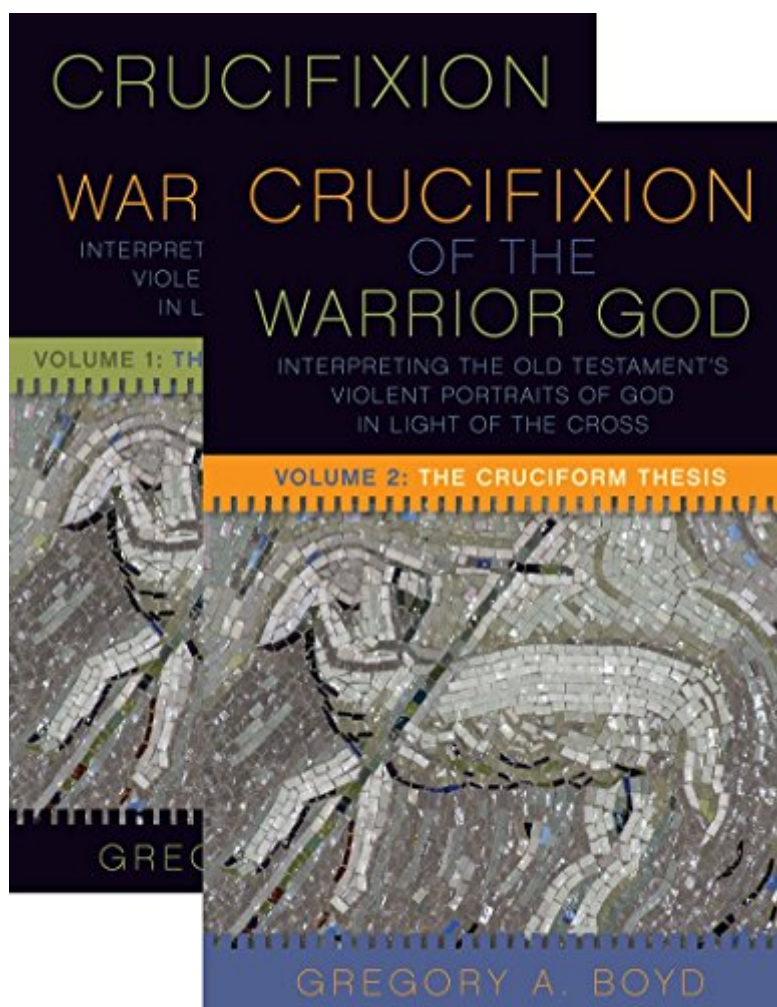


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# The Crucifixion Of The Warrior God: Volumes 1 & 2



## Synopsis

Renowned pastor-theologian Gregory A. Boyd proposes a revolutionary way to read the Bible in this epic but accessible study. His "cruciform hermeneutic" stands as a challenge to the field of biblical studies and to all thoughtful Christians. A dramatic tension confronts every Christian believer and interpreter of Scripture: on the one hand, we encounter Old Testament stories of God commanding horrendous violence. On the other hand, we read the unequivocally nonviolent teachings of Jesus in the New Testament. Reconciling these two has challenged Christians and theologians for two millennia. Throughout Christian history, various answers have been proposed, ranging from the long-rejected explanation that these contrasting depictions are of two entirely different "gods" to recent social, cultural, and literary theories that attempt to dispel the conflict. *The Crucifixion of the Warrior God* takes up this dramatic tension and the range of proposed answers in an ambitious constructive investigation. Over two volumes, Gregory A. Boyd argues that we must take seriously the full range of Scripture as inspired, including its violent depictions of God. At the same time, he affirms the absolute centrality of the crucified and risen Christ as the supreme revelation of God. Developing a theological interpretation of Scripture that he labels a "cruciform hermeneutic," Boyd demonstrates how the Bible's violent images of God are reframed and their violence subverted when interpreted through the lens of the cross and resurrection. Indeed, when read in this way, Boyd argues that these violent depictions bear witness to the same self-sacrificial nature of God that was ultimately revealed on the cross.

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## Customer Reviews

This is an extremely difficult review to write ... I love Greg Boyd and everything he has written over the years. I have nothing but respect for him as a pastor, scholar, and theologian. When it comes to this new book of his, I agree with him on about 90% of what he has written. But I disagree with the central point of his book, which is that God withdraws from sin so that evil will be destroyed by evil. But I tend not to give negative reviews of books that I disagree with if they are well-written, well-argued, and thought-provoking. Such is the case with *Crucifixion of the Warrior God*. Whatever you believe about the violence of God in Scripture, this book will present you with a new way of looking at things so that you no longer have to choose between accepting that God is violent or writing off the Bible as hopelessly full of error. There are other explanations. Greg Boyd has presented one such explanation. I 100% agree with Greg Boyd that Jesus reveals God to us, especially through His crucifixion. Greg Boyd calls this the cruciform (or crucicentric) hermeneutic. I have referred to this elsewhere as reading the Bible with a crucivision lens. I 100% agree with Greg Boyd that God did not punish Jesus on the cross for our sin, and that God is not angry with humans about sin, but seeks only to rescue and deliver us from it. I 100% agree with Greg Boyd that sin bears its own punishment, so that when sin comes to fruition in our life, it brings forth only death and destruction. I could go on and on about the many areas of complete agreement I have with Greg Boyd and this book. But the only primary area I disagree with him on is the main thesis of his book, that sometimes God is faced with no choice but to painfully withdraw Himself from our sin and rebellion so that He allows sin to have its way in our lives and this world, since this is the only way that God can both show us the devastating consequences of sin and deliver us (and future generations from it). The flood event in Genesis 6-8 is one example. Greg Boyd says that since wickedness had spread over the face of the earth, all humanity had become corrupted by the sons of God (Gen 6:1-8), and so Noah was literally the last pure man on earth, and so to save, rescue, and deliver humanity from complete destruction, God had to step back from humanity and withdraw His protection so that sin would destroy humanity and a new creation could occur through Noah and

his family, whom God rescued and delivered from the flood through the ark. Boyd argues that God's only activity in the flood was to rescue and deliver Noah. The flood waters came on their own as God stepped back. I am extremely uncomfortable with such an explanation of the flood account, or such a way of reading Scripture. My discomfort is not because Boyd's thesis is new, but because I think it ultimately violates one of his preliminary points, that all of Scripture must be read and interpreted through Jesus Christ, and especially through Jesus Christ on the cross. I do not believe that what we see on the cross is God withdrawing from sin, but rather jumping head-first into it. I believe that the incarnation is the missing element to Boyd's thesis. God does not back away from sin to let it have its way. No, God, in Jesus, enters fully into our sin, not to participate in it, but to deliver us from it. He does not draw away; He dives headlong into the mess. I do not believe that God allows sin to have its way with us, even if we continue to rebel and live in it. This is little more than another form of child abuse. A neglectful, absentee parent is barely better than an abusive one. I do not believe that God destroys sin by letting sin destroy itself. I believe that God destroys sin through redemption. He destroys sin by tearing it apart from the inside, not violently, but through love, grace, mercy, forgiveness, and revelation. I believe God destroys sin through the revelation and illumination brought by the incarnation. He rescues, not by retreating, but by redeeming. Jesus said "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." And neither does God. He never withdraws. Never backs away. Never leaves us alone. Does sin hurt us? Yes. Does sin bear its own punishment? Yes. God does not punish us for sin. But the blows we feel from sin are the glancing blows that hit His back first. This is starting to turn into a book of my own, so I will stop here. Look, read this book. Absolutely read this book. Even though I disagree with the central point of the book, I give it five stars because it does a fantastic job of presenting some truths that all Christians need to hear. But if you are uncomfortable with Greg's point that God withdraws from sin to let it have its way, that's okay ... be uncomfortable .. for there are other ways to maintain Boyd's cruciform hermeneutic without turning God into an absentee parent when we need Him most.

I highly enjoy Boyd's work, and his concern with being both thorough and pastoral. This is highly evident in the painstaking work to keep his thesis within the confines of confessional orthodoxy by building off the work(s) of church fathers (especially Origen). Further, his cruciform thesis is highly compelling: I have been swayed by proto-forms of it in the major works of scholars like Michael Gorman. Boyd's work deserves commendation for continuing the conversation forward with rigor and passion. However, I have three main critiques: 1) The book mainly suffered most from length. While his work is meant to be academic in nature, and that does come with certain expectations of

"dialogue partners" and fending off potential objections to his thesis, the Crucifixion of the warrior god could have shaved off most the contents in volume 1 in order to streamline the argumentation and thesis. Or, at least, been almost 2/3 the size that it is.)<sup>2</sup>) The biggest issue comes through the theme of God's divine condescension as revealed through the cross. Is the clearest picture of God found in Jesus? Yes. Is the cross the place where Jesus' life and work most evidently point to God's love/humility/character, etc? Indeed. Cruciformity is humility, and that's the divine trait over-and-against human pride (the root of sin). None of that need be argued about. It's quite a convincing case; the NT seems clear on this, and the church has a long history of understanding Jesus this way. What is less convincing: the need to always understand God's "undoing" of evil and sin through the lens of non-violence (my critique is coming from a worldview that positively embraces Jesus' non-violent human ethic for citizens of the Kingdom). One of the prime examples would be Boyd's conception of account such as the flood; essentially, Boyd argues that the flood is God withdrawing his divine protection from creation enough that demonic forces are responsible for the consequences (because evil is unsustainable, and the forces of evil will only collapse/implode when left unchecked). Yet, it seems like God would still ultimately be responsible despite this line of reasoning, even if he removes himself from the equation somehow (something along the lines of Kant's moral imperative and a philosophical "trolley" analogy spring to mind). So, God's not exactly "off the hook" in a moral way. And Boyd's pitbull analogy--while not a straw-man per se--did not seem to account for necessary details in the problem of evil. But....I'm honestly not sure why, if God is good, His assessment and methodologies in dealing with evil can't be trusted, even if they're "violent" looking. Full disclosure: the only problems I have with violent portraits in scripture stem from human-on-human violence that seem to be assumed as divinely ordained (such as herem passages). Ultimately, I think that Boyd's work actually didn't explore how vastly ahead of its time the OT was. There's something supernatural about its composition when you start to actively investigate how ANE laws, like the lex talionis, are mitigated differently in Israelite Law codes (compared to Hammurabi's codes, etc). Further, bringing in the concept of psychological trauma, the APA defines it as such: "a type of damage to the mind that occurs as a result of a severely distressing event. Trauma is often the result of an overwhelming amount of stress that exceeds one's ability to cope, or integrate the emotions involved with that experience." Now, a trauma-informed worldview actually highlights that trauma is about how we process something (please read *THE BODY KEEPS THE SCORE* by Van der Kolk on the subject). One thing can be traumatic for someone, and not traumatic for another. Because this is how human brains are wired, it creates space for "violence" to be more circumstantial. I.E....a divine portrait of violence doesn't

necessarily "have" to be perceived as traumatic, if it's processed (the action was "just" per se), or healing can still happen (a broken limb can be traumatic on a brain/body, but healing can happen, and the trauma dealt with). I don't see the need to find a "non violent" interpretation of God's character mitigated by the cross in every single "perceived" picture of violence in the OT. The concept of violence may be too abstract to justify a need to do so. But I am more persuaded by a joint Crucifixion-and-resurrection hermeneutic than I am by a sole "cruciform" thesis. My hope is placed on Jesus as the crucified-and-resurrected king, and in God's (re)new(ed) creation. Which brings me to my third and final critique.<sup>3</sup> I am persuaded by a cruciform king and his cruciform kingdom (cf, chapter one in Michael Gorman's *INHABITING THE CRUCIFORM GOD*, and Jeremy Treat's *THE CRUCIFIED KING*). But not for Girardian scapegoat reasons (google "why Girardians exist" for a one-stop shop, devastating, critique of Girardianism), or for a purely non violent atonement theology. PSA, as well as Christus Victor, and all the various other kaleidoscopic facets of atonement theology, are too convincing to eject from a rich understanding of what happened in the cross. Further, the resurrection is where our hope lies—*that's even basic to Judaism leading up through the first century*. Is the resurrection possible without the cross? I don't think so. But to only have a cruciform thesis, not a co-equal emphasis (or, possibly, greater emphasis) on the resurrection and (re)new(ed) creation as a part of the structure seems like a pretty big misstep for a Christian hermeneutic. According to Paul in 1 Cor 15, more hermeneutic emphasis is given to the implications of Jesus' resurrection beyond His purely having "died according to the scriptures." Rather, He was "buried, and rose again three days later, and then appeared" to a lot of people. And, based upon these resurrection-based experiences, Paul extrapolates the support for Christian experience, baptism, the nature of the resurrected body, etc.. His point has more to do with the implications of the resurrection. Again, to summarize this last critique: I think a better hermeneutic would be a cruciform-and-resurrection one. Anyways, that's just my opinion. Again, I think Boyd did a commendable job. I would want that clear. And I am persuaded that the cross is not central enough to the church's hemenutical principles as a whole. Boyd's spot-on in much of his critique of the church's historic collusion with violence and "power(s)" that lead to destruction. I would hope that my words here would be understood as they're intended: a critique, not a tearing down as to offer something different/new. I would like to build off the cruciform thesis, and modify it to a cruciform-and-resurrection thesis.

This book is amazing for those interested in applying the principle of seeing the Old Testament through the lens of Christ. I just started Seminary and thought it might be over my head but honestly

the way Gregory A. Boyd writes I have been able to not only read but understand as well. This is not a fast read. It is a slow digest even for a fast reader. To some it may sound to text book like but literally I cannot wait until evening reading time. Every page is a new "aha" moment and makes sound Theological sense!! This book is changing the way I look at my Bible! Thank you!!!

This book is helping me re-fall for Jesus (as in, fall in love)... Boyd puts the character of Jesus on full display and the compelling nature and puts Him back in context with the profound thought of the ancient writers and teachers of the early church. His thought (and cross-referenced citation) is incredibly thorough. He's even gracious to people he disagrees with (and gives the reader plenty of opportunity to do research of opposing viewpoints through his footnotes). While it's thick, it's not jargon-y. This book is so helpful.

Such a thorough treatment of this theme was needed. Boyd delivered. I have much to chew on still. But these volumes have balanced some issue I've had with mimetic theory. It's a both and!

Very thorough. At times difficult to understand. Certain parts tedious but many sections must have been interesting to some degree as I want to read it through again with three other books to hand. A Bible, a dictionary and a note book. The subject matter is even more important to me now having read the book. I had not before appreciated the extent of the "problem"....

Very pleased.

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