

3), the process of tell excavation (chap. 4), and a brief history of biblical lands (chap. 5). Part 2 ("A Journey through the Land") zooms in on the major archaeological sites currently under excavation region-by-region: Galilee (chap. 6), the Jezreel Valley (chap. 7), the Negev (chap. 8), the Shephelah (chap. 9), Jordan River Valley (chap. 10), the southern coastal plain (chap. 11), and the central highlands (chap. 12). Part 3 ("Aspects of Society") offers the most insight into what archaeologists have been able to discover about ancient life. The chapters cover agriculture and herding (chap. 13), water management (chap. 14), architecture (chap. 15), ceramics (chap. 16), Hebrew language (chap. 17), burial practices (chap. 18), and small finds (chap. 19). This reviewer found the chapters on Hebrew language and burial practices to be most insightful, although readers will likely gain greater understanding of the Old Testament world from each of the foregoing sections. The book ends rather abruptly with the final chapter on small finds, offering no concluding chapter to tie together the study.

Currid has provided a helpful overview of archaeology and has furnished a window into the nature of archaeological work for those unfamiliar with the ins-and-outs of field excavation. The strengths of the book include its user-friendliness and insight for those interested in specific parts of archaeology, its quality photographs and maps, and its measured approach to the benefit archaeology offers (not to *prove* the Bible so much as to illumine it). The book itself is aesthetically pleasing, with its glossy pages and informative features (e.g., frequent breakout boxes with further resources or key terms). The only weakness of the book may well be its lack of a coherent purpose statement or aim. While the title indicates the author is making a case for biblical archaeology, the book does not really offer an argument for archaeology so much as provide a loosely organized overview of important parts of the archaeological task. Nor does the author specifically define what he means by "biblical archaeology" vis-à-vis archaeology in general. In spite of these omissions, I commend the book to readers interested in discovering more about the Old Testament world and the work of archaeology. I have added sections of the book as required reading in my Old Testament Historical Books course, and I would encourage readers of this journal to read this volume to gain greater insight into the Old Testament period.

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Bloody, Brutal, and Barbaric? Wrestling with Troubling War Texts, by William J. Webb and Gordon K. Oest. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019. 397 pp. \$45.00.

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Seminary in Toronto, while Gordon K. Oestle is adjunct professor of Old Testament at Wycliffe College and the teaching pastor at Cedar Creek Community Church in Cambridge, Ontario. The book is the product of fourteen years of writing, reflecting on, and challenging conventional understandings of OT war texts. More specifically, the authors position their book as a *via media* between traditional interpretations of these texts (which they posit as viewing the ethical implications of holy-war passages in an overall positive sense) and the so-called antitraditional interpretations (which they depict as viewing the ethics of these passages as reprehensible) (20). Most of the conversation, nonetheless, is targeted toward the traditional side. The authors contend that traditional answers have come up short (i.e., square pegs, round holes), creating a gap that calls for their “realigned traditional view.” This latter perspective, they contend, asks the right questions and poses more nuanced answers (29).

They begin by proposing, in the introductory chapter and Part 1, six theses which define the agenda of the book (13–19). (1) Anachronistic readings of war texts have skewed modern interpretations because readers tend to force contemporary ethical questions upon ancient texts and cultures. (2) The “total-kill rhetoric” of OT war texts must be understood as hyperbole. (3) In divine warfare Yahweh is accommodating himself to the brutalities of ANE war conventions (e.g., “God enters our world in hip waders...sloshing through the sewer water” [14]). (4) OT warfare texts move, as does the rest of Scripture, in incremental steps within a “redemptive-movement ethic,” bringing good out of evil and diachronically ameliorating ethical standards and demands. (5) Interpreters must find convergence rather than discord in the portraits of God as divine warrior in the OT, Jesus as gentle shepherd in the Gospels and Paul, and Jesus as apocalyptic warrior in Revelation. (6) Scripture points toward an eschatological reversal, whereby God intends to right all wrongs and to subsume even warfare under his righteous, loving character and actions.

The next two chapters, Part 2, focus on the shortcomings vis-à-vis salient features of traditional approaches. Traditional interpretations fail, first, because they assume divine commands concerning Yahweh war equate to ethical commendation of these practices. Second, traditional approaches often fallaciously force the ethical ladder of abstraction on war texts to argue for their inherent goodness at the highest level, where exclusive love for God is demanded. Third, traditional interpretations simply distract from the problems attending OT war texts by turning attention instead to the holiness of God, the removal of idolatry, the depravity of the Canaanites, or the foreshadowing of eschatological judgment. On the other hand, traditional approaches offer some benefit. Here, however, the authors’ approach becomes more involved, and, to this reviewer, more recondite. They contend that to comprehend what is happening in these war texts, readers must incorporate the heuristic lens of the biblical storyline by distinguishing *ethnic* Canaanites from *literary* Canaanites and by understanding the function of sacred

space. Holy war texts begin in the opening chapters of Genesis, they posit, where sacred space is created and sinners first run afoul of it. In this vein, nearly any biblical event involving divine judgment of sin, from the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden to the imputation of Adamic guilt to Jesus on the cross, constitutes a variation of the same reality—*literary* Canaanites (Adam and Eve, Christ as recipient of sinners' imputed guilt) are punished just as the ethnic Canaanites living during the conquest were. This equation becomes a hermeneutical key to unlock the meaning and significance of OT war texts.

Part 3 provides the heart of the book and the bulk of its content, with thirteen chapters. This section will prove instructive to readers not familiar with ancient war practices and offers an insightful backdrop to contextualizing biblical war passages. The authors begin with a short chapter (7 pp.) summarizing Webb's redemptive-movement hermeneutic, which has appeared in his other writings (e.g., *Corporal Punishment in the Bible: A Redemptive-Movement Hermeneutic for Troubling Texts* [IVP, 2011]; *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* [IVP, 2001]). In sum, this approach argues that Scripture must be interpreted in view of two horizons—ancient and modern—so that the ethics of the ancient context (concrete words and ethics frozen in time) are to be seen as moving incrementally and redemptively toward the far horizon of contemporary application (spirit of the words and ultimate ethical application). Moreover, *the meaning of the text is bound up in this movement*. Thus, for example, while the Bible does not outrightly condemn slavery, it provides a trajectory whereby Christians are obligated to ban it in contemporary society if they correctly interpret the spirit of the text (its meaning) and rightly apply its consummatory ethic. With respect to war texts, the authors argue that the true meaning is thus “to carry Christians forward in forging new practices and policies that help offset or minimize the atrocities of war” (82).

In the next two chapters the authors tackle the theme of war rape in certain OT passages: the “ugly side” in Deut 21:10–14 and the “redemptive side” in Deut 21:4–10 and Num 31:17–18. With regard to the former, the authors conclude that Deut 21:10–14 “contains serious ethical problems” (97) and that “contemporary Christians should be repulsed” (99). In the next chapter, however, the authors attempt to contextualize this assessment by examining ANE war rape practices as well as the biblical passages cited above that provide a redemptive movement toward the compassionate and honorable treatment of women. After a brief chapter relating war rape to genocide, the authors then extensively evaluate and support their claims that the OT total-kill statements are actually hyperbole (chaps. 8–12). They analyze evidence that ANE war texts typically exaggerated battle feats, including the numbers killed, the speed of attack, the severity of the carnage, the extent of the destruction, and the responsibility for victory (i.e., the king is given an outsized role). They apply this to statements in the OT, especially in Joshua and Judges, to argue that entire populations of

Canaanites were rarely, if ever, exterminated. Furthermore, they posit that the command to drive out the Canaanites shares the goal of total-kill hyperbole in seeking to rid the land of pollutants as sacred space for Yahweh. Here the authors—to my mind—make a plausible case for some level of hyperbole in some of these texts. Next (chap. 13) the authors examine the war atrocities found in ANE texts; in terms of understanding ancient backgrounds this may be the most helpful chapter.

In the next three chapters the authors assess the divine role in OT war texts. They argue that Yahweh is an “uneasy war God” who seeks to subvert conventional war practices of the ANE. They support this thesis along several lines, suggesting, for example, that Yahweh weeps over the destruction of Israel’s enemies, that he forbids ancient-world weapons of mass destruction, and that he prohibits David from building the temple to undermine the practice of violence. Finally, the authors consider the role of Jesus in divine warfare, arguing that the cross turns warfare on its head and that holy war in Revelation is not warfare at all but simply Jesus speaking one word. The final chapter concludes by rehashing the theses of the book mentioned above and proposing continued gaps for further study.

Several strengths of the book may be mentioned. The authors provide a substantive and well-nuanced addition to the literature on Yahweh war and OT battle texts. The authors appear genuinely concerned to wrestle with these texts in a sensitive and thoughtful way. The book provides an informative background for how warfare was practiced in the ANE and will thus illuminate many OT texts for readers.

Nonetheless, some weaknesses offset the value of the book. First, the organization and outline of the book is somewhat uneven and even unfocused. Perhaps this is the result of two authors and a fourteen-year writing process. Some chapters are quite short; others are very long. The authors seem to ping back and forth from various themes and topics in a rather haphazard way. Second, the redemptive-movement hermeneutic is ultimately unconvincing. While critiquing this would require space beyond this review, the approach seems to create more problems than it solves. The ethics of Scripture become problematized, especially acute when these ethics appear to carry little or no change from the beginning to end of the Bible. Thus, for example, the book of Revelation presents battle scenes and carnage just as bloody and devastating as passages from Joshua or Judges. Zechariah—when read from a futurist, originalist perspective—presents a terrifying picture of battle and Yahweh war during the Tribulation and leading up to the Battle of Armageddon (Zech 9:12–15; 12:2–9; 14:1–3). Third, the authors tend to exacerbate some of the alleged problems in OT warfare texts and appear to inflate some of the atrocities of ANE war texts. For example, in a recent paper Charlie Trimm debunked the book’s claim that ANE war texts glorified battle rape (see “Battlefield Rape in the Ancient Near East and the Old Testament: Hiding and Exposing the Horror,” ETS 2020). Similarly, this reviewer finds objectionable, for example, that Deut 21:10–14 sanctions war rape. Fourth, in seeking to critique traditional views the

authors end up committing the same *faux pas* they identify in their traditionalist counterparts. They contend that traditional approaches have simply distracted from the difficulties of war texts. But Webb and Oeste appear to do the same when they suggest that we must widen the lens so that any sinner divinely punished becomes a “literary” Canaanite. If all punished sinners are Canaanites then some punished sinners (who happen actually to be ethnic Canaanites) cannot be Canaanites in any distinctive way. Simply put, to paraphrase a popular slogan, if everyone is a Canaanite then no one is a Canaanite. The tensions in traditional approaches have not been resolved; the lens has been widened so far as to render the killing of the Canaanites moot. A more fertile approach—to my mind—accounts for the challenges by positing a unique role and standing for Israel vis-à-vis the church, a reality that resolves tensions in the war texts of Revelation, and by understanding Yahweh war against the backdrop of the exodus event rather than exclusively of sacred space. In summary, traditional approaches are likely more valid than the authors give them credit for. While this book provides an informative backdrop on warfare in the ancient world and will prove enlightening to many readers, the authors attempt to resolve observed tensions in previous approaches must be ultimately judged to fall short.

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Psalms 73–150, by Daniel J. Estes. New American Commentary. Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2019. 671 pp. \$32.99.

Daniel Estes, Distinguished Professor of Old Testament at Cedarville University, has specialized in the study of Old Testament Wisdom literature and the Psalms for many years, and now he has added to his accomplishments in this area by contributing the first volume of a planned two-volume commentary on the Psalms. (The preliminary word is that the companion volume might appear in 2024.) In the author’s preface to this commentary, Estes asks the obvious question, “Why is another commentary on Psalms needed?” After all, the canonical collection of Psalms is the most sung, chanted, prayed, read, memorized, translated, and commented upon portion of inspired scripture throughout two millennia of church history. The past couple decades have added a fair number of contemporary commentaries to that great cloud of witnesses. Is there really room for another commentary?

Estes answers that question by appealing to his intended audience and his specific approach. His audience, broadly speaking, is the church, not the academy. His approach is fundamentally exegetical, which is to say, Estes self-consciously steers away from questions of reception history and Christological interpretation and focuses his efforts on interpreting each psalm as an individual work of poetry.