NEW DIRECTIONS IN AUSTRALIAN SPIRITUALITY:  
SABBATH BEYOND THE CHURCH

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For at least three decades now surveys have been reporting that a majority of Australians pray, meditate or engage in some form of spiritual practice, but most do not express this spirituality by attending church. More recently, as the census has given people the opportunity to record “No religion”, we have seen a significant increase in the “Nones” as they are called. Meanwhile the attendance at Sunday church services continues to decline, with particularly low numbers in the younger generations. For all these findings there are notable exceptions, but the trends are well established and cannot be disputed.

My interest in this article is not in these statistics as such, but in a reflection upon the apparent spiritual life beyond the churches. In turning to this area, however, I would observe that we should not regard the decline in church attendances as entirely bad news. In another paper I have noted the vitality that is emerging in Christian groups forming in many contexts seemingly beyond “religious” structures, and I will briefly return to this matter later. Meanwhile, since it is no longer fashionable nor in many ways socially acceptable to go to church, this marks the end of nominalism in Australia. If people do belong to a church, it is likely to be because they are genuinely believers in Christ and his gospel and committed to a pathway of discipleship. For the life of a local church to be characterized by committed and, at least to some degree, counter-cultural discipleship is no bad thing. Some of us in the radical puritan traditions might even regard it as an answer to our prayers!

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1 One of the earliest studies here was Gary D. Bouma and Beverly Dixon, *The Religious Factor in Australian Life* (Melbourne: MARC, 1986). They found that while only 20% of people attended church weekly (that figure would now be seen as optimistic) 67% pray or meditate occasionally or more frequently.

2 Since the Australian census introduced the direct possibility of answering the religion question with “No religion,” this figure has steadily risen, from 6.7% in 1971 to 18.7% in 2006 and 22.3% in 2011.

Something Else Has Happened to Sundays

One Sunday morning each May, my family and I join with around 40,000 other people in Melbourne, for what is called The Mothers’ Day Classic. Around Australia about 100,000 people do this. In Melbourne people walk or run an 8 km circuit, as part of an immense fundraising event for breast cancer research. The first time I did this was a revelatory experience. It is a celebration of life, held on Mothers’ Day and with a strong feminine ethos. Although there is a fun atmosphere, the focus on breast cancer is also very clear. Shared grief or statements of support for someone fighting the disease give an emotional power to the event. Sometimes three generations of the one family walk together, commonly with small children in prams or carried on shoulders part of the way. There is a remarkable sense of community amongst strangers, encouraging, affirming life together on this earth.

Such events, supporting various causes and needs, have sprung up all over the world and occur in Melbourne on perhaps ten or more Sunday mornings per year. They reflect something much deeper and broader in our community, which I think is evident in many different ways on Sundays. What’s happening might be summed up in terms of breakfast, bike riding or Bunnings. These are three activities representative of what people are doing at the time others go to church.

The Sunday breakfast culture, widely known as “brunch,” is ubiquitous. From corner cafés to high-class restaurants to McDonald’s, people are “doing breakfast.” This is a time for families to meet others, relatives or friends, and very commonly it is now the time when friends “catch up.” It is the hospitality of the table and a time when advice may be sought, or friends may simply pour out their stories of what has been happening. It’s the stuff of relationships shared over food and coffee.

While you are at breakfast, however, you will very likely see at another table some people who have been bike riding, or engaged in some other recreation. Public parks, sports fields and the streets, which were once quiet and deserted on Sunday mornings, are now filled with people engaged in every kind of team and individual sport or personal exercise regime. These may be competitive or simply fun events such as a bunch of friends kicking a ball or an extended family’s cricket game. The bike riders represent another large element of what people do on Sundays. Later in the day, many will go to organized sporting events as well, if their team is playing that day, or watch it on television.
Some years ago one of the Sunday magazines ran a major article on “the new cathedrals,” likening the Bunnings chain of hardware and home improvements centres to the historic cathedrals of Europe. In these giant buildings, people find what they need in order to “improve” their homes and their lives. On Sundays, there is sometimes a family focus, usually barbecued sausages are on offer as well as coffee and other things to eat. The inference is that Bunnings is not just a store for buying things, it is a place to belong. Of course, people do not only go to the hardware stores. The shopping centres are now also a venue for large crowds on Sundays, and these also include places to eat.

Implicit in many of the things I’ve mentioned so far, however, is the requirement that other people are working, and that is a significant change in our society in recent decades. “Flexible” working hours mean that many people are expected to work on Sundays. For them, the brunch or bike riding or Bunnings will have to be some other day. That, too, is part of what has happened to the idea of “Sabbath.”

Finally, lots of people spend much of Sunday at home with family or their household, resting, gardening or doing all the things that need to be done to sustain everyday life, such as washing, cooking, gardening or home maintenance. And for most people, including those who do go to church, Sunday is a mixture of all of these things.

A Renewal of Sabbath?

Strangely, with the decline in church services we are seeing a renewal of the classic idea of “Sabbath.” This classic biblical idea needs some explanation, as all too easily it has been understood in negative terms. One of the traditions which make up the Hebrew Bible has a focus on ritual worship (in the temple) and the keeping of the Sabbath. The basic idea of the Sabbath can be seen in the fourth commandment of the Decalogue, “Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy” (Exod 20:8). The verses that follow explain that on this day the people are not to work and the basis for this prohibition is that God the Creator established this practice. In six days, God created all that is and on the seventh day God rested (Gen 1:1–2:4a). Theologically it is vital to see this priority. Before there was an Israelite Sabbath there was and is a divine Sabbath. The importance of this priority is emphasized by Jesus, when he critiques those who complain that his followers have failed to observe the Sabbath (by plucking heads of grain). Jesus counters that the Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath (Mark 2:23–28). But that means that
the Sabbath itself must be understood in terms of God’s purposes—and that is best understood by looking to the creation story in Gen 1. There we find the repeated refrain that God looked at what had been made and God was pleased: “it was good.” These positive affirmations lead to the Sabbath. When God “rests” on the seventh day, this rest is not to be understood only in negative terms, that is in terms of what God does not do. While God does not “work,” instead there is a positive affirmation of all that God has made. This first and definitive Sabbath speaks of wonder, celebration and delight. It is the enjoyment of things, creatures and people—something that is often not possible during work, especially for those whose work is manual labour. So when the people are urged to “remember” and “keep holy” the Sabbath day, they are being urged to follow this divine example. It is much more than a negative avoidance of hard labour, or that meticulous focus on what one may or may not do, such as precisely how far one may walk on this day (the kind of thing the Pharisees emphasized). Keeping the Sabbath holy is about engaging positively with God’s creation, affirming life, valuing the good things achieved and reflecting perhaps on what might need to be put right. It is about recreation, reflection and renewal. In many ways, as a recent work by Walter Brueggemann suggests, this requires resistance to the impetus of our culture, which would have us working and achieving things all the time. As Brueggemann puts it, “YHWH is a Sabbath-giving God and a Sabbath-commanding God. … Sabbath becomes a decisive, concrete, visible way of opting for and aligning with the God of rest.”

As Brueggemann sees it, to understand the meaning of “rest” in regard to Sabbath, we need to understand its opposite, which he explains in terms of restlessness. What the Sabbath, both divine and human, resists is that frantic and often anxious activity which so characterizes our lives, even sometimes our very busy Sundays at church.

It is on this basis, then, that I am suggesting that there is something of a renewal of “Sabbath” evident within the Sunday activities I’ve described in terms of breakfast, bikes and Bunnings, in themselves just examples of many other features emerging in our society.

There are significant values expressed in these activities. Fundamentally, there is an assertion of life, to be enjoyed and valued. It is life together,
expressed through the table hospitality of breakfast and the enjoyment of sport and leisure. So too these activities affirm our embodied life. Food, sport and working to “improve” homes are all part of being together as embodied persons. Not all of these things are overtly named or stated within these Sunday routines, but they are part of what is happening and these are good things, even if also they can be distorted into selfishness or indulgence. Behind them all is an affirmation of life and a desire to enjoy, to be grateful and to share that affirmation. Furthermore, there is a clear element of community here. These activities are about family, friendship and the development of relationships.

All this has something of the character of Sabbath. It is the kind of active rest that allows renewal and recovery from the stress and demands of work and the remainder of our lives. It has something of the resistance that Brueggemann proposes, against the idea that our lives are primarily about our work, what we produce or earn, and so forth. It is the affirmation of God’s good creation and the desire to enjoy, even if it is not seen as God’s creation as such. The possibility, then, that the Jewish and Christian idea of Sabbath has to some degree found a new expression in our lives and culture, apart from the church, leads me to consider the work of John Carroll, who writes of the “divine breath” in our ordinary lives and activities.

THE “DIVINE BREATH” IN EVERYDAY LIFE

John Carroll has written a number of books that trace what has become of the religious commitments which once shaped western culture but now seem to have virtually no influence on how we live. Carroll does not believe that those historic social forms simply dissipate without trace. Rather, his argument is that there is a “divine breath” which has moved out of the churches and into our everyday life. His thesis is worth considering as a way of understanding both the meaning and the dangers in this situation.

In *Ego and Soul*, Carroll argues that the dominant forces in our culture are in fact two Reformations: the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century and, following that, the rise of capitalism. But what is paradoxical is that the former of these has led to a spiritual crisis, meaning that we are now acutely vulnerable to the distortions of the latter. In Carroll’s view, the Protestant “tendency,” which essentially challenged the special sacredness of certain places, people and performances, has led to the emptying
or disappearance of the churches.\footnote{John Carroll, \textit{Ego and Soul: The Modern West in Search of Meaning} (Sydney: HarperCollins, 1998), 5. Frequently he refers to the emptiness of the churches, without recognition that this is not a universal phenomenon. A further development of this argument can be found in Chapters 4 and 5 of John Carroll, \textit{The Wreck of Western Culture: Humanism Revisited} (Melbourne: Scribe, 2004).} Positively, as Tillich long ago argued, the “Protestant Principle” recognizes the religious or spiritual presence in all things.\footnote{Whereas it might be argued that the “Protestant Principle” as he called it was at the heart of all Tillich’s theological work, a sustained consideration of these ideas can be found in Paul Tillich, \textit{The Protestant Era}, trans. James Luther Adams (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948).} Carroll sees a kind of democratized spirituality of ordinary lives. There is a wider sense of life as vocation: ordinary lives will be the locus of meaning and value, not just those spent within religious institutions. Our ordinary lives in the world are the place where we will find meaning. In our lives of work and home, most people “continue to feel strongly moved by such age-old values as trust, nurture, protecting the innocent and helpless, honesty, courage and patriotism.”\footnote{Carroll, \textit{Ego and Soul}, 28.} There is an inherent conservatism here. The “heroes” of Carroll’s representation of contemporary society are those he pictures as “lower middle-class,” who are the largest majority and participants in popular culture. It is precisely here that Carroll sees the signs of the “divine breath”—but also the danger that it may also be lost entirely.

Popular culture focuses around two things, “the hearth” or home, where life is nurtured and lived with dignity and hard work, and an acceptance of the world as it is, without any grandiose expectation that we can change it. This acceptance contrasts with the upper middle class drive to be constantly improving the world.

The lives of people within the popular culture are, however, endangered by the very historical developments Carroll describes, because along with the “historical necessity” of the Reformation tendencies—the shift of focus out of the churches and into everyday life—has come the loss of a framework of belief and meaning. “Not much is left apart from popular culture to fortify belief, or to steady families under strain.”\footnote{Carroll, \textit{Ego and Soul}, 45.} The heart of the community is lost.\footnote{Carroll, \textit{Ego and Soul}, 45.} Hence the continuous search for meaning.

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7 Carroll, \textit{Ego and Soul}, 28.
8 Carroll, \textit{Ego and Soul}, 45.
9 Carroll, \textit{Ego and Soul}, 45.
Only ego and soul remain as indicators of “the divine breath” within all life. But there is no theology, no doctrine to give meaning and gravity to these elements. Western culture has been founded on a “balance” of these elements, enabling the fulfilment of ego (in an appropriate sense of vocation) while still allowing “the freedom of the soul to speak.”

So what Carroll is suggesting is that there is a fundamental danger in our present situation. While he believes people will inherently pursue the possibilities of life, through a sense of personal meaning and value, in home life, intimacy, sport and friendship—the very things we have seen evident on Sunday mornings—these values may very easily be undermined by the dangers of nihilism and consumerism. Shopping may become all there is left to do, in the otherwise soulless cathedrals of our culture. Interestingly, Graham Ward has identified this same concern, arguing that the genuine transcendence of religious faith is being crassly simulated in commercialized and sometimes kitsch forms.

Carroll is himself clearly concerned about where this “divine breath” is going. When the sacred has moved into ordinary life, into many small things, we are engaged he says with a number of “small g gods,” but he doubts that this will be “enough to accompany a person through the legendary dark night of the soul.” In short, will that implicit spiritual awareness be overwhelmed by the everyday concerns of life, by consumerism and by a loss of hope, meaning and vision?

Scott Cowdell has responded appreciatively to Carroll’s work in this and other books, summing it up with the observation: “Western culture is dying for want of a story.” He notes that Colin Gunton had also argued that “when God was removed from the centre of Western life, God’s place was taken by other gods of our own making.” Cowdell very nicely suggests that Carroll finds a “spiritual reality claiming us anew … . Not a personal God, worshipped in church, but a kind of ethical pantheism, worshipped by living well and ordinary life.” That last phrase points us back to what

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10 Carroll, *Ego and Soul*, 231.
15 Cowdell, *God’s Next Big Thing*, 50.
we observed about Sunday mornings. Carroll does not see us celebrating anything exceptional, but ordinary life. It is this we value on our Sabbaths, nothing special, majestic or involving any high culture. Still, it is about living well. It is about good food, keeping fit, affirming our bodily life and our life together in the world. It is about maintaining health: mental, physical and relational. It is Sabbath rest, renewal and celebration.

In the last paragraphs of *Ego and Soul*, however, Carroll hints that for at least some people the search for meaning will require more than the popular culture can provide: beyond our popular heroes and exemplary characters, some will pursue a large-g God. In particular, there may be a belief in a Christ presence that provides support in times of suffering.16 It is interesting that Carroll went on to write *The Existential Jesus* and *The Wreck of Western Culture: Humanism Revisited*, both of which include strong reference back to the Christian New Testament.17 It would seem that for him at least, the lack of a story calls for some kind of renewal of the Christian story, relating the stories of Jesus and his vision of life with God to our stories and our ordinary lives.

**A SECULAR AGE OR THE AGE OF THE SPIRIT?**

A number of theologians have offered responses to this evident shift in “spiritual” life in our culture, some lamenting it and others welcoming it. One very helpful contribution to be noted here is the argument in the first part of Charles Taylor’s monumental *A Secular Age*.18 Taylor distinguishes various ways of understanding “secularity,” suggesting that it is not inherently anti-religious. Whereas in earlier times, religious belief was embedded in a culture, so much so that believing was hardly a choice at all, today it is at most one of the options or “points of view” available to people. Taylor’s claim is important though: secularity as such does not preclude the option of believing nor make it impossible. Secularism may resist and oppose religion, but secularity allows for choices and Taylor sees many new forms of faith communities, groups and expressions of faith emerging in the “bricolage” of contemporary culture.

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Writing in the United States, but on the basis of very extensive global research, Harvey Cox has suggested that in the last century or so we have moved from what he called “the age of belief” to “the age of the Spirit.” In his most recent work, Cox describes three very broad eras in Christian history. “The age of faith” persisted for the first three centuries, a time of creative and often contradictory forces in church life. Here Cox sees a tolerance for diversity and a focus on faith in Jesus and his ethic (in contrast to the imperial regime). From the time of Constantine and through all that we have known as Christendom, Cox sees the “age of belief,” where what it meant to be Christian was codified, doctrinally, and Christian life took on institutional forms. In this time, theology provided a comprehensive explanation of life and to a significant degree the mystery of faith was removed, or at least managed, while the teachings and ethical demands of Jesus were less prominent. Finally, with the emergence of the Pentecostal movements of the last century and a number of other factors, Cox sees the “age of the Spirit.” More like the first age of faith, this time again embraces a rich diversity of expressions of contextual Christian community. In his studies of the Pentecostal movements, Cox has noted a strong tolerance of diversity, with a focus more on experience than doctrine. Notably, also, in the earlier forms of these movements he found a strong emphasis on inclusiveness and social justice, particularly for women and across racial divisions.

It is interesting to pursue Cox’s idea of the age of the Spirit, to consider the theological possibilities of what Carroll called the divine breath. Here I shall develop an argument from Philip Rosato, in a paper prepared in the lead-up to the Canberra Assembly of the WCC, on the theme “Come, Holy Spirit, Renew the Whole Creation.” Rosato considered the presence and mission of the Spirit within and beyond the church. His interest is in what we can see the Spirit doing in each of these contexts, but then also in what the church can learn from the Spirit’s activity “beyond” the church.

Rosato describes the mission of the Spirit in terms of four key elements: truth, unity, liberty and life. In another paper I have explored these ideas in more depth. Here I will explain just one example of Rosato’s argument.

The church has affirmed the promise of Jesus that the Spirit will lead his followers into “all truth” (John 16:13). This idea of truth has all too easily been focused on what we might call theological ideas, in which the church may claim some expertise. It is centuries since the church could claim to be the custodian of all truth (if ever). Thus Rosato sees the mission of the Spirit of truth in all the genuine enquiries of human science and reflection. Furthermore, since all truth is God’s truth Rosato urges the church to learn from the mission of the Spirit in leading humanity towards truth. We should affirm the quest for truth wherever it may lead. We should be prepared to learn from those who have discovered new ways of understanding, for example in community formation and leadership models. Similarly, in his discussion of the Spirit’s mission as liberator, Rosato challenges the church to work with all people of good conscience, all who work for justice, whatever their political philosophy might be.

In my paper referred to earlier, I pressed Rosato’s argument further to suggest that we might add a fifth role of the Spirit within and beyond the church, that of artist.23 The quest for beauty is in fact now well expressed in many churches, including in many previously more word-centred forms of worship. The Spirit’s work as artist invites us to see and celebrate the beauty of creation and creativity wherever it is found.

Now I would like to press this argument further, in two specific ways. The first is to suggest a number of other roles of the Spirit. Where Rosato spoke of the Spirit as life-giver, in the preceding discussion we have seen indications of the “divine breath” of the Spirit in nurturing life. Where people are seeking to grow, to be healthy, to celebrate relationship as families and friends, supporting and caring for one another, life itself is being nurtured. This can be seen within local church life as an expression of what is called “fellowship,” the koinonia of the Spirit, a mutuality amongst people which itself derives from the mutuality of life within the divine community, the Trinity. Nurturing life together is what the Spirit does. That nurture is part of what is happening in the Sabbath expressions within our culture.

Similarly, we might speak of the Spirit as maker, in an affirmation of the continuous activity of making things, from cupcakes to bookshelves, from toys to office blocks. This is perhaps an extension of the earlier idea of artist, except that here I want to affirm the functionality of most of our making. Whilst some things we make are for the inherent beauty of that object, piece of music, painting or film, most things are made primarily for their use. All too easily we

discount the useful simply because of its functionality. If we follow Carroll's affirmation of the ordinary as the “destination” of the divine breath, it may be in the very ordinary making of ordinary things that we can see the work of the Spirit as maker. A person makes a bed every day, as a service to themselves and perhaps their family member. A parent makes sandwiches for the children’s lunches. Someone else digs a trench in which to place sewerage pipes. Every one of these things can be seen as “merely” doing the job. It may seem a stretch to speak of them as having “spiritual” significance, but this is because we have so reified the “spiritual” as to separate it from the practical, the physical and indeed from life as it is lived. My contention is that we need to re-think the idea of the Spirit’s presence precisely to embrace the ordinary, the practical and physical, including the beautiful and those things we might consider merely functional. One very important extension of this argument needs to be the development of a theology of economics and finance, where “economy” is the life of the household, the whole community. This should not begin with ethical prohibitions, but rather with an affirmation of the necessity and value of industry and commerce, in providing employment and productivity. Here, too, the Spirit is at work making things and we can celebrate these activities as having “divine breath.”

Finally, I would add the role of the Spirit as healer. Rosato’s interest in the Spirit as unifier perhaps includes binding together that which is divided within human affairs. My interest is to take this further, into the work of an anaesthetist, a clinical psychologist and an occupational therapist, for example. In the “healing professions” there is a growing recognition of the need for a holistic approach to care. Patients are not only individuals, let alone limbs or organs, separated from the whole body and their family and community systems. This growing recognition that we are whole persons, living in relationships, is a gift of the Spirit, calling us all towards the healing of our individualist and often self-centred ways of living (and dying). The Spirit invites us to a renewal of relationships within the human sphere and ultimately with the entire creation—something like the Sabbath renewal we described earlier. While their work may sometimes seem very “ordinary” to the health care practitioners, it is vital for those who receive healing and, I would suggest, vital for us all. The church, too, has a contribution to make in this area, with many aspects of healing care, through countless activities and supportive relationships which keep people going, enrich the community and share wisdom and guidance. Here, too, the divine breath is evident.
Ordinary Life as “Priestly”

There is a further theological development to be noted, in our extension of Rosato’s argument. Here we return to John Carroll’s claim that one aspect of the movement of spiritual life into the everyday and ordinary is a wider sense of vocation. Negatively, this means that we live without special persons who “dispense” the spiritual presence to us. This is basically what Carroll sees as an historical outworking of the Protestant Reformation: the making-secular of all things means that no one is a special vehicle of the divine presence. Yet that same insight was, in the Reformation period, seen to mean quite the opposite: that every life is in fact a “called” life, a vocation. In every profession there is a priestly function and, even more, the sum total of the lives of the members of the church forms a collective priesthood, “the priesthood of all believers.” This cherished Protestant idea has been applied in many different ways. In the Baptist tradition, for example, it was at times taken to emphasize that we all have access to God without need of any mediator other than Christ (1 Tim 2:5), while in other places some have taken this idea to mean that any person may lead worship or exercise various functions in the church service, and still others emphasize a mutuality of service in prayer and Christian nurture. In its richest form, however, this doctrine has presented a vision of Christian service beyond the church walls, in what Carroll calls “ordinary” lives being lived well. Here, in the affirmation of life, where I have suggested we can see the “divine breath” in the Spirit’s activities as teacher, unifier, liberator, life-giver, artist, nurturer, maker and healer, there is an invitation to celebrate life, offering it and ourselves in humble gratitude to our Creator and to each other. This is a priestly service in which we participate, simply by living. We may participate in a new spirituality, a new Sabbath renewal, and with all of that we may discover in new ways the comprehensive life-story of our faith.

But There Is Also a Prophetic Challenge

To conclude here, however, would be to offer a much too limited and indeed romantic vision of ordinary life. Carroll’s work, from which I have drawn positively, celebrates what he calls the lower middle classes and their ordinary life, which he says includes a basic acceptance of how things are. The contrast here is with higher income groups, who he says always want to change the world. They are, in the language of contemporary politics, “aspirational.”

24 Robert Muthiah gives a succinct survey of the various expressions of this idea, from the works of Luther through to recent Protestant and Catholic thought, in The Priesthood of All Believers in the Twenty-First Century (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009), 17–46.
In his later work, however, *The Wreck of Western Culture*, written after the attacks upon the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, Carroll sees the need for “a new place to stand”: the threat of violence and nihilism is now acute. “The exit into endless night eternally threatens.” Humanism is dead, Carroll says. Sacred rage is a possibility, but something more positive is needed. We must recover “our capacity for spontaneous and self-conscious revulsion” and return to “the difficult business of restoring our capacity for life.” Then, in his final sentence, Carroll invokes the Gospel of John: “in the beginning was the word.” Here is the hint of something more than the priestly offering of everyday life. It is a call to a prophetic dimension as well. Whilst there can be no ultimate separation of the priestly and prophetic dimensions of Christian life, they are distinct emphases and the preceding affirmation of the “priestly” character of everyday life runs the risk of being one-sided and indeed may easily collapse into the very consumerist futility that Carroll fears.

The positivity of my earlier description of the Spirit’s invocations to truth, unity, beauty, healing and so on, can only be sustained in a wise and deliberate rejection of the nihilism, commercialism and sheer crassness that is possible if we ignore the reality of what our theological heritage calls sin. There is an ambiguity and destructive potential in all things, with potential to narrow self-concern, moral self-deception and spiritual blindness. This is why the priestly must always be accompanied by the prophetic.

The Spirit speaks truth to our self-deceptions and urges us to see more, hope for more, to aspire for a better way. This is not about becoming richer in things or upper middle class, but about a vision of community that is truly healthy, becoming whole together. This is the possibility not just of Sunday brunch, bikes and Bunnings, but of a constant Sabbath renewal, the gift of a renewed and renewing spirituality, a life together. It means laying claim to the Sabbath as *resistance* as well as celebration.

In the spirit of the Hebrew Bible, the Sabbath we may enjoy week by week and year by year is not an end in itself. It reaches forward in hope of a divine Sabbath, when all people and all creation find rest with God. There is a positive, prophetic and counter-cultural dimension to this Sabbath

26 Carroll, *Wreck of Western Culture*, 268.
invitation. Inherent in this vision is the basis both for this priestly and prophetic spirituality, in mutual critique and positive harmony.

It might be suggested that this call for a “prophetic” dimension to the contemporary quest for “Sabbath” to some degree undermines the preceding argument for the spiritual significance of everyday life. That could be so, but only if we see the priestly and the prophetic in opposition to one another, rather than in a creative tension—as they are within the biblical traditions. What does seem to follow clearly from these considerations, as Carroll himself articulated, is the constant need to resist the inherent pull of contemporary culture towards consumerism and nihilism, as if these are the only options. In this context, a Christian theological response offers a vision of the Spirit’s presence within our lives and cultural movements, inviting us to see a greater depth, meaning and possibility, and thus to be thankful, hopeful and to rest in celebration with our Creator and with one another.