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A STUDY OF RECENT RESEARCH ON THE CONCEPT
OF HOLY WAR IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

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INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this thesis is to gain a general overview of recent scholarship in the area of Holy War in the Old Testament. Holy War is a "problem" for the Christian for at least two reasons. First, the concept of holy War in the Old Testament is often a major point used in stressing the discontinuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Contrasts are set up between the Old Testament as a book of Law and the New Testament as a book of Gospel. The Old Testament is seen as containing a primitive form of religion that later evolved into the "love" concepts of "Sweet Jesus." As a result, Holy War, along with most of the Old Testament is, I believe, either ignored or "spiritualized" by the majority of Christianity today. In order to avoid this, the Christian must come to grips with the "problem" of the relevance of Holy War ideology for Christian ethics and warfare today.¹ Secondly, the misuse of the concept of Holy War throughout Christian history to "justify" "just wars," Crusades and other political stances has been a major point of critique from outside the Church against the Christian faith.²

Peter C. Craigie gives the following reasons (with which I concur) for studying the subject of Holy War in the Old Testament in detail:

¹Peter C. Craigie, The Problem of War in the Old Testament, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), p. 11.

²Ibid., pp. 13-14.

1. In order to profit, as Christians, from our reading of the O.T., we must have an overall perspective with which to interpret its many passages dealing with war.
2. In order to give an intelligent response to criticism of the Bible or the Christian faith (here specifically concerning Holy War), we must first understand the problem ourselves.
3. Christian attitude and action about war will, as a small part of society, have some influence on the future of war. In order to have clear attitudes, we must come to a clear understanding of the subject as it is presented in the Bible.
4. If we are going to present the subject of war and Holy War in Christian education, we must first of all understand the subject ourselves.
5. We live in an age of global wars and nuclear power. If we are to have a clear understanding of war and peace, and life in a nuclear age, we must first seek to clarify the Biblical basis of our position.³

I have found that my research in this area has helped me to better understand the Old Testament as "my" history and, thus, will better enable me to present this history to other Christians as "their" history. My appreciation of the heritage, archeology and history of the Old Testament has grown, but, most of all, my appreciation of God's choosing to reveal Himself at work in, with and under human history and sinful mankind resulting in His ultimate victory as Warrior on the Cross has increased. I also think my ability to evaluate and respond to critical approaches to Biblical material has been enhanced by this research.

I will use the term "Holy War" throughout this thesis. There has been some debate as to the appropriateness of this term. Recent scholarship seems to prefer the term "Yahweh war" or "wars of the

³Ibid., pp. 16

Lord."⁴ There are many reasons given for the rejection of the term "Holy War," foremost of which is probably the rejection of von Rad's conception of war in ancient Israel as a cultic act undertaken by the amphictyony, or an aversion to calling an essentially evil act holy.⁵ This is merely a matter of semantics, and the rejection of the term "Holy War" may carry as much extra baggage as the term itself, so I have chosen to use this familiar term in a neutral sense.

My method of presentation for this thesis is, first of all, to survey what the Bible has to say about Holy War. Next I will survey prominent research on this subject. Since this is a survey, I was not able to be exhaustive in my presentation of the Biblical material or in presenting many of the individual debates that have arisen in recent scholarship. I have tried to cover the major issues in both categories. In the final chapter I have evaluated the recent research on the basis of the Biblical record, historical-grammatical exegesis and Confessional principles.

My conclusion from this study is that the "problem" of Holy War ceases to be a problem for the Christian who listens to the clear witness of God's Word. Internally, there is no contrast between the Warrior God of the Old Testament and the God of Love portrayed in the

⁴See Rudolf Smend, Yahweh War and Tribal Confederation, trans. M. G. Rogers (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970); M. Weippert, "'Heiliger Krieg' in Israel und Assyrien. Kritische Anmerkungen zu Gerhard von Rads Konzept des 'Heiligen Krieges im alten Israel,'" Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 84 (1972):460-93; Patrick D. Miller, The Divine Warrior in Early Israel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973).

⁵Craigie, pp. 48-49.

New Testament. These are two perspectives of the same God, and neither perspective is exclusive to either Testament. Both perspectives reveal to us a God who has chosen to make Himself known by His actions among sinful human beings. Both perspectives reveal to us part of the mystery of God's plan for salvation.

The "problem" of God choosing to reveal Himself through war also disappears if we look at the total picture of God's revelation. The Old Testament literature on war illustrates the reality of the human situation and gives a realistic presentation of the horrors of war. In addition, the Old Testament concept of Holy War reveals to us God's Kingdom and His rule as our King. In the Old Testament this Kingdom was revealed in the ancient state of Israel. Due to Israel's sinfulness, this kingdom failed, but it also prepared the way for the revelation of the Kingdom of God inaugurated in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, not a political rule, but God ruling in the hearts of men under the New Covenant.

The "problem" of the Old Testament ideology of Holy War and modern Christian ethics is solved when we remember our dual citizenship. As citizens of the Kingdom of Glory/Grace, we follow the eschatological ethics as presented by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. Christ's death has transformed the Old Testament concept of Kingdom into a new setting. The Kingdom is no longer identified with the national state in which the Law and government by coercive, legal power is necessary to curb evil. It is now the Church, wherever Christ is recognized and acknowledged as King, where the Word is proclaimed in its truth and purity, and where the Sacraments are administered according to Christ's

command. This Kingdom is free from the coercive legal power of the Law and is ruled by the uncoercive Word of God. Its citizens are no longer under the Law, but in the Law, freely serving by Gospel motivation.⁶ The Warrior God has become the Crucified God, and the final battle, which will be consummated on the Last Day, has been won. The victory is ours. But we are also citizens of a particular human state, which, by nature, is bound up in violence. These human states are appointed by God (Romans 13). Warfare is a necessary instrument of these human states. We are commanded by God to support these states (Romans 13) which includes supporting warfare. We may raise the voice of Christian concern through the channels of protest provided by a particular state, but to go against that state is to go against the order of God (Romans 13:2).

We must face up to criticism from outside the Church and admit to the many abuses that have taken place throughout history with respect to the "Just War theory" and political action in the name of Christianity.⁷ A clear witness to the Scriptural truth about Holy War is necessary, therefore, both within the Church and without. We cannot change the errors of the past, but we can witness to the truth, and it

⁶ See Bornkamm, Heinrich, Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms, trans. Karl H. Hertz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 5-

⁷ In recent years, with the threat of atomic war and a push for disarmament, many mainstream churches are questioning the traditional "Just War" stance and moving toward an historic "peace church" stance (e.g., National Conference of Catholic Bishops, "pastoral letter," etc.)

is on the basis of that Truth that the Christian Church, as well as those judging her from outside, will be judged.

CHAPTER I

BIBLICAL DATA

For those who believe that the Bible is, in its entirety, the inerrant, inspired Word of God, and, as such, the only source and norm of Christian doctrine, the Scriptural record itself is the obvious place to begin a study of Holy War in the Old Testament. Based on this pre-supposition, this chapter will survey what Scripture has to say about Holy War. Emphasis is given to the Old Testament record, but intertestamental developments and New Testament teachings will also be noted. This is not intended to be an exhaustive concordance of every Scriptural reference to warfare, but, rather, it is a representative survey intended to give an over-all picture of the Biblical concept of Holy War.

The Elements and Motifs of Holy War¹

The Bible intimately connects Yahweh with warfare (Ex. 15:3; Ps. 24; Is. 31:5; Acts 13:17-19; and so forth). Throughout the Old Testament Yahweh reveals Himself as the active and determinative factor in the wars of His people, Israel. Israel's warfare was considered

¹The general outline and many of the Scripture references for this section were taken from L. E. Toombs, "Wars, ideas of," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, 4 vols. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 4:796-801.

sacred because of the command and participation of Yahweh. Thus there is a concept of Holy War in the Old Testament.²

Von Rad has identified 13 elements of Holy War.³ Not all accounts of Holy War indicate the presence of all identified elements of a Holy War. Various elements may be present implicitly in a given text, but it is possible that not all the elements that von Rad identified as part of Holy War were present in any given occurrence of Holy War. However, by studying Scripture, we can develop a picture of the procedures, presumptions and motifs involved in Israel's warfare with/for Yahweh.

Preparation for Warfare

For warfare to be "holy" it required the sanction of Yahweh. Yahweh Himself had to declare the war (Ex. 17:16; Num. 31:3). Failure to follow God's design for warfare resulted in disaster (Num. 14:40-45; 1 Sam. 28-31).

Yahweh was consulted through dreams (Judg. 7:13-14), ephod (1 Sam. 30:7), Urim and Thummim (1 Sam. 28:6), and prophets (1 Kings 22:5-8). The Leaders of Israel would "enquire of Yahweh" (יִשְׁאַל יְהוָה לְאַשְׁמֹרֶת) to get divine approval for strategy (Judg. 1:1-2; 20:23), apparently in front of the ark of the covenant (Judg. 20:27). No answer indicated a negative response (1 Sam. 14:36-37; 28:6). At times, detailed instructions were included in the answer (2 Sam. 5:23-24). Petitions were made

²See discussion of terminology pp. 2-3 of Introduction.

³Gerhard von Rad, Der Heilige Krieg im alten Israel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1952), pp. 4-16. For a discussion of von Rad's hypothesis on Holy War see Chapter 2.

to Yahweh with sacrifice for protection from their enemies (1 Sam. 7:9). Priests would also accompany the army into battle along with the ark of the covenant (1 Sam. 4:4-11).

The Personnel of Holy War

The military leader was designated for this office in Israel by a special gift of the Spirit of Yahweh (Deut. 34:9; Judg. 6:34; 11:29). When God's Spirit was withdrawn from an individual, he no longer had the authority to lead God's people (Judg. 16:20; 1 Sam. 16:14). Yahweh was the real leader in Israel, the theocratic King, and He chose men through whom to lead.

The men participating in Holy War were to be totally dedicated, without other obligations (Deut. 20:5-9). They are said to have offered their service willingly (Judg. 5:2,9), and, apparently, followed an ascetic life style during warfare (2 Sam. 11:11). These men are called "chosen ones of Israel" (1 Sam. 26:2 $\text{לְאִיִּם וְיִשְׂרָאֵל}$) and "sanctified ones" (Is. 13:3 שְׂרָפָה). They are set apart for service to God.

The Sacrificial/Cultic Character of Holy War

Holy War involved the priesthood and the cultus of Israel. As was mentioned above, the priests were involved with sacrificial petitions concerning warfare and accompanied the men into battle. The priests were to encourage the people to trust in Yahweh for deliverance from their enemies (Deut. 20:2-4). Singers, at times, went before the army singing praises to Yahweh (2 Chron. 20:21-22).

The encampment of the army was considered a place set apart. The presence and activity of Yahweh Himself made this a holy place. Thus,

the camp underwent a ritual cleansing. (Deut. 23:10-14). The men and their weapons were also consecrated (Num. 31:19-24; Joshua 3:5; 2 Sam. 1:21; 11:11).

The sacrificial character of Holy War is also seen in the practice of cherem (חֵרֵם). The basic meaning of this root is the exclusion of an object from the use or abuse of man and its irrevocable surrender to God. As a noun, it can refer to the object devoted or to the ban itself.⁴ The Septuagint usually translates cherum as anathema, which can mean something dedicated to a deity or consecrated offerings laid up in a temple, as well as something delivered up to divine wrath, dedicated to destruction and brought under a curse. What comes under the ban is taken out of ordinary human circulation and given up to destruction.⁵

Cherem can indicate the devotion of an object for service to God (Lev. 27:28). Usually the verb means "a ban for utter destruction, the compulsory dedication of something which impedes or resists God's work, which is considered accursed before God."⁶ (Num. 21:2-3; Joshua 6:21). In Deut. 7:2-6 the command for this manner of destruction is given with the explanation following that, otherwise, these cities would lure the Israelites away from Yahweh (Deut. 20:17-18). These instructions were not fully carried out, and the results were precisely as

⁴L. J. Wood, "haram," in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, ed. R. L. Harris et al. (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1980), pp. 324-25.

⁵J. Behm, "anathema," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 10 vols. ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 1:354-355.

⁶Wood, p. 324.

predicted. Cherem is closely related to qadosh. The distinction was that objects set aside as cherem were to be destroyed since they were offensive and injurious (Joshua 6:18), while objects set apart because they were qadosh were pleasing and useful (Joshua 6:19).⁷

The concept of cherem was not unique to Israel.⁸ For Israel, the ban originates with Yahweh (1 Sam. 15:3). Cherem acknowledges Yahweh's help and carries out His will.

The curse of cherem and the threat of Israel becoming cherem if they were disobedient to Yahweh should be seen in connection with the blessing and cursing formulary of the covenant.⁹ In Malachi 4, the cherem is applied to the final judgment. Cherem also points out the "scandal of particularity" evidenced throughout the Bible. The cherem curse was due partly to a special accumulated evil of the Canaanites (God hates and punishes sinners). We must also remember that Israel was not only the Church Militant, but also a state.¹⁰ War is a necessary function of a political state.¹¹ It was necessary to dispossess the Canaanites in order that Israel might possess the land promised to them.

Another possible liturgical aspect of Holy War can be seen in the Psalms. The liturgical significance of the Psalms has been demonstrated

⁷Ibid. ⁸See Chapter 3 on Moabite Stone

⁹For more information on blessing and cursing formularies see Delbert R. Hillers, Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964), pp. 30-79).

¹⁰Horace D. Hummel, The Word Becoming Flesh (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), p. 111.

¹¹Peter C. Craigie, The Problem of War in the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), pp. 71-72.

by recent scholarship.¹² Two particular types of psalms seem to have special connection with the Holy War theme. These are the Imprecatory Psalms and the Royal Psalms.

In the Imprecatory Psalms (for example, Ps. 35, 58, 139, and so forth) we must remember that they are not written as expressions of individual revenge, but, rather, the writer is speaking for God. God hates the sinner as well as the sin. The Bible makes it clear that God's justice does not allow for universalism. For God's rule to be carried out, sin must be punished, which means sinners must be punished.¹³

The Royal Psalms involve various aspects of royal activity, including warfare. "Precisely because the Israelite kingdom was a microcosm of the eternal kingdom, the Israelite king could lay claim to the 'ends of the earth' (Ps. 2:8), but the reality was available to them essentially only as it still is to us - in Word and Sacrament."¹⁴

These Royal Psalms are connected with Israel's history, but they are History interpreted as Messianic and Christological (see Ps. 45:6). They also have cultic connections, but not "enthronement" in a magical sense.

"Properly ('sacramentally') understood the cultic accent simultaneously stresses that the actual ancient history is also 'represented,' that is, made present and actualized 'for me,' as though I were a contemporary (anamnesis: 'remembrance'), and, of course, both 'Word' and 'Sacrament' combine in this respect as vehicles of the Holy Spirit."¹⁵

¹²Hummel, pp. 440-47.

¹³Ibid., pp. 432-36

¹⁴Ibid., p. 439.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 442.

The Conduct of Holy War

Yahweh's activity was the bene esse of Holy War. The war was Yahweh's war (1 Sam. 18:17; 25:28). The Israelites were fighting Yahweh's enemy (Judg. 5:31; 1 Sam. 30:26). From a human point of view, war was seen as a struggle between Yahweh and other gods (1 Kings 20:28; 2 Kings 18:28-35).

Yahweh participated in the actual fighting (Deut. 20:4). At times, it was Yahweh alone who brought the victory, without any active participation by the people of Israel (Ex. 14:13-14). Yahweh led His people into battle (Judg. 4:14; 2 Sam. 5:24). The ark of the covenant represented Yahweh's incarnational presence at the head of the battle (Joshua 3:11; Num. 10:35-36). The military importance of the Ark is clearly shown (Num. 14:39-45; 1 Samuel 4).

Yahweh's heavenly hosts also fought for Israel (2 Kings 6:15-19; Judge. 5:20-21; Is. 37:36). The precise manner in which Yahweh and His hosts aided Israel is not always specified. Merely the fact of the heavenly army's marching forth with Israel is all that needed to be said (for example, Deut. 33:2-3).

There is much debate and disagreement about the term sebaot (which occurs over 250 times in the Old Testament) and its association with Yahweh. The origin, meaning and grammatical explanation of the name are all matters of controversy. Most scholars agree that this epithet in its earliest stages is to be associated with the Ark, the palladium of Holy War.¹⁶ Albright contends that the official name of the Ark was

¹⁶Patrick D. Miller, Jr., The Divine Warrior in Early Israel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 152 and 256.

probably "Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh of Hosts Enthroned on the Cherubin."¹⁷

Various grammatical explanations of the name have vied for popularity:¹⁸

1. The longer form of the name - yhwh 'elohe (has) seba'ot - is the original. Thus sebaoth stands in a genitival or construct relation to either 'elohe or yhwh.
2. Eissfeldt suggests that the words yhwh and sebaot are grammatically independent of one another. Thus, he views the latter as in apposition to yhwh, "Yahweh the Mighty one."¹⁹
3. Albright sees this construction as a sentence name, which is common with numerous West Semitic divine names. This would translate as "He who causes to be or creates the armies."²⁰ Cross interprets these armies as a clear reference to the beings who made up the divine assembly.²¹

Basically, saba is a military term. It is used most frequently to indicate a body of men organized for war (Gen. 21:22; Judg. 4:2, 7; Is. 34:2; and so forth). It can also mean the act of war, or warfare (Num. 1:3, 20; Deut. 24:5; 1 Sam. 28:1; and so forth), or, by an extension of meaning, may designate a term of hard service (Job. 7:1; Is. 40:2; Dan. 10:1). It is sometimes used of the service of the Levites (Num. 4:3, 23, 30, and so forth).

¹⁷W, F, Albright, review of L'epithete divine Jahve Seba'ot: Etude philologique, historique et exegetique, by B. N. Wambacq, in Journal of Biblical Literature, 67 (1948):381.

¹⁸Miller, pp. 152-55.

¹⁹Otto Eissfeldt, "Jahwe Zebaoth," Miscellanea Acadamica Berolinensia, 2.2 (1950):128-50. Cited in Miller, pp. 151 and 256.

²⁰Albright, pp. 377-81

²¹Frank Moore Cross, Canannite Myth and Hebrew Epic (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 69-71. See Chapter Five of this thesis: Miller and Cross see sebaot as combining the ideas of the God of the Fathers and 'El.

The military meaning of sebaot is clearly set forth in 1 Sam. 17:45, where David says he fights in the name of Yahweh of sebaot, who is "God of the armies (מְצִיְוֹת) of Israel." Elsewhere Israel's troops are designated as sebaot whom Yahweh leads to victory (Ex. 6:26; 7:4; 12:17) and this is implied in other passages (1 Sam. 15:2; 2 Sam. 5:10).

This term also applies to the heavenly hosts of Yahweh (1 Kings 22:19; compare Job 1-2; Psalm 82; Isaiah 6).²² Colin Brown states:

It is not simply a case of the prophets transferring the hosts from the terrestrial to the celestial plane. The term refers to the totality of forces over which Yahweh rules. But possibly the term also had polemical overtones, directed against the cult of the stars and spirits, claiming by its use that Yahweh also controlled them.²³

Yahweh of hosts acts in the historical arena to accomplish his sovereign purpose (Is. 1:9,24; Jer. 5:14; Amos 5:14-17; and so forth). The use of exmythological imagery also shows a redemption that transcends the earthly nationalistic plane (Is. 44:6; Micah 4:4), and points to the eschatological final victory (Ps. 46:8-11).

The battle cry, "Yahweh has delivered them into your hands," shows that the hand of Yahweh was determinative of the outcome of Holy War (compare Judg. 3:28; 7:15; 1 Sam. 7:8). The battle often climaxed with the "terror of Yahweh" (M^ehumah) falling upon the enemy, resulting in panic, confusion and defeat (Joshua 10:10; Judg. 4:15; 2 Sam. 5:24).

Because of Yahweh's participation in Holy War, numbers were an unimportant matter for His people (Judg. 7; 1 Sam. 14:6). God would provide

²² See Chapter Five on the divine assembly.

²³ The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, ed. Colin Brown, 3rd ed., 3 vols., s.v. "God" by Colin Brown et al., 2:69.

the victory, no matter what the odds, if the war was carried out according to His will.

A Brief Historical Sketch

The unconditional promise of land to the patriarchs (Genesis 15, 17, 35, etc.) presupposed some sort of conflict. In order for the patriarchs to possess, others must be dispossessed. The patriarchs are simply asked to believe it will be so. It is not detailed to them how it will take place.

Holy War motifs are present, however, in the blessing pronounced by Melchizedek on Abraham after his victory over Lot's captors (Gen. 14:20 "blessed be the most high God, who has delivered your enemies into your hand."). The motif of "the terror of God" is found in Genesis 35 as Jacob travels from Shechem to Bethel, preventing any "counter-revenge" of Simeon's and Levi's revenge for their sister's rape.

The Exodus provides the archetype for Holy War in Israel. The use of exmythological language in the description of Exodus 15 is not contrary to, but, rather, complementary to the historical narrative account. It adds a transcendent, universal and eschatological aspect to Holy War ideology.

In the wilderness, the details of Holy War are spelled out in more detail as the people of Israel are prepared for the Conquest of the Promised Land. God must be with them to ensure victory (Numbers 14). The laws of warfare and cherem are recorded in Numbers 31 and Deuteronomy 7-9 and 20.

The Israelites are led into the Promised Land in military formation led by the Incarnational presence of Yahweh in the ark of the

covenant (Joshua 3,4). The book of Joshua indicates three sweeping campaigns resulting in swift and total victory. Theologically, God had given the land into their hands and victory was complete, but pockets of resistance still remained and "mopping up" exercises continued (see Judges 1).

The period of the Judges shows that God continued to work through the sordid history of His people to accomplish His purpose and fulfill His promises. Three major examples of Holy War can be cited from this period:

1. The victory of Deborah and Barak over Jabin and Sisera (Judges 4 and 5);
2. Gideon's encounter with the Midianites (Judges 6-8) which is somewhat of a paradigm of Holy War; and
3. Samuel's conflicts with the Philistines (1 Samuel 7).

With the Monarchy came a gradual disregard for the key aspect of trust in Yahweh alone for victory. Saul's failure to obey cherem laws (1 Samuel 14) was a major reason given for his break with Samuel and eventual downfall. He also put his trust in advice other than that which came from Yahweh (1 Samuel 28).

King David had great success as a warrior for God (2 Sam. 5:10). He was very much aware of the importance of Yahweh for Holy War (1 Sam. 17:26, 45-47). Yet, even David experienced the reversal of Holy War when the angel of the Lord drew his sword against Israel because David failed to trust God completely (2 Sam. 24; 1 Chron. 2).

With the divided monarchy, increasingly Scripture points out that the kings and the people trusted in their own power or in political alliances rather than trusting in God to lead them to victory (Jer. 9:23;

Amos 2:13-16; Hos. 7:11). This, along with other apostasy led to the turning of the tables so that Yahweh's war was against Israel rather than for her (Jer. 5:29-31; Hosea 5).

The Prophetic and Apocalyptic View of Holy War

The prophets supported Holy War ideology, but often stressed it as a judgment on sinful Israel (Is. 5:26-30; Ezekiel 5) or judgment on other nations for oppressing Israel (Jer. 46:10; Obadiah 10-14) or for having too much pride in their own power (Is. 16:5-7) or a lack of humanity (Jer. 51:25-26; Amos 1:13-14). On the other hand, the prophets also proclaimed that Yahweh as Warrior King would deliver His people (Isaiah 45). Trust was to be placed in Yahweh alone for deliverance (Is. 30:1-5).

It was noted earlier that the prophets were involved in conveying God's will for Holy War. At times they supported the king in military adventures (1 Kings 20:22-25), but they would also oppose the king for not following God's will in Holy War (Is. 7:17-25). A distinction is also made between the true prophet who spoke God's will and the false prophets who spoke only what the king wanted to hear (1 Kings 22; Jeremiah 28).

At times, the prophets applied Holy War motifs to the Final Judgment (Is. 30:29-33; Zech. 12:1-9 and chapter 14). There is debate over the origins of the prophetic use of "the Day of the Lord" and Gentile Oracles, but it seems likely that Holy War ideology had some influence on this usage.²⁴

Apocalyptic thought also saw in war a sign of the end of the age and testing of faith.

²⁴Hummel, pp. 197 and 312.

Since the course of history is a record of increasing degeneration and decadence (Dan. 2:31-45), wars will increase in intensity, brutality, and destructiveness, and an uncontrolled outburst of warfare is a sign of the imminent end of the age (Dan. 8:23-26 . . .). The demonic powers, whether human or divine, take special delight in directing their attacks against the people of God (Dan. 7:24-25; 8:23 . . .). Thus war and persecution test the faith and endurance of the covenant community.²⁵

The most characteristic apocalyptic teaching about war is that when God acts to assert his final control over the cosmos, the people of God will march under the Messiah of the line of David against the forces of the pagan world and their demonic masters (Dan.5:10-12;Ezekiel 38-39).

Holy War themes continued to be used in the intertestamental apocalyptic writings. In the Book of Enoch there are clear pictures of Yahweh and His hosts as the destroying army (see 1:9). "The purpose of the coming of God and his hosts is no longer historical victory in a particular battle with one of Israel's foes, but the final judgment and destruction of the wicked and vindication of the righteous."²⁶

The heavenly army plays a minor role in 2 Maccabees. For example, the divine army is seen in the sky over Jerusalem (5:1-4); the enemy sees divine warriors with their arrows and thunderbolts which causes them to panic (10:27); and an angel leads Judas Maccabaeus and his army as a white horseman (11:6-12).

The War Scroll from Qumran, which recounts the final war between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness, is explicit in Holy War terminology: the tribes are summoned to battle as the people of God; the camp undergoes ritual purification; there is a war cry (t^eru'ah); and

²⁵L. E. Toombs, "Wars, ideas of," IDB, 4:800.

²⁶Miller, p. 142.

the panic (m^ehumah) of God strikes the enemy, and so forth.²⁷ The Sons of Light are fighting side by side with God and His angels (see 1QM 1:9-11; Col. xii 3-8). "The purpose of this apocalyptic encounter is, as in days of old, the defeat of the wicked, the redemption of Israel, and the establishment of God's kingship and kingdom forever."²⁸

The New Testament View of War

The focus of this thesis is a survey of studies on Holy War in the Old Testament, but a brief look at the unity of the Old and New Testament on Holy War ideology will be helpful. There are also differences between the testaments, the foremost of which is the shift from the Old Testament theocracy to the New Testament division of the kingdoms of the Right and Left Hand of God.

Jesus rejects the earthly Messianic role put on Him by His followers (Matt. 4:8-10; 26:51-54). However, Jesus does point out that He had the power to be an earthly Messiah if He had so desired (Matt. 26:53). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus presents an ethic opposed to war. This, however, is not a political manifesto, but, rather, eschatological Christian ethics in the Kingdom of Grace/Glory.

Holy War in the New Testament is an eschatological/spiritual struggle versus sin and Satan (1 Cor. 14:8; 2 Cor. 10:3-4; 1 Tim. 1:18-19; Eph. 6:10-17). New Testament apocalyptic passages follow Old Testament apocalyptic views of Holy War. It is a sign of the end of the age (Matt. 24:6-8; Mark 13:7-8), and it puts faith to the test (Matt.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 144

²⁸ Ibid.,

24:9-28).²⁹ Holy War typology is climaxed in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rev. 16:14-16; 20:7-9). (Note that while Holy War in the New Testament can be called "spiritualized" the physical reality of Christ's death and resurrection should caution one from forgetting the physical aspect of Holy War, even as we experience it now and will celebrate the final victory via our physical resurrection). We, too, participate in this Holy War through our Baptism into the death and resurrection of Christ (Romans 6).

Physical warfare is in the realm of the State (Romans 13). Whereas the Church Militant in the Old Testament was both Church and State, in the New Testament era, we live in two separate kingdoms. We must distinguish between our responsibilities as citizens of the kingdom of the Left Hand (see Rom. 13) and our responsibilities as citizens of the Kingdom of the Right Hand (see Matt. 5-7), as well as distinguishing those passages that speak of final judgment in terms of warfare (for example, Revelation, passim; 1 Cor. 15:50-55).

²⁹ Robert Doran, "Luke 20:18: A Warrior's Boast?" Catholic Biblical Quarterly 45 (January 1983):61-67. (I cannot agree with his ideas on composition of the text, but he does point out that Luke may have expressed the theme of Holy War in the Last Days, and that Luke 20:18 and Matt. 21:44 may reflect the theme of Christ as a Warrior.)

CHAPTER II

RECENT CRITICAL SCHOLARSHIP ON HOLY WAR IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The historical-critical method involves certain presuppositions which also influence critical studies of Holy War in the Old Testament. In general, these presuppositions are that the Bible merely contains the Word of God, the Bible is a human book and should be treated like any other human book, Israel's religion is the result of an evolution of thought, and anything supernatural is denied.

Some specific theories of critical scholars that are involved in the recent studies on Holy War are: 1. Source criticism and the documentary hypothesis posit that the "historical" material of Early Israel was not put together until exilic or post-exilic times.¹ There are traces of early material, but it is obviously "spiritualized"² and "re-worked"³ by a later redactor. Millard C. Lind, speaking of material from Genesis, states, "we do not concern ourselves so much with what may have been the historical roots of these materials as with the use to which

¹Recent critical study tends to date material earlier, but many of the studies covered in this paper follow this as a general rule.

²Gerhard von Rad, Studies in Deuteronomy, 4th ed. (London: SCM Press, 1963), p. 45.

³A. Glock, "Warfare in Mari and Early Israel" (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1968, University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, MI), p. 190.

they were put by the various redactors";⁴ 2. The theories of A. Alt⁵ and M. Noth⁶ on the amphictyonic nature of Early Israel are central to many of the studies.⁷ Noth posited a pre-state institution with the name Israel, namely, the sacred confederation of twelve tribes around a common central sanctuary. S. Mowinckel and others suggest this confederation consisted of ten tribes at the time of the judges;⁸ 3. The Conquest did not take place as history records. Three different approaches are suggested to the Conquest material: A. The Bible contains etiological tales that reflect little, if any, history. The Conquest was a relatively peaceful settlement as suggested by Judges 1;⁹ B. The Conquest involved violence as evidenced by the Book of Joshua and archeological discoveries;¹⁰ C. The violence of the Conquest was mitigated

⁴ Millard C. Lind, Yahweh is a Warrior (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1980), p. 41.

⁵ A. Alt, "The Formation of the Israelite State in Palestine" (1930) cited by R. Smend, Yahweh War & Tribal Confederation (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), p. 11.

⁶ M. Noth, The History of Israel, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960).

⁷ This was almost universally accepted but now has come under sharp attack. See H. Hummel, The Word Becoming Flesh (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), p. 112.

⁸ S. Mowinckel, "Von Ugarit nach Qumran," Bethefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 77 (1958):137. Cited by Smend, p. 15.

⁹ Thus Alt, von Rad and Noth, compare Lind, p. 190, n. 1.

¹⁰ See John Bright, A History of Israel, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), pp. 127-30.

by a "peasant revolt" versus feudal lords touched off by the invasion of the Yahwists.¹¹

Friedrich Schwally¹² is credited with the origin of the phrase "holy war." He arranged the Biblical material under eight rubrics which emphasized the ritual or cultic view of warfare in Israel.¹³ Schwally used considerable comparative material with frequent reference to Arab parallels.¹⁴ Implicit in his work is "the view that Israel is 'primitive,' that warfare is 'ritual,' and therefore 'holy.'"¹⁵ The Israelite viewpoint of warfare, according to Schwally, was a result of late Judaic historical writing which exaggerated the importance of faith and depreciated the human action for the purpose of edification (that is, an expression of pietistic thought).¹⁶

Johannes Pedersen¹⁷ also ascribed Israel's uniqueness to later interpretation. Pedersen focused on the psychic aspects of Holy War in

¹¹See George E. Mendenhall, "The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine," The Biblical Archaeologist, 25 (1962):74. Also Norman K. Gottwald, The Tribes of Yahweh: a Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250-1050 B.C.E. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), pp. 191-233. Also A. Glock, pp. 206-209.

¹²Friedrich Schwally, Der heilige Krieg im alten Israel (Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Theodor Weicher, 1901).

¹³Ibid., Cited by Glock, p. 4.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 11 and passim. Cited by Glock, p. 4.

¹⁵Glock, p. 5.

¹⁶Schwally, p. 27-28. Cited by Lind, p. 24.

¹⁷J. Pedersen, Israel, Its Life and Culture, vols. 3 and 4 (London: Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, 1947; first published in Danish, 1934), pp. 1-32.

Israel. All ancient peoples, according to Pedersen, were more concerned with the "proper psychic force" behind those who used weapons in warfare than with mere weapons alone.¹⁸ A later narrator, by a very slight change, shifted the psychic action of Israelite warfare to a position of independent magical agencies. Thus, that which merely psyched up the warrior was made to appear as a miraculous means of victory in themselves.¹⁹

Gerhard von Rad's book, Der Heilige Krieg im alten Israel,²⁰ is perhaps the best known work on Holy War in the Old Testament. Von Rad built on the foundation of tradition criticism in developing his Old Testament theology. He insisted that one can only write a theology of each individual tradition in the Old Testament by itself, without any possibility of synthesizing them into a Biblical theology. He is also quite skeptical of the historicity of these "traditions."²¹

Von Rad's form-critical study of the Hexateuch concluded that Deuteronomy 6:20-24; 26:5b-9; and Joshua 24:2b-13 represents the genre of "the small historical credo," which is "already a Hexateuch in miniature," which was formulated into the Yahwist's account of Israel's early history by the processes of insertion, expansion and addition of various traditions.²² The deuteronomic tradition, according to von Rad, had its

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 18. Cited by Lind, p. 25.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 21. Cited by Lind, p. 25.

²⁰ G. von Rad, Der heilige Krieg im alten Israel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1952). See J. Crenshaw, Gerhard von Rad (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1978, pp. 42-52, for summary of this work.

²¹ Hummel, p. 27.

²² G. von Rad, "The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch," in The Problem of the Hexateuch, trans. E. W. Trueman Dicken (New York:

source in a proposed "covenant renewal festival" originally celebrated in amphictyonic times (the period of the "Judges") in the sanctuary at Shechem. This liturgy was fused with one from a similar festival at Gilgal, which allegedly featured the Exodus and the Conquest, to form our present Pentateuch.²³

In his book on Holy War, von Rad stresses that the Old Testament sources have been reworked by tradition and theology, but he asserts that there is no alternative than to deal with the Hebrew text (tradition) as it is.²⁴ After identifying thirteen features of Holy War, von Rad points out that this was a cultic event (that is, surrounded with conventional rites and conceptions).²⁵ He defines "cultic" not simply as "religious festivals," but the collective experience of the rule of Yahweh in warfare.²⁶ According to von Rad, "the emergence of the inclusive sacred alliance is the foremost characteristic of such a war, . . . these wars present themselves . . . in principle as a reaction of the amphictyony."²⁷

War was "holy," says von Rad, when men of war had faith in Yahweh. In fact, Holy War ideology is seen as the basis for Israel's faith.²⁸

McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1966), pp. 1-78. Cited by Patrick Miller, The Divine Warrior in Early Israel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 166 and 261.

²³Hummel, p. 47.

²⁴von Rad, Der heilige Krieg, pp. 33-39, 48, 56-70.

²⁵Ibid., p. 14. ²⁶Ibid., p. 31. ²⁷Ibid., p. 25-26.

²⁸von Rad, Studies in Deuteronomy, p. 48.

As was noted above, von Rad, along with Alt and Noth, regard the earliest period in Israel as one of peaceful penetration of the mountains and farmlands of Canaan by unarmed shepherd nomads who could hardly have made serious war against the well-defended Canaanite city-states.²⁹ The classical period of Holy War was that of the Judges.³⁰ Von Rad saw Holy War as entirely defensive, and he distinguished between Holy War and secular warfare (derek hol).³¹

The end of Holy War as an institution, according to von Rad, came soon after the formation of the state.

From then onwards the wars were no longer waged under a charismatic leader but, in Judah, under an hereditary king, and they were fought by him at the head of an army which became more and more mercenary in character, a new development in Israel. . . . The old wars had been waged by the militias of the tribes raised from levies of the free citizens possessed of property. None the less, we see the concept of the Holy War still thoroughly alive in the time of David. But after that the old sacral form of warfare apparently broke down under the impact of rational and tactical, that is, secular considerations.³²

Von Rad emphasized the influence of wisdom literature in the "enlightenment" of Solomon on the "re-interpretation" of Holy War.³³ Isaiah's proclamation that Judah was not to rely upon Egypt for armaments was based upon the prophet's naive assumption that post-Solomonic re-interpretation of Holy War as absolute miracle was an historical picture of Holy War itself.³⁴

²⁹ von Rad, Der heilig Krieg, p. 16-17.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 28, n. 45.

³¹ von Rad, Studies in Deuteronomy, p. 46-47.

³² Ibid., p. 46.

³³ von Rad, Der heilig Krieg, pp. 33-39.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 56-70.

The prophets generally spiritualized the worn-out institution of Holy War, in von Rad's opinion, seeing prophecy itself as the legal successor to the ancient institution, and themselves as the executors of the tradition.³⁵ Israel's Holy War was again institutionalized in the time of Josiah, but came to a quick end with the death of Josiah at Megiddo. This, along with the catastrophes of 598 and 587 B.C. led to a great new spiritualization of Holy War with the Deuteronomic rewriting of history and the Book of Chronicles.³⁶ Von Rad proposes that the prophetic theme of "Day of Yahweh" allegedly arose in a Holy War context.³⁷

Rudolf Smend takes issue with von Rad's theory that the "war of Yahweh" is an event of the amphictyony. Smend attempts to prove that these wars were fought quite independently of the Twelve Tribe League, which he suggests did not come into existence until the wars against the Philistines or, perhaps, the Ammonite war of Saul.³⁸

The war theme in Israel, according to Smend, began at the Exodus. Only the Rachel tribes (or perhaps just the tribe of Joseph) participated in the Exodus. War was associated with the Yahwists and was a primary experience in which Israel learned to know Yahweh.³⁹

The military activity of Early Israel consisted of the ad hoc collaboration of two or more tribes in self-defense.⁴⁰ The fact that

³⁵ Ibid., p. 67. ³⁶ Ibid., p. 79.

³⁷ Gerhard von Rad, "The Origin of the Concept of the Day of Yahweh," Journal of Semitic Studies 4 (April 1959):97-108.

³⁸ Smend, p. 23-24. ³⁹ Ibid., pp. 98-119. ⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 31.

this military activity was sometimes attributed to the whole of Israel is due, according to Smend, to what Martin Buber called the "amphictyonic will": that is, "the will to refer the deed of the smaller community to the larger community to demonstrate the Israel in action to the potential Israel, in order that the potential Israel will one day become an Israel of action."⁴¹

Smend argues that if "Yahweh wars" were a function of the amphictyony and a requirement for membership in the league, the league itself would commission a leader ("judge"). The "Judge," however, was not responsible to the amphictyony but to his individual tribe.⁴²

According to Smend, there was not a strong centralized political organization in Early Israel. He argues that the ark of the covenant did not become a central sanctuary for all of the tribes of Israel until the eleventh century.⁴³

Smend is careful to point out that the ideas he presents in his book are only conjecture and of a hypothetical nature. One can only surmise and prove little, says Smend, because we have little, if any, authentic sources.⁴⁴

Manfred Weippert⁴⁵ used von Rad's methodology to analyze the practice of Holy war in other Ancient Near Eastern states. He found that the features identified by von Rad were not unique to Israel. Thus, he

⁴¹Ibid., p. 18. ⁴²Ibid., pp. 50-75. ⁴³Ibid., pp. 76-97.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 12-13. Compare p. 119.

⁴⁵Manfred Weippert, "'Heiliger Krieg' in Israel und Assyrien: Kritische Anmerkungen zu Gerhard von Rads Konzept des 'Heiligen Krieges im alten Israel,'" Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 84 (1972):460-93.

opposed von Rad's idea of a distinctively Israelite special "sacral institution" (that is, Holy War) of the "amphictyony,"⁴⁶

Patrick Miller⁴⁷ shows the parallels of Israel's concept of Holy War with those in Syro-Palestinian religious thought. He stresses the importance of the use of ex-mythological imagery.⁴⁸ According to Miller, the divine warrior image and its content are central in Old Testament theology.⁴⁹

Albert Glock⁵⁰ stresses the importance of comparative studies in dealing with the concept of Holy War in Early Israel. He deals specifically with eighteenth century B.C. Mari. He points out von Rad's failure to use sources from the Bronze Age outside of the Old Testament.⁵¹ Israel was not unique in its conception of Holy War, according to Glock.⁵²

Millard C. Lind⁵³ covers the subject of Holy War from a Mennonite pacifist viewpoint. He stresses the uniqueness of Israel as compared to other Ancient nations in emphasizing God's action and minimizing man's action. According to Lind, this distinctive view in Israel was based on the historical experience of the Exodus, rather than on later theologizing.⁵⁴

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 485 and 493. See Chapter three of this thesis for more details on Weippert's study.

⁴⁷ P. Miller, The Divine Warrior.

⁴⁸ See Chapter four of this thesis for more detail.

⁴⁹ Miller, p. 173. ⁵⁰ A. Glock, "Warfare," ⁵¹ Ibid., p. 7.

⁵² See Chapter three of this thesis for more detail.

⁵³ M. Lind, p. 41. ⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 30-34.

The theology of "Yahweh as Warrior" in ancient Israel had three main emphases, according to Lind:⁵⁵

1. Yahweh, as a God of War, fought for His people by miracle, not by sword and spear. Yahweh delivered His people from Egypt by prophetic leader, not a warrior; by a nature miracle, not human fighting. This event provides the fundamental paradigm for Israel's Holy War.
2. This method of Yahweh's fighting affected Israel's "theo-political" structure in a fundamental way. The exodus event was the basis for Israel's "prophetic" political structure as opposed to the "Enlil" (i.e. associated with coercive political power) power of divinity seen in the conventional Near Eastern power base and kingship.⁵⁶
3. Yahweh's warfare was directed not only against Israel's enemies, but, at times, against Israel herself (when she became like her neighbors), not by miracle, but by enemy nations.

Israel's distinctive theology of warfare, therefore, was that obedience to Yahweh's Word and trust in His miracle are alone decisive. Warfare was transformed from a manipulation of power to a prophetic act and patient waiting upon Yahweh's deliverance. This is fulfilled in Christ, whose pacifist ways are not in contrast to the Old Testament, but are right in line with the teaching that God's kingdom comes through miraculous intervention, not by human action.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 23-34.

⁵⁶ See Ibid., pp. 62-64.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 171-74.

CHAPTER III

INTERPRETATION OF ARCHEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Albert E. Glock, in his Ph.D. dissertation, "Warfare in Mari and Early Israel," emphasizes that care must be taken with comparative studies. Oversimplification by the elimination of complex evidence or use of uncertain material can easily distort comparative studies. Comparative studies should illumine the results of diffusion and adaptation between two or more societies. Glock bases his study on the assumptions that thorough understanding of the cultures being compared must precede comparison, and that the most powerful key available to scholarship to unlock the meaning of religious texts, in this case, Old Testament sources bearing on warfare in Early Israel,¹ is a systematic study of the background and roots of ancient world realities bearing on warfare as they can be illumined by textual and archeological evidence.²

Mari

Glock did extensive research at the University of Michigan under Prof. George E. Mendenhall comparing warfare as a socio-political function in eighteenth century B.C. Mesopotamia (specifically Mari) and

¹Note he considers Biblical sources as secondary for the historian because they are extended and often reworked literary traditions thoroughly committed to refined theological positions. Albert E. Glock, "Warfare in Mari and Early Israel" (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1968, University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, MI), p. 190.

²Ibid., pp. 12-14.

thirteenth to eleventh century B.C. Palestine (Early Israel). He concludes that Early Israel was an "archaic society" in that she deliberately rejected the sophisticated military machinery of the Canaanites on the grounds that it required and implied a caste system and city-state social and political structure that was contrary to the rule of Yahweh.³ As a "mosaic of archaic social institutions," Israel shows a strong continuity with the village-pastoralists traditions seen in eighteenth century Mari.⁴

A vast amount of archeological and textual information available on the Amorite kingdom centered in Mari makes it the best known Mesopotamian principality of the 2nd millenium B.C. (Middle Bronze Age). Since its discovery in 1934, many volumes of cuneiform texts have been published from the archives at Mari which contain more than 20,000 tablets in Old Babylonian cuneiform texts, including diplomatic correspondence and administrative dockets, as well as about a dozen historical inscriptions in monumental script.⁵

The following "military traditions"⁶ in Mari were identified by Glock:⁷

1. A strong central government in Mari was equipped to organize and administer the heterogeneous social composite that was the Mari army on an expedition.

³Ibid., p. 216. ⁴Ibid., p. 189. ⁵Ibid., p. 22-23.

⁶See Ibid., p. 184. Glock defines "military tradition" as "specialized actions by society, approved, adopted, and fixed by constant use, a product of interaction with the demands of defense and offense imposed by an enemy."

⁷Ibid., pp. 184-88.

2. The kingdom of Mari assured itself of the political loyalty of large elements in the population by allotting tracts of land to men willing to swear fealty to the king and respond to the call to arms.
3. Mari possessed no large standing army. A conglomerate army was enlisted from the villages for temporary service.
4. The means of warfare available to the Marian army were limited.
5. Styles of defense of persons and populations were rational responses to means and techniques of offensive warfare.
6. Communication with human and divine lords was essential and well-developed. There was a profound conviction that no military action could succeed unless its plan had the prior approval of the gods.
7. Military activity reflected formal legal relations of treaties:
 - a. The Mari government guaranteed military assistance to vassals under attack.
 - b. Vassals were required to provide the suzerain with troops for defense of the realm or for military expedition.
 - c. Occasionally, formal treaties formed temporary allies for limited military objectives.
 - d. Conflicts between vassals were reprimanded or punished by the suzerain.
 - e. Kings bonded by parity treaties lent troops to each other for limited periods.
 - f. If a people or region would not accept the treaty (salimum) peacefully, the only alternative was to capture the people or city.⁸
8. The sources indicate that the correspondents believed that the gods were involved in military events, both by the protective presence of the deity as well as by direct intervention.

In comparing Early Israel with eighteenth century Mari, Glock points out differences, non-military parallels, minor military parallels and major military parallels. The differences between Early Israel and Mari include terrain and combat tactics. Mari was situated on a vast plain, while Israel occupied the forested hills of Palestine. This difference in geography affected communications, mobility, agriculture,

⁸ Ibid., p. 48-49.

political unity and warfare. As a result, Israel utilized surprise maneuvers at close range, ambush attacks and pursuit and fighting in the open as opposed to the seige tactics common in Mari. The trumpet was used in Israel for communication in battle rather than messengers on foot, also as a probable result of the rough terrain.⁹

Non-military parallels mentioned by Glock include the use of Amorite personal names and the use of kinship terminology for political relationships.¹⁰ There was also a similarity of social organization.¹¹

Glock lists seven minor military parallels:¹²

1. Organization. Both in Mari and Israel the major social-military group was divided into four units. The basic unit for the military in Mari was 2,000 or 1,000 composed of units of 200 each compared to units of 1,000 and 100 in Israel. The smallest unit for both was 10.
2. Personnel. Mari's behrum, "elite soldier," and Early Israel's 'āš bāḥōr, "chosen man," have both a similarity of function and an etymological equivalence.
3. Divination. In both cultures divination in one form or another determined what action should be taken in battle. In both Mari and Early Israel diviners accompanied the army into battle.
4. Recruitment, Folk Militia. Both Mari and Early Israel had no standing army. Military muster was made with the majority of troops coming from tribes living in villages. The response was often slow and inadequate with desertion common.
5. Recruitment, Emergency Muster. A form of ritual curse (parading of decapitated or severed bodies to stimulate muster for battle) is apparent in both Early Israel and Mari.

⁹Ibid., p. 191

¹⁰Note that Glock points out that Israel's relationship is not that of kin, which was imposed at a later date. Ibid., p. 193.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 192-95. See also p. 41.

¹²Ibid., pp. 195-98.

6. Weapons. It is quite possible that the sling represents a unique point of contact between Mari and Early Israel.
7. Transportation. In neither Mari nor Early Israel did the horse, ass, or drawn wagon serve military purposes in battle, except to bear supplies.

Three major military parallels are discussed by Glock:¹³

1. Enlistment. There is a connection between the forms of census in the two societies. The tebibtum, literally, "the purification," evidenced only at Mari and Chager Bazar, was a formal ceremony in the villages of the kingdom of Samsi-Adad, authorized by the central government and administered by the districts in which the citizens pledged their allegiance to the crown. Its purposes included providing an up-to-date list of available military manpower and assuring the crown of the loyalty of the population by granting plots of land owned, theoretically at least, by the king. The list compiled was very detailed. A ritual cleansing was also included.

The tebibtum is related to the use in early Israel of the root PQD in the Qal and intensive stems when the sense is "to muster." This term in this meaning is most prominent in the so-called census lists of Numbers 1-4 and 26. The tebibtum involved a detailed census list, while Numbers 1 and 26 are quota lists of available military units, but the number of troops and their organization as recorded in Numbers are remarkably similar to the numbers of troops and organization requested by Samsi-Adad of a viceregent in Mari. Yahweh's actions in Numbers as Ruler of Israel in providing a quota list for a call to arms by Yahweh Himself,

¹³ Ibid., pp. 199-213.

and Yahweh Himself keeping "a book of the living" is similar to the ruler's actions in Mari's tebibtum.

Two further points of contact between the forms of census in the two societies may be pointed out. In both, the entire community assembled for the "numbering," and the count was taken "head by head." Also, recent studies have shown a common underlying meaning between the root PQD in Israel and the synonym nasa'ros in the Mari texts of "to take notice, etc." Thus, as Yahweh identifies the faithful and marks them for special favor by this "head by head" count, so the king of Mari would grant a plot of land as a reward for loyal support of his kingship.

2. Compensation: Land Possession. Both tebibtum in Mari and census in Early Israel are closely related to land distribution. Both take place in a warfare setting.¹⁴ Only those who went to war received land. The sequence of events was: land grant - warfare - land use.

Israel's continuity with Mari is reinforced by their discontinuity with Canaanite land tenure practices (see 1 Samuel 8) where land was used as a means of elevating some elements in society and degrading others.¹⁵ In Israel this was interpreted as subversion of the claims of Yahweh to possession of the land. Similarly in both Mari and Ugarit the king held theological title to all real estate of the realm.

3. Compensation: Royal Reward. There is a parallel between the asakkum (taboo booty set aside for the king) in Mari and the cherem in

¹⁴Glock sees patriarchal promise and "inheritance" as later Deuteronomistic theological interpretation. Ibid., p. 203-204.

¹⁵Glock states that it is a good hypothesis that most of early Israel was derived from the landless hupsu and habiru classes. Ibid., p. 206.

early Israel. The asakkum was set aside by special proclamation for deity or king. To infringe upon the asakkum meant one would become cursed, and such infringement was severely punished.

In Israel, however, cherem receives a more intense religious development. In Israel, cherem clearly exceeded the semantic range of asakkum in Mari. Cherem in Israel includes the declaration of the "death penalty" on human spoil. This is a result of Israel's view of Yahweh's Rulership, Who alone had authority to declare war and to Whom the spoil of victory belonged.¹⁶ The decision to destroy the Canaanites of the hill country in order to defend Israel from a subtle and potent enemy is also parallel to the treaty situation in Mari where the king is sworn to vindicate his people and preserve their freedom.¹⁷

The Moabite Stone

The Moabite Stone is a stela discovered at Dhiban in Transjordan around 1868. It contains an inscription of Mesha, king of Moab, in which he recounts his victory over Israel.

This inscription provides further evidence that the custom of cherem was practiced outside of Israel. Lines 16-18 of the Moabite Stone read:

"So I went by night and fought against it from the break of dawn until noon, taking it and slaying all, seven thousand men, boys, women, girls and maid-servants, for I had devoted them to destruction for (the god) Ashtar-Chemosh."¹⁸

¹⁶ Glock connects all of this with the political situation and the initial zeal of the peasant rebels, which later died down so that this herem disappears after Joshua. Ibid., p. 208-209.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 214-16.

¹⁸ I. B. Pritchard, ed., Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament, 3rd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p.320.

Other parallels to Holy War in Israel include the fact that Mesha attributes victory to Chemosh: "I reigned after my father,--(who) made this high place for Chemosh in Quarhoh (. . .) because he saved me from all the kings and caused me to triumph over all my adversaries." (lines 3-5)¹⁹ (see Judges 11:24). Also, just as the command for Holy War in Israel came from Yahweh (Ex. 17:16, and so forth), Chemosh gives Mesha the command to attack Israel (line 14) and Hauronen (line 32).²⁰

Norman Gottwald points out that the Moabite parallel argues against the interpretation that the parallels of Biblical cherem and religious taboo at Mari are the result of the fact that holy war in both societies are derived from pastoral nomadic military organizations.²¹

"At the time of the Moabite sacral massacre of the Israelites, Moab was a monarchy with a largely sedentary populace."²²

Other Parallels

Manfred Weippert²³ analyzed the practice and ideology of holy war in ancient Near East states using the methodology Gerhard von Rad had applied to Israel. Cuneiform material from Mari was analyzed, as well as other literature primarily from the first millenium B.C.²⁴

¹⁹Ibid. ²⁰Ibid., p. 320-21.

²¹Gottwald mentions Schwally and von Rad in connection with this view. N. K. Gottwald, "War, Holy," Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible Supplementary Volume (Nashville: 1976), p. 492. Compare Glock p. 189.

²²Gottwald, "War, Holy," p. 492.

²³Manfred Weippert, "'Heiliger Krieg' in Israel und Assyrien: Kritische Anmerkungen zu Gerhard von Rads Konzept des 'Heiliger Krieges im alten Israel,'" Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 84 (1972):460-93.

²⁴Ibid., p. 467.

All but two of von Rad's thirteen features of Israelite Holy War were identified by Weippert in Eastern and Mediterranean states. (The two not identified were the use of a ram's horn for a call to arms and the consecration of weapons.) Thus, Weippert says that "Yahweh Wars" are not unique to old Israel, but, rather, are paralleled by "Ashur Wars" and "Ishtar Wars" in Oriental war practices as well as classical warfare practices and ideology in Greece and Rome.²⁵

The essential difference in Israel's warfare, according to Weippert, is involved with Kingship. Israel did not have the developed kingship of other ancient Near Eastern states. Israel's kings, like the Assyrian rulers, were seen as the vicarius dei and vassal of divinity, but Yahweh was a "God of the people." Weippert points out that Yahweh's concern for the common people rather than just the elite is seen in the texts that deal with the occupation and cultivation of the land.²⁶

According to Weippert, charismatic leadership in warfare was not unique to ancient Israel. Similarities are cited in Arab bedouin cultures of "a later day."²⁷

Weippert also disagrees with von Rad's theory that attributing victory to God's action alone, rather than to the action of the army, was a later theological interpretation of Holy War. Rather, this was a common ancient Near Eastern formula for saying that the troops had won.²⁸

²⁵ Ibid., p. 485.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 488.

²⁷ "jungst vergangener Tage" Ibid., p. 492.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 482-83.

Contrary to von Rad's findings,²⁹ Weippert was unable to find any distinction between "secular war" and "holy war" in either ancient Near Eastern texts or the Old Testament.³⁰ Neither was he able to identify a distinction in ideological-theological treatment of defensive and offensive wars in Neo-Assyria or in the Old Testament.³¹

Peter Craigie,³² focusing on material from the thirteenth to sixth centuries B.C., identifies the following religious aspects of warfare in ancient Mesopotamia (Babylon and Assyria):³³

1. Pre-battle aspects:

Before departing for war, a number of religious activities were pursued which had the principal aim of seeking to determine beforehand the outcome of the battle. The king would consult omens to discover whether the conditions were favorable for battle; the omens would be interpreted for him by barû - priests (diviners) or by royal astrologers. . . . The king would [also] endeavor to receive oracles from the gods. . . . The oracles would be delivered to the king by oracular priests or priestesses The king might also offer prayers before the battle. . . . When these various preliminary activities had been completed, the king and his armies would depart for war. The departure itself was given religious significance, for the king would declare as he left the city that his departure was "at the order of (the god) Ashur."

2. In battle aspects:³⁴

The gods themselves are described as participating in the fighting and the Assyrian army is referred to as the army of the god Ashur. . . . The presence of the gods in battle was symbolized

²⁹See Gerhard von Rad, Studies in Deuteronomy (London: SCM Press, 1953), p. 46f.

³⁰Weippert, p. 490.

³¹Ibid., p. 492.

³²Peter C. Craigie, The Problem of War in the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978).

³³Ibid., p. 118-19.

³⁴Craigie points out the difficulty of determining the facts of battles due to the semi-factual, semi-reflective nature of poetic descriptions of battle. Ibid., p. 118.

visually by the standards and flags carried by the armies and also by the presence of priests and diviners who represented the gods physically. In particular, the influence of the baru - priests was so great that they accompanied the king into battle and held a great deal of military authority.³⁵

3. Post-battle aspects:

After the battle, when victory had been won, military success was attributed to Ashur and other gods who had given aid during the fighting. . . . According to the historical texts, the king was in no way diffident about the greatness of his military triumphs, and yet he also expressed his subservience to and dependence on the gods for final victory. The acknowledgment of divine aid was given formal expression in the offering of sacrifices to the gods on the return from battle. In addition to the offering of sacrifices, a monument might be set up to commemorate the victory.

Craigie points out that this religious dimension is further clarified by the Assyrians' attitudes toward their enemies:

The enemies are criticized for being self-confident and for forgetting the superior might of the Assyrian gods; implicit in this type of criticism may be a reference to a broken treaty. . . .³⁶

The ideological or theological base for warfare in Babylon is based in the Warrior Marduk's military victory over Chaos to establish a cosmic state ruled by the gods.³⁷ In Assyria, Ashur replaces Marduk as national champion. Assyria, however, shows a militaristic spirit distinct from other Mesopotamian cultures.³⁸

Craigie concludes that there are many similarities and some differences between Israel and the common ancient Near Eastern practice of

³⁵ See A. Hadler, Associations of Cult Prophets Among the Ancient Semites (Uppsala, 1945), pp. 65-66. Cited in Craigie, p. 119.

³⁶ Craigie, p. 119.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 120. See Enuma Elish in Pritchard., pp. 60-72.

³⁸ Craigie, p. 120-21.

warfare. He sees Israel as unique, however, in the vision of peace and anticipation of the redemption of all mankind which emerged from the disastrous defeat of the Hebrew people in war.³⁹

Patrick Miller, following the studies of Frank Cross, studied the parallels in extra-Biblical materials from Syria-Palestine, specifically the Ugaritic texts and the work of Philo Byblius.⁴⁰ Miller states:

. . . it was on Syro-Palestinian soil that Israel's history and religion were cultivated, and that environment had an inevitable influence upon her, both by Israel's reaction against and her accommodation to the phenomena which she met in her surroundings.⁴¹

He sees definite parallels in the divine warrior motif and pattern (for example, the Israelite notions of a divine assembly, the divine warrior, and the chaos battle was quite similar to surrounding cultures, particularly Canaan and Mesopotamia).⁴²

Archeological evidence can be interpreted in many different ways, as is evident from the disparate views presented in this chapter. Archeology helps us better understand the Bible by providing information about the historical and cultural context of the original audience. In a sense, also, archeology has often shown the Bible to be correct in disputed issues. However, archeological discoveries have also been the basis for many far-out "critical" theories. It must be remembered that the Bible is not subject to "proof" by scientific research (although such proof can and should

³⁹Ibid., p. 122.

⁴⁰Patrick D. Miller, Jr., The Divine Warrior in Early Israel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973).

⁴¹Ibid., p. 8-9.

⁴²Ibid., p. 164. See Chapter five for details.

be presented). The Bible is a divine/human book telling the story of God working among unpredictable human beings, and, like its human subjects, it is unpredictable and not strictly subject to scientific laws and research. Scripture is also God's divine Word which is accepted through faith worked by the Holy Spirit, not through scientific "proof."

Just as the human subjects of the Bible are unpredictable, so are the human interpreters of bare archeological facts. In fact, it is possible to have as many different interpretations as there are interpreters. Each of the interpretations presented in this chapter focus on particular materials and parallels relevant to their individual ideas and purposes, depending on the point they are trying to make.

Comparative religion studies have, at times, fallen into the trap of excessive enthusiasm over the result of new archeological discoveries leading to a "pan-Babylonianism" or "pan-Ugaritism," and so forth, failing to see the uniqueness of Israel, externally as well as theologically.⁴³ The comparisons presented in this chapter do point out some uniqueness in Israel, but their focus, admittedly, is on the apparent parallels. The uniqueness of Israel's God and His relationship with and Self-revelation to His people is a vital aspect in proper interpretation of archeological discoveries relating to comparative religion studies.⁴⁴

⁴³ H. Hummel, The Word Becoming Flesh, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), p. 25.

⁴⁴ See evaluation in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

CHAPTER IV

THE USE OF EX-MYTHOLOGICAL IMAGERY

Frank Cross¹ did pioneer work in relating the Biblical record to parallels from Canaanite mythology. Patrick Miller, Jr.,² studying under Cross, focused his doctoral dissertation upon the mythological background of Holy War in ancient Israel. Miller contends that the role of divine or cosmic hosts of Yahweh was a far more significant factor in the imagery of divine warfare than is usually recognized. He focuses his study of Scripture on "the corpus of early poetry as that has been worked out and defined particularly in the studies of W. F. Albright, F. M. Cross, and D. N. Freedman."³ Israel's history and religion were inevitably influenced by her Syro-Palestinian environment, both by her reaction against and her accommodation to the phenomena which she met in her surroundings.⁴

The Chaos Battle

The Ba'al epic is primary to Miller's study "because it furnishes the most information concerning Canaanite conceptions of . . . divine

¹Frank Moore Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973).

²Patrick D. Miller, Jr., The Divine Warrior in Early Israel, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973).

³Ibid., p. 5.

⁴Ibid., p. 8-9.

warfare--war among the gods and their hosts and the participation of these cosmic forces in human battles, both aspects being derivative from or a reflection of the other."⁵ A series of texts known as the Ba'al and 'Anat cycle⁶ is the principle source for investigating the series of battles and divine epithets of these two warrior deities, which are the basis for study of divine warfare in the Ugaritic corpus.⁷

Ba'al's initial conflict is with Prince Yamm, the Sea. This conflict between Ba'al and Yamm is in many ways quite similar to that between Marduk and Tiamat in Babylonian mythology. Miller points out that it is difficult to determine which of these myths was original and which is a reflex of the other.⁸

The Marduk/Tiamat conflict is related in Enuma elish.⁹ In this account the assembly of the gods followed democratic procedures to prepare for its conflict with Tiamat, Kingu and their army. First they elected a representative (Ea). Next they sought a leader for battle (Marduk), whom they made king. Functioning primarily as a storm god, Marduk summoned the winds, the lightning, and the flood, mounted his storm chariot drawn by four steeds of destruction, and, backed by the gods and armed with these cosmic forces, marched forth to meet Tiamat and her army.

⁵Ibid., p. 11.

⁶Ibid., p. 193. Miller notes the debate over the number of texts belonging to the Ba'al epic and their precise order, concluding that we cannot be sure of an answer.

⁷Ibid., p. 24.

⁸Ibid., p. 25. Miller notes that Thorkild Jacobsen, "The Battle between Marduk and Tiamat," Journal of the American Oriental Society 88 (1968):104-108, has argued cogently for the priority of the West Semitic Ba'al and Yamm conflict (see n. 63).

⁹See J. B. Pritchard, ed., Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament, 3rd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 60-72.

He challenged her to single combat and in the ensuing battle Tiamat was destroyed and her supporters captured. Victorious in the cosmic conflict, Marduk then created the universe, and the gods erected a temple for him where he might dwell as king.¹⁰

In the Ugaritic myth,¹¹ Ba'al parallels Marduk, the rising young god seeking kingship, and Yamm parallels Tiamat.¹² Both myths represent a type of rebellion among the gods and the struggle for kingship or rule.

The description of the events leading to war in the Ba'al epic has some interesting features which Miller and Cross see paralleled in the Old Testament. There is the great fear of the gods at the sight of Yamm's warrior messengers armed with flaming swords, contrasted by Ba'al's lack of intimidation and bold rebuke to the gods, "Lift up, o gods, your heads from your knees, from the thrones of your princship."¹³ Cross identifies Psalm 24:7,9 ("Lift up, O gates, your heads.") as similar, demythologized, victory cries of the warrior god and his hosts.¹⁴ "The conquest in holy war and cosmic war is followed by the triumphant return of the victor and his earthly or divine army."¹⁵

The warrior messengers of fire, who struck fear in the hearts of gods, are also seen as background for the Israelite conception of the heavenly hosts. Parallels are identified in the placing of the cherubim

¹⁰ Miller, p. 27-28.

¹¹ See Pritchard, pp. 129-35.

¹² Ibid., pp. 28 and 195. Miller cites linguistic evidence from the "Ugaritic Pantheon" text equating ym with dtamtu in J. Nougayrol, Ugaritica V, 45.

¹³ Miller, p. 29. ¹⁴ Cross, p. 93. ¹⁵ Miller, P. 30.

at the East of the Garden of Eden with a flaming sword (Gen. 3:24); angels with a drawn sword (Num. 22:31; Joshua 5:13; 2 Sam. 24:16-17; and especially 1 Chron. 21:27,30); or simply the appearance of the mal'ak Yhwh in a flame of fire (Ex. 3:2).¹⁶

The conflict itself between Ba'al and Yamm, like that of Marduk and Tiamat, was one of single combat. The objects of the battles with Tiamat and Yamm were the preservation and maintenance of kingship over the gods.

A necessary consequence of the establishment of kingship by victory over the enemy, the Sea, is the establishment of a palace or sanctuary for the god as a sign of his victory and rule. Marduk, in Enuma elish was immediately granted his palace, while Ba'al had to beg, cajole and threaten for his palace. The Ba'al cycle recounts the triumphal procession of the victorious god to his palace to firmly establish his rule.

Miller claims that the imagery of this scene is strongly reflected in the warrior and storm concepts associated with Yahweh. He cites specifically Psalm 29, 2 Sam. 22/Psalm 18, and Numbers 10:35-36.¹⁷

The Ba'al-'Anat cycle gives further evidence of the role of Ba'al as warrior god, particularly in his conflict with Mot.¹⁸ This conflict involves the death and renewal of life of both Ba'al and Mot, and, as in the battle with Yamm, the question of kingship is involved. Ba'al's

¹⁶Ibid., p. 31-32.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 35-37. Miller states that Psalm 29 is "generally" regarded as a Canaanite hymn taken over by the Israelite cultus.

¹⁸See Pritchard, pp. 135-42.

death is cause for an attempt to produce a new king, but his return to life is occasion for renewed battle to establish his kingship. To gain his throne, Ba'al is forced to do battle with the sons of Athirat. Having conquered these enemies, he then assumes his rule again, but another battle ensues, this time the final one between Ba'al and Mot. The fight results in the submission of Mot and the kingship of Ba'al.

Miller also points out other texts that associate Ba'al with battles, as well as epithets that indicate cosmic warfare.¹⁹ He concludes:

There can be no doubt that in many respects the imagery associated with Yahweh is the same as that associated with Ba'al, particularly with regard to Yahweh as warrior. He battles as the storm god, riding or driving the clouds. He sends forth his voice and the enemies flee. He battles the monsters of the deep who represent death and chaos, as does Ba'al. Some of these creatures have the same names in the Ugaritic texts and in the Old Testament. . . . one may assume that the direct contact with Ba'alism from an early period strongly influenced the way Israel conceived its God.²⁰

The Divine Warrior in Israel

Miller states that

"in the origins of Yahwism and the worship of Yahweh in Israel two strains merged in the deity of Yahweh, the tutelary clan deity, the god of the fathers; and the high god El, the creator of heaven and earth."²¹

Israel's conception of Holy War as a cosmic and earthly endeavor involving the hosts of heaven and of Israel under the leadership of Yahweh, according to Miller, is a result of the fusion of these two strains in the God of Israel. The divine name Yahweh Seba'ot is seen as a probable reflection of this fusion.²²

¹⁹ Miller, pp. 38-42. ²⁰ Ibid., p. 60.

²¹ Ibid., p. 162; compare, Cross, p. 89-90.

²² Miller, p. 163.

Albrecht Alt²³ was the first scholar to isolate epithets where the god is identified by the name of a patriarch, which he called "the gods of the Fathers." These gods, according to Alt, were originally distinct deities which were later coalesced into a single family god by the artificial genealogical linkage of the Fathers and at the same time assimilated to Yahweh. Cross agrees with Alt that there was a special type ("god of the fathers") of designation for deities, but he disagrees with Alt on his analysis of these epithets.

I do not believe that the Patriarchal gods were typically nameless, designated only by the eponym of the clan and/or the cult founder. In fact we should regard the formula "god of PN" as specifying the cultus of a clan or tribal league, and hence a special cultic epithet used in place of the usual proper name of the god. Insofar as these Patriarchal deities belong to a pastoral or migrant folk, no doubt they were imported, ancestral gods in origin rather than the gods of popular sanctuaries in the lands of Patriarchal sojournings. However, there seems to be no reason to doubt . . . that these clan or "social" gods were high gods and were quickly identified by common traits or by cognate names with gods of the local pantheon.²⁴

The divine name 'El ('I1) appears as a proper name in the earliest strata of Semitic languages. Thus, Cross concludes, it belongs to Proto-Semitic as a generic appellative.²⁵ The epithets associated with 'El reveal the following characteristics: 1. 'El is father and creator;²⁶ 2. 'El is described as the "ancient one" or the "eternal one."²⁷

²³A. Alt, Old Testament History and Religion, trans. R. A. Wilson (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), pp. 1-100.

²⁴Cross, p. 12. ²⁵Ibid., p. 14.

²⁶Ibid., p. 15. 'El is called "father of the gods," "Bull 'El his father," and "king 'El who created him," etc.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 16-20.

In Canaanite myth 'El is portrayed as the "ancient king." 'El is the primordial procreator and patriarch, a vigorous and lusty old man who sires the gods Dawn and Dusk.²⁸

According to Cross, "'El is rarely if ever used in the Bible as the proper name of a non-Israelite, Canaanite deity in the full consciousness of a distinction between 'El and Yahweh, the god of Israel."²⁹

Many of the traits and functions of 'El appear as traits and functions of Yahweh in the earliest traditions of Israel: Yahweh's role as Judge in the court of 'El (Psalm 82; Psalm 89:6-8) and in the general picture of Yahweh at the head of the Divine council; Yahweh's kingship (Exodus 15:18; Deuteronomy 33:15; Numbers 24:21); Yahweh's wisdom, age, and compassion (yahwe 'el rahum we'hannun) and above all, Yahweh as creator and father (Genesis 49:25; Deuteronomy 32:6).³⁰

The Tabernacle and its structure also parallel Canaanite models, specifically the Tent of 'El and his cherubim throne.³¹

There is some question as to what role 'El played in the understanding of Yahweh as warrior. Yahwism strongly rejected the worship of Ba'al, whereas, as the evidence of Cross (and others) shows Yahweh seems to be strongly related to 'El. However, Yahweh takes on the role of a war leader, while, at Ugarit, it is Ba'al, the god rejected by Israel, who is war leader, whereas 'El, who appears to have a closer relation to Yahweh is not primarily a warrior or the leader of a military host, although there are some indications of his war-like character at Ugarit.

Miller explains this problem by assuming that the 'El identified with Yahweh is the early Canaanite 'El described by Philo and Sanchuniathon. Apparently Philo and Sanchuniathon are dealing with an earlier stage of Canaanite religious development when 'El was seen as a warrior

²⁸Ibid., pp. 20-24,

²⁹Ibid., p. 44.

³⁰Ibid., p. 72.

³¹Ibid.

leading his hosts into battle. It was this 'El, the 'El of the patriarchs, with whom Yahweh was identified.³² Miller concludes:

Thus the imagery of Yahweh as warrior god, leader of the cosmic armies -- an imagery central to Israel's religion from earliest times -- was a basic aspect of the concept of deity in the ancient Near East but bore special affinities to the warlike character of the Canaanite gods El and Ba'al with whom contact was intimate and from whom certain other aspects were assimilated into the Israelite understanding of Yahweh and his rule of the universe.³³

The Divine Council of Israel

Miller states: "In many respects the Israelite notion of a divine assembly was quite similar to that of the surrounding cultures, particularly Canaan and Mesopotamia, and assuredly adapted from them."³⁴ He lists the following as examples of Old Testament examples of divine beings in this assembly:

'elohim/bene 'elim gedoshim, bene 'elyon (Ps. 82:6), 'badim (Job 4:18; Isa. 44:26), mesarethem (Ps. 104:4), melis (Job 33:23), ruah (1 Kgs. 22:21; Ps. 104:3-4), 'ed (Job 16:19), or in totality 'adat 'el (Ps. 82:1), dor (Amos 8:14), sod gedoshim (Ps. 89:8), gehal gedoshim (Ps. 89:6), mo 'ed (Isa. 14:13), sod yhwah (Jer. 23:18), sod 'eloah (Job 15:8), and 'anane shemayya (Dan. 7:13).³⁵

The cherubim, seraphim and host of heaven also function as part of the divine assembly.³⁶

The assembly served as a judicial court (Psalm 82; Job 1-2; Zechariah 3). It also had the important function of bearing the message of the deity, Yahweh, a message which was often a judicial verdict

³² Miller, pp. 60-63; compare Cross, pp. 24-36.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Miller, p. 66; see p. 209, n. 4 for additional literature on the divine assembly and its role in Israel.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

(Is. 40:1-2). Sometimes the messenger of the council is a prophet (Isaiah 6; 1 Kings 33). Jeremiah specifically states that the true prophet is distinguished from the false by the fact that the true prophet has stood in the council of Yahweh (Jer. 23:18, 23). The council also had the role of a worshiping coterie in the divine theophany (Psalms 29).³⁷

Miller points out the following similarities between the divine assembly in Israel and in the mythology and religion of Mesopotamia and Canaan:³⁸

- Both have the basic notion of a council of divine beings grouped around a particular deity or deities.
- In both these are largely anonymous creatures.
- The terminology is almost exactly the same in Israel and Canaan.³⁹
- All included the heavenly host, the sun, moon and stars.
- The imagery of the messenger to and from the god(s) is especially similar between Israel and Canaan.

Miller also pointed out that there were some differences between the Israelite conception of the divine assembly and that of her neighbors.⁴⁰ There were some differences in messenger imagery. In Ugaritic texts the messengers have definite names. This did not develop in Israel until later when the fierce opposition to the Canaanite cult had died down.

Messengers of Canaanite mythology also appear to have moved in pairs, which probably reflects historical practice of messengers. In the

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 67-69.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 69-72.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 70 and 212. There is one notable exception where Israel substitutes saba for the Ugaritic puhru.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 71-73.

Old Testament, when messengers are identified, it is primarily only one figure, although the plural (Mal'akim) is used and, at times, more than one figure may appear (for example, Genesis 18 and 19).

In the Old Testament the single messenger mal'ak ywhw is often indistinguishable from Yahweh. Aubrey R. Johnson has proposed that the mal'ak ywhw is merely an extension of Yahweh, an aspect of Israel's notion of "corporate personality."⁴¹ Miller suggests that Israel's tendency to identify the mal'ak ywhw with Yahweh Himself probably represents, in some contexts, a tendency to avoid giving members of the Council too much individual status although it may not have been as conscious an action as this would imply.⁴²

A major difference involves the distinction between a polytheistic development and a basically monotheistic thrust. In Mesopotamia and Canaan the council existed as a 'primitive democracy,'⁴³ whereas, in Israel, Yahweh was the absolute ruler.

In Mesopotamian theology each member of the council had a voice, and decisions were made by the whole body or by subgroups within the body. . . . At Ugarit matters were decided largely at the whim and impulse of various deities, the council as a whole acquiescing. But Israel's religion knew no pantheon of ruling deities in competition with one another . . . all decisions and judgments were made by

⁴¹A. Johnson, The One in the Many in Israelite Conception of God, 2nd ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1961), pp. 28-33. cited by Miller, pp. 72 and 213. Miller thinks that the benefit of this thought is marred by an injudicious tendency to explain the Israelite understanding of the divine assembly, the mal'ak ywhw, and even the prophet as messenger of the council almost entirely in terms of "an active 'extension' of Yahweh's personality."

⁴²Miller, p. 72.

⁴³See T. Jacobson, "Primitive Democracy in Ancient Mesopotamia," Journal of Near Eastern Studies 2 (1943):159-72. Cited by Miller, pp. 73 and 214.

Yahweh and imposed upon the rest of the council as well as upon Israel and other earthly powers.⁴⁴

The fact, however, that the Israelite concept included the heavenly host (again an explanation within her own framework of experience of divine phenomena in surrounding cultures) opened the door to a possible elevation of these elements to a status equal with Yahweh so that they might be worshipped in their own right. This is precisely what happened in the seventh century (2 Kings 21:5; 23:5).⁴⁵

The Israelite divine assembly knew no real distinction between groups. Different terms were used but most of them could apply to the council as a whole. The divine assemblies of Mesopotamia and Ugarit, on the other hand, apparently consisted of groups of gods, though again precise distinctions are not always possible.⁴⁶

In short, the polytheistic impulse of surrounding cultures tended to produce the conception of the divine assembly marked by specificity, complexity, independence, and democratic rule, whereas the monotheistic impulse of Israelite religion tended toward a notion of the council of Yahweh marked by anonymity, uniformity, powerlessness, and autocratic rule.⁴⁷

Miller concludes that Israelite conceptions were very strongly allied with those of her neighbors. The notion of the divine warrior, the assembly of the gods as an army and the chaos battle are all motifs which reflect outside influence upon Israelite thought. However, Israel also showed its own peculiar character in its religious history. In other religions of the Near East there was a clear separation between historical battles and mythological battles, with the center of the religious concern focused on the battle for order over chaos, life over death, fertility over sterility. At the center of Israel's faith, however, lay the battle for Israel's deliverance, a conflict involving the theophany of Yahweh and his mighty armies to fight with and for Israel.

⁴⁴Miller, p. 73. ⁴⁵Ibid., p. 70. ⁴⁶Ibid., p. 73.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 74.

This battle took place on an historical and eschatological level, but involved cosmic forces. The mythological motif of divine warfare of Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Hittite, Hurrian and Canaanite religion was subordinated in Israel to the historical purposes of election and covenant so that the whole march through the wilderness to Canaan was seen as a mighty Holy War led by the divine warrior and his armies. Whereas in other Near East mythology the establishment of kingship and sanctuary resulted from the mythological battle of the gods, in Israel, Yahweh alone had supreme power, and attention was focused on His activity on behalf of Israel.⁴⁸

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 164-65.

CHAPTER V

EVALUATION AND SUMMARY

In evaluating the recent research on Holy War in the Old Testament it must first be noted that the presuppositions underlying higher critical study are diametrically opposed to the presupposition of sound Biblical and Confessional exegesis. God has chosen to reveal Himself propositionally through the verbal inspiration of the writers of His divine Word. Thus, the Bible is the Word of God, and, although it does have a human aspect that allows the use of some "critical" methods to aid in our understanding of the text, it cannot be treated like any other book. Because of its divine authorship, Scriptures are inerrant and infallible in all that they present. Historicity, then, must be judged on the basis of the grammar of the text, not on the basis of human critique. Scripture also has a message - the revelation of God's plan of salvation - to convey. The higher-critical method often becomes so concerned with the objective facts of background, date, authorship, development, and so forth, that they totally ignore the theological message.¹

The Bible is not primarily an historical book as we would understand that term. It presents a selective and interpretative view of history, but this does not mandate "later theologizing" as many of the

¹H. Hummel, The Word Becoming Flesh (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), p. 12.

works reviewed indicated. In addition, a distinction must be made between the progressive nature of God's Self-revelation as opposed to the concept of an evolution of Israel's religious thought. Apart from the fact that the Word of God should be accepted as it is, archeological discoveries and comparative religious studies have forced many higher critics to re-evaluate their stand on lateness and lack of historicity in the Biblical accounts. The reconstructions of Israel's "true" history presented by higher critics are admittedly hypothetical among higher criticism itself.

Still, there is much that can be gained from the higher critical studies of Holy War. Most of the authors reviewed admitted that they had no choice but to work with the Biblical text or "tradition" as it stands. Their work with the text and study of the background through comparison with other ancient Near Eastern cultures, and so forth, can be valuable aids for our understanding of the Bible.

In looking at Israel's conception of Holy War in comparison to her neighbors, one must not lose sight of the uniqueness of Israel. This uniqueness centers around Yahweh. Yahweh, as a personal God who revealed Himself to His people, was totally unique in comparison to the gods created by the human imaginations of Israel's neighbors. Any connection between Israel's beliefs and practices with those of her neighbors must be seen in light of this uniqueness.

Israel did not accommodate to its neighbors, nor evolve in their sophistication of religious thought, rather, Yahweh revealed Himself through ideas and concepts familiar to His people, reinterpreted in light of His uniqueness as the One True God. "Parallels" with other

nations may be either coincidental or garbled adaptation of God's revelation. These connections with other nations, at times, also served as apologetic and polemic tools to present Yahweh as the only True God. As in the case of ex-mythological language, they could also be used partly as literary tools to transcendentalize and universalize the event, showing that this was not just one discrete historical event, but something with transhistorical, universal and salvific significance.

Judging from Christian history,² there has been much misunderstanding of the message of Scripture concerning Holy War. The concept of Holy War in the Old Testament, therefore, needs to be studied and explained as regards "its theological richness, its implications for our understanding of God, and its relevance to Christian living."³ It is such a study that this paper (in part) has been about, and such an explanation that will be attempted in the remaining paragraphs.

The Lutheran Confessions state that war is caused by the devil. Satan works against both spiritual and political order to prevent peaceful relations on earth.⁴

However, David's labors in waging war and in governing the state are called "holy works, true sacrifices, battles of God to defend the

² See Roland H. Bainton, Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace (New York: Abingdon Press, 1960).

³ Peter C. Craigie, The Problem of War in the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), p. 103.

⁴ Large Catechism, Lord's Prayer, 80. In The Book of Concord: the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, trans. and ed. Theodore B. Tappert, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959). All further references to the Lutheran Confessions are from the Tappert edition.

people who had God's Word against the devil, that the knowledge of God might not perish utterly from the earth."⁵ This is seen in light of the fact that the Old Testament Church Militant was a theocracy involving both Church and state. In this same section, the Confessions compare this to the New Testament Church Militant where examples of the "battles by which Christ restrained the devil and drove him away from believers" were labors and sermons of Paul, Athanasius, Augustine and other teachers of the church.⁶ A clear distinction is drawn between the New Testament Church Militant which wages its wars in the realm of the kingdom of the Right Hand and is not theocratically connected to the political realm, and the Old Testament theocracy.

Political warfare is in the realm of civil government.⁷ God has ordained and instituted civil government for the sake of good order. The civil government has both the right and the duty to wage war for the defense and protection of their subjects.⁸ Christians have a right to make legitimate use of political ordinances and might legitimately hold public office and "engage in just wars,⁹ render military service,"

⁵ Apology, IV, 19. ⁶ Ibid.

⁷ cf. Augsburg Confession, XVI, 1; Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, 31.

⁸ cf. Apology, XVI; Augsburg Confession. XXI, 1.

⁹ The Confessions do not define "just war," but Luther indicates the following points in his writings. (See What Luther Says: An Anthology comp. Ewald M. Plass, 3 vols. (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 3:1428-35): 1. Civil government has the right to wage just wars as punishment of evildoers and to maintain peace (Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved): 2. Self-protection (defensive war) is certainly a sound reason for war (Whether Soldiers, . . .), but he would not advise a Christian to take the offensive to begin a war ("On the War with the Turks, 1528"); 3. Christians, and even clergy, may participate in warfare if the government calls them to do so (Sermons on Genesis, Chapter 14, 1527); 4. The

and so forth.¹⁰

The Gospel does not introduce any new laws about the civil state, but commands us to obey the existing laws, whether they were formulated by heathen or by others, and in this obedience to practice love."¹¹

The Church, however, has only spiritual power, "that is, the command to preach the Gospel, proclaim the forgiveness of sins, administer the sacraments, and excommunicate the godless without physical violence."¹² The Church was not given the power of the sword or the right to establish, take possession of or transfer the kingdoms of this world, as the papacy attempted to do.¹³

Thus, our Lutheran Confessions rightly interpret Scripture in distinguishing between the Kingdom of Power and the Kingdom of Grace/Glory in the New Testament Era.¹⁴ We are not to use the Holy War motifs of the Bible as motivation for attacking our own little social and political pet peeves in the name of Christianity. This ignores the two kingdoms mandated by the coming of Christ. Holy War has been caught up and capitulated in Christ's victory on the cross. However, via Christ and His Holy Spirit, Holy War motifs are still applicable to the daily Christian warfare of the sanctified life. Armed with Word and Sacrament,

final decision of what is a just war is up to the sanctified Christian conscience. We are to obey God rather than men and accept the consequences which might occur for disobeying the government if we positively believe the war is wrong (Whether Soldiers,).

¹⁰ Apology, XVI, passim.

¹¹ Ibid., 3.

¹² Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, 31.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ See H. Bornkamm, Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966).

we know that it is God who fights our battles for us and through us, His Body, the Church.

Luther makes a distinction between the activities of the Church and Ministry in the spiritual realm as opposed to the secular affairs of civil government. The Church and Ministry are to govern souls only with the Word of God. They are not to be involved with the ruling of cities, lands and peoples outwardly. Likewise, secular authorities are to govern territories and curb evil by the use of the law and human reason, but they are not to exercise spiritual rule over souls.¹⁵ Thus, the Church can provide information and witness to government concerning what the Word of God has to say, but advocacy of particular secular laws or demanding such on the basis of absolute moral law is outside the realm of the Church's government of souls. The civil government, as a gift of God in this sinful world, works with coercive legal power to curb evil. The Church and Ministry, on the other hand, govern by the uncoercive power of the Word of God, through which the Holy Spirit works faith in the hearts of men.¹⁶

This separation of Church and State is somewhat unique. The "traditional" views of other church bodies either give the Church authority over the secular realm (for example, Roman Catholicism), mingle the two (for example, Reformed, especially Zwingli) or choose the spiritual and reject the secular (for example, Anabaptists).¹⁷

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 6. Bornkamm cites Luther's "Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed."

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁷ Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), Vol. III, pp. 178-183.

For the individual Christian, Luther makes the distinction between the "private" person and the "public" person. As a private person, the individual Christian suffers injustice to himself, witnessing to the Gospel and following the unconditional command of forgiveness, endurance and sacrifice (see the Sermon on the Mount). As a public person, a Christian must see that no one suffers injustice or becomes a victim of the other, protecting the rights of others and acting in their behalf.¹⁸ "It is for the Christian, therefore, a continually new and vital problem of conscience to determine where he is a 'private' person and where he is a 'public' one, . . ."¹⁹ It is difficult to draw neat, clear lines between our lives in these two realms.

Theologically, Holy War points out both the nature of man and of God. War can be seen as a large-scale manifestation of the nature of man.²⁰ The evils and horrors of war, which the Bible accurately and vividly reports, are just a small portion of the evil and horror brought about by man's fall into sin.

Through God's propositional revelation of Himself in, with and under Holy War, we also see the nature of God. God is willing, because of His gracious love, to come down to man in his sinful condition. This same God is a mighty and powerful God who controls all nations and powers. In fact, He created and controls all things, in heaven and on earth, and

¹⁸Bornkamm, p. 7-8.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 23.

²⁰See James 4:1; although he is not dealing specifically with international conflict, James points out that conflict is a result of the lust warring within us (compare Romans 7).

rules as King of the Universe. He is a just God who hates those who sin against Him and punishes them for their disobedience. Yet, He is a loving God who chose a special people through whom to reveal His plan of salvation. Thus, God the Warrior is a fearful sight to those who reject Him, but a great comfort for those who have been called as His people and for whom He fights and brings the victory.

Typologically, Holy War is a prefiguring of salvation itself. Vertically, "the holy war of Biblical history is fought both and often simultaneously in heaven and on earth."²¹ Horizontally, this is climaxed in the antitype of Christ's great victory on the cross. This also serves as a type of our Christian life. Theologically the final victory is already ours, won by Jesus Christ on the cross. Yet, as in the Conquest, we still are involved in mopping up exercises as we live out our life in this "now-not" yet existence which, in a sense, is still in the Old Testament. We continue to eagerly await the final consummation of this victory when both the vertical and the horizontal types will be totally fulfilled. The whole journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, with which Holy War is so intimately connected, provides the type of our Christian life as we go through our baptismal Red Sea, freed from the slavery of sin, and wander through our wilderness existence of Sinai until God brings us into the Promised Land.

For believers, God as Almighty Warrior is a comforting picture as we daily renew our Baptismal vows, battling the Old Adam, and confronting other "battles" of everyday Christianity. For the unbeliever (and

²¹Hummel, p. 16.

our Old Adam), God as Warrior serves as an awesome warning of the spiritual and physical destruction that we deserve and will experience if we do not have Christ as our Substitute, Intercessor and Victorious Warrior King.

Thus, a proper understanding of Holy War hinges on the distinction of the three Kingdoms (Power, Grace and Glory). We must see both the continuity and the discontinuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament on Holy War. Typologically we see the continuity, as it reveals the nature of God and man and points to the mystery of salvation. The distinction of the Kingdoms points out the discontinuity between the theocracy of the Old Testament and the separation of the Church and the state in the New Testament. (The theme of eschatological Kingdom of Glory is common to both Testaments). Continued study of Holy War is needed (as is true of all Scripture) to increase our understanding of God's clear revelation, in order that this understanding might be proclaimed through Christian education and witness.

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