

## Andrews University Digital Commons @ Andrews University

---

Faculty Publications

Old Testament

---

April 2011

# Sabbath and Sanctification

Roy Gane

*Andrews University*, [gane@andrews.edu](mailto:gane@andrews.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/old-testament-pubs>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Gane, Roy, "Sabbath and Sanctification" (2011). *Faculty Publications*. Paper 29.  
<http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/old-testament-pubs/29>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Old Testament at Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact [repository@andrews.edu](mailto:repository@andrews.edu).

## **Sabbath and Sanctification<sup>1</sup>**

Roy E. Gane  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Society  
Andrews University

### **Introduction**

Exodus 31 places a brief divine speech regarding the weekly Sabbath (vv. 12-17) immediately after the Lord's detailed instructions for building him a sanctuary (25:1-31:11). The Sabbath pericope begins: "The LORD said to Moses: You yourself are to speak to the Israelites: "You shall keep my sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, given in order that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you" (31:12-13; NRSV).<sup>2</sup>

The basic appropriateness of the Sabbath as a sign that the Lord sanctifies his covenant people seems fairly transparent. "Israelites imitate God and partake of his Holiness"<sup>3</sup> by participating in cessation from work on the seventh day (cf. Lev 19:2-3), which he sanctified when he ceased from his work at the end of the creation week (Gen 2:2-3; cf. Exod 31:17). In this way they acknowledge to God and to other peoples that he is the intrinsically holy Creator and Source of holiness, and that he shares his holiness with time, people, and things, such as the sanctuary, that he bonds

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper was originally delivered as the Presidential Address for the 2010 Adventist Theological Society annual meeting in Atlanta, Georgia.

<sup>2</sup> NRSV here and subsequently, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>3</sup> William H. C. Propp, *Exodus 19-40* (Anchor Bible 2A; New York: Doubleday, 2006), 492.

*JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY*

to himself.<sup>4</sup> Just as consecrated priests have access to the holy sanctuary in space (e.g., Lev 8; Num 18), all Israelites enjoy access to the holy temple in time—the Sabbath—because God makes them holy.<sup>5</sup>

It is not the Israelites' own Sabbath rest that sanctifies them. Rather, the Lord himself does this. Their Sabbath observance signifies that they accept his gift of holiness. The free nature of the gift is emphasized by the fact that its sign—the Sabbath—involves no work. To the contrary, it is refreshing, liberating rest from work.

The covenant signs of the rainbow and circumcision testify to miracles: deliverance from the Flood and a line of descendants for Abraham and post-menopausal Sarah. Sabbath is a covenant sign of two miracles: Creation (Exod 31:17), and later the sanctification of Israel (v. 13). That Israel's sanctification is a miracle should be obvious to anyone who casually peruses the narratives of Exodus and Numbers.

What kind of change does Israel's sanctification effect? Since Sabbath rest signifies both Creation and sanctification, we could expect a thematic connection between them. Does the fact that the sanctified Creation memorial also celebrates the sanctification of God's people imply that the latter is a kind of re-creation, accomplished by divine creative power?

To plot a course for grappling with these questions, it is helpful to observe the following characteristics of *קִדְּשׁוּ*, “sanctify you,” in Exodus 31:13.

1. As a *piel* of the root *קִדַּשׁ* with a human direct object, it refers to transfer or transformation of someone to a state of holiness.<sup>6</sup>
2. The form is a participle, indicating that this sanctification is an ongoing process.

---

<sup>4</sup> On Exod 31:13, Rashi interprets *לִדְעוּת*, lit. “to know,” not for “you” (Israel) to know, as this is usually rendered (following LXX), but for the nations of the world to know through the covenant sign of Sabbath observance that the Lord sanctifies Israel. But in this context, Propp sees the Sabbath as reminding “both Israel and God of their covenant” (492).

<sup>5</sup> On Sabbath as a sanctuary in time, see Abraham J. Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1951), 27-29.

<sup>6</sup> Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (study edition; rev. W. Baumgartner and J. J. Stamm; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 2:1073-4.

*GANE: SABBATH AND SANCTIFICATION*

3. The pronominal suffix **כֶּם**-, “you,” is plural, referring to all Israelites. Holiness is for everyone, rather than restricted to an elite group.

The present study will explore these three aspects in order under the rubrics: transfer/transformation to holiness, ongoing sanctification, and holiness for everyone.

**I. Transfer/Transformation to Holiness**

“Sanctify” in Exodus 31:13 translates a *piel* form of **קִדַּשׁ**, which in *piel* means to make, treat, or declare something or someone holy, whether this transfer or transformation is expressed in terms of dedication, consecration, or sanctification.<sup>7</sup> So the semantic range is broader than sanctification as growth in character that is the work of a lifetime.<sup>8</sup>

When the Lord transfers/transforms the Israelites to holiness, he does not instantly make them morally perfect. This is jarringly demonstrated by the fact that the golden calf apostasy begins in Exodus 32:1, just two verses after the Sabbath pericope ends in 31:17. This covenant-shattering fiasco was hardly in God’s plan for Israel’s sanctification, but rather, interrupted it. Israel’s sanctification operated between the extremes of instant perfection and apostasy.

When the Israelites first arrived at Mt. Sinai, the Lord articulated his vision for their holiness:

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation” (Exod 19:4-6).

Here several aspects shape the profile of Israel’s holy relationship to God. First, he has already demonstrated his love by liberating the Israelites and miraculously bringing them to himself.<sup>9</sup> “Exodus makes it clear that

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.; cf. NIV—“who makes you holy”; NJPS—“have consecrated you”; NKJV and NASB95—“who sanctifies you”; NRSV—“sanctify you.”

<sup>8</sup> On sanctification as “the work. . . of a lifetime,” “the result of lifelong obedience” to God, see Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 560-61.

<sup>9</sup> Compare the song of deliverance at the Red Sea: “In your steadfast love you led the people whom you redeemed; you guided them by your strength to your holy abode” (Exod 15:13).

*JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY*

God, not a place, was the destination of the liberated people” because “what they were meant to be could only be found in what God is.”<sup>10</sup> The holy God makes his people holy by restoring them to union with himself as their Lord.

Second, the Israelites can enjoy the privilege of being God’s chosen, treasured possession, which means that they serve him as a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. By living in harmony with him as his special people and receiving the blessings that he lavishes upon them (cf. Lev 26:3-13; Deut 28:1-14), they are to be his representatives (“priests”) in order to show his holy character to other nations and share the blessings with them (cf. Gen 12:2-3; 22:17-18).

Third, being the Lord’s treasured possession is conditional upon obedience to him and keeping his covenant (cf. Ps 105:43-45). As the Creator and supreme Sovereign, he has no need or desire to exploit their human energy or material resources for his own well-being or profit (Ps 50:10-13). So his yoke is easy and his burden is light (cf. Matt 11:30). If his people, whom he has redeemed to enjoy his benevolent rule, disloyally violate his principles (e.g., Num 15:32-36), they express ungrateful rebellion and thwart his missiological purpose by misrepresenting him.<sup>11</sup>

Through the process of delivering Israel, God made the nation holy to himself.<sup>12</sup> Pentateuchal Sabbath legislation links these concepts: In Exodus 31, Sabbath signifies that the Lord sanctifies his people (v. 13), and in the Deuteronomy Decalogue, the reason for observing this day is the fact that he brought them out of slavery in Egypt “with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm” (Deut 5:15).

As the motivation for Sabbath observance, deliverance in Deuteronomy is the functional equivalent of the Lord’s rest, blessing, and consecration of the seventh day at the end of the creation week in Exodus 20:11.

---

<sup>10</sup> Sigve K. Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 86.

<sup>11</sup> So damage control requires that God distance himself from them, as evidenced by suspension of the blessings that only come with his rule (see the curses in Lev 26:14-39; Deut 28:15-68).

<sup>12</sup> The fact that the Lord directed the Israelites to keep Sabbath, the sign of sanctification, in the wilderness before reaching Mt. Sinai (Exod 16) suggests that he was then already engaged in the process of sanctifying them, in spite of their lapses in faith (14:10-12; 15:23-24; 16:2-3).

### *GANE: SABBATH AND SANCTIFICATION*

Creation and deliverance are linked. At the time of the Exodus, God deployed his power over creation to cause the ten plagues (chaps. 7-12) and the Red Sea crossing (chap. 14), through which he enabled the Israelites to rest from slavery and be holy to him. By resting on Sabbath, they acknowledged enjoyment of their re-created or reborn freedom, identity, and life with the Creator and Re-Creator, which gave them hope. “Biblical hope is a vision of the future which is paradoxically channeled through memory. As the event of creation is remembered, one can think of the event of recreation; therefore, one can hope.”<sup>13</sup>

Keeping in mind the difference between Israelite national deliverance and Christian individual salvation, we can find instructive analogies between the two. Just as Israel enjoyed rebirth and the beginning of sanctification, Christian conversion involves “new birth” (Jn 3:3-8; Titus 3:4-7) and initial sanctification or consecration (1 Cor 1:2, 30; 6:11). Paul even parallels Israel and Christians by referring to the “baptism,” implying a kind of conversion, of the former (10:1-2). The apostle sees value in learning from the Israelites’ experience. For him, soteriology is not an abstract theoretical exercise; it is a story.

There is another aspect to Israel’s story: The role of sacrifices in the process of the nation’s “conversion,” by which it became holy. First, the Israelites accepted the Lord’s provision for saving their firstborn by applying the apotropaic blood of their Passover sacrifices to the doors of their dwellings (Exod 12). Later their bond to YHWH was cemented when Moses tossed the blood of the covenant sacrifices both on the Lord’s altar and on the people (24:5-8).

Because the Lord spared the firstborn, they were holy to him, which meant that they belonged to him (Exod 13:2). They were representatives of all Israel, which God regarded as his firstborn son (4:22-23). So on the basis of the Passover sacrifice, which ransomed the lives of the firstborn (chap. 12; cf. 30:12), and redeemed the nation from the pharaoh (6:6; 15:13), all the people were holy to God (19:6; 31:13). Divine ransom and redemption produce holy ownership, i.e., consecration.

---

<sup>13</sup> Jacques B. Doukhan, “Loving the Sabbath as a Christian: A Seventh-day Adventist Perspective,” in *The Sabbath in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (ed. Tamara C. Eskenazi, Daniel J. Harrington, and William H. Shea; New York: Crossroad, 1991), 154.

*JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY*

As our Passover lamb (1 Cor 5:7), Christ has ransomed and redeemed us (e.g., Matt 20:28; Gal 3:13; Heb 9:15). If we accept this provision, we are justified rather than culpable and condemned (Rom 3:21-26; 8:1; Titus 3:7),<sup>14</sup> and we are holy in the sense that we belong to God (Rom 12:1; Col 1:22). As the Lord freed the Israelites from domination by the pharaoh, “He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col 1:13-14).

Entering a new kind of life, we become “participants of the divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4), enjoying the transforming benefits of Christ’s indwelling Presence (Gal 2:20) and power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:13), who pours into our hearts divine love (5:5), thereby progressively bringing us into harmony with God’s character (1 Jn 4:8) and law (Matt 22:37-40). These gifts are ongoing and produce progressive effects in the character, but they first come with conversion, and without them, conversion has not taken place (e.g., Rom 8:9). Without this divine assistance to pull us out of our deep ruts and set us on the road, reorienting us in the right direction, our journey with God cannot even begin.

Here is an illustration. My father-in-law, Richard Clark, was born in China to missionary parents. In 1940 he was eleven years old, living in the city of Hankow, and recovering from a second bout of polio. His father acquired a bicycle for him to exercise and regain strength. He rode it on a smooth, newly paved road in the French Concession part of the city. Alongside the road on either side were ditches, about five feet deep, that drained city sewer. There had been iron grates over them, but poor people had stolen them and sold them to the Japanese, who were occupying the country, for recycling into war materials.

One day as Richard made a U-turn, he swung a bit wide and fell into the open drainage ditch, with his bicycle wedged above him. A crowd of amused people gathered around to see the plight of the helpless “foreign devil.” But a Japanese sentry elbowed his way to Richard, reached down with a smile, and pulled him out of the sewer. Then he was able to go on his way.

---

<sup>14</sup> This ransom also justifies God in the sense of showing him to be just when he justifies those who have faith in Jesus (Rom 3:26).

## *GANE: SABBATH AND SANCTIFICATION*

The power that pulled Richard out of his predicament was not his own. It was from outside himself, but it made a difference in his life situation by giving him a new start. The fact that it made such a difference didn't mean that he could claim to have saved himself in any way. So why should anyone entertain the notion that if we experience an initial transformation at conversion—not only for us, but also in us—we thereby attribute part of the ground of our salvation to our own works or merit? It is all pure grace, just as when God delivered the undeserving Israelites from Egypt.

We have been in such a deep rut or, to change metaphors, afflicted by such a tenaciously chronic disease, that we need a whole package of assistance. Paul speaks of the dynamic, interlinked set of remedies that change believers at conversion: “but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11; verbs in aorist tense).

King David also included moral “washing” when he cried out for divine mercy and forgiveness at the time of his re-conversion: “Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin” (Ps 51:2; cf. v. 7). Additionally, he asked for something new to replace the old evil within him: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me” (v. 10). The word for “create” here is the verb **ברא**, the same word used in Genesis 1 for God's initial creation of the world. This term always has God as its subject because only he can create ex nihilo. So David called on the power that created the world to re-create his moral nature as part of the process of forgiveness/justification.<sup>15</sup> The idea that spiritual conversion involves a divine act of creation should occasion no surprise because we already knew from Exodus 31 that the Sabbath links these concepts: The sign of creation is also the sign of sanctification (vv. 13, 17), which includes the transformation of initial consecration at conversion.

### **II. Ongoing Sanctification**

In Exodus 31:13, **מְקַדְּשֵׁיכֶם** is a participle functioning as a predicate, with a direct object suffix that refers to the Israelites. So it emphasizes the

---

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1955 [1st publ. 1896]), 114.



*JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY*

durative circumstance that the Lord is the people's ongoing sanctifier.<sup>16</sup> The fact that the Source of sanctification is outside humanity means that even if people lose holiness, as they did at the Fall into sin and the golden calf apostasy, it can be restored by the always holy God.

Because sanctification is an ongoing process, the initial event of transfer/transformation to holiness provides opportunity for the journey; it doesn't immediately rocket one to the final destination.<sup>17</sup> After my father-in-law Richard was back on the road in Hankow, he could have jumped back in the sewer if he had chosen to repeat the vicious cycle. But now he had a choice, whereas he didn't have one before. He still had some cleaning up to do and had a way to go, but he could get there by increments rather than wallowing in excrements.

Similarly, the Israelite's "conversion" to holiness was the beginning of a journey with the holy God, who was sanctifying them by progressively drawing them closer to himself. They made a commitment to do all that the Lord said (Exod 19:8; 24:3, 7), but they needed to learn how to obey him and keep his covenant, to be a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. It was a steep learning curve, a bumpy road. Tragically, the first generation of liberated Israelites ultimately failed to enter the rest prepared for them in the Promised Land because they faithlessly rejected the lordship of their Savior and Creator (Ps 95).

The Israelites strode forth to freedom with gifts (Exod 11:2-3), and so do Christians (see above). But God has taken the risk of leaving our freedom of choice intact so that we can choose to love him. So we can also choose to turn against him and abuse his gifts, just as the Israelites used theirs to fabricate the golden calf (32:2-4).

Hebrews 4 picks up the appeal of Psalm 95 to hear the Lord's voice and enter his rest (Heb 4:9-11). Here the weekly Sabbath (cf. v. 4) symbolizes a total life experience that God's people can enjoy with him through faith. The Sabbath, commemorating the Creator's rest, is a microcosm of the life

---

<sup>16</sup> Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 624.

<sup>17</sup> The fact that Paul addressed the church in Corinth as consisting of "called saints" (NASB95—"saints by calling"; 1 Cor 1:2) who had been sanctified (same verse; cf. 6:11) by no means indicated that they had attained perfection (cf. 1:11). Rather, they had chosen to be joined to God through Christ, and Paul was appealing to them to live in harmony with their commitment to that union.

### *GANE: SABBATH AND SANCTIFICATION*

of faith that points beyond itself to rest in the re-created Promised Land to be enjoyed by those who maintain loyalty to him. The fact that the literal Sabbath can represent a simultaneous experience, rather than being superseded by it, is confirmed by Exodus 31:13, where Sabbath is the sign that the Lord sanctifies his people.<sup>18</sup>

The Israelites' deliverance gave them the opportunity for intimacy with God, through which they could learn to be like the Creator in character by living in harmony with his principles, which are all based on unselfish love. Thus, at the beginning of Leviticus 19, he commanded the Israelites through Moses: "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. You shall each revere your mother and father, and you shall keep my sabbaths: I am the LORD your God (vv. 2-3)." This remarkable chapter teaches God's people how to emulate divine holiness by following a variety of instructions for safeguarding relationships with him and their fellow creatures. At the center of the chapter is the command: "you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD" (v. 18). Jesus cited this verse and Deuteronomy 6:5 when he stated that all the law and the prophets hang on love for God and other human beings (Matt 22:37-40).

So the dimension in which humans are to emulate God's holiness is that of their relational interactions, by loving him and others in harmony with his essential moral character of love (1 Jn 4:8). Therefore, sanctification as growth in holiness is growth in God's kind of love: "And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints" (1 Thess 3:12-13).<sup>19</sup> Here sanctification carries special force in view of Christ's Second Coming, just

---

<sup>18</sup> Those who claim that literal Sabbath rest is superseded by the Christian "rest" experience that involves all days of the week (e.g., A. T. Lincoln, "Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament," *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation* [ed. D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982], 209-17) miss the point. Sabbath has never been a temporary type because it was instituted before the Fall, i.e., before the need for temporary types arose as part of God's salvific plan (cf. Roy Gane, "The Role of God's Moral Law, Including Sabbath, in the 'New Covenant,'" [Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2004], 14, published online at <http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/Gane%20Gods%20moral%20law.pdf>).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 560—"True sanctification comes through the working out of the principle of love."

as Sabbath rest, which signifies sanctification in Exod 31:13, points to ultimate rest in Hebrews 4.

As the appropriately ongoing sign of the ongoing sanctification process, Sabbath celebrates growth in love, by which we are being restored into the moral image of God, who lovingly created, liberates, and re-creates (cf. Ps 92—Sabbath Psalm).<sup>20</sup> This helps to explain the connection in Isaiah 58 between Sabbath (here especially the Day of Atonement Sabbath) and social concern: Sabbath as a celebration of love and liberation calls for service to the needy, in diametric opposition to selfish oppression.

### **III. Holiness for Everyone**

In *קִדְּשׁוּ*, “sanctify you” (Exod 31:13), “you” is plural, referring to all Israelites. Just as the Sabbath was equally for everyone (20:10; 23:12; Deut 5:14), holiness signified by rest on this day was for the entire “holy nation,” rather than restricted to an elite group. The people as a whole were consecrated as a “priestly kingdom” when Moses sprinkled the blood of the covenant on them (Exod 24:8), just as blood of the ordination sacrifice was later applied to the bodies of the Aaronic priests (Lev 8:23-24, 30), who functioned as the Lord’s special house-servants.

The holiness of all Israelites was emphasized by the fact that any man or woman could take a temporary vow of Nazirite dedication to God. Naziritiship involved aspects of lifestyle similar to those of the Aaronic priests, especially the high priest (Num 6; cf. Lev 10:9; 21:11).<sup>21</sup>

Even Israelite criminal law reflected the concept that all Israelites were holy. In Leviticus 24:19-20, one who inflicted a *מַזְרָם*, permanent injury, on another person was to be punished by the *lex talionis*. Elsewhere *מַזְרָם* refers to blemishes that disqualified priests from officiating (21:17-23) and animals from serving as sacrifices (22:20-25). Sacrifices and priests were, as far as possible in a fallen world, to model the pristine, holy sphere of the Creator of perfect life. By implication, assault resulting in *מַזְרָם* diminished

---

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Doukhan, 157—“Just as the Sabbath is the divine expression of love toward humanity, it is also, on the human level as a response, the expression of human love toward God.”

<sup>21</sup> See Roy Gane, “The Function of the Nazirite’s Concluding Purification Offering,” in *Perspectives on Purity and Purification in the Bible* (ed. Baruch J. Schwartz, David P. Wright, Jeffrey Stackert, and Naphtali S. Meshel; New York: T & T Clark, 2008), 9-17.

*GANE: SABBATH AND SANCTIFICATION*

the wholeness, and therefore holiness, of a person made in the image of God.<sup>22</sup> This kind of holiness actually applies to the entire human race, not just to Israel. God created everyone holy in the beginning, but all have fallen short of his glory (Rom 3:23), so all need his sanctifying re-creation, which the Sabbath represents.

The Israelite ritual system emphasized that holiness is characterized by life, as opposed to physical ritual impurity, which represented “the birth-death cycle that comprises mortality”<sup>23</sup> resulting from sin (cf. Rom 6:23). Persons and objects that were ritually impure, and therefore associated with mortality, were to be separated from the holy sphere of God (e.g., Lev 7:20-21; 15:31; Num 5:1-4), the Giver and Sustainer of all life. In this light, the fact that God sanctifies his people implies that he restores their life, which he created in the beginning (cf. Exod 31:13, 17).

Just as Israel’s holiness was for everyone, Peter echoes Exodus 19:6 to tell Christians: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9). So our priestly role, like that of ancient Israel, is to convey God’s revelation of himself to the world.

When Peter says “you,” he does not single out an elite episcopate or sector of sacerdotalists. Rather, he continues addressing “the exiles of the Dispersion. . . who have been chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood” (1 Pet 1:1-2). All of these believers and all others are to serve a royal priesthood and holy nation function.

An elite cadre of earthly priests, in addition to Christ’s heavenly ministry (Heb 4:14-16; 6:19-20; chaps. 7-10), is conspicuously absent in the New Testament. The universal New Covenant community does not have an earthly priesthood; we are a priesthood.<sup>24</sup> In this sense, the church does not have a ministry; it is a ministry. Since we have no elite earthly

---

<sup>22</sup> Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers* (NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 426.

<sup>23</sup> Hyam Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality: The Ritual Purity System and its Place in Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 49.

<sup>24</sup> Russell Burrill, *Revolution in the Church* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1979), 24.

*JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY*

priesthood, the pedigree and gender restrictions applying to the earthly Aaronic male priesthood under the elective covenant with the nation of Israel are irrelevant to Christian ministry.<sup>25</sup> Of course, the “body of Christ” needs differentiated functions, but these are determined by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12).

What would happen if we were to take the priesthood of all believers more seriously? What would happen if we were to optimize our collective human resources by more closely tuning in to the Spirit’s leading in assignment of roles, rather than quenching the Spirit under the influence of elitist attitudes to ministry held by churches that do not follow the New Testament model of religious leadership? If we empower all of our members by recognizing that they are various kinds of ministers, rather than restricting “ministry” to paid professional clergy, could we more effectively “proclaim the mighty acts of him who called” us “out of darkness into his marvelous light”? (1 Pet 2:9).

**Conclusion**

For the Israelites, the Sabbath signified initial and ongoing sanctification through divine intervention (Exod 31:13). This transfer/transformation to holiness involved liberation to God and a new life of progressive growth in holy love. So Sabbath celebrated liberation, life, and love from the Creator.

Since we too are a holy people (1 Pet 2:9), who are liberated to new life by the Passover Lamb (1 Cor 5:7), receive the gift of sanctification as growth in love (1 Cor 6:11; 1 Thess 3:12-13), and honor the Creator (Rev 14:7), we too can claim Sabbath rest as the sign of our sanctification. Today, as in biblical times, the egalitarian, inclusive Sabbath expresses the fact that God consecrates all people belonging to his egalitarian, inclusive, holy, priestly community that is designed to take this “gospel of the kingdom” to “the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matt 24:14; NASB95).

---

<sup>25</sup> See Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, 375-7 on reasons for Israelite priests to be male, which do not apply to Christian ministry today.

*GANE: SABBATH AND SANCTIFICATION*

**Roy E. Gane** is Professor of Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Languages in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. He finished his Ph.D. in Biblical Hebrew Language and Literature at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1992 and taught in the Religion Department at Pacific Union College from 1992 until he joined the Seminary in 1994. He has authored numerous articles, Adult Bible Study Guides on Judges (spring, 1996) and Isaiah (spring, 2004), and seven books: *God's Faulty Heroes* (Review and Herald, 1996); *Altar Call* (Diadem, 1999); *Ritual Dynamic Structure* (Gorgias, 2004); *Leviticus, Numbers* (NIV Application Commentary; Zondervan, 2004); *Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy* (Eisenbrauns, 2005); *Who's Afraid of the Judgment?* (Pacific Press, 2006); *In the Shadow of the Shekinah: God's Journey With Us* (Review and Herald, 2009); plus the "Leviticus" portion of the *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* (2009), and he was the primary translator of Leviticus in the *Common English Bible* (2011).  
gane@andrews.edu