

## **Between Law and Grace: Ritual and Ritual Studies in Recent Evangelical Thought**

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### **1. Introduction**

In 1991 Mark A. Noll published an insightful study focusing upon the relationship between evangelicals and secular scholarship. He suggested that evangelical scholars (and I take this term here to have a broad meaning, including all those who have a high concept of Scripture) have never been as active in their respective professional academic contexts as they are today.<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, Noll implies that while NT evangelical scholars seem to be more integrated in their professional peer group, this is not the case for OT scholars.<sup>2</sup> I think that over the past ten years, the involvement of OT scholars in their respective professional community has increased—one has only to look at the SBL annual congress OT sections and chairs as well as the regional SBL meetings.<sup>3</sup> However, as pointed out by Noll, evangelical scholarship needs to become “meta-critical,” i.e., scholars need to look at the larger picture, incorporating the fruits of specific biblical research in a larger multi-disciplinary context, and thus become trend setters, rather than mere apologists or disconnected island-scholars.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Leicester: Apollos, 1991), 186.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>3</sup> However, this seems to be the case more in the USA than in Europe. Often, European mainstream critical scholarship simply ignores technical or professional research done by evangelical scholars. *Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>4</sup> I have argued elsewhere for the increased necessity for conservative biblical scholars to look again at the larger picture, utilizing insights and questions from other disciplines. Compare G. A. Klingbeil and M. G. Klingbeil, “La lectura de la Biblia desde una perspectiva hermenéutica multidisciplinaria (I) - Consideraciones teóricas preliminares,” in *Entender la Palabra: Hermenéutica Adventista para el Nuevo Siglo*, ed. M. Alomía, G. A. Klingbeil, M. G. Klingbeil, et al. (Cochabamba: Universidad Adventista de Bolivia, 2000), 147-173.

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In this study I will look at the prevalence of ritual studies and connected themes in conservative evangelical scholarship between 1990–1999. This is of course a descriptive and historical task. However, based upon my historical findings, I will try to delve into the “collective psyche” (whatever that may be) of evangelical scholarship, seeking to understand the underlying patterns and, finally, indicating possible future directions for evangelical scholarship on ritual.

### 2. Ritual Studies in Evangelical Scholarship—Definitions and Overview

The phrase “ritual studies” as used in this paper will indicate any research, be it in OT, NT, biblical, systematic, or pastoral theology, which involves a discussion of some aspect of ritual and uses the term “ritual.” This is a broad definition seeking to be inclusive rather than exclusive. The following evangelical/conservative journals have been included in the historical review: *Andrews University Seminary Studies* (AUSS—1990–1999), *Bibliotheca Sacra* (BSac—1990–1999), *Emmaus Journal* (EJ—1991–1999), *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (JETS—1990–1999), *Trinity Journal* (TJ—1990–1998), and the *Westminster Theological Journal* (WTJ—1990–1999). Other keywords, such as “rite(s)” or “cult,” could also have been included, but in view of space limitations and time constraints, I have restricted myself to only one keyword. The following table provides a synoptic view of the study of ritual in these journals and will utilize special *siglas* to indicate the importance of ritual for the perspective of the article:

- =ritual receives only cursory mention and does not represent a major argument
- ▣=the study of ritual is important to the argument of the article/study but not the main focus
- =ritual is the main focus of the article/study, sometimes including theoretical/methodological reflections

For the sake of a more graphical division, four distinct areas have been designated. The first two—OT and NT research—are self-explicatory. With systematic theology I have included the scarce reference to historical theology as well. In the case of practical theology, the more recent concern with missiology has been included. Furthermore, it should be noted that only journals published in English and originating in the USA were reviewed. There are a number of academic journals in Spanish, Portuguese, or French whose editorial policies subscribe to a theologically conservative perspective. Furthermore, British and European journals were also not taken into consideration. Neither book reviews nor dissertation abstracts were included in the study. In this digital age, full text searches are able to pinpoint the single use of a specific term, although subsequent reading confirmed that the use of the term might not always be technical. Unfortunately, *AUSS* is not yet available in digitally searchable format (as is the

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case with the *Theological Journal Library*, produced by Galaxie Software),<sup>5</sup> and thus it is possible that some uses of the term escaped my attention, although I went to great pains to fast-read all relevant articles.

Journal	OT	NT	Syst./Hist. Theology	Practical Theology/Miss.
<i>AUSS</i> (1990–99) ☞ = 117 6.83%	29/3 (1991): 195–203 ☐ <sup>6</sup> 34/2 (1996): 269–286 ■ 35/2 (1997): 189–209 ☐ 36/2 (1998): 231–244 ■	29/2 (1991): 127–137 ☐ 32/3 (1994): 217–226 ☐	36/2 (1998): 183–206 ☐	31/2 (1993): 119–126 ☐
<i>BSac</i> (1990–99) ☞ = 260 8.84%	147/586 (1990): 188–197 ☐ 147/587 (1990): 270–285 ☐ 149/596 (1992): 411–427 ☐ 149/496 (1992): 438–453 ☐ 152/607 (1995): 279–289 ■ 153/611 (1996): 259–269 ☐ 154/613 (1997): 23–46 ☐ 156/621 (1999): 42–60 ☐	148/590 (1991): 184–200 ■ 150/599 (1993): 341–358 ☐ 151/603 (1994): 309–324 ☐ 152/605 (1995): 42–59 ☐ 153/611 (1996): 281–307 ☐ 155/617 (1998): 39–61 ☐ 155/618 (1998): 139–163 ☐	152/605 (1995): 60–71 ☐ 153/612 (1996): 449–467 ☐ 156/623 (1999): 308–324 ☐	148/590 (1991): 131–150 ■ 152/606 (1995): 182–200 ☐ 153/609 (1996): 75–86 ☐ 154/615 (1997): 285–296 ☐ <sup>7</sup> 154/616 (1997): 396–409 ☐
<i>EJ</i> (1991–99) ☞ = 88 7.95%		3/1 (1994): 49–59 ☐	7/2 (1998): 157–199 ☐	2/1 (1993): 65–77 ☐ 2/2 (1993): 111–153 ☐ 4/1 (1995): 47–60 ☐ 6/1 (1997): 3–42 ☐ 6/1 (1997): 43–96 ■
<i>JETS</i> (1990–99) ☞ = 321 8.72%	34/2 (1991): 157–177 ☐ 34/2 (1991): 179–193 ☐ 35/2 (1992): 145–157 ☐ 35/3 (1992): 299–314 ■ 37/4 (1994): 481–496 ☐ 37/4 (1994): 497–510 ■ 39/2 (1996): 177–189 ■ 39/3 (1996): 421–432 ■ 41/4 (1998): 539–550 ■ 41/4 (1998): 551–560 ■	33/1 (1990): 13–34 ☐ 33/2 (1990): 171–178 ☐ 36/2 (1993): 179–187 ☐ 37/2 (1994): 217–233 ☐ 37/3 (1994): 333–350 ☐ 39/2 (1996): 223–240 ☐ 39/4 (1996): 571–586 ☐ 40/2 (1997): 189–197 ■ 42/2 (1999): 211–229 ☐ 42/3 (1999): 443–460 ☐	33/3 (1990): 289–302 ☐ 35/2 (1992): 199–216 ☐ 35/4 (1992): 515–530 ☐ 36/1 (1993): 15–23 ☐ 38/1 (1995): 77–92 ■ 37/3 (1994): 365–379 ☐	34/1 (1991): 3–19 ☐ 38/4 (1995): 565–580 ☐
<i>TJ</i> (1990–98) ☞ = 78 6.41%		12/2 (1991): 151–183 ☐ 12/2 (1991): 185–208 ■ 17/1 (1996): 19–65 ☐	19/1 (1998): 51–80 ☐	19/2 (1998): 179–205 ☐
<i>WTJ</i> (1990–99) ☞ = 179 7.26%	57/2 (1995): 277–297 ☐ 60/1 (1998): 1–21 ☐	53/1 (1991): 29–45 ☐ 53/1 (1991): 47–72 ☐ 54/2 (1992): 255–271 ☐	53/1 (1991): 93–108 ☐ 57/2 (1995): 383–402 ☐ 58/2 (1996): 183–207 ☐ 59/2 (1997): 159–176 ■ 61/2 (1999): 175–207 ☐	56/2 (1994): 345–377 ■ 58/1 (1996): 17–27 ☐ 60/1 (1998): 131–152 ☐
<b>Total</b> ☞ = 1043 <b>Total</b> Ritual=84 8.05%	<b>Total OT</b> ☞ = 24 (2.30 %)	<b>Total NT</b> ☞ = 26 (2.49%)	<b>Total Syst./Hist. Theology</b> ☞ = 17 (1.62%)	<b>Total Pract. Theology/Miss.</b> ☞ = 17 (1.62%)

### 3. Description of Evidence

All in all, out of 1043 articles reviewed, 84 (8.05%) contained in one form or another a reference to “ritual.” On first sight this does not seem to be such a bad ratio, especially in view of the fact that ritual texts/ritual studies represent only

<sup>5</sup> Galaxie Software, *Theological Journal Library* Version 4, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Although B. Dabrowski, “Ceramic Stand From Tell El-Umeiri,” *AUSS* 29/3 (1991): 195–203, technically deals with an object encountered in archaeological research, its time frame and context is the OT, and thus it is included in this rubric.

<sup>7</sup> I have opted to include E. M. Curtis, “Ancient Psalms and Modern Worship,” *BSac* 154/615 (1997): 285–296 in the practical theology section, since it focuses mostly on lessons to be learned from the ancient text and does not represent an exegetical study.

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one aspect of biblical genres or theological topics.<sup>8</sup> However, when looking more closely at the content and use of the references and qualifying the usage one immediately notes a different scenario. The following table illustrates the situation in terms of quality in relation to quantity.

**Ritual in Evangelical Academic Publications: 1990–1999**

Main Focus	4 (0.38%)
Important Mention	13 (1.24%)
Cursory Mention	67 (6.42%)
No Mention	959 (91.94%)

Out of the 1043 reviewed articles, 959 (91.94%) do not contain any reference to “ritual.” Sixty-seven articles (6.42%) mention the term, but do so in a non-technical way, often assuming concepts without introducing them. Most examples found in this group mention the term “ritual” only in a cursory way<sup>9</sup>—and interestingly enough—many of these also belong to the field of NT

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<sup>8</sup> Others include legal texts, prophetic texts, historiographical narratives, apocalyptic literature, genealogical texts, etc.

<sup>9</sup> They include the following articles (in chronological order beginning in 1990 and grouped according to journal): *Andrews University Seminary Studies*: K. G. C. Newport, “The Pharisees Prior to A.D. 70,” *AUSS* 29/2 (1991): 127-137; R. P. Martin, “New Testament Worship: Some Puzzling Practices,” *AUSS* 31/2 (1993): 119-126; R. Helm, “Azazel in Early Jewish Tradition,” *AUSS* 32/3 (1994): 217-226; E. Wendland, “Recursion and Variation in the ‘Prophecy’ of Jonah: On the Rhetorical Impact of Stylistic Technique in Hebrew Narrative Discourse, with Special Reference to Irony and Enigma,” *AUSS* 35/2 (1997): 189-209; F. L. Canale, “Philosophical Foundations and the Biblical Sanctuary,” *AUSS* 36/2 (1998): 183-206. *Bibliotheca Sacra*: R. B. Chisholm, Jr., “For Three Sins . . . Even For Four: the Numerical Sayings in Amos,” *BSac* 147 (1990): 188-197; J. D. Fawver and R. L. Overstreet, “Moses and Preventive Medicine,” *BSac* 147/587 (1990): 270-285; M. F. Rooker, “Part 2: Genesis 1:1–3: Creation or Re-Creation?” *BSac* 149/596 (1992): 411-427; H. W. Bateman IV, “Psalm 110:1 and the New Testament,” *BSac* 149/496 (1992): 438-453; W. B. Russell, “Rhetorical Analysis of the Book of Galatians, Part 1,” *BSac* 150/599 (1993): 341-358; D. E. Hiebert, “Presentation and Transformation: An Exposition of Romans 12:1–2,” *BSac* 151/603 (1994): 309-324; D. J. MacLeod, “The Cleansing of the True Tabernacle,” *BSac* 152/605 (1995): 60-71; J. E. Johnson, “The Old Testament Offices as Paradigm for Pastoral Identity,” *BSac* 152/606 (1995): 182-200; D. G. Moore and R. A. Pyne, “Neil Anderson’s Approach to the Spiritual Life,” *BSac* 153/609 (1996): 75-86; R. B. Allen, “The ‘Bloody Bridegroom’ in Exodus 4:24–26,” *BSac* 153/611 (1996): 259-269; M. R. Saucy, “Miracles and Jesus’ Proclamation of the Kingdom of God,” *BSac* 153/611 (1996): 281-307; G. J. Gatis, “The Political Theory of John Calvin,” *BSac* 153/612 (1996): 449-467; J. P. Tanner, “The History of Interpretation of the Song of Songs,” *BSac* 154/613 (1997): 23-46; E. M. Curtis, “Ancient Psalms and Modern Worship,” *BSac* 154/615 (1997): 285-296; R. H. Bowers, Jr., “Defending God before Buddhist Emptiness,” *BSac* 154/616 (1997): 396-409; H. W. Bateman IV, “Were the Opponents at Philippi Necessarily Jewish?,” *BSac* 155/617 (1998): 39-61; E. Woodcock, “The Seal of the Holy Spirit,” *BSac* 155/618 (1998): 139-163; S. J. Bramer, “The Literary Genre of the Book of Amos,” *BSac* 156/621 (1999): 42-60; G. H. Harris, “Satan’s Deceptive Miracles in the Tribulation,” *BSac* 156/623 (1999): 308-324. *Emmaus Journal*: K. C. Fleming, “Missionary Service in the Life of Paul, Part 3,” *EJ* 2/1 (1993): 65-77; J. H. Fish III, “Brethren Tra-

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studies, where the dichotomy between salvation by “ritual” and salvation by faith is assumed, with most of the standard references discussing Paul’s theology

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dition or New Testament Church Truth,” *EJ* 2/2 (1993): 111-153; S. L. Johnson, Jr., “The Promise of the Paraclete. An Exposition of John 14:12-21,” *EJ* 3/1 (1994): 49-59; J. H. Fish III, “The Vision of the Lord: An Exposition of Isaiah 6:1-13,” *EJ* 4/1 (1995): 47-60; J. H. Fish III, “The Life of the Local Church. The Structure, Ministry, and Functions of the Church,” *EJ* 6/1 (1997): 3-42; D. J. MacLeod, “The Resurrection of Jesus Christ: Myth, Hoax, or History?” *EJ* 7/2 (1998): 157-199. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*: J. F. MacArthur, Jr., “Faith According to the Apostle James,” *JETS* 31/1 (1990): 13-34; J. D. Charles, “The Angels, Sonship and Birthright in the Letter to the Hebrews,” *JETS* 31/2 (1990): 171-178; W. C. Kaiser, Jr., “God’s Promise Plan and His Gracious Law,” *JETS* 31/3 (1990): 289-302; R. L. Thomas, “Improving Evangelical Ethics: An Analysis of the Problem and a Proposed Solution,” *JETS* 34/1 (1991): 3-19; J. B. de Young, “The Contributions of the Septuagint to Biblical Sanctions Against Homosexuality,” *JETS* 34/2 (1991): 157-177; M. G. Kline, “The Structure of the Book of Zechariah,” *JETS* 34/2 (1991): 179-193; J. A. Hartle, “The Literary Unity of Zechariah,” *JETS* 35/2 (1992): 145-157; M. Bauman, “Jesus, Anarchy, and Marx: The Theological and Political Contours of Ellulism,” *JETS* 35/2 (1992): 199-216; W. Corduan, “The Gospel According to Margaret,” *JETS* 35/4 (1992): 515-530; J. V. Dahms, “Dying with Christ,” *JETS* 36/1 (1993): 15-23; W. B. Russell, III, “Does The Christian Have ‘Flesh’ In Gal 5:13-26?,” *JETS* 36/2 (1993): 179-187; J. R. Edwards, “The Authority of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark,” *JETS* 37/2 (1994): 217-233; D. Doriani, “The Deity of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels,” *JETS* 37/3 (1994): 333-350; D. B. Clendenin, “Partakers of Divinity: The Orthodox Doctrine of Theosis,” *JETS* 37/3 (1994): 365-379; J. P. Lewis, “The Offering of Abel (Gen 4:4): A History of Interpretation,” *JETS* 37/4 (1994): 481-498; B. Talbert-Wettler, “Secular Feminist Religious Metaphor and Christianity,” *JETS* 38/1 (1995): 77-92; B. Fong, “Addressing the Issue of Racial Reconciliation According to the Principles of Eph 2:11-22,” *JETS* 38/4 (1995): 565-580; J. T. Reed, “Discourse Analysis as New Testament Hermeneutic: A Retrospective and Prospective Appraisal,” *JETS* 39/2 (1996): 223-240; B. B. Colijn, “Let Us Approach: Soteriology in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *JETS* 39/4 (1996): 571-586; W. E. Glenny, “Typology: A Summary of the Present Evangelical Discussion,” *JETS* 40/4 (1997): 627-638; G. Forbes, “Repentance and Conflict in the Parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15:11-32),” *JETS* 42/2 (1999): 211-229; S. M. Baugh, “Cult Prostitution in New Testament Ephesus: A Reappraisal,” *JETS* 42/3 (1999): 443-460. *Trinity Journal*: D. B. Garlington, “Burden Bearing and the Recovery of Offending Christians (Galatians 6:1-5),” *TJ* 12/2 (1991): 151-183; E. R. Wendland, “Finding Some Lost Aspects of Meaning in Christ’s Parables of the Lost and Found (Luke 15),” *TJ* 17/1 (1996): 19-65; J. Christians, “Erasmus and the New Testament: Humanist Scholarship or Theological Convictions?” *TJ* 19/1 (1998): 51-80; C. Mosser and P. Owen, “Mormon Scholarship, Apologetics, and Evangelical Neglect: Losing the Battle and Not Knowing It?,” *TJ* 19/2 (1998): 179-205. *Westminster Theological Journal*: B. D. Smith, “The Chronology of the Last Supper,” *WTJ* 53/1 (1991): 29-45; D. B. Garlington, “The Obedience of Faith in the Letter to the Romans Part II: The Obedience of Faith and Judgment by Works,” *WTJ* 53/1 (1991): 47-72; R. White, “An Early Reformed Document on the Mission to the Jews,” *WTJ* 53/1 (1991): 93-108; B. D. Smith, “Objections to the Authenticity of Mark 11:17 Reconsidered,” *WTJ* 54/2 (1992): 255-271; M. J. Boda, “Words and Meanings: ׀׀ in Hebrew Research,” *WTJ* 57/2 (1995): 277-297; D. B. Clendenin, “Orthodoxy on Scripture and Tradition: A Comparison With Reformed and Catholic Perspectives,” *WTJ* 57/2 (1995): 383-402; A. C. Troxel, “Charles Hodge on Church Boards: A Case Study in Ecclesiology,” *WTJ* 58/2 (1996): 183-207; M. D. Futato, “Because it Had Rained: A Study of Gen 2:5-7 with Implications for Gen 2:4-25 and Gen 1:1-2:3,” *WTJ* 60/1 (1998): 1-21; T. L. Johnson, “Liturgical Studies: The Pastor’s Public Ministry: Part One,” *WTJ* 60/1 (1998): 131-152; S. J. Casselli, “The Threefold Division of the Law in the Thought of Aquinas,” *WTJ* 61/2 (1999): 175-207.

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or his controversy with the so-called “Judaizers.”<sup>10</sup> Very seldom is this dichotomy described in an adequate way. It is assumed and has developed a life of its own, having become some type of common supposition of NT scholars.<sup>11</sup> Some examples should suffice here: Walter Russell<sup>12</sup> discusses the Galatian conflict in terms of resistance to the acceptance of Jewish ritual and ethical norms—or in the final instance the Christian struggle for identity in connection with the Jewish background of the newly founded church. Herbert Bateman<sup>13</sup> puzzles about possible rituals used by the Judaizers in Philippi, suggesting that their true nature is not clear. Robert Thomas<sup>14</sup> hypothesizes that the judaizing heresy in Galatia had to do with ritual circumcision. More examples could be added here.<sup>15</sup>

I have classified thirteen articles (1.24%) as containing important references to ritual, but not focusing in their totality on ritual—either in its application or underlying theory.<sup>16</sup> Three of these thirteen are in the practical theology/Missiology category. Wayne House<sup>17</sup> discusses the function of ritual in Hinduism and Shintoism in the context of the theological question of the resurrection and reincarnation. The study focuses on how other religions (including

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<sup>10</sup> For all NT references, see table above.

<sup>11</sup> See here, for example, W. S. Campbell, “Judaizers,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin, and D. G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 512-516. It seems that the biblical text is not clear enough to determine whether the opposition should be considered a local characteristic or if it comprised a more universal semi-organized group.

<sup>12</sup> “Rhetorical Analysis of the Book of Galatians, Part 1,” *BSac* 150/599 (1993): 350.

<sup>13</sup> “Were the Opponents at Philippi Necessarily Jewish?” *BSac* 155/617 (1998): 44, 49, 54.

<sup>14</sup> “Improving Evangelical Ethics: An Analysis of the Problem and a Proposed Solution,” *JETS* 34/1 (1991): 15.

<sup>15</sup> Compare here D. B. Garlington, “Burden Bearing and the Recovery of Offending Christians (Galatians 6:1-5),” *TJ* 12/2 (1991): 162, which refers to the ritual purity of the Pharisees, a standard dogma of NT scholarship; W. B. Russell, III, “Does The Christian Have ‘Flesh’ In Gal 5:13-26?” *JETS* 36/2 (1993): 182, with a reference to the question of Jewish ritual, which is, however, never defined.

<sup>16</sup> *Andrews University Seminary Studies*: A. M. Rodriguez, “Leviticus 16: Its Literary Structure,” *AUSS* 34/2 (1996): 269-286. *Bibliotheca Sacra*: H. W. House, “Resurrection, Reincarnation, and Humanness,” *BSac* 148/590 (1991): 131-150; D. J. MacLeod, “The Present Work of Christ in Hebrews,” *BSac* 148/590 (1991): 184-200; J. M. Hullinger, “The Problem of Animal Sacrifices in Ezekiel 40-48,” *BSac* 152/607 (1995): 279-289. *Emmaus Journal*: D. J. MacLeod, “The Primacy of Scripture and the Church,” *EJ* 6/1 (1997): 43-96. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*: T. Kleven, “Hebrew Style in 2 Samuel 6,” *JETS* 35/3 (1992): 299-314; M. G. Kline, “The Feast of Cover-Over,” *JETS* 37/4 (1994): 497-510; B. Talbert-Wettler, “Secular Feminist Religious Metaphor and Christianity,” *JETS* 38/1 (1995): 77-92; J. W. Hilber, “Theology Of Worship In Exodus 24,” *JETS* 39/2 (1996): 177-189; W. D. Spencer, “Christ’s Sacrifice as Apologetic: An Application of Heb 10:1-18,” *JETS* 40/2 (1997): 189-197; B. R. Reichenbach, “By His Stripes We Are Healed,” *JETS* 41/4 (1998): 551-560. *Trinity Journal*: D. A. deSilva, “The ‘Image of the Beast’ and the Christians in Asia Minor: Escalation of Sectarian Tension in Revelation 13,” *TJ* 12/2 (1991): 185-208. *Westminster Theological Journal*: T. A. Turnau III, “Speaking in a Broken Tongue: Postmodernism, Principled Pluralism, and the Rehabilitation of Public Moral Discourse,” *WTJ* 56/2 (1994): 345-377.

<sup>17</sup> “Resurrection, Reincarnation, and Humanness,” *BSac* 148/590 (1991): 142-144.

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all major world religions) have resolved the issue of death and whether reincarnation as understood by these religions is compatible with Biblical theology. House includes a very interesting quote when commenting on Shintoism that might provide an insight into the standard evangelical conservative approach to ritual:

Human soteriology [in this religious framework] is a return to original perfection and unity with the divine essence of the universe. It involves individual (ritual) effort and/or belief, toward undifferentiated Being, through the cosmic law of karma worked out in reincarnation.<sup>18</sup>

House does not agree with the perspective of Shintoism. However, this “ritual effort and belief by the individual” has an off-putting effect. The second substantial discussion of ritual in this section involves a study of the importance of ritual (namely baptism and the Lord’s Supper) in the early church by David MacLeod.<sup>19</sup> Actually MacLeod is more interested in proving that the specific ecclesiology practiced by the Open Brethren has a biblical basis. He only recognizes two rituals instituted by our Lord Jesus, though he argues that they have been “seriously compromised,”<sup>20</sup> when comparing the biblical standard with the modern practice of child baptism and the sacramental and automatic (*ex opere operato*) theology of communion found in many denominations. While this is not the place to discuss the biblical concept and theology of baptism and the Lord’s supper (on which I tend to side with MacLeod), the use of the terms ritual and rite again display a negative perspective to which I will return later.

Theodore Turnau III<sup>21</sup> discusses the lack of cultural, political and—most obviously—religious consensus in the context of the predominant philosophical paradigm (which in itself is a contradiction), i.e., postmodernism. The very nature of postmodern reasoning, ideology, and thought patterns questions the existence of a common set of answers, generally understood as moral values. Turnau proposes the metaphor of the “narrative” or “texts,” which, while being distinct, share some underlying center—according to him, the Christian story tradition. Specific “texts” include ritual, family tradition, TV, Hollywood—institutions we inhabit every day. Taking up the line of thought where Turnau ends, a proper understanding and consciousness of ritual can help us discover our common language again and represents an important tool for pastoral contexts.

Only one of thirteen studies containing an important reference to ritual could be found in the area of systematic/historical theology. Betty Talbert-

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>19</sup> “The Primacy of Scripture and the Church,” *EJ* 6/1 (1997): 43-96, esp. 56-57.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>21</sup> “Speaking in a Broken Tongue: Postmodernism, Principled Pluralism, and the Rehabilitation of Public Moral Discourse,” *WTJ* 56/2 (1994): 345-377, esp. 375.

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Wettler<sup>22</sup> studies some current influential views on secular feminist religious metaphor and argues that they are ultimately insufficient to describe the nature of God. In this context, according to Talbert-Wettler, feminists commandeered the concept of ritual in religious myth and utilized it to “re-create” their new world order.<sup>23</sup> It is clear that ritual in this context is not compatible with conservative evangelical scholarship.

By far the highest quantity of references to ritual can be found in the biblical studies section, namely three and five respectively in NT and OT studies. David MacLeod discusses the ritual of the day of atonement in Hebrews as based upon the festival as described in Lev 16.<sup>24</sup> However, MacLeod, while referring many times to distinct ritual aspects of the festival, does not include a technical discussion of what ritual as a vessel of meaning involves. William David Spencer’s study of Heb 10:1–18 includes a similar focus and discusses OT ritual superseded by Christ’s ministry.<sup>25</sup> He discusses the general role of sacrifice in ritual systems. Drawing connections to ancient and modern religious expressions, he distinguishes between three general religious types, namely (1) power religions,<sup>26</sup> (2) life-style religions,<sup>27</sup> and (3) relationship religions. While he classifies Christianity in the third category, Spencer contends that the sacrificial language of both the OT and its NT typology does speak to practitioners of both power and life-style religions. In this sense, ritual and its sub-rite of sacrifice provides a basis for a powerful apologetic of Christianity and should be understood and utilized.

David deSilva studies Rev 13 in the context of the immediate historical context for the first audience of John’s book.<sup>28</sup> He understands the use of the term “beast” as a de-legitimizing attack on a very important social order actually representing the Christian opposition to the domineering worldview prevalent in the Roman empire. Without a specific evaluation of deSilva’s main thesis, his study is the first so far reviewed which includes a serious theoretical reflection on ritual and its function.<sup>29</sup> Thus, he mentions legitimization as part and parcel

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<sup>22</sup> “Secular Feminist Religious Metaphor and Christianity,” *JETS* 38/1 (1995): 77-92.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>24</sup> “The Present Work of Christ in Hebrews,” *BSac* 148/590 (1991): 184-200, esp. 188, 193, 198.

<sup>25</sup> “Christ’s Sacrifice as Apologetic: An Application of Heb 10:1-18,” *JETS* 40/2 (1997): 189-197, esp. 190.

<sup>26</sup> He writes: “Power religions are those traditional (as opposed to written scripture) faiths that seek to balance power between the human and the divine. The traditional Canaanite faiths we cited earlier would fit here, as would pre-Columbian Carib faith and African traditional religions and their new world extensions in Haitian Voudoun, Latin Santeria, Brazilian Condomblé, Trinidadian Shango and Jamaican Obeah. The pagan systems that permeated Europe and produced Druidism into the neopagan revivals of Wicca and Asatru also qualify as power religions” (*ibid.*, 195).

<sup>27</sup> In this category fall Buddhism, Hinduism, and other eastern religions.

<sup>28</sup> “The ‘Image of the Beast’ and the Christians in Asia Minor: Escalation of Sectarian Tension in Revelation 13,” *TJ* 12/2 (1991): 185-208.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 190-192.



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of the ritual agenda—an important point in ritual theory, which, however, has recently been challenged by theorists in the field.<sup>30</sup> DeSilva bases his comments on work done by anthropologist Clifford Geertz. Thus, by connecting a well known power symbol of the Roman cultural context (the imperial cult) and by utilizing this symbol in a negative sense (the image of the beast), John practiced a veiled but powerful criticism of the present system. It is clear that deSilva's observations tumble if one does not understand this biblical image as a reference to the Roman imperial cult. Notwithstanding this issue, it is important that this is the first study that provides even some cursory access to ritual theory.

Angel Manuel Rodriguez<sup>31</sup> published in 1996 a study concerning the literary structure of Lev 16. While he does not provide an introduction to or discussion of the theory of ritual, he distinguishes three sub-rites (or elements) that together integrate a new ritual complex, including the entrance rite, the cleansing rites, and the elimination rites. Rodriguez (in my view correctly) argues for a literary and theological unity of the chapter based upon the ritual elements. While not treating the issue of the complexity and interaction of ritual action as the main focus of the article, it is an important and innovative observation—something I also pointed out in an article on the sequence and ritual action in Lev 8 that appeared in *Biblica* in the same year.<sup>32</sup> Jerry Hullinger also focuses on the subject of sacrifice, albeit in Ezek 40–48.<sup>33</sup> Taking as his point of departure a dispensationalist perspective on eschatology, he suggests that the OT sacrificial ritual is efficacious, while Christ's sacrifice dealt with the internal cleansing of the conscience. Clearly, with this opinion Hullinger does not follow mainstream scholarly opinion on ritual.<sup>34</sup> However, at the least, many references to ritual are included in his study, although he does not get down to its basics.

Terence Kleven<sup>35</sup> in his study on 2 Sam 6 takes issue with Leonard Rost's thesis regarding the origin of the ark narrative. While he is not particularly concerned about definitions or a theoretical discussion about ritual, he discusses the

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<sup>30</sup> See here C. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York-Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992), 193-196, who suggests that ritual is not the instrument of power structures (such as politics), but is actually the result of these power relations.

<sup>31</sup> "Leviticus 16: Its Literary Structure," *AUSS* 34/2 (1996): 269-286.

<sup>32</sup> G. A. Klingbeil, "The Syntactic Structure of the Ritual of Ordination (Lev 8)," *Biblica* 77/4 (1996): 509-519.

<sup>33</sup> "The Problem of Animal Sacrifices in Ezekiel 40–48," *BSac* 152/607 (1995): 279-289.

<sup>34</sup> See here, for example, J. Milgrom, "Sin Offering or Purification Offering?" *Vetus Testamentum* 21 (1971): 237-239; idem, *Leviticus 1-16. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 3A (New York: Doubleday, 1991), and also B. A. Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord. A Study of Cult and Some Cultic Terms in Ancient Israel*, Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity 5 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), and B. A. Levine, *Leviticus, The JPS Torah Commentary* 3 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), to mention just a few. For a comprehensive discussion of OT sacrifice in the context of the ANE, see G. A. Klingbeil, *A Comparative Study of the Ritual of Ordination as Found in Leviticus 8 and Emar 369* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1998), 247-254.

<sup>35</sup> "Hebrew Style in 2 Samuel 6," *JETS* 35/3 (1992): 299-314.

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question of a possible occurrence of a ritual in the bringing of a shrine for a coronation in this section. He suggests that the stylistic ritualistic language particular to the chapter represents a deliberate use of language to develop the dynamics of the narrative.

Meredith Kline studies ritual details of the Passover feast as described in Exod 12 and connects the image of the hovering Spirit of God in Gen 1:2 with the central term of *ḥōḥēn*.<sup>36</sup> His discussion concerning the ritual is mainly comparative, focusing upon Egyptian material, and he does not provide a definition and adequate reference to what is understood as ritual and its elements.

John Hilber's<sup>37</sup> study of the worship theme in Exod 24 emphasizes the importance of blood manipulation "in a solemn ceremony of ratification"<sup>38</sup> of the covenant. The rites contain three sub-actions which are all introduced by the verbal form *ḥāḥāq*, "and he took," an important marker of ritual sub-rites. His reference to Gordon Wenham's connection suggesting a common interpretation of the blood manipulation rites in Lev 8 and Exod 24 as symbolizing renewed communion seems to me—at least in the case of Lev 8—more intuitive than exegetical.

A rare discussion of the prophetic perspective in connection with ritual can be found in Bruce Reichenbach's study.<sup>39</sup> He argues that Isaiah understands atonement in terms of a healing metaphor. He writes: "The Servant bears our sins and heals us with his wounds. Healing understood in this way is at the very least a symbolic ritual."<sup>40</sup> Reichenbach provides some comparative and modern examples to the type of healing ritual he envisions for Isaiah.

Only four out of 1043 articles (0.38%)—according to my evaluation—deal with ritual in a systematic and technical way. All except one belong to the category of OT studies—which in a sense is understandable and to be expected, since it is the OT that contains a sizable amount of ritual textual data. Roy Gane's comparative study of the macrostructure of ANE Sancta purification days<sup>41</sup> concerns the structure of these rituals distinguishing between regular ("daily"), festival, and special subrites, constructed into a day for purifying the sanctuary of the respective culture. He indicates both comparable and distinct elements and traits of these complex rituals and finishes on a historical note, suggesting that the comparable structure actually could be used as an argument for the antiquity of the Israelite day of atonement as described in Lev 16. Gane does not discuss a specific underlying theory of ritual—perhaps he takes it for granted that it would be automatically understood by his audience.

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<sup>36</sup> "The Feast of Cover-Over," *JETS* 37/4 (1994): 497-510, esp. 504.

<sup>37</sup> "Theology Of Worship In Exodus 24," *JETS* 39/2 (1996): 177-189, esp. 182.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>39</sup> "By His Stripes we are Healed," *JETS* 41/4 (1998): 551-560.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 558.

<sup>41</sup> "Schedules for Deities: Macrostructure of Israelite, Babylonian, and Hittite Sancta Purification Days," *AUSS* 36/2 (1998): 231-244.

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Duane Christensen writes from a very distinct perspective.<sup>42</sup> His concern is the canonical process and, more specifically, the demonstration of this process in the book of Psalms.<sup>43</sup> However, his contribution to ritual study—which apparently has nothing to do with the process of canonization—involves a comparative ritual from last century Indians (Iroquois), including specific rites of intensification. He concludes by comparing the canonization process of the OT (and more specifically the book of Psalms) with the structure and oral transmission of the *Code of Handsome Lake*. However, while looking beyond the rim of traditional biblical studies, he does not provide the necessary theoretical basis concerning ritual.

Another helpful example of the importance of ritual studies for exegesis and theology can be found in David Howard's discussion of the recurring three-day period (1:11; 2:22; 3:2) in Josh 1–3.<sup>44</sup> He provides an extensive discussion of specific ritual actions in the context of the chronological framework of these three chapters, taking as his point of departure the fact that the first three chapters of Joshua are “concerned with proper ritual and cultic concerns.”<sup>45</sup> Howard's discussion is helpful in establishing a viable chronology for these chapters, but also provides an important marker to highlight the interaction between regular exegesis and ritual studies. As with most examples seen above, Howard does not elaborate on specific theoretical aspects of ritual, but rather presupposes that we all understand the same thing when encountering this term.

The final important study was published by Peter Leithart in 1997 and studies the interaction of the Eucharist with culture. I have categorized it in the Systematic/Historical Theology section.<sup>46</sup> Leithart suggests that the traditional discussion of the Eucharist in terms of *what* is there or represented and *how* it works is too limited and due to past historical contexts. Modern anthropology “has explored how rituals express, reinforce, and even constitute the values and structures of a community”<sup>47</sup> and Leithart demonstrates in his presentation a good understanding of the basic works on ritual theory. Of all the reviewed publications, this is the only one dealing with the theory of ritual in an evangelical

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<sup>42</sup> “The Book Of Psalms within the Canonical Process in Ancient Israel,” *JETS* 39/3 (1996): 421-432.

<sup>43</sup> This seems to be an evangelical study of the Psalms without Gunkel, as discussed by Martin G. Klingbeil, “Off the Beaten Track: An Evangelical Reading of the Psalms without Gunkel,” presented on November 15, 2001, at the Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

<sup>44</sup> “‘Three Days’ in Joshua 1-3: Resolving a Chronological Conundrum,” *JETS* 41/4 (1998): 539-550.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 545. These include covenant renovation rituals, purification/preparation rituals, Passover celebration, etc.

<sup>46</sup> “The Way Things Really Ought to Be: Eucharist, Eschatology, and Culture,” *WTJ* 59/2 (1997): 159-176.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

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conservative context. However, Leithart only refers to these models and does not contribute to or advance them.

Before attempting to pinpoint more specifically some of the probable causes for the present (sad) state of ritual studies in conservative scholarship, I would like to include a short note on two important books published recently by two major conservative publishers. In 1997 Zondervan published in five volumes the comprehensive *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*.<sup>48</sup> While keeping with traditional theological word books of the OT and following an alphabetic order of word entries, it also provides a helpful section of ten introductory articles to OT exegesis. However, among all the useful introductory chapters, no chapter talks about OT religion or more specifically ritual. Historiography, theology, textual criticism, literary analysis, narrative criticism, linguistics and others are well represented, but no reference can be found to the deciphering of ritual texts. Two years later, Baker Book House published the very useful *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*.<sup>49</sup> Of the sixteen essays included, two would lend themselves to a section dealing with ritual in the OT context.<sup>50</sup> However neither Gordon Wenham's chapter on the Pentateuch nor Bill Arnold's study on religion in ancient Israel discuss any significant aspect of ritual studies.<sup>51</sup> These brief references should by no means suggest that these volumes are somewhat less important or deficient. But as has already been seen in the review of the published journal material, they reflect the focus of OT evangelical scholarship.

#### 4. Evaluation

How is it possible that in evangelical publications ritual studies play either no role or a very limited role? In 1998 I wrote in the introduction to my dissertation, published by Edwin Mellen Press:

Ritual studies are booming! In the wake of renewed interest in the religious history of Israel, the sub-discipline of ritual studies is constituting an important part of the investigation into the religious ideas and practices of ancient cultures. This trend can also be observed outside the realm of OT and ANE studies and suggests a new urgency in attempts to understand man's religious conscience and behavior.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> W. A. VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997).

<sup>49</sup> D. W. Baker and B. T. Arnold, eds., *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999).

<sup>50</sup> G. J. Wenham, "Pondering the Pentateuch: The Search for a New Paradigm," in Baker and Arnold, 116-144, and B. T. Arnold, "Religion in Ancient Israel," in Baker and Arnold, 391-420.

<sup>51</sup> It must be stated, however, that Arnold does mention the important ritual texts from Emar, albeit in very cursory manner (ibid., 417).

<sup>52</sup> Klingbeil, *A Comparative Study of the Ritual of Ordination*, 1.

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Clearly I was mistaken, and I publicly recant—or better, rephrase this statement. “Ritual studies are booming—but only in mainstream scholarship!” While evangelical scholarship has kept up to date and is contributing generously in most other major areas of biblical research,<sup>53</sup> ritual studies seem to have gotten small change. Major contributions in this field come from Jewish scholars<sup>54</sup> (although not exclusively), but are seldom published in evangelical publications. A good example is the work of Daniel Fleming of New York University.<sup>55</sup> While we share similar interests in our research, we also share a meaningful friendship and compatible perspectives concerning Scripture. Fleming could be included in the broad definition of theologically conservative scholars with a high regard for Scripture—however, all his numerous publications on ritual have appeared outside the evangelical community. In the Adventist community I see only three OT scholars working on ritual, one being Roy Gane from Andrews University (who studied under Jacob Milgrom at the University of California); Angel Rodriguez, who has, however, focused upon other areas of theological

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<sup>53</sup> One only has to think of the important contributions of serious evangelical scholars in the area of historiographical research in the face of the onslaught of rampant minimalism. Compare here, for example, I. W. Provan, “The End of (Israel’s) History? K. W. Whitelam’s *The Invention of Ancient Israel*: A Review Article,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 42/2 (1997): 283-300; V. P. Long, *The Art of Biblical History: Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation* 5 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994); E. M. Yamauchi, “The Current State of Old Testament Historiography,” in *Faith, Tradition and History*, ed. A. R. Millard, J. K. Hoffmeier, and D. W. Baker (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 1-36; A. R. Millard, “Story, History, and Theology,” in Millard, Hoffmeier, and Baker, 37-64; I. W. Provan, “Ideologies, Literary and Critical: Reflections on Recent Writing on the History of Israel,” *JBL* 114/4 (1995): 585-606; E. H. Merrill, “History, Theology, and Hermeneutics,” in *NI-DOTTE*, 1:68-1:85; M. W. Chavalas, “Recent Trends in the Study of Israelite Historiography,” *JETS* 38/2 (1995): 161-169; E. H. Merrill, “Old Testament History: A Theological Perspective,” in *NI-DOTTE*, 1:68-1:85; V. P. Long, “Historiography of the Old Testament,” in Baker and Arnold, 145-175; K. L. Younger, Jr., “Early Israel in Recent Biblical Scholarship,” in Baker and Arnold, 176-206; and C. L. Quarles, “Midrash As Creative Historiography: Portrait of a Misnomer,” *JETS* 39/3 (1996): 457-464, in the NT period.

<sup>54</sup> Immediately the works of Baruch A. Levine and Jacob Milgrom come to mind. Other important contributors include Menahem Haran and Moshe Greenberg.

<sup>55</sup> Some important contributions include D. E. Fleming, *The Installation of Baal’s High Priestess at Emar: A Window on Ancient Syrian Religion*, HSS 42 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992); idem, “The Rituals from Emar: Evolution of an Indigenous Tradition in Second-Millennium Syria,” in *New Horizons in the Study of Ancient Syria*, ed. M. W. Chavalas and J. L. Hayes, *Bibliotheca Mesopotamica* 25 (Malibu: Undena, 1992), 51-61; idem, “The Emar Festivals: City Unity and Syrian Identity under Hittite Hegemony,” in *Emar: The History, Religion, and Culture of a Syrian Town in the Late Bronze Age*, ed. M. W. Chavalas (Bethesda: CDL, 1996), 81-114; idem, “The Biblical Tradition of Anointing Priests,” *JBL* 117/3 (1998): 401-414; idem, “The Israelite Festival Calendar and Emar’s Ritual Archive,” *Revue Biblique* 106/1 (1999): 8-34; idem, “A Break in the Line: Reconsidering the Bible’s Diverse Festival Calendars,” *Revue Biblique* 106/2 (1999): 161-174; idem, “Mari’s Large Public Tent and the Priestly Tent Sanctuary,” *VT* 50/4 (2000): 484-498; idem, *Time at Emar. The Cultic Calendar and the Rituals from the Diviner’s Archive*, Mesopotamian Civilizations 11 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000).

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research over the past ten years; and myself.<sup>56</sup> And here we are talking about Seventh-day Adventist scholars with a supposedly high regard for OT legislative texts and an innovative theological perspective on the function and role of the OT sanctuary and its ritual!

In the following paragraphs I will present five possible reasons why ritual studies is the neglected stepchild of 21<sup>st</sup> century conservative scholarship. Most of these explanations can be reached by a careful reading of the mindset of evangelical scholars in the context of postmodernism, as visible in the research thrust, methodologies, and theological presuppositions.

1. In 1981, Gordon McConville observed that legislation on ritual is often “quietly and piously consigned to oblivion.”<sup>57</sup> This was—in his opinion—(and still is) mainly due to the perceived “barbaric” nature of some of these rites and the underlying evolutionary theological concept of development from primitive religion to some type of higher religion not needing the spilling of blood or any other rituals to achieve reconciliation. Somehow, evangelicalism got caught in between law and grace, focusing upon the latter at the expense of the former.<sup>58</sup> Evangelicals claim a strong heritage of early Protestantism, and it might just be this Protestant bias against biblical ritual which is coming to the surface. Interestingly, Julius Wellhausen—a committed Protestant—co-developed the now (in)famous *Neue Dokumentenhypothese* in order to synthesize a religious system of Israelite religion that was acceptable to Protestant theology<sup>59</sup> and that was clearly pointed against Judaism and its accompanying legalism. I do not intend to resolve the tension between law and grace, but rather describe historical realities. Actually, this observation can already be found in an essay by Greg Chirichigno in 1981 in *JETS*.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps the time has come to discard inherited

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<sup>56</sup> To this one could add my friend Jiří Moskala, who recently published his dissertation studying the distinction made in Lev 11 between “clean” and “unclean” animals. However, his method and interest seems to be more theological than ritual.

<sup>57</sup> J. G. McConville, “The Place of Ritual in Old Testament Religion,” *Irish Biblical Studies* 3/3 (1981): 120.

<sup>58</sup> Similar explanations can be found in F. H. Gorman, Jr., *The Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time and Status in the Priestly Theology*, JSOTSS 91 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 8, and P. P. Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World*, JSOTSS 106 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 16-19.

<sup>59</sup> See here the references in *ibid.*, 16, note 2. Compare also C. Houtman, *Der Pentateuch: Die Geschichte seiner Erforschung neben einer Auswertung*, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 9 (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994), 113, where Cees Houtman writes: “Es ist offensichtlich, dass Wellhausen auch im dritten Hauptteil nachweisen will, dass die Religion des alten Israels von Freiheit, Natürlichkeit und Spontanität bestimmt wird und dass erst mit dem Aufkommen des Gesetzes zur Zeit Josias der Übergang zum Judentum stattfindet, in dem sich die Gesetzesreligion dann zum Gegenpol zur Religion des alten Israels entwickelt.”

<sup>60</sup> Writes G. Chirichigno, “A Theological Investigation of Motivation in Old Testament Law,” *JETS* 24/4 (1981): 306, note 15: “This interpretation can be found in Alt, *Origins*, 84-85. Wenham, *Numbers*, 27-28, examines the prejudice that has prevented much discussion concerning the significance of OT ritual, particularly the sacrificial system. He critiques J. Wellhausen’s work, *Prolegom-*

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paradigms and return to the concept so aptly expressed by the apostle Paul in 2 Tim 3:16: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”

2. Relevance is in vogue these days. Worship needs to be “relevant.” Meditation and Scripture reading,<sup>61</sup> preaching and mission need to be relevant.<sup>62</sup> So, when discussing ritual texts from a far-removed time period, the issue of relevance is often raised. Frequently, the explicit “non-human” nature of cultic/ritual texts makes them difficult to penetrate, since they can be classified either as *prescriptive* or *descriptive* ritual texts.<sup>63</sup> The technical term “descriptive ritual text” as a sub-genre of ritual texts was first introduced in 1965 by Baruch Levine and has counterparts in other ANE literature.<sup>64</sup> The often technical and repetitive language challenges both the biblical scholar and the lay reader. But does not the mere fact of their inclusion in the canon of both OT and NT indicate their importance?

3. There is a distinct bias in NT studies against ritual. Ritual is viewed as “dead,” “legalistic,” and connected to a type of Judaism that was always confronting the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. As a result, a dichotomy between OT law/ritual and NT grace/freedom is postulated—a dichotomy not

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*ena to the History of Israel* (1878), noting two presuppositions that run through it. The first is that freedom and spontaneity are good (early), the second that organization and ritual are bad (late). Such presuppositions have affected evangelicals, who fail to realize the significance of ritual and minimize the importance of form and organization in both religious and secular callings. Concerning the significance of motivation such authors as Cassuto, von Rad, Gemser, Payne, Eichrodt and Uitti attest that motivation is unique to Israel. Rifat, *Motive Clauses*, 153-175, notes that motivation occurs in extra-Biblical law codes. Comparing them with Biblical motivation he concludes that (1) motivation occurs more frequently in Biblical law than in cuneiform law, (2) multiple motivation occurs only in the Bible, (3) no cuneiform law is motivated by an historical situation, (4) the deity is completely silent in cuneiform law, (5) Biblical motivation is religious while cuneiform law is economic, and (6) motivation in Biblical law corresponds to motivation found in wisdom literature and probably was formed under its influence (under redactional influence during the prophets). While motivation in its simplest terms was known apart from Israel, Biblical motivation remains unique in its use and form. Just as the law, which was given at Sinai, was God-interpreted when given, so the same may be said for motivation.”

<sup>61</sup> Relevance is an important issue in academic education for ministry. See, for example, R. B. Chisholm, Jr., *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Using Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 7-10. On the relevance of Scripture in worship see E. M. Curtis, “Ancient Psalms and Modern Worship,” *BSac* 154/615 (1997): 286.

<sup>62</sup> See, for example, C. Trimp, “The Relevance of Preaching in the Light of the Reformation's 'Sola Scriptura' Principle,” *WTJ* 36/1 (1973): 1-30, and T. S. Warren, “A Paradigm for Preaching,” *BSac* 148/592 (1991): 473.

<sup>63</sup> C. L. Meyers, *The Tabernacle Menorah: A Synthetic Study of a Symbol from the Biblical Cult*, American Schools of Oriental Research Dissertation Series 2 (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press/The American Schools of Oriental Research, 1976), 1.

<sup>64</sup> See B. A. Levine, “The Descriptive Tabernacle Texts of the Pentateuch,” *JAOS* 85 (1965): 307-318, and also his earlier work on the same text genre in Ugaritic literature in B. A. Levine, “Ugaritic Descriptive Rituals,” *JCS* 17 (1963): 105-111.

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necessarily reflecting Scriptural realities.<sup>65</sup> New Testament ritual exists and includes more than merely baptism and communion. In order to understand the structure and message of NT texts, one needs to grasp their often ritual focus. A good example of the importance of this issue has been presented by the different publications of K. C. Hanson.<sup>66</sup>

4. Another reason—based upon internal OT presuppositions—for the devaluation of ritual studies in evangelical scholarship might be the prophetic critique of ritual.<sup>67</sup> However, prophetic critique did not represent a discontinuation of the earlier legal and cultic traditions, as has been repeatedly demonstrated in recent scholarship.<sup>68</sup> Perhaps the news about this changed paradigm has not yet reached conservative scholarship?

5. Finally, one major issue connected rather with worldview than specific exegetical presuppositions should not go unnoticed. Most of us are children of modernism—although we love and accept the biblical model of revelation/inspiration of Scripture. However, modernism's emphasis upon the concrete, countable, and visible does not provide a fertile ground for studying and understanding rituals which functioned in a pre-modern society, with its distinct values, such as community, hierarchy, faith, order, tradition, etc.<sup>69</sup> In other words, it is difficult for us, having been brought up in a culture where we want to count and reason before we believe and feel, to delve into ritual, which—adding to its problematic nature—is only present in written form and cannot be observed and belongs to a cultural stream far removed from present

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<sup>65</sup> A good example of this tendency can be seen in the discussion of Rom 10:4. Compare here R. Badenas, *Christ the End of the Law: Romans 10.4 in Pauline Perspective*, JSNTSS 10 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 7-36, for a history of research. A recent evangelical exegetical commentary, T. R. Schreiner, *Romans: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 6* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), interprets the term in question as “end” instead of “goal,” following long established traditional lines of argumentation.

<sup>66</sup> Compare K. C. Hanson, “Transformed on the Mountain: Ritual Analysis and the Gospel of Matthew,” *Semeia* 67 (1994)[1995]: 147-170, and also K. C. Hanson, “Sin, Purification, and Group Process,” in *Problems in Biblical Theology: Essays in Honor of Rolf Knierim*, ed. H. T. C. Sun, K. L. Eades, J. M. Robinson, et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 167-191.

<sup>67</sup> Compare here also Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, 17.

<sup>68</sup> A good example in evangelical scholarship can be found in S. J. Bramer, “The Literary Genre of the Book of Amos,” *BSac* 156/621 (1999): 42-60, esp. 50, note 37, where Bramer positions as opposites the worship in spirit and in truth against the “listless perpetuation of mere ritual.” For a review of modern scholarship concerning the issue, see J. Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel: From the Settlement in the Land to the Hellenistic Period* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 24-25; R. P. Gordon, “A Story of Two Paradigm Shifts,” in *The Place Is Too Small for Us: The Israelite Prophets in Recent Scholarship*, ed. R. P. Gordon, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 5 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 9-12, esp. where he writes: “Generally speaking, the notion of a fundamental opposition between prophecy and cult has fallen into disfavor in modern Old Testament scholarship” (12).

<sup>69</sup> Some good observations can be found in D. Jodock, *The Church's Bible: Its Contemporary Authority* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 15-20, 34-42, 72-84.



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experience.<sup>70</sup> While this does not preclude fruitful interaction with modern ritual studies of Scripture, it makes it much more difficult. Having lived in Africa and in South America, I find it enlightening to see how simple, often “under-educated” lay members handle and understand ritual texts from the OT that would only cause some raised eyebrows and the quick flick to turn over the page in a modern Western church context.

### **5. Future Strategies and Challenges**

Taking into consideration some of the possible reasons for the paucity of ritual studies in evangelical thought, I would like to offer the following strategies and challenges.

1. Ritual studies must become part and parcel of our religious education. This first point has to do with introductory courses in religion or theology. Usually we include historical books (and thus historiography), the Pentateuch (with a brief introduction to legal texts), and prophetic writings. Sometimes an introduction to apocalyptic writings is included as well. However, never have I seen a seminary or university religion department course entitled “Introduction to Ritual in Biblical Studies.” Perhaps this is the time to refocus and reflect in our curriculum what is present (in quite substantial amounts) in the text itself.

2. Evangelical scholars need to rise to the challenge of interacting in multi-disciplinary research work. In the past, anthropology and sociology (or any other non-religious discipline working with ritual) has had negative press in conservative circles—often justifiably so, since it was often used to re-write history in the context of overarching theories. The exodus/conquest discussion is a good example for this tendency. However, when we understand the tools that anthropology or sociology provide without necessarily accepting their philosophical presuppositions, we might just be able to make more sense of biblical ritual texts.<sup>71</sup>

3. In the western world we live in an environment that is ritually poor. Forms are not important, tradition is challenged, and symbolic action is for those who do not have the backbone to be go-getters. However, I believe that the contemporary Church (and I do not mean denomination) needs to rediscover ritual as a means of communication, conservation, and innovation. The days and weeks after September 11 were full of gestures and symbolic acts (for example, flying the flag) and these filled an important emotional and communicative void. As a contemporary Christian community/church, we also need these rallying

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<sup>70</sup> I include here also the issue of language and pragmatics. See, for more information, C. J. Klingbeil, “Mirando más allá de las Palabras—Pragmática Lingüística y su Aplicación a los Estudios Bíblicos,” in Alomía, Klingbeil, and Klingbeil, 123-135.

<sup>71</sup> I have argued this point in more detail (albeit in Spanish) in G. A. Klingbeil and M. G. Klingbeil, “La lectura de la Biblia desde una perspectiva hermenéutica multidisciplinaria (I) - Consideraciones teóricas preliminares,” in Alomía, Klingbeil, and Klingbeil, 147-173, esp. 158-162. For a good evaluation of the evangelical reception of these disciplines, see E. M. Yamauchi, “Sociology, Scripture and the Supernatural,” *JETS* 27/2 (1984): 169-192.

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points and must rediscover the importance of biblical symbolic acts, rites, or more complex rituals and their contemporary application.

4. We need more undergraduate (and not necessarily postgraduate) textbooks dealing with ritual in the Bible. Most religious textbooks concentrate on ritual in existing cultures and are based upon anthropological fieldwork. However, biblical ritual studies are a somewhat different kettle of fish, since they are focusing upon physical observation and not on textual observation.

5. While presently the field of biblical ritual studies is dominated by historical-critical research or social-science research, there is a need for scholars with a high regard for Scripture to delve into this field and interact with these scholars, leading to a rediscovery of essential elements of worship and adoration in our contemporary context.

6. Ritual is a means of discovering, enacting, and reflecting about faith and present reality.<sup>72</sup> Actually, ritual is highly theological, since it gives us a good idea about what is important and what is not. It is my conviction that understanding ritual better will help us write a more authentic theology of the Old Testament—a point indicated recently by Walter Brueggemann.<sup>73</sup>

In conclusion, a lot of work lies ahead. If we are to understand and appreciate ritual and ritual texts in their OT context, we need to expose ourselves and our students to them. We need to rediscover their ability to cross cultural and linguistic barriers. We need to discover what artists and multi-media specialists have already known for ages: an image (and with this I would include the “image of a performed ritual”) speaks more than a thousand words.

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<sup>72</sup> F. H. Gorman, Jr., “Ritual,” in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. D. N. Freedman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1131.

<sup>73</sup> W. Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 652-654.