

Article

The Converging of the Ways?—What Sabbath Practice Can Teach Us about Jewish-Christian and Intra-Religious Relations Today

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Abstract: Given the tenuous relationship Christians have had with Jews over the centuries, not to mention division among Christianity on points of doctrine and practice, a contemporary examination of the Sabbath could be an opportunity to bring Jews and Christians into further dialogue with each other, not on the basis of a shared written text, but rather the living texts of religious experience. However, a review of the literature reveals a scarcity of empirical research on the Sabbath, especially how religious professionals practice Sabbath as exemplars in their spheres of influence. In this study, I, therefore, offer a comparative description of my findings with respect to two practical theological studies I conducted on Shabbat/Sabbath practice, one with American pulpit rabbis and the other Seventh-day Adventist pastors. As a practical theological project, I offer a theological reflection of the data, followed by implications for theological (re)construction and revised praxis for the Church and Jewish-Christian relations.

Keywords: interreligious education; Jewish-Christian relations; Jewish practice; practical theology; Sabbath; Seventh-day Adventist

1. Introduction

The reality of living in a post-Shoah world demands that Christianity engage in an appraisal of its own theology and practice. It also invites Christianity to return to its Jewish roots, which has happily resulted in a whole genre of literature known as post-Shoah theology and the “New Perspective” (NP) on Paul in biblical studies, not to mention revised Roman Catholic and Protestant liturgies, among others. Another outgrowth of this *ressourcement*, has been a revitalization of certain practices, such as the Sabbath and its viability, and even necessity, for Christians today. This, too, has resulted in a variety of significant studies (Bass 1997; Brueggemann 2014; Buchanan 2006; Dawn 1989; Muller 2000; Wirzba 2006).

However, a return to the Jewish roots of the Sabbath for a better understanding of its Christian practice is only one part of the story. Is there not also room for learning from Christians who embody a Sabbath way of life? I am speaking primarily of the 21 million Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Christians who observe the Sabbath every week as a twenty-four period of time from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, thus following the Jewish calendar in which a day begins and ends at sunset. Adventists have been practicing Sabbath in this way for over 150 years.

When examining the aforementioned Christian publications on the Sabbath, as well as many others, there are virtually no references to Seventh-day Adventists or a Seventh-day Adventist perspective, which begs the question as to why. This is not to say SDA scholars and theologians have refrained from publishing on the subject. Doukhan (2002a, 2002b), Davidson (1988, 2010), and Tonstad (2009) are three prominent figures who have done notable work along these lines. In addition to advancing a Christian theology of the Sabbath, all three draw from scripture, Jewish texts, and liturgical resources, as well

as their own Jewish Shabbat encounters, in order to highlight how symbols, food, music, and ritual portray the potential beauty, joy, and hope contained in a Jewish Shabbat experience.

Regardless of the potential contributions from both Jewish and SDA perspectives, what has been lacking in the research is a substantial investigation of the Sabbath as an *embodied* practice. It is not a detached object found in a text devoid of lived experience. It is perhaps most importantly experientially known. After a methodological review of the literature, I found little to no empirical studies on how Jews practice Shabbat (Marks et al. 2018), and more importantly for this project, no empirical studies conducted on how rabbis practice Shabbat. Hoge (2011), writing in *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, sums it up well: “Sociological studies on Jewish rabbis is scant. Not many studies have been published. The main topics of research involving rabbis have been their views of interfaith marriage, outreach, and Jewish identity” (590). As for the Christian side of the equation, with the exception of a substantial mixed methods study of SDAs in 51 countries by Colón (2003, 2008), as well as a qualitative study I conducted on how SDA clergy practice and experience the Sabbath (Carter 2013), the results are the same: There are virtually no empirical studies of Christian clergy, representing a specific denomination or sect, practicing Sabbath as a twenty-four-hour period of time. In view of this gap in the research, I suggest that if Christians are serious in learning about the Sabbath and how it is lived, what is needed is the incorporation of empirical research into Christian theological reflection—a practical theological examination of the Sabbath.

Failure to ground a Christian application of Jewish Shabbat practices in the reality of contemporary lived Judaism could prove disastrous given the history of anti-Judaism, persecution, supersessionist theology, and proselytization. After all, the Sabbath has been a point of contention in a strained relationship between Jews and Christians since the inception of the Christian Church. This strain eventually resulted in a “parting of the ways” between the two religions, and later to the Church’s ideological influence in pogroms and eventually the extermination of Jews in WWII (Dunn 2006; Doukhan 2002a, 2002b; Tonstad 2009). Moreover, failure to learn from practitioners from one’s own religious tradition, such as Christians gleaned what they can from Seventh-day Adventist Sabbath practice, reveals, at best, an intra-religious blind spot that weakens the integrity of any Christian-initiated inter-religious endeavor and potentially Jewish-Christian relations itself.

In what follows, I shall offer a comparative description of my findings with respect to two practical theological studies I conducted on Sabbath practice, one with American pulpit rabbis and the other with Seventh-day Adventist pastors. I would also like to enfold Colón’s mixed-methods study into my analysis, for its broad, international scope. As a practical theological project, I would then like to offer a theological reflection of the data, followed by implications for theological (re)construction and revised praxis. Given the tenuous relationship Christians have had with Jews over the years, not to mention fellow Christians, a contemporary examination of the Sabbath in this way could be an opportunity to bring Jews and Christians into further dialogue, not on the basis of a shared written text, but rather the living texts of religious experience. Perhaps this could lead, in some small way, to a “converging of the ways”. What has been equally troubling are the ruptured relationships among Christians over any number of beliefs and practices. In this regard, it is my aim to foreground one particular point of contention among Christians, namely the Sabbath and its practice, as a way to stimulate further conversation and intra-religious learning.

2. Research Methodology and Design

To address the research gap, I conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with Jewish rabbis and SDA pastors in an attempt to mine the depths of their experience. Hence, the problem and central question that guided these studies was: How do American pulpit rabbis and Seventh-day Adventist

pastors practice and experience Shabbat/Sabbath?¹ One primary goal was to gain a thick, in-depth description of a phenomenon. I do not intend to generalize my findings to Jewish rabbis or Adventist pastors as a whole. In other words, the report of my findings does not speak for each Jewish movement as a whole, it only reflects how these particular rabbis articulate their own experience and understanding of Shabbat and its practice. Participants for this study were selected through a purposive, criteria-based process, where my hope was to find the greatest degree of difference. I, therefore, chose rabbis and pastors with a range of experience, leaders of small and large congregations, and, in the case of rabbis, clergy across the spectrum of American Judaism: Hasidic, Modern Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, and Renewal. Thus, six male rabbis and five male pastors were selected on the basis of two reasons.

The reason for selecting clergy as the primary participants was two-fold. The first was based on a simple hypothesis that clergy currently serving in a congregation represented the most practice-rich sample for Shabbat/Sabbath experiences as they are exemplars of their faith. As for selecting SDA pastors, they represent the largest Christian denomination observing the Sabbath as an entire day, and, as such, are, therefore, unique practitioners of the Sabbath among Christian clergy. Secondly, I wanted to utilize a similar research methodology and purposive sample for comparative purposes (Carter 2013, 2015b). Any future project of a similar nature would most certainly need to expand my initial sample to include female clergy and religious professionals from other Christian denominations, such as the Seventh Day Baptist and Church of God (Seventh Day). This will undoubtedly lead to an even richer data set for inter and intra-religious learning.

Since the objective of these studies was to gain access to and make sense of the lived experience of rabbis and SDA pastors, the empirical research methodology was distinctly phenomenological. Phenomenological methodology is rooted in the philosophical school of thought, which bears its name and considers the range of conscious human experience from a first-person point of view. It assumes a familiarity with the type of experiences characterized. In this way, the practice of phenomenology classifies, describes, interprets, and analyzes structures of experiences in ways that answer to our own experience. For the present study, this included the use of semi-structured interviews as the primary method used to gather data on the Shabbat phenomenon. Of the numerous approaches to this type of research, along with corresponding research procedures, Van Manen (2014) Phenomenology of Practice and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith et al. 2013) demonstrated to be the most relevant and were followed accordingly.

Though phenomenological research was the chosen qualitative methodology, the conceptual framework was decisively that of practical theology. In other words, phenomenology as a research methodology was used in the service of a distinctly practical theological approach in examining Shabbat/Sabbath practices, namely Richard Osmer's "consensus equilibrium" scheme. This becomes especially important when analyzing and reflecting on the data collected, as practical theologians are not sociologists of religion, but theologians writing to and for the Church. For the purpose of these projects, I espoused Osmer (2005) definition of practical theology as "that branch of Christian theology that seeks to construct action-guiding theories of Christian praxis in particular social contexts" (xiv). It focuses on the "how to" within Christian ministry, but is guided by an informed theory of "why to"—"why we ought to practice the Christian way of life in certain ways in light of an interpretation of a particular social context and the normative claims of the Christian community" (xiv).

Collection and analysis of the data thus fit into Osmer's practical theological framework of the four methodological tasks—descriptive/empirical, interpretive, normative, pragmatic—and was, therefore, conducted in dialogue with a social scientific understanding of "practice," Jewish and Adventist Christian theologies of the Sabbath, and in the case of examining rabbis' Shabbat practices in particular,

¹ Although "Shabbat" and "Sabbath" are the same word, the former is transliterated from the Hebrew and the latter is English. In this study, I cite them with a specific intention in mind. When I use "Shabbat" I am generally referring to the Jewish expression, and when I use "Sabbath" I am referring to the Christian expression.

post-Shoah theology—an indispensable lens for any Christian theologian scrutinizing Jewish spiritual practice(s) (Carter 2015a, 2018; Reckwitz 2002). In this way, normative texts, social science texts, as well as living texts (i.e., the Shabbat/Sabbath practices of the respective clergy), were brought into a mutually constructive critical exchange—a hallmark of what it means to “do” practical theology.

Due to the nature of interview inquiry as a moral activity, I followed strict ethical guidelines. I did this by seeking approval for my study of Jewish rabbis from the Claremont School of Theology Institutional Review Board (IRB) as well as the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary IRB. Moreover, I provided informed consent to all research participants, and sought their permission to be included in the study, clarifying their choice to opt-out for any reason whatsoever. I also ensured the participants’ anonymity by securing interview recordings and transcriptions in a locked compartment, as well as masking their names and any pertinent information that could identify them. The validity and quality of the study were demonstrated by meeting four general principles as outlined in IPA: Sensitivity to context, commitment and rigor, transparency and coherence, impact and importance. In the end, each participant was given an opportunity to review the report and offer suggestions, critique, clarifications and/or amendments before publishing the final write-up.

3. Findings

Following Osmer’s four tasks of practical theological research, the Findings section of this essay represents the descriptive-empirical and interpretive moments, and attempts to answer the questions what and why: What is going on? Why is this going on? These tasks are to gather information that helps “discern patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations, or contexts,” and to seek to understand why these patterns and dynamics are occurring, thus resulting in a thick description of the Shabbat/Sabbath phenomenon (Osmer 2008, p. 4). The final section of this essay will address the third and fourth of Osmer’s proposed practical theological tasks, and that is the normative reflection and pragmatic suggestions for revised praxis, which addresses the questions: What *ought* to be going on? How to?

3.1. Contours of the Rabbis’ Shabbat

The practice of Shabbat for the six rabbis can be divided into increments of time during a twenty-five-hour interval, preceded by a period of preparation before Shabbat begins. Shabbat was understood to be a twenty-five-hour span of time, beginning slightly before Friday sunset (18 min for the Orthodox rabbis) and concluding just after Saturday sunset. The day was then divided into the following increments: Shabbat evening, Shabbat day, and close of Shabbat. Each period of time displayed distinct activities in terms of the way they practiced Shabbat and were seen to be largely similar in terms of shared ritual practices.

Despite some of the shared similarities for observant Jews, there were also considerable variations between the two Orthodox rabbis and the remaining four, whom I shall henceforth refer to in this essay as the “CRRR” rabbis—Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, and Renewal. The major differences between these two groups were based on how they approached *halakhic* regulations regarding Shabbat practice. The traditional rabbis were observant in this regard, whereas the CRRR rabbis utilized *halakhah*, or Oral Torah, as a guide, opting for those practices that either appealed more to their personality, sensibility, and/or specific context and needs. With that said, the CRRR rabbis saw the value of several Shabbat practices (candle lighting, *challah*, *kiddush*, Friday night Shabbat meal) as central to the Jewish practice of Shabbat.

Regardless of the variation of practices, all of the rabbis deemed Shabbat as core to Jewish identity. All agree, the Sabbath, in its myriad ways of observance and celebration, has kept Judaism Jewish. One quotation, from Zionist thinker Ahad Ha’am, mentioned by all but one of the rabbis sums up the relationship of Shabbat to Jewish identity: “More than the Jews have kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath has kept the Jews.” In addition to Shabbat’s significance to Jewish identity formation, the different rabbis also experienced the same benefits, regardless of the variation in practice, such as positive contributions to

family life, connection to one's children and spouse, prevents overwork, provides balance, is a valuable organizational tool for community, helps realign and reprioritize one's life, therapeutic, orders time and endows with significance, and connects one to something greater than oneself.

Taking a closer look at the rabbis' Shabbat practices also revealed that despite speaking of Shabbat in positive terms, there were some very serious challenges to practicing Shabbat, which included stress due to additional responsibilities on Shabbat and congregational disagreements. For the Orthodox rabbis who live a *shomer* Shabbat lifestyle, there was an additional layer of stress they had to deal with: The financial strain. They described the challenges of having to cook and eat the equivalent of "two Thanksgiving meals a week," as well as the cost of living having to live within walking distance of their congregation—both of which were expensive neighborhoods.

Finally, the data uncovered how CRRR rabbis' Shabbat practices have evolved over the course of their lives, whereas the two Orthodox rabbis' practices have largely remained the same. When one can be more selective about how to interpret the Oral Torah, there was a correlation to the ability a rabbi had to experience variations in the Shabbat experience.

The aforementioned description also accords with the dynamics of contemporary Judaism, namely blurred boundaries between movements, a growing engagement with ritual practice (Jewish and non-Jewish), behavioral contradictions, and a clear division of *halakhic* interpretation between Orthodox and non-Orthodox rabbis (Cohen and Eisen 2000; Kaplan 2009; Sarna 2004; Satlow 2006).

3.2. Comparing the Rabbis' Shabbat with the Seventh-Day Adventist Sabbath Experience

In terms of the empirical connections of Sabbath practice between SDA pastors and the rabbis I interviewed, there were many (Carter 2013). First, the pastors I interviewed divided their Sabbath into the same increments of time as the rabbis (i.e., a full twenty-four-hour period of time), and articulated their conception of the Sabbath in a similar fashion. They also both viewed the Sabbath as the culmination of the week and as something that required intentional preparation. Moreover, pastors and rabbis experienced Shabbat evening as unique and at times even more spiritually significant when compared to the rest of Shabbat/Sabbath day.

Both rabbis and pastors recognized the need for a mutually correlated relationship of law and spirit. That is, the holiness and sanctity of the Sabbath can only be maintained where there are clearly defined parameters. However, the boundaries of Shabbat/Sabbath practice must also embody a spiritual dimension. Tensions between these two poles are clearly extant in both religious traditions.

While the Orthodox rabbis' communal experience was in a category of its own, CRRR rabbis and Adventist pastors generally placed a premium on time with loved ones. Both conceived of the Sabbath as a day of intimacy and relationship with God and loved ones.

Finally, rabbis and pastors experienced the day as a paradox. As clergy representing traditions where much of their professional work culminated and took place on the Sabbath—a day they view cannot be altered or moved—there were some unique challenges. This stands in contradistinction to many Christian ministers who bifurcate their personal Sabbath, if they choose to take one, with Sunday communal leadership responsibilities. For this reason alone, there were additional layers of stress commensurate with their clergy responsibilities. However, such work was also imbued with a sense of peace and jubilation. Depending on how the day proceeded, the pastor or rabbi could experience certain parts of Shabbat/Sabbath as restful *and* stressful, energizing *and* draining. One of the primary causes for this paradox was based on the difficulty or ease with which each clergy member was able to place appropriate boundaries on the nature of their work on the day.

A second empirical work, significant for this research project, is a mixed-methods study conducted by Colón. In her research, Colón examines SDA Sabbath-keeping among lay people in a staggering 51 countries, and as such, sets her work apart as the most comprehensive to date. This study yielded much-needed empirical data, which provides a large window into the world of Adventist Sabbath-keeping. However, the most important for the present study are the empirical connections of

Colón's findings to Jewish practice, which include the following. For Adventists, as for the rabbis, the Sabbath as a biblical concept and embodied practice is an important part of their religious and spiritual identity. Motivations for observing the Sabbath constitute part of that identity but are also consistently grounded in specific texts (i.e., Scripture), which connect them to a relationship with God. The Sabbath is, therefore, a holy time spent with God, and requires preparation and intentionality.

One example of this are the grounds upon which the Sabbath and its parameters are defined. The rabbis, for example, believe there is "precious little" about how to observe Shabbat in the Bible, and so the *halakhah* provides the necessary guidance. However, CRRR rabbis view the authority of *halakhah*, including the binding nature of the thirty-nine *melachot*, or Shabbat laws, quite differently than their Orthodox colleagues. The result is a different Shabbat experience. Adventists, too, see the need for parameters, but in general, seek to apply biblical principles and not follow specific extra-biblical laws. However, there is just as much a spectrum of Sabbath practice in the Adventist Church as there is among the CRRR rabbis, which includes the growing trend of what Colón calls "routine secular activities" on the Sabbath (Colón 2003, p. 326). She concluded that one's experience of the Sabbath is directly related to one's relationship (or lack thereof) with God and how one's practices coincide with biblical principles of Sabbath observance.

The parallels between Adventists and the rabbis are considerable, but there are also dissimilarities. Perhaps the most obvious difference is Adventism's emphasis upon Saturday as *the* Sabbath.² This includes a detailed historical narrative of how the Sabbath was changed to Sunday by the Roman Catholic Church, and the Sabbath's role in last-day events preceding Jesus' Second Advent or *parousia*. For Jewish rabbis, Saturday-as-Sabbath is a given, whereas for Adventist Christians, Saturday, which they declare as the "true day of worship", is what sets them apart from other Christians. This is core to Adventist identity and existence.

One of Colón's most interesting findings is that Adventists who live in countries and/or societies that are considered less secular are more likely to follow tribal mentality—that is, participate in Sabbath activities as a large group. For those who live in more secularized parts of the world, the Sabbath experience tends to be more individualistic and/or small group oriented. This is interesting because the Orthodox rabbis belonged to more insulated communities, and, therefore, were apt to be less secularized. For them, Shabbat tended more towards a communal expression. The CRRR rabbis, on the other hand, were more secularized in their thinking and lifestyle, which, in turn, led to a very different Shabbat experience, one that could be more isolating but also ritualistically playful. Comparing the Orthodox and CRRR rabbis' views on *halakhah*, for example, serves as a microcosm of this very issue.

According to Colón, what is missing for Adventists, and was not the case as a whole for the rabbis, is including specific time for fun, leisure activities on the Sabbath. This could also be coupled with Colón's finding of how Adventists scored low in taking a more creative approach to Sabbath-keeping. This is not to say, however, that Adventists lacked joy. Like the rabbis, who had very few negative experiences to share about Shabbat, most respondents reported how much they appreciated and enjoyed the Sabbath. Nevertheless, Adventists could add "special niceties, like candles, flowers, having special Sabbath activities, Sabbath family worship, Bible games, etc." (p. 327). Perhaps it is partly for this empirical reason that Colón, Carter, Doukhan, Davidson, Tonstad, and others look to Judaism for inspiration.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The interviews represented in this study with six rabbis constitute an important data-set by which to analyze, reflect upon, and critique the Christian practice of the Sabbath in general, and the

² One finding from "the most in-depth research the denomination has conducted on its members", reveals the following: "92 percent of Adventists have an overwhelming conviction that the Seventh-day Sabbath is the true Sabbath, and only three percent disagree (that particular survey's margin of error was three percent, which could perhaps mean zero disagreement)," in Garcia (2014).

Adventist embodiment of the Sabbath in particular. Adding the empirical studies of how Adventists practice the Sabbath, significantly expands the data for purposes of comparison and further practical theological work. While it is beyond the scope of this article to engage in a robust post-Shoah-style de/reconstruction of Christian and Adventist theologies of the Sabbath, there is room for a discussion on practice, its implications for Jewish-Christian dialogue and intra-religious relations.

In this final section, I would like to discuss what can be learned about Shabbat/Sabbath practice by the various interested parties. First, I would like to consider what all Christians must keep in mind when considering Jewish practices of Shabbat. Second, what SDAs can learn from the rabbis' Shabbat experience. Third, and finally, I wish to set forth what fellow Christians can potentially learn about Sabbath and the unique role Adventists play in Jewish-Christian relations.

4.1. Contextualizing the Rabbis' Shabbat Experience for Christians

The descriptive snapshot of the rabbis' Shabbat experience demonstrates that it would be a misconception to think of Judaism as if it were monolithic and that all Jews believe and live out their beliefs in the same way. It follows that if there is indeed a spectrum within Judaism, there is also a diverse range of Shabbat practices and experiences among rabbis as well. This was perhaps one of the greatest revelations for me as I conducted my research. As Christians, considering what can be learned from the Jews about the Sabbath, it is critical that the history and diversity of Judaism—past and present, historical and lived—be examined on its own terms. Although my interview data revealed a basic shared structure to how these rabbis practiced Shabbat, there were variations between Orthodox rabbis and rabbis from the Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, and Renewal movements. This included how one prepared for Shabbat, the place of community, the location of Shabbat celebration, and the role of ritual, to name just a few variations.

Unfortunately, the range of practices briefly described in this essay are often eclipsed by the more exotic portrayals, to those outside of Judaism, of one dominant expression of Shabbat being some form of Orthodox. Even a cursory survey of the literature reveals Hasidism as representative of traditional Judaism. Television and movies are replete with images of Judaism as represented by bearded men with curly sidelocks (*payot*) in austere black clothing walking down the street of what equates to a modern-day *shtetl* (see, e.g., Zborowski and Herzog 1952). Another obstruction is seeing the Jewish Sabbath through rose-tinted glasses. For example, as important as Heschel (1951) slender book, *The Sabbath*, has been over the years, its poetic prose could easily lead the Christian reader, in particular, to a romanticized view not consistent with the reality of diverse Jewish expressions, as evidenced by the data. It may be more of an ideal for which to strive than a reflection of reality.

4.2. What Adventists Can Learn from the Rabbis' Shabbat Experience

Based on the aforementioned empirical studies conducted on how Adventists practice the Sabbath, it is clear that Adventists need a fuller appreciation of leisure, emphasizing the centrality of relationships, and of fostering creativity leading to multi-sensory experiences on the Sabbath. Each rabbi interviewed demonstrated how Jewish ritual (preparation, candlelighting, challah, special meals and songs, smelling of spices, etc.) and the decision (of four of the rabbis) to remain in community on Shabbat, could hold potential solutions to these Adventist challenges of living more fully into the joy of the Sabbath, at least in principle. In adopting Jewish rituals for Adventist purposes, however, one must proceed with caution lest one fall into misappropriation. This can often be curtailed by examining the sources for how one practices Shabbat.

4.3. The Adventist Contribution to Jewish-Christian Relations

Another direction in this mutual critique is to consider the location of Adventism in post-Shoah Jewish-Christian relations. Based on the existence of Sabbath-observing Christians in the Seventh-day Adventists, the theology undergirding such practice, and the data presented from empirical research,

there are several reasons why the Adventist church has something to offer the Jewish-Christian relationship after the Shoah.

First, in some respects, Adventist theology more fully incorporates post-Shoah theological principles than the vast majority of Christian denominations. For example, Adventist theology possesses a high view of both the first and second testaments, emphasizes the revelation of God in human history, places great value upon God's creation, and promotes non-dualistic anthropology and soteriology—in which law and grace are holistically fused together into a life of faith. As Adventists understand it, the gospel is comprised of both law and grace and cannot be separated. As consistent as this may be with post-Shoah theological constructions, it is not uncommon for Adventists, who affirm the binding authority of the Ten Commandments—especially the fourth commandment—and the validity of the Old Testament, to be criticized by fellow Christians as legalists, followers of Judaism, and in the case of some Muslim critics, modern Jews (Doukhan 2002b, p. 94, notes 6–11). Some Christian critics reason that since Christ has fulfilled both the Ten Commandments and the Torah, with its dietary and ceremonial laws, the Sabbath as practiced by the Jews is no longer valid. Sunday has superseded the Jewish Sabbath in honor of Christ's resurrection (Carson 2000). Many of the grounds upon which these conclusions are made, however, have been seriously challenged with the NP on Paul proposed by Sanders (1977), Wright (1997), and Dunn (1990), among others. According to Dunn, one of the tenets of the NP is that Jewish belief at the time of Jesus should not be characterized as a model of salvation by works (1990).

This leads to a second reason for the Adventist contribution to Jewish-Christian relations. If it is recognized that Adventism contains Jewish elements in its beliefs and practices, such as the Sabbath, and if post-Shoah theology demands that Christianity return to its Jewish roots and critically examine its own position and practices in relation to Judaism, then perhaps the Adventist practice of the Sabbath has something to offer the Christian story of the Sabbath. This is certainly not to diminish the Jewish contribution, but the belief in Jesus the Christ and his relationship to the Sabbath does add further chapters to the Sabbath story. Adventism is thus in a unique position to demonstrate how this is so.

In some ways, there is an even more desperate need for Christians to grapple with intra-church relations than there is to engage the "other" from another world religion. For this reason, it is indeed peculiar that Christians scarcely consider the unique contribution Adventists have to offer in this regard, as evidenced by the absence of Adventist authors, theology, and practice amongst Sabbath publications. Could it be those holding such views do not wish to practice Sabbath as a twenty-four-hour period of time occurring from Friday sunset to Saturday sun fall? Is it because such a practice is too demanding, or perhaps even "too Jewish"? As for the latter, this certainly cannot be the case because many Christians highly value Jewish Shabbat practices, but only selectively. More to the point: Are contemporary Christians interested in extracting spiritual principles of the Sabbath, applying such principles to their own life or community, not realizing that to dislodge the Sabbath from its "cathedral in time" (to use Abraham Joshua Heschel's language), leaves the Sabbath in a dualistic dilemma: A spirit with no body (again, Heschel's language)? (Heschel 1951, pp. 19, 75; Dresner 2002, p. 89). Could it be that Adventism's marginalization on such issues as the Sabbath reveals an age-old aversion to anything that hints of Judaism? This study serves as a beginning of such questioning and hopefully presents an opportunity for the practical theologian to overcome these alienating barriers.

Third, and finally, what Adventists say regarding their evangelistic mission and ministry to the Jewish people is telling: The approach is more about reconciliation than proselytization. According to Doukhan, an Adventist Hebrew Bible scholar with Jewish origins, Adventists position themselves as an agent of reconciliation, bridging Judaism and Christianity (Doukhan 2010). In this respect, the SDA Church, with its accent on the seventh day Sabbath, can perhaps serve as Isaiah's "repairer of the breach" (Isa 58). Although the Sabbath has gone on to develop somewhat different narratives in Judaism and Christianity, it would seem that post-Shoah Jewish-Christian relations have caused the metaphorical fork in the road to converge. If the Sabbath is an ideal practice to examine the relationship between these two religions, and constitutes one of the defining practices that drove

them apart, then perhaps *Seventh-day* Adventists, with their embodiment of the Sabbath, can serve as a shared median of practice in the road.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

CRRR	Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, Renewal [Jewish movements]
NP	New Perspective on Paul
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist

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