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# Strengthening Biblical Historicity vis-à-vis Minimalism, 1992-2008 and Beyond, Part 2.2: The Literature of Perspective, Critique, and Methodology, Second Half

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**STRENGTHENING BIBLICAL HISTORICITY VIS-À-VIS  
MINIMALISM, 1992–2008 AND BEYOND,  
PART 2.2: THE LITERATURE OF PERSPECTIVE, CRITIQUE,  
AND METHODOLOGY, SECOND HALF**

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*This series of articles covers scholarly works in English which can, at least potentially, be associated with a generally positive view of biblical historicity regarding periods preceding the Israelites' return from exile. Part 2 covers works that treat the methodological issues at the center of the maximalist-minimalist debate. Parts 3–5 will cover works on evidences.*

*This article completes the coverage, begun in the preceding article, of works that are neither maximalist nor minimalist by treating select publications of Anthony J. Frendo, Nadav Na'aman, Israel Finkelstein, Andrew G. Vaughn, Baruch Halpern, Robert D. Miller II, and H. G. M. Williamson.*

*It then discusses works on methodology by authors who espouse biblical historicity unless it is proven wrong, who are often called maximalists. It introduces these through the comments of Craig G. Bartholomew, then treats select works by Kenneth . Kitchen, Jens Bruun Kofoed, Richard E. Averbeck, Iain W. Provan, V. Philips Long, and James K. Hoffmeier.*

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*KEYWORDS: biblical minimalism, biblical maximalism, historical methodology, history of Israel, Keith Whitelam*

This third article,<sup>1</sup> the “Second Half” of Part 2, begins by completing Part 2.1’s coverage of publications that are neither minimalist nor maximalist, then completes Part 2 by covering maximalist approaches.

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I dedicate this article to the memory of Gordon D. Young (1936–2012) and to the memory of Joseph Haberer (1929–2013), my dear faculty colleagues at Purdue University. I also gratefully acknowledge Purdue University’s Dean of Libraries, James L. Mullins, granting me six months’ sabbatical leave during 2009 to conduct research for the bibliographic essay that this series of articles comprises. Most appreciative thanks to the *JRTI* scholars who commented on this article. The author bears sole responsibility for all of its flaws and shortcomings. Address correspondence to Lawrence J. Mykytiuk, Purdue University Libraries HSSE, 504 W. State St., West Lafayette, IN 47907-2058. Email: [larrym@purdue.edu](mailto:larrym@purdue.edu).

Regarding the terms maximalist, minimalist, maximalism, and minimalism, which some time ago raised objections from some minimalists, currently, most leading minimalist scholars themselves apply some of these terms to themselves or their own position in print, e.g., Davies *Memories* 146–149 *passim*, Lemche *A to Z* 2, 26, 289, Thompson *Mythic Past* 44. On the intended neutral use in the present series of articles, see Mykytiuk, “Strengthening Part 2.1” 128 n. 3, second-to-last paragraph.

#### 4a, continued. Select Approaches That Are Neither Minimalist nor Maximalist

In this article series, as parts of the “Beyond” in the title, select treatments of methodology since 2008 appear in notes. Among this article’s post-2008 selections are works by Anthony J. Frendo, Nadav Na’aman, and Israel Finkelstein, treated in the attached note.<sup>2</sup>

##### Andrew G. Vaughn

Confronted with what seems to be a mixture of historical fact and fiction in the Bible, Vaughn proposes and illustrates a method for dealing with it in his essay, “Is Biblical Archaeology Theologically Useful Today? Yes, A Programmatic Proposal” (2003). His method is based on three perceptions that serve as warnings. The first perception, dealing with the subjective element, is that “philosophical and political presuppositions pose a major obstacle in the effort to draw firm conclusions” (10). He finds hope for a remedy in “biblical theologians *and* archaeologists . . . [becoming] intentional about putting their conclusions in conversation with external, historical data” (10, emphasis his).

On the other hand, his second warning perception is that “overreliance on historical data leads to another trap” (10), which is a tendency “to argue that, even if some of the details in the Bible are found to be in error, there is an essential continuity between what is described in the Bible and the external facts” (412). Vaughn finds that “[t]he problem here is that continued archaeological and historical research has shown that it is impossible to substantiate an essential continuity between the ‘facts’ found in the Bible and external historical facts” (412).<sup>3</sup> This statement suggests a non-maximalist view.

Third, some biblical theologians “jettison history and archaeology and . . . turn to other approaches,” such as “rhetorical or literary readings” (413). But in Vaughn’s view, they “have gone too far in their rejection of history as an alternative” (414), because, despite their assertions and intentions to the contrary, in reality they are running “the risk of reducing God to a psychological or rhetorical concept” (414).

Vaughn proposes to use the concept of “historical imagination,”<sup>4</sup> to “salvage the role of history in the theological enterprise.” This concept “allows us to *take* fragmentary parts *as* representing the whole” (414, emphasis his). It “is not make-believe or necessarily hypothetical. Rather, it allows a person to consider all the pieces of information that are known and to look at them and evaluate them at the same time” (414 n. 15). Including history in the imaginative process is a safeguard against untethered subjectivism.

Vaughn harnesses two kinds of history to bring about historical imagination: 1) “Critical (or negative) history asks ‘yes/no’ questions and has a corrective function” (415). Apart from the religious truth of the Bible, which, he states, stands regardless of whether the text is factual, the correct use of archaeology (as part of critical history) is “to disprove or to support previously constructed interpretations of the biblical texts” (415). There is also a need for 2) “background history (positive history that illuminates the setting of the period without asking yes/no questions)” (416).<sup>5</sup> Vaughn uses historical imagination to allow “[b]oth the biblical scholar and the archaeologist . . . to find the middle ground that avoids the traps,” i.e., presuppositions governing conclusions and tending toward essential continuity between archaeology and the Bible (416).

This essay synthesizes the nineteen essays in this volume, some of which take sharply divergent views of Jerusalem's history, by finding points of agreement between conflicting views. It arrives at historical conclusions via questions of both critical history and background history, illustrating his proposal. The results are consistent with many archaeological conclusions and many biblical texts, while avoiding a "blanket" commitment to either.

### Baruch Halpern

In his book *David's Secret Demons* (2001), Halpern adduces an appreciable amount of archaeological, inscriptional, and linguistic evidence in favor of the historicity of King David and an early date for the books of Samuel (57–72, 427–478). A Bible scholar, Halpern has also co-directed excavations at Megiddo with archaeologists Israel Finkelstein and David Ussishkin. This book incorporates, with adjustments, three of his previous articles ("Construction" [1996], "Text" [1997], "Gate" [1998]). That he is not a minimalist is clear from his arguments (based on McCarter "Apology" 495, 502) that the writing of the books of Samuel required a political environment in which David needed a defense against the accusations of his enemies, to legitimize his reign. Halpern's survey of the evidence generally "places 2 Samuel, for example, no later than the 9th century, since the text reflects memories of the 10th century" B.C.E. (Halpern *Demons* 69).

On the other hand, that Halpern is not a maximalist is clear from his view that the defense of David in 1–2 Samuel whitewashes David's real involvement in a series of murders and other nefarious acts. Ironically, Halpern exonerates David from the murder of Uriah, whereas most scholars agree that in that instance, David—whether as a historical figure or solely as a literary character—should be considered guilty. *David's Secret Demons* goes so far as to suggest that David was not an Israelite at all, but probably a Gibeonite (Halpern *Demons* 306–307, 332, 340, 479). Thus Halpern makes it clear that one need not accept the biblical text at face value in order to mount a strong, rational defense against minimalism's extremely late dating of 1–2 Samuel.

Halpern's earlier essay, "The State of Israelite History" (2000) argues for pre-exilic composition of 1–2 Kings by surveying the books in comparison with relevant epigraphic and archaeological data on international affairs. The survey's reverse chronological order tends to strengthen his case by starting where comparable extrabiblical data are most abundant.<sup>6</sup> The essay argues for considering all relevant data using historical methodology—in contrast with what Halpern refers to as the minimalists' philologically-based version of historical study, which the essay attempts to discredit.

### Robert D. Miller II

His article "Yahweh and His Clio: Critical Theory and the Historical Criticism of the Hebrew Bible" (2006), assumes readers have a great amount of background (part of which is in sections below on Kofoed, Provan, and Long). First, it "explores the epistemological underpinnings of the historical criticism of the Hebrew Bible" (149), noting especially the continual reappearance of elements of von Ranke's approach ["Vorrede" 5], which is characterized as rationalist and seeking empirical objectivity, in order to present history "as it actually happened" (150, 152). Rankean elements surface in

the works of many scholars through to the present, including both minimalists and maximalists (152–153).

Miller also “outlines trends in historiographical theory” (149), such as following the perceived national development of nineteenth-century Germany, as well as of twentieth-century America (150–152). Also, regarding Fernand Braudel, a major post-World War II representative of the *Annales* School, since the 1990s “biblical scholars have recently ‘discovered’ Braudel . . . [and use his work] as the ‘latest thing’ in historical theory,” whereas since the 1960s, “[h]istorians have left Braudel far behind” (154).

Next, Miller “assesses the impact newer theories of intellectual cultural history can have on studies of the history of the social world of ancient Israel” (149).<sup>7</sup> These theories include deconstructionism, whose “greatest proponents were Hayden White<sup>8</sup> and Dominick LaCapra, reflecting in historiography the ideas, respectively, of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida” (155). Also, a “post-deconstructionist school has developed around such figures as Roger Chartier . . . and Robert Darnton” (157). While agreeing with White and LaCapra in some ways, “they draw attention to a real past that *constrains* our reconstructions,” and “the aim of research is to gain knowledge that ‘constrains’” (157).

Perhaps unexpectedly, Miller takes some decades-old guidance from William F. Albright, who wished for historians to analyze thoroughly “‘their underlying postulates and philosophical principles’” (158, quoting Albright *History, Archaeology* 23). R. D. Miller finds that the historian examines evidence “in a way much more like jurisprudence than science,” therefore he approves the “jurisprudence analogy or forensic model” along with scholars as diverse as maximalist V. Philips Long (*Israel’s Past* 580–586) and post-deconstructionist historian Carlo Ginzburg (*Judge*).

On use of the Bible in the process of writing Israel’s history, R. D. Miller seeks to avoid two dangers: “Scholars should not write a biblical-text-based history with the miracles edited out and the ancient Near East as supplement” (159). But they also must be wary of the opposite error: to reject the narrative history of the Hebrew Bible as a potential starting point (159–160).

Miller’s explicit goal is to “write a critical postmodern history of Israel, avoiding Rankean empiricism, naïve Biblicism, . . . [etc.], including a postmodernist skepticism about the approachability to any external reality” (160). To write such a history, he seeks well-argued, plausible “working hypotheses that approximate accurate knowledge” (160, quoting Hallo “Limits” 188). These can then be tested and used to “challenge other possible pasts, yielding better-informed reconstructions” (160, citing Grabbe “Are Historians” 31). He agrees with Gottwald that “it is impossible to formulate any well-considered hypothesis without grappling with alternative ways of comprehending the evidence” (160, quoting Gottwald “Response” 262). R. D. Miller’s application of his approach appears in his *Chieftains of the Highland Clans* (2005).

#### H. G. M. Williamson

A short essay of his titled “The Origins of Israel: Can We Safely Ignore the Bible?” (1998) plainly states his non-minimalist, non-maximalist position: “When we turn to what might broadly be called the historical period, . . . the evidence cannot, in my opinion, support the kind of blanket dismissal of the relevance of the biblical data any

more than it could the earlier unsophisticated approach, . . . that the biblical account should be accepted at face value unless strong grounds to the contrary could be shown” (143). Despite the limitations of the data found in the Bible, Williamson finds “the fact remains that there still seems to be an historical bedrock which, in my opinion, it is perverse to deny” (145).

The same essay also presents his reasoning on method. It starts from the observation that “archaeology is in fact best suited to the description of what would now be called the history of *la longue duree*” (144). Sometimes archaeology detects development toward a major change in overall conditions. “Even if the evidence of this sort is sufficiently strong to conclude that . . . a major change in the ordering of society [is inevitable, it] usually requires a catalyst” (146). He labels “with the generalization of ‘catalyst’” (145) the “particular set of circumstances or the appearance of a particular personality” (146) which precipitates the change.

For example, within the archaeologically set condition of social change at the beginning of the Iron Age in Palestine, at the level of “historical specifics . . . the catalyst for change . . . cannot be settled” on the basis of approaches such as those of Alt or Na’aman (147), which remain “hypotheses, possible models to help explain empirical data” (148). Thus, “[w]hen we turn to ask what might have been the catalyst for such change, . . . we find no agreement. . . . It is important . . . to remain clear in one’s thinking about the distinction between data and interpretation” (148). Implicitly receiving the biblical account on an equal footing as such hypotheses, the essay states that the possibility of the Bible having something “of relevance” to say about historical questions, such as the origins of Israel, “should not be rejected *a priori*” (148).

Williamson goes on to make a case for “the earliest time” for a “strictly political history of Israel” beginning “most appropriately” with archival sources at the time of the united monarchy (148–149). Israel’s “sense of national . . . self-consciousness . . . . indicates that the standpoint is that of the monarchy looking back to its cultural and personal antecedents” (149). “The possibility, therefore, of the incursion of an external group into the land as a catalyst from some of the changes which are attested in settlement patterns and the like at the start of the Iron Age should not be ignored, nor need the evidence in its favour” (149).

#### **4b. Select maximalist approaches**

“Defense wins championships.”—American sports saying

Approaches which regard the biblical text as historically reliable unless the text is proven wrong are called maximalist. This approach is sometimes referred to as considering the text “innocent until proven guilty.” It is important to note that even such a stalwart maximalist as K. A. Kitchen finds some small historical portions of the Hebrew Bible to be historically unreliable. The distinguishing mark of a maximalist is the *starting point* that posits historical reliability, even if tentatively.

Because the ravages of time are cumulative, normally the earlier the period, the less evidence is extant. For any number of reasons, usually unstated, but often apparently

related to the amount of surviving evidence, scholars who take this approach tend to apply it beginning from a certain period onward. Many maximalist scholars begin their treatments around the biblical period of the United Kingdom of Saul, David, and Solomon and continue to the end of the Hebrew Bible.

With the awareness that maximalist publications are usually, though not always, written by evangelical scholars,<sup>9</sup> Craig G. Bartholomew describes a characteristic aspect of their hermeneutical approach:

Evangelical scholars continue to insist that the referential dimension [i.e., references which correspond to things in the real world] of the Historical Books is vital and an integral part of their interpretation. . . . However, even among evangelical OT [Old Testament] scholars there is a considerable diversity on these issues . . . . (“Hermeneutics” 404)<sup>10</sup>

He then contrasts the maximalist approach of K. A. Kitchen, which Kitchen states is “based on history, literature, and culture, not on theology, doctrine, or dogma” (404, quoting *On the Reliability* 3), with that of John Goldingay, which “acknowledges the theological imperative toward a maximalist position”<sup>11</sup> but “insists that we attend to the complex nature of the biblical tradition” (405). Thus, in the books of Genesis through Kings, Goldingay postulates:

the proportion of ‘story’ . . . as opposed to ‘history’ . . . is at its highest at the opening of the work. It is at its lowest at the end, where the events in focus had taken place not long before the work’s writing. The story of Israel’s exodus and their occupation of the land lies somewhere in between. (“Hermeneutics” 405, quoting Goldingay *Models* 56)

The question of apparent “story” vs. apparent “history” in the eyes of modern interpreters leads to the matter of ancient genres. Some scholars, including some maximalists and some “neither-nor” scholars, emphasize attempting to discern the ways of writing history that are found in early historical writings of other cultures of the ancient Near East in order to use them as tools for correctly understanding biblical texts whose setting is in such early periods. Examples of such biblical texts include those about the patriarchs and the exodus. Cultural sensitivity to historiographic conventions of the times to which the Bible refers promises to help achieve more refined, more accurate understanding of the historical aspect of biblical texts. Indications that biblical texts follow truly ancient conventions can be seen as evidence for great antiquity of the biblical texts themselves—certainly greater than minimalist publications have recognized. Writings from Mesopotamian cultures, often seen to be influential in other lands, furnish examples of historical writing in these cultures.<sup>12</sup> One example is that used below in the section on Richard Averbeck’s essay.

In “Hermeneutics,” Bartholomew pays special attention to Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (1985). He regards it as sophisticated and strong in its hermeneutical approach, serving as bedrock (albeit contested bedrock) in arguing for historicity (“Hermeneutics,” 402–403, 405). Of particular interest to Bartholomew is Sternberg’s indication of “the impossibility of keeping theological issues out of the debate about the historical dimension of the

Historical Books” (405, accompanied by a quotation from Sternberg *Poetics* 320; cf. a similar view held later by Vaughn in “Is Biblical” 414, mentioned in his section above).

Edited volumes of essays that are maximalist to largely “positive” toward the Bible

In “*Behind*” the *Text: History and Biblical Interpretation* (2003), edited by Craig Bartholomew, an essay of his titled “Warranted Biblical Interpretation: Alvin Plantinga’s ‘Two (or More) Kinds of Scripture Scholarship,’” examines philosophical issues in an effort to confront a contention of Philip R. Davies in his *Whose Bible Is It Anyway?* As stated by Bartholomew, Davies’ contention is that “the theological paradigm [for the history of Israel] claimed a truth for itself to which it is not entitled; presumably the latter [i.e., non-theological approach] claims a truth for itself to which it is entitled” (60).

Several other edited collections of essays have appeared since 1992 that are similar to Bartholomew, ed., “*Behind*” the *Text*, in that they are also wholly or partly responses to minimalism or to its predecessors, such as the publications of John Van Seters. Overall, many essays in these collections are written by scholars holding a maximalist view or else a less clearly defined approach that has a generally “positive” view of the Bible, especially compared to minimalism. In chronological order, these collections include: Alan R. Millard, James K. Hoffmeier, and David W. Baker, eds., *Faith, Tradition, and History: Old Testament Historiography in Its Near Eastern Context* (1994; from a 1990 symposium at Wheaton College); Shmuel A. Ituv and Eliezer D. Oren, eds., *The Origin of Early Israel—Current Debate: Biblical, Historical and Archaeological Perspectives: Irene Levi-Sala Seminar, 1997* (1998); David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold, eds., *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches* (1999); V. Philips Long, ed., *Israel’s Past in Present Research: Essays on Ancient Israelite Historiography* (1999; see Mykytiuk “Strengthening Part 2.1” sections 1 and 2); Lee I. Levine and Amihai Mazar, eds., *ha-Pulmus al ha-’emet ha-hisorit ba-Miḥra* [The Controversy over the Historicity of the Bible] (2001; in Hebrew); V. Philips Long, David W. Baker, and Gordon J. Wenham, eds., *Windows into Old Testament History: Evidence, Argument, and the Crisis of “Biblical Israel”* (2002); James K. Hoffmeier and Alan R. Millard, eds., *The Future of Biblical Archaeology: Reassessing Methodologies and Assumptions: The Proceedings of a Symposium August 12–14, 2001, at Trinity International University* (2004); John Day, ed., *In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (2004; containing papers delivered to the Oxford Old Testament Seminar between January 2001 and June 2003); H. G. M. Williamson, ed. *Understanding the History of Ancient Israel* (2007).

Several essays in these volumes receive specific treatment elsewhere in the present series of articles. Other essays in the above titles, because of their shortness, treat only limited instances that involve the question of biblical historicity or treat small facets of it, rather than attempting to grapple with the matter more broadly. One exception in *Israel’s Past in Present Research* is an essay by K. Lawson Younger, Jr., “The Underpinnings,” which deals with large questions in the realm of analysis and theory. It provides insights in support of biblical historicity, clears up misconceptions of history, formulates a more accurate definition of it, deals with the matter of ideology, and arrives at a historical method that combines the contextual method and semiotics. For Younger, the truth claim

of history distinguishes it from non-historical writing, though both may have literary qualities.<sup>13</sup>

Below are descriptions and summaries of select works of prominent scholars who espouse a clearly maximalist approach: Kenneth A. Kitchen, Jens Bruun Kofoed, Richard E. Averbeck, Iain W. Provan, V. Philips Long, and James K. Hoffmeier. A conference paper by Hoffmeier published in 1997 sets a good example for this section of the present article by briefly discussing minimalism and eight evangelical responses to it which were published from 1990 through 1995.<sup>14</sup>

#### Kenneth A. Kitchen (2002)

Almost all of Kitchen's publications discuss particular historical events and situations, rather than methodological principles and procedure. An exception is the essay titled "The Controlling Role of External Evidence in Assessing the Historical Status of the Israelite United Monarchy" (2002), in which Kitchen gives an example of historical assessment and enumerates the "fact-based" (128) methodological principles used in that assessment:

- (1) *All* texts—including the biblical texts—should first be read *as they stand*, carefully and detachedly, to observe what they actually say or seem to say; alternative possibilities (in detail, or overall) should be noted down. [See especially the section below on Provan.]
- (2) What the text itself claims to tell, or to be, or to achieve, should be noted, where stated.
- (3) In what category does the text itself appear to stand? (As myth, legend, stories about people; historical narration, i.e., happenings to humans in the past?) If our concern is with a biblical text, then
- (4) one must find out whether it belongs to a clear class of texts, and whether its contents have clear analogues, in the cultural context of the Near East. [For example, see Averbeck's essay below on accounts of temple construction.]
- (5) Verification/falsification of a text, and of our possible views about it, must be sought from the independent, hence relatively objective platform provided by external sources.
- (6) The mute witness of uninscribed artifacts (whose interpretation is entirely at the whim of the observer) *cannot* be privileged over the explicit evidence of texts properly understood. The interrelationships (if any . . .) of texts and nontext artifacts have to be established with due respect to the relative weight-by-relevance of all the data. ("Controlling Role" 128, emphasizes his; the original single paragraph has been reformatted here as a vertical list)<sup>15</sup>

As if to expand on Kitchen's points above, especially (2), (3), and (4), Jens Kofoed's published dissertation treats methodology for approaching the "category" and intent of the books of Kings and for pursuing questions of genre in their ancient Near Eastern context.

#### Jens Bruun Kofoed

Kofoed's work receives lengthy treatment here, because he has devoted more written effort than most others, on the continent of Europe and elsewhere, to establishing sound methodology to deal with the question of biblical historicity vis-à-vis minimalism. Irenic

in tone yet firm in his conclusions, he is scrupulously fair to minimalists<sup>16</sup> and careful to claim neither too much nor too little on the basis of the evidence adduced.

Kofoed's 2002 dissertation at the University of Aarhus, revised and published in 2005 as *Text and History: Historiography and the Study of the Biblical Text*, advances the thesis "that the texts of the Hebrew Bible [which in this dissertation means the books of Kings] contain reliable information for a reconstruction of the period it purports to describe" (30).<sup>17</sup> The book seeks "to argue for its thesis more methodologically than analytically" (32), because of the author's "contention that matters of method and presupposition have been largely overlooked in the debate over the epistemological and historiographical value of the biblical texts" (247).<sup>18</sup> Kofoed's 2007 article, "The Role of Faith in Historical Research: A Rejoinder," responds to Thomas L. Thompson's adverse review of *Text and History*.

Since the present article is on methodology, it will focus on chapters 1, 2, and 5 of the five chapters in *Text and History*.<sup>19</sup> Chapter 1 begins by surveying developments in the general field of the theory of history. The book regards the *Annales* approach and Fernand Braudel's three-tiered framework as valuable advances in the writing of history (*Text and History* 6–7). But it does not accept them uncritically, citing works that question it in various ways (8–9).<sup>20</sup> It especially criticizes the ways in which Braudel's three-tiered approach is actually used, advocating the rehabilitation of the individual human as an important factor in history, so as to make contingent events caused by people serve as a counterbalance to Braudel's first two levels, structural and conjunctural factors (4; cf. Williamson's mention of circumstances, group, or individual as a catalyst, above, and the disillusionment with the three-tiered model mentioned in Provan, Long, and Longman *Biblical History* 77 and in R. D. Miller "Yahweh and His Clio" 154).

Turning from the modern approach of the *Annales*, the introduction goes on to survey postmodernism's challenges in the realm of the theory of history, among which it finds that the truly controversial issues are the following three. On each point, Kofoed agrees with Andrew P. Norman, "Telling It Like It Was," implicitly affirming that: a) Meaning is intrinsically present in actual events and historical developments, not imposed by the historian. b) Historical narrative refers to a reality outside itself. It is not a non-referential, purely subjective attempt to shape collective understanding of the past.<sup>21</sup> Kofoed opposes anti-referentialism as a genre-neutralization of the distinction between fact and fiction, which "would mean the end of history" (14). c) The truth-claims of history are different from those of fiction (13, 15).

On point (a) above, specifically, A. P. Norman and Kofoed do not agree that meaning is imposed by "a mode of emplotment," as Hayden White would have it, and not by imposing "an overarching conception/'Great Story' on a certain pool of evidence," as Arthur C. Danto and Robert F. Berkhofer, respectively, see it (13, emphasis Kofoed's). Here the alternative is that meaning exists in reality, and the implication seems to be that the historian's task is to attempt to discern and present it. (See the section on V. P. Long below, which follows Long in calling Hayden White's position "constructionism," a term that apparently implies the construction of meaning by the historian.)

Recent developments in the historical study particularly of ancient Israel<sup>22</sup> include the expectation of a multi-disciplinary approach and use of the insights of current literary criticism. The problem is "how to use *texts* in the historiographical enterprise" (25,

emphasis his). Kofoed wishes to let textual and nontextual material “be deployed on equal and reciprocal terms, the texts illuminating possible interpretations of the nontextual material and the nontextual remains explaining otherwise incomprehensible features in the textual evidence” (26).

He finds the Copenhagen School’s contrasting tendency to let “structural and conjunctural factors evidenced in the nontextual material” take priority over written material to be “highly problematic” for several reasons (26; cf. Kitchen’s sixth point above).<sup>23</sup> These include the fact that although artifactual remains can reveal “the possibilities and impossibilities” with which people lived and made decisions, “they cannot and do not tell what choices people actually made, and they certainly do not explain why they made them. Texts such as the texts of the Hebrew Bible, therefore should not a priori be dismissed as second-rate evidence” (27).

Even more pointedly, Kofoed observes that discarding “the human factor as decisive for historical development” and denying “textual evidence any possibility of adding much” (26) arises “not so much because of . . . [Braudel’s] model itself as . . . because of the historiographer’s own philosophical presuppositions” (26). To make “event-oriented textual evidence . . . ‘secondary’ or ‘intellectual’ history . . . is . . . not necessary within Braudel’s model but is a materialistic or positivistic use of the model” (27).

Kofoed insists that “exciting” developments in literary criticism, including “synchronic and intertextual analyses, . . . cannot be detached from investigation into diachronic aspects of the texts” (28; cf. Long’s view of purely literary treatments of historical texts, below). “[H]ow was the apparently historical information in the texts understood in the first place? Was it a *relecture* on a national heritage of oral/written historiographical traditions, a literary invention created by authors living in the time of the extant texts, or something in between?” (28). “[T]o argue that the historical information present in such a literary innovation must be considered a *literary invention* is a non sequitur” (29, emphasis his). Moreover, “It has . . . been shown conclusively [by Alan R. Millard] that the deployment of literary devices and narrative strategies is not sufficient grounds in itself for judging a narrative to be fictive or invented.”<sup>24</sup> (29).

In the second chapter, titled “The Lateness of the Text,” *Text and History* considers text-critical markers in an attempt to trace the history of the text. The oldest extant texts leave us with “a wide gap” between the Qumran scrolls and early Iron Age events in the books of Kings (37). Regarding the text between its original state and how it appeared at Qumran in the second century B.C.E., “we can by no objective means determine the extent of later arranging, modernizing, and harmonizing efforts of a redactor” (37). For example, what looks like a text-critical marker could potentially be nothing more than a “stitch” or a “seam” between materials from two different sources (37, which quotes Gary Long “Written Story” 184). Because modern efforts to reconstruct developments leading to the final text are based on much less knowledge than that possessed by the final redactors, Kofoed agrees with Lemche that “The starting point for our analysis must, therefore, be these extant texts” (*Text and History* 38). Trying to discern reliable textual markers in texts that are themselves considered unreliable by some offers “little hope that we will ever find ‘conclusive evidence,’” but he discusses such markers in the books of Kings and in “comparison with similar markers in . . . material from the shared culture of the ancient Near East” (39).

Of particular importance is Kofoed's distinction between sources as primary or secondary versus sources as firsthand or secondhand:

A source is primary . . . if it stems directly from an eye- or ear-witness or, importantly, a later account that relies on an earlier *nonextant* source. In other words, a primary account is the oldest *extant* source available. The distinction between "primary" and "secondary" has to do, therefore, with the value or *importance* of the witness rather than its contemporaneity with the event it purports to describe. . . . A firsthand account will always be a primary source, but the opposite does not apply, because a secondhand account may be the oldest extant witness and therefore a primary source. This is precisely what is acknowledged in the field of medieval Scandinavian history, where the *sagas* are increasingly treated as primary sources, even though the extant manuscripts are late in relation to the events they purport to describe. (42, *emphases his*).

While all sources need to be examined for biases, "secondhand sources, in addition, are also infested with another problem, the corrupting impact of time on both the carriers of a tradition and the tradition itself" (43). "What is needed, therefore, are methodologically sound principles regarding the inclusion of late sources into the pool of evidence for early events" (47–48). For such principles, Kofoed relies on Meir Malul, *The Comparative Method* (1990) and, for the contextual method, William W. Hallo, "The Limits of Skepticism" (1990), plus works by James K. Hoffmeier, Alan R. Millard, K. Lawson Younger, and Jacob Lassner, taking the side of all of them (109).

Chapter 2 acknowledges Lemche's correctness "in pointing out the problem of controls in oral transmission" (59), but it goes on to make a case for the possibility and likelihood of a prolonged oral tradition transmitting accurate historical information that was committed to writing in the Hebrew Bible. It spends some thirty pages responding to Lemche's statements which follow:

[W]e may safely conclude that the ordinary man in the street had little if any knowledge of what may have happened in his country hundreds of years ago. We could of course think of a prolonged period of oral tradition handed down from father and mother to son and daughter, and there can be no doubt that such tradition existed and that tales were told. We also know that oral tradition . . . cannot be controlled. . . . It will never remain stable but will always be changing until the moment when it is written down . . . . (Lemche "Origin" 45–46, quoted in Kofoed *Text and History* 59)

In evaluating this "position statement," Kofoed credits Lemche with two things: first, sensitivity "to the general possibility in the ancient Near East of information being handed down through a prolonged oral tradition and that 'such tradition existed and tales were told' also in preexilic Israel" (77). Indeed, Kofoed observes, "[i]t has long been recognized and is a commonplace in contemporary Old Testament research that a prolonged oral transmission existed in preexilic Israel and that the written traditions of the Hebrew Bible to some extent are based on oral traditions" (59–60). Also, "his [Lemche's] comment on the written standardization of an oral tradition as a crucial point regarding its historical reliability must be acknowledged" (77).

But Kofoed finds Lemche's conclusion regarding the ignorance of "the man in the street" and the uncontrollability of oral transmission being "reason enough to reject the

reliability of the written tradition that is making use of it” to be based on two unsustainable assumptions (77):

First is the unsustainable assumption that parent-to-child was “the *only* channel” and that “tales” was the only “genre of oral transmission” (77). Kofoed observes that Lemche chose not to mention any other genre.

Second, “a similar narrow understanding of oral genres and performative settings” seems to underlie Lemche’s assertion “that the lack of external controls on oral transmission makes it impossible for the historian to regard the (late) written stabilization . . . as reliable . . . . [T]here is good reason to believe that traditions . . . were handed down in ways that preserved the “central thrust” (78).<sup>25</sup> Through rituals, commemorative ceremonies, etc., such things as the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple were kept in the historical memory of noble and commoner alike (79, based on Blenkinsopp “Memory, Tradition” 77–78, quoted in *Text and History* 78). And (braving the danger of circular reasoning) such things as rainbows, Passover observance, stones of remembrance, fringes on garments, and Absalom’s pillar are all portrayed in the Bible as means of historical recollection (80–81).

Recognizing that since there is no direct access to ancient oral traditions, one can only argue by analogy (69), Kofoed also adduces much currently valid research on oral tradition which supports that “historically reliable transmission is indeed possible” (68), including the following:

- “[C]urrent research on . . . modern oral societies has revealed an extraordinary ability to memorize, preserve, and transmit even vast amounts of information over several generations” (63, referring to Lord *Singer of Tales*, Vansina *Oral Tradition as History*, Connerton *How Societies Remember* and Ong *Orality and Literacy*). This ability “remains difficult for many Westerners to understand” (64).

- Despite the need to treat oral tradition very cautiously, “reliability cannot be rejected a priori, because certain kinds of oral transmission—due to their genre and performative setting—tend to be more stable and to preserve reliable historical information better than others” (64). “Factual traditions or accounts are transmitted differently—with more regard to faithful reproduction of content—than are fictional narratives” (Vansina *Oral Tradition as History* 13–14, quoted in *Text and History* 64).

- “[S]equentially arranged narratives or traditions may testify to a concept of time in which accuracy (in the sequence and description of events, persons, etc.) does matter and thus exemplify a genre far more able to preserve a tradition in a historically reliable way than, for example, topically arranged myth” (67).

- “[R]elevance to the transmitter and his or her interest in a tradition often makes it more viable, stable, and historically reliable,” as demonstrated by M. I. Finley (66). These motivating factors “increase the possibility of a prolonged oral tradition” (67).

- Identity-related information, such as “ancestral heritage and religious practices” are important to people, especially to “immigrant minorities,” which would include “Judeans . . . captured and deported” to Babylonia (98).

- On the question of whether biblical narrative exhibits “signs of oral transmission, . . . [Frank H.] Polak has made a good case for the books of Kings being created in a markedly oral environment” (80).

A “new consensus seems to be that no ‘great divide’ exists between orality and literacy” (83). Kofoed finds it “reasonable to assume that a prolonged oral tradition was indeed possible, *but* that such a tradition (if it existed in ancient Israel) must be seen alongside a possible *written* tradition” (88).

Mesopotamian texts that “continued to be copied for more than a thousand years,” as well as Egyptian and Ugaritic texts copied for many hundreds of years, show that it is possible that “a *written* tradition was handed down from, say the 9<sup>th</sup> century to the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E., thus providing the author(s) of the books of Kings with reliable historical information on early Israel’s history” (89, emphasis his). Periods of disruption could but did not always prevent written transmission of historical material (92–94). Further, texts that were regarded as sacred, such as Psalms, were copied with much greater care for faithful reproduction than other texts, such as Ben Sira (96).

It is most likely that the written traditions in the Hebrew Bible existed for a very long time before their Qumran exemplars appeared. “[W]e must allow a considerable time for the creation of the complex tradition of the Hebrew Bible . . . , because it is highly unlikely that both the basic concepts and the derived traditions came into being at the same time” (99). For them to have been produced “in one spurt of activity in Persian and/or Hellenistic times . . . would be without parallel in the entire ancient Near Eastern record” (99).

In sum, Kofoed finds that, starting with “the very same pool of available evidence,” both minimalists and maximalists reach conclusions that are consistent with their premises (110–111). “The issue is not, therefore, whether either the ‘maximalist’ or ‘minimalist’ version is correct but what kind of history we want to write (or read) and which presuppositions we want to guide the selection and interpretation of the sources” (111). Kofoed finds that Lemche’s premises “are to be seriously questioned,” and in fact the evidence Kofoed presents does seriously call into question “the *grounds*” for Lemche’s claims (111, emphasis his).

Lemche may be right on other grounds, of course, but given the corroborating arguments presented above and the unsustainability of the skeptical approach to secondhand sources that is fundamental to his and the other Copenhageners’ interpretation of the contemporary evidence, it is more likely that he is wrong. We *may*, therefore, reject the picture he paints of Iron Age Israel, because we cannot from the outset exclude the admittedly late [i.e., in attestation at Qumran] biblical narratives from the pool of reliable evidence.” (111–112, emphasis his)

The burden of chapter 5, “Genre,” in *Text and History* is to present “markers of *historical intention and referentiality*” (190, emphasis his).<sup>26</sup> “Genre recognition is paramount for any decision about whether to include or exclude the text as a historical source on the history of Iron Age Israel” (193). A survey of modern genre theory reveals that genre cannot be defined rigidly, nor can the ways in which one recognizes genre be rigidly described (199). Its definition and recognition “are subject to cultural change and consequently must be seen as historically-conditioned concepts” (199). “Literary critics [of whom Kofoed refers to several] . . . often describe genre with recourse to metaphors. E. D. Hirsch defines it in terms of the rules of a game or a code of social behavior: ‘Coming to understand the meaning of an utterance is like learning the rules of a game’” (200, quoting Hirsch *Validity in Interpretation* 70). “[M]ost scholars have rejected the

attack of ‘philosophical impositionism’ [e.g., that of White, Danto, and Berkhofer] and ‘antireferentialism’ . . . on the epistemic value of the historical narrative by maintaining that truth-claims in historical narratives are different from those of fiction because they can be checked and discussed against the available source material, the ‘voices of the past’” (201).

Kofoed finds Paul Ricoeur’s and John Marincola’s insights into genre “especially promising” (246). Ricoeur points out “three distinct phases in the process of history-writing: the documentary phase [involving written documents or ‘testimonies’<sup>27</sup>], the explanatory/comprehensive phase [which treats questions about causes and reasons], and the literary phase. . . . In the final, literary phase, the trusted, ‘raw’ material of the first phase is given order, based on the explanation of the second phase, in a literary representation, the *narrative* or historical discourse” (202). This three-tier model allows Ricoeur’s “novel observation” that “deployment of various literary devices” involves a tension, because it tends to lead away from “the referential character of historiography” (203). “[B]y implication, Ricoeur’s model demonstrates that the factuality or fictionality of a given textual element must be judged not on literary grounds [as T. L. Thompson does] but on explanatory (authorial intent) and especially documentary (testimony) evidence” (206).

Marincola shows he “is in full accord with modern genre research” in that “[i]nstead of maintaining the conventional taxonomy as the starting point of assigning genre labels to historical texts, he suggests that an analysis of historical works consider five criteria: whether they are *narrative* or *nonnarrative*,<sup>28</sup> and what their *focalization* [i.e., ‘the orientation or point of view, taken by the narrator’ (237)], *chronological limits*, *chronological arrangement*, and *subject matter* are” (235, emphasizes his). Kofoed finds “this method to be one of the most up-to-date and relevant approaches for determining whether a given ancient text should be considered history-writing or not” (246).

Kofoed observes, however, that the “books of Kings cannot be categorized as *either* narrative or nonnarrative. It depends on whether one focuses on the whole or its parts, because it is a multigenre product. If narrative is defined broadly as anything told or recounted, the books of Kings as a whole undeniably qualify as narrative . . . . Beneath the surface, however, the text is clearly a composite text, consisting of various text types” such as annotated lists, chronicle-like information, etc. (236, emphasis his). The last conclusion is that “. . . a more-detailed and precise designation for the genre of ancient Israelite history-writing (e.g., the books of Kings) must await further research” (247).

Kofoed makes it clear that his choice to treat methodology and presuppositions means that his published dissertation “cannot stand alone. The thesis cannot be further substantiated until case studies and analytically-oriented research have been done. We need new methodologically-conscious case studies on the books of Kings and other apparently historical books of the Hebrew Bible” (247). At least some of the works treated below and/or in Parts 3 and 4 of this article series seem to be what Kofoed would consider analytical in their orientation.

Further, his book closes with a wish for future research on “comparative historiography. The genre of the apparently historiographical texts in the Hebrew Bible has so far largely been determined [sc., by minimalists] on the basis of foreign (i.e.,

Greek) standards, and further research is necessary before it can be valued on its own terms” (247). Averbeck’s short study, treated next, makes a contribution in this area.

### Richard E. Averbeck

Although Averbeck’s essay, “Sumer, the Bible, and Comparative Method: Historiography and Temple Building,” is not a major work, it exemplifies the theory and logic of a sophisticated maximalist approach. In response to John Van Seters (97–103), this essay observes but does not endorse Van Seters’ distinction between what is truly *history writing* and historiography. The latter, in Van Seters’ view, is at a lower level. Averbeck does not find the ancient Near East bereft of history writing, whereas Van Seters proposes that it was, until Greek influence via the Phoenicians led the Hebrews to write the history we call Genesis through 2 Kings. He does agree with Van Seters, however,

that “history writing” was in ancient times, as it is today, a literary endeavor that not only records past situations and events but also imposes a certain form upon them. Thus, [Averbeck affirms,] the way in which the ancients wrote history needs to be taken into account when one makes a judgment about whether or not Genesis through 2 Kings can properly be called ancient “history writing.” (Averbeck 98)

He then points out one of Shemaryahu Talmon’s four principles for employing the comparative method in biblical interpretation: correspondence of social function (Talmon “Comparative Method”). Averbeck refers to Johan Huizinga’s well known, supra-cultural definition of history as “the intellectual form in which a civilization renders account *to itself* of its past” (Huizinga 9, emphasis mine), which he understands to be “primarily a *sociological* definition of history” (Averbeck 98, emphasis his). As such, it is well suited for applying Talmon’s principle of correspondence of social function. Later, in relation to modern ways of labeling Genesis chapters 1–11 as “founding myth,” “legend,” or, without necessarily implying anything fictional, “theology” (108), Averbeck contrasts these with the ancient view:

[I]t must be recognized that [as with a Sumerian example] . . . and other ancient Near Eastern compositions of its kind, the ancients themselves did not see this as ‘fiction.’ The ‘theology’ of the composition was simply treated as an essential part of their true ‘history’ (in the sense of historically accurate ‘history writing’). (Averbeck “Sumer” 108–109)

Similarly, in the Hebrew Bible Genesis 1–11 is presented as ‘history’, not ‘myth’ or ‘fiction’. Van Seters himself is willing to include Genesis 1–11 in his category of ‘history writing’ (although he would argue that it is a case of ‘mythologization of history’) (Van Seters 1992: 26–27, 188–93). Part of the reason for this is the genealogical framework that runs through the entire book. By taking this framework seriously, . . . one is able to show that Genesis 1–11 is presented as an integral part of the history of Israel. It is just as historical as Genesis 12–50 and Exodus through 2 Kings, from the perspective of the text. There is no primary distinction between myth, legend, and history here. (Averbeck “Sumer” 109)

Averbeck also points out that the books of Joshua, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Nehemiah, and Esther, considered together, treat their “pre-existing sources” (106) by using a sizeable number of references. “The sheer number of sources and references to

them must be taken into consideration when assessing the concern for historicity in ancient Israelite history writing. I would argue that this comes as close to our standards of reference as we could expect them to come in the ancient Near East” (107).

### Iain W. Provan

Because his work seems both more sharply focused in its critical approach and more extensive than most others, here, as with Kofoed’s, it receives greater attention. Provan was among the first to issue a major challenge to minimalist methodology, (“Ideologies, Literary and Critical” 1995), and he has devoted repeated efforts to making a case for considering biblical data on an equal footing with other evidences in historical study.

Along with “Ideologies,” Provan’s main publications along this line are: “The Historical Books of the Old Testament” (1998) and “In the Stable with the Dwarves” (2000). Also, in the co-authored *A Biblical History of Israel* (2003), he wrote the major share of most chapters in the section, “History, Historiography, and the Bible.”<sup>29</sup> (His publications avoid using the terms *minimalism* and *minimalist*.)

In “Ideologies,” Provan responds to minimalist contentions that the Bible cannot present history, because it consists, rather, of story, which is the product of ideology, and that ideology has led some non-minimalist biblical scholars to forsake objectivity (588). He considers all historiography to be ideological, but he disputes “that ideology itself renders these biblical and modern texts problematic in a way that the more recent histories of Israel are not problematic. It is simply in the nature of historiography . . . that it is problematic in just these terms . . . . Confessionalism of a religious sort is attacked in the name of critical inquiry and objectivity, but the noisy ejection of religious commitment through the *front* door of the scholarly house is only a cover for the quieter smuggling in (whether conscious or unconscious) of a quite different form of commitment through the *rear*” (605, emphasis his).

Provan finds the faith commitment of Philip R. Davies to be, as J. Maxwell Miller has termed it, “positivist” (601). Note: this term does not necessarily specify commitment to every trait of fully developed philosophical positivism, but only to its general approach, that is, evaluating historical texts according to some consistent standard of verification. Provan puts this approach in contrast with treating all available written sources (testimonies) as evidence on a case-to-case basis. He understands minimalists to claim that there is only one way to do history, a claim which he finds to be groundless (602). Further, “. . . if its [i.e., their positivist approach’s] level of skepticism with regard to some favorite things [such as the biblical text] were applied consistently to everything, there could be no knowledge of anything” (602).

Provan describes his own position as “traditional middle ground” (603), “an approach that seeks to build broadly based hypotheses on all the available evidence, textual and otherwise; an approach that certainly does not decide a priori which parts of the evidence should be utilized and which ignored; an approach that does not require ‘proof’ before accepting something as true, however provisional that truth might be considered to be; an approach that considers the doing of history to be art, and not science, in what we may now call the old-fashioned and outdated sense of the latter term” (603).

Regarding Provan’s second main publication, the encyclopedia article, “The Historical Books of the Old Testament,” James Barr’s support for Provan’s position, over

against Davies' position, ironically resulted in something like "friendly fire." Ever the perceptive critic, Barr enumerated inconsistencies and weaknesses he found in Provan's "Ideologies" and "Historical Books," (*History and Ideology* 66–69, 74–82). He found that Provan's opening salvo in "Ideologies" presents a stronger argument than "Historical Books" (69, 73–79). Barr's treatment in *History and Ideology* 74–82 serves as a critical summary of "Historical Books."

Provan's third main publication, "In the Stable with the Dwarves" (a 1998 conference paper published in 2000), is best understood as a reply to 1995 journal articles by Thomas L. Thompson and Philip R. Davies.<sup>30</sup> It begins by offering three clarifications of points in "Ideologies" that Provan states are misunderstood. First, he has not opposed the minimalist position "primarily because of . . . [his] theology" (282–283). That is, his view of Scripture does not require him "to defend its historicity against all-comers," nor "to treating it, as historical source, differently from any other historical source," nor to adopt a position of "'maximal conservatism' on historical matters" (283). He opposes "the marginalization of the Hebrew Bible in the task of writing the history of Israel," certainly not because his Christian faith leads him to "revere these texts as part of Christian Scripture," but instead "on the grounds of epistemology and logic" (283).

His second clarification is that he is "perfectly aware" he is "also raising questions about various aspects of Enlightenment historical method" and is "happy to raise these questions for consideration" (284). "[T]he perceived sanctity of method . . . has . . . stifled debate . . . about the truly important question which should lie at the heart of any discussion about the history of Israel. How do we know what we claim to know about the reality of the past?" (284). Later, in *Biblical History*, Provan examines it at greater length.

His third clarification is that he does not at all view the biblical text as unproblematic. Provan's "position is, rather, that the Hebrew Bible is indeed problematic for the historian, but that it is no more essentially problematic as a window onto the past than any other kinds of material available to him or her. The problem . . . lies not with the Bible . . . [but] rather with the historian" (285–286). "[M]uch recent scholarship is indeed unaware of the epistemological problems involved in writing history" (286). He then expresses what seems to be the main burden of this article:

We "know" what we claim to know about the past . . . by listening to testimony, to interpretation, and by exercising faith. There is no good reason . . . to think that any testimony and interpretation should be required to "verify" itself in some way before being listened to. Nor is there any good reason to think that any testimony and interpretation can be pre-judged either positively or negatively by "method" rather than being listened to on its own terms. The only rational course of action for the person interested in the reality of history is, in fact, to consider all the testimony and interpretation available to him or her and to make his/her judgments on a case by case basis about whether and how far it is to be believed. (301)<sup>31</sup>

Provan characterizes the above paragraph as a "position of epistemological openness" (302). Other positions are "only selectively open," such as "some of the recent scholarship on the history of Israel," which is "open to receive testimony about Israel's past predominantly or entirely from non-biblical sources." But it is "predominantly or entirely closed to testimony from the Bible itself" (304). "The grounds upon which this epistemological privileging of non-biblical testimony can be defended are, however,

entirely unclear” (306).<sup>32</sup> In a later section, Provan compares Philip R. Davies’ treatment of Sennacherib’s invasion of Judah with his own approach. In this discussion, it becomes clear that Davies accepts the Assyrian version (310–311, 316, 317), even though it is no less ideological than biblical accounts.

Although Thomas L. Thompson claims to “know” that “[h]istory no longer has room” for ancient Israel (305), Provan states, “*he* actually knows nothing of the kind” (italics Provan’s), but is simply expressing a strongly held belief. He “has decided to invest faith in certain testimonies about the past rather than others, the most notable of the ‘others’ being the testimony of the Hebrew Bible” (306). Provan offers the trenchant, even harsh criticism that such so-called “[k]nowledge” becomes the wall that we build around ourselves to protect ourselves from reality” (306–307). “[W]hen Enlightenment scholarship gets to this point, it is essentially no different from . . . fundamentalist religion. It is closed in on itself, unable and unwilling to hear voices from the outside” (307). Hence Provan’s title, “In the Stable with the Dwarves,” refers to C. S. Lewis’ depiction of such a group.<sup>33</sup>

In Iain W. Provan, V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel* (2003), the first of its two parts consists of five chapters on methodology (1–104) comprising one-third of the book’s main body of text. Chapters 1–3 and a short chapter 5 are written mainly by Iain Provan, and chapter 4 is mostly by V. Philips Long. The rest of the book applies that methodology to the writing of a history of Israel.<sup>34</sup>

Provan’s chapters develop major points mentioned in his previous publications. He observes that ancient non-biblical sources offer very uneven coverage of time periods, are in many instances difficult to read intelligibly due to their poor condition, and present only a partial picture, rather than a comprehensive one. William F. Albright’s scientific use of external controls through archaeological discoveries ultimately foundered on the reality that “archaeology offers little support of the kind that is necessary” (26). But the past, Provan insists, is not rendered inaccessible, because literary forms and conventions, ideological goals, and religious bias do not preclude the intention to present an accurate historical account. “Ideological literature can also, in whole or in part, be historically accurate literature” (*Biblical History* 69). (Halpern insisted on this historiographic intent among the biblical authors of the Deuteronomistic History as early as 1988 in *First Historians* 235.)

Further, Provan finds no reason to make any particular source pass a verification test, especially while other sources having literary qualities, ideological goals, and religious bias are given a free pass. Verification would have to be based on other potentially fallible testimony, and it would inevitably be applied only to a selected target(s), instead of evenhandedly to all testimonies (55–56). Provan rejects requiring that testimony from a particular source be verified, simply because that source *might* be wrong. “Thus it is made to seem inevitable that any truly critical scholar will adopt a principled suspicion of the whole Old Testament in respect of historical work” (54). Instead of blanket discrediting of any particular source, as one of many scholars who share the insistence on examining *all* relevant evidence, he insists on thoughtful, case-by-case evaluation (55, 74).

It is, indeed, judgment that is required: the judgment of the epistemologically open person . . . .

“Rules” of evidence cannot prejudge whether particular testimonies are worthy of faith or not. . . . No intellectually defensible way is available to avoid, in the particular case, the inevitable consideration of all testimonies together, weighing them up on their own terms and in comparison with each other and asking how far they are each likely (or not) to be in actual relationship to the events to which they refer. (73)

But Provan is not merely opposed to minimalism and its historiographic approach to the history of Israel. His goal is much greater. He seeks to expose faulty epistemology that has led to minimalism. “To argue the case, one would have to subject the whole “scientific” approach to historiography to critique” (26). Such a critique is precisely what Provan undertakes, dealing primarily with epistemological issues in an argument that spans three chapters (9–74).<sup>35</sup>

In beginning to deal with Keith W. Whitelam’s affirmation of “the death of biblical history,”<sup>36</sup> Provan’s “Two Initial Case Studies” (9–18) treat two histories from the 1980s, one by J. Alberto Soggin and the other co-authored by J. Maxwell Miller and John Hayes.<sup>37</sup> He has selected these two because Whitelam refers specifically to them, and his focus is on Whitelam’s thinking. Provan presents his case that in both of these histories, the biblical period that serves as “firm ground” for the starting point of genuine history<sup>38</sup> in the Bible is chosen arbitrarily. Both Soggin and Miller-Hayes (and in 27–31, Martin Noth) provide only weak, insufficient support for the distinction between the beginning of historically “firm ground” and preceding, historically unreliable portions of Scripture, which, Provan argues, are not significantly different. Finding no clear dividing line for either book’s firm beginning of history in the Bible, Provan finds that it is “no great step” (14; or “a very short step” 18) for Whitelam to assert the logical outcome: that the Hebrew Bible provides no such “firm ground.” Rather, the Hebrew Bible consists almost entirely of literary fiction, without historical value. “Miller and Hayes and Soggin lead on naturally, then, to Whitelam” (18).

Even Philip R. Davies’ (*In Search*, 1992) assigning to “the books of Ezra and Nehemiah the central place in his historical reconstruction of the postexilic period” (31), though with significant limitations, is for Provan yet another unsuccessful attempt to find a starting point for history in the biblical text (32). Unlike Davies, however, Whitelam is not at all “reluctant to follow the logic of the positivist attitude to tradition through to its logical conclusion” (32), that there is no firm historical ground at all in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>39</sup> In Whitelam’s position, post-Enlightenment historiography arrives at its full fruition.<sup>40</sup>

From this point in his analysis, Provan’s logic calls for a broad critique of the post-Enlightenment development of the discipline of history in a “scientific” direction. “History was to be assumed to lie *behind* tradition [including the biblical text] and to be more or less distorted by it. The point, then, was not to listen to tradition and to be guided by it in what it said about the past, but if possible, to see through tradition to the history that might (or indeed might not) exist behind it. The onus now fell on tradition to verify itself, rather on than on the historian to falsify it” (24).<sup>41</sup> Thus positivist views took charge. Developments in historiography that began with nineteenth-century German historians and biblical scholars maintained this basic disposition toward the Bible as a source for history.

Building on his argument against nineteenth-century “scientific” historiography and summarizing the views of those who challenged it, Provan refers to the “collapse of the nineteenth-century historiographical model” (43). He enumerates three responses which historians of ancient Israel can make to this stated collapse. They can 1) ignore it, 2) choose the postmodern “extreme reaction” against modernism (44), or 3), with Provan, “revisit some fundamental questions about epistemology.” Notably included in 3), which would otherwise have been a broad third option allowing for diverse approaches, is the specific view (disputed by Grabbe “Big Max” 215–217) that historians of ancient Israel need to give “proper place to philosophy and tradition” in historiography (44).

#### V. Philips Long

In the co-authored *A Biblical History of Israel*, Long is the predominant author of chapter 4, “Narrative and History: Stories about the Past” (75–97). He points out that “Attempts to find firmer ground [than biblical testimony for Israel’s history] in the supposedly more scientific fields of archaeology and/or social theory overlook the fact that these means of access to Israel’s past are no more ‘objective’ in any meaningful sense than the biblical testimony, given that each involves a significant measure of interpretation” (75).

The chapter goes on to deal with the fact that “[a]nalytical philosophers . . . argued that narratives involve art, not science; are thus by nature interpretive; and are therefore insufficiently objective” (75–76). But following a period in which “quantifying histories were preferred, narrative history has made a strong comeback among historians” (76). “[L]ittle remains to commend any longer an antinarrative stance” (79).

Regarding the literary aspect of the Bible, Long argues that “[m]ost biblical texts were not composed as “pure” literature (i.e., art for art’s sake), but as “applied” literature . . . they often instruct, recount, exhort, or some combination of these and more.” Therefore, “a happy marriage between literary and historical concerns is possible, desirable, and necessary” (81), so that “as we read biblical narratives better as narratives, in keeping with ancient conventions and techniques, better historical reconstructions become possible” (76). “*Where biblical texts make historical truth claim, ahistorical readings are perforce misreadings*—which remains the case, whatever one’s opinions may be regarding the truth value of those claims” (81, emphasis mine).

Long then deals with the question of constructionism (espoused by Hayden White): “whether the past has any inherent meaning or only appears to have meaning by virtue of the historian’s narrative shaping of events” (81). It is “hard to deny that life has a narrative quality about it” (83). Long states, “Our position is that, just as the physical world has contours, so life itself has contours, structure, meaningfully connected features. And just as the task of a representational artist is to perceive the subject’s contours and represent them in a visual medium, so the task of the historian is to recognize the past’s contours and meaningfully connected features and to represent them in a verbal medium. . . the historian’s creativity is constrained by the actualities of the subject . . .” (84). Thus history writing is “both an art and a science” (97).

Moving on to Long’s “How Reliable Are Biblical Reports? Repeating Lester Grabbe’s Comparative Experiment,” he repeats an experiment that Grabbe had carried out earlier in “Are Historians,” taking care to use only the same sources. Readily

admitting his own preconceptions about “the reliability of biblical reports,” Long manages to cancel the effect of what appear to be presuppositions that run counter to his own (“How Reliable” 382–383) and arrive at conclusions that give every appearance of being better supported.<sup>42</sup> This experiment shows that following centuries-old scientific method in taking the simple step of repetition by others in can help lead to conclusions that are relatively more objective. It seems surprising that more scholars have not attempted to emulate this example where possible. Although many issues are complex, it might be possible to tease out smaller, “bite-sized” questions from these issues for repeated treatments by others.

Long’s perhaps most revealing essay, “The Future of Israel’s Past: Personal Reflections,” comes at the end of his edited volume, *Israel’s Past*. He hopes that scholars will be open about their core beliefs: “what are the reality models embraced by scholars, evinced by texts, and inherent in methods?” (586). He also wants scholars to distinguish between the truth-claims of the biblical text and “their personal response to these claims (that is, their own beliefs regarding the truth value of said claims)” (589). Regarding the historical-critical method, following William J. Abraham, *Divine Revelation*, Long wishes to see the three chief principles of the historical method defined so as to accommodate the full spectrum of scholars, including believers. “The principle of criticism . . . should be defined not in terms of systematic doubt but in terms of a thoughtful appraisal of the evidence in keeping with its source” (589). The principle of analogy should employ a definition broader than the one restricted to the experience of the historian, his or her contemporaries, or recent times (589). The definition of the principle of correlation should be not just material, which allows only natural causes, but should be formal, permitting “*personal* agency, not merely human agency, and thus God is allowed back into the picture” (589, emphasis his). Long also suggests that the use of the social sciences be limited to providing background on “general features of societies and cultures, . . . [because] they are usually ill suited to pronounce on *specific* events and individuals” (589). He also sees a need for more exploration of how “the legitimate results of modern literary studies . . . bear upon historical questions and at times challenge prior [i.e., Wellhausian] historical-critical judgments” (590).

Long’s *The Art of Biblical History* (1994), published soon after the 1992 stoking of the controversy involving basic concepts and methodological foundations, is a clearly written, basic introduction to the issues involved, intended for theology students. It is consonant with “Long’s clear commitment to biblical historicity.”<sup>43</sup> The book makes only tangential mention of minimalists.<sup>44</sup> The main value of the book is its overall treatment of the bundle of methodological issues that are involved in considering the Bible as theology, history, and literature, without slighting any of the three.<sup>45</sup> It explores “[h]ow these three interests are coordinated in the biblical texts” (13). Each of its six chapters addresses a particular range of issues, such as those related to genre and historicity, and ends with a conclusion section.<sup>46</sup>

Like Kofoed (treated above), Long stresses, in the first major point of the first chapter of his book, that the Bible is a product of distant cultures, “a foreign book,” therefore, one should seek to understand its literary genres, not simply considering them to be identical to those in any modern culture (30–35). At the same time, there must be some affinity between biblical genres and our own for us to have any comprehension at all of biblical

texts, or else their meaning would be completely hidden, much like “a foreign language that shared no conceptual categories with our own (e.g., nouns, verbs, prepositions)” (35).

### James K. Hoffmeier

His *Ancient Israel in Sinai* (2005) treats methodology mainly in chapters 1 and 2 (17–33). Chapter 1 begins by observing a “reductionist or revisionist agenda driving the recent debate, be it positivist or postmodern” (19). Like William G. Dever, Hoffmeier classifies minimalism as a postmodern approach, for example, in his criticisms of statements by Philip R. Davies and Thomas L. Thompson (15; Dever *What Did* 23–27).<sup>47</sup> He then makes three points that have become familiar in the present series of articles, regarding the gap between event and writing, wrong use of absence of evidence, and the error of not treating biblical texts on an equal footing with other evidence.<sup>48</sup>

At the end of chapter 1, he summarizes his chosen “approach to reading the Bible” in his book, *Ancient Israel*, as

1. treating the Bible critically but without condescension. Unfortunately, too many minimalist historians seem to have confused a critical reading with a skeptical reading: the more skeptical, the more objective. I reject this premise.
2. reading the Hebrew Bible contextually, that is, trying to understand and interpret the Bible through the lens of data provided by other ancient texts, archaeological data, geography, and so on. This means being sensitive to ancient literary conventions, which should help prevent a literal reading when a metaphorical reading was intended, and vice versa, and not forcing modern literary conventions on ancient texts. [See the section on Averbeck above.]
3. assuming that when a historical claim is made that it was intended to communicate some reality. I will assume the text to be innocent until proven guilty, rather than guilty until proven innocent. If a particular genre is encountered that is known for its use of hyperbole or nonchronological narration, these features will be taken into account before rendering a conclusion. [This point affirms the referentialism, fits the definition of maximalism, and emphasizes interpretation according to genre, in accord with various sections above.] (Hoffmeier *Ancient Israel* 22)

Chapter 2 examines how historians of religion view the episodes of the wilderness tradition (Exodus chapter 16 through Numbers chapter 20). Observing “the impasse between the scientific (modern) hermeneutic and the postmodern approach to the wilderness tradition,” Hoffmeier finds the phenomenological approach to be “a way out” (ix; in the present article, the section on Provan above treats the “scientific” approach).

The chapter describes the approach of nineteenth-century *Religionswissenschaft* (science of religion) including its *a priori* features which artificially predispose results in certain ways and have been rejected by phenomenologists of religion (28). Among these features are “reducing Israelite religion to its commonality with other religions, rather than stressing its differences or uniqueness,” “rejecting the concept of revelation,” and “holding evolutionary theory as foundational” (23). The evolutionary model is factually untrue, for example, in the case of Akhenaten’s religious revolt during a ten-to-fifteen-year period (28). A revealing quotation from Roland K. Harrison mentions Julius Wellhausen’s basing his documentary theory on “only a small part of the evidence” and his “complete indifference toward subsequent anthropological or archaeological

discoveries, even though they demanded a substantial modification of his original position” (24; Harrison *Introduction* 355).

Hoffmeier offers a brief survey of the study of Israel’s religion in the past century (24), noting the recent change exemplified by two of Mark Smith’s books, which “focus primarily on archaeological data” and observing that “Moses, the exodus, and the wilderness tradition play no role for Smith” (25). Hoffmeier finds “tension in pitting archaeology against the Bible” or vice versa. “A purely artifact-based reconstruction of Israel’s religion is destined to reflect almost entirely popular religion, inasmuch as excavation within the Temple Mount in Jerusalem . . . remains off limits to investigators” (25). On the other hand, the reflection of popular religion in inscriptions discovered at Khirbet el-Kom and Kuntillet Ajrud “that mention YHWH and his Asherah . . . complete the picture of what the prophets so regularly denounced.” (26). Dever pointedly remarks that when we “look closely at the condemnation of religious practices in the texts of the Hebrew Bible. . . . we are making a practical and legitimate assumption, namely that prophets, priests, and reformers ‘know what they were talking about.’ That is, the situation about which they complained was real, not invented by them . . . .” (*What Did* 195).

Hoffmeier’s most profound and seemingly most needed methodological emphasis concerns variations in historiography from one culture to another, including variations across time. Hoffmeier takes as a starting point Huizinga’s observation, that “every civilization creates its own form of history” (21; Huizinga “Definition” 1–10). Therefore, “the present-day scholar should not demand that ancient literature—Egyptian, Assyrian, or Hebrew—must conform to a Western understanding of historiography to be considered historical, and we should not expect to find a one-size-fits-all genre called ‘historiography’ as advocated by Van Seters” (Hoffmeier *Ancient Israel* 21 with Mendenhall *Ancient Israel’s Faith* 43 providing support; Van Seters *In Search* chapters 1 and 7). Rather, Hoffmeier employs the “contextual approach” advocated by Hallo *Biblical History*. (Thus his approach agrees well with Kofoed’s, described above.)

Recognition of different worldviews “is an important starting point” that the phenomenological approach addresses (28), in contrast to Enlightenment rationalism (27).<sup>49</sup> No less a scholar of religion than Mircea Eliade advanced the phenomenological approach.<sup>50</sup> Hoffmeier views Ziony Zevit’s *Religions of Ancient Israel* (2001) as superior to other studies of ancient Israel’s religion because it adopts this approach, which “takes history seriously.” “This method has been widely used by historians of religion in the twentieth century, though most religionists who have studied ancient Israelite religion seem unaware of it” (26).

Having based his dissertation on a phenomenological approach twenty-five years ago, Hoffmeier summarizes its main points as follows:

1. It is descriptive in the sense of being *Religionsgeschichtlich* (inclined to take a history-of-religion direction) in approach, but rejects the assumption that only what is rational is real.
2. It is a comparative discipline, employing comparative materials from other religious traditions . . . .

3. It employs bracketing, that is, it requires empathy toward what is investigated and suspends judgment on the phenomenon so as to avoid the bias that might come from one's worldview or the limitations of one's experience.

4. It is empirical in the sense of collecting and examining data without a priori judgments and assumptions.

5. It is intentional, in that it treats acts of "consciousness as consciousness of something." For Otto<sup>51</sup> this meant that there was an intended numinous object.

6. It is historical in that it must be investigated within the context of history (so Eliade) and work alongside historical research, and in many cases be able to clarify problems for the historian. (33).

Hoffmeier uses the phenomenological approach to investigate the wilderness tradition in *Ancient Israel in Sinai* in ways described by Paul Ricoeur, both as "a tool for explicating religious experience" and "for interpreting texts" (33).

### **Brief Concluding Observations**

There is an impressive array of views worth considering among the twenty-four non-minimalist scholars whose positive contributions are treated in Parts 2.1 and 2.2 of this series. Works that are neither maximalist nor minimalist present a broad, healthy spectrum of approaches, and maximalist publications exhibit strong, substantial agreement on many aspects of methodology and undergirding rationale.

In a total of approximately sixty pages of text, Parts 2.1 and 2.2 have introduced readers to especially relevant works by two dozen authors. One purpose has been to aid in literature review. Occasional mention of points of comparison is also an initial move in the direction of a more organized, analytical treatment of the rich but sometimes bewildering variety of scholarship in this specialized area.

The author sincerely regrets that limits of space have prevented coverage of many valuable works by other worthy scholars. Particularly regretted is the failure to include in the previous article, Mykytiuk "Strengthening Part 2.1," any treatment of Lester Grabbe's judicious comments on minimalist publications in his many edited volumes.<sup>52</sup> These would have greatly improved more than one aspect of the section "Toward a Balanced View of Minimalism: A Summary of Published Critiques."

In the rest of this series, Parts 3 and 4 are to treat select works on external evidences, namely, archaeology and epigraphy, and Part 5 select works on internal evidences in the Bible, including those that are linguistic.

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### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Preceding articles in this single-author series, which are in this same journal, are: "Strengthening Part 1" (2010) and "Strengthening Part 2.1" (2012).

<sup>2</sup> Among this article series' select treatments of methodology since 2008 are works by Anthony J. Frendo, Nadav Na'aman, and Israel Finkelstein:

Anthony J. Frendo

His *Pre-Exilic Israel, the Hebrew Bible, and Archaeology: Integrating Text and Artefact* (2011) is a reflective work that traces a path through conflicting views. Its opening chapters specify the distinctions between archaeology and history but emphasize their very close relationship as two sides of the same coin.

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Both “offer data to the scholar which need to be interpreted correctly for facts to be established” (25). Vis-à-vis minimalism, Frendo establishes the major point that relating biblical and archaeological evidence “without confusing one with the other is a must . . . Nothing short of all the available evidence must be seriously taken into account” (7). Also, rather than following some minimalists in requiring near-absolute proof in order to regard a historical event as true, the book recognizes the need not only for logic, but also for “prudence and common sense in order to reach truth” (99). Therefore, “it is impossible to eliminate the personal element” (99). In chapter 7, investigation of an example in the book of Joshua demonstrates that “some things about ancient Israel can be known with a high degree of probability and that therefore historical relativism is untenable” (102). Also, the use of a historical narrative for the purpose of propaganda “does not mean that whenever we find elements of propaganda in the narratives of ancient Israel we are dealing with fiction” (102). Further, “later traditions can contain old and authentic historical information” (103), and, as unexpected archaeological discoveries have shown, “the fact that no archaeological evidence supports a given biblical text does not mean that such a text is to be automatically viewed as untrustworthy. The reliability of a text should be established via other means, such as that of historical criticism” (103). At its most basic level, Frendo observes that “the debate between the so-called maximalists and minimalists centres on whether one accepts that we can know the truth about the past, albeit imperfectly, or whether one endorses the self-defeating assumption of relativism and scepticism” (104). Still, he finds good and bad historians among minimalists and non-minimalists, which he feels is a better distinction than which position a scholar favors (105).

#### Nadav Na’aman

Although he does not usually publish on theory *per se*, Na’aman’s book chapter, “Does Archaeology Really Deserve the Status of a ‘High Court’ in Biblical Historical Research?” (2011), addresses a theoretical question. (The next section below concerns Israel Finkelstein’s reply.) Na’aman begins by tracing the developments that reasonably led “many biblical scholars” (166) to rely increasingly on archaeology as “scientific” and to regard biblical texts with growing uncertainty or mistrust as sources of reliable historical data (165–166). Thus he explains conditions favoring the rise of minimalism.

While acknowledging the value of archaeology, Na’aman goes on to present instances in which it seems advisable to reject the primacy of archaeology as a source of data for the history of ancient Israel. He examines “a series of test-cases in which the documentary evidence disagrees with the results of the archaeological research. In the light of this comparison, . . . [he points out some] *circumstances in which* the archaeological research is quite limited and should be treated with great caution” (162, emphasis mine), namely, multi-layered highland sites.

His six test-cases begin with the fourteenth century B.C.E. Amarna letters compared with archaeology at four cities in the land of Canaan, including Jerusalem. Next come cases comparing other ancient texts and archaeological results regarding Jerusalem in three later periods, then Gibeah of Benjamin, and finally Bethel. All involve wide discrepancies between textual accounts and archaeological discoveries—or their absence.

Na’aman’s prime example of highland cities is “the old city of Jerusalem, which was built on terraces and settled for thousands of years, each new city resting its foundations on bedrock, destroying what had stood on it” (183). He concludes that “The old truth, ‘absence of evidence is not evidence of absence’, is particularly applicable for multi-layered highland sites and should always be taken into consideration” (183). “The discussion of the documents and the archaeological finding demonstrates the dangers of ignoring the limitations of either of these disciplines. Exclusive reliance on one of them alone can produce a distorted picture. Only the skilful [*sic*] use of both can lead to a balanced evaluation of the ancient reality” (183).

#### Israel Finkelstein

Finkelstein understands archaeology to be “the only real-time witness to many of the events described in the biblical text” (“Digging” 19). In relation to the preceding section on Na’aman, his online article, “Archaeology as a High Court in Ancient Israelite History: A Reply to Nadav Na’aman” (2010, perhaps in response to a pre-publication copy of Na’aman’s chapter) briefly defends what he feels is the proper preeminence of archaeological research by short replies to each of Na’aman’s six test-cases mentioned above. This publication is useful for locating weaknesses and debatable points in Na’aman’s examples. Ultimately it replies directly with only a single, carefully worded, closing sentence: “. . . [W]hen solid data from well-excavated sites is compared to assumptions regarding the nature of biblical texts and their date of

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compilation, the former should prevail, at least until tested by new archaeological evidence or extra-biblical texts” (Finkelstein “Archaeology as a High Court” 7). It seems difficult to disagree with the general, abstract concept that “solid data” should prevail over what are characterized as mere “assumptions.” Not all of the texts Na’aman uses are biblical, so such assumptions are not always involved, yet Finkelstein appears to have neutralized each of the test-cases. But because the article focuses on those six cases, it bypasses potentially productive engagement with Na’aman’s main point, which appears to be entirely reasonable.

In a 2005 colloquium with Amihai Mazar, Finkelstein presented his overall position at length. That colloquium appears in *The Quest for the Historical Israel* (2007). The first of Finkelstein’s chapters in this book, “Digging for the Truth: Archaeology and the Bible,” spells out his overall approach to the question of the Bible as a source of historical data.

(Mazar’s overall position appears in *his* first chapter, “On Archaeology, Biblical History, and Biblical Archaeology.” The content of this chapter does not appear in the section under his name in Mykytiuk “Strengthening Part 2.1” 122–123. Mazar defends the concept of a “biblical archaeology” as archaeological research into the world of the Bible which maintains an essential relationship between artifact and biblical text. Without granting supremacy to archaeology for the history of ancient Israel and its neighbors, Mazar sees archaeology as a very valuable independent witness to that history and uses it as a control for discerning whether a biblical text is relevant. Despite the literary and ideological factors in the Bible, and despite the complex factors involved in the composition and transmission of the biblical text, Mazar provisionally holds to the potential for blocks of biblical material to be historically relevant and to preserve very early historical memories. For Mazar, the convergences between the Bible and royal inscriptions tend to confirm the general historical picture in the Deuteronomistic History for the ninth century—much of 1–2 Kings. Still, he finds that many intervening factors render the history revealed through the biblical text less and less clear as one attempts to view earlier and earlier periods.)

Finkelstein calls his own position “a voice from the center” (Finkelstein and Mazar *Quest* 9). He accepts the higher criticism founded on the Documentary Hypothesis (JEDP) as modified since its nineteenth-century formulations. He also accepts a revised form of Noth’s hypothesis of the Deuteronomistic History, i.e., the overall compositional unity of Joshua through 2 Kings. He sees the Anglo-American biblical archaeology of the twentieth century as a conservative attempt to rescue biblical studies from the higher criticism by archaeological research (as might seem justifiable based on the background of William F. Albright). Because it made the Bible central and relegated archaeology to a supportive role, Finkelstein understands it to have been a factor that contributed to stalling the development of archaeology in the Levant. He also describes the school of biblical minimalism in terms of its negative view of the Bible as a historical source and its positive view of the Bible’s literary power.

Nevertheless, *contra* biblical minimalism, Finkelstein finds that within the Iron Age (which in the Levant enveloped 1000 to 500 B.C.E.), there is a remarkable convergence between the results of archaeological surveys and settlement studies, historical data found in extrabiblical inscriptions, and biblical traditions. He finds the lengthy geographical and administrative data in the Deuteronomistic History to be “unnecessary” (Finkelstein and Mazar *Quest* 15), in that they go far beyond what was needed in a concocted myth of national origins to fulfill the political function envisioned by minimalists (cf. Part 2.1 of this article series for a similar observation elaborated by E. W. Nicholson). Finkelstein also observes that linguist Avi Hurvitz showed that “much of the Deuteronomistic History is written in late-monarchic Hebrew, which is different from the Hebrew of post-exilic times” (14; see the future Part 5 of this article series). Finally, the 1993 discovery of an Aramaic victory stele at Tel Dan which mentions “the house of David” using a common idiom “naming a state (Judah) after the founder of its ruling (or dominant) dynasty” struck “a major blow” to the minimalist school, which earlier had energetically contended for the non-existence of David and Solomon (14). Finkelstein’s last chapter, “Short Summary” (183–188), and Mazar’s last chapter “Concluding Summary” (189–195), tell more about their approaches.

<sup>3</sup> Note that Vaughn’s methodological views and Kitchen’s (in *On the Reliability*) are the same on the first perception but opposed on the second.

<sup>4</sup> This concept is set forth in Vaughn’s earlier work, “Can We Write a History of Israel Today?” 368–385 (Its pre-publication title, which was replaced, was “How Can a History of Israel Be Theologically

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Relevant in a Post-Modern World?” mentioned in “Is Biblical Archaeology” 414 n. 13). In “Can We Write,” Vaughn credits and explicitly builds on Leo G. Perdue, *The Collapse of History* (1994), 264–265.

<sup>5</sup> Vaughn also seems to suggest a cultural memory approach (cf. those in Mykytiuk “Strengthening, Part 2.1”) in saying, “the biblical writers were constantly reinterpreting past promises in order to have the old promises make sense in a new day and in a new social location” (“Is Biblical Archaeology” 430).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Mykytiuk “Strengthening Part 2.1” 114. Both chronological order and reverse chronological order can produce a rhetorical effect.

<sup>7</sup> R. D. Miller “Yahweh and His Clio” 149.

<sup>8</sup> Regarding Hayden White, see the sections on Kofoed and Long.

<sup>9</sup> The term *evangelical* (which in English has an accent on the third syllable) signifies belief in the gospel, normally as set forth in the New Testament, or a person or group holding such belief. In a German context, the term *evangelical* (accent on the last syllable in German) refers to the state church in contrast to the Roman Catholic Church and thus signifies *Protestant*.

For a definition of the gospel, many Christians, including evangelicals, appeal to 1 Corinthians 15:1–4, which defines the essence of the gospel in the New Testament as the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Emphatically, 1 Corinthians 15:12–19 goes on to inform readers that if the resurrection of Jesus were not an actual, historical event, Christian faith would be useless. Following in that general direction, encouraged by the New Testament presentation of Jesus’ own affirmations regarding the Bible, and deeply impressed by Jesus’ submission to it in fulfilling his mission, evangelicals generally tend to favor biblical historicity.

Although not all evangelical biblical scholars are maximalists, and not all maximalist scholars are evangelicals, there is substantial overlap between the two groups. For a sample list of publications of leading evangelical scholars and the recognition they have earned, see Hoffmeier “Open Letter.”

<sup>10</sup> For example, regarding merely literary interpretation of purportedly referential historical texts, see the section on V. Philips Long below.

<sup>11</sup> A book-length view of the theological imperative is set forth, e.g., in Wenham *Christ and the Bible*. Other works that support similar views of the Bible, which are termed *high* views, are J. I. Packer *God Has Spoken*, and Telford Work *Living and Active: Scripture in the Economy of Salvation*.

Speaking of a few evangelical scholars who are theologically quite conservative, John Kelsay observes, “For these authors, there is no way around the notion that the texts in question are in some way ‘the word of the LORD’; this means, among other things, that the technical skills and findings associated with the modern historical-critical study of the Bible must be utilized in ways that honor the authoritative status of the texts” (“Foreword” to *A History of Modern Scholarship on the Biblical Word* □erem ii).

For an application of the above-mentioned views to the question of biblical historicity, see Long’s discussion of the question, “If Jericho was not razed, is our faith in vain?” (Long *Art* 116–118).

<sup>12</sup> Short of reading a large number of sometimes fragmentary texts written in more than one difficult ancient language, a useful, accessible resource for coming to understand ancient genres largely via English translations is Kenton L. Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible* (2009). Sparks demonstrates sensitivity to nuances of genre in the literatures of the ancient Near East and tries to include as many as possible of the most important writings of the entire ancient Near East *in each genre*.

On another matter, although not all evangelicals and certainly not all maximalists hold to a doctrine of biblical inerrancy, the teaching that the original manuscripts of the Bible were without error, yet in some conservative circles which hold to this doctrine, it needs to be squared with the matter of interpreting according to ancient genres. See Hays “Inerrancy” 120–121. Approaching the Hebrew Bible in a manner which is culturally sensitive to its ancient way of writing history might conceivably be included in what Hays refers to as “fine tuning” in the context of clarifying the meaning or use of the terms *inerrancy* and *inerrant* as applied to the Bible (127–132).

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<sup>13</sup> Younger has a noteworthy quotation from Iggers and von Moltke which seems to improve the common translation of von Ranke's much-quoted phrase, "*wie es eigentlich gewesen*," usually rendered in English as "as it actually occurred," to a translation that was a possible alternative in the German language of von Ranke's day: "as it essentially occurred" ("Underpinnings" 312 n. 35, quoting von Ranke *Theory and Practice* xix–xx). The fact that such a translation allows for generalization and approximation makes von Ranke's phrase not as easy to reject.

<sup>14</sup> Hoffmeier "Evangelical Contribution" 77–82.

<sup>15</sup> Kitchen's note 24 attached to the last word in (6), "data," advises, "See, for an exemplary study . . . that by R. S. Hess, 'Fallacies in the Study of Early Israel: An Onomastic Perspective,' *Tyn[dale] Bul[letin]* 45 (1994): 339–54."

<sup>16</sup> For example, his 2002 dissertation opens by describing as "both inevitable and necessary" the minimalists' deconstruction of the methodological foundations of the prior consensus of the Alt-Noth school and Albright school (*Text and History* ix, x, 4). Further, as Philip R. Davies has stated with apparent appreciation, Kofoed is "unusual" in that he "recognizes the validity of the minimalist option while insisting that a maximalist one is also reasonable" (Davies *Memories* 158). (Of course, any statement about validity has no relevance to the question of whether the assertion(s) under consideration is correct or true. "Validity" here only means that minimalism's own essential approach—and, yes, one can assert, *tenets*—do not violate the rules of logic. Further, validity tends to imply that minimalism, in its essence, is without internal contradiction.)

<sup>17</sup> Kofoed wrote his dissertation, which opposes the views of Niels Peter Lemche and Thomas L. Thompson for being too skeptical, after he had participated in seminars led by Thompson and Lemche at the University of Copenhagen.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Anthony J. Frendo's introductory comment that "the real crux of the problem of the emergence of ancient Israel lay not so much in adducing some new datum or in drawing up a solid synthesis of the puzzle, but in the various presuppositions (often diametrically opposed) with which scholars approached the subject . . . the first principles, assumptions, axioms, and pre-understanding with which scholars approached both the relevant archaeological and biblical data. It was therefore also a problem of how to correlate textual and archaeological evidence in a methodical manner." (Frendo *Pre-Exilic Israel* ix).

Kofoed goes on to state that his methodological approach "means, however, that this study cannot stand alone. The thesis cannot be further substantiated until case studies and analytically-oriented research have been done. We need new methodologically-conscious case studies on the books of Kings and other apparently historical books of the Hebrew Bible" (*Text and History* 247). Midway through the book, Kofoed says, "What we do *not* need . . . are histories that do not present to the readers a full discussion of the philosophical and epistemological assumptions that have determined their choice of methods and the basis for their assertions" (112).

<sup>19</sup> In later articles of this series, Parts 3–4 on *external* evidences for historicity of the Hebrew Bible is to cover extrabiblical texts (treated in Kofoed's chapter 4), and Part 5 is to cover *internal* evidences in the Hebrew Bible, including linguistic dating of biblical texts (treated in Kofoed's chapter 3).

<sup>20</sup> Works cited by Kofoed at this point question the applicability of quantitative treatments in view of insufficient data from ancient history, question the adequacy of quantitative means for social and historical analyses and oppose the dismissal of the significance of tradition for understanding people's motivations.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Philip R. Davies' helpful observation of two views of the Old Testament: German scholars Albrecht Alt, Martin Noth, and Gerhard von Rad viewed it as ancient Israel's traditions, whereas American scholars William F. Albright and John Bright viewed it a collection of witnesses to past events (Davies *Memories* 151).

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<sup>22</sup> Kofoed observes that “many scholars” currently view biblical traditions as “literary fictions,” texts that have been “selected and shaped” in ways that meet “the demands of the social world of the writers . . . . [T]he Hebrew Bible is now increasingly used by scholars as a *historical source* for Hellenistic Period Palestine and of little or no use as witness to the earlier periods it purports to describe” (24, emphasis his). To compare the views of Mark S. Smith, his preference for case-by-case consideration of potential historicity seems to differ, but his view that the text, even if based in historical realities, was shaped to meet then-current needs (Mykytiuk “Strengthening Part 2.1” 127) seems to agree with what Kofoed observes.

<sup>23</sup> The problems with this approach are “demonstrated” (*Text and History* 26) in the more complete treatment in Kofoed “Epistemology.”

<sup>24</sup> Here Kofoed’s footnote 82 cites Millard: “So, e.g., A. R. Millard, ‘Story, History, and Theology’ . . . .” (Millard, Hoffmeier, and Baker *Faith, Tradition* 37–64).

<sup>25</sup> As an example of central thrust, in the study of the Synoptic Gospels, according to K. E. Bailey, storytellers had freedom to change other elements, but not the “central thrust,” which included “[t]he basic flow of the story and its conclusion,” the names, and the “summary punch line” (Bailey “Informal Controlled Oral Tradition” 7, quoted in *Text and History* 73–74).

<sup>26</sup> Kofoed’s chapters 3 and 4 may contribute to future articles in this series.

<sup>27</sup> “Ricoeur defines ‘testimony’ as ‘a declaration of a witness who says three things: (1) *I was there* (2) *believe me or not* (3) *if you don’t believe my word ask somebody else*” (*Text and History* 202, quoting Ricoeur “Humanities between Science and Art” 7).

<sup>28</sup> “The books of Kings cannot be categorized as *either* narrative or nonnarrative. It depends on whether one focuses on the whole or its parts, because it is a multigenre product. If narrative is defined broadly as anything told or recounted, the books of Kings as a whole undeniably qualify as narrative . . . . Beneath the surface, however, the text is clearly a composite text, consisting of various text types” such as annotated lists, chronicle-like information, etc. (236).

<sup>29</sup> Much of material in these chapters in *Biblical History* is also found in Provan’s chapter titled “Knowing and Believing” in Bartholomew, “*Behind*” *the Text* (229–266).

<sup>30</sup> Thomas L. Thompson, “A Neo-Albrightean School in History and Biblical Scholarship?” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114 (1995): 683–698. Provan observes that “This article is a response to Provan, ‘Ideologies’, and itself finds an answer throughout Provan, ‘Stable’” (“Knowing and Believing: Faith in the Past,” “*Behind*” *the Text: History and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: 2003), 229n1.

In the same journal issue, along with Thompson “Neo-Albrightean” and Provan “Ideologies” is an article by Philip R. Davies, “Method and Madness: Some Remarks on Doing History with the Bible” (699–705). Provan states that “In the Stable with the Dwarves” contains a “full response to these articles,” i.e., those by Thompson and Davies cited here (“(Perhaps the) Last,” note 2.)

<sup>31</sup> As part of his note 46 attached to the end of this paragraph, Provan writes, “Cf. also Halpern *First Historians*, p. 28: ‘. . . history cannot base itself on predictability . . . Lacking universal axioms and theorems, it can be based on testimony only.’”

<sup>32</sup> E.g., in the late John H. Hayes’ list under the heading, “Some Guiding Principles”: “Fifth, when external evidence derived from archaeological and/or epigraphic data clashes with evidence derived from the Bible, priority must be given to the nonbiblical data” (Hayes “Historiographical Approaches” 203).

<sup>33</sup> Lewis *Last Battle* 124–135, cited in “In the Stable” 281 n. 1.

<sup>34</sup> *A Biblical History of Israel* has been criticized for not devoting as much space to periods in which relatively abundant evidences are extant as it devotes to periods from which there is little surviving

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evidence. This is a curious parallel to John J. Collins' *Bible After Babel* as observed in Mykytiuk "Strengthening Part 1" 78 n. 3. Although the development of arguments from scant, indirect evidences can require a disproportionate amount of space, it is also important to give areas of strength their due.

<sup>35</sup> Much later, Grabbe rejects this argument (Grabbe "Big Max" 215–234, esp. 215–217). As the editor of the volume, Grabbe fair-mindedly included in the same volume, along with *ibid.*, a response from the three co-authors of *A Biblical History of Israel: Provan Long Longman* "'Who is the Prophet Talking about'" 235–252.

<sup>36</sup> Whitelam, *Invention*, 35, 69.

<sup>37</sup> J. Albert Soggin, *A History of Israel* (1984); J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*. (1986).

Twentieth-century histories of ancient Israel generally tend to adopt later and later starting points, such as the patriarchal period beginning with Abraham, then the exodus beginning with Moses, then Israel's conquest or settlement in the land of Canaan, or the period of the Judges (Miller and Hayes 1986), or the united monarchy of David and Solomon (Soggin 1984).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. the view that within their culturally conditioned perception (as distinguished from ours) the authors of the Hebrew Bible considered even its earliest and most theology-laden portions to be historical. In a similar way, "the [Sumerian] ancients themselves did not see this [Sumerian-theology-saturated account] as 'fiction.' The 'theology' of the composition was simply treated as an essential part of their true 'history' (in the sense of historically accurate 'history writing'). . . . Similarly, in the Hebrew Bible Genesis 1–11 is presented as 'history', not 'myth' or 'fiction'. (Averbeck "Sumer" 109).

<sup>39</sup> Contrast the immediately preceding note.

<sup>40</sup> For more on Provan's view of Whitelam's approach, see Provan "End of (Israel's) History?" 283–300.

<sup>41</sup> This view of the biblical text in relation to historical criticism is consistent with John Rogerson's observation that "deep divisions today among scholars" as "merely the contemporary version of the issues that inevitably came to the fore *once it was accepted that the actual history of ancient Israelite religion and sacrifice was different from that presented in the Old Testament*" (Rogerson "Setting the Scene" 12, emphasis mine).

<sup>42</sup> Grabbe introduces his essay, "Are Historians," as a "rough and ready" exercise, intended only to arrive at a general picture. In that picture, he finds that "the biblical framework for Israelite and Judean kings from the mid-ninth century onwards is reasonably accurate," but that "the details of the biblical accounts are at times misleading, inaccurate, or even invented" ("How Reliable" 384). Long's closer examination, however, certainly seems to show that Grabbe's second generalization is "unsupported by the evidence" (382) and opens the possibility that it might have arisen from "preconceived notions" (383).

<sup>43</sup> From the preface by series editor Moisés Silva (Long *Art* 10).

<sup>44</sup> *The Art of Biblical History* names only two minimalist leaders: Niels P. Lemche once in a note and Thomas L. Thompson, who receives mention only for his view that historicity does not matter. That view serves as a foil to John Goldingay's point that historicity of biblical events does matter. "Goldingay demonstrates how biblical writers viewed present faith as resting on prior events . . ." (98).

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Millard "Story, History."

<sup>46</sup> Chapter 1. History and the Genre(s) of the Bible: *Is the Bible a History Book?* 2. History and Fiction: *What is History?* 3. History and Truth: *Is Historicity Important?* 4. History and Modern Scholarship: *Why Do Scholars Disagree?* 5. History and Hermeneutics: *How Then Should We Read the Bible "Historically"?* 6. An Extended Example: *The Rise of Saul* (chapter titles excerpted from Long *Art* 7–8).

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<sup>47</sup> Some other scholars find Thompson, Davies, Lemche, and Whitelam to be modern rather than postmodern in their approach. For example, Barstad finds that minimalists are, rather, “the first of the last modernists” (Barstad “History and the Hebrew Bible” 13).

<sup>48</sup> First, a chronologically distant source is not necessarily unreliable, for example, Manetho (Hoffmeier *Ancient Israel* 17–18; Mykytiuk “Strengthening Part 2.1” 130–131 n. 16). For his second point, Hoffmeier quotes David Hackett Fischer, “in writing history, ‘evidence must always be affirmative. Negative evidence is a contradiction in terms—it is not evidence at all’” (19–20, quoting Fischer *Historians’ Fallacies* 47). This point regarding the nature of evidence appears to undergird the much-repeated observation that absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. Third, the Bible should be treated as any other book is treated, but in fact it is not (Hoffmeier *Ancient Israel* 20–21, citing Dever *What Did* 127 and Hallo “Limits” 189). Instead it is rejected as tendentious, theological, and ideological, while ancient non-biblical texts which are *also* tendentious, theological, and ideological escape the “hermeneutics of suspicion” and are readily accepted without question as historical evidence (20).

<sup>49</sup> The term *phenomenology* is used by religionists in three senses (Hoffmeier here relying on Allen “Phenomenology” 11: 272–285):

“1. Generally, it means ‘investigating the phenomena of religion’” (Hoffmeier *Ancient Israel* 28).

“2. It can refer to ‘a system of classification of various religious phenomena’ and comparing them” (28–29).

“3. It can refer to the phenomenology of religion working within *Religionswissenschaft*, using ‘many of the critical methods and ways of reading texts’ but *not* the rationalistic or ‘scientific’ treatments, rather ‘more sympathetic ones’” (29).

<sup>50</sup> Mircea Eliade (1907–1986) was professor of the history of religions at many prestigious universities in Europe and lastly at the University of Chicago 1956 to 1986. Besides writing many books, he edited the 16-volume *Encyclopedia of Religions* (1987), and received ten honorary doctorates.

<sup>51</sup> Otto *Idea*.

<sup>52</sup> Among these works, which characteristically contain both essays by scholars of very diverse points of view and Grabbe’s closing “Reflections on the Discussion,” are: Lester L. Grabbe, ed., *Can a ‘History of Israel’ Be Written?* (1997); idem, ed., *Leading Captivity Captive: ‘The Exile’ as History and Ideology* (1998); idem, ed., *Good Kings and Bad Kings* (2007); idem, ed., *Israel in Transition: From Late Bronze II to Iron IIA (c. 1250–850 B.C.E., 2 vols.* (2008); idem, ed., *Enquire of the Former Age: Ancient Historiography and Writing the History of Israel* (2011); Bob Becking and Lester L. Grabbe, eds., *Between Evidence and Ideology: Essays on the History of Ancient Israel Read at the Joint Meeting of the Society for Old Testament Study and the Oud Testamentisch Werkgezelschap, Lincoln, July 2009* (2011).

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