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Not Just the Time of the Other—What Does It Mean for Christians Today to Remember Shabbat and Keep It Holy?

Barbara U. Meyer

Religious Studies, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel; barmeyer@tauex.tau.ac.il

Abstract: In this essay, I explore how Christians can relate to the Sabbath in a way that adequately expresses Christian traditions about sacred time while showing respect for distinctly Jewish practices. My basic claim is that a Christian sanctification of the Sabbath presents an entirely new challenge for a Christianity that does not view Judaism as superseded or outdated. Thus, I ask: What should be the meaning of the Sabbath commandment for Christians? How can Christians sanctify the Sabbath while affirming it as a sign of the Jewish people's living covenant? First, I will lay out the questions that are raised for Christian theology when affirming Jewish Sabbath observance as part of practiced Judaism, that is, as lived Torah and as a tradition passed on from generation to generation. Next, I will consult contemporary Jewish literature on the topic, then look for Christian accounts of the Sabbath in Christian systematic theologies. I will ask: What happens when Christians affirm that Sunday does not abrogate the Jewish Sabbath, while also asserting their own commitment to the Bible's holy day? I will subsequently sketch an outline of a Christian theology of Shabbat that acknowledges distinctive Jewish legal traditions as well as its own connectedness to Biblical temporal structures.

Keywords: Jewish-Christian relations; post-supersessionism; Sabbath; Karl Barth; Abraham Joshua Heschel

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1. Introduction

In the following, I will use "Sabbath" for the purposes of overall discussion and to review the multi-faceted literature on the topic, and "Shabbat" for the Biblical term and when developing a Christian post-supersessionist approach. I reserve the Hebrew word "Shabbat" for the name of the specific day announced in the Ten Commandments, observed by Jesus and his surroundings and known and practiced up to today by all Jewish denominations in various ways. It is this specific time frame that Christians have direct knowledge of from their Holy Scriptures. In addition, I will use the term "post-supersessionist" to describe an informed and comprehensive approach that rejects any expression of Christianity as replacing, superseding or otherwise disinheriting Judaism. I will use the term "non-supersessionist" for depictions of the Sabbath and Sunday that do not entail thought patterns of replacement but do not include explicit opposition to the idea that a Christian phenomenon—whether in terms of ritual or belief—outdated a Jewish tradition.

My inquiry is based on the claim that the Christian remembrance and sanctification of Shabbat presents an entirely new challenge for such post-supersessionist theologies. I argue that in non-supersessionist Christian reasoning, Sunday, however restful, cannot replace the Sabbath observed by Jews. My thesis thus focuses on a distinctly Christian relationship to Shabbat that cannot be transferred to Sunday.

2. When Sunday Does Not Replace the Sabbath

Thinking about the Sabbath places entirely new challenges before Christian theologians who are committed to a post-supersessionist reasoning. This is because the Sabbath is no longer understood as being replaced by a Christian Sunday but as a biblically constituted

holy time, to be recognized as holy by Christians, too. Since the last third of the Twentieth Century, many mainstream churches and Christian denominations have determined that the idea of Christianity as having spiritually replaced Judaism is not just morally but also theologically wrong. Thus, the mainstream churches today affirm Judaism as a valid religion, alive, enduring and unfolding. From this, it generally follows that Christian theologians would no longer describe any longstanding Jewish tradition as obsolete; but while explicit supersessionism has been criticized and rejected, comparative accounts of Christianity and Judaism often retain patterns of replacement theology.

The notion that Sunday substitutes for the Sabbath is a particularly challenging case, as it is often presented as a historical fact and thus, largely remains unquestioned. Indeed, historically, Constantine decreed the "dies solis" as a day of national rest as early as 321.[1] Remarkably, at the time of the Council of Nicaea, in 325, the day of worship itself was no longer a topic of discussion.[2] With Sunday remaining as the day of weekly worship in all mainstream churches after the great schism between east and the west and the European Reformation, the question of the Christian holy day seemed to be resolved.[3] However, there is little theological support for a Sunday holy day, beyond it being the day of the week of Jesus's resurrection. Thus, a political decision by Constantine to cease trade nationwide on Sundays and an early Christian tradition to gather on the first day of the week seemed to manifest the idea of Sunday as a day of rest and worship for Christians. The identification of this day as the holy day of the fourth commandment, though, which developed over several centuries, employs a logic of substitution. A comparative perspective of the Sabbath as Judaism's holy day and Sunday as its Christian equivalent is actually an ahistorical construct. Weekly holy time in itself was never a core issue of Christian tradition or theology. There is nothing in the Christian sphere comparable to what the great Jewish philosopher Abraham Joshua Heschel describes as holy time: "Shabbat comes with its own holiness; we enter not simply a day, but an atmosphere." (Heschel 2005, p. xv). One might say that the main feature of Sunday as a holy day was its replacing of the Jews' Sabbath.[4]

As Christians have begun in the last third of the Twentieth Century to confess the ongoing, living covenant of the Jewish people as part of their own belief in God—reconfirmed as the one God of creation, exodus, and Sinai—the weekly sign of that covenant, Shabbat, must come back into focus. Clearly, Christian systematic theologians have found it easier to re-approach the covenant as a general theological topic than to confront the specific commandment of the Sabbath. As a time sequence, a weekly ritual, and even an atmosphere, the Sabbath seems to escape Christian theological definitions. Since legal traditions are central to Jewish Sabbatical observance, the Sabbath as a theme belongs also to the complex question of Christian approaches to law and commandments, a field that has undergone considerable changes connected to the late twentieth-century revolutions in Pauline Studies and Historical Jesus research (see Meyer 2020).

3. Not Simply "The Time of the Other"

The challenge to developing a post-supersessionist Christian theology of Shabbat lies in the fact that the Sabbath is for Christians not simply "the time of the Other." Instead, Christians know of Shabbat from both parts of their own scriptures. Sadly, historical critical exegesis did not help Christian readers of the New Testament to respect Jewish observances of the Sabbath, which suffered through a long history of Christian misinterpretation. Until the last half of the Twentieth Century, Christian New Testament scholars set Jesus against the Sabbath, understanding him as at least "critical" of the Sabbath if not totally disregarding its supposedly excessive restrictions.[5]

It is astonishing that it took until the so-called Third Quest in Historical Jesus research, beginning in the 1980s, to revise this misunderstanding. (Already in the 1960s, however, Hebrew University scholar David Flusser had successfully explained that Jesus himself did not break any Sabbath law of Second Temple Judaism (Flusser 1969)). Today, mainstream critical scholarship fully recognizes Jesus's compliance with Jewish law. Yet, until Jewish scholars of the New Testament, due to their expertise in rabbinic literature, changed the

field, the anachronistic depiction of Jesus as a critic of Sabbath observance had been upheld by Christian scholars who were ignorant of Midrashic parallels to what Jesus said. Thus, for instance, the saying attributed to Jesus "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27), was typically quoted to indicate Jesus's critique of Sabbath observance. However, the sentence also appears in early rabbinic literature, for instance in the *Mekhilta d'Rabbi Ishmael* 31:13 (https://www.sefaria.org/Mekhilta_d\T1\textquoterightRabbi_Yishmael.31.14.3?lang=en&with=About&lang2=en, accessed on 20 May 2022), which likewise states: "The Sabbath is given to you, and you are not given to the Sabbath." Clearly, if Jesus had spoken this sentence—which is difficult to prove or disprove—there were others who had said the same thing. It is thus historically unlikely that Jesus held an idiosyncratic approach to the Sabbath. Whatever the contemporaneous details of Sabbath legal practice and discourse were, Jesus was part of its discussion and development. Interreligious research and the discovery of direct parallels to Jesus' sayings make his allegedly peculiar views historically improbable.

Another source for the alleged opposition of Jesus to the Sabbath commandments is in the accounts of his performing healing miracles. Stories featuring Jesus's healing on the Sabbath have been grossly misinterpreted as indicating that Jesus opposed Jewish law in general. While "pikuaḥ nefesh," the principle that the preservation of human life overrides almost all other halakhic precepts, was a term not yet coined in Second Temple Judaism, historians regard it as already common and generally practiced (Sanders 2016). That Jesus healed on the Sabbath in protest or disregard of contemporaneous Sabbath laws is therefore historically unlikely. Instead, he saved and preserved lives because human life was regarded then and now as of the highest value in Judaism.

In sum, understanding Jesus as a Sabbath transgressor is part of the history of anti-Judaism rather than an accurate depiction of Second Temple Judaism. Nevertheless, the revision of a previously widespread construct of Jesus as a Sabbath critic has not yet received a broad theological echo.[6] Although strongly contested in recent New Testament research, the image of Jesus as a critic of oppressive biblical or Jewish laws has long been a feature of Christianity in a wide range of theological disciplines. The idea of Jesus's choosing "life over law" often functions as continued anti-Judaism as well as Christian supersessionism (as in "the law is superseded by grace"), often with no attention to Jesus's Jewishness. Although the Gospels' account of Jesus's relation to the Sabbath is complex, with some texts even showing Jesus as distancing himself from Sabbath observance, New Testament scholarship at the end of the Twentieth Century makes it clear that a Sabbath-critical Jesus is anachronistic.

Remarkably, the texts most familiar for Christians relating to Shabbat are found in the Pentateuch. The commandment to remember and sanctify Shabbat is part of the Decalogue (Exodus 20:8 and Deuteronomy 5:15), one of the best-known scriptural passages in all Christian denominations and perhaps the Old Testament text most likely to be known by heart by many Christians. The term "Decalogue" is often capitalized in English, a sign of its high status in Christian culture. As part of the Ten Commandments though, the Sabbath is not always recognizable as Shabbat. Luther, for instance, translated the Hebrew word "Shabbat" with "Feiertag" ("holy day") when discussing the Decalogue in his catechisms, which were summaries of Christian belief that gained great importance during the Reformation. As a popular genre meant for religious education and spiritual instruction, the catechisms include explanations. What are Christians to do on this day? Luther's interpretation takes Christians far away from any Sabbatarian practice. Since he worried about "laziness" in monasteries that he saw as part of the Church's overall corruption, he did not champion time free of work. According to Luther, only people working physically need to rest one day a week. Preaching "the Word" in its comprehensive meaning as the Word of God, justifies a day set apart, though Luther thought only half a day would be enough for weekly community worship. Calvin, in contrast, did not change the name of the day. Against the popular image of a rigorous Calvinist work ethic, he developed a sincere spirituality of rest that allows for "God to work in us." (Calvin 1995).

That Shabbat enters Christian space in the very first chapter of the Bible is probably not commonly remembered by Christians. Even among theologians, Shabbat is seldom seen as a major motif of the creation story. It is here, though, that the Hebrew word *sha-vat* is introduced—as a verb, describing God's activity, or more precisely, lack of activity on the seventh day of world's creation. In rabbinic literature, the Sabbath is mainly depicted as a signifier of Jewish difference, as recently researched and analyzed by Sarit Kattan Gribetz (Gribetz 2020). The Bible, in contrast, introduces the root of the word to describe God's rest after having created the whole world.

4. Recognizing a Lived Sign of the Covenant

Although some Christians have knowledge about the observance of Shabbat, one might argue that few "know" Shabbat. Certainly, few Christians engage in Sabbath observance in any way that resembles the biblical model, and even the word "Sabbatical" has no religious resonance in Christian theology. In Christian societies, the Sabbath has hardly appeared in prose or poetry, or in art and culture generally. This is in striking contrast to Jewish literature, with obvious examples like Hayim Nachman Bialik or Isaac Bashevis Singer, but also assimilated or even converted writers such as the famous poet Heinrich Heine. In Christian intellectual history, the Sabbath is scarcely discussed, and this has continued even after Jewish–Christian relations began to change. Even the numerous post-supersessionist theologians, who have expressed their affirmation of the ongoing relationship between God and the people of Israel in covenantal language, say little about it. This is most strikingly the case with Paul van Buren, who suggests a covenantal rethinking of Christology as a whole: "The Jewish people today . . . are the Israel of God. The ancient covenant between God and Israel . . . continues today, ever new and alive in the ambiguous contemporary life of the Jewish people." (van Buren 1988). Strikingly missing in his Christian theological affirmation of the Jewish covenant is a theological account of one major sign of that covenant, the Sabbath.

The one systematic theologian who engaged with the Sabbath and its meaning did so before the comprehensive revision of Jewish–Christian relations in the last third of the 20th century. Karl Barth, the Swiss theologian and opponent of Nazism, did rediscover the covenant as a core theological category but fell short of underscoring its ongoing validity as the Jews' covenant. Only a new generation of systematic theologians after Karl Barth, including his students Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt, Bertold Klappert, and Paul van Buren, emphasized the ongoing validity and vitality of the Jewish people's covenant. Barth's failures to understand the importance of post-biblical Judaism for Christianity have been comprehensively analyzed by Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt (1967). Marquardt and especially Bertold Klappert, though, have always credited Karl Barth for reconnecting systematic theology to the Old Testament. Although van Buren and Marquardt far exceeded their teacher by studying rabbinic sources and referring to them with great respect, they never approached Barth's intimate closeness to the Old Testament. There are various reasons for this, including the obvious point that they focused on adding rabbinic literature to the frame of reference for Christian systematic theology, in this way affirming the validity of post-biblical Judaism. Nevertheless, neither van Buren nor Marquardt developed a Christian theology of Shabbat, although it would have fit perfectly into van Buren's Theology of the People of Israel or Marquardt's deliberations about the Christian approach to the commandments that is central to his theology (Marquardt 1988).

5. Karl Barth and the Sabbath

Karl Barth's theological account of the Sabbath is part of his doctrine of creation. While Barth's sentence "the covenant is the goal of creation and creation the way to the covenant" became famous (Barth 1958), less well known is how deeply connected he viewed the covenant and the Sabbath: "Hence the history of the covenant was really established in the event of the seventh day." (Barth 1958, p. 217). Barth's notion of the Sabbath as the goal of creation has not gained the attention it deserves—especially from Christian theologians

engaged in the affirmation of Judaism. "The goal of creation," writes Barth, "and at the same time the beginning of all that follows, is the event of God's Sabbath freedom, Sabbath rest and Sabbath joy, in which man, too, has been summoned to participate." (Barth 1958, p. 98). Of the three qualities that Barth attributes to the Sabbath, joy is the most notable. The freedom of God expressed in the Sabbath fits Barth's core theological approach that emphasizes God's sovereignty. Resting is part of the biblical instruction to observe the holy day; but how did Barth come to think of joy as a major aspect of the Sabbath? Although the Bible knows of joy on the Sabbath (e.g., Isaiah 58:13), it is the rabbinic tradition that made enjoyment and physical pleasure integral to Sabbath observance. This attitude is captured by Abraham Joshua Heschel, who declared that "it is a sin to be sad on the Sabbath." (Heschel 2005, p. xiv).

Barth declares that "the freedom, rest and joy of the Sabbath consist in the fact that on this day man is released from his daily work. On the Sabbath he does not belong to his work . . . . On the Sabbath he belongs to himself." (Barth, Church Dogmatics III.1; p. 214). My impression is that Barth learned about the joy of the Sabbath from the great Jewish Bible scholar Benno Jacob, whose Genesis commentary he obviously studied thoroughly, as his frequent quotes demonstrate (Jacob 1974). From Benno Jacob Barth learned about the blessedness and joy of the Sabbath, which he reports in a phrasing that painfully echoes a supersessionist mindset by expressing a certain astonishment at the ongoing Jewish presence: "According to Jewish consciousness still alive today, it brings man a 'heightened sense of life' (B. Jacob)." (Barth, CD III.1; p. 221).

Unsurprisingly, with Barth, the Sabbath joy then takes a turn to grace and love, both traditional keywords of Christian belief: "It is the covenant of the grace of God which in this event, at the supreme and final point of the first creation story, is revealed as the starting-point for all that follows." (Barth 1958, p. 98). While the "first feature of God revealed by His rest on the seventh day" is freedom, the "second feature of God revealed in the rest of the seventh day" is love. (Barth 1958, p. 215). In an additional Protestant turn, Barth emphasizes the rest of Sabbath as not being conditioned by merits: "Before and apart from all work and conflict, irrespective of any merits of his own, he is invited to cease from his own works, to rest, and therefore to enter into the freedom, rest and joy of God Himself. In his case, therefore, the Sabbath as the sign of the given promise does not stand at the end but at the beginning, i.e., at the beginning of his working week. And the promise itself, whose sign is the Sabbath, cannot be tied to his own volition, achievement or merit." (Barth, CD III,1; p. 218).

Despite this Christian turn to grace, with its additional Protestant accent of unmerited invitation to rest, Barth's core interpretation of the Sabbath as a day of joy remains the key to his extraordinary theological reading. Having introduced the Sabbath as part of God's creation (Church Dogmatics III.1), Barth continues to discuss the fourth commandment within his ethics which he situated in the last part of his doctrine of creation (Church Dogmatics III.4). Here, Barth asks concretely: "What does the Sabbath commandment say?" His answer expresses biblical themes in Christian cadences: "It says that, in deference to God and to the heart and meaning of His work, there must be from time to time an interruption, a rest, a deliberate non-continuation, a temporal pause, to reflect on God and His work . . . man's own work is to be performed as a work bounded by this continually recurring interruption. This interruption is the holy day." (Barth 1961, p. 50). It is important to Barth that the early church called this day the Lord's Day: "In a special way it belongs to God and not to man; and this is something man ought to respect by not claiming it as his own." (Barth 1961, p. 50).

Barth's overall depiction of the Sabbath as belonging to God, without having any primary social function, fits his theology that is non-apologetic as a whole and often even explicitly avoids apologetic reasoning. The Sabbath makes people free from themselves and instead "free for God." Barth acknowledges that "a day of rest from work does correspond to a genuine and well-founded human need." (Barth 1961, p. 60). He is considerate of workers suffering under the strain of industrialized work; we should not forget that Karl

Barth was a socialist![7] In this context of work, Barth quotes Luther positively, crediting his regard for "common folk, servants and maids." (Barth, Church Dogmatics III.4; p. 61). In contrast to Luther, who argued that church attendance was the primary reason to have a day free from work, Barth does not find that to be an adequate explanation for the Sabbath commandment: "We weaken the commandment when we understand it from the standpoint of any aim . . . " (Barth 1961, p. 63).

6. An Ethics of Intermittence

Astonishingly, the theme of joy that is central to his treatment of the Sabbath in the Genesis creation narrative is further pursued in Barth's ethics. The holy day—in this part of the doctrine of creation, mainly called Sunday—is a "true day of joy." (Barth 1961, p. 69). Now, even the meaning of the other major quality of the holy day, freedom, is identified as joy: "the meaning of Sunday freedom is joy, the celebrating of a feast." (Barth 1961, p. 68). The atmosphere of joy introduces the social dimension of the holy day, " . . . the holy day is not given to the individual in isolation, but in relationships to his fellows." (Barth 1961, p. 69).

This social dimension of the Sabbath is echoed by most scholars and has recently been highlighted by Judith Shulevitz, an American journalist who published a comprehensive monograph on the Sabbath in 2011, *The Sabbath World: Glimpses of a Different Order of Time* (Shulevitz 2011). The book has an enormous historical scope and offers valuable personal experiences with Sabbath literature and Sabbath observance. One of Shulevitz's striking insights is that if asked about "one thing that is truly exceptional about the Sabbath, it would have to be its efficacy. The Sabbath *does* something, and what it does is remarkable." (Shulevitz 2011, p. 37). Isn't what the Sabbath does to you dependent on circumstances and on your individual experience of it? Yet, strikingly, what Shulevitz describes as the unique feature of the Sabbath is precisely not individual: "the Sabbath gives societies a competitive advantage . . . it promotes social solidarity." (Shulevitz 2011, p. 37).

Unusually for someone from the Calvinist tradition, which is typically regarded as more somber than happy, joy is a special topic in Barth's ethics, corresponding to a core theme of Christian theology, namely, grace. Interestingly, the correspondence between God's grace and our humanly experienced joy is neither permanent nor continuous. Barth does not suggest an uninterrupted flow of God's grace humanly felt as joy. Instead, intermittence structures our joy. Barth describes life as "movement in time," and joy as "one of the forms in which this movement is arrested for a moment." (Barth, CD III.4; p. 376). We will not be continuously happy; and there is no advice to be found in Barth's ethics to strive for continuous happiness; but with astonishing cheerfulness, Barth asserts that we should always be ready for joy! (cf. Barth 1961, p. 377). While life is continuously "God's gift of grace," our gratitude breaks through all the "running and striving and fighting and struggling." (Barth 1961, p. 378). Instead of striving for happiness, we are to be "prepared and ready for the arrival of such moments." Although joy corresponds to grace that flows continuously, it is precisely intermittence that facilitates joy.

Extraordinary in Christian systematic theologies, Barth's ethics are not added as an appendix to his dogmatics but appear as an integral part of his doctrine of creation. It is here, in the midst of his ethics integrated into dogmatics and concluding the doctrine of creation, that Barth turns back to the topic of the Sabbath. While Barth had previously linked the Sabbath with joy, he now explains his understanding of joy with the example of the Sabbath: "To this extent joy has an affinity with what we earlier described as the holy day that interrupts, concludes and above all initiates the working week. And the required readiness for joy might in this sense be regarded as merely an application of the Sabbath commandment." (Barth 1961, p. 378.)

Are we to understand that Barth suggests a "lived readiness for joy" as a Christian way to observe the fourth commandment? At first sight, this might sound as if he is turning the Sabbath into a metaphor, which is clearly not Barth's intention. Instead, I would highlight his insight into a dimension of the Sabbath emphasized by Jewish thinkers: The

Sabbath marks a sharp divide from the days of the week. All work and weeklong activities are interrupted. Joy, as described by Barth, appears not as a constructed or accumulated experience, but as a breakthrough. It does not last. The affinity of joy to the Sabbath helps Barth to shape joy as a human response to grace that is not meant to be continuous and enduring. Instead, it is the defining quality of human joy to occur in breakthrough moments of gratitude to unceasing grace.

7. Shabbat and Post-Supersessionist Christian Thought

Obviously, a post-supersessionist Christian theology of Shabbat cannot be seamlessly built on Barth's church dogmatics since he was not free of supersessionist depictions of Sunday. Barth did not have substantive knowledge about post-biblical Judaism and did not have any agenda, will, or capability to do theological justice to contemporary Judaism. Thus, Barth's theology of the Sabbath as part of his doctrine of creation cannot be simply converted into post-supersessionist Christian thinking. Since Barth has explored the topic of the Sabbath in an unparalleled manner, his interpretation ought not be disregarded either. While Barth did not successfully escape supersessionist thought patterns, it is to be noted that he did not diminish the value of the Sabbath. The opposite is the case: Barth is fascinated by the phenomenon of the Sabbath, a reality that is not just a concept, not just an idea, not just a day. Barth also has great respect for the commandments, often regarded as secondary at best in most traditions of Christian thought.[8] He follows Calvin in this appreciation; and he can thus say: "The Sabbath commandment explains all the other commandments, or all the other forms of the one commandment." (Barth, CD III.4; p. 53). I contend that Barth's strikingly positive attitude to law and commandments shaped his deep understanding of the multifaceted reality of the Sabbath.

Some recent Christian theologies are prone to an idealization of the Sabbath. I do not see harm in admiring Sabbath culture; but a post-supersessionist Christian theology of Shabbat also needs to grapple with the extremely violent and dangerous history of Christian assaults on Jews for their Shabbat observance. It is not enough to quote Ahad Ha'Am's famous sentence: "More than the Jewish people has kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept the Jews." Christian theologians should research the history of the remarkable Jewish resistance against Christian restrictions on Sabbath observance. The awareness of Israel's suffering on behalf of the Sabbath does not only begin with Rabbinic literature. Christian Old Testament scholars can take a page from Judith Shulevitz's remarkable insights into the history of the Sabbath, beginning with the Old Testament origins of that holy day. Especially impressive are her descriptions of the social and even the psychological background and context of the Babylonian exile when the fourth commandment was formulated (Shulevitz 2011, p. 31). Scholarly discourse has recently chosen to disregard the historical fact that exile is in most cases not voluntary (Boyarin 2015). Exile often follows violence and threats to life. Shulevitz reminds us that the Babylonian exile was "the most bitterly objected-to population transfer in all Western literature." (Shulevitz 2011, p. 33). Without the slightest idealization of a minority diaspora-existence, she takes the biblical memories of humiliation and metaphors of rape very seriously: "It was out of this abasement that Judaism as we know it was born, and along with it the Sabbath." (Shulevitz 2011, p. 33).

8. To Remember Shabbat and Keep It Holy

This Biblical memory of exile is a shared memory of Jews and Christians. While memories of exile and deportation continued all through Jewish history, though, Western Christians were more often exiling than exiled. Shulevitz explicitly includes Christian Sabbatarian practice in her general account of intergenerational memory of the Sabbath: "The Sabbath may have defensible social value, in that it offers excellent ideas about time and society, but it also bears testimony to that which can't be defended, only re-experienced . . . . And because the Sabbath, Sunday as well as Saturday, is a day those men and women kept, and not a conversation they had, the men and women who came after them remembered it." (Shulevitz 2011, p. 216).

In the history of the Sabbatarian movements, Sabbatarian Christian groups have been discriminated against and persecuted.[9] However, most of the persecuted Sabbatarian movements found refuge in America, where they could flourish and observe their various Sabbatical commitments freely. The overall historical experience, and thus the main collective memory of Jews, remains dramatically different. Jews experienced various long historical periods with both their oppression and their resistance focused on Sabbath observance, as most famously in Converso history (See Melammed 1999).

Christians cannot simply add these medieval memories of Sabbatical resistance to their own memory of the Sabbath, since Christian institutions were typically on the other side of history.

This calls for the Christian to remember that Shabbat is a complex undertaking. Shabbat for Christians cannot just be the holy day of Jews because the Fourth Commandment is also part of the Christian Bible. Christians can remember the roots of Shabbat in creation that reveal essential features of God and humankind, such as God's freedom and the human readiness for joy. The commandment that reaches Christians as part of the Ten Commandments does not specify how Christians are to observe the holy day. Regarding the biblical Shabbat, Christians are to remember and to sanctify that very day. My post-supersessionist interpretation is based on these two activities, memory and the sanctification of Shabbat. The theological outline of a Christian approach to Shabbat suggested here does not seek to dismiss Sabbatarian Sunday practice and traditions. Instead, I have limited my argumentation to the Christian observance of the commandment to remember and sanctify Shabbat, which for post-supersessionist Christianity begins with remembering the history of Jewish observance.

While Christians have the sources and resources to recognize the time of the Sabbath as holy, Christian practices of sanctification must not appropriate Jewish observance. Clearly, the dimensions of practice and ritual intensify the challenges for a post-supersessionist Christianity: The re-remembered commandment to sanctify Shabbat seems to be at odds with the sanctity of Jewish otherness, that Christians have only begun to grasp (cf. Cunningham 2014). Is a Christian affirmation of Shabbat better achieved by refraining from Sabbatical practices so as to express respect for Jewish halakhic uniqueness? Or, can Christians' practice of differentiating between Saturday and Sunday train them to be accepting of other differences?

These questions lead to a new field at the crossroads of interreligious studies and practical theology, the study of inter-rituality. Marianne Moyaert has analyzed the problematic aspects of Christians engaging in the celebration of the Seder evening as part of their Holy Week ceremonies, calling this a case of "paraliturgy." She has convincingly argued that Christians should refrain from that practice (Moyaert 2016, p. 148). I have come to a similar conclusion in my study of the exodus memory that is common to both Jews and Christians (Meyer 2020, pp. 24–25). A Christian recognition of Jews' different exodus-memory clearly stands against any ritual appropriation of the Seder liturgy. The case of the Sabbath is similar. Here, too, the Jewish history of observing the Sabbath day entails exile, discrimination, and persecution; and here, too, Christians have mainly been on the other side of history, exiling, discriminating, and persecuting. Moyaerts' argumentation is especially important here, since the dimension of time is central to her argumentation: When Christians celebrate the Seder as Jesus's feast, they implicitly portray Judaism as "an almost ahistoric tradition frozen in time." (Moyaert 2016, p. 155). Similarly to my argument, Moyaert draws attention to the many historical developments in Judaism and especially to the violent history suffered at the hands of Christians. It is precisely this history that turns cultural appropriation into dispossession: "Christians are writing Jews out of their own story." (Moyaert 2016, p. 157).

While religious scholars like Paul Knitter and John Thatamanil see the observance of rituals and feasts of different religions as an expression of the affirmation of different truths (cf. Thatamanil 2016), these scholars' approaches to multiple religious belonging and practice are not applicable to post-supersessionist Jewish–Christian relations. I argue

that inter-rituality is deeply dependent on historical context. With a history of violent dispossession, ritual appropriation does not simply present a possible peril to be aware of, but a bitter retention. Thus, a renewed Christian compliance with the commandment to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy would be compromised if it ignored its centrality in Jewish memory. Nevertheless, rituals are not the only way to sanctify time.

My original question of how Christians who are committed to the ongoing covenant between Jews and God can express their own memory of the biblical Shabbat while still acknowledging its distinctively Jewish observance today, may be preliminarily answered with Christians beginning to learn how to sanctify time without forgoing the sanctity of Judaism's otherness. The sanctification of Shabbat by witnessing this sign of the living covenant and the Other's holiness offers Christians an opportunity to learn holy time in the Heschelian sense, not by rivalry but by sharing (cf. Heschel 2005).

Importantly, sharing time does not mean joining the Other's particular ritual of sanctifying time. Christian post-supersessionist remembrance of Shabbat need not be ritual. A Christian approach that is both biblically rooted and affirmative of Jewish Halakhic uniqueness could take two aspects of Karl Barth's theology of the Sabbath as a starting point. The first is Barth's insight that this day first and foremost belongs to God and not to us—which we can respect by not claiming it as our own. While Christian ritual marking of the Sabbath bears a taste of appropriation, Barth's reminder of the day belonging to God can help Christians to refrain from dispossessing Jews. Another constructive directive is Barth's view of joy and gratitude as a breakthrough experience. Christians who are used to claiming grace as something Christians "have" may enjoy a more biblical notion of gratitude as a human response to God's grace. This gratitude and joy becomes intensified as a repeated rather than an accumulated experience.

A Christian sanctification of Shabbat thus presents an ongoing challenge for post-supersessionist theology. The challenge is highly complex as it involves Christian affirmation without appropriation. Post-supersessionist theological awareness identifies appropriation not only as a risk in the future but as part of a competitive past. For this reason, Christian listening to the commandment to remember Shabbat and keep it holy cannot forgo the uniquely Jewish memories of costly observance. Instead, for Christians, the sanctification of Shabbat begins with the acknowledgment of unique Jewish observances of this day.

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Notes

1 Workshops were ordered closed in this decree while agricultural work was explicitly said to continue. See (Schaff 1960).

2 This can be concluded from the last of the "twenty canons" decreed in addition to the Creed that argues against the practice of kneeling during prayer on Sunday. See (Weckwerth 2021).

3 However, not all questions were resolved. The split between the western and eastern churches, as well the division of the western church into Catholic and Protestant wings, both provoked disagreement about observance of the sabbath. In particular, the European reformation, and the Protestant focus on the Biblical texts, shaped the debates.

4 This was of course different from much later Sabbatarian movements, which displayed an intense desire to return to observance of some of the laws of the Hebrew Bible.

5 For a sharp analysis of this misleading exegetical presentation see (von Kellenbach 1994).

6 I am myself planning a Christology of the Sabbath as a future research topic, continuing my inquiry into dogmatic implications of halakhic discourse.

7 A reminder that costed Marquardt his dissertation! See (Marquardt 1972).

8 For an in-depth analysis of this highly important matter see (Meyer 2018).

9 Shulevitz pays tribute to this history in many parts of her book.

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