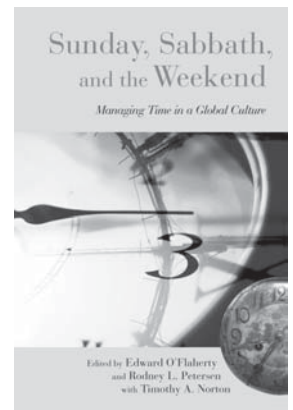


# Sunday, Sabbath, and the Weekend: Managing Time in a Global Culture

Eerdmans, 2010, paperback, 198pp. £10.99.  
ISBN-13: 978-0-8028-6583-0.

Edited by Edward O'Flaherty S.J. and Rodney L. Peterson  
with Timothy A. Norton



■ reviewed by Michael E. Cafferky

**If you haven't thought about the biblical meaning of the Sabbath lately and your mind is focused on business, I recommend that you start considering Sabbath now with the help of the book *Sunday, Sabbath and the Weekend*.**

Remember the Sabbath! Remembering (Exodus 20:8) and observing (Deuteronomy 5:12) the Sabbath is what the book helps us to do by offering a collection of fourteen essays on the Sabbath and what this concept and practice mean in a contemporary global context.

The authors' purpose is to raise our awareness of the value of Sabbath in creating an important 'social safety net' which, by contributing to human wellbeing, helps us to fulfil our civic responsibilities. There is more to Sabbath than an experience of individual worship on Sunday (or Saturday). Sabbath is a communal institution with amazing social implications for our whole life. In spelling these out this collection of essays builds on the legacy of Abraham Heschel's *The Sabbath: Its meaning for modern man*, published more than half a century ago.

The book allows us to hear different perspectives that reveal the depth to which Sabbath theology can be taken to enrich our life. The micro-level analysis adopted in the opening essay and the macro-level approach

taken by several contributors, along with the distinctive Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant perspectives, together build up complex layers of texture seldom seen in one volume on the Sabbath. Collectively the contributors, most of them theologians and clergy, show the interconnections between Sabbath and several other theological ideas such as creation, covenant, ecclesiology, mission, eschatology, the sacraments, social ethics, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and public theology.

Reading the essays in this volume can quickly give you an overview of the richness of Sabbath theology. For examples, consider that Sabbath:

- fulfils an important role as the 'hinge' between the first and second great Commandments (Mark 12:29-33); its Exodus 20 form emphasises emulating God and its Deuteronomy 5 form care for the slave/ neighbour
- forms God's people to fulfill their calling in mission; gathered worship equips for a life of discipleship and enables the continuing work of God in our daily life
- is the primary means of experiencing the Divine Liturgy, notably the Eucharist
- provides rest from commercialism
- reminds us of our finiteness.
- tests our loyalty to God and trust in his continuing care.



▶▶ The essayists offer us general implications of observing the weekly Sabbath for the faith community and for society as a whole. Its contributions are immensely valuable to Christians who wish to understand better the meaning of this great institution inaugurated at Creation, renewed at the giving of the Covenant, and finally given more complete meaning in the ministry of Jesus Christ. *Sunday, Sabbath and the Weekend* gives a good introduction to Sabbath concepts without getting embroiled in the details of debates over which day of the week is the biblical Sabbath, ceremonial vs. moral law, and when Sabbath begins and ends.

Contributors stop short of applying Sabbath to the world of business. Though this is the major shortcoming of the book it is so perhaps only for the businessperson interested in how Sabbath theology informs business practice. The book tantalisingly takes us to the edge of considering the implications of Sabbath for the workplace with all its budgetary considerations and constraints.

Its thesis could have been strengthened for the Christian business reader had the editors included one or two additional essays exploring Sabbath theology from the point of view of applied economics. For example, what guidance does the Sabbath concept offer to managers who desire to promote liberation from oppressive work in a way that fosters responsible stewardship of organisational resources, honours commitments to the larger community, and provides responsible care of workers?

It is relatively easy to criticise the one-dimensional culture of a 'production and consumption' society (which two contributors do), but it is more difficult to explore what further steps contemporary employers should be taking in order to respect the multidimensional nature of life envisioned in the Sabbath. Well-meaning, faithful Christians may differ in how they interpret Sabbath in the context of particular business situations.

Isaiah 58 makes clear the connection that God desires between Sabbath-keeping and

social justice. Opportunities to apply Sabbath thinking to the world of business can be quite easy to detect when obvious injustices (towards consumers, employees, or others) occur. In such cases, the Sabbath-observing businessperson will decide whether, when and how to advocate on behalf of those who are affected. Other positive opportunities include the following:

- Become better at planning for, and responding to, contingencies so that future events have less of an unfavourable impact on the prospects of maintaining a Sabbath-rest perspective at work (not to mention the ability of the worker to leave the intensity of work behind on the Sabbath day!)
- Offer adequate rest from burdensome work, but prevent workers from dishonouring the Sabbath principle by abusing rest periods
- Encourage others to voice appreciation for those among us who complete the least favoured tasks in our organisations
- Keeping Sabbath involves entering into the joy of work. Voice appreciation for those who do the least favoured tasks in the organisation - so-called 'dirty work'.

Overall the book fulfills its purpose well even if some of the essays appear to promote the interests of the *Lord's Day Alliance* (in the UK, *Lord's Day Observance Society*, now *Day One Christian Ministries*) as an organisation. Observations offered here about the book's weaknesses are not intended to throw stones at essayists whose purpose is something other than speaking directly to businesspeople. The book opens the doors for us to think creatively about how to take the principle of Sabbath rest on one day of worship to a Sabbath rest during the week - when financing operations, negotiating contracts, hiring, firing, investing, purchasing, providing products and services, increasing cash flow, and managing the revenue cycle all need to be done as efficiently as possible. ■

Michael E. Cafferky is Professor of Business and Management at Southern Adventist University, Tennessee. He is the author of the text book *Management: A Faith-Based Perspective*. He recently spent a sabbatical studying and writing at Ridley Hall.

