

## Joy of Perfection: An Adventist Theme

Lauri Onjukka. *The Sanctuary and Perfection* (Temecula, CA: Lifemark Press, 1982), (paper).

Reviewed by Gary Chartier

Lauri Onjukka is a happy man. You can tell by the smile that beams from the picture on the back cover of *The Sanctuary and Perfection*. And once you have read the book, you can tell why: he loves Jesus, and he is sure that Jesus loves him. Despite the potentially ominous implications of its title, this is a very fine book by a man who has sensed the existential significance of the gospel.

The author's purpose is simple: to respond from traditional Seventh-day Adventist sources, particularly the writings of Ellen G. White, to the views of Adventist perfectionists. Onjukka covers much of the same ground that others have previously trod in their efforts to lay to rest the specter of Adventist perfectionism. He discusses the nature of Christ, original sin, and the nature of justification and sanctification, and he emphasizes the objectivity of a heavenly sanctuary in order to forestall claims that the "cleansing of the sanctuary" has ultimate reference to the supernatural eradication of sin from the hearts and lives of believers. But if his discussion is not breathtakingly original, it is at least a comprehensive analysis of the question of perfection from an Adventist perspective—and one rooted firmly in an Adventist tradition.

Despite what its title might suggest, Onjukka's book is less than perfect. Unfortunately, he uncritically accepts a traditionally formulated doctrine of the sanctuary and depends overly much on the writings of Ellen White to establish

his position. I am not sure that all his quotations from White really mean what he apparently believes they do, although on the whole he has selected well from her writings, calling attention to powerful but obscure passages. Finally, many proponents of the "harvest principle" (who assert that Jesus will return when his people no longer sin) will remain unsatisfied by his discussion of what it means to "reflect the image of Jesus fully." But I recommend this book nonetheless.

What makes this book so powerful and appealing is the personal warmth and Christian love radiating from Onjukka's writing. I was captivated by his personal trust in Jesus and by his joyful understanding and appreciation of the doctrine of salvation by grace. To those who, like me, are sometimes assailed by doubts about God's acceptance, I commend *The Sanctuary and Perfection* as a heartwarming reminder that Jesus Christ is our sin-pardoning Saviour.

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## Adventism & The Reformation Redux

W. L. Emmerson. *The Reformation and the Advent Movement* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1983), 214 pp. \$8.95.

Reviewed by William J. Cork

**T**he *Reformation and the Advent Movement* vividly demonstrates a tendency that historians have long lamented—that of trying to vindicate oneself rather than searching for truth. As Samuel Eliot Morison put it, "Clio is seldom allowed by her foolish votaries to appear in her proper character; she is

clothed in strange disguises, from the whig blue-and-buff to the hammer and sickle" (*The Intellectual Life of Colonial New England*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1960). In this book by W. L. Emmerson, Clio wears the rose-tinted glasses of Seventh-day Adventist apologetics and appears peculiarly uninterested in primary sources.

But the book also seems strangely dated, for Emmerson's unspoken purpose is clearly to respond to Geoffrey J. Paxton's *The Shaking of Adventism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978) and to continue a debate long passé. Paxton and Robert Brinsmead have gotten off the reformation horse, and most SDA's have gone on to discuss other issues, while Emmerson is still arguing that Seventh-day Adventists are indeed the "heirs of the Reformation." In saying this, however, he does not mean either the Lutheran Reformation in general or justification by faith in particular. Rather, he would have us believe that this phrase means that the Seventh-day Adventist church is a direct descendant of what he calls the "ongoing Reformation" of the Anabaptist movement.

Emmerson devotes much space to contrasting Luther's views with those of the Anabaptists and selects his evidence in order to turn Anabaptists into prototypical Seventh-day Adventists. He says, for example, that a fellow named Oswald Glait "can very proudly be described as the first 'Seventh-day Adventist' of Reformation times, in doctrine and practice if not in name" (p. 74).

Emmerson repeatedly denigrates Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli as "halfway men" (pp. 9, 59, 61), while praising the Anabaptists as "the quiet and truly Biblical evangelicals," active participants in the "ongoing reformatory movement" (pp. 91, 104). Specifically, he says the Anabaptists went beyond the mainline reformers in rejecting Luther's "rather one-sided emphasis on the life of faith," the entire concept of sacraments, immortality of the soul, and infant baptism (pp. 19, 21-22, 24, 59). They further superceded these "halfway men" by embracing footwashing and Sabbatarianism and in studying the prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation (pp. 20-21, 29, 51, 61).

It is true that in a number of incidentals, as well as in its approach to the Bible and the Christian life, Adventism does bear a resemblance to Anabaptism, and many Adventists, no doubt, would feel more at home in a Mennonite worship service today than with the Lutheran liturgy. Yet, despite all the similarities that Emmerson draws attention to, his claim that Adventism is thereby a direct historical descendant of Anabaptism remains unproven.

Emmerson damages his own position by referring to Everett Dick's study of Millerite preachers. The figures Emmerson quotes clearly show that while maybe five percent of Millerite preachers were from Anglican, Lutheran, or Reformed churches, *none* can be listed as coming from the Anabaptists. Twenty-seven percent were Baptists, but Emmerson does not even provide a convincing argument for their direct descent from Anabaptism. On the other hand, 44 percent of Millerite preachers were Methodists and 16 percent were from Congregational or Presbyterian churches (p. 200). Despite Emmerson's vehement denial, a more logical inference would be that Adventism arose in 19th-century America as an indigenous religion, the founders of which had been members of distinctly American denominations (p. 7).

In my opinion, Emmerson indicts both Adventism and Anabaptism by failing to appreciate the Reformation concept of *adiophora*—"things indifferent." For these groups it seems that every theological question and religious practice must be black or white. No space is left for a diversity of practice and belief on those inconsequential matters not directly addressed by the gospel or the ecumenical creeds. Those who want reassurance as to the divine guidance of Adventism will be encouraged by the "humbl[e]" claim that "The Seventh-day Adventist Church . . . is nothing less than God's ecumenical movement of truth" (p. 7). But students of history will not take *The Reformation and the Advent Movement* too seriously, for the author claims too much with too little supporting evidence.

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William J. Cork was a student at Lutheran Theological Seminary, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, when he wrote this review.

# Sabbath, Sunday, and the Lord's Day

Reviewed by Niels-Erik Andreassen

D. A. Carson, ed. *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982). 444 pp., (paper).

“**T**o become a seventh-day Sabatarian is the only consistent course of action for anyone who holds that the whole Decalogue is binding as moral law” (p. 392). This very conclusion was reached by Seventh-day Adventists well over 100 years ago and has been the basis for their Sabbath observance ever since. How can such a remarkable conclusion be reached again in a study that defends Sunday observance?

From *Sabbath to Lord's Day* is a symposium volume consisting of 11 essays treating the Sabbath-Sunday theme from the Old Testament times to the present. The authors and editor were graduate students in Cambridge University, England, who undertook a research project on “Sunday” sponsored by the Tyndale Fellowship for Biblical Research in 1973. The present volume is the fruit of their labors. Two of its essays treat the Sabbath in Old Testament times, five discuss the subject in the New Testament and the early church, and three cover the Sabbath in the church. The volume concludes with a summary chapter and 10 appendices. Each chapter has extensive notes; there is no bibliography.

The subject is given fair, if somewhat uneven, treatment throughout, and the conclusions are telling, for they reveal as much about the presuppositions of the authors as about the materials under study. For example: the Sabbath (Genesis 2 notwithstanding) is not a universal ordinance, but a specific institution for Israel (p. 34); Jesus taught that Sabbath rest is intrinsically bound up with God's eschatological plan of salvation, but he did not affirm Sabbath observance as a moral obligation, nor did he introduce Sunday observance to replace it (p. 85); the

Apostle Paul may have seen Sunday as an appropriate day for worship and for celebrating the Eucharist, but no evidence suggests that he would impose or advocate such a practice. Indeed, he was content to let Christians observe Sabbath, but only for reasons of convention or convenience, not of theology (pp. 184-196); theologically speaking, the true New Testament Sabbath is not “a literal, physical rest” but consists “in the salvation that God has provided” in Jesus Christ (p. 215); the Lord's Day or Sunday worship became a commemoration of the Resurrection early in Christian history (pp. 238-240); the post apostolic church (third and fourth centuries) did not transform Sunday into a Christian Sabbath. Rather, the Sabbath commandment was said to enjoin abstention not from work, but from sin (p. 281); instead, “true sabbatarianism was a medieval, not a patristic, development.” The medieval church explained the Decalogue as a “moral concept” and as “natural law” with reference to the designation of time (one day in seven) for rest and worship, but not with reference to a specifically appointed time (the seventh day). A similar concept of the Decalogue and the Sabbath emerged in the Protestant tradition (p. 287; p. 306; p. 318f).

In short, the book concludes that while early Christians may well have observed Sabbath for a time after the Resurrection, that practice was not considered a Christian ordinance. Sunday worship, on the other hand, is nowhere enjoined by the New Testament, but recommends itself “because it bears the mark of antiquity” and “lays claim to bearing the mark of canonical authority” (p. 388). The true New Testament Sabbath is the Lord's Day, a memorial to the Resurrection and an anticipation of the kingdom, but since it involves no rest from work, it does not constitute a first-day Sabbath. It remains the day of the Lord, the first day of the week, which, for the sake of convenience and thanks to the medieval church, Christians have also set aside as a day for rest from work.

How shall we respond to this proposal? In spite of the many helpful insights offered by this volume, its conclusions fall short of being persuasive. If neither Christ nor his apostles en-

joined Sunday worship, how then can it claim canonical authority? Moreover, if Sunday observance (sabbatarianism) is a late medieval development, rejected by the patristic fathers, how can Sunday, as we know it, or even Sunday worship be said to bear the mark of antiquity? The appeal to the antiquity or even presence in the canon of a merely convenient practice can hardly claim the serious attention of the believing community today.

A more persuasive reading of the New Testament will acknowledge the first-century practice of Sabbath observance among Christians while finding no evidence of Sunday observance. It will recognize a relationship among Christian theology of covenant, law and grace, and the Sabbath institution, and will note that the Sabbath emerges in the text as a day of rest, not work, of salvation, not oppression, and as a pointer to the eschaton. Hence, the New Testament affirms the rest day as a Christian ordinance, prominently displayed in the early Christians' Scriptures, designed by God in Creation to benefit humankind, and contributing to his everlasting covenant with all people. That the later Christian church through the so-called transfer theory should establish Sunday as a Christian sabbath seems to confirm that for the New

Testament writers a seventh day of rest remained a natural and inevitable element of the Christian faith. Indeed, it is doubtful that a Lord's Day ordinance could have survived without the weekly day of rest. All the theological insights into true Christian rest could not have survived without observance of the seventh day. Those later Sabbatarians whose strictures are deplored in this volume as being sub-Christian, though perhaps quite valuable, convenient, and socially acceptable, understood one thing clearly: theological insight and spiritual perception must keep company with practical Christian observance. Unhappily, thanks to an early Christian aberration, they attached their sabbatarianism to the wrong day. Fortunately, many seventh-day Sabbathkeepers, both Jews or Christians, have escaped many of the legalistic excesses of some first-day sabbatarians without losing the significance of their day of rest. The rich Biblical heritage of the Sabbath institution has protected them from this harm and has enabled them to overcome the general neglect to which the day of the Lord has become subject in recent years.

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