

Book Review

Allender, Dan B. (2009). *Sabbath*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson. 208 pages.
ISBN 978-0-8499-4604-2. US\$ 12.99.

Sabbath is part of The Ancient Practices Series which examine the shared religious concepts of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. For Allender, the journey into a deep and profound understanding of Sabbath began at the Mae Sot refugee camp in Thailand.

The book comprises three sections, Sabbath Pillars, Sabbath Purpose and Sabbath Performance. The Pillars of Sabbath are sensual, holy time, communal feast and play day. Allender argues that above all else, Sabbath is a festive, celebrational concept. He contends, 'Many who take the Sabbath seriously and intentionally ruin it with legislative and worrisome fences that protect the Sabbath but destroy its delight' (p.8). Sabbath is not so much about a break from work, but rather a redefinition of how and why we work and the creation of freedom through work (p.82).

According to Allender, the purpose of Sabbath is threefold: to engender 'a radical entry into shalom' (p.106), to enable us to say 'Thank you' to God (p.126) and to allow such gratitude to open our hearts to freedom and joy (p.140). If these things hold true, then Sabbath eliminates worry for 'worry is anti-Sabbath' (p.136).

In the final segment of the book, Allender explores the practice of Sabbath through rituals, symbols, silence and a quest for justice. For Allender, the Sabbath 'is the day God has created for us to celebrate' (p.194) creation, redemption and re-creation. Sabbath does not merely look back to creation and redemption but also forward to the re-created joy in God's presence

Allender has produced a truly monumental exploration of Sabbath theology. The narrative style of writing and the blend of conceptual work with personal illustration make for compelling reading. However, there is one missing element in the book; it does not raise the issue about which day is Sabbath. It appears to deliberately leave that option open-ended, as if expecting the readers to figure it out for themselves. Nevertheless, I highly recommend this book to every believer seeking a heightened relationship with God.

About the Reviewer

Wann Fanwar, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Religious Studies, Asia-Pacific International University, Thailand.