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## Review: Show Them No Mercy: Four Views on Canaanite Genocide

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forms the end of the Book of Numbers, and the materials in the Book of Deuteronomy are quite distinct. Having established the limits of the study, Lee surveys all of the individual units that make up the whole. Again, this was clearly necessary foundational work for Lee in developing and refining his thesis, but for the reader these brief studies seem to fall between two stools. They are more than simply a summary of the contents of the individual units, and occasionally there are insightful comments and observations. However, the comments on each section are too brief to provide complete commentary, and in many cases give little information that could not be gained elsewhere. Finally, however, the last eighty pages get to the heart of the issue, the macrostructure of Num 10:11–36:13. Here is the most valuable aspect of Lee's study, where he unfolds the thesis stated earlier in his study that:

Numbers 10:11–36:13 points not to the entire process of the execution of the ongoing campaign but rather to a specific aspect of that execution, namely, the failure of the conquest from the south and the resultant forty years of wandering before the attempt was made once again to conquer the Promised Land—not from the south but from the east—by the new generation. (p. 104)

Within this macrostructure, Num 10:11–14:45 outline the failed southern campaign, which hinged on the failure of the exodus generation to trust Yahweh's ability to fulfill the promise to their ancestors. Numbers 15:1–20:29 then recount Yahweh's punishment of all of the exodus generation, while 21:1–36:13 shows Yahweh's forgiveness, actualized in the call of the new generation as the bearers of the promise (p. 216). I found Lee's treatment of 21:1–3 as a turning point from the old generation to the new particularly powerful in explaining the arrangement of the varied materials of Num 20–21.

As an overall macrostructure, Lee's proposal has considerable merit. At the same time, however, it pushes into the background other structural devices that seem to have obvious claims on our attention. For example, Douglas's observation that the groups that rebel in ch. 16 are exactly those identified prominently in the opening chapters, whereas ch. 17 re-asserts the original ordering of Israel, supports her thesis that there is a strong line of connection between Num 1–4 and Num 16–17. Equally, as Olson noted, the double treatment of Zelophehad's daughters in Num 27 and 36 seems to be a fairly obvious inclusio that brackets the post-census story of the second generation. Perhaps, in sharp contrast to those such as Noth who have seen no principle of organization behind the diverse materials of the Book of Numbers, we have to conclude that in fact the book is a sophisticated literary work involving numerous structural devices that intersect at a variety of levels. Certainly in the ongoing debate on the structure of Numbers, all scholars will benefit from Lee's careful and thoughtful analysis.

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C. S. Cowles, Eugene H. Merrill, Daniel L. Gard, and Tremper Longman III, *Show Them No Mercy: Four Views on Canaanite Genocide*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003. Pp. 218. \$16.99, paper.

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, and the continuing threat of Islamic *jihad*, *Show Them No Mercy* is a timely work providing four perspectives on the theological and

ethical issues surrounding the biblical teaching on holy war as practiced by Israel in the OT. In the first section of the book, Cowles argues the “case for radical discontinuity” between the OT and NT on the subject of holy war, meaning that there is a radical discontinuity between the God of the OT and the God of the NT: “The God portrayed in the Old Testament was full of fury against sinners, but the God incarnate in Jesus is not” (p. 28). The God who commands Canaanite genocide in the OT is the product of human misunderstanding on the part of Moses and Joshua, not divine revelation and self-disclosure from God himself. Cowles’s christocentric hermeneutic, which views the love of God revealed in Christ as the ultimate criterion of truth, makes it impossible for him to accept that God could have sanctioned the slaughter of the Canaanites: “If we believe that Jesus is truly ‘the image of the invisible God’ (Col 1:15), then we must resist all efforts to defend Old Testament genocidal commands as reflective of the will and character of God” (p. 36).

The other contributors note two prevailing weaknesses in Cowles’s treatment of the subject. First, his position seriously undermines the authority of Scripture and reflects an almost Marcionite view of the moral inferiority of the OT. Second, Cowles’s selective christocentric hermeneutic reflects an overemphasis on the love of God revealed in Christ to the exclusion of God’s wrath that is also revealed in the person of Jesus. The failure of Cowles, for example, to engage the texts in Rev 19–20 that present Jesus as the Divine Warrior raises the suspicion that Cowles not only rejects the authority of various OT texts but also ignores the implications of troublesome passages in the NT that do not fit his preconceived christocentric hermeneutic.

The second viewpoint expressed in the book is Merrill’s position of “moderate discontinuity,” which argues that holy war and Canaanite genocide were divinely sanctioned in the OT but that such practices have no justification in the church age except in terms of spiritual conflict. The strength of Merrill’s presentation is the detail and precision found in his discussion of key passages and concepts bearing on the OT teaching concerning holy war. Merrill also provides a careful rationale for the practice of holy war and Canaanite genocide in the OT: (1) holy war was a demonstration of God’s sovereignty; (2) holy war was a demonstration of God’s wrath against human sinfulness, particularly a Canaanite culture that had become progressively corrupt over centuries of time; (3) holy war enabled the fulfillment of God’s covenant promises to the nation of Israel and was designed to protect Israel from following the idolatrous practices of the Canaanites; and (4) holy war educated all peoples that Yahweh was a God of both grace and wrath. Though Longman’s criticism that Merrill’s presentation provides “too neat an explanation for why the Canaanites were the object of God’s warring wrath in a way that say, the Egyptians were not” (p. 108) is perhaps somewhat valid, Merrill offers a reasoned explanation of the divine purposes behind holy war in the OT.

The labeling of the views of Gard and Longman in this work as positions of “continuity” is somewhat confusing because both writers share Merrill’s conviction that the practice of actual holy war is something sanctioned only in connection with Israel in the OT. Gard and Longman, however, attempt to develop much more fully the spiritual connection between the OT and NT in relationship to the holy war concept. Gard’s chapter argues for an “eschatological continuity” from the OT to the NT. Gard traces a trajectory that begins with Israel’s early understanding of holy war and moves to Chronicles at

the end of the Hebrew canon, which presents a more cosmic perspective on the Yahweh wars of the OT. This cosmic viewpoint is more fully developed in the apocalyptic literature of the Second Temple period and reaches its culmination in the NT's eschatological presentation of God in the person of Jesus Christ "as the conquering King" (p. 135).

Gard's chapter makes several important contributions to this overall work. He helps to place Israel's practice of holy war in its cultural setting by demonstrating that other ancient Near Eastern peoples shared a similar ideology. He also carefully explains the difference between Israel's identity as a national and political entity and the church's theological identity. In contrast to Israel, the church "has no identity except as the people of God. The church has no territorial or political boundaries. She does not raise armies or fight battles with weapons, ancient or modern" (p. 138).

The weakness of Gard's presentation, as is especially noted by Longman, is that his argument concerning Chronicles as a transition work is unconvincing. The supposedly distinctive perspectives of Chronicles (defeat for the generation that disobeyed, the emphasis on God fighting alone for Israel, and the more cosmic descriptions of the divine battles) are simply not unique to the theology of the Chronicler. Merrill also rightly criticizes Gard for failing to make a convincing argument for his view of typological patternism in Chronicles that anticipates a David *redivivus* and a Solomonic era of peace following the final eschatological battle. Gard points in the right direction in seeing a connection between OT holy war and the work of Christ both in his work as Redeemer at his first coming and his role as Judge and Conqueror at the second coming, but these connections are rather underdeveloped.

Longman's chapter on the "case for spiritual continuity" develops these connections more fully and clearly. After treating the practice of *herem* warfare in the OT, Longman traces the trajectory of the holy war concept from OT to NT in five key phases, which are: (1) God fights against the human enemies of Israel; (2) God fights against Israel; (3) God will fight in the future as a Warrior; (4) Jesus Christ fights against the spiritual powers and authorities; and (5) God fights the final battle. The element of continuity between the OT and NT is that the holy war against the forces of evil continues. The elements of discontinuity in the NT are that Jesus ultimately triumphs over evil by himself dying on the cross and the enemies engaged in battle are primarily spiritual in nature. The practical implication of this model of holy war is that the church participates in God's ongoing conflict with evil by engaging in the spiritual battle described in Eph 6:10-18. Merrill provides the helpful corrective that Longman's use of the term "holy war" is perhaps too broad, but this criticism in no way diminishes the importance of Longman's insights concerning the cosmic battle imagery that is found in both the OT and the NT.

The major criticism of this work is that the "Counterpoints" format presenting four opposing views is not well suited to the discussion that unfolds in this book. This work is advertised as presenting four views that "are quite different," but in reality, there are only two major views presented in the book—the view of Cowles versus the view of Merrill, Gard, and Longman. On the one hand, Cowles's emphasis on the love of God to the exclusion of other attributes leads to the question of how God could destroy innocent Canaanites. On the other hand, the attempt of the other contributors to balance God's love and holiness leads to the question raised by Gard as to why God "did not command the destruction of the entire human race in time and history" (p. 140).

Throughout the discussion, Cowles operates by a different set of rules in that he does not accept the full authority of the entire Bible and thus is not forced to wrestle with a number of the exegetical and theological issues addressed by the other contributors. As a result, Cowles's one-note emphasis on his christological hermeneutic takes on an increasing shrillness (see, e.g., his comments on Longman's view of Osama bin Laden on p. 191) that minimizes some of the important perspectives that he provides.

There are different perspectives and emphases in the arguments of Merrill, Gard, and Longman (e.g., the dispensational theology of Merrill versus the covenant theology of Gard and Longman in relationship to their understanding of the eschatological holy war), but these three writers are in essential agreement concerning their understanding of OT holy war and its ethical implications for the NT church. The common ground they share leads to a consensus on three important conclusions. First, Canaanite genocide in the OT was the righteous and sovereign act of a holy God against a sinful and corrupt culture. Second, holy war texts in the OT provide no justification for the literal practice of holy war by any religious, national, or political group today. Third, the misapplication of holy war by various groups (Christian and non-Christian) throughout history in no way taints the holiness of God or the integrity of Scripture.

The topic of "holy war" addressed in this book perhaps could have been better served by a work that included the exegetical and theological insights of *Show Them No Mercy* in combination with political, ethical, sociological, and religious perspectives on the contemporary issues of Islamic *jihād*, American militarism, and the proper Christian response. Nevertheless, *Show Them No Mercy* provides the biblical and theological foundation for an evangelical understanding of this vital issue and is a work that no person seriously attempting to wrestle with the biblical theology of war would want to ignore.

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Florian Wilk, *Die Bedeutung des Jesajabuches für Paulus*. FRLANT 179. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998. xii, 461. EUR 69, cloth.

J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul in Concert in the Letter to the Romans*. Supplements to Novum Testamentum 101. Leiden: Brill, 2002. Pp. xi + 437. \$141.00, cloth; \$53.00, paper.

These two monographs share some striking similarities, the most obvious of which is that they treat the same basic subject: Paul's use of Isaiah. In addition, both of them were originally academic dissertations that have been revised for publication: Wilk's was submitted in 1996 to the Friedrich-Schiller-Universität in Jena, where he now teaches; Wagner, who is on the faculty at Princeton Theological Seminary, completed his dissertation for Duke University in 1999 (he was able to make use of Wilk's volume, which appeared in the late stages of his own work). Furthermore, both monographs are exceptionally erudite—leaving virtually no stone unturned—and mark a genuine advance in Pauline scholarship.



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