

The Sabbath in Scripture and History. Edited by Kenneth A. Strand. Review and Herald, 1982, 391 pp., \$19.95.

For many years it had been recognized among those who have worked closely on this subject that Seventh-Day Adventist literature in this area is not only partisan but also lacking in scholarly acumen—with perhaps the single exception of the major work by J. N. Andrews and L. R. Conradi, *History of the Sabbath and First Day of the Week* (1912). The generalization no longer holds: Not only do we have the work by Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday* (1977), but now also the work under review.

Most of the contributors are connected with Andrews University in Michigan or its associated Seventh-Day Adventist Theological Seminary. After a brief introduction by the editor the book offers 16 chapters divided into three general areas. The first six chapters deal with Sabbath and Sunday in the Biblical period: Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Sabbath in the

Pentateuch"; Hasel and W. G. C. Murdoch, "The Sabbath in the Prophetic and Historical Literature of the Old Testament"; Sakae Kubo, "The Sabbath in the Intertestamental Period"; Robert Johnston, "The Rabbinic Sabbath"; Walter F. Specht, "The Sabbath in the New Testament" and "Sunday in the New Testament." The second part deals with Sabbath and Sunday in Christian Church history and offers seven more chapters: Samuele Bacchiocchi, "The Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity"; Werner Vyhmeister, "The Sabbath in Asia" and "The Sabbath in Egypt and Ethiopia"; Daniel Augsburg, "The Sabbath and Lord's Day During the Middle Ages"; Kenneth A. Strand, "Sabbath and Sunday in the Reformation Era"; Walter B. Douglas, "The Sabbath in Puritanism"; Raymond F. Cottrell, "The Sabbath in the New World." The third section, on Sabbath theology, is the shortest, embracing the final three chapters: Roy Branson, "The Sabbath in Modern Jewish theology"; Hans K. LaRondelle, "Contemporary Theologies of the Sabbath"; Raoul Dederen, "Reflections on a Theology of the Sabbath." The book ends with eight appendices of various length on such topics as "The Planetary Week in the Roman West" and exegetical discussions of Rom 14:5-6; Col 2:16-17; Heb 4:4-9. Perhaps the comprehensiveness of the book may be judged by the fact that the final appendix, by Cottrell and Lawrence T. Geraty, discusses "the sabbath on a round world." Inevitably there is some overlap and considerable variation in the quality of the essays, but the editor has worked hard to make the volume as unified, even and readable as could reasonably be expected.

The central arguments of Seventh-Day Adventists regarding the Sabbath are well known. The Sabbath law is seen as a permanently binding moral requirement that cannot be weakened in any way, even to a principal "one day in seven" that might allow for the "transfer theology" especially prominent in many strands of Protestantism—a theology that argues for the legitimacy of calling Sunday the Christian Sabbath. A close reading of in-house debates recorded in *AUSS* in recent years, however, shows quite a number of disagreements among Seventh-Day Adventists regarding a number of technical points. For instance, Bacchiocchi's reconstruction of the rise of Sunday observance in early Christianity is certainly not shared by all Adventists. The book's sweep from Biblical materials right through to historical and theological assessments gives a flavor of comprehensiveness; but, correspondingly, a number of critical issues are handled very lightly or not at all. In many of the chapters on various historical periods and locations in the Church, for instance, the authors regularly speak of the "majority" view and the "minority" view at the time, without indicating whether the "minority" view, with which they are almost always in sympathy, was a major option or something reserved for the fringe. The point is not academic: In almost any period one can find fringe groups that believe all sorts of interesting and strange things. But it is misleading to argue that their opinions represent one of the genuine historical options unless one establishes the relative importance of the minority opinion in each of the eras under consideration.

The Biblical material receives rather short shrift, especially the NT. Probably the weakest part of this book is the failure to consider how the canon is put together on central issues. It is probably impossible to talk persuasively about the Sabbath without dealing with the relationships between law and grace, between prophecy and fulfillment, between type and antitype, and much more. There is no attempt to address these matters, and only the briefest consideration is given to Hebrews 4. The central defense of the Adventist position on Rom 14:5-6 is essentially *ad hoc* rather than exegetical, historical or theological: "Who could have a divine commandment before him and say to others: 'You can treat that commandment as you please; it really makes no difference whether you keep it or not'? No apostle could conduct such an argument. And probably no man would be more surprised with that interpretation than Paul himself, who had utmost respect for the Decalogue, God's law, which is 'holy, and just, and good' (chap. 7:12)" (p. 335). There is no even-handed attempt to sort out the bases on which earliest Christianity did not keep some laws. The most common explanation given in Protestantism bases itself on the tripartite distinction

of Aquinas: Law can be divided into three parts—viz., moral, civil and ceremonial—and only the first continues under the new covenant. The New Chalcedon movement offers another distinction; Lutherans yet another; and I have joined with others in suggesting yet another. Although some of these structures are briefly discussed in one chapter, that chapter bases its critique on an assumed Adventist position rather than returning to Scripture and arguing the matter out at a fundamental level. Indeed it is probably this chapter that uses the least disciplined language in the book. For instance, John Murray is accused of using a “device of dissecting” the Sabbath from the seventh day of the week, of introducing “an illegitimate contrast” that is “utterly foreign to the Bible” in a position that “would destroy a good memorial of a perfect work done” by Christ, and so forth.

But perhaps this is to ask too much from one book. It is certainly unfortunate that both this book, edited by Strand, and the one I edited under the title *From Sabbath to Lord's Day* have come out so close in time to each other that neither was able to interact with the other's work. The reading of Strand's book has convinced me afresh that if anything new is to be done in the area, if we are to move beyond the mere articulation of polarized positions to a genuine attempt at resolution, all of us are going to have to grapple much more strongly with the enormously complex questions regarding the patterns of connections between the OT and the NT. Even for the benefit of having that conviction reinforced, I am grateful to have read this book.

D. A. Carson