The Judgment of God.

The Problem of the Canaanites

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Many today find difficulty, on ostensibly Christian grounds, with the concept of divine judgment, and thus find it hard to accept judgments in the OT as the work of the Christian God. The case of the Canaanites causes particular difficulty because of the involvement of Israel in carrying out the judgment.

The Israelite invasion of Canaan, as described in the book of Joshua and based on instructions in the Pentateuch, was like many another barbarian invasion in the course of history – at least from the viewpoint of those who suffered from it. The moral issues arise from taking the theological dimension seriously, *i.e.* from claiming that the OT is revelation of the one true God and that he directed the invasion.[1] If our outlook is based on accepting the NT as a manual of Christian lifestyle, with principles of forgiveness and service grounded in a gospel freely available, we may find it difficult to see how the invasion of Canaan can be fitted into the same theological framework. Was Marcion right after all – was this the work of another and inferior deity?

To put it another way, if we could see the policy of exterminating the Canaanites merely as a phase in the development of religion (whether 'primitive' or 'deuteronomic'),[2] we could attribute it to human misapprehension of the character of God; but if the instructions in the Law came from God, then, regardless of any debate about their historical context, we have a theological problem. Stone considers that this problem already exercised the author of the book of Joshua, and argues that 'one important, but generally unnoticed, effect of the interpretive reshaping of Joshua is a disquiet with "holy war", directing readers to modes of appropriation other than martial and territorial'.[3]

We cannot be content to limit our enquiry to an academic question of understanding the OT historically; we must also ask how the Scripture applies to Christians as they interact with the world, especially with forces that oppose them. If the biblical treatment of the Canaanites does not provide a model, what does it say to us? And how do we explain the basis on which we determine its relevance? I propose to examine the Canaanite question against the background of other OT examples of judgment; to make some suggestions for understanding the biblical text and the situation which it describes; and to consider briefly the implications for Christians in pagan (or post-Christian) society.

Judgment in the Old Testament

The idea that God does not judge is by no means a modern one: Zephaniah had to contend with it (Zp. 1:12). As a proposition it is untenable: if no penalty is enforced, law becomes ineffective, and the purposes and ideals of the law must for ever be frustrated by human self-will. The Bible witnesses to God's willingness to persuade men; but no biblical writer describes a 'god' whose will is ultimately limited to what he can achieve by persuasion. The basic principles of divine intervention in conflict situations were stated by G.E. Wright as follows: (a) God works in this world mediately through chosen agents, whether they know it or not; (b) the divine use of an agent confers no special righteousness or merit on the agent. God uses people as they are.[4]

Judgment on individuals and communities

In human society, judgment attaches responsibility and blame to individuals. The law may be broken by groups, but charges can only be brought against individuals. It is considered unjust to punish family and friends of the guilty

unless they are themselves accessory to the crime (although it may be unavoidable that they also suffer consequences). The principle is endorsed by God in his revelation to Ezekiel (ch. 18); *cf.* Deuteronomy 24:16, cited in 2 Kings 14:6. The proverb about 'sour grapes' may have misinterpreted Exodus 20:5, which speaks of the sins of the fathers being visited on the children 'to the third and fourth generation *of those who hate me*'.

In practice, we do experience corporate punishment, although we tend to interpret it as misfortune rather than in terms of the operation of law and judgment. The Bible provides case-studies of such punishment, illustrating three modes of involvement. Firstly, there is individual sin prejudicing the welfare of the community; secondly, there is individual sin leading the community astray; and finally, we can find the community generally adopting wrong standards.

From the first class, we may cite Achan's theft of devoted objects at Jericho, and David's insistence on holding a census. In both cases the immediate consequences fell on the community. After the 'ban' had been violated, the attack on Ai could not be allowed to succeed, even though the army as a whole was innocent. David held leadership and responsibility; his sin could not be treated as a private matter. Even his treatment of Uriah led to disasters for Israel; much more so did his public transgression (2 Sa. 24).

The classic instance in the second class is that of Jeroboam. He goes down in history as the man 'who caused Israel to sin' (1 Ki. 14:16 and a further 17 times in Kings), but clearly his lead was accepted by the community as a whole, which suffered the consequences, down to the fall of Samaria.

In the third mode of involvement, the community identifies itself with evil so that it passes beyond hope of redemption. In a sense, the whole world is under this condemnation, expressed historically in the flood and prophetically in 'the end of the age' (Mt. 13:40; *cp.* 24:37ff.). The charge lies more particularly against societies which have abandoned moral restraint, wallowed in vile religion, or gloried in oppressive political power. The Canaanites, by the testimony of the biblical authors and their own literature, came into this class.

The involvement of Israel, however, makes the Canaanites something of a special case. Before examining this, it may be useful to review the other principal instances of judgment on Gentile societies. I do not include Israel, because its status as a covenant community raises additional issues, although at times it is dealt with in the same way as Gentiles (Amos 4:10-12).

Judgments on Gentile societies

The case of *Sodom* is the clearest instance of divine judgment by natural agency on a community. The setting and language in Genesis 18 denote a judicial investigation (vv. 20f., 'outcry'; and Abraham's famous plea that 'the Judge of all the earth' could not destroy the righteous with the wicked). There are strong parallels with the flood; Christ cited both as types of final judgment (Lk. 17:26-29). There was a last call to escape, and provision for a remnant. The outcome proved, in the light of the interview with Abraham, that the community was beyond redemption.

With reference to *Egypt*, the language of judgment, already used in Genesis 15:14, appears in Exodus 7:4 and 12:12. Here 'the gods' are judged, referring perhaps to the bestial representations of Egyptian divinities. However, the theme is essentially one of deliverance from oppression, in a confrontation between the true God and the powers of darkness; this is clearly echoed in Psalm 78. Egypt is called to account for its treatment of Israel rather than for its moral or religious corruption.

Accusations against *Nineveh* are spelled out in the prophecy of Nahum: the Assyrians 'plot against the Lord' (1:9, 11); Nineveh is a city of blood, lies and plunder (3:1); oppression is to fulfil 'the wanton lust of a harlot' (3:4) - this is made more specific in terms of sorcery and witchcraft; her 'evil' (NIV 'cruelty') is 'endless', there is no hope of her ever being different (3:19). Isaiah (10:5-14) condemns 'the wilful pride . . . and the haughty look' which put the imperial power on a collision course with God, setting no bounds in space or time to its ambition; but God will 'punish' (v. 12, *pqd*), exercising his authority to call the nations to account.

It is hardly necessary to document the judgment on *Babylon*, which proceeds from similar charges to a similar execution. While Nebuchadnezzar contemplated his achievement, we may be sure that his subjects took their full share of pride in its glory, and were entirely committed to the combination of force and idolatry which sustained it. 'That ruthless and impetuous people' (Hab. 1:6) stand for all time to represent imperial power without responsibility.

Taking these leading examples together, we conclude that the nations come under judgment because of arrogance and oppression as well as what we call 'immorality'; in fact, 'every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God' (2 Cor. 10:5). In the earlier examples, judgment came largely through natural agencies; later, as rebellion was expressed increasingly in political terms, judgment also was often worked out politically. Judgment is not immediate or continuous, otherwise no flesh would survive, as the Psalmist pointed out (130:3f.); it is always linked to the working out of God's redemptive purposes. Even the case of Sodom, ripe for judicial attention, involved the destiny of Lot (*cf.* 2 Pet. 2:6-8). However, Sodom and Canaan had this in common: their iniquity had 'reached its full measure' (*šālēm*, Gn. 15:16). Outrageous evil is purged to forestall the spread of corruption.

The Canaanite question

This brings us back to the Canaanites and to the situation in which the Israelites were commissioned to extirpate them. Being concerned primarily with the prescriptive material, I shall not discuss the historical reconstruction of the origins of the state of Israel. This is not to deny the importance of the subject; but whether one visualizes peaceful penetration, social revolution, or any other theory which minimizes or denies invasion, the attitude to the Canaanites inculcated by the Law requires not only a historical setting but also a theological explanation.[5]

To take an extreme example, since Niels Lemche is persuaded that the Pentateuch is essentially a post-exilic composition and that it generally misuses the term 'Canaanite' in an unhistorical sense, and since the pentateuchal emphasis on the exodus from Egypt and the eviction of the Canaanites is an anachronism in the post-exilic context, he is driven to refer the whole construction to the Jewish diaspora in Egypt.[6] Thus the practical application of the doctrine is entirely removed from the world of war and invasion; but we must still face the theological and ethical implications of that doctrine.

Similarly, theories of the development of the Pentateuch will not remove the theological problem. For instance, writing on the basis that Deuteronomy was compiled in the latter part of the seventh century BC, S.R. Driver accounts for its anti-Canaanite polemics 'partly, no doubt, because they formed an element in the older legislation (Ex. 23:31-33) . . . but chiefly because . . . they were a significant protest against the fashions of the age'.[7] He does not postulate an anti-Canaanite pogrom under Josiah, but senses 'the intensity of the author's convictions on the subject', and apparently grants that 'older legislation' would have carried the same message.

Much more recently, and more radically, A.D.H. Mayes regards Deuteronomy as representing Mosaic authorship in order to authorize and legitimize its teaching, and states that 'this presentation as speech of Moses brought with it the fictional setting of pre-settlement times'.[8] Nevertheless, he goes on to treat 'holy war' as a

reality, even though 'Holy War theory represents a deuteronomic interpretation . . . of past events'.[9] The problem of understanding the theory therefore remains, even if one supposes that it was never actually put into practice.

It becomes evident that neither by rewriting the history of Israel's origins, nor by identifying stages in the compilation of the Pentateuch, can one avoid the need to give an account of the prescriptions for dealing with the Canaanites which will enable us to understand their purpose correctly. I propose therefore to set aside the historical and literary questions, and to examine the texts – primarily the pentateuchal texts – as they stand.

Instructions given in the Pentateuch

The principal texts are Exodus 23:20-33, Exodus 34:11-16, Deuteronomy 7:1-6 and Deuteronomy 12:1-4, 29-32. Some phrases recur in Leviticus 18 20, Numbers 33:51-56, Deuteronomy 18:9-13 and Deuteronomy 20:16-18. The instructions can be considered under two heads: dealing with the people, and abolishing their religion. The second group is fairly simple: in the four main passages, apart from some minor variations of expression, Exodus 23:24 and 34:13f. cover the same points as Deuteronomy 7:5 and 12:3, 30 (*cf.* also Dt. 7:16, 25). The general injunction not to 'follow their practices' (Ex. 12:24), implied again in Exodus 34:15, is effectively repeated in Deuteronomy 12:4, 31 as regards worship, while Leviticus 18:3, 20:23 and Deuteronomy 18:9 carry it into the realm of ethics and particularly of occultism. The first group of instructions, for dealing with the people, will repay closer attention.

The crux of the problem

Common to most of the passages are the phrase 'I will drive out' (various words used) and a warning not to be ensnared or led into sin (in Dt. 12, connected directly with worship). The deuteronomic passages are complementary, inasmuch as chapter 7 is part of the introduction while chapter 12 is specific law. On the other hand, Exodus 34 recapitulates chapter 23 with some abbreviation. One can therefore see a very close correspondence between Exodus and Deuteronomy, taking each as a whole.

The phrase 'I will drive out' is closely connected with the oft-repeated assurance that the Lord had given Israel the land of Canaan. This theme is especially prominent in Deuteronomy 1–6, which is not concerned with the idolatry of the Canaanites as such: here the threat to faithful worship is expected from within (4:25) or from abroad (6:14). However, the implication that the Canaanites must be 'thrust out' (6:19) is inevitable.

The other phrases which occur in one or both of the Exodus passages are also found in Deuteronomy 7, except for Exodus 23:33: 'Do not let them live in your land'; on the other hand, Deuteronomy 7:3 adds: 'Do not intermarry' (implied in Ex. 34:15f.). In practical terms this amounts almost to the same thing, but in 7:2 the point is sharpened into the first application of *hērem* in this context.[10] The term reappears in Deuteronomy 20:17,[11] as epexegetic to the phrase 'you shall not leave alive anything that breathes'.[11] Both expressions are common in Joshua, where we read of these instructions being put into effect, and it is important to understand the meaning of *hērem*.

'Devoted' or 'under the ban'

The essential significance of *hērem* is irrevocable dedication of an object or person. It is seen clearly in Leviticus 27:28f., where the term (NIV 'devote') is contrasted with 'dedicate' (vv. 14-27, *haqdiš*); the latter usage leaves open the possibility of redemption. This related to voluntary offerings, but in a few instances 'devotion' was applied to what would normally have been taken as plunder.[12] It was not intended to be applied to the spoil of Canaanite cities

generally.[13] It had nothing to do with the standing instructions to destroy idolatrous cult-objects, neither was it a hallmark of the so-called 'holy war'. Failure to observe the evidence on these points has led to widespread misunderstanding and confusion even in standard commentaries.[14]

With regard to persons, 'irrevocable dedication' implies that the options of enslavement and of treaty are not available.[15] This follows from the prohibition of social intercourse, given in more detailed terms in the texts cited above. The Canaanites in general would never accept the Israelite doctrine of God and submit themselves to its discipline; the exceptional case of Rahab only points the contrast. A whole way of life is at stake. Debased religion has corrupted Canaanite thought and practice from seed-time to harvest, and no way will they be persuaded to abandon it. Their society is ripe for judgment.

Understanding the judgment

The invasion as judgment

We are presented, then, with a situation which is practically unparalleled in Scripture: judgment is decreed on a society, and Israel is commissioned to execute it. It is so unusual, and apparently so far outside Christian terms of reference, that we may have some difficulty in understanding that this could be the will of God.

As to the judgment itself, we need to appreciate more fully the character of Canaanite society as known to us from biblical and extra-biblical sources. The strictures of W.F. Albright[16] are not universally accepted; for example, Dr J. Gray attempts to show that Canaanite religion anticipated many biblical ideals, even if 'what predominated in Canaan was in fact the fertility-cult relating to the recurrent seasonal crises in the agricultural year, man's efforts to enlist Providence in supplying his primary need, his daily food and the propagation of his kind'.[17] Dr Gray is clearly seeking to justify or at least excuse the cult, on the very grounds on which it stands condemned biblically; the God of grace is not to be 'enlisted by man's efforts'.

Let us illustrate further the style of this defence. Gray claims that the Canaanites were emotionally involved in their myths, which were a form of proto-drama; in places 'the whole bawdy, farcical tone is just that of Greek comedy ... Their gods were like the Greek gods, glorified human beings ... Granted that this intense anthropomorphism is rather the work of the artist using his poetic licence, the fact remains that there was no moral purpose in the fertility-cult. *That is not a reproach; it is a natural limitation.*'[18]

This is not the place to examine Gray's attempts to connect Canaanite and Israelite practice,[19] or to answer his polemic against the biblical representation of Canaanite religion. It is enough to remark that his defence can be made, to our reading public, in terms such as we have quoted, and that it appears to rest mainly on the prior claims of cultural appreciation over moral (let alone religious) considerations. We have to face the question whether we believe, and are prepared to maintain, that a true appreciation of history has room for the possibility of divine judgment being executed in particular situations, and that in such judgment, the pretensions of culture might be set aside.

This position is taken by W.L. Alexander, commenting on the policy of extermination:

> *If Israel had no divine command to this effect, no-one would pretend to justify this part of their policy. If they had, it needed no justification ... when a nation has given way to such nameless and shameless wickedness that its land groans beneath the burden of its crimes, it is a mercy to the world when the evil is stamped out ... no nation has any absolute right to itself or its land. It holds its existence subject to God's will, and to that will alone; and if it is good for the world that it should give place to others, he will cause it to pass away.*[20]

It is my contention that the invasion of Canaan should be seen in this light rather than as an expression of a general principle of holy war against sinners and unbelievers.

Israel as God's agents

This theme of judgment exhibits a relatively low profile in our texts, and is certainly not to be regarded as motivating Israel. We read in Genesis 15:16 that a return from Egypt would be deferred until 'the sin of the Amorites' had 'reached its full measure' (*šālēm*). In Leviticus 18:24ff. and 20:22 the land is said to have been defiled, so that it 'vomited out its inhabitants' and (18:25) 'I punished it for its sin'. Thus in Deuteronomy 9:4, 'it is on account of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is going to drive them out before you'. In both Leviticus and Deuteronomy the Israelites are warned not to congratulate themselves on their own virtue, but to fear lest they come under the same judgment.

So, when we come to specific instructions to make no terms with the Canaanites (*e.g.* Dt. 20:16-18), the Israelites are not encouraged to see themselves as God's avenging angels. Craigie says:

> *There are two reasons for this total destruction, only one of which is stated in this context. The unstated reason is that the Israelites were instruments of God's judgment; the conquest was not only the means by which God granted his people the promised land, but was also the means by which he executed his judgment on the Canaanites for their sinfulness (see 9:4). The second reason, which is stated, appears in v.18: if the Canaanites survived, their unholy religion could turn Israel aside from serving the Lord.*[21]

Reasons for the policy

What then can we say about the rationale of the directions given in the Law for dealing with the Canaanites?

The Sinai Covenant, modelled as it may have been on accepted forms of Near Eastern treaty so that Israel could grasp its purpose, was a very special kind of covenant. Yahweh would not accept a place in a pantheon to deal on equal terms with the gods of other nations; much less would their representatives be allowed in his territory. Therefore, not only is the worship of other gods prohibited, but the idea of treaty with the Canaanites is impossible; for such a treaty would involve reciprocal invocation of each other's deities.[22]

Under the covenant which constituted them as God's people, Israel acquired title to the land. This is explicit in Exodus and strongly developed in Deuteronomy, and of course goes back to the covenant with Abraham. Possession of the land means control of it and of all that goes on in it, so that the national life may be developed in accordance with the covenant. Aliens, as such, are not excluded - indeed, provision is made for them and Israel is required to see that they are not neglected or oppressed[23] – but they must conform to the law of the land; and this includes the first and second commandments. 1 Kings 11:7f. illustrates the point.

It is easy enough to see that the prohibition of idolatrous worship involves the destruction of its visual aids; but if the pagan altars are eliminated, what will the pagans do? After all, their idolatrous worship is also a matter of conviction, not just a pastime which they could regretfully abandon. The Sinai Covenant therefore, by its very nature, requires the eviction of pagans from Israelite territory, both because their worship cannot be allowed to co-exist with that of Israel, and because there can be no basis for a treaty relationship with them. On the other hand, they cannot be deported; Israel is not going to be an imperial power with the resources and authority to move populations around.

So, while the primary intention is '[or, you] will drive them out', this leads inevitably to 'you must devote them'.[24] I am not suggesting that this implication was avoided in the first place, but I think it important to establish that the prior objective was to possess and cleanse the land.

Constructive purpose

If the gift of the land was an essential factor determining the policy to be followed towards the Canaanites, what has the Law to say about God's purpose in this gift? It went far beyond the common Near Eastern theme of conquest promoting the glory of the conqueror's god: beyond Jephthah's *démarche* to the king of Ammon (Jg. 11:24), 'whatever the Lord our God has given us, we will possess'.

In Deuteronomy 4:32ff. Moses declares that Israel's unique experience of deliverance 'out of another nation' testifies to the uniqueness of the one true God (vv. 35, 39). 'He loved your forefathers and chose their descendants' (v. 37) – not to exercise power, but so that their obedience to the covenant would 'show your wisdom and understanding to the nations' (v. 6), who would 'see that you are called by the name of the Lord' (28:10). One must therefore question the assertion by A.D.H. Mayes that 'Deuteronomy expresses no sense of Israel with a mission to the world'.[25] Israel is to be *s'gullāh*, the Lord's treasure, and *gôy qāḏôš*, a holy people (Ex. 19:5f.; *cf.* also Dt. 26:18f.); the Lord is glorified not in mere power, but in wisdom and in the quality of life which results from keeping his laws.

God called Israel to witness to his power and uniqueness, by non-idolatrous worship; to his holiness, by an appropriate lifestyle; to his justice, by fair laws protecting the disadvantaged. It would be quite misleading to express all this in purely negative terms of prohibitions and restrictions. The stringent rules against idolatry presuppose that Israel is a worshipping community, and must be read with the laws governing the conduct of festivals. The rejection of Canaanite practices is matched by repeated assurances that God will ensure the prosperity of his people (*e.g.* Ex. 23:25). Divination and necromancy are prohibited because the Lord intends to reveal his will through prophecy, as befits the dignity of his creation (Dt. 18:14ff.). God's purpose is to have people reconciled to himself in a covenant relationship, replacing fear and uncertainty with love and confidence, people who understand what the Lord's will is[26] and enjoy the benefits of obeying it. Consistent with this is the strong emphasis in Deuteronomy on responsible self-government and stewardship of resources.[27]

To fulfil this purpose, Israel needed total control and total responsibility within its geographical boundaries for three reasons. Firstly, the theology of worship was so entirely different from that in paganism, that the two could not be combined. Secondly, human instincts being what they are, it was necessary to take a strong line against 'visual aids' prejudicial to a right understanding of God. Thirdly, the personal and social ethics required by the covenant were incompatible with many practices accepted and deep-rooted in paganism. Therefore the covenant could not permit any social intercourse or treaty relationships, or indeed any co-existence, with the former inhabitants of the land.

W.L. Alexander puts this in perspective for us: 'When we come to think of what vast importance for the world was the choice of one people who should serve as leverage for the rest, we discern the reason for the imperative injunctions ... as to the policy which Israel was to pursue with reference to the peoples of Canaan.'[28]

Contemporary relevance

Thus far I have been seeking to understand a historical situation on the basis of a biblical world-view, as a study which is important for faith and worship. There is another dimension of relevance, which Dr C.J. Wright stressed in his editorial (*Themelios*, January 1994, p. 3): 'these things were written for our instruction'. What has Deuteronomy, and in particular its teaching about Canaanites, to say to

us for whom 'the Baalism of Canaan ... is alive and well in our society'?

We live in a world where sexual licentiousness and perversion, together with false worship and outright idolatry, are as prevalent as they were in Canaan – or in NT Corinth or Rome. We are involved in that society, and we risk being dragged along by it and failing to maintain the God-fearing community which the Church ought to be. What are we to do with our Canaanites? Can the Law of Moses give us any directions?

Of course, it is obvious that the NT attitude to idolaters is different. Paul says plainly: 'What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church?' To dissociate from idolaters 'you would have to leave this world'[29] – and then how would we fulfil our commission to preach the gospel? But if we simply say that 'the gospel has made the difference', we have no clear basis for applying the OT – only a kind of filter to strain out what we think has ceased to be relevant.

I suggest that the key to interpretation lies in identifying what has changed, and what has not changed, as between the status of Israel around 1000 BC and our own. In three ways, at least, the Church is differently placed. (a) We serve under a new covenant, in terms set out by Jeremiah (31:33-34). Our remit is to proclaim a message of renewal and reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:17-21). (b) We are not a territorial people as Israel was. We hold no property otherwise than under the secular law. (c) We have no political identity or status. Neither force nor birth can make a Christian. We cannot implement a Christian state; the attempts which have been made are proof of that.

As to the unchanged factors, I would stress the following: (a) God has not changed in himself. He was and is unique, holy, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, forgiving wickedness yet maintaining righteousness; life, power and judgment flow from him alone. (b) He requires our exclusive loyalty. He is not head of a pantheon, neither does Jesus sit on a committee of mediators. (c) We are still 'a people'. Our social life and ethics within the Church, and the way we worship, are essential parts of our witness to Christ.[30] (d) We are still vulnerable to temptation; 'the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit' (Gal. 5:17), and we need to be careful what we hear and see, and how we think.

Conclusions

Having thus reviewed the provisions in the Law for dealing with the Canaanites and their religion, and having tried to assess their relevance in a Christian context, I propose the following:

1. The biblical directions for the occupation of Canaan and the eradication of Canaanite religion reflect God's purpose to establish a holy people with a political identity under the old covenant.

2. As members of the body of Christ under the new covenant, we are not in a position to occupy any territory or impose any laws against immorality or idolatry, but we are required to maintain holiness and true worship in the Church.

3. To this end, we ought to avoid cultural links and interests which would undermine our faith or holiness, and prejudice our witness to the glory of God, and we ought to be unashamed to say why we avoid them. We have to resist the trend in our pluralist society which places culture above criticism.

Such a policy will meet opposition because it has negative aspects. We have to insist that negatives are necessary in order to achieve and maintain positives. Christians cannot say 'yes' to everything.

[1] So L.G. Stone, 'Ethical and apologetic tendencies in the redaction of the Book of Joshua', *CBQ* 53 (1991), pp. 25–36: 'Those looking to Joshua for an enduring illumination of existence struggle with the book's violence, of which God is made the author' (p. 25).

[2] The extermination policy is usually considered 'deuteronomic', and this is often taken to imply that it was promulgated in the late seventh century; for an extreme view, see A. Rofe, 'Laws of warfare', *JSOT* 32 (1985), pp. 23–44. Neither step in this argument is beyond controversy.

[3] Stone, *op. cit.*, p. 28. Stone demonstrates that the Joshua narrative is articulated to emphasize that the Canaanites were destroyed because they resisted the purposes of Yahweh. It is not clear that this makes any significant difference to the 'mode of appropriation'. He goes on to argue (p. 35) that the deuteronomistic expansion shifted the emphasis to a call for Israel to obey the Torah, but the passages cited (Jos. 1:1-9; 8:30-35; 23:1-16) are hardly sufficient to change the thrust of the narrative.

[4] Introduction to R. Boling, *Joshua* (Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 1982), p. 30.

[5] Stone, *op. cit.*, p. 26, on theories of peaceful penetration: 'While expunging the moral problem from history, this approach does not remove the problem from the text.' Again (p. 27), 'the received text of Joshua ... does not depict Israel as ... engaged in a revolutionary class-struggle'.

[6] N.P. Lemche, *The Canaanites and their Land* (JSOTS 110; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), pp. 167f. It may be rather difficult to explain how such a source could produce 'literary works which were to become normative for the whole Jewish community' (p. 169). Lemche acknowledges the problem and there ends the discussion.

[7] S.R. Driver, *Deuteronomy* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 3rd edn, 1902), p. xxxii.

[8] A.D.H. Mayes, *Deuteronomy* (New Century Bible; London: Oliphants, 1979), p. 57.

[9] A.D.H. Mayes, *The Story of Israel between Settlement and Exile* (London: SCM, 1983), p. 157 n. 3. The use of the term 'holy war' may be taken to imply that the invasion was represented as undertaken by God's command, which is the point under discussion. It is another question whether the term itself (which is not biblical) describes a biblical concept accurately. The practice of war usually had religious aspects, but the identification of a form of 'holy war' is very dubious; see P.C. Craigie, *The Problem of War in the OT* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 49, and K. Lawson Younger, *Ancient Conquest Accounts* (JSOTS 98; Sheffield: Almond, 1990), pp. 258–60. The application of 'the ban' (*hērem*) is not a distinctive feature as many commentators have supposed; see below, and note 11.

[10] Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, finds an inconsistency between vv. 2 and 3: 'Had [v.2] been carried out, or had it been intended ... the following verse would be superfluous' (p. 183). It is more logical to read vv. 2*b*-3 as spelling out the implications of 2*a*. J. Ridderbos, *Deuteronomy* (Bible Student's Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), p. 12, explains by reference to v. 22, but this is less realistic; the application of *hērem* could hardly follow a period of shared occupation, so v. 22 implies the gradual extension of boundaries and reduction of Canaanite cities.

[11] *kol n'šāmāh*, which I take as referring to human life. The word is never clearly used of animals except in Gn. 7:22, and even this is not certain; see T.C. Mitchell, *Vetus Testamentum* (*VT*) 11 (1961), pp. 177–87. See also M. Weinfeld, 'The ban on the Canaanites in the biblical codes and its historic development', *VT Suppl.* 50 (1993), pp. 142–60. He finds a shift of terminology in Deuteronomy as compared with Exodus, prescribing extirpation rather than eviction, and concludes that the deuteronomistic view is 'utopian', although he admits that 'the radical policy against the old inhabitants of the land characterizes the times of Saul' (p. 156) and traces an early application of *hērem* to that period. It

is not altogether correct that the prescriptive passages in Deuteronomy tend to use 'destroy' rather than the 'drive out' of Exodus (the term 'dispossess' occurs in 12:29 and 18:12), but in any case the distinction seems somewhat academic; the option to go quietly was, as Weinfeld points out (p. 154), a Rabbinic invention reflecting conditions under the Hasmonaeans.

[12] The principal cases are: (a) Hormah (Nu. 21:2f.), where the dedication was made under a vow invoking divine assistance; (b) the law of an apostate Israelite community (Dt. 13:15-17); (c) Jericho (Jos. 6:17), by Joshua's orders; (d) the Amalekites (1 Sa. 15), by Samuel's orders.

[13] The Talmud points out in *Sifre Deuteronomy* (tr. R. Hammer; New Haven, CN: Yale U.P., 1986), Piska 201, that Dt. 20:17 might have been read in this sense but that it is stated expressly in 6:10f. that the Israelites were to acquire 'houses filled with all kinds of good things'. The text actually refers to the population.

[14] For justification of this view of *ḥērem*, see J.P.U. Lilley, 'Understanding the *ḥērem*', *Tyndale Bulletin* 44.1 (1993), pp. 169–77.

[15] I have in mind here the deliberate use of *haḥ'rēm*, the verb derived from *ḥērem*, in its full religious significance (as in Dt. 7:2), to which the inscription of Mesha', line 17, provides a parallel; see D. Winton Thomas (ed.), *Documents from Old Testament Times* (New York: Harper, 1958), p. 197. There is clearly a weakened or derived sense meaning simply 'destroy' (Lilley, *op. cit.*, pp. 176f.).

[16] W.F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1956), pp. 68–94. 'Sacred prostitution was apparently an almost invariable concomitant of the cult [of Anath]' (p. 75).

[17] J. Gray, *The Canaanites* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1964), p. 138.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 136 (my italics).

[19] Fresh debate on this subject arises from the inscriptions recovered at Quntillet 'Ajrud in the Negev which appear to refer to 'Yahweh and his asherah' (though the reading and interpretation are under discussion). S.M. Olyan, in 'Asherah and the cult of Yahweh in Israel' (SBL monograph 34; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), p. 13, has gone so far as to infer that 'the asherah was a legitimate part of the cult of Yahweh'; this could well have been so, even in Judah, under a king who favoured a pluralist religion. See R. Hess, 'Yahweh and his asherah?', in *One God, one Lord*, ed. A.D. Clarke and B.W. Winter (Cambridge: Tyndale House, 1991), pp. 5 33.

[20] W.L. Alexander, *Deuteronomy* (Pulpit Commentary; London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1906), p. 138.

[21] P.C. Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), p. 276.

[22] Thus Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, p. 183, commenting on Dt. 7:2 'make no treaty'. See also Ex. 23:13.

[23] Ex. 22:21, and frequently thereafter.

[24] The verb *haḥ'rēm* occurs only once in our leading passages (Dt. 7:2), and is there expanded in terms of 'no treaty, no mercy'; the context of the only other occurrence in Deuteronomy (20:17) is not dissimilar. See note 11 above.

[25] Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, p. 56.

[26] Eph. 5:17.

[27] *E.g.* 16:18; 17:8; 20:19; 22:6; 24:19.

[28] Alexander, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

[29] 1 Cor. 5:9-13.

[30] Compare Ex. 19:5f. with 1 Pet. 2:9.