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"vita vestra abscondita est cum Christo in Deo"

Colossians 3:3

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THE END IN THE BEGINNING:

A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL CATECHISM FOR YOUNG AND OLD

Leviticus

James T. Dennison, Jr.

What do you observe about the position of Leviticus in the Pentateuch?

It is the central book of the five

What does this suggest?

Leviticus is the keystone to the five books of Moses

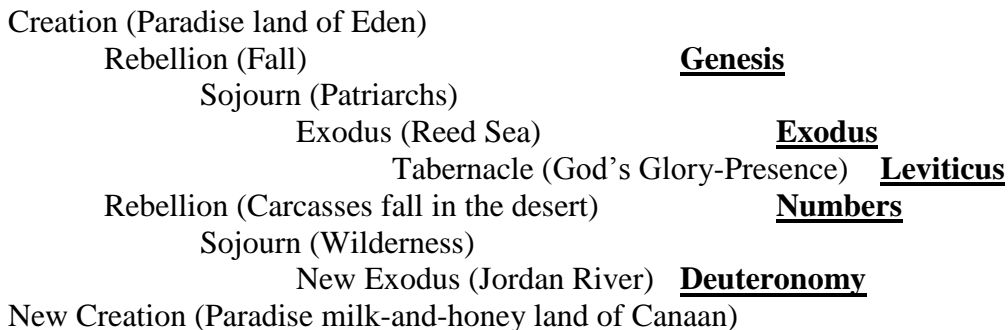
LEVITICUS



Explain

Genesis and Exodus flow into Leviticus; Numbers and Deuteronomy flow out of Leviticus. The movement of the narrative-revelation is from outside Leviticus to inside Leviticus, then moving on out (moving forward/beyond) from Leviticus.

Let me suggest a macro-structural biblical-theological paradigm for the Pentateuch



What is the central theme of Leviticus?

Life within and around the Tabernacle of the Lord

We have already learned that the Tabernacle is eschatologically oriented in our BT catechism on Exodus.¹

Yes, the Tabernacle is: (1) God's condescension-humiliation; (2) God's identification-incarnation; (3) God's Immanuel-presence

Thus, life within and around the Tabernacle is heaven-oriented

Yes. How a sinner approaches God (via propitiatory sacrifice)

How a sinner communes with God (via a fellowship meal)

¹ Here: <http://kerux.com/doc/2902A4.asp> .

How a sinner lives with God (via holiness and purity of heart and life)

How a sinner celebrates God's unmerited grace (via festivals in remembrance of his mighty acts or *magnalia Dei*)

So the book of Leviticus is an invitation to come into God's dwelling place concretely miniaturized via symbols, rituals and festivals.

Yes

If Leviticus is heaven oriented, then it is also Christocentric—and that protologically as well as eschatologically?

Protological high priest in Leviticus anticipates eschatological High Priest (God's Son)

Protological tabernacle sacrifice projects eschatological Sacrifice (once-and-for-all)

Protological tabernacle and community holiness reflects Incarnate Holiness (Christ)

Protological spatial tabernacle arena anticipates aspatial dwelling place infinite in extent

Protological temporal tabernacle projects eschatological eternal dwelling place in heaven

How does a sinner travel in Leviticus?

From the outside the Tabernacle in (through sacrifice to and communion with the Lord)

From the inside the Tabernacle out (through cleansing and holiness of life in and through the Spirit of the Lord)

Where is the transition point in the book of Leviticus?

Yom Kippur ("the day of atonement")—Leviticus 16, the hinge point of the book

May we thus regard Leviticus as an unfolding narrative?

Yes, it is the story of a sinner's life from outside the grace of God (heaven), to inside the grace of God (via sacrifice), to becoming clean (nothing unclean in heaven), to the great atonement (annually repeated), to becoming holy (without holiness, no one sees heaven), to celebrating Sabbath and Jubilee (heaven's perfect rest and perfect liberation).

How does the book of Exodus end?

With the completion of the tabernacle (*mishkan*, Hebrew = "dwelling place")—Ex 40:30

How does the book of Leviticus begin?

With God speaking from the tabernacle (*ohel moed*, Hebrew = "tent of meeting")—Lev. 1:1

So what, you may ask?

The unfolding organic narrative of the history of God's relationship with his redeemed people flows through Leviticus; the seamless narrative requires literary continuity and cohesiveness, not redaction, invention and mythologization (as higher critics suppose).

Comment on the macro-structure of the book of Leviticus.

Numerous scholars have noticed the alternating pattern of legal and narrative material in the chapters of the book.

Outline this for me

Legal (ch. 1-7)—Narrative (8-10)—Legal (11-15)—Narrative (16)—Legal (17-24:9)—Narrative (24:10-23)—Legal (25-27)

This means Leviticus is composed of seven building blocks in alternating fashion, i.e., legal, narrative. The whole of Leviticus is a seven-fold tableau.

What is unique about each of the three narrative units?

They all contain a death story

Explain

Chapters 8-10 contain the death of Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron

Chapter 16 contains the death of the sacrificial goat of the annual day of atonement
Chapter 24:10-23 contains the death of a man who blasphemes the name of the Lord
In a book about holiness of life in God's presence, the antithesis of death and sin sounds forth from the interstices of the unfolding fabric of the book.

Chapters 1-7 deal with sacrifices. What is unique about this section?

Each type of sacrifice is mentioned twice

Explain

The whole burnt offering appears in chapter 1 and 6:8-13

The grain offering appears in chapter 2 and 6:14-23

The peace offering appears in chapter 3 and 7:11-34

The sin offering appears in chapter 4-5:13 and 6:24-30

The guilt/trespass offering appears in chapter 5:14-6:7 and 7:1-10

Why are they mentioned twice?

To underscore or emphasize the importance of sacrifice to the Lord. The beginning of the book is framed in twofold patterns of sacrifice and forgiveness—twice over revelation of God's open accessibility, forgiving grace and joyful communion.

Why is sacrifice important?

It is a symbol or figure of the relationship of the one making the offering to the Lord in his Glory-Tabernacle.

What is the figural or symbolic meaning of sacrifice?

Sin requires a substitute; sinners require a mediator

What is another word for "substitute"?

Vicarious

What is another word for "mediator"?

Intercessor or go-between

In Leviticus, the mediator is _____? _____ (the priest and especially the high priest)

Who is the eschatological substitute or vicarious offering?

The Lord Jesus Christ

Who is the eschatological mediator?

The Lord Jesus Christ

Who is the eschatological priest/high priest?

The Lord Jesus Christ

The protological Tabernacle-sacrifices figure or point to the eschatological sacrifice of the Lord of Heaven.

Yes

Is there any other substitute for the sins of sinners than Jesus Christ?

No, he alone is all-sufficient in his marvelous person and saving grace.

Do we need any other priest than Jesus Christ?

No, he is the once-and-for-all eschatological (last) and final priest for the people of God. Priesthood is abolished in his finished priestly work.

How do you know this is correct?

When Christ said, "It is finished" (John 19:30), he completed and abolished the OT sacrifices, their priestly intercessors and the earthly Tabernacle-Temple.

How do you know this is correct?

God himself confirmed what we said above when he split the veil of the Temple from top to bottom. The Temple with its sacrifices, priests and earthly location had "passed away";

“new things” were brought forth from then on.

What relationship between God and the sinner is symbolized by the whole burnt offering (Lev 1; 6:8-13)?

As the whole sacrificial victim is burnt on the altar as a pleasing aroma to the Lord, so the sinner belongs wholly and entirely to the Lord. His whole being is to be offered up to the Lord as a result of God’s creating, redeeming and sanctifying that person. The sinner is confessing, “I belong body and soul to God, my Lord, to whom I yield or offer myself wholly as my Creator, my Redeemer, my Lord.”

Where will this wholeness be perfected?

In the perfect arena which the Tabernacle symbolized, i.e., in heaven the life of the believer belongs wholly and entirely to the Triune God for eternity.

You are saying that the eschatological perfects the protological even as the protological anticipates the eschatological?

Yes—and that in a biblical-theological or redemptive-historical manner. This is true of all the sacrifices detailed in Lev 1-7.

What relationship between God and the sinner is symbolized by the grain offering (Lev 2; 6:14-23)?

A portion of the fruits of the sinner’s labor is offered to the Lord as an expression (symbolic figure) that all the efforts of his labors in toiling and producing have their source and fruition in the will, the strength and the grace of God. The sinner is confessing, “I believe all my labor and toil in producing fruit unto the Lord is due to his abundant blessing and provision as my Creator, my Redeemer, my Lord.”

Where will this labor be perfected?

In the perfect arena which the Tabernacle symbolized, i.e., in heaven, believers lay their labors down as completed perfectly in the fruit of the labors of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What relationship between God and the sinner is symbolized by the peace offering (Lev 3; 7:11-34)?

This offering displays the result of the sinner offering himself and his labors wholly to the Lord. The result is the peace of reconciliation between God and sinners. The sinner is declaring, “I confess that all the enmity between myself and my God has been placated in the substitute who bears that enmity to death in my place; so that I may eat with and communion in peace before God my Creator, my Redeemer, My Lord.”

How is this peace (*shalom*) evident in the details of the offering?

The fellowship meal within the Tabernacle courts of God’s Glory-Presence displays the *shalom* which now exists between God and sinner (cf. Lev 7:15; also 3:1, 7, 12 and the phrase “before the Lord”). They are reconciled—no longer at enmity with one another on account of sin—and thus may sit at table with one another in peace.

When will this peace and reconciliation be perfected?

In the place where the supper of everlasting peace is spread in all its glory—the banquet between God and his children in heaven is the testimony to perfect reconciliation secured by the blood of the Lamb of God (NB: Lev 3:7 and Rev 19:7-9).

What relationship between God and the sinner is symbolized by the sin offering (Lev 4-5:13; 6:24-30)?

Sin places a barrier between God and man. It is an offense against God’s infinite and eternal holiness and righteousness which requires satisfaction and forgiveness.

Why is satisfaction required?

Because a debt of demerit has been incurred (or a merited/deserved punishment has been earned), God requires payment of the debt/demerit of sin. That debt is death (“the wages of sin is death,” Rom 6:23). The protological punishment of sin, which is death (Gen 2:17; 3:19), is recapitulated in every sinner in every era of history. It is the penalty of the protological curse and remains an eschatological reality (i.e., Hell as the lake of eternal fire of eternal death, Rev 20:14), unless it is removed by the payment of the penalty and the forgiveness of the guilt.

But how is a sinner to pay the debt and cleanse the guilt?

Only in the manner prescribed by God himself. The sin offering illustrates the gracious (not meritorious!) manner which God appoints for satisfying the debt of sin and forgiving the guilt of sin.

How is this accomplished?

Vicariously—through a substitute

What do you mean?

By means of a substitute (sacrificial animal), God accepts death as payment for the sin which offends his holy righteousness.

Is this why the sinner, offering a sin offering at the Tabernacle, was required to “lay his hands on the head” of his offering (Lev 4:4, 15, 29, 33)?

Yes, he was transferring his sin to the substitute (symbolically/figuratively) so that his sacrifice would die in his place. Laying his hands on the victim was his confession that he deserved to die, but that God’s grace allowed a substitute to pay his penalty.

You say a transfer—what was being transferred?

The punishment and guilt of the sinner was transferred to the sacrificial victim; from the sacrificial victim to the sinner, satisfaction of the penalty (victim’s death means sinner lives) and remission of guilt (victim’s blood means sinner’s guilt is cleansed or washed away) was transferred.

But how could temporal bulls, goats and lambs remove an eternal penalty?

They could not, as Hebrews 10:4 tells us. They could only symbolize or figure that which alone could satisfy and atone for sin.

Who is the eschatological sin offering for the people of God?

The Lord Jesus Christ

How?

Once-and-for-all, he vicariously pays the penalty for their sin by/in his death and cleanses their guilt in his precious blood. The transfer is: sin’s death penalty is transferred to Christ; Christ’s life sufficiency is transferred to the sinner. Again the transfer is: sin’s guilt and criminality (sin a crime against God) is transferred to Christ; Christ’s guiltlessness and purity washes the sinner in forgiveness (guilt is washed away in the blood of the eschatological victim for sinner’s slain).

How is this eschatological sacrifice/victim an eschatological payment for an eschatological debt?

He alone is an eschatological person able to endure (and remit) an eschatological debt—whose death is of infinite value (on account of his infinite person) so as to cancel an infinite eschatological death penalty. No Hell is due to the person of Christ; no Hell is due to those vicariously united to him (i.e., “in Christ”) in his death-resurrection life story.²

But Christ was 1400 years away. How did an Israelite sinner receive Christ?

² The reader will enjoy George Herbert’s “The Sacrifice” as a brilliant poetic reflection on our Lord’s death.

By proxy anticipation—Christ was present in advance through the symbolic and figurative reality of the Tabernacle sacrifices. So rich and pervasive is his all-sufficient grace that his eschatological work is present to those who believe under the old covenant. They too are “in Christ” from afar. This is the wonderful message of the epistle to the Hebrews.³

What relationship between God and the sinner is symbolized by the guilt/trespass offering (Lev 5:14-6:7; 7:1-10)?

That as with the sin offering (cf. Lev 7:7), God is offended and must be placated by an atoning substitute. However, one additional element is essential in the trespass offering: restitution of the value of the sin plus 20% (one-fifth) is required. The sinner is acknowledging, “I am guilty of trespassing against the righteous holiness of God, both intentionally and unintentionally. In addition, I must redress any potential loss to those whom I have offended by a 20% gift of value above and beyond what the loss was worth.”

Why is restitution of value required?

Justice requires value for value—that is equitable. Ultimately, God has been defrauded.

But why is 20% added?

Because justice requires that the loss of value be compensated by an additional one-fifth of the value of what the sin involved. The equity of loss of use is therefore compensated. Cf. the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:2-10.

The next section of Leviticus is the narrative unit of chapters 8-10. What is the unfolding story-line featured here?

We are told of the anointing and installation/consecration of Aaron and his sons as priests at the Lord’s tabernacle. This includes making sin offerings (8:2), burnt offerings (8:18), grain offerings (9:17) and peace offerings (9:18) for them; thus folding their narrative story into the narrative of the offerings themselves (chapters 1-7).

But Nadab and Abihu did not survive this full narrative.

No, they “died before the Lord” (Lev 10:2).

Why?

Because they offered “strange fire” before the Lord (Lev 10:1).

How did they die?

Fire devoured them, issuing from the glory-presence of the Lord in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle. Fire met fire!

What is “strange fire”?

No one knows for sure. But whatever it was in particular, God was particularly offended. It was so wicked that the Lord consigned them to eschatological fire instantly.

The next section (Lev 11-15) contains laws of clean and unclean animals, clean and unclean physical conditions and leprosy.

Why are these laws in the OT? They seem very strange to us today.

Yes, they are strange. However, they are associated with holiness in the presence of the Lord, i.e., as one comes to the tabernacle.

Therefore, since the tabernacle is a symbol of heaven, are these laws prohibiting access to heaven for anything or anyone unclean?

Yes, they have a moral/ethical vector/aspect. As Geerhardus Vos observes, “God teaches his people to feel about sin as they are accustomed to feel an ignominious and

³ See the author’s audio series on the epistle to the Hebrews here: <http://nwts.edu/audio/JTD/Hebrews.htm> .

uncomfortable exclusion from the ritual service” (*Biblical Theology: OT and NT* [1948 Eerdmans edition] 200; [1975 Banner of Truth edition] 182).

We may add to Vos’s “exclusion from the ritual service” the following: exclusion from the ritual dwelling, i.e., the Tabernacle.

Why do you add this?

Because unholiness, uncleanness (symbolic of sinfulness) cannot be admitted to God’s perfectly clean and holy presence. These cleanliness laws ultimately have an eschatological vector—they point to heaven, the arena of perfect holiness and pristine cleanliness.

Israel was then being given visual reminders of God’s presence and God’s person.

Yes. In their everyday life, the children of Israel saw (and felt) visual (and tangible) reminders of the pollution, corruption and repugnance of sin. Unclean animals demonstrated that only clean beasts could be brought to the tabernacle. Unclean conditions (both bodily and structurally, i.e., in buildings) evidenced the on-going presence of sin in one’s life and in the world—and thus a barrier to living as such (i.e., in that condition) in God’s presence.

But that which barred a sinner from God’s presence could be removed.

Yes. The Lord mercifully provided a way for cleansing, purification and removal of sin so that the believer could come into his presence “whiter than snow”.

Thus, Leviticus 11-15 may be read for edification and celebration.

Yes. Edification for our understanding of sin and its consequences by physical and tangible realities. Celebration in that Christ Jesus has taken all the pollution, uncleanness and repugnance of our sin upon himself so as to wash us in his blood, cleanse us through his cross, and to embrace us in his saving grace so that we are fit to appear in the arena of the eschatological tabernacle. Praise be to his blessed name!!

Previously, you labeled chapter 16 the hinge or pivot point of the book of Leviticus.

Yes

Why?

Because it contains the narrative of the most wonderful day of the OT year—Yom Kippur.

What does Yom Kippur mean?

Day (Yom) of atonement (Kippur) or Day of covering

Covering what?

Israel’s sins

Covering how?

By the blood of a substitute hiding the guilt, shame and pollution of sin from the omniscient eye of God.

What was covered?

The mercy seat or lid to the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle. Mercy placated with cleansing blood speaks atonement, payment, satisfaction, forgiveness, sin removed and banished.

How is this narrated?

By the story of two goats—one of which gives its life in death, the other of which is set free from death to live.

Why are there two?

To dramatize the wages of sin (death) and the reverse, i.e., freedom from death

when sin is atoned (liberty).

How often did this occur?

Yom Kippur was observed once a year. Thus, once a year Israel saw a visual dramatization of what sin produces (death) and what God graciously dispenses (freedom from death by way of atonement and satisfaction).

But this occurred once a year, over and over again.

Yes, this OT ritual was never finished. It could not truly remove the penalty of sin and bestow the benefit of grace because it had no endless life in itself, so as to once and for all cancel sin, annul death and grant everlasting freedom and life.

Then the symbol of Yom Kippur was powerless to complete or fulfill itself?

Yes, it needed a supernatural person and a supernatural work to put an end to its ritualistic drama once and for all.

Who was this person and what was his work?

He was our sweet Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, eternal Son of God together with his spotless, blameless, pristinely clean, perfectly holy life and atoning death.

Was his life and death an eschatological atonement?

Yes

Why?

As an eternal, supernatural person, he was able to make eternal and eschatological satisfaction for our sins. That is, his atoning sacrifice was final, absolute, never needs repeating, effectual once-and-for-all. It displaces and replaces Yom Kippur because he is the eschatological victim as well as the eschatological high priest. This is the teaching of the epistle to the Hebrews.⁴

What is the next unit of material in Leviticus?

The legal matter in chapter 17-24:9

This unit contains the Hebrew feasts in chapter 23. List them.

The Sabbath, Passover, First-fruits, Pentecost, Tabernacles (or Booths) are the major ones. Blowing of Trumpets and New Moon are also listed.

Three of these are so-called 'pilgrimage' festivals.

Yes. Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles were the three that required a journey to the tabernacle/temple each year (Deut 16:16; cf. Ex 23:14-17).

What is the biblical theology of these feasts?

Consider them:

Retrospectively	Past Historical vector/aspect
Existentially	Present rehearsal or re-living
Prospectively	Future eschatological vector/aspect

How does the Sabbath function biblically-theologically?⁵

Retrospective	Historical creation Sabbath (God's rest)
Existential	Present re-living weekly Sabbath (man's weekly rest)
Prospective	Future eschatological Sabbath (eternal rest—redeemed man in God's rest forever)

Israel's Saturday Sabbath displaced by the Christian Lord's day Sabbath

⁴ Cf. the author's series on Hebrews here: <http://nwts.edu/audio/JTD/Hebrews.htm> .

⁵ Review the treatment of the Sabbath in the Genesis and Exodus BT Catechism here <http://kerux.com/doc/2803A5.asp> and here <http://kerux.com/doc/2902A4.asp> .

How does the Passover function biblically-theologically (it includes the Feast of Unleavened Bread)?

Retrospective	Historical exodus from Egypt by the blood of a lamb
Existential	Re-living liberation from bondage to evil principalities
Prospective	Eschatological exodus redemption/liberation by eschatological Lamb of God (1 Cor 5:7)

Israel's lamb displaced by the Lamb of God

How does First-fruits function biblically-theologically?

Retrospective	Historical spring (barley) harvest in the Promised Land
Existential	Re-living possession of the first portion of the bounty of God's land
Prospective	Eschatological bringer of eternal possession of the first-fruits of God's Spirit, i.e., Jesus Christ as First-fruits of the new creation glory-land (Jam 1:18; Rom 8:23; 1 Cor 15: 20, 23)

Israel's first-fruits displaced by Christ Jesus, the true First-fruits of creation

How does Pentecost function biblically-theologically?

Retrospective	Historical first-fruits of wheat harvest in the Promised Land
Existential	Re-living the out-pouring of blessing in the grain harvest
Prospective	Eschatological out-pouring of blessings of the Holy Spirit as the harvest of the nations unfolds (Acts 2:5-42).

Israel's harvest in-gathering displaced by the harvest in-gathering of nations through the Holy Spirit

How does Yom Kippur function biblically-theologically?

Retrospectively	Historical annual day of atonement
Existentially	Re-living forgiveness of sins via a scapegoat
Prospectively	Eschatological atonement day through Messiah-Christ

Israel's tabernacle/temple altar displaced by the cross of Jesus Christ

How does the Feast of Tabernacles function biblically-theologically?

Retrospectively	Historical conclusion to the wilderness 40-year sojourn and conclusion to the agricultural year (Hebrew "Thanksgiving", i.e., Fall harvest in-gathering)
Existential	Re-living the pilgrim status of the people of God by dwelling in booths like Israel of old
Prospectively	Eschatological pilgrim (Jesus Christ) and eschatological conclusion to the in-gathering of the people of God (NB: Zech 14:16-21)

Israel's booths displaced by the Son of God who is the end of the Feast of Tabernacles and its imagery: he is the fountain of living waters (John 7:37-38) and the light of the world (John 8:12), as well as the very tabernacle of God in the midst of men (John 1:14; 2:19; Rev 21:22)

Are the feasts of the OT to be observed and celebrated by Christians in the NT age?

No

Why not?

Christ Jesus is their full, complete and final meaning. Having him, we have all and need no festival elements of the prior age to encumber us. We do not live in the past, but in the future wonder of the glorious Son of God of heaven where festivals, times and seasons have been transcended by eternity.

The next unit of Leviticus (24:10-23) is a narrative interlude about the death of a blasphemer. Why is it present in the text of the book?

It is a demonstrable instance of the just wrath of God (even as the deaths of Nadab and Abihu were). This incident places an exclamation point (!) on the dire consequences of blaspheming the person, the name, the work of the living, all-holy Triune Lord God.

What is unique about this narrative unit?

It contains a chiasm (vv. 13-23)⁶

How so?

The narrative text begins as it ends with the Lord speaking to Moses (v. 13 with v. 23). It pivots at the center point of the chiasm on the so-called *lex talionis* (Latin, “law of retaliation” or law of proportionate justice)—“eye for eye, tooth for tooth” (v. 20).

How does Leviticus end?

With the Jubilee celebration (chapters 25-27)

What is the year of Jubilee?

It was the year after a period of seven sabbatical years (or 49 years altogether). Thus, the year of Jubilee was the 50th year.

What occurred in the year of Jubilee?

All debts were canceled; all slaves went free (save those who chose to remain indentured); all land was returned to the original owners or their descendants; all borrowed property was returned; the land was not planted nor harvested.

It was a semi-centennial celebration of liberty, freedom and rest. Why?

To permit the people of God to enjoy temporal life without the usual burdens and encumbrances. Also it provided a heart of hope for the future when, in the seven sabbatical years in which they may have been burdened with debt, etc., they would anticipate the year of Jubilee in which they would be unburdened, unencumbered and granted, by the gift of God, temporal rest, relief and liberty.

How does Isaiah 61:1-2 relate to the year of Jubilee?

The prophet projects an eschatological Jubilee

How do we know this?

The Lord Jesus reads the Isaiah passage in Luke 4:18-21 and says, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Thus, Leviticus closes on an eschatological note—a note of temporal Jubilee anticipating the eschatological Jubilee; a note which projects Isaiah’s vision and Christ’s realization.

Then, what kind of a Jubilee land is Isaiah’s vision and Christ’s realization (symbolized in Israel’s land)?

Not Israel-Palestine, but the Kingdom of Heaven

Not temporal release, but eternal release

Not freedom from debt, but freedom from sin permanently

Not release from bond servitude, but the everlasting liberty of the sons and daughters of God

The keystone of the Pentateuch is a rich tapestry of how sinners come into the dwelling place of a just and holy God. Israel is granted the visual revelation of the invisible realization; and Christ completes, “sums it up”, brings it to full semi-eschatological accomplishment for those united to him by grace through faith (“in Christ”, even from Leviticus).

⁶ Cf. the full outline in N. Klaus, *Pivot Patterns in the Former Prophets* (1999) 219.

The Nakedness of Our Lord

John 19: 23-24

Robert Van Kooten

As you might expect, these last few verses of the gospel of John describing Jesus' death on the cross are some of the most interpreted and thought about verses in all of church history. If you were to obtain the various commentaries on John's gospel, you would find the verses 23-24 of chapter 19 are subject to a plethora of interpretations. Therefore, to help you understand the message of our text, I want to first make you aware of some of those interpretations so that you can better understand what the inspired writer wants you to know about our Lord. Let us first consider the two points in our text with which everyone agrees.

Two Points of Agreement

First: **The Soldiers**. Nearly all interpreters agree that the mention of the soldiers two times brackets our text and sets the verses apart as a separate unit of John 19. The unit begins in verse 23 stating *when the soldiers crucified Jesus* and concludes in verse 24 with *so the soldiers did these things*. The soldiers, therefore, begin and conclude the unit, separating the event from the rest of the chapter.

Second: **Psalm 22:18**. All interpretations agree in recognizing the significance of the direct quote of Psalm 22 in verse 24. The other three gospels tell us that the soldiers divided Jesus' clothes by the casting of lots. But John is the only gospel writer who records the quote from Psalm 22:18. John quotes word for word the Greek version of the Old Testament (called the Septuagint) as if the inspired gospel writer took it right from the Septuagint instead of the original Hebrew.

All interpreters agree on these two points.

Disagreement: One Garment or Two

What is not agreed upon, however, is what this all means and more specifically how we are to interpret these verses. Much of the discussion about these two verses centers on whether Jesus wore one garment or two. The other three gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) speak of only one garment and thus some interpreters try to apply that one garment to John's account as well. They point out that the end of verse 24 is a direct quote from Psalm 22:18. This means the genre of the Psalm quoted is poetry and should be interpreted according to the rule of poetic interpretation: what is A and what is more than A, B. The 'A what's more B' rule implies that the biblical author is making a point about the garment in the first line and elaborating upon the same piece of clothing on the second line. Hence, in the first line, when the psalmist writes *they have divided up my garments* among them, he is embellishing the point in the second line. How did they divide the garments among them? The second line answers *and for my clothing they cast lots*. This means, according to the poetic interpretation rule, the *garment* in the first line and the *clothing* in the second line are referring to the same piece of clothing. Therefore, these interpreters conclude that John is indicating, as the other gospels, that there was only one garment.

Yet if the poetry in the Psalm is referring to one garment, why then does the gospel writer of John uniquely record in this context that there were two pieces of clothing? In verse 23, we are told that the outer clothing of Jesus was divided up into four because there are four soldiers and each one takes a piece. In verse 24, we are told that the soldiers take the inner garment—the tunic, which is seamless and woven into one piece—and they draw lots to see who would receive it. Why does the gospel writer of John uniquely record the detail of the second piece of clothing that no other gospel writer records? That is the question we seek to answer in this sermon because when the gospel writer of John includes the second garment, he has something more he wants us to know and understand about our Lord. Therefore, since we have now settled on the fact that the text clearly states there were two garments, it is important for you to understand how these two garments have been interpreted in church history.

The Symbolic Interpretation

One of the oldest interpretations as to why John records two garments goes way back to the time of Cyprian (†258 A.D.). In this interpretation, people have viewed the two garments symbolically. This would seem to indicate that the gospel writer of John has included two garments because he is indirectly making a point that is made in the other three gospels. According to this symbolic interpretation, the first piece of clothing divided up into four, represents the four corners of the earth: north, south, east and west. This symbolically means that the news of Jesus Christ who died on the cross for sinners would be proclaimed to the four corners of the earth. In this symbolic interpretation, John is telling us the first garment was divided up into four pieces to symbolize what the apostles and the church would later do: preach the gospel of Jesus' death on the cross to the four corners of the earth. Thus, what is taught specifically in the other three gospels concerning the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ being proclaimed to the ends of the earth, is here being implied in John's gospel as well.

Yet not only does this interpretation symbolically look at the first garment, it also interprets symbolically the second seamless garment. If the first garment was divided into four, then there must be something to the second garment in verse 24 that was not divided. Therefore, the second garment which is described at the end of verse 23 as a seamless tunic woven in one piece from top to bottom and was not divided, represents the unity of the church. As the first garment was divided into four and spoke of the gospel going to the four corners of the earth, so the second garment which is not divided and represents the unity of the church. As this tunic is not divided by the Roman soldiers, so it is true of the church of Jesus Christ that no power, no army can divide it. This means that the church, which is made up of people all nations and all languages from the four corners of the earth, will be united together and become one body that will not be divided, just like the seamless garment of Jesus. Thus, the seamless garment reminds us that no military power, no Roman soldier try as he might, can ever break apart the church united in Jesus Christ and destroy it.

Now all of this is true isn't it? The gospel about Jesus Christ and his death on the cross will be proclaimed to the ends of the earth. That message of the church is unified and no one, no power, can ever destroy it or break it apart. All of this is taught in other parts of Scripture. But is that what the gospel writer of John wants us to know from the seamless tunic? I do not believe so.

The High Priest Interpretation

Another interpretation in church history concerning the seamless tunic has to do with Jesus' office as high priest. In the Old Testament, the high priest of the temple wore a seamless tunic as he went into the Holy of Holies to make the sacrifice on behalf of the people of God. This high priest interpretation says that John specifically mentions the seamless undergarment in verse 24 because he wants us to connect it with Jesus as our great high priest. This is just as the previous unit where in verse 21 Pilate puts the sign on the cross above Jesus' head that said *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews*—connecting him with his kingly office in that John 19 unit. Now, in this next unit of verses, he is connecting Jesus with his high priestly office. After all, when Jesus dies on the cross and his blood is spilled, he becomes the high priest of God's people forevermore. And so this interpretation concludes that the reason why John includes the second garment—the seamless tunic—is to identify Jesus as our great high priest!

Now it is true that Jesus is our great high priest. Other Scripture passages tell us that Jesus is our high priest forever. However, the only problem with that interpretation is that our catechism doctrine also tells us that Jesus fulfilled three offices—the offices of prophet, priest and king. And if that is what John is doing, connecting these sections of Jesus' death on the cross with his threefold offices, then why does he mention the king and the high priestly office in John 19, but he does not mention his prophetic office?

'The Robe' Interpretation

All of these interpretations makes you wonder if we should just leave it to the portrayal given in the 1953 Hollywood movie *The Robe* which portrays a Roman soldier searching for this second seamless tunic mentioned in John's gospel because there must be something magical about it. The search for the tunic proceeds because it is thought to have magical healing powers. Yet, we know that the Bible does not tell us there is anything magical about Jesus' garment and if we were to find it, it would not have healing powers.

However, if we are going to reject all these interpretations, we must then ask ourselves how are we going to interpret these verses? What was the inspired author John thinking when he added the second garment?

The Key: Psalm 22:18

The key to understanding these verses is found in the Psalm that is quoted in verse 24. The quote from this Psalm and its heading tells us that King David wrote it. The situation described by David in this Psalm is a scenario where he is surrounded by his enemies. He feels abandoned by God, just as Jesus was abandoned on the cross. You can read the words of David in the Psalm and you can think of them being fulfilled by the Lord Jesus as he hung on the cross. Note these verses:

1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?

2 O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer,

and by night, but I find no rest.

6 But I am a worm and not a man,
scorned by mankind and despised by the people.
7 All who see me mock me;
they make mouths at me; they wag their heads;
8 “He trusts in the Lord; let him deliver him
let him rescue him, for he delights in him!”

12 Many bulls encompass me;
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;
13 they open wide their mouths at me,
like a ravening and roaring lion.

14 I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
my heart is like wax;
it is melted within my breast;
15 my strength is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;
you lay me in the dust of death.
16 For dogs encompass me;
a company of evildoers encircles me;
they have pierced my hands and feet—
17 I can count all my bones—
they stare and gloat over me;
18 they divide my garments among them,
and for my clothing they cast lots.

Do you understand what David is describing in the Psalm? He is describing his humiliation at the hands of his enemies. His enemies have surrounded him! They are mocking him! God has ordained his enemies to have their way with him. Taking his garments and leaving him naked and exposed is all part of the humiliation that he feels, as if God has abandoned him. And as the gospel writer of John gazes upon our Lord hanging upon the cross, the first thing that comes to his mind is not the gospel going to the four corners of the earth and the unity of the church; nor does he think about Jesus as our great high priest or that there will be something magical about the garment that will later give healing powers to people. What comes to his mind as he is inspired by the Holy Spirit is Psalm 22, the Psalm of humiliation. What comes to mind is the humiliation that Israel's King David experienced and now as he hangs on the cross, our own Lord's humiliation.

Jesus' Naked Humiliation

And how was our Savior humiliated? The gospel writer of John, who wrote this after the other three gospels were written, wants you to know something more about our Lord. The other gospel writers tell you that they divided up his clothes by the casting of lots. But the gospel writer of John, in keeping with his quote from the Psalm of humiliation, wants to make something even clearer

than any other gospel writer. In verse 23, we are told that they took off his clothes and cast lots for his clothing. But “this is Jesus,” you think; “they probably just took his outer clothes, and must have left the undergarment on? This is Jesus after all, the Son of God.” We do not want to think of him naked on the cross!

But this is what John inspired by Holy Spirit very carefully tells us in verses 23-24: *They took his garments and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, so they said to one another, “Let’s not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be.”* This means they took the tunic off too.

Do you notice how respectfully the gospel writer tells us about Jesus’ nakedness? He wants us to know it, but he does not come out blatantly and say, “They took off his undergarment and Jesus hung on the cross naked.” He remains careful and respectful in the wording. Is it any wonder that there are so many interpretations of this text throughout church history?

But he very specifically tells us that they took the outer garment and divided it into four. And then they took the inner tunic as well and cast lots for it. And as the gospel writer of John witnessed this event inspired by the Holy Spirit, he immediately thought and wrote of the fulfillment of David’s humiliation in Psalm 22:18:

they divide my garments among them,
and for my clothing they cast lots.

This is not something we like to think about is it? Jesus, naked on the cross; our Savior exposed before everyone who walked by. If John would have said it more specifically, the church probably would not want to read it! If John would be more specific, the verse could be an object of scorn for the unbeliever who reads it even today!

For a believer, it is the kind of thing that you just don’t want to think about. You hear about it and you wonder if you should respond like Noah’s two sons to their father and his nakedness after the flood in Genesis 9. Not like Ham who told others of his father’s nakedness, but the two sons who turned their faces, walked backward and brought a garment to cover their father out of respect (Gen. 9: 22-23).

We don’t want to think of this concerning Jesus. Yet we are surrounded by a world and a culture of nakedness—in the movies and on the internet, where people parade around their nakedness and expose themselves or look at the nakedness of others for entertainment. By doing so, they degrade others and themselves as human beings into objects of mockery.

We would never want to think of our Savior that way. But the inspired author very carefully makes sure that we do. Why?

The First Adam Second Adam

The Bible tells us we are born in Adam. The first Adam and his wife Eve were created in the garden naked and without shame. But when they ate of the tree, their eyes were opened and their

nakedness was exposed. They knew they could not stand as naked sinners before a Holy God and they hid. God called to them. They hid in the trees; they tried to cover themselves with fig leaves because they could not stand as naked and exposed sinners before a Holy God (Gen. 3:7-9).

God had to cover them. And he covered them with animal skins (Gen. 3:21). Blood had to be shed to cover their nakedness. Blood had to be shed to cover their sins and in the Old Testament temple system it was the blood of animals. But in the New Testament temple, it is the blood of God's Son, Jesus Christ.

The gospel writer of John wants you to see that as Adam hid his nakedness in the trees, so the second Adam—Jesus Christ—was nailed to a tree. His nakedness was exposed before the world and a Holy God. He hung on the cross cursed and humiliated before the world and a Holy God so that naked sinners born in Adam could be covered and all of his people would be clothed.

Lest you think the world was in charge—lest you think that the soldiers who bracket the text are controlling the situation as they drew lots and are entertained as he was exposed, take note of the phrase that leads into the Psalm quote in verse 24: *this was to fulfill the Scripture*. You see, when the gospel writer of John includes the detail of the second garment, he is carefully and respectfully recording the nakedness of our Lord. Hence, in the nakedness of our Lord, John wants you to see your own nakedness and sin. He wants you to think about the fact that if Christ had not been naked and exposed and endured what Adam and every child of Adam could not bear, you would have to bear it someday before a Holy God. And without his covering of your nakedness and sin, you would be nakedly exposed to God's eternal wrath in hell. This is the purpose of bracketing the soldiers as God ordained they fulfill the Scriptures.

The John 19:23-24 picture of your Lord is his glory. There is no darkness in our text. Look at him and know the nakedness of your Lord and see your nakedness covered. Look at him and see and know your salvation.

Book Reviews

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Arthur Holder, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2011. 584pp. Paper. ISBN: 978-1-4443-3765-5. \$47.06.

This volume has some basic and useful articles on the history of Christian spirituality. Those familiar with John A. McGuckin and his work in Patristic theology will note that he writes a chapter on “Christian Spirituality in Byzantium and the East”. However, the articles that seek to construct a positive perspective on Christian spirituality leave much to be desired. The study of spirituality advocated here is one promoted at the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) in Berkeley, California, a union of schools largely devoted to ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. As a result, this volume begins with a discussion of the methods of the study of Christian spirituality by Sandra M. Schneiders, professor emerita in the Jesuit School of Theology at GTU. In addition, a number of the articles refer to David Tracy, a progressive Roman Catholic theologian who taught for much of his career at the University of Chicago. To give readers a perspective on Dr. Tracy, he wrote a book entitled *Talking About God: Doing Theology in the Context of Modern Pluralism* (1983) with John Cobb, an eminent process theologian who believed that God was in the process of becoming.

This may explain why most of the constructive articles (as distinguished from historical articles) in this volume are vapid and advocate a view of Christian spirituality that is unhistorical and non-descriptive. Or to put it another way, they tend to advocate a form of spirituality that is progressive, mystical and anti-metaphysical (using the term metaphysics as it is used in traditional western philosophy and theology). Admittedly, some of the constructive articles do wish to advocate a form of spirituality grounded in the particularity of history (e.g., David Hay, chapter 24), but the result is still not that descriptive compared to the richness of classic Christian spirituality (e.g., Augustine’s *Confessions*, et al.). In the midst of this, there are a couple articles that are stimulating and one of these (in our opinion) is constructively helpful in its apologetic against Marx, Freud and Durkheim.

The first of the chapters that I would classify as stimulating, but not constructively helpful in the final analysis, is “Trinitarian Perspectives on Christian Spirituality” (chapter 10) by Mark A. McIntosh. The chapter is stimulating in that it forces the reader to think and is not simply a fog of emptiness like so many of the chapters. But it ultimately arrives at a view of the Trinity which accords with the mystical tradition in theology, and in this sense (in our view) is not constructively useful on the whole.

Janet K. Ruffing’s contribution entitled “Personality Sciences” (chapter 18) is worth reading for the statistical studies she notes which take on Marx, Freud and Durkheim’s views of religion. For instance, Freud taught that religion contributed to neurosis. But Dr. Ruffing shows studies which indicate that religious people are just as psychologically whole (or more so) than non-religious people. Admittedly, these studies involve a large spectrum of the population, but in their own limited sphere they do refute (or seriously question) Freud’s contention. And we might note Marx’s view that religion is the opiate of the people (most notably the poorer members of society). This

view is questioned by statistical studies that indicate that religious commitments are found less among groups of people the more they approach the most disadvantaged segments of society. Admittedly such a study is counter intuitive to many and may not provide the final word on the subject. Nonetheless, Dr. Ruffing is to be thanked for assembling some of these studies and raising the question (and perhaps answering it in certain cases) of how statistical studies can be used in response to arguments such as those of Marx and Freud.

At the same time, she uses these studies to prove her own view that religion is a human biological phenomena. Insofar as she may wish to dilute the distinctiveness of Christianity, we cannot agree. However, her biological view per se may amount to nothing more than the classic observation that all human beings are religious, a view traditionally used in defense of God's existence.

When she verges into economics, she appeals more to her own speculations and is less convincing. She seems to imply that since all humans are collectively religious, one should begin with collectivism rather than individualism in economics. She then claims that Adam Smith promotes selfishness since he argues for a form of economics grounded in the assumption that everyone seeks their own best interests. She presumably wishes economics to be grounded in a form of collectivism advocating selfless Christian love. There are several problems with this view, the most notable being the Pelagian or Semi-Pelagian assumptions behind the view. That assumption is that we live in a world where selfishness is not at the core of human moral behavior. In the Augustinian (and we would argue Pauline) tradition of Christianity, all people are religious by nature, but they suppress the true God, fashioning him into an idol. Thus, they do not offer him the thanks and worship he deserves, and as a result, they do not serve their fellow human beings as they ought. Thus, the majority of human beings in this age will never seek the universal good of others above their own self interests. And those who rule the state will be like them. On the other hand, many idealistic economic systems are founded on a this-worldly utopian eschatology, usually wedded with a Semi-Pelagian or Pelagian view of human nature. That is, they envision a broader society that will act unselfishly as a whole. Without this vision socialism cannot flourish. These this-worldly utopian visions are contrary to the semi-eschatological nature of the church in the present world. Such views are Christian heresies (like Marxism) and can be justified in no other way than by appeal to dogmatic utopian fancies. The brakes can be put on this by a careful assessment of biblical eschatology. And this can be gained by looking up all the places the Old Testament is quoted in the New Testament and carefully studying the context of each.

A subsidiary line of investigation would be to engage the arguments of professional economists without appealing to unproven utopian ideals. Since economics lies in the sphere of mixed articles (in which natural and supernatural revelation intersects), we suggest that those promoting their economic visions should be able to answer the arguments from nature presented by professional economists. This might help them reevaluate their understanding of the Christian Scriptures on their view of economics and thus of their this-worldly utopian eschatologies. But Dr. Ruffing has not taken on Adam Smith's arguments in this way. And her assumption that Smith promotes selfishness has been denied by writers of economic history like Mark Skousen (see *The Making of Modern Economics*), who notes that Smith does not make selfishness a virtue like Ayn Rand.

Under this line of inquiry, we suggest that Dr. Ruffing tackle the arguments found in Carl Menger's *Principles of Economics*, which is shorter, simpler and perhaps better argued than Smith. If

Menger's arguments are sound, they could be seen to fit with a Christian world view in which a proper form of self-love and liberty contributes to the greatest good of the community. And considering the notion of liberty, Christians who are liberated by Christ are called to extend that liberty to others in their social relationships. However, socialism stifles liberty of economic expression. And if the arguments made by Ludwig von Mises in *Economic Calculation in the Socialist Commonwealth* are correct, the socialist constraint of liberty does not lead to the benefit of all, but to their impoverishment. For socialism puts economic planning in the hands of fewer people (central planning) rather than utilizing the specialized knowledge and resourcefulness of numerous individuals as they make individual economic decisions. Thereby socialism stifles the ingenuity of a multitude of minds and the feast they could offer in place of a meager few at the top and their paltry scraps. This diminishes the greater good of all. We now have evidence that this has been the actual historical result of socialism, especially in the Soviet Republic (see *Basic Economics* by Thomas Sowell).

Admittedly, an economic exchange that utilizes the ingenuity of the multitude is imperfect in this world. But this is true all the more of the socialist alternative of central planning. The collectivist alternative is usually argued by those who do not recognize the semi-eschatological nature of this era. Instead, they wish to replace it with their utopian visions, which are ultimately totalitarian. These systems have historically tyrannized individuals and have thereby undermined the love command (which Dr. Ruffing thinks she is defending) by criticizing Adam Smith. With all this said, I found Dr. Ruffing's chapter to be one of the more stimulating in this book, primarily when she dealt with statistical studies which question the claims of Marx, Durkheim, Freud and others.

On the other hand, David B. Perrin's chapter on "Mysticism" (chapter 25) illustrates regrettable themes that are consonant with this volume as a whole. In this chapter, Perrin blurs the lines that separate the individual from God. The way he argues makes it clear that he advocates a form of mysticism that does not really distinguish the divine from the human. For him, the distinction between the divine and the human fits too much into the mold of Greek dualisms. Thus, he implicitly argues for a Pantheism that is more in accord with thinkers like Spinoza or Hegel, who from the point of view of some modern interpreters, taught that one cannot get outside of oneself and argue for a transcendent being. Thus, it is not surprising that he is against ontic theology, a line of argument that accords with the post-Kantian turn away from metaphysics. Perrin also claims that God is reassessing the situation and presumably changing, perhaps putting himself in the company of Alfred North Whitehead and process theology.

In an article *not* found in this volume, entitled "Mysticism and Christianity", the late B. B. Warfield makes a number of telling criticisms of mysticism (cf. *Biblical and Theological Studies*, 445-62). Besides the fact that it undermines the Creator/creature distinction, Warfield notes that mysticism undervalues the historical grounding of Christianity. The spirituality of biblical characters is grounded in history. For example, we might note that Mary praises God for his mighty acts culminating in the incarnation and kingdom of her Son (the Magnificat of Luke 1:46-55). Her praise of God is intimately connected to the manifestation of God's glorious character and saving grace in redemptive history. This is true of Hannah's song (1 Samuel 2:1-10), which the Magnificat reflects. In the same way, the song of Deborah and Barak (Judges 5) like the Psalms praises God insofar as he has manifested himself in his mighty acts in redemptive history. This biblical spirituality is not primarily an ahistorical contemplation of the divine nature which is divorced

from God's supernatural activity in history. No doubt God is eternal and unchanging, but this one who is eternal and unchanging acts in history, thereby expressing his very life to creatures found in time. And as such he is truly known by analogy to this world and its history. Thereby, God's revelation to his creatures is not simply an existential encounter (Neo-Orthodoxy) or an exclusively apophatic theology (in the mystical tradition). Readers of this volume who want to give the other side a fair hearing could do no better than read Warfield's article on this subject together with the present volume.

In conclusion, some of the historical studies on Christian spirituality in this volume, while basic, can be useful. And we have noted our appreciation for the statistical studies in Janet K. Ruffing's chapter. But on the whole, the constructive articles of this volume are far too slanted in the direction of studies sympathetic to the study of Christian spirituality as we find it at the Graduate Theological Union and to the views of David Tracy. A broader volume would have included more constructive articles from orthodox Christian authors. If this had been the case perhaps union with Christ, the historical God-man who is distinct from us but has brought us into communion with himself by grace, would be highlighted and articulated with greater care, precision, and resounding praise.

—Scott F. Sanborn

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Barry G. Webb, *The Book of Judges*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2012. 575pp. Cloth. ISBN: 978-0-8028-2628-2. \$50.

This is a recent offering in the NICOT (New International Commentary on the Old Testament) and arrives with the 'soft higher criticism' that we now expect from modern evangelicals. Webb does affirm the early date of the Exodus (1447/46 B.C.) as well as the literal 300-year era of the Judges mentioned in the Jephthah narrative (Jdg 11:26). But he cannot resist attributing portions of the text to post-monarchical crises, either that of Jeroboam I (931-910 B.C.), or the deportation of the Danites by Tiglath-Pileser III (734 B.C.) (p. 420)—all this in spite of numerous statements in the book of Judges that "there was no king in the land" (i.e., the text records pre-monarchical conditions and events).

Nor can he resist the Deuteronomistic origin of sections the book (i.e., that it arises from Josiah's 621 B.C. reform, when a gaggle of Jewish priests fabricated/invented the book of Deuteronomy, hid it in the garbage heaps of the Temple, then (re)discovered it to great applause and (falsely) revered it as the work of the 'mythical' Moses) (see his remarks on chapters 17-21 of Judges). Webb does venture a narrative approach to the book. While his story analysis is often tepid and lacks pizzazz, nonetheless there are some hints for moving the exegesis in the direction of genuine narrative theologians such as J. P. Fokkelman and Robert Alter (whom he cites, but does not show he has mastered) or proficient of the method on the NT side of the canon (e.g., Alan Culpepper, Jack Kingsbury, Charles Talbert). The patient reader may be stimulated by our author so as to go beyond him and even deeper than his oft superficial and obvious exegesis.

Nor is there much Christocentric exploration of a book which falls under our Lord's own exposition—cf. Luke 24:44. If our Savior indicated the (Former) Prophets witnessed of him, it behooves the genuine evangelical to seek the Savior revealed in the ancient text—Judges included. John Milton's brilliant *Samson Agonistes* is more stimulating in this regard than Webb. (Our author cites Milton, but again misses the power of the drama of the "eyeless" slave of Gaza and its eschatological projection a la Heb 11:1 and 32.) Beside Milton, we may suggest Joseph Hall's *Contemplations on the Old Testament* for provocative Christ-oriented insights.

Webb surveys recent scholarship on the book (35-53) and confesses his agreement with Daniel Block on the Christian canonical approach to the work. But, as noted above, he does not penetrate the implications and results of such an approach so as to draw the reader into the life and glory of the Lord Jesus. He does, however, have a fetish for the bizarre—a good example of which is his bringing the Lord's supper into Deborah and Barak's defeat of Sisera (p. 215).

All of Scripture is about Jesus Christ—either prospectively, actually or retrospectively. The Word of God is about God the Word (John 1:1) or it is a mere "clanging cymbal" and/or vacuous (Jewish) religious relic. Evangelicals deserve better, but Webb may force them to deconstruct then reconstruct his deficiencies, so as to advance the discussion as well as the Christocentric penetration of the book of Judges.

—James T. Dennison, Jr.