

The book is divided into two sections, the first dealing with the early eastern versions and the second with the early western versions. In the first section the following versions are treated: Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Georgian, Ethiopic, and minor versions such as Arabic, Nubian, Sogdian, and Caucasian Albanian; and in the second section the following are treated: Latin, Gothic, Old Church Slavonic, and minor versions such as Anglo-Saxon, Old High German, and Old Saxon. For each of these versions, a short history of the beginnings of Christianity in that language area is provided, followed by a list and description of the earliest manuscripts and printed editions, and a discussion of the translation base, the textual affinities, and the limitations of the language in representing Greek. The last is written by experts in the respective language areas.

Metzger's work updates Vööbus's *Early Versions of the New Testament* (Stockholm, 1954) and again makes accessible material which has been difficult to obtain inasmuch as the latter work has been out of print for some time. Metzger also adds material not found in Vööbus's treatment. This includes coverage of additional versions (Old Church Slavonic, Sub-Achmimic, Middle Egyptian, Anglo-Saxon, Old High German, Old Saxon, Nubian, Persian, Sogdian, and Caucasian Albanian) and the especially helpful section on the limitations of the languages in representing Greek. This latter is indispensable in evaluating whether a difference in the reading is a real variant or is simply due to the limitation of a language. In dealing with versions, the text critic must always be aware of this situation and of a group of variants such as transpositions and use of synonyms which cannot be definitely determined as variants.

Metzger's material is better organized than Vööbus's, since he divides the versions into eastern and western, while it is difficult to see the rationale for Vööbus's order. Metzger also appears to be more objective in his treatment of areas where there is no clear consensus. Since Vööbus has been more personally involved in research in some of these areas, it is understandable that he would be more subjective in favoring his positions.

It would have been helpful to the less linguistically trained person if words not in Roman script (other than Greek) had been transliterated and translated, as, e.g., on p. 97. While this has usually been done, it is not consistently carried through; translations are normally Latin, and in one case for some unknown reason the translation is German (p. 248). The translation should be either Greek or English.

This publication will be a useful volume not only for the text critic but also for the philologist and church historian.

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Odom, Robert L. *Sabbath and Sunday in Early Christianity*. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1977. 304 pp. \$12.95.

Robert L. Odom is already well known for his scholarly work on the Sabbath and Sunday in ancient times, particularly through his major book, *Sunday in Roman Paganism* (Washington, D.C., 1944). He has also dealt with "The Sabbath in A.D. 1054" and "Vettius Valens and the Planetary Week" in articles in earlier issues of *AUSS* (*AUSS* 1 [1963]: 74-80, and 3 [1964]: 110-137). The present volume deals with the weekly Sabbath and Sunday as worship days in early Christianity down through the time of Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, in the fourth century A.D. The presentation, Odom tells us, "unfolds the historical facts in their chronological order, and the data used for the purpose are drawn mainly from primary sources" (p. 10).

The first chapter (pp. 11-17) treats very briefly the OT data, followed by six short chapters (pp. 18-71) dealing with the NT. Chaps. 8 through 35 (pp. 72-243)—again all very brief—cover the period from the second century to the time of Eusebius. A final chapter (pp. 294-304) summarizes the findings.

The first seven chapters, though brief as they are, give a fairly comprehensive overview of the main biblical data, especially for the NT; and the arguments are generally set forth both cogently and clearly. The major drawback is the fact that nowhere in these chapters does Odom grapple with, or even show awareness of, current discussion of the subject. Certain questions raised by recent writers such as Willy Rordorf, Paul Jewett, and others, have not received the attention that would be expected in a volume such as Odom's.

For the postbiblical period Odom has brought to attention a wide and helpful array of source materials, and this feature is certainly one of the stronger points in his publication. But again, unfortunately, the presentation lacks treatment—and even fails to show awareness—of the issues that are at the forefront of current discussion. Moreover, although the author deserves commendation for the comprehensiveness of his survey of ancient literature and for his ability to move comfortably in knowledge of what that literature says, his portrayal repeatedly betrays inaccuracy because of failure to take proper note of historical backgrounds.

Treatment of the terms "Gnostic" and "Gnosticism" will illustrate this latter point. Though Odom refers repeatedly to ancient Gnosticism, he does not seem to recognize what Gnosticism really was. Rather, he identifies it by simply one of its practices, that of allegorizing—a practice which was by no means limited to Gnostics nor determinative of them as Gnostics. Odom has, in fact, classified the Sabbath interpretations of such anti-Gnostic champions as Ignatius, Justin, Irenaeus, and Tertullian as being of Gnostic type (see pp. 78, 132, 145, 147, 150, 194)! He even claims that the charge of Gnosticism has been brought against Ignatius' epistle to the Magnesians in the short recension by the editors of ANF (see p. 78, n. 12), when in fact the reference he gives states (and correctly so) exactly the opposite.

His chap. 12, "Extreme Antinomianism," shows how far afield he really goes on this matter. In that chapter he discusses as extreme antinomians several genuine Gnostics, but misses the very point that made them Gnostics. He thinks again, apparently, only of allegorization, and ignores the central idea of a spirit-matter dualism, with its connected concepts of the Gnostic aeon theory, docetism, etc. While some Gnostics were actually antinomian and even licentious, it should be noted that others went to an opposite extreme of becoming rigorous and ascetic. (Some seem even to have advocated "sabbatizing the Sabbath"!)

Such widely divergent practices among Gnostics found common ground in the belief that the body was being harmed for the good of the spirit. Thus, Odom's chapter on "Extreme Antinomianism," describing the views of only one class of Gnostics, is not really helpful. In fact, it may even leave the unwary reader with quite a wrong impression, for although Odom does admit that the Gnostics were not in the mainstream of Christianity, he fails to indicate how truly violent early Christianity was in its opposition to Gnosticism.

Numerous other illustrations could be mentioned of problems arising from a failure to deal adequately with historical contexts; but aside from these, a broader concern may be raised: Does this volume provide a *history* of the Sabbath and Sunday in the early church in such a manner that the reader can determine what was really happening—what the basic developments were? How and through precisely what processes, e.g., did Sunday eventually come to displace the seventh-day Sabbath so widely? Although the writer may have fulfilled well his purpose of presenting sources in a chronological order, he has left the reader at a loss regarding historical *relationships*. It seems to this reviewer that Odom's book would have served better as either a

history or a source collection, rather than as an admixture of the two.

Moreover, there are considerable sections in the volume that are extraneous to the main discussion, and that lead the reader into "blind alleys" as far as the main topic is concerned. The chapter about Gnostic antinomianism, mentioned above, is only one such example. Several chapters that deal with the Easter question in early church history fall into the same category. If in his discussion the author had related this particular question in a meaningful way to his main topic, the inclusion would have been good and justified; but Odom has generally failed to draw out the relationships.

In this connection, it may be observed that in his brief chapter on "Hippolytus" (pp. 210-214) he seems more interested in the paschal chronological tables than in Hippolytus' references to Sabbath and/or Sunday. It is unfortunate that precisely here he has missed calling attention to one of the most significant early statements about the weekly Sabbath fast (this indeed is one of the very few sources overlooked by Odom). Hippolytus, in his Daniel commentary, polemicizes against those who maintain the Sabbath fast. Incidentally, a recognition of this may have helped Odom avert another historical misunderstanding, in his chapter on Tertullian, where he quotes an outdated and erroneous opinion of Joseph Bingham in support of the idea that, to use Bingham's words, "it is next to impossible, that the sabbath should have been a fast in the Roman church at this time [the time of Tertullian's *On Fasting*], and yet not have been discerned by so acute a man as Tertullian" (p. 196, n. 26). (For a discussion of the Sabbath fast in early Christianity, see, e.g., Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome, 1977), pp. 187-196, and Kenneth A. Strand, "A Note on the Sabbath Fast in Early Christianity," *AUSS* 3 [1965]: 167-174.)

In conclusion, I would say that in spite of my criticism of Odom's book on some rather basic matters, the volume has considerable merit as a compendium of ancient source materials. It is evident that the author has put much effort and considerable research into locating such a comprehensive collection of primary source materials. Indeed, the overview of statements from the different writers up through Eusebius is excellent and can be used with profit by the careful reader who sifts historical judgments from the primary data given. The lack of an index and bibliography is unfortunate, as is also the fact that footnote references lack imprint information (even the dates of publication are omitted).

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Talbert, Charles H. *What Is a Gospel? The Genre of the Canonical Gospels*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977. 147 pp. \$9.95.

Two views prevail concerning the literary genre of the canonical gospels. One view maintains that they are biographies in the same class as Graeco-Roman biographies. Another view affirms that they are not biographies but apostolic *kerygma* built up into a vivid narrative form. The author's purpose is to demonstrate that the gospels do indeed fit into the biographical genre, and he marshals a large amount of evidence for this purpose.

The three main arguments set forth against the view that the gospels are biographies are "(1) the gospels are mythical, the Graeco-Roman biographies are not; (2) the gospels are cultic, the Graeco-Roman biographies are not; and, (3) while the gospels emerge from a community with a world-negating outlook, the literary biographies are produced by and for a world-affirming people" (p. 2). The first provides the structure; the second, the function; and the third, the attitude—all of which in conjunction are necessary for a genre under which gospels can be classified. In