

useless repetitions with other chapters. Rolland offers a sound and sensitive scholarly apology of the Adventist Church, but it is more a general overview of the church in the world than a French-focused presentation. For example, Bert Beach, John Harvey Kellogg, and Ben Carson, all outstanding American figures, feature with but a few French Adventist characters. A good deal of Rolland's study deals with the concept of present truth. With (too many and too long) quotations, sometimes coming from unpublished manuscripts of Ellen White, Rolland asserts that the Seventh-day Adventist Church supports a dynamic understanding of the concept of truth. His historical presentation is quite helpful, however, showing how reluctant the pioneers were to the idea of a creed. However, again, what is the link between this description and the Adventist Church in France? Generally speaking, one wonders if this idyllic description of an open church, willing to discover new truth, corresponds to the current reality in the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Last, but not least in the book, is Richard Lehmann's chapter (101-119). Lehmann published a general presentation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1987 that is still considered a valuable reference guide. In addition, he served as President of the Adventist Church in France during the admission period into the Conference. His chapter is a useful testimony from inside, written by a theologian. At the end of the admission process, Lehmann asks pertinent questions: What, in the end, is the mission of the Adventist Church? Should the church further develop its relationships with other Christian entities, sharing common doctrines and practices? Or should the church maintain a constant confrontation/opposition with others (119)? In dealing with these questions, Lehmann contends, the church in France showed its capacity to remain alive.

Ces protestants que l'on dit adventistes is a unique contribution not only to the history and sociology of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in France, but it is also relevant for a wider understanding of the church in general. As mentioned in its foreword by the non-Adventist editors, it is an innovative publication, a major contribution no serious sociologist or historian of religion will ignore.

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Du Preez, Ron. *Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can't Be Found in Colossians 2:16*. Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 2008. xv + 190 pp. Paper, \$19.99.

Colossians 2:16 has been interpreted by the vast majority of scholars as evidence that the seventh-day Sabbath has been abolished and is no longer a day Christians need to observe. Sabbatarians, however, see this text as referring not to the seventh-day Sabbath, but to the OT ceremonial sabbaths that Christians are no longer obliged to keep. Du Preez, in *Judging the Sabbath*, critically analyzes the "anti-Sabbatarian apologetics" (viii). He supports his conclusions through an extensive analysis of the terms "festival," "new moon," and "sabbath" with helpful diagrams. Four extensive appendices

provide a wealth of data from his research, again arranged in diagrams. An index of authors and texts concludes the book.

The book is divided into two parts: the first part is for “educated lay persons and seminary-trained pastors;” the second part is oriented more to “the professional scholar of biblical studies and languages” (x).

The author begins this study with a short historical overview of the interpretations of Col 2:16 and provides the rationale for his analytical textual approach. He admits that in order to get a full understanding of this text it would require a detailed understanding of wider questions about Colossians, such as its main purpose and the heresies Paul is combating. The author cites recent scholars who, because of the lack of unanimity in NT scholarship, express doubts about the possibility of understanding these questions and the heresy that Paul was trying to combat (5-7). Consequently, the author proposes to concentrate his study on the text itself and follow the rule that “Scripture is its own best interpreter” (7). Thus he proposes to study the text with an “inter-textual, semantic, hermeneutical approach, allowing Scripture to interpret itself” (90), which avoids “extra-biblical reconstructions, assumptions, or speculations” (8). From this perspective, the author investigates each of the major arguments built upon this text by proponents in favor of the abolition of the seventh-day Sabbath. The following are some of the significant findings of his approach that support the view that the text warns believers against those insisting that it is necessary to continue observing the OT ceremonial rest days.

The author begins his approach by investigating the view that the word “sabbath” in Col 2:16 cannot refer to ceremonial sabbaths because this word by itself is never used in the OT for such sabbaths (17). From an extensive textual analysis, with the help of syntactical and linguistic markers of the 111 occurrences of “sabbath” in the OT, he concludes that in 94 instances this word refers to the seventh-day Sabbath. However, in 17 instances the word can refer to the Day of Atonement, weeks, or Sabbatical Years. (23). Thus he notes that *sabbata* in Col 2:16 could mean ceremonial sabbaths.

The author’s further analysis of the free-standing Hebrew word for “sabbath” and its Greek equivalent *sabbata* in the LXX reveal that it was also used for the Day of Atonement, sabbatical years, and, in some Greek manuscripts, for the Day of Trumpets (51). These findings, the author says, need to be taken into account to arrive at the best translation of *sabbata* in Col 2:16.

Du Preez responds to the argument that of the 60 times the word “Sabbath” is used in the NT 59 times it clearly refers to the seventh-day Sabbath and thus its use in Col 2:16 should obviously mean the seventh-day Sabbath, by engaging in a statistical analysis of the Greek terms *sabbatōn* and *sabbata*. His findings are that these terms appear a total of 69 times in the NT. Fifty-nine times they refer to the seventh-day Sabbath. Of the ten remaining instances, nine are translated as “week.” The one still to be identified is *sabbata* in Col 2:16. Because of the lack of any well-recognized linguistic markers and clear contextual indicators, the author concludes that it would appear that here the Greek term refers to something different than the seventh-day Sabbath or week.

In dealing with the assumption that all the ceremonial sabbaths are included in the term “festival” in Col 2:16, and therefore, the term “sabbath” must refer to the seventh-day Sabbath, the author presents compelling arguments from the Hebrew that this term refers to the three great sacred, joyful festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. This pattern he sees supported by the LXX translation of the religious festivals. By contrast, the Day of Atonement and the blowing of the trumpets, both being ceremonial sabbaths, are not referred to as festivals or feasts. These differences among ceremonial sabbaths, the author observes, justify why the text makes a distinction between “festival” and “sabbath,” pointing to a two-fold division of ceremonial sabbaths. Thus the term “festival” he applies to the joyful pilgrim festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, while the word “sabbath” comprises the other ceremonial occasions of the blowing of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Sabbatical Years (72-78).

As nearly all commentators viewed the three terms of “feast day,” “new moon,” and “sabbath” in Col 2:16 as a description of a yearly, monthly, and weekly calendar sequence, summarizing Israel’s feasts prescribed in the Torah, the author investigated 110 Bible commentaries as to how they came to this conclusion. The texts supporting this view were 1 Chron 23:30-31; 2 Chron 2:4; 8:13; 31:3; Neh 10:33; Ezek 45:17; and Hos 2:11. It is assumed that Paul used this same calendar cycle, and as the seventh-day Sabbath is part of the weekly cycle, so it is part of Col 2:16. The author’s thorough investigation found that of 92 commentaries commenting on this text since 1861, none did any “serious exegesis” of these three terms (56-58). He observed that none of the OT passages have the same progression and nature as in Colossians. Instead, these passages deal with sacrifices and not with actual days. Therefore, none of these OT texts can legitimately be used to support the view that Paul was using these texts in Colossians.

The author concludes his arguments in favor of the idea that in Col 2:16 Paul was referring to the Mosaic ceremonial services because he described these services as a “shadow of things to come,” namely Christ. And when Christ came, the ceremonial rest days came to an end, not the seventh-day. The author, therefore, concludes that any view that this text refers to the abolition of the seventh-day Sabbath is invalid.

The second part of the book, written especially for scholars, addresses the use of the OT in Paul’s epistles. Here he makes a case for Paul’s use of Hos 2:11 in his letter to the Colossians. In the rest of part 2, the author analyzes the linguistics and literary structure of Hos 2:11. He sees evidence that the three-part phrase “her festival, her new moon, and her sabbath” forms a chiasmic structure. The word “festival” he refers to the three annual joyous festivals, while the term “sabbath” alludes to the three nonseventh-day religious occasions (annual Trumpets, Atonement, and Sabbatical Years), not the seventh-day Sabbath (111, 125, 146). Then he analyzes the literary structure of Col 2:16 and concludes that the phrase “festival, new moon, and sabbath” is also part of a chiasmic structure. He comments that if Paul was quoting the OT, he would “most likely have chosen to use the phrase from Hosea 2:11 in Colossians 2:16” (136). The

author finishes his research with the observation that both parts of the book help to demonstrate that “the compelling weight of inter-textual, linguistic, semantic, structural, and contextual evidence demonstrates that the *sabbata* of Colossians 2:16 refers to the ancient Jewish ceremonial sabbaths, and not the weekly Sabbath” (148). Thus, he states, this text cannot be used as evidence that the seventh-day Sabbath of the Decalogue has been abolished.

The author’s intertextual hermeneutical approach leads to valuable discoveries about the meanings of the single words “festival,” “new moon,” and “sabbath” of Col 2:16 that should be given serious attention. However, I do not think this unique approach fully identifies the significance of these expressions. The fact that NT scholarship is not united on the context of Colossians, the issues Paul is fighting against, or the Colossian heresy is not an excuse for not carefully studying these aspects unless we assume *a priori* that all views on the type of conflict Paul is dealing with are wrong.

The author is very critical of the exegesis practiced by 88 commentaries with different hermeneutical perspectives. From his analysis, he finds that nearly half of them did not engage in exegesis, the others practiced some exegesis, while none did any exegesis of these vital three terms (56). He discovered four commentaries that interpreted the “sabbath” in Col 2:16 as ceremonial Sabbaths, but again these “nowhere engage in any serious exegesis of the crucial three terms” (57). Unfortunately, the author nowhere defines what he means by “exegesis,” so it is difficult to evaluate the validity of his criticism.

Exegesis, as it is generally defined, includes questions of the intention of the writer, the understanding of the message by the original audience, and the issues the document tries to settle, all of which impact the outcome of the interpretation of the text. Paul’s strong exhortation and caution in Col 2:13-17 did not take place in a vacuum, but in a powerful conflict with opponents he most likely had been facing in other places. In Gal 4:10-11 and Rom 14:5-6, Paul also dealt with the issue of observance of days and times. A study of these challenges could provide further support of the author’s arguments. However, simply criticizing the exegesis of others—while avoiding the contextual and exegetical study of the text in the immediate and larger context of Colossians and other Pauline letters because there are so many different interpretations—begs the question.

With this minor criticism, I fully recommend this book for anyone who wants to be informed about the latest research on one of the most challenging texts of the letter to the Colossians.

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Ron du Preez is a man of strong convictions. He is also a careful Bible scholar with a passion to help people resolve theological and ethical issues.