

Books on Sabbath

An annotated bibliography

Ron Guengerich

Recent years have seen a resurgence of attention to Sabbath—its practice, its value, its benefits, its purpose, and its significance for theology and human existence. This issue of *Vision* is one more place of reflection on this special day. Over the past seventy years writers have contributed many new perspectives on Sabbath, with the primary shift being toward seeing Sabbath as a gift and blessing rather than a restriction and limitation.

A selective roster of the most significant voices reflecting on Sabbath, in both poetry and prose, is impressive, fascinating, and diverse. They are listed below in the order of their first appearance in print. Each of these voices contributes an urgent and appreciative perspective on Sabbath. Each of them proposes new

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understandings, renewed practices, and revised appreciation for “remembering” the Sabbath, a day of rest.

The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man, by Abraham Joshua Heschel (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Young, 1951). Heschel initiates attention to Sabbath among modern writers, with his classic treatment of the Jewish attitudes and practices of Sabbath. Walter Brueggemann is correct in calling this a magisterial book that articulates the Jewish perception of and appreciation for the Sab-

bath. Heschel (1907–72) did more than anyone else to enhance the relevance of Sabbath in modern times. This is required reading for gaining deeper insight into Sabbath.

Sabbath Time: Understanding Practice for Contemporary Christians, by Tilden Edwards (New York: Seabury Press, 1982). Edwards contributes an additional examination that presents both

Christian and Jewish practices and attitudes. This book introduces the idea and practice of Sabbath as receptive time, a time when we stop the active time of the other six days to receive the gift of the day.

Sabbaths, by Wendell Berry (San Francisco: North Points Press, 1987). Wendell Berry presents a wonderful short collection of poems written over seven years, giving us his gentle ruminations on the blessings and joys of Sabbath solitude and quiet. This thin volume is the witness of a Sabbath practitioner.

Keeping Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting, by Marva Dawn (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989). This practical and theological journal examines Marva Dawn's own interaction with Sabbath, noting the various actions that are part of Sabbath observance. A paean of praise for and delight in the practice and discovery of Sabbath, this collection of personal observations, scriptural interpretation, and lore about the Sabbath becomes a prism for examining Scripture from many different angles.

Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives, by Wayne Muller (New York: Bantam Books, 2000). Wayne Muller, a Christian pastor and therapist, provides a rich anthology of reflections on Sabbath and rest that expands the Sabbath horizon to add the wisdom of other traditions concerning observance and remembrance of Sabbath. This book explores the multitude of simple disciplines that enrich a day when nothing productive is done, a day when we begin to enjoy, relish, and observe blessings that we miss amid our frenetic daily activities.

Sabbath and Jubilee, by Richard H. Lowery (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000). Richard Lowery locates the theme and activity of Sabbath observance as central to an understanding of biblical faith. He lays out the rich social, economic, political, and cultural context of traditions concerning Sabbath (and Jubilee) and spells out implications for our day. This book ties Sabbath to a multitude of texts from the Hebrew Bible.

Rest: Experiencing God's Peace in a Restless World, by Siang-Yang Tan (Vancouver: Regent College Pub., 2000). Though not primarily about Sabbath, this book describes the subversive and

alternative practices that are necessary to enter the times of rest that are lacking in our contemporary world.

Living the Sabbath: Discovering the Rhythms of Rest and Delight, by Norman Wirzba (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006).

Norman Wirzba provides another set of practical suggestions about how to observe Sabbath, and he also discusses why Sabbath is needed and what is lost when we forget the Sabbath. This book works in much the same way as Brueggemann's: giving a critique of the bankruptcy and malaise of our current life-without-Sabbath while also providing the rationale for and description of the practices that make Sabbath a healing, wonder-filled day.

The Sabbath World: Glimpses of a Different Order of Time, by

Judith Shulevitz (New York: Random House, 2010). Judith Shulevitz provides erudite reflection on her deep desire to enter the Sabbath. This delightful book gives Shulevitz's personal interaction and struggle with Sabbath, noting how Sabbath observance creates a whole different perspective on time as it is experienced during the other six days of the week.

About the reviewer

Ron Guengerich is beginning an extended Sabbath/sabbatical (also known as retirement), in which he is preparing to recycle himself into new uses of his time and energy. He has spent the last thirty years as a seminary and college teacher of Old Testament, and as a pastor in Kansas, Ohio, and most recently in Goshen, Indiana, where he and his wife Ruth live.