

## ABSTRACT

**“Eschatological Dimensions of the Seventh-day Sabbath within the Adventist Doctrinal Framework”**— In the Adventist theological system, the Sabbath has a key role, functioning as the neural network of the body of beliefs. As such, it delivers eschatological energy to the entire system. The present article outlines several eschatological dimensions of the Sabbath according to the major categories of systematic theology: theology proper, anthropology, soteriology, ecclesiology, and eschatology. After presenting the eschatological overtones of the Sabbath evinced in Exodus 20:8–11, the eschatological relation of the seventh day with each doctrinal category is analyzed. The article concludes that, as the eschatological insignia of the Adventist theological system, the Sabbath embodies a multifaceted and rich theological significance.

**Keywords:** Sabbath, eschatology, Adventist theology, doctrinal system, fourth commandment

## RESUMEN

**“Dimensiones escatológicas del sábado en el contexto del marco doctrinal adventista”**— En el sistema teológico adventista, el sábado tiene un papel clave, funcionando como la red neuronal del cuerpo de creencias. Como tal, entrega energía escatológica a todo el sistema. El presente artículo describe varias dimensiones escatológicas del sábado según las principales categorías de la teología sistemática: teología propiamente dicha, antropología, soteriología, ecclesiología y escatología. Después de presentar los matices escatológicos del sábado evidenciados en Éxodo 20:8-11, se analiza la relación escatológica del séptimo día con cada categoría doctrinal. El artículo concluye que, como insignia escatológica del sistema teológico adventista, el sábado encarna un significado teológico rico y multifacético.

**Palabras clave:** sábado, escatología, teología adventista, sistema doctrinal, cuarto mandamiento

## ESCHATOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE SEVENTH-DAY SABBATH WITHIN THE ADVENTIST DOCTRINAL FRAMEWORK

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### Introduction

Whereas in Protestant contemporary theology “eschatological themes are as vivid as ever,”<sup>1</sup> in Adventist theology, eschatology is more than a theme in a system. Rather, it stands at the core of what Adventism is. This is not only indicated by the name “Adventist.”<sup>2</sup> It is the first part of the denominational name that encapsulates the uniqueness of Seventh-day Adventist theology: the seventh day.<sup>3</sup> The seventh day is theologically understood as more than a simple day of rest by Adventists scholars. It is considered to be the “symbol of our redemption in Christ, a sign of our sanctification, a token of our allegiance, and a foretaste of our eternal future in God’s kingdom.”<sup>4</sup>

All these descriptors confer distinctiveness on Sabbath in Adventist theology. Instead of being coalesced into the doctrine of the Ten Commandments, the Sabbath is introduced under a different—yet closely connected—rubric in the official statement of beliefs. Its doctrinal locus, coupled with its emblematic character, makes the

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1. Markus Mühling, *T&T Clark Handbook of Christian Eschatology*, trans. Jennifer Adams-Maßmann and David Andrew Gilland (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), xiii. Even with reference to the recent past, the “Adventist theology arose as a truly ‘eschatological’ theology a century before the German ‘eschatological’ theologians Wolfhart Pannenberg and Jürgen Moltmann came to prominence”. Fernando L. Canale, “From Vision to System: Finishing the Task of Adventist Theology; Part III, Sanctuary and Hermeneutics,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society (JATS)* 17, no. 2 (2006): 54.

2. Richard L. Lehmann, “The Second Coming of Jesus,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 893.

3. In Adventist theology, the Sabbath refers to the seventh day of the week, Saturday. While the word is used with reference to other periods, in this paper it refers to Saturday.

4. “The Sabbath,” in General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists, 28 *Fundamental Beliefs*, 2020 ed., 9, accessed September 14, 2020, <https://www.adventist.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ADV-28Beliefs2020.pdf>.

Sabbath similar to a neural network that delivers eschatological energy to each doctrine. The doctrines of God, humanity, salvation, church, and last things are teleologically oriented by the seventh day.<sup>5</sup> As such, the Sabbath embodies a multifaceted and rich theological significance. This meaning cannot remain within the theoretical constraints of theology. Pulsing with missiological energy, the seventh day acts as one of the five senses of the Adventist system, connecting the theoretical aspects with the practical ones.<sup>6</sup> Hence, it is more than a day to be acknowledged. It is a day of celebrating “God’s creative and redemptive acts.”<sup>7</sup> With such a broad inclusion, the Sabbath becomes the eschatological insignia of the entire system.

### Eschatological Overtones of the Sabbath in the Bible

The seventh day is “time given to man, and required of man.”<sup>8</sup> While extending the gift of rest, redemption, and restoration on this day, God expects human beings to receive the offer. This is the reason why the Sabbath observance appears as the fourth commandment in the Decalogue covenant (Exod 20:8–11):

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the

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5. See also Dan-Adrian Petre, “The Three Angels’ Messages as the Teleological Principle of the Adventist Theological System,” in *Eschatology from an Adventist Perspective: Proceedings of the Fourth International Bible Conference, Rome, June 11–20, 2018*, ed. Elias Brasil de Souza, A. Rahel Wells, Laszlo Gallusz, and Denis Kaiser (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2021), 429–456. The Sabbath is presented in this chapter as part of the three angels’ message—the teleological principle of the Adventist theological system. The material used in this chapter is expanded in the present article for each doctrinal category. As such, the present article complements and enlarges the eschatological symbolism of the Sabbath.

6. Sabbath (1) is part of a set of five specific Adventist doctrines that have an enormous impact on practical theology. The other four are: (2) Christ’s heavenly sanctuary, (3) conditional immortality, (4) gift of prophecy, and (5) second coming. As biblically derived teachings, these doctrines offer the “hermeneutical foundations” for a biblical conception of the church and its message. Fernando L. Canale, “The Message and the Mission of the Remnant: A Methodological Approach,” in *Message, Mission, and Unity of the Church*, ed. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, Biblical Research Institute Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology 1 (Silver Springs, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2013), 275.

7. *28 Fundamental Beliefs*, 2020 ed., 9.

8. Niels-Erik A. Andreasen, *Rest and Redemption: A Study of the Biblical Sabbath*, Andrews University Monographs: Studies in Religion 11 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1978), 1.

LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.<sup>9</sup>

The necessity of commanding the Sabbath observance conveys a sense of estrangement between the Creator and his creatures. The imperative is needed because the indicative of creation was forgotten.<sup>10</sup> While built on the previous narrative, the imperative announces a vigorous promise.<sup>11</sup> It elaborates on the past and points to the future. As such, the proclamation of the Sabbath comes at the juncture between past and future, being filled with eschatological overtones.

The fourth commandment is designed as an inverted parallelism or chiasmus (see the table below). All nine structural elements encompass the teleological orientation of the seventh day. Also, they summarize the various eschatological dimensions mentioned in the previous two sections.

*The chiasmus of Exod 20:8–11*

| Code            | Structural element  |
|-----------------|---|
| A <sub>1</sub>  | Remember the Sabbath day,   |
| A <sub>2</sub>  | to keep it holy.  |
| B <sub>1</sub>  | Six days you shall labor, and do all your work,   |
| B <sub>2</sub>  | but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God.  |
| C               | On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. |
| B' <sub>1</sub> | For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them,   |

9. All biblical quotations in this article are from the ESV.

10. For this reason, Sigve K. Tonstad states that “in a real sense the imperative is louder than the indicative because it is weaker.” Sigve K. Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 97.

11. Richard M. Davidson, *A Love Song for the Sabbath* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 1988), 36.

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|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| B' <sub>2</sub> | and rested on the seventh day.             |
| A' <sub>1</sub> | Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day |
| A' <sub>2</sub> | and made it holy.                          |

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The first element (A<sub>1</sub>) consists of the positive dictum of “remember the Sabbath day.” It indicates the initial teleology of creation.<sup>12</sup> The creative work of God is completed and finished with the Sabbath rest. The word “remember” brings into mind the first reference to “the Sabbath day” (Gen 2:2). Being re-affirmed in the context of Exodus, “remember” points to the present. Human beings have the responsibility to mark the “celebration and inauguration” of their history.<sup>13</sup> This is to be memorialized by the generations to come (Exod 31:16; Deut 6:20–25). Hence, “remember” indicates God’s purpose for the future. In the words of the epistle to the Hebrews, the Sabbath rest “remains . . . for the people of God” (Heb 4:9).<sup>14</sup>

The second element (A<sub>2</sub>), the enjoinder “to keep it holy,” presents the Sabbath as a sign of loyal allegiance to God. In Gen 2:3, God is the subject of the verb “to sanctify.” In Exod 20:8, the human being becomes the subject of the verbal idea involved in the infinitive of the same verb. When the human being dedicates the seventh day for God, he or she acknowledges his authority to sanctify. As a result, the seventh day becomes the mark of God’s power to sanctify human beings (Exod 31:13). As the seal embodying “the true meaning of covenant relationship with God,” the Sabbath has a decisive role in the ministry of the end-time remnant (Rev 12:17; 14:12).<sup>15</sup>

The third theological idea (B<sub>1</sub>), “Six days you shall labor, and do all your work,” reveals the Sabbath as resistance against and limitation of the prevalent spirit of conquering everything by human

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12. Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, *Creation, Christ, Salvation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2012), 42.

13. Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness: A Theological Study of the Good News of the Sabbath for Today* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1980), 20.

14. The Greek word *σαββατισμός* appearing here is anarthrous. This seems to indicate the qualitative nature of the rest in Heb 4:9, not its indefinite or definite character. For a lengthy discussion about the anarthrous article, see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 243–254.

15. Kenneth A. Strand, “The Sabbath,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 496.

power. While the full week has seven days, only six are working days. The seventh day draws a line of demarcation between work and rest, pointing to God's works and human finiteness. By limiting work, it frees human beings from their "masters of work, possessions, desires."<sup>16</sup> Life's purpose is not insatiable accumulation.<sup>17</sup> In consequence, competition, "the pressure to produce and achieve,"<sup>18</sup> should be shrugged off. Orienting the week toward completion, the Sabbath also orients human life toward God's future redemption from sin and all its effects.

The fourth eschatological element of the commandment (B<sub>2</sub>) follows: "But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God." God is both the author and the owner of the Sabbath.<sup>19</sup> He created it with a specific purpose in mind. As such, the Sabbath is not just a moment of the past to be remembered, but a day with a teleological role to play in the present of human existence. God's purpose can only be fulfilled when the seventh day is observed as the Sabbath. Elements B'<sub>2</sub>, A'<sub>1</sub>, and A'<sub>2</sub> detail the divine intention.

The fifth teleological thought (C) is comprehensive in sphere: "On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates." The seventh day marks the space in time for community restoration. The Sabbath rest expands to include the slaves, the hired workers, and the foreigners. On this day, the master and his servant stand as equals before God.<sup>20</sup> They share the Sabbath lifestyle which gifts them with the "knowledge of the fact that there is enough."<sup>21</sup> To the enjoyment of physical rest, the

16. Niels-Erik A. Andreasen, *The Christian Use of Time* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), 62.

17. Franz Segbers, "Der Sabbat und seine sozioökonomische Bedeutung: Die biblischen Wurzeln für sozialetische Fragen," *Spes Christiana* 18–19 (2007–2008): 26.

18. Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest*, 220.

19. The Hebrew text says: **וְיִזְם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שְׁבַת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ** The verb "to be" is supplied in the English translation. The preposition **לְ** (לַיהוָה) seems to point beyond possession, indicating authorship (*lamed auctoris*). For this usage of *lamed*, see Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 206.

20. Tonstad insightfully points out that "the particulars on this list are amazing because no parallels have been found in other cultures" contemporary with Israel. Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning*, 126.

21. Segbers, "Der Sabbat," 31.

mental, emotional, and spiritual rest is added.<sup>22</sup> A new community reflecting the Edenic ideal is formed, pointing the final restoration of humanity. This theme is later expanded in the variegated imagery used to describe the church in the NT. Like the OT community, the church becomes a micro-model of the future redeemed community.<sup>23</sup>

To this “social awareness” of the Sabbath, an ecological component is added: even the animals rest on Sabbath.<sup>24</sup> Ecology is a part of creation and is strongly alluded to in the fourth commandment.<sup>25</sup> Echoing Gen 1:26, 28, the seventh day reminds human beings that their dominion over the earth is not ruthless exploitation, but a caring administration. Both the social and the ecological areas come at rest on the Sabbath as a foretaste of the time when evil and suffering—both in the natural and in the moral world—will be no more.

The sixth structural element (B'<sub>1</sub>), “for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them,” states the reason for the Sabbath observance. God is the omnipotent Creator. He offers a model of work-rest to be followed by human beings. The

22. In his article exploring the experiential significance of Sabbath, Davidson emphasizes seven dimensions of rest: “Physical, mental, emotional, creative, spiritual, blessed, and holy.” Richard M. Davidson, “Sabbath, Spirituality, and Mission: Torah’s Seven Dimensions of Sabbath Rest,” in *Encountering God in Life and Mission: A Festschrift Honoring Jon Dybdahl*, ed. Rudi Maier, Andrews University Mission Studies 7 (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2010), 3.

23. For a comprehensive discussion about the church in the NT, see I. H. Marshall, “Church,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992); P. T. O’Brien, “Church,” *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993); K. N. Giles, “Church,” *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 193–201.

24. For an expanded discussion about the social conscience of the Sabbath, see Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning*, 125–141.

25. Gulley, *Creation, Christ, Salvation*, 103. Ecology (Gk. οἶκος, “house” and Gk. λόγος, “word”) is understood here as referring to “human and non-human creatures and their interrelationship and interdependencies on the planet Earth.” Celia Deane-Drummond, “Ecotheology,” in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. Ian A. McFarland et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 156. As such, it is not synonymous with ecotheology; rather, it may be seen as a development of the doctrine of creation. Genesis is theocentric; as a result, one can speak about “theocentric environmentalism.” Ben Holdsworth, “Sabbath: An Interactive Environmental Rest, Restoration, and Worship,” paper presented at the 2016 Annual Meeting of the SBL, San Antonio, TX, November, 2016, 3.

completion of creation “assures a stable world order.”<sup>26</sup> But the fourth commandment is affirmed in a present world wherein the inceptive order was disrupted. However, the context is one a powerful divine intervention that resulted in the creation of a people through the exodus.<sup>27</sup> The Creator has the power to re-create also in the present through redemption. Israel was intended to find rest in a world depicted in paradisiacal terminology under messianic rulership (Is 11:6–9). For national Israel, this remained an unfulfilled objective. The NT indicates the future fulfillment of the divine intention: at the end of sin, God will recreate both human immortality (1 Cor 15:51–53) and the natural environment (Rev 21:1). The Sabbath encompasses all these temporal horizons, vibrating with the restoration of all things to their initial pure state.

The seventh component of the fourth commandment ( $B'_2$ ) continues the flow of the thought presented in  $B'_1$ : God “rested on the seventh day.” His rest transforms the day into Sabbath. This is the purpose hinted by the divine ownership present in  $B_2$ . It is a rest that completes creation by framing the space-time wherein the divine presence meets the human presence. The first human pair spent its first full day with the Creator, setting in motion the teleological function of the Sabbath. From Gen 2:1–3 onward, the divine desire of meeting human beings orients the Sabbath observance. The first rest becomes a model to be followed by all future generations.

The last two structural strands announce Sabbath as the fulfillment of human destiny: “Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day [ $A'_1$ ] and made it holy [ $A'_2$ ].” Both echo the Genesis narrative.  $A'_1$  recalls the fact that only living beings and the seventh day are blessed. The blessing embodies the power of productivity for the future; therefore, for Adam and Eve, the Sabbath is “pregnant with the promise of fruitfulness and the anticipation of abundance.”<sup>28</sup> Their future children are also included in the promise, given that the “divine blessing is not static, but continues to have special meaning onward from the time when it is first given.”<sup>29</sup>

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26. Niels-Erik A. Andreasen, *The Old Testament Sabbath: A Tradition-Historical Investigation*, SBLDS 7 (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1972), 196.

27. Bruce K. Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 294.

28. Jacques B. Doukhan, *Genesis*, Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2016), 70.

29. Strand, “The Sabbath,” 495.



The fruitfulness resulted from the blessing is closely related to another meaning: sanctification.

Element A<sub>2</sub> reminds of the only source of sanctification: divine presence. God's companionship makes the seventh day a blessing. The fact that the protological statement is repeated in the fourth commandment reveals several important aspects. First, the Genesis narrative has a teleological character, orienting the future history toward God's ideal. The Canaan rest is the destination of the exodus redemption. The new earth rest is the terminus of the new exodus from sin. Second, the Sabbath is understood as having a permanent nature, overarching all generations from Gen 2 to Exod 20 and beyond. As such, it becomes a symbol of the divine covenant with human beings. Third, the repetition emphasizes that the human presence can only be sanctified by God's presence. Sanctification is understood as the reflection of the *imago Dei* in human beings. The seventh day becomes the "epitome of the entire life of sanctification."<sup>30</sup> Fourth, the Sabbath fulfills a restorative role. The transformation of the humans' character after the divine image is preparatory for the restoration of their human body and environment. As such, the blessing of sanctification brings human beings to wholeness.

The rich teleological overtones of the Sabbath transform it in a day wherein "we have eternity breaking into the present."<sup>31</sup> All nine chiasmic elements of the fourth commandment outline the eschatological emblematic character the Sabbath has in the Bible. It interconnects the themes of rest, redemption, and restoration in the metanarrative of the great controversy. These three themes are essential for any systematic theology based on the *sola-tota-prima Scriptura* principle. As a result, the seventh day interacts with every doctrinal category of Adventist theology. This dynamic interconnectedness is presented in the next section.

### **Sabbath as the Eschatological Interconnect of the Adventist System of Beliefs**

Reflecting the biblical evidence regarding the teleological nature of the Sabbath, the Adventist theological system considers the Sabbath

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30. Davidson, *A Love Song for the Sabbath*, 89.

31. Sakae Kubo, *God Meets Man: A Theology of the Sabbath and the Second Advent* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1978), 68.

to be its eschatological symbol. As such, it is interconnected with all other doctrines. This part restructures the eschatological overtones presented in the previous one according to the major categories of systematic theology: the doctrines of God, humanity, salvation, church, and the last things. These are wrapped in two sections dealing with the relation between the beginning and the end as reflected by the Sabbath. In-between, the eschatological relation of the seventh day with each doctrinal category is analyzed.

## The End in the Beginning

The relationship between protology and eschatology “is a study of such sweeping scope and presuppositional import that it affects virtually any scriptural subject.”<sup>32</sup> Protology refers to the introduction of Scripture (Gen 1–3), while eschatology to its conclusion (Rev 20–22).<sup>33</sup> Although the term “eschatology” is used with reference to the end-time events, like second coming, millennium, final judgment, or new earth, the basic sense of it is “end.”<sup>34</sup> As presented in Genesis, the Sabbath has end-like features. Fulfilling God’s purpose, it marks the end of creation and its completion.

In the context of the fall, the seventh day represents the ideal which is projected into the future as the *telos* to be reached. It indicates the eschatological divine intentions that are encompassed within the beginning. As a result, the Sabbath is not just a memorial of creation, but accompanies redemption throughout history, orienting it toward restoration. From this privileged position, the seventh day contributes to a deeper understanding of God, humanity, salvation, church, and last things.

## God: Sabbath as Presence

God is the hidden meaning of the Sabbath; hence, it “yields

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32. Warren Austin Gage, *The Gospel of Genesis: Studies in Protology and Eschatology* (Winona Lake, IN: Carpenter Books, 1984), 3.

33. See Richard M. Davidson, “Back to the Beginning: Genesis 1–3 and the Theological Center of Scripture,” in *Christ, Salvation, and the Eschaton: Essays in Honor of Hans K. LaRondelle*, ed. Daniel Heinz, Jiří Moskala, and Peter M. Van Bemmelen (Berrien Springs, MI: Old Testament Department, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, 2009), 11–24.

34. The word “eschatology” comes from the combination of two Greek words: ἔσχατος and λόγος. Ἐσχατος refers to “last” in space, time, or value. BDAG, s.v. “ἔσχατος.”

theology in the strict sense of the term, i.e., provides us with a doctrine of God.”<sup>35</sup> Theology proper focuses on the reality of God, his attributes, and activities.<sup>36</sup> The seventh day interacts with each part, enriching their understanding. The central theological thrust of the Sabbath presents God as Creator, Redeemer, and Restorer. The creation theme is developed in this section, while redemption and restoration are discussed under the next heading.

Coming at the end of creation week, the seventh day is not situated “outside of the historical reality of Creation.”<sup>37</sup> The Genesis account is historical, and this evinces the temporal nature of the divine reality.<sup>38</sup> Given that such reality “is essentially temporal and historical,”<sup>39</sup> God’s actions presented in the Scripture are not fictional but real. The creatorship of God allows the biblical discourse about redemption and restoration.<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, the creation account presents God as transcendent, predating, and being independent of the created reality. The latter is contingent on the divine reality.<sup>41</sup> This is reflected by the fact that the seventh day is hallowed by him, signifying that God sanctifies humans. Human beings need the divine presence to continue to be what they are. Moreover, the “vertical relationship” purpose of the Sabbath seems to reflect a relational plurality within Godhead.<sup>42</sup> If the divine-human relation is not necessary but contingent, then *imago*

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35. Raoul Dederen, “Reflections on a Theology of the Sabbath,” in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, ed. Kenneth A. Strand (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1982), 296.

36. Fernando L. Canale, “Doctrine of God,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 105.

37. Doukhan, *Genesis*, 68.

38. Fernando Canale, “The Quest for the Biblical Ontological Ground of Christian Theology,” *JATS* 16, no. 1–2 (2005): 16–19.

39. Fernando L. Canale, *Back to Revelation-Inspiration: Searching for the Cognitive Foundation of Christian Theology in a Postmodern World* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2001), 38.

40. Gerhard F. Hasel and Michael G. Hasel, “The Unique Cosmology of Genesis 1 Against Ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian Parallels,” in *The Genesis Creation Account and Its Reverberations in the Old Testament*, ed. Gerald A. Klingbeil (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2015), 10.

41. John C. Peckham, *The Love of God: A Canonical Model* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 253.

42. Jacques B. Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story: Its Literary Structure*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series 5 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1978), 218.

*Dei* reveals that God is a relational being within his nature. This relational aspect is suggested by the companionship time offered through the Sabbath. Fellowship involves harmony between God and human beings. This closeness is a reflection of God's oneness. Likewise, the teleological nature of the seventh day reveals the unitary purpose of the three divine beings involved in the creation of the world: Father (Rev 4:11), Son (Col 1:16), and the Divine Spirit (Gen 1:2).

By creating rest in the space of the seventh day to meet human beings, God presents himself as immanent. He chooses to dwell not in or through creation but with creation. The Sabbath—like the sanctuary and incarnation—is a revelation of a “Person who relates with men and women as He dwells with them throughout and within the flow of human history.”<sup>43</sup>

God's presence is best described by the concept of love. In creation, God unveils his love. Five characteristics describe this revelation of love.<sup>44</sup> First, God chooses to rest, even though he does not need it (Isa 40:28): love is volitional. Second, God comes to meet human beings and he is displeased when they don't show up (Ezek 20:13, 21). He is not impassible: his love appraises human interaction (Neh 13:22). Third, God is emotionally involved in restoring the lost meaning of the Sabbath: his love is emotional (Mark 3:1–6). Fourth, the seventh day, introduced as an unconditional gift, becomes a condition of maintaining the covenant between God and human beings (Exod 31:13–16). This reflects the foreconditional aspect of divine love. Fifth, God's rest is an invitation to humans. As such, it indicates that God's love is ideally reciprocal, far removed from any rigid determinism (Isa 56:4).

In addition to the attributes of transcendence, immanence, and divine love, the Bible also reveals divine immutability.<sup>45</sup> God does not abrogate or change the Sabbath when sin invades his creation or when Jesus dies on the cross. The fact that God intervenes throughout biblical history to remind humankind of the Sabbath is significant. The permanence of the seventh-day observance and its important role in the end-time events shows that God is involved in a controversy wherein his faithfulness is at stake.<sup>46</sup> This

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43. Canale, “Doctrine of God,” 118.

44. These five traits are adapted from Peckham, *The Love of God*, 250.

45. For a broader discussion of these attributes, see Canale, “Doctrine of God,” 108–113.

46. Psalm 92:2 indicates the connection between God's faithfulness (אֱמוּנָה)

controversy generated a “fundamental crisis of humanity in relation to its Creator.”<sup>47</sup> The Sabbath specifically proclaims his reign.<sup>48</sup> It also evinces divine foreknowledge and predestination.<sup>49</sup> God was not surprised by the fall. The existence of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil indicates the divine intention of solving the sin problem within the created world. This means that the Sabbath was designed with a latent potential to counteract the effects of sin. In subsequent history, God acts through the Sabbath to redeem and restore his creation.

The seventh day reveals the Creator’s presence in the world. This theological idea sums up well the interaction between the Sabbath and the doctrine of God. The creation week is oriented by God toward rest. As a result, the seventh day is inseparable from its eschatological endowments. Although transcendent, God meets human beings in his immanence. The purpose of this meeting is to reflect in humanity the relational oneness of God: *imago Dei*. The creation of the *imago Dei* theme runs throughout the Bible. It functions as an ideal of perfection, a background of redemption, and a model for future restoration. As a result, the Sabbath fulfills humanity’s destiny.

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and the Sabbath, while Ps 89 connects God’s faithfulness with a cosmic controversy. The word אֱמוּנָה appears 49 times in the OT, and 22 times in the Psalms. Emphasizing the reliability of God’s rule, אֱמוּנָה appears as a special concern of the heavenly council in Ps 89. It is the purpose of this psalm to proclaim God’s faithfulness (v. 1) both in the human realm (v. 24) and in the heavenly one (v. 5). God’s trustworthiness is presented in a warfare context (v. 10). As a ruler, God does not act arbitrarily. When confronting evil, he is self-consistent. God cannot but act in accordance with the principles of justice. His purpose is to establish his trustworthy character in heaven (v. 2). But trustworthiness is a relational concept in Ps 89. Hence, the members of the divine council are presented as observing God’s actions and rejoicing in finding righteousness and justice as “foundation of your [God’s] throne” (v. 14).

47. Mathilde Frey, “The Theological Concept of the Sabbath in the Book of Revelation,” in *For You Have Strengthened Me: Biblical and Theological Studies in Honor of Gerhard Pfandl in Celebration of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Martin T. Pröbstle, Gerald A. Klingbeil, and Martin G. Klingbeil (St. Peter am Hart, Austria: Seminar Schloss Bogenhofen, 2007), 239.

48. Richard Rice, *Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1997), 410.

49. Foreknowledge is understood here as “to God’s cognitive activity regarding the world in general and free human actions in particular”, while predestination “refers to God’s volitive activity (Eph. 1:5, 9, 11) in deciding the basic components and structure required to accomplish the redemption of humankind (1 Cor. 2:7).” Canale, “Doctrine of God,” 115.

## Humanity: Sabbath as Fulfillment

Relationships stand both in the center of the Sabbath and in the center of anthropology.<sup>50</sup> The seventh day is closely intertwined with human beings. A close analysis shows that the day of rest embodies the essential features of the reality of human beings' existence and their activities in relation to God, to themselves, to others, and nature. As a reminder of creation, the Sabbath evinces human createdness. In its original state, humanity was imprinted with the image of the Maker. This image was "both concrete (outward/physical resemblance) and abstract (inward/spiritual/mental/moral resemblance) . . . indicating the person as a whole."<sup>51</sup> In addition to the individual aspect of the human being, the relational facet of what it means to be human also reflects the *imago Dei*.<sup>52</sup>

The seventh day hints at all of these aspects. Being a day for the benefit of humanity (Mark 2:27), the Sabbath is a concrete period of time to be observed by concrete, temporal human beings. Therefore, it runs against the prevalent notion of the natural immortality of being. Moreover, this 24-hour period creates the context for the divine-human meeting that benefits humanity inwardly. In the prelapsarian state, the human being is oriented toward the purpose of the Sabbath: a permanent growth in the divine resemblance.

The second anthropological implication of the Sabbath refers to human oneness. The name "Adam" refers to a collective, not an individual, reflecting the unity of humankind.<sup>53</sup> As God is one, so the human family forms a whole. Divine oneness and human oneness meet on Sabbath to form the divinely intended togetherness. The fact that marriage and Sabbath are closely connected in the creation

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50. "Biblical anthropology is based primarily upon the concept of relationships." Artur A. Stele and Clinton Wahlen, "Biblical Anthropology: Introduction and Challenges," in "What Are Human Beings That You Remember Them?": *Proceedings of the Third International Bible Conference Nof Ginosar and Jerusalem, June 11–21, 2012*, ed. Clinton Wahlen (Silver Springs, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2015), 2.

51. Richard M. Davidson, "The Nature of the Human Being from the Beginning: Genesis 1–11," in *What Are Human Beings*, 18.

52. As Stanley J. Grenz notes, the human relational self is analogous to the divine intra-Trinitarian relationality. For details, see Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei*, The Matrix of Christian Theology (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 294.

53. Aecio E. Cairus, "The Doctrine of Man," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 209.

narrative reveals the covenantal nature of this relationship.<sup>54</sup> Also, it echoes the characteristics of divine love mentioned above. As the effigy of Creator, the human family reflects love inwardly and outwardly. The intimate sexual union is more than a physical union. It has spiritual dimensions that become paradigmatic for the spiritual divine reality.<sup>55</sup> In its outward manifestation, love expresses social freedom and equality, together with environmental responsibility. Only the latter is directly expressed in the creation narrative (Gen 1:26–30). Freeness and equalness, which were intrinsic before the fall, demand an extrinsic expression after sin marred humanity.

In the postlapsarian state of humanity, the Sabbath does not lose its meaning. Through its latent potential, it functions as a redeeming and restorative agent. Therefore, as a “sign of what every other day ought to be,”<sup>56</sup> it orients human life toward God’s ideal. With its eschatological flavor, the seventh day connects the past with the future outlining humanity as inclusive familial togetherness. On this day, employer and employee, professor and student, black and white, rich and poor, all stand on level ground, being reminded that they have equal value before their Creator. The Sabbath does not recognize the artificial barriers mounted by vanity or egotism. All humans have the same rights. As the Sabbath comes weekly for everybody as a gift, it carries the meaning of equal freedom for each human being.

Like the tree of the knowledge of good and evil once stood in the midst of Eden pointing to the One that delimits good from evil, the seventh day indicates the same Person who instructs the human beings of their limits.<sup>57</sup> As a result, the day of rest functions also as a barrier against accumulation. Instead of avarice, it teaches benevolence. As God gave himself in human time, the Sabbath teaches human beings to give themselves to others also in time.<sup>58</sup>

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54. Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story*, 222.

55. Zoltán Szalos-Farkas, “Spirituality of Human Sexuality: A Theological and Anthropological Perspective,” in *Marriage: Biblical and Theological Aspects*, ed. Ekkehardt Mueller and Elias Brasil De Souza, Biblical Research Institute Studies in Biblical Ethics 1 (Silver Springs, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2015), 125.

56. Dederen, “Reflections on a Theology of the Sabbath,” 301.

57. For a theological discussion about the two trees in the Garden, see Sigve K. Tonstad, “The Message of the Trees in the Midst of the Garden,” *JATS* 19, no. 1–2 (2008): 82–97. For the relation between temptation and Sabbath, see Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning*, 43–59.

58. Andreassen, *The Christian Use of Time*, 108.

Recognizing the severe rupture between human beings and their entrusted natural dominion, the imperative of the seventh day strives to rouse humankind from its egocentric slumber. Nowadays, human cupidity is fed not only by egoism but also by the theory of evolution. Replacing God with blind forces, evolutionism transforms creation into a commodity that humanity can dispose of.<sup>59</sup> The Sabbath reminds humankind of the responsible care for creation as a bearer of *imago Dei*. Its ecological concerns are based on the Genesis narrative and are oriented toward the future restoration of all things.

The major elements that circumscribe human identity are embodied in the seventh day: createdness, temporality, fellowship, love, freedom, equality, altruism, care, and responsibility. All were innate within the pre-fall human beings, indicating Sabbath as the day which fulfills humanity's destiny. After the fall, even if the divine resemblance is partially present, these determinants have to be acquired. To make this possible, God confers Sabbath a redemptive symbolism. By observing it, human beings not only celebrate their salvation but join a resistance movement against the contending masters.

### Salvation: Sabbath as Resistance

The Bible reveals that the great controversy between Christ and Satan, good and evil, centers on God's character expressed as divine law.<sup>60</sup> When the Creator adapted this law to the earthly context, the Sabbath was placed in its center, as an imprint of his character. Indicating not only the core values of the Godhead but also his restorative activities, the seventh day presents God as one who "takes the initiative. He creates, He acts, He gives, He provides, He invites, He blesses, He sanctifies."<sup>61</sup> God's initiative extends beyond protology. Once sin disrupts his creation, God becomes the Redeemer. The OT exodus, together with the new exodus inaugurated through Christ,

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59. For a good refutation of the theory of evolution, see Leonard Brand and Arthur Chadwick, *Faith, Reason, and Earth History: A Paradigm of Earth and Biological Origins by Intelligent Design*, 3rd ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2016). For a theological evaluation of evolutionism, see Fernando L. Canale, *Creation, Evolution, and Theology: The Role of Method in Theological Accommodation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Litotech, 2005), 124–178; Gulley, *Creation, Christ, Salvation*, 169–390.

60. Frank B. Holbrook, "The Great Controversy," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 973–974.

61. Kubo, *God Meets Man*, 40.



is memorialized through the seventh day. The Sabbath interacts with salvation in the latter's past, present, and future aspects, both at individual and collective levels. As such, it is a paradigm of God's resistance against the outspread sin.

In the Exodus narrative, the seventh day offers hints of the theological concept of justification. In the midst of human helplessness, God freely intervenes to provide what is necessary to support life. His grace precedes any human action. As such, it conveys forgiveness and the opportunity to be in the right relationship with God again.<sup>62</sup> But God does not have only physical life in view. He aims at an internal transformation, one that enables humanity to trust again in his Maker. Therefore, the Sabbath becomes indicative of conversion from self-dependence to divine-dependence. Only passing through this conversion, as through the waters of the Red Sea, the human being can trust in God's protective care and leadership. Ceasing from their works, human beings accept God's work of inner transformation. The Sabbath thus signifies sanctification. God bestows his holiness on human beings. The restoration of *imago Dei* leads human beings to become *imitatores Dei*.<sup>63</sup> The growth in Christ feeds on Sabbath observance. In the process of character development, Sabbath-keeping "forms the knower through habituation."<sup>64</sup>

The individual subjective acceptance is made possible only through the redemptive rest of Jesus on the Holy Saturday. His life, death, and resurrection offer the universal objective possibility for each human being to enter God's future rest by accepting the present rest. While God's salvific work is performed every day for those accepting it, the day of rest marks the human faith in his work. The seventh day is the supreme day for honoring God.<sup>65</sup>

Once sanctification begins, the seventh day turns into the mark of God's earthly resistance movement.<sup>66</sup> It is a moral resistance

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62. Blazen considers (1) a right relationship with God and (2) forgiveness as part of the essential meaning of justification. See Ivan T. Blazen, "Salvation," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 280–282.

63. This is taken from the Vulgate version of Eph 5:1, "estote ergo imitatores Dei sicut filii carissimi" ["therefore you shall be imitators of God as most beloved sons"].

64. Dru Johnson, *Knowledge by Ritual: A Biblical Prolegomenon to Sacramental Theology* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 152.

65. Davidson, *A Love Song for the Sabbath*, 100.

66. The imagery of resistance is intentionally chosen. For many Sabbath-keepers, this day became the battleground whether in the army, at work, or during wartime. See, for example, Susi Hasel Mundy and Maylan Schurch, *A Thousand Shall*

against the “the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience” (Eph 2:2). Made fruitful through God’s blessing, the Christian life is resisting the occupation force by manifesting the yield of the Holy Spirit. “The sons of disobedience” fill their time with work, their work with accumulation, their accumulation with egocentrism, and their egocentrism with vanity. On the other hand, those sanctified “by the Spirit and belief in the truth” (2 Thes 2:13) orient their time toward rest, their rest toward compassion, their compassion toward fellowship, and their fellowship toward Christian love. For the disobedient, the Sabbath acts like a barrier. For the obedient, it functions as a blessing and sanctification. While Christ intercedes in the heavenly sanctuary, his people on earth are transformed from redeemed subjects into redeeming agents. As part of God’s resistance movement, they form a community that reflects God’s reinstatement: the church. The seventh day is identified with restoration.

### Church: Sabbath as Restoration

Whether in the Old or the NT, “where there are people of God, there is the church.”<sup>67</sup> And where human beings are, the Sabbath is already there. It unites the church both in worship and in mission.<sup>68</sup>

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*Fall: The Electrifying Story of a Soldier and His Family Who Dared to Practice Their Faith in Hitler’s Germany* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2001); Doru Tarita and Kara Kerbs, *A Way of Escape* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2007).

67. Jiří Moskala, “The Concept and Notion of the Church in the Pentateuch,” in *For You Have Strengthened Me*, 4.

68. Recently, the Adventist ecclesiology came under scrutiny. For a bibliographical review of the period between 1995–2004, see Gerald A. Klingbeil, “Ecclesiology in Seventh-day Adventist Theological Research, 1995–2004: A Brief Introduction and Bibliographical Guide,” *AUSS* 43, no. 1 (2005): 11–29. For other studies after 2004, see, among others, Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, ed., *Toward a Theology of the Remnant: An Adventist Ecclesiastical Perspective*, Biblical Research Institute Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology 1 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009); Reinder Bruinsma, *The Body of Christ: A Biblical Understanding of the Church* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2009); Fernando L. Canale, “The Eclipse of Scripture and the Protestantization of the Adventist Mind: Part 1: The Assumed Compatibility of Adventism with Evangelical Theology and Ministerial Practices,” *JATS* 21, no. 1–2 (2010): 133–165; Fernando Canale, “The Eclipse of Scripture and the Protestantization of the Adventist Mind: Part 2: From the Evangelical Gospel to Culture,” *JATS* 22, no. 1 (2011): 102–133; Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, ed., *Message, Mission, and Unity of the Church*, Biblical Research Institute Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology 1 (Silver Springs, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2013); Kwabena Donkor, “The Catholicity of the Church and Adventist Ecclesiology,” *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary (JAAS)* 17, no. 1 (2014): 17–36;

The seventh day reveals that unity cannot be imposed or forced on people. It becomes a reality when people come together to meet their Creator. In God's presence, human beings are transformed and sanctified. They start to reflect the oneness that characterized the first day of rest. Because unity is inherent in the nature of the Sabbath, once humans start to observe it, they begin to experience the invisible power of the Spirit that draws them together. As a result, they start worshipping the Lord of the seventh day. The Sabbath becomes a day of communal worship.

Resting on Sabbath, the worshippers confess that they accept the Scripture as authoritative for their religious practice. From the individual level, the seventh day moves to the collective one, indicating conversion to the dependence on God. As a visible sign of obedience, the Sabbath becomes a trigger for exploring other uncharted doctrines and positive behaviors. Once an individual rests on Sabbath, his family is influenced. Once a family observes the day of rest, the entire neighborhood is impacted. Once a neighborhood celebrates the Sabbath, the entire community is transformed.

Accepting God's word as authoritative, the church recognizes the reality and the identity of God. Therefore, it celebrates creation, redemption, and restoration. Uniting people in worship, the seventh day confesses that there is only one body and a sole head of the Church: Jesus Christ (Col 1:18). As his body, the church collectively imitates his example of service, through various ministries, including healing, teaching, and preaching. The various spiritual gifts received by men and women are used within the church and through the church for others. As a result, wherever the Sabbatarian church is, social life is protected, nurtured, and oriented toward its Source. By offering itself

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Ekkehardt Mueller, "The Holiness of the Church," *JAAS* 17, no. 1 (2014): 37–65; Fernando Canale, *Vision and Mission: How a Theological Vision Drives the Mission of the Emerging Remnant* (North Charleston, SC: Fernando Canale, 2015); Jacques Doukhan, "The Tension of Seventh-day Adventist Identity: An Existential and Eschatological Perspective," *JATS* 26, no. 1 (2015): 29–37; Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, ed., *Worship, Ministry, and the Authority of the Church*, Biblical Research Institute Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology 3 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2016); Jean-Claude Verrecchia, ed., *Ecclesia Reformata, Semper Reformanda: Proceedings of the European Theology Teachers' Convention; Newbold College of Higher Education, 25–28 March 2015* (Bracknell, Berkshire, UK: Newbold Academic Press, 2016); Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 4, *The Church and the Last Things* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2016).

in time, the church restores fellow human beings physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and socially.

The spirit of the Sabbath cannot be “dissociated from the seventh day.”<sup>69</sup> While having its locus on this day, the rest it proclaims extends beyond a 24-hour period. The strong ethical overtones contained as in a nutshell in the meaning of the Sabbath impact every sphere of life: spiritual and physical, personal, and social.<sup>70</sup> From a biblical point of view, sanctification is not restricted to the spiritual sphere. As a day of sanctification, the Sabbath restores and preserves the physical strength. But nobody can worship God exhausted. Having the Sabbath as the goal of the week, human beings batch their energy and effort.<sup>71</sup> The work becomes characterized by self-discipline and a balanced attitude.<sup>72</sup> By setting a temporal barrier to labor, the day of rest teaches temperance in all other aspects.<sup>73</sup> Not only what is detrimental for health should be avoided, but also the harmful excess of what is good.<sup>74</sup>

The example of Jesus shows that physical healing on the seventh day is part of God’s intention. In accordance with the divine model, the church fosters “healthful living among its members as well as others whom it may reach”<sup>75</sup> throughout the entire week. In addition, healthfulness extends to the public square. Here the Sabbath orients ethical behavior toward a restoration of the Edenic ideal. For church members, business relations are characterized by fairness and equity. They are concerned with social justice and civic responsibility while maintaining their faithfulness to God.<sup>76</sup>

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69. Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning*, 504.

70. For a detailed discussion about the intersection between ethics and these spheres, see Miroslav M. Kiš, “Christian Lifestyle and Behavior,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 676–715.

71. Andreasen states that Sabbath “determines all time, even the time for work by setting limits for it and placing goals before it.” Andreasen, *The Christian Use of Time*, 41.

72. Dederen, “Reflections on a Theology of the Sabbath,” 301.

73. For an insightful ethical treatment of other aspects of personal life, see Kiš, “Christian Lifestyle and Behavior,” 706–715.

74. *Ibid.*, 688.

75. Charles E. Bradford, “Stewardship,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 669.

76. Kiš, “Christian Lifestyle and Behavior,” 699–703.

Facilitating the stewardship of time, the Sabbath imparts knowledge to other stewardship concerns.<sup>77</sup> Of special interest is the environment, which is directly related to the seventh day. The church treats creation not like a demesne or goddess, but as a divinely entrusted gift. As a result, its members oppose greed and wastefulness, supporting environmental care and protection. For them, “the stewardship principle becomes more than intellectual assent to doctrinal formulation; it becomes something to be lived out, shared, experienced.”<sup>78</sup> As a result, the Sabbath orients ethics to accept God’s rule.<sup>79</sup>

Uniting the praxis of mission with the mission of proclamation, the day of rest functions as the insignia of Adventism. It gathers believers into a remnant-church and sends them to proclaim the Sabbath as a part of God’s final message to the world. Hence, it connects the church with the present, through its temporal character, but also with the future given its eschatological character.<sup>80</sup> But the future announces a final battle for human allegiance. As a sign of God’s present and hereafter restoration, the seventh day becomes a marker of loyalty.

### End: Sabbath as Loyalty

While it is true that the Sabbath cannot be fully proclaimed without being lived, it is also true that it cannot be lived without being proclaimed.<sup>81</sup> Understood as the time wherein God’s presence fulfills humankind’s destiny, the seventh day is part of the divine-human resistance movement. As such, it aims to restore God’s rulership in the hearts of men and women in the present. Accepting the “seal of creatorship,”<sup>82</sup> they become the remnant waiting for the final restoration.

Directly alluded in a threefold angelic message (Rev 14:6–12), the ecclesiological proclamation of the Sabbath is not a serene mission. The Bible portrays it as a battle for human allegiance that intensifies

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77. Bradford includes here finances, environment, health, time, family, talents and abilities, and citizenship. Bradford, “Stewardship,” 665–671.

78. *Ibid.*, 667–668, 651.

79. Dederen, “Reflections on a Theology of the Sabbath,” 302.

80. Doukhan, “The Tension of Seventh-day Adventist Identity,” 29.

81. While enlarged here, much of the description of this section is dependent upon Petre, “The Three Angels’ Messages as the Teleological Principle”.

82. Davidson, *A Love Song for the Sabbath*, 79.

toward the end of time (Rev 12–14).<sup>83</sup> Satan, the malefic force behind the fall coup, identifies his followers with his brand (Rev 13:16–17). Imitating God’s seal of ownership, this apocalyptic imprint designates the opposing values of the usurper. The Sabbath is a specific period of time; the other is also a specific period, prophetically and historically identified with Sunday.<sup>84</sup> The seventh day is a reminder of God’s authority as Creator; the mark is a reminder of the rebel’s authority. God’s day indicates freedom, equality, and responsibility; the beast’s imprint reveals coercion, inequity, and carelessness. The day of rest redeems and restores; the sign of unrest enslaves and crushes. One reflects love whereas the other hate. Honoring the Sabbath in the midst of a “nearly universal disregard of the Sabbath among contemporary Christians”<sup>85</sup> cannot avoid confrontation.

By proclaiming the “imposing portfolio of meanings”<sup>86</sup> embodied in the Sabbath, the remnant church expresses its faithfulness in God.<sup>87</sup> The seventh day is a sign of allegiance, revealing human loyalty. The Sabbath recognizes “God as Creator and our willingness to do what He says for His sake alone.”<sup>88</sup> The human willingness to observe the seventh day results from the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. Bearing resemblance to Jesus, the “exact imprint [Gk. *χαρακτήρ*]” of the divine nature (Heb 1:3), the remnant

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83. The end-time is understood as the period of time just before the second coming. Holbrook, “The Great Controversy,” 991. As such, is an eschatological time. Gerhard Pfandl, “Daniel’s ‘Time of the End,’” *JATS* 7, no. 1 (1996), 148. It starts after 1798 AD. William H. Shea, *Daniel 7–12: Prophecies of the End Time*, The Abundant Bible Amplifier (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1996), 218–219. This time is also associated with judgment. Gerhard F. Hasel, “Divine Judgment,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 833–840.

84. For a detailed study on Sunday as the mark of the beast, see C. Mervyn Maxwell, “The Mark of the Beast,” in *Symposium on Revelation: Exegetical and General Studies; Book 2*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 7 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992).

85. Strand, “The Sabbath,” 513.

86. Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning*, 27.

87. For the ecclesiological concept of “remnant” in the Adventist understanding, see Hans K. LaRondelle, “The Remnant and the Three Angels’ Messages,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*; Rodriguez, ed., *Toward a Theology of the Remnant*; Fernando Canale, “On Being the Remnant,” *JATS* 24, no. 1 (2013): 127–174; Stefan Höschele, “The Remnant Concept in Early Adventism: From Apocalyptic Antisectarianism to an Eschatological Denominational Ecclesiology,” *AUSS* 51, no. 2 (2013): 267–300.

88. Davidson, *A Love Song for the Sabbath*, 79.

confesses Christ's faithfulness. As a result, the Sabbath observance becomes a means of restoring God's reputation in the great controversy.<sup>89</sup>

The Sabbath also reveals divine loyalty. The permanence of Sabbath until the second coming suggests this in several ways. God remains trustworthy, in the sense that he does not change the divine law to accommodate sin. As a result, God perseveres in pursuing the cosmic plan of salvation. The climax of his eternal covenant is the incarnation. Through Christ, the Redeemer of humankind, God manifests his steadfast love.

Understood as a revelation of God's character, the Sabbath is extremely important in the end-time. The final eschatological battle between good and evil is fought around the problem of worship.<sup>90</sup> The seventh day indicates the worship given to the Creator. As with the marital relation, the covenantal relationship symbolized by the Sabbath is exclusive. One cannot serve God and his adversary. Therefore, each human being must choose whom to worship. The observance of the seventh day becomes the visible litmus test of the end times.<sup>91</sup>

Up to the second coming, the Sabbath fulfills its eschatological role. It orients human allegiance toward God through its rich symbolism. By remembering creation, it invites humanity to worship the Creator. By celebrating redemption, it entreats human beings to receive their Savior. By offering restoration, it exhorts men and women to enter God's everlasting rest. When the *imago Dei* is reflected in them, God's people can rest in faith. Even if they go through the darkest hour of history, they have the promise of restoration.

## The Beginning in the End

With the second coming of Jesus, the redemption signified by the seventh day begins. The passive rest of the dead saints and the persecuted rest of the living saints is transformed through resurrection and glorification in an effectual everlasting rest. The glorified *imitatores Dei* are taken to heaven for the long period of the millennium. While they are actively involved in understanding God's dealings with

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89. For a detailed discussion about divine reputation in connection with Christ's faithfulness, see Sigve K. Tonstad, *Saving God's Reputation: The Theological Function of Pistis Iesou in the Cosmic Narratives of Revelation*, ed. Mark Goodacre, LNTS 337 (London: Bloomsbury, 2006).

90. Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 2nd ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 455.

91. Davidson, *A Love Song for the Sabbath*, 65.

humanity throughout history, the earth will rest for a millennium.<sup>92</sup>

After the millennium, the final judgment takes place. An important criterion for judgment is the observance of the time and the spirit of the Sabbath. The spirit of the Sabbath as related to judgment can be recognized in Matt 25:41–45 in its various aspects: equality, responsibility, care, fellowship, altruism, and love. The observance of the temporal Sabbath as the mark of loyalty is particularly significant for the last generation of humankind. The refusal of this emblem leads to eternal destruction (Rev 14:9–11).

The redemption and the restoration reach their full completion with the re-creation of the earth. The meaning of the first Sabbath is fully disclosed in the dwelling of God with his people (Rev 21:3). The meeting between the Creator and the human beings at the beginning of humankind's history is found at its end. The presence of the beginning in the end transforms the end into a new beginning. Throughout eternity (Isa 66:22–23), Sabbath will remain a memorial of creation, redemption, and restoration.

### Conclusions

The meaning of the Sabbath has rich eschatological dimensions in the Bible. Indicating the initial teleology of creation, the seventh day represents a divine imperative in the postlapsarian world. Based on the Genesis narrative, the imperative is rooted in God's desire to reflect his image in human beings. The *imago Dei* emerges within the temporal Sabbath. This day is created by setting limits on time. It becomes actual for human beings when they also rest on the seventh day. In addition, by setting a temporal limit to work, the day of rest points to the human finiteness and the divine infiniteness. The Creator is able to re-create the entire world. But first, through a new exodus, he redeems it. The process of restoration within individual hearts draws people together, forming a sanctified community with physical, spiritual, social, and environmental awareness. With this portfolio of meanings, the Sabbath becomes the eschatological symbol of loyalty toward God. It does not only orient the week toward completion but the whole human history toward restoration. The themes of rest, redemption, and restoration are interconnected in the grand metanarrative of the Bible.

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92. Eric Claude Webster, "The Millennium," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 934.



Recognizing this wealth of meaning, the Adventist theology gives the Sabbath a central place among its doctrines. Using a physiological metaphor, it functions as the neural network of the body of beliefs. As such, it delivers eschatological energy to each major doctrinal category within the system: theology proper, anthropology, soteriology, ecclesiology, and eschatology. The seventh day reveals the Creator's presence in the world. With its spiritual fruitfulness, it fulfills the deepest longings of human beings. It transforms them into God's agents of a resistance movement against the rulership of a usurper. Grouped in a body called "church," they worship God on his day of rest. But the Sabbath does not remain inside the church. Acting as one of the five senses of the Adventist system, it connects the theoretical aspects with the practical ones. Church members work together toward a restoration that starts with the spiritual sphere and extends toward the physical, the social, and environmental rehabilitation. This effort clashes with the spirit of the adversary and culminates in a final battle wherein the Sabbath is the mark of divine and human loyalty.

Interconnecting all these doctrinal categories, the Sabbath is the eschatological symbol of the Adventist theology. As the center of the teleological principle of the system, represented by the three angel's messages, the seventh day has a missiological outlook. It distills the ecclesiological *raison d'être*, becoming an indispensable organic part of the church's identity.

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