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Book Reviews

***The LORD's Service: A Ritual Analysis of the Order, Function, and Purpose of the Daily Divine Service in the Pentateuch.* By Robert D. Macina. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2019. 278 pages. Paperback. \$32.00.**

One of the most unexpectedly delightful courses I took in graduate school in the early 1980s was titled Anthropology of Ritual Behavior. It was part of the liturgy curriculum, taught by an esteemed liturgiologist who opened our minds to how liturgy, Scriptures, and culture could be read through the lens of ritual behavior. We were introduced to some of the eminent anthropologists at that time: Arnold van Gennep, whose book *The Rites of Passage* (1960) influenced the way I taught the liturgy and preaching of weddings and funerals, not to mention Baptism; Victor Turner, whose book *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969) led the editors of *Worship* to commission him to write a two-part article titled “Passages, Margins, and Poverty: Religious Symbols of Communitas” to show the intersection between his work and the work that was happening among liturgiologists after Vatican II;¹ and Mary Douglas, a British Roman Catholic social anthropologist whose books *Purity and Danger* (1966) and *Natural Symbols* (1970) connected anthropology, ritual behavior, and Christianity. Her analysis of the Bog Irish shows how a close-knit community lost its cohesion as a group when such prohibitions as that against eating meat on Fridays were abolished. It was in these books that I learned the language of liminality, especially in our Divine Service where heaven is on earth, something I delighted in discussing with my St. Louis colleague Dr. Ronald Feuerhahn, now sainted.

When I first started teaching liturgy at the seminary in the late 1980s, I shared some of this with the students, but after the particularities of the worship wars began to dominate the conversation, I abandoned them. I did include a section in my book *Heaven on Earth* titled “Liturgy and Ritual” to give people a taste of what a study of ritual might do for their understanding of ritual.²

So it was with great pleasure that I discovered in Robert Macina's delightful book *The Lord's Service* a spirited engagement of van Gennep, Turner, and Douglas, because Macina's book is about the rituals of the daily divine service in the tabernacle, as his subtitle indicates: *A Ritual Analysis of the Order, Function, and Purpose of the Daily Divine Service in the Pentateuch*. In his prologue, he explains what this

¹ *Worship* 46, no. 7 (Aug.–Sep. 1972): 390–412; no. 8 (Oct. 1972): 432–494.

² *Heaven on Earth: The Gifts of Christ in the Divine Service* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2008), 32–39.

means: “My methodology for interpreting the daily divine service in the Pentateuch is ritual analysis . . . yet my specific methodology is a form of *theological* ritual analysis” (19, emphasis Macina). For me, this book is priceless because it applies an anthropology of ritual behavior to the mystifying rituals of the daily divine service and interprets the theological significance of those rituals for us with clarity and vigor.

The extraordinary structure of Macina’s unveiling of the daily divine service makes this possible. He limits himself to exactly what his subtitle states—the daily divine service in the Pentateuch. In the final chapter of his book, he acknowledges what is “left unanswered”—the individual offerings such as the peace, sin, guilt, burnt, and grain offerings. This book is *only* about the daily divine service for corporate Israel. So, the reader should not expect anything here about the Solomonic temple or Second Temple Judaism at the time of Jesus. Perhaps Macina has future projects in mind that would include these topics, but his focus is narrow.

What this reader was particularly grateful for was the clarity Macina brings to the daily divine service in the Pentateuch. He shows us that the entire day was shaped by the divine service in the tabernacle, just as later on in the Christian church the day was marked by the liturgy of the hours or the daily prayer office, culminating in the Benedictine hours. Perhaps when Paul said to the Thessalonians “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17 ESV), he had in mind the daily divine service that he must have attended regularly at the temple as he studied Scripture as a Pharisee in the school of Gamaliel. But unless you are an expert like Macina, the rituals of the tabernacle in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers are mystifying. They are a complex puzzle that needs careful attention to each piece to show how it fits into the whole. (It reminds me of what David Moessner said about Bo Reicke’s approach to the Pauline epistles in Reicke’s book *Re-examining Paul’s Letters*.) Sorting out where each piece of the puzzle fits takes great effort, which, in Macina’s most capable hands, is a wonder to observe as he carefully takes each piece to form a picture of what the daily divine service looks like.

Macina accomplishes this by the way he organizes his book in three chapters after a prologue that orients the reader to the daily divine service, literature on this topic, and methodology of his approach. In his three chapters titled “The Practical Order of the Daily Divine Service,” “The Ritual Function of the Daily Divine Service,” and “The Theological Purpose of the Daily Divine Service,” he takes on the maze of rituals in the Pentateuch by breaking them down into three different phases, borrowing from van Gennep’s rite of passage (see Macina’s charts, 191–193, that accent liminality): the initial rites (the fire and presentation rites), the central rites (the blood, incense, and burning rites), and the concluding rites (the blessing and meal rites). For the undiscerning reader, it may appear as if Macina is repeating himself in each chapter, but he must rehearse elements of each rite as he puts the

puzzle together. The differences in each chapter are subtle and accomplish the very thing he set out to do—provide a *theological* ritual analysis. He must first tell us what the rites are, then analyze their ritual function, and finally interpret them theologically. So, the reader must pay careful attention to these small incremental changes. It is also important to read the footnotes, which are extensive. (If you want to know what the author really believes, it is in the footnotes.) Macina's footnotes are worth the price of the book, and sometimes I wondered whether some of these discussions should be in the main text.

The strength of this book is Macina's theological analysis of the rites. Here are a few takeaways from his theological reflections that will now be incorporated into my classes, many of which are interconnected. These excerpts from Macina's book will show why this book is a must for pastors, even some teachers and laity.

1. The daily divine service is authorized by the Lord, and he is the chief actor in the rituals. For each rite, Macina begins with its "divine institution," showing how the Lord is the giver and his people are the receivers. For example, in the blood rite "the LORD decrees that he himself gives the blood on the altar to make atonement for all the Israelites" (103).
2. The daily divine service is centered in the presence of the Lord, his theophany to the people throughout the day. "The LORD founds the daily divine service so that he may dwell among the Israelites (Exod 29:45–46)" (178).
3. The Lord conveys his presence through rituals that appeal to the senses and not through words. "Instead of the Israelites initiating the meeting with the LORD at the tabernacle, he comes to meet them through the sights, sounds, and scents at the altar" (158). Consider how the senses are engaged in the burning rite. Sight is engaged through seeing the high priest with "the golden crown on the front of his turban with the words 'YHWH's holiness' (Exod 28:36–38)" (154). The people also see "the smoke from the offerings [that] reveals God's presence there" (154). As for hearing, "the Israelites hear the sounding of the bells on the hem of the high priest's robe as he approaches and ministers at the altar (Exod 28:33–35)" (154–155). Perhaps most importantly are the smells: "This powerful incense intermingles with the smoke from the altar and disperses among the congregants and throughout the camp of Israel (Exod 29:41; Num 28:2, 6, 8). The soothing scent of the offerings reveals the favorable presence of the LORD to the Israelites. Through the burning rite in the daily divine service, the LORD meets with his people and reveals his gracious presence among them by the unique things that they see, hear, and smell" (155).

4. The presence of the Lord is in the fire that is foundational for all the other rites. For this reason, it is imperative that the fire not go out. “The theological purpose of the fire rite is to maintain the presence of the LORD in the fire on the altar so that the Israelites can meet with him there” (84). For this reason, “the burning rite is the climax of the morning and evening services. The entire daily divine service centers in this rite, builds up to it, and gains its significance from it” (145). “The LORD dwells among the Israelites not to be served by them but for him to serve them. In this part of the service, the LORD shares his Sabbath-like rest with his people, not merely on one day of the week but every morning and evening” (157).
5. The purity code that distinguishes between what is clean and unclean, what is holy and what is common, is central to the daily divine service. The purifying agents of the holy things that sanctify the people are oil and fire. “Just as the LORD’s super holiness consecrates the most holy furniture at the tabernacle by means of the holy anointing oil (Exod 30:22–29), so also the LORD sanctifies the most holy offerings through contact with his holy fire” (187).
6. The blood rite shows the significance of twice-daily atonement for sins. “The LORD decrees that he himself gives the blood on the altar to make atonement for all of the Israelites” (103). “The LORD gives the blood on the altar to make atonement for the lives of the Israelites, because it atones by means of the life in it. When the high priest splashes the blood on the altar, the LORD himself grants atonement for his people” (113). “Atonement expiates the community of Israel at the same time that God is propitiated by the blood of the altar” (115).
7. The incense rite is the center of the central rites and is the most complex. It includes the three locations in the holy place: the incense altar, the table for the bread of presence, and the menorah. “Since the smoke is most holy, it sanctifies every ritually clean person and thing that it contacts. The LORD reveals himself to the Israelites as they smell the fragrant incense emerging from before him in the holy place, and he sanctifies his people as the most holy incense permeates the sanctuary and the camp of Israel” (139).
8. The high priest and his vestments are central to the rites, and he serves as a representative of God to the people. “Not only does the high priest represent the LORD to Israel, he also represents Israel to the LORD (Lev 16:20–22)” (90). “Although the high priest is not God, he functions as an icon or image of God to the people when he conducts the divine service” (154).
9. The centrality of the font next to the altar for the blood and burning rites in the tent of meeting is because the priests must wash themselves before

every rite. For example, “The priests wash their hands and feet before entering the tent of meeting. . . . Since the washing precedes any of the other ritual functions in the fire and presentation rites, the same holds true for burning incense. Washing is most likely the first thing enacted in the incense rite” (47).

10. The rites of the daily divine service differ from all the pagan rites surrounding Israel in this period. For example, “The incense rite is not what a person in the ancient world would expect. In the temples of pagan cultures, their idols would be placed in the area corresponding to the most holy place in the tabernacle. . . . The incense burned inside the tent of meeting hardly penetrates the veil that separates the most holy place from the holy place. All of this seems to turn common conceptions in the ancient religious world upside down” (121).
11. The Aaronic benediction is unique in the daily divine service, for it uses spoken words. Even though all the other rites “involve no prescribed spoken words, the blessing rite does. The performance of these prescribed words sets the blessing rite in a unique category of ritual acts. It is the only spoken ritual enactment” (158–159).

Although *The Lord’s Service* does not speculate on the significance of the daily divine service in the tabernacle for the liturgy today, here are my thoughts on the significance of Macina’s book for our own liturgical context.

1. The divine institution of the rites provides the Old Testament foundation for a Lutheran theology of worship where Christ gives his gifts, which we receive by faith, and where we then respond to him and our neighbor in love.
2. God uses human agents like priests and high priests in the daily divine service as well as ritual elements like water, vestments, blood, smoke. The daily divine service fully engages the senses of sight, hearing, and smell. In the Divine Service today, pastors stand in the stead and by the command of Christ (“The one who hears you hears me” [Luke 10:16 ESV]), and the Divine Service uses ritual materials like water, bread, and wine as the means by which the Lord comes to us with his bodily presence. Incense may also be a blessing for people who not only hear the Lord’s words and see his presence but can smell that the Lord is present with his gifts.
3. With the incarnation and atonement of the Word made flesh, our Divine Service is centered in hearing the Word in the liturgy of the word and the sacrament. The significance of blood for atonement in the daily divine service in the tabernacle is also present in the liturgy of the Lord’s Supper,

where the crucified and risen Lord is present bodily in the bread and wine. Today's Divine Service is centered in the reality that the Old Testament rites have been fulfilled with the incarnation and atonement of Jesus Christ. More ceremonies in our church that accent sight, hearing, and smell would be welcomed.

4. The daily divine service in the tabernacle was the equivalent of "corporate pastoral care" today in the Divine Service, where the Lord dwells among his people in word and sacrament. Just as Israel also had offerings for individuals in peace, sin, guilt, burnt, and grain offerings, so also our churches have "individual pastoral care" in private confession and absolution, the Lord's Supper for those who cannot attend the Divine Service, and other rites outside the Divine Service.
5. The places for the ritual acts in the daily divine service in the Pentateuch, especially font and altar with the ritual materials of water and blood, correspond to the central places in our churches with fonts for Baptism with water and altars/tables for bread and wine, body and blood. The only thing missing in our churches is a place for the smoke of incense.
6. Since atonement was so important for the daily divine service in the Pentateuch, it is imperative that the atonement also figure prominently in our theology and liturgies.

Robert Macina has given us a marvelous resource in *The Lord's Service*. Pastors and laity will all benefit from immersion in the daily divine service of the Pentateuch as they now receive the gifts from the Lord in our Divine Service.

Arthur A. Just Jr.
Professor of Exegetical Theology
Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana

***Irreversible Damage: The Transgender Craze Seducing Our Daughters.* By Abigail Shrier. Washington, DC: Regnery, 2020. 264 pages. Hardcover. \$28.99.**

The social landscape is shifting in ways that many could not have imagined, and it is happening at record speed. *Obergefell v. Hodges*, the Supreme Court decision that legalized gay marriage, opened up the floodgates. What was previously a cultural tug-of-war has become a rout, and it is hard to keep up. Thankfully, there have been many excellent books to help us understand.

Christian parents, especially those who have daughters, would do well to read Abigail Shrier's *Irreversible Damage*. In this well-documented work, Shrier