

Solberg, Winton U. *Redeem the Time: The Puritan Sabbath in Early America*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. 1977. Pp. xii + 406. \$18.50.

One of the unexplained gaps in American historiography has concerned the Sabbath. As an institution dating back to America's founding and one that has remained to the present a source of both inspiration and conflict in American culture, it deserves more consideration than it has received. Thus Winton Solberg's effort at repairing the breach is to be applauded.

Solberg first briefly traces the Sabbath's development from its OT origins to the dawn of the Reformation. With the Reformation the Sabbath (reference is now to Sunday) took on a renewed theological importance, and the author carefully outlines its place in Reformed theology. Among the Puritan reformers in England, above all, the Sabbath came to occupy a revered place. Under the early Stuarts the Sabbath was accepted by a growing number of middle-class Englishmen, and Parliament passed several bills for the preservation of "the Lord's Day." Solberg does a commendable job of setting the English background of the American Sabbath.

In America, Sabbath legislation had become a feature of every colony (with the exception of Georgia) by 1740, the book's terminal date, and Solberg recounts the history of the Sabbath in each. Of course, it was in New England that the Lord's Day achieved its greatest theoretical elaboration and its most extensive legislative enactment. Although the Puritan émigrés brought a tradition of Sabbath observance with them to Massachusetts Bay, Puritan divines such as Thomas Shepard elaborated on the doctrine. The Massachusetts General Court provided secular enforcement of the doctrine by passing a series of laws dealing with the Sabbath in the mid-seventeenth century, requiring attendance at public worship and proscribing Sabbath-breaking activities. Connecticut modeled its strict Sabbatarian laws after those of Massachusetts.

Not all of the colonies went as far as the New England Puritan enclaves did in stipulating attendance at worship. In colonies such as New York, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, where a diversity of religions required toleration, Sabbath laws were generally limited to prohibiting common labor, travel, and festive activities that might disturb the devout. Of all the colonies, Solberg reports, North Carolina appeared to have had the most lax Sabbath observance, though it had a complete paucity of legislation.

Solberg does not neglect Seventh-day Sabbatarianism, treating its origins in England and also in America, where the Seventh-day Baptists established a foothold in Rhode Island in 1672. The conflicts between Saturday and Sunday Sabbatarians, which have never been resolved, had an early start in several colonies.

Solberg is at his best in cataloging the laws and outlining the theological formulations of the Sabbath, which makes his book of encyclopedic value to historians. Unfortunately, it will not be of much value beyond that. While the ubiquity of Sabbath legislation makes it clear that the doctrine was an important feature of colonial life, the author fails to satisfactorily relate it to its social setting. Solberg marshals an admirable amount of information, but he does not appear to have thought it through carefully. At the most interesting junctures he is satisfied with simple assertions rather than complex explorations. E.g., while quantification of cases involving Sabbath enforcement may not have been feasible, the anecdotal use of evidence leaves an unanswered question: Did the relatively few number of Sabbath prosecutions in New England mean a high degree of faithfulness, or was the situation one simply of a laxity of enforcement? Also, in an interesting bit of revisionism, Solberg repeatedly asserts that Sabbatarianism had a beneficial effect on America by promoting high moral standards and tempering the drive to labor. But in challenging the traditional liberal animus against blue laws, he fails actually to weigh the

Sabbath's impact on the culture. Where Bernard Bailyn made colonial political tracts a living embodiment of New England society, Winton Solberg's Sabbath laws remain bloodless abstractions.

Finally, one wonders whether Harvard University Press felt that no editor was needed for Solberg's manuscript. The prose is lifeless, repetitive, and sometimes hard to follow. It quickly becomes an effort to continue turning the pages. Perhaps his style was influenced by extensive readings of Puritan theological tracts. At any rate, one hopes that as Solberg continues his study into the nineteenth century, he will consider the wider implications of the Sabbath, for the later period could hold an even more interesting tale.

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Thiele, Edwin R. *A Chronology of the Hebrew Kings*. Contemporary Evangelical Perspectives. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1977. 93 pp. Paperback, \$2.95.

Edwin R. Thiele's outstanding contributions to biblical chronology are well known to OT scholarship, and his reconstruction for the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah as presented first in *JNES* 3 (1944): 137-186 and then in more detail in *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (Chicago, 1951; rev. ed., Grand Rapids, Mich., 1965) has justly been recognized as a "breakthrough"; and he has, of course, amplified those treatments with articles in various scholarly journals.

The present volume covers in a more popular style the same general ground as does the larger *Mysterious Numbers*, whose revised edition was reviewed by Siegfried H. Horn in *AUSS* 5 (1967): 213-214. The first chapter of this new book illustrates the kinds of problems that have long baffled scholars concerning the chronology of the Divided Monarchy, and seven succeeding chapters are devoted to the solutions of such problems.

It is noteworthy that four chapters (chaps. 4 through 7) deal with questions relating to *dual dating*—a matter of utmost importance, for the "single greatest cause for misunderstandings concerning the chronological data of the Books of Kings has been the failure, both in ancient and modern times, to recognize the employment of what may be termed 'dual dating' in connection with the regnal data in certain coregencies and overlapping reigns" (p. 33). Moving from the earliest and relatively simple instance of this type of dating—involving Omri and Tibni—, Thiele considers several other cases, clearing up three major problem areas in the very confusing period from 798 to 723 B.C. It should be observed that the complicated situation relating to the reign of Pekah in Israel and the subsequent history of both Israel to the fall of Samaria and Judah to the reign of Hezekiah has been presented in a simplified fashion, with the confusing data explained under the rubrics of "Pattern 752" and "Pattern 740" (the Patterns "Two-Seventeen" [or "752-686"] and "Twelve-Twenty" [or "740-686"] of the second edition of *Mysterious Numbers*).

The volume is enhanced throughout with many diagrams to illustrate various points of chronology discussed in the text. These are most illuminating; and in the opinion of this reviewer, they are much more helpful for this particular type of publication than would have been the inclusion of the extensive chronological chart that was inserted as a foldout in the first edition of *Mysterious Numbers*, or even the more abundant (and more complicated) tables, charts, and diagrams amplifying the text in the second edition of that more detailed work.

Several appendices will be useful to scholars and laymen alike: Appendix A (p. 75) gives the complete list of dates of the rulers of Judah and Israel; Appendix B