

❧ Other Voices ❧

Just as society challenges Sabbath, so Sabbath challenges society. Ironically, the same forces that make it difficult to keep Sabbath also make it a prophetic and relevant practice for our time. Exploring it anew is worth the effort. This exploration will be fruitful, however, only if we resolve to help one another, in God's grace, to develop fresh forms of the practice of keeping Sabbath that make sense within the complicated circumstances of our lives.

DOROTHY C. BASS, *Receiving the Day*

The sabbath commandment given to men and women divides up human time. It brings interruption, interval and rhythm into human temporal experience. But of course all the other 'festal' divisions of time do this too. What is special about the sabbath commandment is, on the one hand, *the remembrance* of God's eternal sabbath of creation, from which the command to sanctify the sabbath springs; and, on the other, *the promise* of the eternal sabbath of the messianic era.... The sabbath stands in time, but it is more than time, for it both veils and discloses an eternal surplus of meaning.

JÜRGEN MOLTSMANN, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation*

All the great motifs of our Christian faith are underscored in our Sabbath keeping. Its Ceasing deepens our repentance for the many ways that we fail to trust God and try to create our own future. Its Resting strengthens our faith in the totality of his grace. Its Embracing invites us to take the truths of our faith and apply them practically in our values and lifestyles. Its Feasting heightens our sense of eschatological hope—the Joy of our present experience of God's love and its foretaste of the Joy to come.

MARVA J. DAWN, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly*

Furthermore we must understand that the Lord's Day was not appointed only for listening to sermons, but that we should spend the rest of the time praising God.... Because we are so occupied with our own affairs on the other days of the week, we are slow to serve God in them in the way he has assigned on the one day. The Lord's Day must, therefore, serve as a tower in which we can go up to view God's works in the distance. It is a time in which there should be nothing to hinder us or keep us occupied, so that we can employ our minds meditating on the benefits and gracious gifts he has given us.

JOHN CALVIN (1509-1564), *Sermons on Deuteronomy*

Man was made for the highest activity, which is, in fact, his rest.

THOMAS MERTON (1915-1968), *The Ascent to Truth*

According to [Aristotle], "we need relaxation, because we cannot work continuously. Relaxation, then, is not an end"; it is "for the sake of activity," for the sake of gaining strength for new efforts. To the biblical mind, however, ... the Sabbath as a day of rest, as a day of abstaining from toil, is not for the purpose of recovering one's lost strength and becoming fit for the forthcoming labor. The Sabbath is a day for the sake of life. Man is not a beast of burden, and the Sabbath is not for the purpose of enhancing the efficiency of his work. "Last in creation, first in intention," the Sabbath is "the end of the creation of heaven and earth."

ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL (1907-1972), *The Sabbath*

Overworked Americans need rest, *and* they need to be reminded that they do not cause the grain to grow and that their greatest fulfillment does not come through the acquisition of material things. Moreover, the planet needs a rest from human plucking and burning and buying and selling. Perhaps, as Sabbath keepers, we will come to live and know these truths more fully, and thus to bring their wisdom to the common solution of humanity's problems.

DOROTHY C. BASS, "Keeping Sabbath" in *Practicing Our Faith*

The Sabbath legislation of the Old Testament is full of ecological wisdom leading to a special blessing for humankind and the Earth. As long as we see nature and our own bodies only through the dominating influence of work, we perceive only the utilitarian aspect of nature and only the instrumental side of our bodies. We find wisdom to understand nature and ourselves as God's creation when we celebrate the Sabbath/Sunday as a day of rest on which human beings and animals find peace and leave nature outside in peace. God the Creator 'finished' the creation of the world by celebrating the world's Sabbath. Through resting on the seventh day God blessed the whole creation by his silent presence.

JÜRGEN MOLTMAN, "God's Covenant and Our Responsibility," in *The Care of Creation*, ed. by R. J. Berry

Strange and monstrous are the longings of our pride. There is nothing which the Lord enjoins more strictly than the religious observance of his Sabbath, in other words resting from our works; but in nothing do we show greater reluctance than to renounce our own works, and give due place to the works of God.

JOHN CALVIN (1509-1564), *Institutes of Religion*

The Sabbath is the most precious present mankind has received from the treasure house of God. All week we think: The spirit is too far away, and we succumb to spiritual absenteeism, or at best we pray: Send us a little of Thy spirit. On the Sabbath the spirit stands and pleads: Accept all excellence from me...

Yet what the spirit offers is often too august for our trivial minds. We accept the ease and relief and miss the inspirations of the day, where it comes from and what it stands for.

A B R A H A M J O S H U A H E S C H E L (1907-1972), *The Sabbath*

Lord God, grant us peace; for you have given us all things, the peace of quietness, the peace of the sabbath, a peace with no evening. This entire most beautiful order of very good things will complete its course and then pass away; for in them by creation there is both morning and evening.

The seventh day has no evening and has no ending. You sanctified it to abide everlastingly. After your 'very good' works, which you made while remaining yourself in repose, you 'rested the seventh day.' This utterance in your book foretells for us that after our works which, because they are your gift to us, are very good, we also may rest in you for the sabbath of eternal life.

There also you will rest in us, just as now you work in us. Your rest will be through us, just as now your works are done through us.

A U G U S T I N E (354-430), *Confessions*, trans. by Henry Chadwick