God's Sabbath and Ours: After the Divine Image (2 of 3)

Dr. Justo L. González

Parchman Lecture
Baylor University
Waco, Texas
March 7, 2007

God's Sabbath and Ours:
After the Divine Image
(2 of 3)

As we know, in many of our churches, and particularly among our youth, the very mention of the word "Sabbath" makes people cringe. Churches have lobbied—and still lobby—for blue laws, prohibiting the sale of alcoholic beverages, the opening of stores, and a number of other activities on Sunday. The problem with such activities is that they have lost sight of the Sabbath as a celebration and have turned it into a legalistic set of regulations that tend to deprive the Sabbath of its joy. When in my childhood I was told that I could not go to the movies or play cards on Sunday, the spirit behind such prohibitions was very similar to the spirit we often criticize in some sectors of first-century Judaism. If the rabbis of the first century debated whether it was legitimate to eat an egg that a hen had laid on the Sabbath, we in my church debated whether it was legitimate to buy gas on Sunday, so one could go to church. In both cases, the Sabbath was deprived of its joy, of its dimension as celebration of God's work of creation, of our work of creation, and of our partnership with God as God's stewards over the rest of creation.

****

This has been particularly true of the Reformed tradition to which most of us belong in one way or another. Therefore, it may be useful to open a fairly long parenthesis to see how this tradition arose.

During the Middle Ages there was a tendency to spiritualize or allegorize the commandment regarding the Sabbath. According to St. Thomas Aquinas,

> All the solemnities of the ancient law were instituted in commemoration of a divine benefit, be it celebrating a past act or prefiguring a future one. . . . Of all past benefits, the first and foremost was the benefit of creation, which was commemorated in the celebration of the Sabbath. . . . And among all future benefits that were prefigured, the main and final one was the repose of the mind in God, be it presently by grace, or in the future by glory; and this was prefigured in the Sabbath.[I]

Thomas goes on to explain that it is for this reason that the ancient ceremonial rites, pointing primarily to the past benefits of God to the people of Israel, are no longer commanded, but the Sabbath still remains part of the Decalogue. Those other rites and sacrifices have been superseded by the saving work of Christ, to which they pointed. In contrast, the Sabbath, while a reminder of the past creation of all things, and of the past work of Christ, is also an announcement of a future that will not be reached until the final day.

According to Thomas, under the new law of Christ, Sunday has come to take the place of Saturday. Thomas is well aware that this is not what was commanded by the ancient law of Israel. He declares—as is generally agreed by historians—that it is rather the result of Christian custom, and the ordinances established by the church.[2] Strictly speaking, the laws regarding the Sabbath no longer apply to Sunday—except the law of rest, which is a principle of natural law. It is for this reason that the church does not prohibit on Sundays many of the activities that were proscribed in the ancient law—cooking, for instance. Rather

than worrying about what sort of work is allowed on Sundays, and what is not, Christians ought to be particularly careful to avoid mortal sin during the day of rest. Furthermore, any sort of work intended for the care and preservation of property and of civil order is to be allowed.[3]

The sum total of all this is not only that the Sabbath has been substituted by Sunday, but also that the laws regarding rest are not particularly important.

At the time of the Reformation, Luther was fearful that an emphasis on the validity of the Law would lead back to salvation by works. He therefore said little as to the value of the Law for Christian living. The Law of Moses, he said, has been fulfilled in the Gospel, and therefore it is no longer binding. What, then, about the Decalogue? Should Christians not learn it as a summary of what God requires of them? Certainly—and Luther himself wrote his *Treatise on Good Works* as a commentary on the Decalogue. But this is not because the Law of Moses still stands; it is rather because the Decalogue is an excellent summary of the law of God written on human hearts. As he says, "Natural law is clearly and exactly summarized on Mt. Sinai—in a much better way than the philosophers have done it."[4] For this reason, what Luther generally says about the day of rest is that it is a good and just idea, for it reminds us of the clear principle that no one—neither human, nor beast, nor even the land—can work continuously without rest.

He asks:

> Why does one then keep and teach the Ten Commandments? Answer: Because the natural laws were never so orderly and well written as by Moses. Therefore it is reasonable to follow the example of Moses. And I wish that we would accept even more of Moses in worldly matters, such as the laws about the bill of divorce [Deut 24: l], the sabbath year [Lev. 25:2-7], the year of jubilee, tithes and the like. Through such laws the world would be better governed than now with its practices in usury, trade, and marriage.
>
> It is not necessary to observe the sabbath or Sunday because of Moses' commandment. Nature also shows and teaches that one must now and then rest a day, so that man and beast may be refreshed. This natural reason Moses also recognized in his sabbath law. . . . For where it is kept for the sake of rest alone, it is clear that he who does not need rest may break the sabbath and rest on some other day, as nature allows.

And then, almost as an afterthought, Luther adds: "The sabbath is also to be kept for the purpose of preaching and hearing the Word of God."[5]

Calvin, in contrast to Luther, was more concerned about antinomism than about the possibility of falling back into salvation by works. He sees in the Law of Moses, and particularly in the Decalogue, not just an expression of natural law, but the positive law of God, revealing to believers how they are to live. Thus, for Calvin the law in not only, as it was for Luther, the word of God showing us our sinfulness, and directing civil society as to how it is to order its life, but also a permanently valid set of instructions that God has given believers (what is commonly called the "third use of the law"). This means that, in spite of what we have done with it, in the best of the Reformed tradition the law is not a burden to be carried but is rather an instance of grace. It is God's good news about how life is to be lived. There is gospel in the law, and law in the gospel.

As a result, Calvin insists on the importance of keeping the Sabbath. Indeed, he declares that "The Lord enjoined obedience to almost no other commandment as severely as to this. . . . He bestows highest approbation upon its observance."[6] According to Calvin, this commandment has three main purposes:

> First, under the repose of the seventh day the heavenly Lawgiver meant to represent to the people of Israel spiritual rest, in which believers ought to lay aside their own works to allow God to work in them. Secondly, he meant that there was to be a stated day for them to assemble to hear the law and perform the rites, or at least to devote it particularly to meditation upon his works, and thus through this remembrance to be trained in piety. Thirdly, he resolved to give a day of rest to servants and those who are under the authority of others, in order that they should have some respite from toil. [7]

Of these three functions of the Sabbath, Calvin naturally stresses the first, which is a reminder that our salvation is not by our own works, but by the grace of God:

> We must be wholly at rest that God may work in us; we must yield our will; we must resign our heart; we must give up all our fleshly desires. In short, we must rest from all activities of our own contriving so that, having God working in us, we may repose in him.[8]

Furthermore, "If our sanctification consists in mortifying our own will, then a very close correspondence appears between the outward sign and the inward reality."[9]

Calvin's emphasis on the importance of the Sabbath led him directly to the question of why Sunday rather than Saturday. This was a question that had not been asked for a long time. But the religious ferment of the sixteenth century led many to suggest various reformations within the life and practice of the church. For the first time since the early centuries, when the church

had been mostly Jewish, the question of keeping the Sabbath on Saturday arose. Thus, Calvin says, "I am compelled to dwell longer on this because at present some restless spirits are stirring up tumult over the Lord's Day."[10] His own explanation is that one of the reasons why the observance of Saturday was abandoned was that some people clung superstitiously to that particular day. But then he goes on to give a fuller explanation:

> However, the ancients did not substitute the Lord's Day (as we call it) for the Sabbath without careful discrimination. The purpose and fulfillment of that true rest, represented by the ancient Sabbath, lies in the Lord's resurrection. Hence, by the very day that brought the shadows to an end, Christians are warned not to cling to the shadow rite. [11]

He does not, however, mean that the Sunday is now necessarily the day of sacred observance, for he is willing to allow others to observe other days. He says:

> Nor do I cling to the number "seven" so as to bind the church in subjection to it. And I shall not condemn Churches that have other solemn days for their meetings, provided there be no superstition. This will be so if they have regard solely to the maintenance of discipline and good order.[12]

Soon, however, Calvin's followers went far beyond him in their insistence on the proper observance of the Sabbath. Particularly in Great Britain, Scottish Presbyterians as well as English Puritans began developing long lists of what could and could not be done on the Sabbath—which for them was Sunday. Thus arose Sabbatarianism, which in its original context did not mean the notion that the Sabbath should be celebrated on Saturday rather than Sunday, but simply that the Sabbath—normally Sunday—should be observed by abstaining from an ever-increasing list of prohibitions. In this sense, the passage from Wesley that I quoted at the beginning of the first lecture is an example of Sabbatarianism. To this was soon added another

movement insisting that the proper time for observing the Sabbath is on Saturday. Needless to say, although all of this stems from Calvin's insistence on the importance of the Sabbath, it goes far beyond the three purposes of the Sabbath stated by him, and even against what he considers its most important purpose, namely, to remind us that all our works and our attempts at doing what is right are as naught except by the grace of God.

****

Having said all this, we may now close our parenthesis and return to the question of the Sabbath as it appears in Genesis. In the first story of creation, in Genesis 1, humankind is seen as having dominion—and therefore responsibility—over the rest of creation. Humankind—both male and female—is created after the image of God. This image implies that, just as God has dominion over all things, so shall this human creature have similar dominion: "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth" (Gn 1.26).

It is this human being, made after the divine image, that the commandment calls to work six days and rest on the seventh, just as God created for six days, and rested on the seventh. Even as there is in God a rhythm of work and rest—of creating and letting creation move along its own pathways—so must there be in human life a rhythm of work and rest. And, just as there must be in our own lives such a rhythm, so must there be also in the rest of this creation that God has entrusted to our care.

Let us look first at the matter of the rhythm between work and rest.

I have told the story elsewhere, [13] but it bears repeating. I was visiting a Latino church in the Bronx when I learned that the pastor had been preaching a series of sermons on the Ten Commandments, and that this particular day he was to preach on the Sabbath. I must confess that I cringed. Ever since childhood, I had heard too many sermons on the Sabbath in which we were given a list of activities from which to abstain: on the Sabbath you cannot go to the movies; you cannot go to a ball game, or be part of it; you cannot play cards . . . As I sat in church, I hoped against hope that this pastor would take a different route. Perhaps he would tell the congregation that they must take a breather from their hectic lives, from the constant rat race, to rest and replenish their souls. I had heard quite a few sermons on that topic and found them rather refreshing as an alternative to the straight-laced Sabbath that we had been forced to observe in my youth. Or perhaps this preacher would tell us how the church had struggled in support of labor unions seeking a shorter work week.

Then the pastor came to the pulpit and surprised me. He read the commandment: "Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God." And then he asked: "How many of you have work six days a week, or even five?" When very few raised their hands, he went on to say: "The commandment is about both work and rest. The

commandment is not only to rest, but also to work. And yet, society all around the world is so ordered that many people cannot find work."

He was right. The commandment is not only about rest; it is also about work. The context of the entire Decalogue—and therefore also of the commandment on the Sabbath—is the work of God: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." It is this active God, this God whose work is creation itself, who commands the keeping of the Sabbath.

Thus, before we move too quickly to the matter of rest, we must stop to take a look at work. There is a popular notion that work is somehow the result of sin. But that is not what Genesis says. On the contrary, Genesis 2 clearly declares that "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden, *to till it and keep it*" (Gn 2.15). A garden is not the wilderness. A garden is a place of work. Even apart from sin, humankind is supposed to take care of the earth. In this second story in Genesis, this is seen as tilling the garden and caring for it. What does happen in Genesis 3, after the story of the Fall, is that the earth is accursed, and that therefore work will now become toilsome: "Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; . . . By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground" (Gn 3.17b-19a).

The commandment is not just about rest. The commandment is also about work—about meaningful, creative work, after the manner of the creating work of God. In past years, many in the church have supported the struggles on the part of organized labor for adequate rest. This was necessary, for before such practices were limited by law, there were workplaces where laborers were expected to put in seventy hours of work a week.

Once labor laws were changed so that the normal week's work is forty hours, we have moved to a different emphasis: recognizing that we live in a society where there is a constant struggle to "get ahead," and in which people tend to hold more than one job, and to take work home, we have begun to stress the need for leisure, for "quality time" with family, for the recovery of our spirit. (As I was preparing these lectures, Pope Benedict XVI called the world to take a rest, to restore its soul by taking a break from the apparently endless rat-race.) This I have repeatedly preached, and to this we shall return in a moment.

But before moving too rapidly to the matter of rest and leisure, we need to dwell on the matter of work, as did that pastor in the Bronx some years ago. Excessive work may be the problem of many in the middle class in the United States—where quite often in order to stay middle-class at least two salaries are necessary. It may also be the problem of many of us who simply are workaholics. But it is not the problem of many others. Lack of work, more than lack of rest, is the problem of many of the poor in the United States and elsewhere. As a very poor person has said about the condition of many in Latin America, "for us to be exploited would be

a privilege." There are people—millions of people—who have no land to till, and whose work nobody needs. We must keep these people in mind when we read the commandment: "*Six days you shall labor and do all your work*, but the seventh is a sabbath to the Lord."

As we keep these millions of people in mind, and look at our own stewardship, it is clear that the God who has given us dominion, power of representation as God's stewards, calls us to use that power of representation on behalf of those who cannot even begin to obey the first half of the commandment. The Sabbath is not just about rest; it is also about justice. The Sabbath is not just about us resting and calling others to rest; it is also about ensuring that as many people as possible can follow the divinely ordained rhythm of work and rest. Perhaps one of our main occupations in our own six days of labor should be to work on behalf of those who cannot work, so that they too may follow the rhythm of work and rest, and thus keep the Sabbath.

Secondly, if it is true that work is a gift of God, that it is part of God's purpose that we may have so to speak a garden to till, it is also true that toilsome, meaningless work is a sign of the curse upon a creation marred by sin. "Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life." The work that God desires for us—the joyful tilling of the garden—is work after the image of divine work; it is creative, meaningful work. And here again we must remember other millions—many millions, and many of them in our churches—whose work bears more the sign of the curse than of God's blessing. For many people in our congregations, it would appear as if the divinely instituted rhythm of work and rest were also a

rhythm of curse and blessing. Forty hours a week—or many more—they are cursed with meaningless jobs, so that they can then enjoy the blessing of a weekend, or of a life full of all the "goodies" that modern society tries to sell us.

It is important for us to be aware of this, for the rhythm of work and rest that the commandment envisions is a rhythm of creative work and the rest that comes after a job well done. In the Genesis story, as God created each thing, "God saw everything he had made, and indeed, it was very good." And then, when "God finished the work that he had done" "God rested on the seventh day from all the work he had done." This is not taking a break from meaningless, toilsome work, but rather taking the time to contemplate what one has done, to see that it is indeed "very good," and to rejoice in it.

This Sabbath rest is a joy unknown to many today. It is unknown, not only because many have no work, but also because many have work that they find meaningless. The modern industrial society, with its production lines, makes it difficult for people to find fulfillment in their work. The same is true of much of our computerized databases, where people spend hour after hour entering what to them is essentially meaningless information. Not that these jobs are unimportant; but that it is difficult to see their importance in the midst of the everyday tedious routine. And so, for many people today the purpose of work is not the work itself, but to earn a living. Someone else may actually benefit from their work; but to them the real product of their work is a paycheck. They work hour after hour, always with the clock in mind, for life really

starts when work ends. And to make matters worse, quite often this is not something imposed by outside circumstances but is simply the result of our having bought into the prevailing notion that the purpose of work is to "move ahead" in life, to have a bigger house, to have a more expensive car, to consume more conspicuously. (Nor are pastors and church workers exempt from this syndrome, for many of us have bought into the notion that bigger is better, and find our fulfillment, not in our work, but in the size of our church or in other such measures of success.)

****

At this point, true Sabbath requires a faithful and open consideration of vocation or calling. On this matter, Calvin declares that . . .

> The Lord's calling is in everything the beginning and foundation of well-doing. And if there is anyone who will not direct himself to it, he will never hold to the straight path in his duties. Perhaps, sometimes, he could contrive something laudable in appearance; but whatever it may be in the eyes of men, it will be rejected before God's throne. Besides, there will be no harmony among the several parts of his life. Accordingly, your life will then be best ordered when it is directed to this goal . . . .Again, it will be no slight relief from cares, labors, troubles, and other burdens for a man to know that God is his guide in all these things. [14]

When properly understood and accepted, such vocation, like the Sabbath, is a joy rather than a burden. Frederick Buechner's oft-quoted statement makes this clear: "The place where God calls you is where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."[15] Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset expressed the same idea negatively when he declared that "constant depression is a very clear sign that one is not following one's vocation."[16] And

Dorothy Sayers touched the very essence of much current disquiet in our society when she said that "work is not primarily a thing that one does to live, but the thing one lives to do.[17]

****

On the basis of all of this, we who are pastors, teachers, professionals, scholars, writers, may consider ourselves blessed with occupations in which we may express creativity and find meaning. But it is precisely at this point that two caveats must be raised. First, the Sabbath is not only about meaningful work; it is also about refreshing rest. Those of us who for one reason or another find fulfillment in our work are even more in need of the commandment of rest. Sometimes we enjoy our work so much that we simply have no desire to rest. I enjoy writing; and as a result, I never want to stop—or I don't want to stop until I am burned out and my creative juices are no longer flowing. In the ministry, this is called pastoral burn-out. Burn-out is not simply discovering that one is in the wrong occupation. More often, burn-out comes from enjoying the occupation too much; from enjoying it so much that one forgets the commandment, "Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest." Why rest, when we are not tired, when we enjoy what we are doing, when we would rather do what we are doing than anything else? Second, we must remember that, in contrast with what may be the case with us, many in our congregations have a very different experience. For them work is only meaningful as a means to earn leisure; work, rather than a creative partnership with God, is a dehumanizing drudgery. For them, it is imperative to find ways so that they may joyfully obey the first part of the commandment, "six days you shall work..."—joyfully, because

in their work they too are creating, they too can say, "it is very good," they too may end the week with a note of satisfaction on the work done: "it is finished."

But back to rest. Why rest? If for no other reason, because God commands it! God our Creator, who knows us better than we know ourselves, knows that we need rest—and therefore commands us to rest.

And this means rest. It does not mean some other activity whereby we prepare for the week ahead. Sometimes we accuse Judaism of being exceedingly legalistic in carefully listing 39 activities that are proscribed on the Sabbath: plowing, sowing, reaping, sheaf-making, threshing, bleaching, dying, spinning, writing, erasing, building, demolishing, kindling a fire, extinguishing it, and 15 others. But perhaps we need a similar list: studying, writing, planning . . . We need this list, not because these are things we do not enjoy doing, but precisely because we enjoy them. We need this list because these are the things that come naturally to us, the things we are constantly doing, the very things that may keep us from a true Sabbath rest.

And, if Calvin is right, and the main reason why God instituted the Sabbath is to remind us that we are not God, that our salvation does not depend on our own works, that even the product of our work is the result of God's grace, then even more do church leaders and others who find fulfillment in our occupations need to keep the Sabbath. Otherwise, it all comes to depend on us; and we fall into idolatry; and because all idols fail, we fail; and we burn out.

****

Having said all this, we may look more closely at the Sabbath and what it might mean for us. In order to do this, it is important to note that the commandment on the Sabbath looks, so to speak, both upwards and downward; both to God and to other creatures and people under one's tutelage or direction. Looking up: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day." And looking downwards: "You shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns." (And elsewhere, as we know and to which we shall return, God commands that the soil itself be given Sabbath rest.)

Let us look in order at some of the dimensions of the meaning of Sabbath, first taking into account our relationship with God, and then taking into account our relationship with others and with the rest of creation.

As to our relationship with God, the Sabbath is a reminder of both our closeness and our distance from God. While the entire Decalogue is based on God's actions on behalf of God's people, this particular commandment is based on the human ability and the human need to imitate God. Being made after the divine likeness means also being in some measure capable of acting after the divine example. It also means that we have the capacity to create—not as God, who can call beings out of nothingness by the mere sound of the divine voice, but still in imitation of God. We too can work, and once our work is finished, we can look at it and see that

it is indeed good. We can create and rejoice in our creation. This is so precisely because we are made after the image and likeness of the divine Creator.

There is in the Western theological tradition a long history of rejecting a notion that is quite common in Eastern theology. This is the notion of *theopoiesis* or divinization. The reason for this is obviously that such talk sounds too much like the old Roman apotheoses, through which mere mortals became divine. It also seems to obliterate the unsurpassable distance between creature and Creator. Thus, talk of *theopoiesis* may well lead to the notion that after all we are in essence divine, and all we need to do is to return to our true nature, and even be dissolved into the Godhead. That is certainly a danger to be avoided.

This has sometimes led Western theology to the point of acting as if the best way to exalt God were to denigrate the human creature. Thus, we hear preachers declaring that we are no more than pestilent worms. Or we take for granted that in Genesis the great sin of humankind is to wish to be like gods—when in truth Genesis 1.26 declares that they were already like God. The problem with this sort of theology is that in denigrating creation it ultimately denigrates the Creator. And it tends to forget that according to Scripture we are made after the divine image.

Between these two extremes, the best theologians among the so-called Fathers of the Church affirmed that the goal of human existence is precisely *theopoiesis*—to be made like God—but that the distance between Creator and creature is so vast than even were we to spend an

eternity coming closer and closer to God, God would still remain infinitely above us. We are to be both proud to be like God, and humbled by the enormous distance between ourselves and the Creator—a distance that is made all the greater as a consequence of sin.

In a way, the commandment to keep the Sabbath serves to keep us away from both extremes. On the one hand, this is the only one of the Ten Commandments in which we are told that we can imitate God's behavior. To create and to rest are both divine and human. To follow a rhythm of creating, stepping back, and rejoicing, and in this to imitate God, is a human prerogative.

And so we stand as we celebrate the day of rest: affirmed as creatures made after the divine image and likeness, and chastised lest we think too highly of ourselves, that somehow we can save ourselves—or save the world—by means of our own work.

For those of us who are pastors, theologians, teachers, writers, lay leaders in the church of God, this message is particularly appropriate. Too often we are tempted to think that, since we are servants of God, God cannot do without us. If we could just visit one more hospital, preach one more sermon, lead one more Bible study (in my case, write one more book!), things would be better. We love the illusion that somehow the church and the world rest on our shoulders, and that if for one moment we were to rest or to falter the consequences would be disastrous. In this regard, a true Sabbath disabuses us—and even more an extended period of absence from work, as on a "sabbatical." Thus, following a rhythm of work and rest after the pattern of the

Creator helps to remind us both that we are engaged in God's work—that we are God's stewards—and that we are not God.

****

But, again, the Sabbath is not only a matter of our relationship with God. It is also a matter of our relationship with others and with the rest of creation. Significantly, none of the other nine commandments in the Decalogue extends to others around us. The commandment about murder does not say "you shall not murder, *nor should your daughters and sons, or anyone else in your household.*" Naturally, the intention of the commandment is that nobody will murder anyone else. But the listener is told only that he or she must not commit murder. In contrast, when we come to the fourth commandment we find that we are responsible for having others keep it: "you shall not do any work—*you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns.*" This particular commandment we are told to obey, not only by keeping it ourselves, but also by having others keep it.

This is important, because quite often our rest means extra work for others. A man sits on a couch watching a ball game, and he sends his wife after a glass of water, and his son after his sandals, and even the dog to go fetch the newspaper. He may be resting, but it is not Sabbath rest! It is not Sabbath rest, because its direct consequence is work for others. In the sort of household in which the Ten Commandments were first lived out, in ancient Israel, a similar situation was possible. A man could take his Sabbath rest very seriously, while simply transferring to his children or to his servants the work that he himself was not doing.

Since most of us have grown up with an understanding of the Sabbath as a very restrictive set of dos and don'ts, we tend to read this part of the commandment as if it were a matter of extending to others and imposing on them the same strictures that the Sabbath imposes on us. But that is not the tone of the commandment. This is not about dos and don'ts; it is about the joy of sharing in God's work of creation, and celebrating God's work as well as ours. Thus, what the commandment is saying is not that believers should impose their rules on everyone else, but rather that believers should make it possible for those who live under their direction to enjoy the same Sabbath joy as they do.

Note that this extension of the Sabbath involves three sorts of people: children—sons and daughters—slaves or servants, and aliens. All of these are people in positions of subordination. This is quite clear in the case of children and servants; they must do as they are told. But it is also true of the alien. Throughout Scripture, there are frequent admonitions to care for the alien, and not to oppress them. This is so because in ancient times—and today in many of our cities and rural areas—the alien had very little protection, and therefore it was important for Israel to pay particular attention to the alien in its midst. At any rate, children and servants, and in many cases the alien, would have very little opportunity to celebrate the Sabbath if those in power over them were not commanded to extend the Sabbath so as to include them. Thus, the extension of the commandment so as to include children, slaves, and aliens places on Israel's shoulders the responsibility to provide others with the same rest that the commandment

provides for them. Just as God has blessed us with a rhythm of work and rest, we must extend that blessing to others who may be under our direction or influence.

It is important to understand this: the commandment to extend the Sabbath to others is not intended to add to their burdens, but exactly the opposite. This is made crystal clear three chapters after the Decalogue, in Exodus 23, where the purpose of the Sabbath is explained more fully: *"Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest, so that your ox and your donkey may have relief, and your homeborn slave and the resident alien may have relief"* (Ex 23.12).

Thus the struggle of labor unions and others for a shorter work week has often found support among churches, and many believers have been at the forefront of the struggle itself. If even God took time to rest after the work of creation, it would seem that others are entitled to a similar rest. The joy of Sabbath is for the entire creation, and believers must proclaim it and make it available even to those who do not share our faith.

On the other hand, on the basis of these very words from Exodus some Christians have sought to impose Sabbath laws on others and on the whole of society. When this happens, however, we have lost the real joy of Sabbath as a time to refresh body, soul and creation.

****

Since I have just mentioned the entire creation, there is another dimension of the fourth commandment that requires our attention: it is not only children, slaves, and the alien that must be invited into the joy of Sabbath; it is also the livestock! "You shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, *your livestock*, or the alien resident in your towns." At this point we enter into a dimension of the Sabbath mentioned before—the Sabbath as looking not only at our relationship with God and with others, but also at our relationship with the whole of God's creation. Elsewhere in the book of Exodus, it is explained that the Sabbath includes also the land: "For six years you shall sow your land and gather its yield; but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave wild animals may eat. You shall do the same with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard" (Ex 23.10). The same is reiterated in Leviticus: " . . .the land shall observe a sabbath for the Lord. Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in their yield; but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of complete rest for the Land, a sabbath for the Lord; you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. . . . It shall be a year of complete rest for the land" (Lv 25.2b-5).

This means that, just as God has had mercy on us by providing for us a rhythm of work and rest, so must we have mercy on creation by providing for it a rhythm of work and rest. It is not only we, but also the oxen and the donkeys and the land, that need a Sabbath in which to be refreshed. All of creation is intended to follow a rhythm of work and rest; and we as stewards

over that creation are called to see that it is so. The same God who refreshes us with Sabbath rest calls us to refresh nature with Sabbath rest.

****

Quite clearly, this runs counter to much of what we take for granted in modern society. Many of us seem to think that nature is there to be exploited to the maximum, and that its productivity has no limits. We thus speak of the "maximization of profits" as if it were the final rule for all our dealings with nature and with each other. As a result, lakes and rivers, and even the ocean, have been exploited and polluted to the point that lakes have dried up, rivers have caught fire, and growing sections of the ocean are dying. In some areas, the earth has been chemically fertilized again and again, to the point that now it can no longer sustain vegetation. We have created turkeys with breasts so big that they can hardly walk, and cows with udders so large that they must be immobilized, lest they hurt themselves. And our weather reports, which always spoke about temperatures, wind, and precipitation, now also give us an index of air pollution.

Now, as modernity and its dreams seem to come to a close, and we move into postmodernity, we are beginning to learn that the earth, like the animals and like us, needs Sabbath, that it must be allowed to rest. Creation does not offer unlimited resources for our exploitation. Eventually, the oil wells will dry up. If we are not careful, so will the water wells.

This means that those of us who are believers, and who take the Ten Commandments as God's word to us and to the whole of creation, must recover the full meaning of the Sabbath. We must recover its meaning within the context of our being made after the image of God in order to be God's stewards or representatives before the rest of creation.

In order to do this, we must look again at the story of creation in Genesis 1, where we are told that God made humans after the divine image, so that they could have dominion over the rest of creation. The ecological tragedy of modernity has often been justified by a strange reading of this passage. According to that reading, in creating humankind and giving it dominion over the rest of creation, God was giving humans a sort of carte blanche, so they could do whatever they would with the rest of creation. What this reading forgets it that the dominion of humankind over the rest of creation is after the image of God, and that the God whom we know in Scripture and through Jesus Christ is a loving God whose dominion is exercised for the benefit of creation; a God who out of love steps back from our lives, and lets us be ourselves, and who calls us to administer creation after the divine image—that is, in love, in service, and even in leaving it alone!

Notes

1. *Summa theo*l., 1-2, q. 100, a. 5, ad 2.
2. *Summa theol*., 2-2, q. 122, a. 5, ad 4.
3. *Summa theo*l., 2-2, q. 40, a. 4.
4. WA, 49:1. Quoted in Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966.
5. *Against the Heavenly Prophets*, in *Luther's Works*, Vol. 40 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958), p. 98.
6. *Inst*. 2.8.29. Ford Lewis Battles, trans. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1:395.
7. *Ibid*.
8. *Ibid*., p. 396.
9. *Ibid*.
10. *Ibid*., 2.8.33 (Battles trans., p. 398).
11. *Ibid*., 2.8.34 (Battles trans. pp. 399-400).
12. *Ibid*. (Battles trans., p. 400).
13. *Santa Biblia: The Bible Through Hispanic Eyes* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), pp. 59-60.
14. *Inst*., 3.10.8 (Battles trans., pp. 724-25).
15. Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC* ( ), p. .
16. José Ortega y Gasset, *La deshumanizaciön del arte* (
17. Dorothy Sayers, *Unpopular Opinions* (), p. .