

Hardinge on Leviticus: Where Few Have Dared to Go

Hardinge, Leslie. *Leviticus: Christ Is All* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Assoc., 1988) 127 pp. \$6.95.

Reviewed by Douglas R. Clark

In this volume, intended for use in conjunction with the Sabbath school lessons on Leviticus (first quarter 1989), Leslie Hardinge deals with a biblical book that has occupied his attention for a number of years. Long a student of the sanctuary service and related practices and their meaning(s), he focuses here on issues he feels arise from the law code couched within the unusual and puzzling book of Leviticus.

Not every Christian's favorite bedside reading, Leviticus has challenged even the bravest of biblical scholars in their attempts to understand and interpret the book with its regulations about sacrifices and priestly functions; discussions of issues surrounding clean and unclean objects; instructions concerning annual festivals; and injunctions about vows, blessings, and curses. The mention of this part of the Pentateuch draws yawns from most people in the pew, but strikes terror into the hearts of Sabbath school teachers faced with the prospect of spending 12 weeks trying to expound on its strange stipulations and curious guidelines.

I commend Hardinge for taking on this challenge and pursuing the task where few commentators care to venture. It seems clear that work on Leviticus must continue, since an awareness of its concerns and agenda will go a long way toward

clarifying other difficult passages in the Old Testament. And, of course, the book provides a basis for New Testament perceptions about the theological foundations of the life, death, and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Hardinge divides his volume into four major sections. In the first he deals with sacrifices and offerings with which Leviticus 1-7 and 16 are concerned. Part II covers Leviticus 8-10 with their treatment of priests and priestly ministry. Leviticus 23 and 25 constitute the starting point for Part III, where Hardinge seeks to explain the significance of weekly, lunar, annual, and even more widely separated religious festivals and sacred occasions. Part IV concerns itself with defilement and purification, issues surfacing especially in Leviticus 13-15. A postscript summarizes Hardinge's book, which then concludes with 15 pages of endnotes. The vast majority are unannotated biblical references, with a smattering of rabbinic materials, a few sources from Ellen White, and a very few other authors.

Hardinge's approach to Leviticus is allegorical (see below). Although not unique among devotional Christian writers, it is nonetheless intriguing. And, to appreciate his methodology and

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conclusions, it might prove helpful to outline briefly what other interpreters have suggested and how they have gone about their work.

Among the various approaches Christians (especially evangelical Christians) have taken, ignoring the book altogether appears to be a popular one. Leviticus is simply too unusual, too remote, too irrelevant to find a place on most Christians' reading lists, to say nothing of capti-

vating people's imaginations. Some who actually discuss the book do so in the context of a radical categorization of laws into ritual regulations and moral guidelines. Only the moral ones are really important enough to talk about.

Others will read and appreciate Leviticus, even the laws of clean and unclean (meats, people, garments, houses, emissions, et cetera), with an eye to alleged underlying physiological applications. Clean and pure connote, for these individuals, physical cleanliness. Leviticus, then, provides the basis for good health and hygiene; it becomes a public health document.

By far the simplest approach for modern Christians to adopt is an allegorical interpretation; we are to understand the strange laws and practices as standing for something other than their literal sense. This happens at several levels. In the minds of some interpreters, the laws, as shadows or types of the real thing, point to Christ and his sacrifice for sinners. Other commentators would stress the devotional value of various aspects of these laws, thus spiritualizing them into lessons for the religious life in our time. Still others remind us of the ethical value lying behind many of the cultic stipulations, thereby moralizing them.

All these approaches are open to potential misuse. If they neglect to ask what the laws of Leviticus must have meant to the people who first heard them, they violate the first principle in the exegesis of Scripture. It is important for Christians to know the New Testament perspective, but insensitivity to the Old Testament setting itself may result in our bypassing rich and redemptive meanings. Another temptation for misusing a book like Leviticus lies in the selective utilization of certain verses/chapters while overlooking others that don't seem to fit. Also, there is the temptation to interpret different texts on the basis of different criteria. One must be consistent in applying a particular method to chapter 1 and chapter 13, to Leviticus 11:22 as well as to 23:7.

Hardinge is very eclectic, combining several approaches. Various levels of allegory are especially attractive to him. His book, by its very title, intends to build on the type-antitype model, thus relegating the majority of the Levitical laws to shadows of Christ (see, e.g., pages 40, 42, 51, 53,

54f., 61, 69f., 73, 74, 78, 87).

In addition, the reader will regularly encounter spiritualized applications: the head, feet, legs, and "inwards" of a burnt offering represent, respectively, human will and thoughts, people's well-being, their daily walk and life direction, their emotions and secret longings (p. 14). The door on which Passover blood was daubed suggests the decision-making faculty of the heart (p. 72).

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Hyssop illustrates humility (p. 73). Passover bitter herbs stand for contrition of the heart (p. 74).

Also apparent at every turn are moralizations. Among other meanings, priestly garments illustrate readiness to serve, righteous character, and obedience (p. 52). Silver symbolizes obedience (p. 63). Leaven represents sin (p. 73). The two loaves at Pentecost show human cooperative efforts coupled with God's gifts (p. 80). The contagion of uncleanness points to the influence of an evil life (p. 99). Leprosy is a cipher for sin. In the body, sinful nature; in garments, seductive outward conduct and self-made cloaks of good deeds; in dwellings, defiled and disintegrating homes (pp. 102-105).

Other analogies are less easily identifiable in terms of an interpretative model. The breast and shoulder of sacrifices remind us, respectively, of the comfort and nourishment of a mother and the strength and support of a father (p. 28). The two loaves at Pentecost indicate that Jews and Gentiles will be part of the Christian church (p. 80).

Even more than other allegorical interpreters, Hardinge attempts vigorously to make applications that are devotional and spiritually uplifting. Few have been quite as innovative as he in finding (inventing?) connections between ancient practices and modern situations and needs. And it is probably here that one needs to raise serious questions, not only about his methodology but also about many of his conclusions.

First, many of the applications are too easy, too

innovative. There are no controls to the process. Some of the citations above illustrate how wide-ranging his analogical interpretations have become. This results, I think, from a perspective that, on several levels, is fairly uncritical. There is little attempt to distinguish among all the approaches he takes; they interweave and interface without differentiation. His use of texts from all over the Bible rarely takes account of contextual considerations, a primary concern in biblical studies today. For example, the standard exegetical process of asking for primary meaning(s), then moving to later applications, is conspicuously absent. There is also an uncritical blending of Old Testament, rabbinical, New Testament, and modern considerations without regard for the temporal and cultural differences that exist among them. To quote rabbinical sources, for instance, from the turn of the era to explain exactly how things were done more than a thousand years earlier is problematical, to say nothing of then applying those Jewish insights to Christian doctrine about Jesus.

In the second place, one look through the endnotes for bibliographical entries is a bit disconcerting. No recent works on Leviticus or on sacrifice, purity, or ritual occur. Is there really nothing we can learn from these attempts to understand the milieu of the ancient Israelites? Can we not gain insights from studying how the Hebrews sought to make sense of their world and found these Levitical laws a marvelous and redemptive source of security, purity, and certainty?

A modern attempt to understand Leviticus really needs to take serious account of the ancient setting of the book. Any serious commentary on this biblical book needs to benefit from the latest scholarship (theological and anthropological) clarifying such terms in Leviticus as *unclean*, *holiness*, *ritual*, *celebrative festival*, *sacrifice*.

We need not feel obliged, at whatever cost to context, to discover in every thread, every shred of fabric, some hidden, devotional meaning. While we can thank Hardinge for his imaginative and ingenious suggestions, we must also continue to investigate the book of Leviticus in its own historical terms.

Knight on A.T. Jones: Biography Without Hagiography

George R. Knight, *From 1888 to Apostasy: The Case of A. T. Jones* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1987).

Reviewed by Frederick Hoyt

George R. Knight's *From 1888 to Apostasy* is "must reading," the jacket proclaims, with "a message for Adventists today." But how many will read it carefully, searching for the "message"? Or will readers ignore Knight's work, illustrating once again that all we seem to learn from history is that we learn nothing from history?

In the preface, Knight declares that his "primary purpose" was "to develop [A. T.] Jones's biography, with a special focus on his contributions to Adventism and Adventist theology" (p. 11). Concerned that Adventists "have published a large number of delightful stories about people's lives, but they have written little biography," Knight promises a true biography rather than the usual Adventist "hagiography (the writing of the lives of the saints)" (p. 12). For this he is to be commended. Hopefully, such goals will soon lead to the replacement of Adventist hagiographic literature with balanced, objective, scholarly studies.

Unfortunately, Knight's otherwise excellent biography is seriously flawed by his neglect of Jones's early life. Sergeant Jones first appears in Knight's book at age 24, when on August 8, 1874, he emerged from baptismal waters at Walla Walla, Washington, dramatically raising his hands and proclaiming "Dead to the world and

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alive to thee, O my God!” (p. 15). His entire life up to that moment is summarized in three brief paragraphs, mainly emphasizing his exemplary participation in California’s Modoc “war” in 1873. Unfortunately, only Jones’s own evaluation is provided. His date and place of birth are given but nothing further is revealed about him until he enlisted in the army on November 2, 1870.

Some clue to Jones’s problems as an Adventist leader almost certainly lie hidden in the first 24 years of his life. One does not need to be a psychohistorian to believe that by the time Jones joined the church, his character, intelligence, and personality had been largely fixed by genetics and the previous 24 years. But about these forces the reader is left entirely ignorant. Who were his parents? How did they earn a living? What was the environment that molded his childhood? How many children were in the family? How far did he progress in school and what sort of student was he? What religious influences were operative on him in Rockhill? Why did he enlist in the army in peacetime? What was his military experience in addition to fighting Modoc Indians? Could none of these significant questions have been answered by research outside the usual Adventist sources used to prepare this manuscript?

In contrast, Knight did his best research and writing for chapter five, “The Meaning of Minneapolis.” The “messy picture” of this important event in Adventist history is nicely delineated, together with Jones’s key role. We learn that the essential doctrine of righteousness by faith, which Jones did more to bring to its proper place in the church than anyone else, led to extreme and prolonged unrighteous conduct by church leaders.

Jones’s five years in the U. S. Army were climaxed by his participation in the Modoc “war,” but his most significant involvement with warfare was what Knight labels “the war between Jones and the denomination” (p. 24). This conduct lasted for years, ending not with a peace treaty, but with the ex-sergeant’s conviction for denominational treason. Knight repeatedly utilizes the terminology of power politics or warfare to describe this struggle: *power struggle*, *power play*, *political overthrow*, *coup*, *coup d’etat*, and *all-out war on both sides*. It was not a gen-

tleman’s war—*guerilla warfare* would perhaps be more appropriate. Sarcasm, spitefulness, meanness, and pettiness unfortunately characterized the words and actions of church leaders such as Uriah Smith, A. G. Daniells, E. J. Waggoner, John Harvey Kellogg, George I. Butler, and Jones. Only Ellen White kept herself clear of such unseemly conduct; but during the worst of this power struggle she was off in Australia, absent from the combat zone.

It is incredible that a young army sergeant of uncertain background could join the Adventist church in 1874 without any apparent formal education and rapidly rise to positions of great importance. When Jones was appointed Bible teacher at Battle Creek College in 1888, he apparently had received no formal training for the ministry; he may have never even attended high school. But this must be balanced against the “deplorable educational deficiencies” of his ministerial colleagues (p. 50), which Jones was supposed to

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ameliorate. It is apparent that Jones was largely self-educated. His later serious problems with the church bring to mind Thomas A. Bailey’s comment about President Andrew Johnson: “Like many another self-made man, he was inclined to overpraise his maker.”

A simple listing of his attainments by 1901 is impressive: successful evangelist, widely published author, educational reformer, and religious liberty leader who frequently testified before congressional committees. He was also coeditor of the *Signs of the Times*, editor of the *American Sentinel* and the *Adventist Review*, a member of the powerful General Conference Committee, a professor, president, and chairman of the board of Battle Creek College, president of the important California Conference, and a strong contender for the presidency of the General Confer-

ence. “By the winter of 1893-1894,” Knight explains, “A. T. Jones was the most influential—the most listened-to—voice in Adventism, with the possible exception of Ellen White” (p. 104).

What was the fatal flaw that sent A. T. Jones crashing down from the heights of power and influence to disgrace and ostracism? A variety of clues abound throughout this volume. Elements of his personality were obviously a factor. Knight refers to his “abrasive and cocksure personality” (p. 63) and labels him “sensitive and proud” (p. 207). Willie White criticized his “pomposity and egotism” (p. 33), while Ellen White counseled Jones about his “magisterial, domineering, authoritative manner” (p. 203). She also compared

What impact might a carefully nurtured A. T. Jones have had upon the Adventist church as president of the General Conference?

his “magisterial manner” to that of “a commanding officer” (p. 202). That observation touched a problem that may have persisted from his army days, when as an enlisted man he may have felt the frustration of taking orders from officers less intelligent than he.

There were also certain serious problems related to Jones’s speech, clearly a critical factor for a minister. Willie White felt that “his careless mouth and harsh speech turned many against him” (p. 33). Could his old army vocabulary have betrayed him at times? “Jones’s confrontational style,” Knight states, “and his habit of publicly belittling those who disagreed with him never did much to win over the opposition” (p. 53). Furthermore, he talked too much (his sermons routinely lasted from two to three hours), and ate too often (three times a day rather than the authorized twice).

Jones possessed certain other unfortunate traits of character and mind. “He took every position he touched to its logical extreme,” Knight explains, “irrespective of personal and contextual factors” (p. 131). And he “saw everything in terms of total black or total white. . . . A true fundamentalist of the purest sort, he had no room for compromise of

any kind” (pp. 118, 119). Thus he “had a difficult time accepting the fact that truth could ever be different from his opinion” (p. 249).

Bringing together a number of Jones’s problem areas, Knight concludes that “His impetuous nature, his caustic pen, his harsh treatment of people, and his bent toward logical extremism made it difficult for him to maintain credibility with both the church’s leadership and its membership” (p. 159). Seeking to isolate the most critical factors that led to Jones’s eventual failure, Knight emphasizes his “individualism” and “his view that he was always right (presumably because he was under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit), that led him down the path to his own destruction” (p. 251).

Unfortunately, we are denied insight into the origin of Jones’s fundamental personal problems. As has been mentioned earlier, Knight provides no hint as to whether Jones’s troubles originated with his experiences with Adventism and its leadership, or whether the problems began in his earlier life.

Knight ends his valuable and timely book with a “Mortem” and “Postmortem.” He is obviously haunted by his study of Jones’s life, which began in the church with such promise and ended in bitterness and hostility outside the fold. He sees basic and unreformed defects of character as the fundamental explanation for this tragedy. He does not suggest an even more depressing explanation for this tragic loss: that the church itself may have unwittingly been the cause of his ultimate failure and the attendant loss of a brilliant and charismatic leader. The church failed to provide him with the education, guided practical experience, and slow development in leadership that he desperately needed. What impact a carefully educated and slowly nurtured ex-sergeant Jones might have had upon the Adventist church as president of the General Conference is a very sobering question. This may be “the message for Adventists today.” One of our most urgent challenges may be to develop the corporate maturity that will allow us to retain the brilliant, but often irritatingly individualistic persons who too often in the past have been, with self-righteous satisfaction, drummed out of the “remnant.”

Knight Falls on Brother A. T. Jones

Reviewed by Wayne Willey

The biography of A. T. Jones, *From 1888 to Apostasy: The Case of A. T. Jones*, by George R. Knight, captured my attention because of the important role Jones played during one of the most crucial periods in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist church. As I read Knight's book, it soon became apparent that he had decided to write an "interpretive" rather than an "objective" biography. While Knight admits he has a secondary purpose of "examining issues related to Jones's life and teachings that have become controversial since his death," it seems that the secondary purpose actually dominates the book.

Knight's polemical purpose becomes very apparent with the liberal use of such prejudicial terms as *apostasy*, *anarchy*, *extremist*, and *pantheism*. Jones is painted as such an extremist that the reader may recoil from anything that bears his name or shows even the slightest resemblance to his teachings. Knight does not provide an adequate explanation of how such an "extremist" or "anarchist" could become for 15 years one of the most powerful leaders in Adventism.

While reading this book, I began to wonder if Knight wrote this biography to discredit Jones. Since that time, I have read a reply from Knight to

a reviewer in *Adventist Currents* where he stated, "I was doing my best to demonstrate that Jones was aberrant from beginning to end." A discredited Jones would limit the influence of those who make the "1888 message"—the teachings of Jones and Waggoner during the decade following the 1888 General Conference Session—the standard of "present truth" on righteousness by faith and the nature of Christ for the church today. While some of the current interest in A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner may border on adulation, and some may make their definition of the 1888 message "a graven image" to which all Seventh-day Adventists are expected to bow, Knight's polemical use of biography to tear down these "idols" is as deplorable as the "hagiographies" which are sometimes written to enhance the image of prominent personalities from the past.

Knight would have done the reader a service by relegating these attempts to apply the lessons of history to an appendix, to a concluding chapter, or even to a clearly defined summary section at the end of each chapter. When mingled with the story, these applications of 1888 history to current issues become a distraction.

While there is a considerable amount of useful information in this book, that information seems so "tainted" by "interpretation" that it raises questions about its reliability or accuracy as biography.

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