God's Sabbath and Ours:
The Eternal Sabbath
(3 of 3)

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After I had announced that the title for this presentation would be "The Eternal Sabbath," I went to the internet and did a search for "eternal Sabbath." Much to my surprise, I found that there is a comic series by Japanese artist-writer Fuyuri Soryo, and that the main character of this series, a sort of superhuman with a particular supergene that makes him invulnerable to many a human weakness, is called "ES," which is a short form of his true name, "Eternal Sabbath." Apparently, this series has quite a following, particularly among internet surfers.

If any of you know the series, I am afraid I must disappoint you, for I intend to speak about something entirely different! Indeed, I intend to speak of Sabbath as the goal of all creation, and therefore as the goal of our lives.

In the Jewish tradition, Sabbath is both a beginning and an end, as well as the center of life. Indeed, the days of the week are sometimes counted as days to the Sabbath, and sometimes as days after the Sabbath. Thus, the days of the week may be named "the sixth day to the Sabbath," the "fifth day to the Sabbath," and so on, or "the first day after the Sabbath," the "second day after the Sabbath," and so on. The week both revolves around the Sabbath and moves towards the Sabbath.

In the previous two presentations, we have been dealing with Sabbath mostly as it is to be celebrated within the weekly and apparently unending rhythm of work and rest. Now I suggest we look at Sabbath in a different way: Sabbath as the goal to which all creation moves. Just as God created all things and then celebrated their creation in holy rest, so is creation made in such a way that its final fulfillment is in resting in God.

The oft-quoted words of St. Augustine at the beginning of his *Confessions* point in this direction: "Thou hast made us for Thee, and our heart is restless until it rests in Thee."[1] Augustine may have understood this rest in Neoplatonic ways, and for this reason some have quipped that his descriptions hell is much more interesting than heaven. But that is another matter. What is important in Augustine's words is that God has made us with a purpose, and that our own restlessness is a sign that we are being drawn towards that purpose.

This is what medieval theologians meant when they spoke of God as the "final cause"—as the ultimate purpose—of all things. I shall return to this later. But first it is important to see how the Sabbath relates to this ultimate goal of all creation.

An ancient Jewish legend expresses this quite clearly:

> . . .at the time when God was giving the Torah to Israel, He said to them: My children! If you accept the Torah . . . I will give you for all eternity a thing most precious that I have in my possession.
>
> —And what, asked Israel, is that precious thing which Thou wilt give us if we obey the Torah?
>
> —The world to come.

—Show us in this world an example of the world to come.
—The Sabbath is an example of the world to come.[2]

Likewise, in the ancient pseudoepigraphic *Life of Adam and Eve*, we are told that "the seventh day is a sign of the resurrection and the world to come,"[3] The same theme is repeated in the Sabbath prayer: "May the All-merciful let us inherit the day which will be all Sabbath and rest and life eternal."[4] Rabbi Schemina ben Yitz'hak said: "There are three signs of the future. Sleep prefigures death. Dreams prefigure prophecy. And the Sabbath prefigures the world to come. "[5] Rabbi Mendziboz is quoted as declaring that "the Sabbath is even greater than the world to come, for the source of the world to come is in the Sabbath, like a twig drawing its strength from a branch."[6]

This means that the Sabbath is not only a reminder of God's initial work in creation, when God saw that all was good, and not only an opportunity for us and for all creation to be refreshed in the present; it is also a promise, a sign of God's love for all eternity, a foretaste of a world to come—of the eternal Sabbath for which Augustine's heart longed.

There is an indissoluble connection between the present Sabbath, which we have been discussing up to this point, and the eternal Sabbath, God's promise of a new and final day. Indeed, the reason why we can rest—we can truly rest—in the present life is that we know that ultimately all of creation is in the hands of the God who rests, and that this God will bring

us and all of creation to ultimate rest. The one is a preparation for the other. As an ancient rabbi expressed it,

> Unless one learns how to relish the state of Sabbath while still in this world, unless one is initiated in the appreciation of eternal life, one will be unable to enjoy the taste of eternity in the world to come. Sad is the lot of him who arrives inexperienced and when led to heaven has no power to perceive the beauty of the Sabbath. [7]

This is why it is so important to perceive and practice Sabbath, not as a matter of obligation, but as a celebration of joy. Celsus, that pagan philosopher I quoted in the first lecture mocking a religion whose God could become tired, helps us to remember one important point: the God of the Bible is not one who grows weary. God's rest after the work of creation is not one of fatigue, but of joy, of accomplishment. Likewise, our true Sabbath rest is not in the following of certain precepts, but in rejoicing in the work we have done and in the far greater work God has done in us. Precepts are not bad. Without them we find all sorts of excuses to escape true rest. But all they do is set the stage for the full, free enjoyment of Sabbath.

If the Sabbath is a matter of obligation—of looking around to see who is mowing the lawn and who is going to the beach and who is going to church—it will not do much to bring us closer to the experience of the final Sabbath of God. If, on the other hand, it is a matter of joy and loving trust in God, it becomes a foretaste of the final Sabbath of all creation—of what the New Testament calls the Reign of God.

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An immediate consequence of all this is that we have to recover eschatology. For too long eschatology has been left in the hands of the theological fringe of Christianity. For too long we have left eschatology in the hands of pre-millennialists and post-millennialists, of pre-tribulationists and post-tribulationists, of people who approach the Bible as if it were some sort of divine puzzle whose secret key they have discovered. This is one of the unfortunate byproducts of the liberal theology that held sway three or four generations ago, and which had no idea what to do with eschatology. In consequence, when I went to seminary the curriculum included courses on Christology, on Christian Anthropology, on the doctrine of Creation, on Redemption, and many more. But eschatology was mentioned only in passing, almost as one mentions an embarrassing cousin in polite conversation. And, since theology left eschatology out, eschatology in turn has left theology out—the result being items such as the Left Behind series.

But now the time has come to reclaim eschatology; to bring it back to the very heart of Christian theology. Christian eschatology has nothing to do with the Left Behind sort of fiction, and much to do with the very heart of the Christian message.

Christian eschatology is not about Armageddon, or about the beast from the land or the beast from the sea. Christian eschatology is about hope. Christian eschatology is about the certain expectation that the day will come when God's purposes are fulfilled, when Evil is finally and completely conquered, and when God's creation will enjoy a renewed and eternal Sabbath.

In consequence, Christian eschatology is joyful. It is shocking and sad to realize that the book of Revelation, written to bring encouragement and solace to churches going through all sorts of difficulties and even under the threat of persecution, the book of the Bible that—after Psalms—has contributed most hymns to Christian hymnody, has become a book of fear, often read with the sole purpose of intimidating those whom we consider less faithful than we are.

But no. The Book of Revelation, like the Sabbath, is a matter of joy. Indeed, there are Jewish passages about the Sabbath that evoke in us echoes of the Revelation of John. Thus, in the eternal Sabbath, "the righteous sit enthroned, their crowns on their heads, and enjoy the luster of the Shechinah."[8] And John of Patmos speaks of a vision: . . . there in heaven stood a throne. . . .Around the throne are twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones are twenty-four elders, dressed in white robes, with golden crowns on their heads" (Rev 4.2-3).

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The connection between the Sabbath—the final, eternal Sabbath—and eschatology has deep roots in Christian tradition. At some point early in the second century, an unknown Christian writer who took the pseudonym of Barnabas tells us that the commandment regarding the Sabbath will never be fulfilled in history, for it orders that the Sabbath be sanctified, and human sinfulness makes it impossible to sanctify anything. He comments:

> God says, "Thou shalt sanctify it with pure hands and a pure heart." But we are quite mistaken if we believe that anyone of us, who are impure in our hearts, is able to sanctify what God has sanctified. We shall truly sanctify it with our rest when, having been justified and in full possession of the promise, we shall be

> able to do so, that is, when iniquity is no more and all things have been made new; then we shall be able to sanctify it, having been first sanctified ourselves.[9]

And then, after quoting Isaiah 1.13, where the prophet declares that God rejects the Sabbath celebrations of the people, Pseudo-Barnabas goes on to explain:

> Ye perceive how He speaks: Your present Sabbaths are not acceptable to Me, but that is which I have made, [namely this,] when, giving rest to all things, I shall make a beginning of the eighth day, that is, a beginning of another world. [10]

A few decades later Irenaeus, one of the most remarkable theologians of ancient times, writing about the promises of the Kingdom of God, declares that . . . "these are [to take place] in the times of the kingdom, that is, upon the seventh day, which has been sanctified, in which God rested from all the works which He created, which is the true Sabbath of the righteous, in which they shall not be engaged in any earthly occupation; but shall have a table at hand prepared for them by God, supplying them with all sorts of dishes. And a century later Hippolytus tells us that "the Sabbath is the type and emblem of the future kingdom of the saints, when 'they shall reign with Christ'."[12]

At roughly the same time Cyprian, commenting on the law that an infant boy should be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth, explains that this eighth day was a sign or "figure" of the resurrection of Jesus, also on the eighth day:

> For because the eighth day, that is, the first day after the Sabbath, was to be that on which the Lord should rise again, and should quicken us, and give us circumcision of the spirit, the eighth day, that is, the first day after the Sabbath, and the Lord's day, went before in the figure; which figure ceased when by and by the truth came, and spiritual circumcision was given to us. [13]

And Augustine likewise says: "And what else does the eighth day mean than Christ, who rose again when the week was completed, that is, after the Sabbath?"[14]

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In brief, for early Christianity, as indeed for much of Judaism, the Sabbath celebration had a decidedly eschatological dimension. It pointed to the time of fulfillment, when all the redeemed would rejoice in an eternal Sabbath with the Lord of the Sabbath.

In Pseudo-Barnabas, as well as in several other Christian writers, this final day, this lasting Sabbath, is often referred to as the "eighth day." And, in a passage I quoted in my first lecture, whoever undertook the task of expanding on the letters of Ignatius of Antioch calls his readers to observe both the Sabbath and Sunday, the day of resurrection, and speaks of this as the beginning of the eighth day:

> And after the observance of the Sabbath, let every friend of Christ keep the Lord's Day as a festival, the resurrection-day, the queen and chief of all the days [of the week]. Looking forward to this, the prophet declared, "To the end, for the eighth day," on which our life both sprang up again, and the victory over death was obtained in Christ. [15]

The "eighth day" is another way of referring to the everlasting Sabbath, to the future time when the endless succession of days of the week would end, and the redeemed would share eternally in Sabbath joy. In the normal order of things, after the seventh day, the Sabbath, the cycle starts all over again, and again, and again. This is part of a larger pattern, for every sixth day is followed by a Sabbath, every sixth year is followed by a Sabbatical year, and every six Sabbatical years by a year of jubilee. There is thus a weekly pattern of rejoicing and resting,

when body and soul and animals and servants are refreshed, and a seven-year cycle when the earth and all of creation are refreshed, and a seven-seven-year cycle in which even the social order is refreshed by setting aside all debts and returning the land to the people. But even so, this larger pattern would appear to be a never-ending cycle, with week following week, Sabbatical year following Sabbatical year, and Jubilee year following Jubilee year.

But is it not so. It is not so, because at some point, one blessed morning after Sabbath rest, the world will awake and discover that the cycle has come to an end; that it is not, as expected, the first day of the next week, but an eighth day, an unprecedented day, a day in which the cycle ceases and Sabbath Reigns forever—in other words, the eighth day of creation has dawned!

For Christians, this was part of the meaning of the resurrection of our Lord. The women went to the tomb early in the morning of the first day of the week. Just before the Sabbath, all hope had been shattered. The one whom they had followed had died on the cross. They went to anoint his body as a final act of farewell before returning to the routine, to the unending seven-day cycle of work and rest. . .

But then the unexpected happened. "He is not here. He has risen!" The first day of another week like so many others in the history of humankind had suddenly become the new day, the eighth day of creation, the dawning of the eternal Sabbath!

This was the very core of the early Christian message. The new day has dawned! Thus, when the Evangelists began to put down their stories about Jesus as an instrument for the education of new converts, they depicted him announcing and bringing in the Kingdom of God, the new day. And when Paul sought to express the meaning of Christ for believers, he declared, "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" (2 Cor 5.17).

So, as we have repeatedly seen, those first Christians, all Jews, continued keeping the Sabbath; but they also had a special place for the first day of the new week, the day of the Lord's resurrection, which they soon began calling "the Lord's Day." The Sabbath was a sort of practice for the coming Reign of God; Sunday was its foretaste—in its worship Christians were joined to the risen Christ, and thus entered into the final Sabbath.

Naturally, this did not take them out of the continuing cycle of weeks and Sabbaths. The old creation was still going on. But alongside the old order, the new has dawned. Christians live in the old creation of sin and oppression. They are not immune to pain and even persecution. But they know that this old order is passing away, and that their true self is in the new order that has dawned in Jesus. Paul put it quite bluntly to the Colossians: “. . . for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you will also be revealed with him in glory" (Col 3.3-4).

Ever since, this has been the difficult position of Christians: the old creation continues, and we live in it and are part of it; but the new creation has dawned, and we also live in it and are part of it.

This tension was expressed in a uniquely poignant way by an anonymous second-century Christian:

> To sum up all in one word — what the soul is in the body, that are Christians in the world. The soul is dispersed through all the members of the body, and Christians are scattered through all the cities of the world. The soul dwells in the body, yet is not of the body; and Christians dwell in the world, yet are not of the world. The invisible soul is guarded by the visible body, and Christians are known indeed to be in the world, but their godliness remains invisible. The flesh hates the soul, and wars against it, though itself suffering no injury, because it is prevented from enjoying pleasures; the world also hates the Christians, though in nowise injured, because they abjure pleasures. The soul loves the flesh that hates it, and [loves also] the members; Christians likewise love those that hate them. The soul is imprisoned in the body, yet preserves that very body; and Christians are confined in the world as in a prison, and yet they are the preservers of the world. The immortal soul dwells in a mortal tabernacle; and Christians dwell as sojourners in corruptible [bodies], looking for an incorruptible dwelling in the heavens. The soul, when but ill-provided with food and drink, becomes better; in like manner, the Christians, though subjected day by day to punishment, increase the more in number. God has assigned them this illustrious position, which it were unlawful for them to forsake. [16]

It is interesting to note that the tensions and uncertainties that so many of us deplore today, this early Christian calls "this illustrious position." For early Christians, it was a privilege to be living already in a foretaste of the final Sabbath, of the eighth day of creation, even though this meant ambiguity, tension, and sometimes even persecution.

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It was through baptism that Christians joined the new creation, the eternal Sabbath, and thus came to live in the position of privileged tension that this unknown author describes so eloquently. Very soon after the initial upsurge described in the early chapters of Acts, it became customary to baptize new converts on Sunday morning. An obvious practical reason was that this was the time when Christians usually gathered to worship and celebrate the Lord's Supper. But there was also a deeper, symbolic reason: Christians were baptized into the new creation, into the eighth day of creation, which had been inaugurated by the resurrection of Jesus.

In the early church, before there was an annual calendar, there was a weekly one. In that weekly calendar, every Sunday was a celebration of the resurrection, and therefore an appropriate time for baptisms. Soon, however, a particular Sunday began to be set aside as the Great Sunday of Resurrection—Easter Sunday. Significantly, at that point it became customary to baptize catechumens, not just on any Sunday, but on Easter Sunday. Much could be said about those early Easter services, about how people prepared for them, about the origins of Lent, and about the actual ritual of baptism; but that is not the main point at this time. The main point is that people were baptized on Easter because the resurrection of Jesus was the beginning of the Kingdom, and they were being baptized into the Kingdom. They were baptized on Sunday, not because it was the first day of a new week, but because it was the eighth day—the beginning, so to speak, of a week without end.

The various meanings of baptism are often depicted symbolically in the shape of baptistries and baptismal fonts. The earliest baptistries known to us are usually rectangular or square in shape. This may have been due primarily to merely practical reasons—churches were private homes converted into places of worship, and it was fairly simple to build a square or rectangular pool within such a structure. Rectangular baptistries, sometimes bulging in the middle, in the shape of a coffin, also pointed to baptism as a dying and arising with Christ. Soon, however, other shapes appeared. Some baptistries were circular or pear-shaped, symbolizing both the womb of new birth and eternal life. But many were octagonal—or were octagons inscribed into a circle.

This may be seen in the remains of the various baptistries in the Lateran, in Rome. The very earliest baptistry was square. But very soon it was replaced by a circle surrounded by eight columns, and some seventy years later it became an octagon.[17] The same pattern was followed in many other churches in Italy, France, and elsewhere. To this day, many churches have octagonal baptismal fonts or baptistries—and most of their members and pastors have no idea why!

Obviously, baptism has many meanings. It is a washing away of sin. It is a being grafted into the body of Christ. It is the death of the old person and the birth of the new one. And it is the sign of entrance into the eternal Sabbath of God, into the eighth day of creation.

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I said earlier that I would return to the matter of God as the "ultimate cause" of all things. In many ways, this runs counter to much of our modern way of looking at things. To most of us, in the common use of language, a "cause" is what happens before an event, which is then its "consequence." Thus, the cause of an indigestion is that I ate too much. Or the cause of a bad sermon is that we did not prepare enough.

Sometimes we extend the notion of "cause" to include constantly existing conditions. Thus, Newton would say that the cause of the fall of an apple from a tree is the force of gravity.

These are examples of what ancient and medieval philosophers would call "efficient causes."

But in ancient times, and throughout most of history, humankind has understood that there is another sort of cause. This they called "final causes." It is possible to see events not merely as the product of what went on before, but also as the result of a purpose, of a future goal. Thus, Aristotle used to speak of an *entelechia* moving all things to their intended goal, their *telos*. An acorn becomes an oak because its purpose, its goal to become an oak, is pulling it.

To say that things and events have "final causes" is to speak as to claim that they are not only being pushed by their past, but also pulled by their future.

This may sound strange to us moderns, so affected by the success of the physical sciences—sciences whose concern is precisely the study and management of efficient causes. But in point of fact, we live a great deal of our lives out of final, and not just efficient, causes. A child decides to become a lawyer because her mother is a lawyer; that is an efficient cause. But then that child goes to school because she is to be a lawyer; that is a final cause. A ball player swings a bat because his brain tells his muscles to do so; those are efficient causes. But he also swings the bat because he wants to hit the ball; and he wants to hit the ball because he wants his team to score; and perhaps he wants his team to score so next year he will have a higher salary; and he wants a higher salary so he can retire at leisure. All those are final causes.

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Now back to the question of eschatology and Sabbath. What Augustine meant when he spoke of our souls being restless until they rest in God, he was asserting that such rest is the final cause of our existence; that we have been created for that future goal, and that this goal is constantly calling and pulling us. When the ancient rabbis spoke of the eternal Sabbath as the final promise of creation, they were asserting that this Sabbath is calling all present times towards its fulfillment. The days of the week all point to the Sabbath, and therefore it is possible to count them as "the sixth day to the Sabbath," "the fifth day to the Sabbath," and so on. And all weeks are pulled by the seventh year, the Sabbatical Year. And all Sabbatical Years are pulled by the Year of Jubilee. And the very notion of Jubilee is pulled by the hope of the final Sabbath.

When ancient Christians baptized people into the eighth day of creation, they were affirming that the future pulls the present towards itself, as many others said in different ways. But they were also asserting that in the resurrection of Jesus the eighth day has dawned; that the future has broken into the present; that Christians are now living "between the times"—between the beginning of the end, and the end of the end.

That end, that eternal Sabbath, is what Christians call the Kingdom of God, or the Reign of God. That Reign is the "final cause" of all that exists. It is the goal towards which all creation is being pulled. It is the final Sabbath for which we have been created.

Partly as a result of the theological inheritance of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, it is quite common to think of the Reign of God as something we are supposed to bring about. Indeed, the bringing in of the Kingdom became the motivation for many of the social reforms that Christians have advocated. Through the years, I have heard countless sermons as to how when we promote better labor laws or when we engage in any activity seeking justice and peace, we are "bringing in the Kingdom."

Certainly, all those activities are good and necessary. Christians as individuals, and the church as a whole, must be engaged in them. But we need to remember that the Reign of God does

not depend on us. We are not any more able to bring it about than we were able to bring about our own existence.

This is why it is important to connect the Reign of God with the eternal Sabbath. You may remember that according to Calvin one of the main purposes of the Sabbath is to remind us that we are not saved by our own works, and that our existence does not depend completely on us. We can "let go," and God is still in charge. We may cease in our good works, and God's grace is still with us.

What is true of our salvation is also true of the salvation of the world, of the coming Reign of God. Saved by God's grace, we do good and loving works, not because they are the means to our salvation, or because our salvation is earned through them, but rather because we wish to join and to serve this God whose grace has accepted, forgiven, and regenerated us. Therefore, every week, in the midst of our efforts to serve and please God, the Sabbath comes to remind us that God simply loves us. God loves us during the six days of work, and God loves us during the seventh day of rest. God loves us when we do good, and God loves us when we don't do anything.

Likewise, what is true of our salvation is also true of the goal and salvation of the world. It does not depend on us. We work for it, not because without us it wouldn't happen, but rather

because we are already part of it, and we look forward to the day when God's promises will be fulfilled.

It is at this point that our understanding of the Eternal Sabbath becomes important for our daily lives. There is so much good to be done! There is so much evil to be overcome! There are so many sick people to heal, so many wrongs to right, so many calls to make, so many books to write, so many young people to advise, so many bereaved to console, so many laws to advocate! How, then, dare I quit for a moment, when a young man may be about to make a terrible decision for his life, or when a young woman is trying to decide what her career will be, or when someone is mired in grief and loneliness? We are so important to them! (Or at least, we would like to think we are.)

And so, I convince myself. If I don't write this book, who will? If I don't visit this person, who will? If I don't picket that company or that government agency, who will? In short, let's be blunt about it: If I don't save the world, who will?

When stated that boldly, the question itself is ridiculous, and the answer is obvious: it is not up to us to save the world. That is God's business. Our business is to serve the God who has promised salvation.

Sabbath repeatedly brings us to that point. We are instructed to "let go" every week, so that we may have a constant reminder of who God is and who we are.

In this context, the notion of God's Reign, of the final goal of creation, as the Eternal Sabbath reminds us that we cannot bring in God's Reign or God's Kingdom. Just as we cannot hasten the coming of the weekly Sabbath one whit, we cannot hasten the coming of the Eternal Sabbath by a second. It will come in God's good time, no matter whether we work ourselves to death or not.

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But we find this hard to accept. We find it so hard that even the word "Sabbatical" has become synonymous with work. If you are in academia and are supposed to have a "Sabbatical" every so many years, usually one of the requirements is that you have a particular project to work on during your so-called Sabbatical. And every once in a while, pastors take a supposed "Sabbatical" in order to prepare a year's worth of preaching, or to read up on some particular subject, or to take a course. If they are not planning to do any one of those things—if they are simply planning to do nothing—their so-called Sabbatical will be denied. We must work. We must produce. We cannot really trust the God of creation so sustain creation and bring it to its fulfillment. Hurry! We must bring in the Kingdom!

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Does this mean then that we cannot work for the Reign of God? On the contrary, it means that we can really work for that Reign; but that we can now do this in freedom and joy. To "work

for" something or someone can have two different meanings. It can mean that we are trying to bring it about—as when I say that I am working for the growth of the church. It can also mean that we are employed by someone—as when we say that we work for the church or for a university.

Likewise, to "work for the Kingdom of God" can have two different meanings.

On the one hand, it may mean that we are trying to bring about that Kingdom. Unfortunately, this is precisely what we often mean when we use that phrase. In so doing, we fall prey to a self-aggrandizement that ultimately crushes us. We are doing God's work, and if we do not do it, it simply won't get done. We cannot afford to stop. We cannot afford a Sabbath. And thus, the coming Reign of God, rather than a joyful promise, becomes a source of pain and frustration—until eventually we realize we just can't do it, we give up, and we burn out.

On the other hand, to "work for the Kingdom of God" may mean something similar to what someone means by saying that he or she works for a university. When we use such a phrase in this context, we don't mean that the university's existence depends on us—at least, we should not mean it! What we mean rather is that our work is directed by the university and aimed at the university's goals. Obviously, there are certain things we must do. But we do them, not because the university would disappear without us, but rather because we are part of this community and share its goals.

This is what the phrase "work for the Kingdom" should mean. We work for the Reign of God, not because it is up to us to bring it about, but because we serve it, because through our baptism we have entered the eighth day of creation, because we await its coming and meanwhile, we share its goals.

Put in a nutshell, it is not we who are bringing in the Eternal Sabbath; it is the Eternal Sabbath that is bringing us in. Returning to the earlier discussion of efficient and final causes, we are not to think of our lives and our work as the efficient cause of God's Reign—as bringing in the Kingdom. We are to think rather in terms of that Reign being the final cause for our lives and our living.

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The fact that we cannot bring in the Eternal Sabbath—the Reign of God—does not mean that it is irrelevant for our daily lives, but quite the contrary. Just as working for a university does not mean that the existence of the university depends on us, and yet is a very relevant factor in our lives, so does working for the Reign of God become a guiding principle in our lives. Working for a university implies sharing in that institution's goals. If it is a research university, it means that we value research; if a liberal arts college, it means that we value the liberal arts. Likewise, working for God's Reign requires sharing in what we know its values to be.

When I said earlier that we live our lives out of the future, and not only out of the past, I was trying to remind us that the present in which we live depends greatly on the future for which we hope. That young woman I mentioned earlier, who hopes to become a lawyer because her mother is a lawyer, now organizes her life around that goal. Her law career pulls her from the future and marks her present.

The same is true of Christians. I have said elsewhere that those who truly await the Kingdom of God better start practicing "Kingdomese" here and now, or we will find ourselves not quite at home in the coming Reign of God. I have usually defined such Kingdomese in terms of love, justice, and peace. Now I have come to the conclusion that, strange as it may seem to our pragmatic culture where everything is measured in terms of results, we have to add a fourth dimension to those three—love, justice, and peace. That fourth dimension is Sabbath rest. Indeed, I was surprised when I first came across the words of a rabbi I quoted earlier, where he said about Sabbath much the same as I have said before about love, justice and peace:

> Unless one learns how to relish the state of Sabbath while still in this world, unless
> one is initiated in the appreciation of eternal life, one will be unable to enjoy the taste of eternity in the world to come. Sad is the lot of him who arrives inexperienced and when led to heaven has no power to perceive the beauty of the Sabbath.

This puts Sabbath rest in its proper perspective. It is a matter of practicing now for the future whose coming we announce. It is not just a matter of taking a break to recharge our batteries. It is not just a matter of "quality time" with our families and friends. Nor is it simply

a matter of obeying God's commandment. It is a matter of living now out of the future for which we hope, out of the future we expect. It is a matter of trusting God with our future, and therefore also with our present.

May we learn to do so, and in so doing proclaim that the God of creation is also the Lord of the Sabbath!

Notes

1. *Conf*, 1.1.
2. Alphabet of R. Akiba, *Otzar Midrashim*, p. 407. Quoted in Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1951), p. 73.
3. Life ofAdam and Eve, 41.1 (Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudoepigrapha of the Old Testament*, 2:151)
4. Quoted in Heschel, *Sabbath*. . . p. 114, n. 8.
5. Quoted in Jean Halpérin and Georges Levitte, eds., *Le Shabbat dans la conscieence juive: Donées et textes* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1975), p. 161.
6. *Ibid*., p. 160.
7. Quoted in Heschel, *Sabbath* . . .p. 74.
8. Quoted in *ibid*.
9. *Ep. of Barnabas*, 15.6-7 (my translation).
10. *Ibid*.
11. *Adv. haer*., 5.33.2 (ANF,I :562).
12. Fragment (ANF, 5: 179).
13. *Epistle* 58.4 (ANF,).
14. *City of God*, 16.26 (NPNF, First series,).
15. Pseudo-Ignatius, *To the Magnesians* (interpolated text), 9. (ANF 1:63).
16. *Ep. to Diognetus*, 6 (ANF, 1:26)
17. J.G. Davies, *The Architectural Setting of Baptism* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1962), p. 5.