



Justice and Compassion in Biblical Law

Richard H. Hiers

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The theory and praxis of biblical law in the historical and contemporary landscape of American law and culture is contentious and controversial. Richard Hiers provides a new consideration of the subject with an emphasis upon the underlying justice and compassion implicit within. Special consideration is given to matters of civil law, the death penalty, and due process. An analysis of various biblical trial scenes are also included.

The book draws on, and in turn relates to three areas of scholarship and concern: biblical studies, social ethics, and jurisprudence (legal theory). Modern legal categories often illuminate the nature of biblical law: for instance, by distinguishing between inheritance and bequests or wills (a distinction not found in traditional biblical commentaries), and by identifying the meaning or function of biblical laws by using such categories as "contract" and "tort" law, "due process," "equal protection," and "social welfare legislation."

Several discussions throughout the book compare or contrast biblical laws with modern Anglo-American law or social policies. Each chapter begins with two or three relevant quotations: one or two from biblical texts, and sometimes from one or two relevant latter-day sources, notably, Magna Carta, the United States Constitution, and writings by Ayn Rand, and Robert Bellah. Although modern law usually shows greater compassion, biblical law often combines concern for both justice and compassion in ways that sometime provide grounds for critiquing modern counterparts.

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