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Moving Towards Illumination? The Development of Method and Rhetoric in the American School of Archaeologists

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MOVING TOWARDS ILLUMINATION?
THE DEVELOPMENT OF METHOD AND RHETORIC
IN THE AMERICAN SCHOOL OF ARCHAEOLOGISTS

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Presented by: JEREMY BROWN

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We, the undersigned, certify that we have read this thesis and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the degree of Master of Arts in Theological Studies.

(Steve Delamarter)

(Roger Nam)

To Mom and Dad,
For the support
regardless of where the adventure has taken me.

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ABSTRACT

An abstract of the thesis of Jeremy Brown for the Master of Arts in Theological Studies presented December 8, 2008.

Title: Moving Towards Illumination?: The Development of Method and Rhetoric in the American School of Archaeologists.

This thesis examines two aspects of the work the American School of archaeologists: 1) their refinements of archaeological method; and 2) their cultivation of a particular rhetorical strategy to describe the significance of their findings

In the first chapter, we explore the rise of Near Eastern archaeology from the mid-nineteenth century through the early-twentieth century. During this time many communities of faith joined in the digging in hopes of locating finds with biblical implications. A lofty rhetoric was developed to describe these discoveries and to relate their impact upon the accounts of the Bible. This period was marked by the free-wheeling exploits of adventurers who lacked any sort of developed scientific approach, but who, nonetheless, cultivated lofty claims about the truth of the Bible based on their discoveries.

In the following chapters, we examine the rise of the American school of biblical archaeology. The study begins with William Foxwell Albright, the father of the American school. We show how Albright established the foundation of a critical methodology on which the American school was built and how he developed a new and slightly more-restrained rhetoric of “light” and “illumination” to describe the effect of archaeology on the Bible. We also show how Albright’s approach was closely followed by his students John Bright and George Ernest Wright. These men remained devoted to Albright’s

approach, but tempered even more the rhetoric and truth claims prominent in their teacher's writings.

In the next chapters, our study narrows its focus to follow the career of William G. Dever, one of Wright's students. During this time—often portrayed as the pinnacle of the American school—Dever and others placed a great emphasis on the refinement of methodology, and a completely restrained (if not agnostic) rhetoric with reference to the impact of archaeology on the truth of the Bible. At the Gezer field school, Dever trained an upcoming generation of archaeologists in this method and rhetoric. We argue that this period was concluded with Dever's lectures to Seabury-Western Theological Seminary in January 1972. This period ends with Dever calling for a complete separation between biblical archaeology and Syro-Palestinian archaeology. Finally, we trace the history of the rise of the postmodernists and Dever's conflict with their new approach to the biblical accounts. Unfortunately, the dialogue was quickly mired in accusations and name-calling.

Each period addressed in this work provides an interesting case study in the interplay between culture and faith, as it was played out in the developments surrounding archaeology and biblical studies. This thesis explores these case studies in hopes of understanding the nature of the changes and developments.

Introduction

The physical findings of archaeological discovery have held interest for communities of faith since the first spades broke Near Eastern soil in the mid 19th century. As surprising findings were uncovered, many authors sought to understand and to interpret these discoveries. While many national schools made prominent discoveries in the Near East during the early periods and continue to find measures of success in the present, I have elected to follow the developments within the American school as a representative of the transformation of methodology, rhetoric, and the purpose for archaeology across time. Although Middle Eastern schools, especially the Israeli school, have largely replaced the American school in the present, I have chosen to follow the career of William G. Dever as a representative of the present period of archaeology as a means of examining the changes from the early days of Dever's teachers to the present focus of Dever's career.

I have elected to divide the chapters of this work at moments of paradigm shift or generational change within the field of archaeology and the Bible. Chapter 1 portrays the surprise that many of these discoveries held for archaeologists and interpreters beginning in the 1850s and carrying on until the turn of the century. As this new discipline unearthed unexpected finds, it became apparent that changes in methodology and rhetoric must soon follow.

Chapter 2 records the rise of the American school in a modern age beginning with William Foxwell Albright. This period witnesses the rise of a critical methodology and the beginnings of a rhetoric that will be maintained throughout the American school with Albright's students G. Ernest Wright and John Bright. These scholars are devoted to

providing meaningful interpretations for people of faith and utilize a rhetorical strategy based on the metaphor of archaeology casting light and illuminating the biblical accounts.

Chapter 3 considers the pinnacle period of the American school, which is best depicted by the excavation at Gezer directed by Dever, a student of Wright. This is a period of scientific development, methodological refinement, and training for future archaeologists. However, this period comes to an end when Dever, at a series of lectures at Seabury-Western Theological Seminary in 1972, insists on a separation between biblical studies and archaeology. The accepted relationship between archaeology, the biblical texts, and communities of faith was called into question by a favorite son and the ease with which these disciplines had interacted was swiftly disrupted.

Chapter 4 considers the present period of the American school, focusing on the career of Dever as a representation of the current struggles facing the school. Dever's attempts to define Syro-Palestinian archaeology as a discipline separated from biblical studies is examined as well as his conflict with postmodern scholars, such as Niels Peter Lemche and Thomas L. Thompson. I strive to consider some of the postmodernists' critiques of Dever, but the focus of this work is the American school. No defined end to this period exists, it is on-going and time will tell which school of thought will continue, as well as determining the future of the American school.

This thesis will follow the field of biblical archaeology in America from its origin to the present in hopes of understanding the changes and movements that have delivered the field to its present location.

Chapter 1

The Early Period of Archaeology, 1850-1905

Prior to the mid-nineteenth century biblical studies was largely restricted to considering internal sources.¹ Few, if any, external sources illuminated the text and the culture that brought the text about. However, this would soon change as the world of the Bible began to be explored and excavated. Many discoveries came to light during this earliest period of Near Eastern archaeology. These held the potential to make a substantial impact on the interpretation of biblical texts. A host of persons—archaeologists, adventurers, interested persons and scholars—stepped forward to begin to interpret them for a popular audience. This chapter will seek to explore the methodology, the purpose for archaeology, the rhetoric employed, and the potential application to biblical studies by an array of schools of thought in order to understand the impact of these discoveries, the developments that took place, and the changes called forth by such influential events as the *Babel und Bibel* lectures.

Methodology

It is essential to consider the common methodology of the late nineteenth century in order to understand this earliest period of archaeological discovery properly. The story of this earliest period was characterized by adventures in foreign lands and the search for museum pieces. Well-financed adventurers explored the world of the Bible, but lacked interest in a systematic methodology. It was not until the work of Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie that a scientific, progressive method began to develop. Prior to

¹ For the rest of this work, the past tense will be utilized to relate the work's narrative elements. Present tense will be employed for the analyzing of the evidence that has been presented.

approaching the impact that these discoveries held for biblical scholars, it is important to explore the birth of methodology.

This earliest period was dominated by what later came to be called the “old school” of archaeologists. This was a period of adventurers and amateurs. The majority of these explorers were employed by museums that eagerly awaited displayable artifacts to set before an intrigued public. However, in place of a critical methodology resided an explorer’s spirit and an interest in incredible discoveries. Rather than attention to minute detail, the old school of archaeologists searched for inscriptions, monuments, and other displayable wonders. These were brave individuals setting off on remarkable adventures. However, this lack of methodology meant that these early excavations extracted valuable pieces out of context. Also, this lack of methodology left sites disturbed and no longer able to provide pristine, comprehensible strata to be studied by later archaeologists. While this adventurous generation made many major finds, it was necessary for a methodology to be created in order for archaeology to develop into a scientific discipline.

For such a development to take place, archaeology required an experienced archaeologist to compile his/her work from several digs and to apply lessons learned. This pivotal figure for archaeological methodology was Sir William Matthew Petrie. His work in Egypt and Palestine from 1880 to 1942 provided a tremendous amount of experience on which to draw from. Petrie’s life-work was his establishing a systematic archaeological method, laying the foundation for the essential disciplines of typology and stratigraphy, and establishing a philosophy of excavation.

Petrie’s systematic archaeology featured two major methods. First was the creation of a corpus of known varieties of an object which could serve to define and date

the object. Out of this developed Petrie's ceramic typology, which maintained its value for following generations of archaeologists. Second was the use of statistical method to arrange material "in its order of development."² This method brought together corresponding objects from different sites in order to develop a progression to serve as a form of dating. Petrie employed this approach to observe frequency of different pottery forms and their correspondence across sites. He utilized a corpus of material and statistical analysis to bring scientific order to a previously undirected discipline.

At the heart of Petrie's methodological contribution was his ceramic typology. Petrie understood pottery to be the "greatest resource to an archaeologist."³ He held that pottery was "the very key to digging" due to its commonality and frequency. Pottery's differences in form, texture, decoration, material, and color became especially beneficial when compiled in a corpus of potshards.⁴ Petrie believed that with careful consideration of such ceramic characteristics, an experienced archaeologist could begin to comparatively date sites.

Petrie's methodological developments strongly influenced the advancement of the discipline. Petrie's excavations served to provide some of the earliest examples of what would become common method. One such example is his development of seriation while excavating a cemetery at Diospolis Parva. Seriation is a relative dating system that takes into account the frequency of design styles. Following excavation, careful recording of cultural remains allows the compiled data to be analyzed and compared, ultimately

² W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Methods & Aims in Archaeology* (London: Macmillan, 1904), 122-123.

³ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴ W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Ten Years' Digging in Egypt: 1881-1891* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1892), 158. And W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Methods & Aims in Archaeology*, 15-16.

establishing a date for the stratum. A second benefit of seriation is the recognition of linked sites, of the chronology of sites, and of the progression of collected objects. Through observation and seriation Petrie believed a relatively informed date could be established within minutes.⁵ This was in contrast to the months of digging and collecting of inscriptions and other internal evidence required to estimate a site date absent of this form of observation and analysis.⁶

A second important example of the foundation established by Petrie is his development of sequence dating. This method was the precursor to modern stratigraphy. This early form of sequence dating involved excavating a half meter of debris and then establishing a date for each half meter level. The failure of this stratigraphic approach was that difficult sites, including Tell el-Hesi on which Petrie developed this method, rarely contained such a uniform separation of strata. In reality, such consistent stratification was a practical impossibility. Although a half meter served as an “arbitrary separation of levels,” this approach did serve to establish a mindset that viewed the tell as a sequence of datable levels.⁷ Petrie’s sequence dating ultimately would evolve into a developed methodology of stratigraphy in later generations of archaeology.

Petrie also developed a formative philosophy of excavation. This was especially meaningful in contrast to the indiscretion utilized by his adventuring colleagues. Petrie devoted his work to the belief that “digging must be systematic.”⁸ He declared that “an

⁵ W. M. Flinders Petrie, “Sequences in Prehistoric Remains” *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 29, no. 3/4 (1899): 298-299.

⁶ W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Ten Years' Digging in Egypt: 1881-1891*, 158.

⁷ Walter E. Rast, *Through the Ages in Palestinian Archaeology: An Introductory Handbook* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1992), 36.

⁸ W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Ten Years' Digging in Egypt: 1881-1891*, 156.

excellent rule in excavating is never to dig anywhere without some definite aim.”⁹

Chance trenches and holes could be used as feelers, but systematic excavation must be utilized to gather accurate results and to preserve the site. For Petrie, the goal of archaeology was not the discovery of museum pieces, but rather the acquisition of knowledge through orderly excavation.

The discipline that this philosophy is built upon is founded in awareness that excavation inherently destroys what is being explored. It is an “unpardonable crime” to fail to record such precious, unrecoverable evidence. Thus it is the responsibility of the archaeologist to record carefully and to preserve all possible information about discoveries.¹⁰ Petrie became the father of systematic archaeology with his developed methodology laying the foundation of its core disciplines. His philosophy of archaeology revealed a scientific man devoted not only to discovery, but to accurate recording of all evidence. Thereby, archaeology was enabled to glean knowledge from the site and was challenged to cease merely collecting inscriptions and stelae.

Major Discoveries of the Old School of Archaeology – A Case Study

After having established the state of methodology within this time period, it is important to examine a case study of several of the major discoveries. Interestingly, all of these widely-discussed discoveries were made by the old school of adventurers. The purpose for this case study is to understand the response to the impact that archaeology held for biblical studies. The work of adventurers such as Austen H. Layard, Hormuzd Rassam, Sir Henry Rawlinson, and George Smith unveiled relationships between

⁹ Ibid., 160.

¹⁰ W. M. Flinders Petrie, “Sequences in Prehistoric Remains,” 48.

Babylonian and Assyrian cultures and the Bible that very few scholars previously envisioned. The consideration of three major discoveries will enable us to explore the truth claims accompanying finds possessing potential impact on the Bible as well as witness how these unexpected discoveries surprised and unsettled many interpreters of the Bible.

The Creation Account

This first discovery upset the traditional understanding of the biblical creation account when George Smith discovered an inscription from Nineveh that forced biblical scholars to consider the impact of outside cultures upon the Bible. Smith's work revealed a Babylonian Creation epic bearing startling similarities to the account in Genesis.¹¹ In the Babylonian account the god Marduk defeats the goddess of chaos, Tiamat. Marduk then hews the body of his fallen enemy and creates the heavens and the earth. After this has been completed the other members of the Babylonian pantheon share in the creation of humanity. Scholarly interest was furthered by a Sumerian-Babylonian account describing the act of creation beginning from a state of waste, void of life and order. Such a depiction bore startling similarities to the Genesis 2:5 account.¹² In the biblical account and the two Near Eastern inscriptions, the world is a place of chaos and disorder subsequently ordered by the creator. For the scholars of the period, the key point of differentiation centered upon the differences between the creators. The Babylonian epic described a pantheistic religion in which many members of the pantheon participate. This

¹¹ The text of this account can be found in: George Smith and A. H. Sayce, *The Chaldean Account of Genesis*, rev. ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1880), 56-82.

¹² Ira M. Price, *The Monuments and the Old Testament*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1925), 105-106.

was in stark contrast to the monotheism portrayed in the biblical account. However, the similarities were not dismissible and the Babylonian Creation epic served to bring about a discussion on the impact of outside forces on Israelite religion and the Bible.

The Deluge

A second astonishing discovery, also unveiled by Smith, was the Babylonian Deluge account and its similarities with the Genesis account. The Babylonian epic recounts Utnapishtim being commanded by Ea, lord of wisdom in the Babylonian pantheon, to build a ship to save himself, his kinsfolk, and animals from the deluge that the other gods were planning to bring about. Through Ea's warning, Utnapishtim is able to survive the deluge and offers up a sacrifice to which the gods swarm.¹³ Several similarities are clearly evident between the Babylonian epic and the Genesis account. First, both Noah and Utnapishtim are forewarned by a deity and are presented with orders to build a boat to preserve their lives, the lives of their families, and living creatures. Second, the deluge brings about the destruction of all not within the boat. Third, both boats come to rest upon a mountain. Fourth, both heroes send out three birds to determine when it will be safe to disembark from the boat. Finally, upon landing there is an offering to the deity that is accepted with a hope or a promise of no future deluges.

Two major differences reveal that the story had undergone a transformation prior to its acceptance into Hebrew culture. First, in the biblical account the flood is brought about to wipe out sinful man. This is countered by the Babylonian deluge being brought about entirely by the caprice of the gods. Secondly, the deity is strongly presented as

¹³ Smith's translation of this tablet can be found in his *Chaldean Account of Genesis*, pp. 279-300. A more accessible translation from the same time period is available in Price's *The Monuments and the Old Testament*, pp. 121-127.

monotheistic in Genesis, rather than the polytheism presented by the Babylonian account. Along with bringing about questions of outside forces, the Deluge accounts enabled biblical scholars to consider what processes a foreign story must undergo prior to its acceptance into the Hebrew world view.

The Code of Hammurabi

The third discovery was the deciphering of the Hammurabi Stela, excavated by the French archaeologist M. J. de Morgan in Susa in 1902.¹⁴ Hammurabi was the sixth king of the First Babylonian dynasty. He is credited with uniting the small states of Babylonia into a powerful, united kingdom. The Code is believed to have originally contained two hundred and eighty two individual laws governing a wide range of civil incidents and providing consequences for the breaking of these statutes.¹⁵ The systematic construction of this code testifies to a society that had reached a high, complicated level of function prior to the time of the biblical patriarchs.

The primary interest for the biblical scholar was that this complex civil code predated the Mosaic Law by several hundred years. The civil laws set forth by Hammurabi bear a striking resemblance to the Mosaic Law, even as far as each compiler is called by his deity to compose his respective code. This led to the consideration of the conception of the Mosaic Law and of the resources available to the author. The similarities of the laws, the religious context, and their development caused biblical scholars to ponder if Moses might be better thought of as a compiler of existing laws, rather than as the creator of a previously unknown code. This outside evidence further

¹⁴ Ira M. Price, 200.

¹⁵ Damage to the stela leaves the exact number of laws impossible to state with certainty.

facilitated the discussion of foreign influences on Hebrew religion and culture and caused the role of Moses and the composition of the Pentateuch to be further explored.

In conclusion, the scholars of this time period were given a great deal of fresh material to interact with through the efforts of archaeologists, decipherers, and explorers. At the heart of these major discoveries arose the concern for reconciling the biblical accounts with the Assyrian and Babylonian inscriptions. This was further complicated by the apparent foreign influence and its unknown impact on the accounts transmitted within the biblical text. This sudden influx of discoveries left scholars wrestling with how these archaeological finds impacted the traditional views of the Hebrew Bible. Scholars of faith also began to consider what meaning these discoveries might hold for people of faith, including what theological claims these discoveries could be used to formulate, and what theological purposes might influence interpretation.

The Purpose of Archaeology and the Rhetoric Employed

These discoveries called for a response and the interest of the public was quickly stirred. Many people held investments in these finds, including biblical scholars, textual critics, and the common person of faith. A wide breadth of material was swiftly published reporting on and responding to these archaeological developments. This section will examine a representative sample of both lay-focused and scholarly-aimed works. Such a representative sample will make possible a survey of the purpose for archaeology, the common rhetoric being employed, and the author's application of rhetoric and purpose in one's interpretation of the discoveries.

The Lay Focused Works

As the major archaeological discoveries of this time period became public, authors strove to create accessible resources for lay audiences. These works were formulated with hopes of shining light upon the Bible through the work of the spade while holding to the belief that the Scriptures were a rock, unshakable by any revelation from the discoveries. These works offered solutions to the puzzles of the Old Testament with confidence that archaeology would prove to be an accessible resource to calm many of the questions facing their faith communities. To best consider the purpose of archaeology and the rhetoric employed within lay-focused scholarship it is important to acknowledge both balanced and unbalanced study of the archaeological discoveries. The criteria by which these works will be evaluated are the understanding held by the author regarding archaeology's potential impact, the rhetoric employed by the author as either restrained or proof-centered, and the interaction with or avoidance of discoveries that present difficulties to traditional biblical interpretations. Such an evaluation will provide a wider view of the differing conclusions generated by the archaeological discoveries.

Restrained Lay-Focused Scholarship

It would be a mistake to dismiss all of the works prepared for lay audiences as amateur or unbalanced. Two examples of educated, professional literature are Dr. Edgar J. Banks' *The Bible and the Spade* and Dr. Albert T. Clay's *Light on the Old Testament from Babel*.¹⁶ Both of these authors were experienced Babylonian scholars, excavators, and professors. These educated, experienced individuals authored scholarly works that were both accessible and thorough. This section will evaluate these works as examples of

¹⁶ Edgar J. Banks, *The Bible and the Spade* (New York: Association Press, 1913). And Albert T. Clay, *Light on the Old Testament from Babel* (Philadelphia: The Sunday School Times Company, 1907).

those containing a tempered purpose for archaeology, a restrained rhetoric that avoids overstating the claims of the interpreter, and a balanced survey of the important discoveries, including discoveries that prove unsettling to traditional interpretations of biblical accounts.

The stating of the purpose of archaeology and the purpose for writing such a work reveals a great deal about the author's beliefs regarding the archaeological discoveries of the period. Banks wrote with the aspiration to create a book that illustrated the finds as shedding "a direct and wonderful light on the Bible."¹⁷ It was the writer's hope that readers would be inspired to investigate the Bible with a greater intellect through the illumination of these discoveries. For Banks, the purpose of archaeology was to teach the reader "to understand the book as its author intended it to be understood."¹⁸ The formula employed was a historical account of the archaeological discoveries with an accompanying insight into potential illumination for the Bible. This form of writing invited the reader to interact with the discoveries and to relate this new knowledge towards understanding of the Bible. Banks refused any inclination to claim archaeology as serving to confirm the Bible, but instead championed it as a way of better understanding the intended meaning of the biblical writers.

Clay described the purpose of archaeology in much the same way. Archaeology served to "reconstruct ancient history" and to expand our understanding of the culture surrounding the Hebrew Bible. Clay also believed that archaeology can "illustrate,

¹⁷ Edgar J. Banks, *The Bible and the Spade*, 3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 152.

elucidate, substantiate, and corroborate many of the narratives of the early Scriptures.”¹⁹

For Clay, the greatest service that these discoveries could offer was “the right interpretation of the Old Testament.”²⁰ However, he limited what this statement meant by questioning those who regarded the confirmation of the Bible as the greatest service.

Though Clay believed that archaeology could very directly influence biblical interpretation, he resisted the opportunity to declare that archaeology served to confirm the biblical accounts. It is this self-limiting that characterizes the balanced lay-focused scholarship.

A second characteristic of this balanced literature is a restrained rhetoric. This restrained rhetoric is in place of a rhetoric centering on proof and confirmation, which limits what role archaeology can serve. Rather than providing an understanding of a social world and culture, for proof-centered rhetoric, the value of material finds resided in their ability to prove textual accounts. A restrained rhetoric enables an interpretation of the discoveries that is not limited to confirming the biblical accounts, but instead can examine a broader field of discovery. Clay’s rhetoric was defined by his use of language of “illumination” and “light.”²¹ He even ventured to use stronger language of “right interpretation,” “beyond doubt,” and he believed that those who viewed the Hebrew Bible as fictitious had been proven to be “wholly fallacious.”²² Such rhetoric describes archaeological discoveries as possessing potential impact for understanding the biblical

¹⁹ Albert T. Clay, *Light on the Old Testament from Babel*, 2.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 2, 3, and 429.

²² Ibid., 2-3.

accounts, yet refrains from declaring these discoveries as undeniable proof for the historical accuracy of these accounts.

Banks followed a similar rhetoric and utilized rhetoric of the discoveries moving stories from the mythical to the real. This is revealed as he describes “real kings,” “real wars,” and “real history.”²³ Banks even employs language of confirmation in a single usage regarding the religious practice of Canaanites as reported in the Hebrew Bible being confirmed in the Tell el-Amarna Letters.²⁴

While far from restrained by modern standards, declining to draw on language of proof or to employ widely-used confirmation language establishes these works apart from their contemporaries. The rhetoric of these authors provides a clear indication of how the discoveries will be interpreted. Their attention to the evidence serves to limit their claims and thus is evident in their restrained rhetoric. While these works overstate by modern standards, by the standards of their time these two works represent a concentrated attempt to limit claims on the archaeological evidence coupled with an awareness of the failure to do so by those writers seeking the confirmation of the biblical accounts.

The third and final characteristic of this literature is a balanced survey of the discoveries. While these authors are both devoted to the truth of the Hebrew Bible, they are willing to consider the possible impact of the discoveries. There is an even-handedness in their approaches as the authors consider the difficult data and decline to omit evidence that is unsettling to traditional biblical interpretation. This section will consider the apparent Babylonian influence on the Hebrews as a case study of how these representatives wrestle with difficult issues.

²³ Edgar J. Banks, *The Bible and the Spade*, 54.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

Banks was not threatened by Babylonian influence and viewed it as easily fitting within a biblical understanding of the culture and heritage of the Hebrews. Banks viewed the Hebrews' sharing of stories and law codes with the Babylonians as natural.²⁵ It is his assessment that the Babylonian accounts were also stories of the Hebrews' own people as these would be well-established epics within Babylonian culture prior to Abraham's migration west. In response to related accounts such as the creation and deluge, Banks informed his audience that it was useless to speculate as to which culture borrowed from the other as the birthplace of the Hebrew people was Babylonia. These stories belonged to the Hebrews just as they did to the Babylonians.²⁶ These epics were instrumental to each people group's understanding of self. Shared stories should not be surprising for peoples with a common birthplace. Banks offered his audience a way of culturally interpreting the discoveries without dismissing either the find or the biblical account. This approach reveals a scholar that was striving to set forth an interpretation that was honest, yet was one that his intended audience can grasp and wrestle with.

Likewise, Clay considered the potential impact of Babylonian influence upon Hebrew culture and religion. Clay's opinion was that this influence must not be minimized. However, he believed that it had been exaggerated and overstated by some scholars.²⁷ He held that a generalized understanding of Babylonian influence upon Palestine was not justified with the evidence available. Clay pointed out that the inscriptions only revealed that a relationship between the Babylonian and biblical accounts existed and that the Babylonians possessed this tradition prior to the existence

²⁵ Ibid., 81.

²⁶ Ibid, 33.

²⁷ Albert T. Clay, *Light on the Old Testament from Babel*, 19.

of Israel. To make judgments on the importance or the means by which the cultures acquired these stories was beyond the available evidence. Clay agreed with Banks' assessment that the account may have been carried from Babylon to Palestine by Abraham or other travelers and then naturalized to agree with Hebrew theology. He next proposed a second theory involving Semites carrying the story into both Babylonia and Palestine. This theory opened the possibility that the account may have been free from its polytheistic features when handed down by the Semites. However, Clay admitted that there was no evidence to this extent. For Clay the Babylonian influence compelled the scholar to "unlearn some things, and set aside certain traditional views."²⁸ But he believed that there was no evidence to compel a Christian to lose respect or admiration for the creation account found in Scripture. Although both of these scholars carried a bias of wishing to defend the integrity of the biblical account and to defend the validity of faith, both openly considered the surprising revelation of Babylonian influence. This willingness characterized a small group of lay-focused authors who desired to present a balanced presentation of the evidence so that readers could be informed by the discoveries, but not forced to lose faith. Their purpose, rhetoric, and application testify to a balanced, educated approach to the surprises caused by these monumental discoveries.

Proof-Centered Lay-Focused Scholarship

Unfortunately, this balanced approach was not always the norm. Uneducated authors armed with little more than archaeology entries from Encyclopedia Britannica sought to interpret the discoveries. This approach was typified by a perceived need to defend the Bible through the use of archaeological discoveries. This section will consider

²⁸ Ibid., 76.

W. E. Gladstone's *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture* and John Urquhart's *Archeology's Solution of Old Testament Puzzles* as representatives of this approach to lay-focused scholarship.²⁹ The criteria for evaluating these works are an understanding of archaeology as the defender of the historicity of the Bible and a proof-centered rhetoric developed to establish the biblical accounts as superior to the discoveries unless the material remains were useful to establishing the Bible as possessing superior historicity.

The first characterization of these works is a severely limited role for archaeology primarily focused on establishing the biblical account over the inscriptions. Discoveries, such as the Moabite stela, that seemingly agree with the biblical account were used to prove the “fully informed and minutely accurate history” of the Bible.³⁰ Discoveries, such as the Babylonian Creation and Deluge accounts, that seemingly “stand in competition” served the purpose of establishing the “superior antiquity and authority” of the biblical tradition.³¹ These works contained little potential for archaeology to expand one's understanding of context or of Near Eastern culture. The purpose for archaeology was either to prove the Hebrew Bible's integrity or to establish it as superior over the inscriptions of other cultures. It was this amateur, biblically-biased approach that would be pushed against in later generations of archaeologists.

The rhetoric of these works reflects the perceived role for archaeology. The biblical accounts were trumpeted as “superior,” “rational,” “transcendent,” and free of

²⁹ W. E. Gladstone, *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture* (Philadelphia: John D. Wattles, 1891). And John Urquhart, *Archeology's Solution of Old Testament Puzzles* (Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1906).

³⁰ John Urquhart, *Archeology's Solution of Old Testament Puzzles*, 23.

³¹ W. E. Gladstone, *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*, 265.

legend or distortion of tradition.³² The inscriptions were then characterized as “dark and confused,” “inferior,” and filled with “vainglorious boastfulness.”³³ This rhetoric revealed that the author’s intention was to discredit the testimony of the discoveries lest they assist in the “proving” of the authenticity and authority of the biblical accounts. These authors’ approach to the archaeological discoveries was one strictly interested either in the proving of the Bible or in the discounting of the inscriptions’ validity. No value was awarded outside of confirmation of the biblical tradition. Nor was interest paid to culture or background. This school of thought sought proof while willingly dismissing any source not assisting such a search.

In summation, the educated efforts of authors such as Clay and Banks are to be admired as progressive for the time period. Their works facilitated better Bible scholarship through an archaeological purpose that included an investigation of culture, a rhetoric that avoided the need to confirm or prove, and a willingness that considered how surprising discoveries could be reconciled to the biblical traditions. Authors pursuing illumination and a better understanding of the world and culture during the time of the Bible tended to produce works more willing to interact with the discoveries. Less beneficially, some authors held to a limited philosophy of archaeology that demanded confirmation from the discoveries. If the finds were unable to provide confirmation or seemed to stand in “competition,” these discoveries were dismissed as inferior and devoid of value. Those in search of confirmation denied the discoveries’ ability to provide insight into a different cultural and ethnic context. Unfortunately, these authors justified claims of truth and confirmation by dismissing many of the challenges presented

³² Ibid., 265, 269, and 270.

³³ Ibid., 269-270. And John Urquhart, *Archeology’s Solution of Old Testament Puzzles*, 26.

by these discoveries, thus overstepping the available evidence for their claims. The perceived needs and biases of the author shaped and limited the approach taken towards these discoveries, the testimonies sought out of these resources, and the rhetoric employed.

The Scholarship Aimed to Bible Societies and Seminaries

As these archaeological discoveries become known, the Bible Societies and the seminaries throughout the world were forced to consider their impact. To appreciate the breadth of scholarship, this section will consider eight authors as a representative of the different approaches and rhetoric used during this time period. At the heart of these scholarly-focused works is a consideration of the purpose of archaeology, of the proper language to utilize, and of how, if necessary, to reconcile the discoveries with traditional views of Scripture.

As is to be expected with the number of scholars staking a claim to the importance of these discoveries, there is a large span of beliefs surrounding the intended purpose of archaeology. A. H. Sayce believed that archaeology provided a means of settling controversy with higher critics. This was accomplished by providing external sources to shed light upon the Old Testament from the outside. Such clues thereby removed theories regarding the biblical tradition, authorship, and culture from the “inner consciousness” of the higher critics.³⁴ For Sayce, archaeology potentially could provide substantial evidence to defend the traditions and ancient records against those who openly

³⁴ A. H. Sayce, *The “Higher Criticism” and the Verdict of the Monuments*, 4th ed. (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1894), 29.

questioned them.³⁵ Sayce's belief was that archaeology would serve to silence those who questioned the biblical tradition.

Of a similar school, Philip Henry Gosse's primary conclusion was his emphasis that "there has not been found a single contradiction."³⁶ Such a conclusion reveals a need to find a champion to defend the cause and archaeology had the potential to serve in just such a role.

Next, Ira M. Price sought for archaeology to inform the traditions regarding Scripture, especially concerning the Bible's relationship with external sources. For Price, archaeology revealed that the historical accounts were of pure quality with few extravagances, holding most closely to the original form of any shared traditions.³⁷ Archaeology provided an outside lens to look back at the accounts recorded in the Hebrew Bible. For Price, the goal of archaeology was to inform the biblical account and to testify to its validity and authenticity.

Next, the widely used *Jahn's Biblical Archaeology* asserted that archaeology allowed the reader of the Bible to understand allusions to ceremonies, laws, and peculiarities. This and knowledge of the inscriptions might ultimately enable the reader to separate between religious truths and figurative language.³⁸ The ancient monuments served to illustrate the Bible relative to the physical locations at the time "of our

³⁵ A. H. Sayce, *Monument Facts and Higher Critical Fancies*, 2nd ed. (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1904), 60.

³⁶ Philip Henry Gosse, *The Monuments of Ancient Egypt, and their Relation to the Word of God* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1855), 285.

³⁷ Ira M. Price, 129-130.

³⁸ Thomas C., Upham, trans., *Jahn's Biblical Archaeology*, 5th ed. (New York: Ivison, Phinney, Blakman & Co., 1839), 2.

savior.”³⁹ For this work, archaeology brought the reader into the world of the Bible and provided a means of better understanding the cultural happenings of such a world.

Next, Fritz Hommel desired to find confirmation of the accuracy of the biblical narratives through the recognition of indirect relationships between the narratives and the archaeological discoveries.⁴⁰ His stated purpose was for archaeology to testify to the accuracy and trustworthiness of the historical narratives of the Bible.⁴¹ Also, archaeology was trusted to bulwark his position against all “future attacks” from skeptics and critics.⁴² For Hommel, archaeology affirmed the integrity of the biblical accounts through indirect relationships, thereby defending the Hebrew Bible.

Next, S. R. Driver believed that archaeology served to cast light upon the history of the people, civilizations, and important sites of the Bible. More than providing illuminating allusions to the Bible, archaeology uncovered places and cultures only incidentally mentioned in the Bible.⁴³ To Driver, the discoveries held the potential to enable the student to arrive at a fuller understanding of the events, people, and cultures of the ancient Near East. This was in contrast to the limiting of archaeology’s value to those discoveries “which merely corroborate isolated biblical statements.”⁴⁴ Archaeology located the events of the Bible into proper perspective by removing them from isolation

³⁹ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁰ Fritz Hommel, *The Ancient Hebrew Tradition*, trans. Edmund McClure and Leonard Crossle (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1897), 267.

⁴¹ Ibid., 221.

⁴² Ibid., 118.

⁴³ S. R. Driver, *Modern Research as Illustrating the Bible* (London: British Academy, 1909), 3.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 16.

and by acknowledging links made to the Near Eastern world outside of the biblical witness.⁴⁵

Next, H. J. Dukinfield Astley wrote that archaeology and the inscriptions of other cultures served to testify to the progressive revelation of the “character and purposes of God.” It was Astley’s belief that this served to prepare the way for the Incarnation.⁴⁶ For Astley, archaeology served to reveal God’s activity in the physical world through material evidence.

Lastly, J. F. McCurdy believed that the purpose of archaeology was to shed light upon the people, city, languages, cultures, political structures, and moral characteristics of the people of the lands of the Bible.⁴⁷ It was through this focus that the Hebrew Bible was illustrated.

Although these authors have differing scopes for the purpose of archaeology, each was committed to utilizing the discipline to illuminate the accounts of the Bible. In addition archaeology could potentially silence the critics, reaffirm the Bible’s authenticity, illustrate the physical locations, place biblical events in cultural context, and even testify to God’s activity in the world.

Having considered the authors’ perceived purpose for archaeology, it is important to examine the rhetoric utilized to approach archaeology and its relation to the biblical accounts. These same authors will be considered as a representative sample to explore the rhetoric of the scholarly works of this time period.

⁴⁵ S. R. Driver, “Hebrew Authority,” in *Authority and Archaeology: Sacred and Profane*, ed. David G. Hogarth (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1899), 130.

⁴⁶ H. J. Dukinfield Astley, *Prehistoric Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908), 284.

⁴⁷ J. F. McCurdy, “Oriental Research and the Bible,” in *Recent Research in Bible Lands*, ed. Herman V. Hilprecht (Philadelphia: John D. Wattles, 1896), 5.

Illumination and light are common metaphors for describing the relationship between the Bible and archaeology. Sayce's works are typified by his use of "shedding light" language.⁴⁸ For example, he described the inscriptions as reflecting light back upon the biblical accounts. Also, the inscriptions "shed a flood of light" upon the history of the Old Testament, illustrate the biblical accounts, and make possible the further examination of the language of the Bible. Astley also utilized language of throwing fresh light upon the difficulties posed by archaeology and higher criticism. This same light and illumination language would continue to dominate the rhetoric well into the American school's rise to prominence.

Driver employs a unique rhetoric when he makes use of such phrases as "rising above," "unique character," and "inspired teachers."⁴⁹ He utilized this rhetoric when considering the relationship between the biblical accounts and the inscriptions. Such phrases related to a desire for the biblical accounts and sites to be brought into a larger context.

Another common theme among these writers is the language of illustration. Price utilized such language to portray the relationship between archaeology and the Old Testament. McCurdy went on to state that the rhetoric of illustration was now prominent, thereby replacing any remnants of the rhetoric of confirmation. Moreover, McCurdy believed that "the stadium of needed vindication of the historical accuracy of the Old Testament is now as good as past in our progress towards the final goal of truth and

⁴⁸ A. H. Sayce, *The "Higher Criticism" and the Verdict of the Monuments*, 29.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.

knowledge.”⁵⁰ Such a belief reveals a school of thought that was moving away from searching for absolute confirmations and towards a view of archaeology contributing to a wider cultural understanding.

However, the language of confirmation had not been removed from the landscape of archaeology and the Bible. Hommel commonly employed rhetoric of indirect confirmation. This language was accompanied by his interest in putting down objections of those who criticized his conclusions.⁵¹ Gosse also utilized language of the confirmation of the Word of God through minute and “therefore indubitable” evidences from ancient nations. He went on to state that there have been no discoveries that contradict his understanding of the “Word of God,” which corresponded with his belief that archaeology’s purpose was to confirm the biblical accounts.⁵² It was important for Gosse to point out this perceived lack of contradiction because he next employed it to declare that the biblical accounts were not forgeries of a later authorship, but possess an intimate understanding of the time period, the people, and the events described. This rhetoric of confirmation corresponds with a purpose for archaeology that was committed to defending the biblical accounts against critics and doubters and to testifying to the authenticity of the traditional views.

This survey of rhetoric reveals two major schools of thought. One school utilized language of confirmation and sought to defend the Bible from its opponents. The second school employed illumination and illustration language. There seems to be a developing sense held by these scholars that illustration was the necessary path for the rhetoric to

⁵⁰ J. F. McCurdy, “Oriental Research and the Bible,” 28.

⁵¹ Fritz Hommel, *The Ancient Hebrew Tradition*, 119, 221, and 266.

⁵² Philip Henry Gosse, *The Monuments of Ancient Egypt*, 91.

take.⁵³ While confirmation rhetoric offered a very limited philosophy of archaeology, illumination rhetoric held the potential to free the authors to be aware of implications beyond direct influence on the biblical text.

Application of Archaeology to Biblical Studies – The Creation Epic as a Case Study

Having considered the purpose of archaeology and the rhetoric utilized, we move next to examine the truth claims, the evidence, and the logic utilized. This section will examine three of the before-mentioned authors and explore their interactions with the creation accounts as a case study of the application of purpose and rhetoric.

Each author approached the difficulties of the Babylonian and biblical traditions in differing fashions. These unique approaches further reveal each author's philosophy and motivation. Price examined the similarities between the inscriptions and Genesis and arrived at the conclusion that both traditions possessed a primitive knowledge of the tradition in its original form. This primitive account was subsequently adapted and shaped into a distinctive epic to fit the needs and the beliefs of the differing traditions that adopt it. Interestingly, Price went on to state that Genesis was evident, through "careful examination," to be the purest and nearest to this unknown original form.⁵⁴ Judging by some statements by Price, it would seem that he believed older materials to have more historical authority. But, when the biblical materials are demonstrably later than the Babylonian account, he has little to say about it. To claim purity of form for either account seems to assume evidences that were not readily available through the texts.

⁵³ J. F. McCurdy, "Oriental Research and the Bible," 28.

⁵⁴ Ira M. Price, 129-130.

However, such an interpretation of the evidence corresponds with Price's archaeological goal of informing the biblical accounts through the verification of authenticity.

Driver's interpretation led him to believe that the Babylonian account had been borrowed by the Hebrews. Accordingly, through a development period the story was divested of its polytheistic beliefs and acclimated to the religious world of the Hebrews until being adopted by the Genesis author. Driver believed that the shape and outline of the story continued on, but the pagan aspects were stripped away and then infused with a new spirit through "the magic touch of Israel's religion."⁵⁵ Driver accepted that in the hands of the Israelite religion "its spirit was changed, its religious teaching, and significance was transfigured, in the light of revelation."⁵⁶ He adopted a view of progressive revelation that understood the polytheistic epic as having evolved into a "divinely appointed means" to declare "eternal spiritual realities" that were implicit in the workings of the world.⁵⁷ For Driver, there was no question concerning his theory of the biblical cosmogony having derived from the Babylonian tradition. To him the only questions that remained concerned the date of this occurrence and the channels by which the tradition was transmitted. He went on to state that "no archaeologist" fostered any other questions than these.⁵⁸ There was little or no perceived threat for Driver. Instead he strove to understand the cultural means that brought about this naturalization of the epic. Archaeology was not needed to defend the Bible, but it did hold the potential to increase the understanding of the world that shaped it.

⁵⁵ S. R. Driver, *Modern Research as Illustrating the Bible*, 23.

⁵⁶ S. R. Driver, "Hebrew Authority," in *Authority and Archaeology: Sacred and Profane*, 17.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

Finally, Sayce held that the story was known in Canaan and later modified prior to its inclusion in the Hebrew Scriptures. For Sayce there was no denying Babylonian influence on the biblical account as the similarities between these two accounts extended to the very vocabulary found in the accounts. Yet, he contrasted the “mythology, polytheism, and materialism” of the Babylonian account with the sober monotheism of Genesis.⁵⁹ The relationship between the two accounts allowed Sayce to come to the same conclusion as Driver: the Genesis account was of Babylonian origin. Notably, Sayce’s devoted opposition of higher criticism and his desire to hold evidence in balance caused him to end his examination of outside influences by warning of the dangers of questioning tradition and ancient record prior to the revelation of all facts and evidences.⁶⁰ Although these discoveries had challenged the traditional understanding of the Genesis creation account, Sayce remained committed to preserving the value and authenticity of the biblical account.

Interestingly, the motivation of each author provides a distinctive shade to his respective interpretation. Just as Price expected archaeology to inform the traditions of Scripture, his belief in Genesis being the purest form of the original tradition of the Creation Epic was a natural conclusion. Driver looked for archaeology to provide perspective to the biblical narratives and to illuminate the world of the Bible. Thereby, this freed him from having to defend the authority of Scripture in light of Babylonian influence. Instead, Driver was left to ponder how the traditions were shaped and how the Hebrew account took on its final form. Sayce remained a dedicated opponent of higher

⁵⁹ A. H. Sayce, *The “Higher Criticism” and the Verdict of the Monuments*, 71.

⁶⁰ A. H. Sayce, *Monument Facts and Higher Critical Fancies*, 60. “Archaeological research is constantly demonstrating how dangerous it is to question or deny the veracity of tradition or of an ancient record until we know all the facts.”

criticism. He consequently warned to not question tradition without all possible evidence. He was hopeful that the destructive theories of the critics would be quieted and scrutinized by the beneficial lens of archaeological discovery. As is inevitable in scholarship, each author's purpose of archaeology, rhetoric and bias shapes the final interpretations that each one makes. We must be aware of the author's philosophy and tendencies in order to properly understand this time period in archaeological discovery. Their individual goals and rhetoric reflect an attempt to reconcile and to apply this new discipline to the traditional interpretations. And finally, their passionate attempts must be recognized as admirable considering the unexpected surprises that the dawn of archaeology presented these relatively unprepared biblical scholars.

Babel und Bibel

The appearance of Friedrich Delitzsch's *Babel und Bibel* heralded the culmination of the early period of biblical archaeology and the need for the discipline to progress in order to survive.⁶¹ This section will examine Delitzsch's claims, explore the rebuttal of his critics and colleagues, and finally consider the long-term impact upon the young field of archaeology.

Delitzsch presented the first of this controversial lectures series before German Emperor William II and the German Oriental Society on January 13th, 1902. This well-known professor of Oriental Philology and Assyriology at the University of Berlin had been financed by the state to examine the relationship between the Bible and the cuneiform inscriptions that had recently come to light. Contrary to the intentions of the

⁶¹ Friedrich Delitzsch, *Babel and Bible: Two Lectures delivered before the Members of the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft in the presence of the German Emperor*, ed. C. H. W. Johns (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1903).

Emperor, his lectures challenged many of the traditional views of the Bible and Christianity. At the core of these lectures was Delitzsch's assertion that Israel and Israelite tradition were actually fully subservient to Babylonian influence. We will next consider these claims as well as the challenges that were raised for his generation.

One primary claim he made was that many elements of the material and religious culture, such as commerce, money, weights and measures, law, sacrificial systems, priestly systems, and language were all "profoundly influenced by the Babylonian."⁶² Even by the time of the writing of the Tell-El Amarna letters, the Israelites resided in a land deeply saturated by Babylonian culture. There was no means of separating between the purely Israelite accounts and the Babylonian accounts. For Delitzsch, the influence was simply too overwhelming because the accounts of the Hebrew Bible were undeniably steeped in Babylonian culture and religion.⁶³ Delitzsch went on to conclude that this influence from Babylonia meant that the Bible was nothing more than a work of "highly-gifted peoples."⁶⁴ His critics felt that such a conclusion dismissed the possibility of divine revelation within the biblical accounts. Instead, the development and identity of Hebrew culture and faith were in actuality children of Babylonian influence.

Another of Delitzsch's main tenets was that Hebrew monotheism was unable to stand against polytheism.⁶⁵ It was his belief that monotheistic Semites entered Babylonia prior to the time of the biblical patriarchs. This Semitic monotheism was unable to

⁶² Ibid., 40.

⁶³ Ibid., 51.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 67.

⁶⁵ In order to understand Delitzsch's appreciation for Babylonian polytheism, it is important to note that he views the Babylonian gods as "living, omniscient, and omnipresent beings who hear the prayers of men," who are angered by sin, but are ready to be reconciled to those who offend them. (Ibid., 72).

maintain its individuality and ultimately succumbed to Babylonian polytheism. It was not until Abraham's departure that monotheism, freed from polytheistic influence, reasserted itself. For Delitzsch, a second example of this same phenomenon was the Israelite captives who adopted polytheism during the captivity. This further revealed the inability of monotheism to stand against Babylonian gods. Delitzsch understood this supposed failure to remain faithful to monotheism as a burden not lifted until "the New Testament dawned upon the world."⁶⁶ Hebrew monotheism was simply not a sustainable system in opposition to the Babylonian religious system. Delitzsch's claims were based on his belief that Hebrew culture was a child of Babylonian influence and was also unable to assert its religious identity over the polytheism of its cultural parent. The claims that Delitzsch leveled call into question the very identity and formation of the Hebrew culture and religion.

However, Delitzsch's claims were quickly met by challengers calling into question his interpretations of the evidence. Here we will consider several of Delitzsch's critics as a representation of the opposition that this lecture series faced.

Both his funding agency and his fellow Assyriologists openly questioned Delitzsch's treatment of evidence and his interpretations which ventured far beyond his specialization. Emperor William II, the patron of the project, ultimately expressed his disregard for the work of Delitzsch. In a letter to the German Oriental Society, William II questioned Delitzsch's venture away from his specialty of Assyriology and into theology and the New Testament. The Emperor retrospectively wished that Delitzsch had simply explained the discoveries and mentioned potential theories for their Old Testament bearings. The Emperor felt forced to make it plain that he did not support the professor

⁶⁶ Ibid., 76.

due to Delitzsch's failure to report strictly on his specialization, his "denial" of revelation, and his "not admitting the divinity of Christ".⁶⁷ The Emperor stated he would have been grateful for the presentation if Delitzsch had presented evidence of Babylonian excavations possibly shedding light upon the Hebrew Bible and then explained potential consequences. However, it was Delitzsch's attempt to step beyond his specialization and into the field of religion that finally forced the Emperor to dismiss the entirety of the lectures.⁶⁸ Such need for the clarification between science and faith and the ability to resist the temptation to expound beyond one's specialty were challenges that would continually face the relationship between archaeology and the Bible.

A second challenger is H. V. Hilprecht, an experienced Assyriologist from the University of Pennsylvania. Hilprecht countered Delitzsch by holding to a belief that it was impossible that Israelite faith had found its origins in a Babylonian polytheism characterized as "full of death and the savor of death."⁶⁹ For Hilprecht, the characteristics between the two religions were so different that a Babylonian origin for the Hebrew religion was dismissible. A third challenger, Joseph Halévy, a leading French Orientalist, also questioned Delitzsch. Here Halévy characterized Delitzsch's scientific method as allowing for great statements and sweeping truth claims with minimal evidence. Halévy even stated that "certain inept, inaccurate, and redundant statements" pervaded many of

⁶⁷ Emperor William to Admiral Hollman, Counciliar of the German Oriental Society, February 15, 1903, in *Babel and Bible: Two Lectures on the Significance of Assyriological Research*, trans. Thomas Joseph McCormack and W. H. Carruth (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1903), 120.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 121.

⁶⁹ D. S. Gregory, "'Babel and Bible' or 'Science Falsely So-Called,'" *The Homiletic Review* 45, no. 4 (April 1903): 379.

the truth claims located in Delitzsch's lectures.⁷⁰ One example was Halévy's refutation of a Babylonian seal Delitzsch used as evidence for a Babylonian origin for the Fall of humanity account. This seal was Delitzsch's chief evidence for a Babylonian Fall account. Halévy largely dismissed such an interpretation due to the lack of an inscription to support such a conclusion. Also, the image found on the seal lacked the necessary consistency with the biblical account to deem them of the same origin. This was just one example of what Halévy believed to be Delitzsch's "predisposition to rest content with superficial appearances."⁷¹ These rebuttals from his emperor and his colleagues reveal an emphatic belief that the claims of Delitzsch overstepped his evidence and scientific method. However, the ultimate impact that this lecture makes with its lack of method and lack of restraint for claims is the calling forth of a new era in archaeology.

The long-term effects of Delitzsch's lectures and the following response were the movement of the relationship between archaeology and the Bible into a new epoch. The time of the prominent adventurer who failed to utilize careful, calculated methods must come to an end so that unsupported claims, such as Delitzsch, could be contained through scientific analysis of the evidence. Delitzsch's methodological imprecision elicited a conviction on the part of people in his time that a critical discipline must be developed. The efforts of men such as Layard, Smith, Rawlinson, and Rassam opened the doors to the cultures of the ancient Near East being unearthed and examined with the expressed goal of the illumination and the illustration of the Bible. However, Delitzsch's lectures revealed a weakness which established the academic pursuit of archaeology in the fashion of Petrie as the necessary evolution of the discipline. Although Delitzsch's arguments and

⁷⁰ Ibid., 381.

⁷¹ Ibid.

interpretations failed to stand up against the criticism of his colleagues, they did succeed in bringing about a new class of archaeologist devoted to method and science. And though the method of this next generation would pale in comparison to modern methodology, it clearly signaled that undisciplined excavation and truth claims void of evidence or those willing to distort archaeological evidence would no longer be accepted. Though not the goal of the author, *Babel und Bibel* raised awareness to the lack of method and scientific discipline and the next generation would seek to apply science as it strives to understand the relationship between archaeology and the Bible.

Chapter 2

The Rise of the American School

Appearing for the first time in the mid nineteenth-century, biblical archaeology provided a new approach for understanding the Bible. It became no longer necessary or possible to strictly contain conversations concerning the Bible to the text itself. William Foxwell Albright and the members of his American school of archaeologists recognized the biblical significance of Near Eastern archaeology and put into practice a methodology to answer criticisms regarding the scientific approach of biblical archaeologists. Digs such as Tell Beit Mirsim were undertaken with this developing methodology in mind. The interpretation of this methodology is visible as each member of the school approached archaeology with a recognizable goal and purpose and went on to develop and solidify a rhetoric for describing the discoveries. This chapter will seek to examine the methodology, the key excavations, and the purposes and the rhetoric utilized by Albright and his students, as well as interacting with the American school's view of the future of archaeology and its relevance to an understanding of Israel's faith.

Methodology

It is often written that one of the greatest contributions of the American school was its work in methodology and archaeological chronology. Acquiring funding, assembling an excavation team, designing new methods and advancing the methodology of others were all contributions made by Albright and his followers. Their scholarly efforts also included the defense of biblical archaeology and of those who carried out the excavations.

The funding of excavations was a primary concern during this time period, as it continues to be in the present. A majority of the excavations were undertaken by research organizations and institutions, such as American and British universities and archaeological research societies. Governments, such as those of France and Germany, often supplied funds for expeditions carried out by their nationals. Such strong national support points towards a drive to lay claim to the finest discoveries prior to their acquisition by other “Christian nations.” Rich individuals also often served as patrons with the archaeologists themselves often assisting in the financing of certain elements of the excavations.⁷²

Oftentimes, the need for funding hindered the excavations. Pressures to discover museum pieces, such as inscriptions, steles, and statues, limited the number of attractive sites. This was coupled with expectations for discoveries holding biblical significance. Both of these pressures weighed heavily upon the archaeologists. Excavations in Palestine were especially difficult to finance. Museum directors and curators were hesitant to provide funds as digs in Palestinian rarely yielded museum objects. Conservative religious groups lacked interest in archaeological work, arguing that, “since the Bible needs no confirmation there is no object in looking for any more than we already have.”⁷³ Even well-educated individuals doubted the ability to gain insight into human values from “a science of potsherds.” Lastly, liberals in religion held that excavations of sites in India and China would be more conducive to learning about the history of religion than Palestine. The financial needs of these excavations were often met with underwhelming support. The danger of insufficient funding led to the tendency to

⁷² William Foxwell Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1971), 9.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 10.

fail to uphold the necessary meticulous methods as well as an inability to obtain first-rate equipment, which was necessary in order to obtain superior results as well as to make the work reliable and convenient.

The assembly of the excavation team is another method into which Albright provided considerable insight. Earlier excavations had been plagued by a lack of close supervision and control. This ultimately led to the stratigraphy, chronology and history of a site going unrecorded. Albright's teams were designed around the importance of "detailed and precise archaeological recording."⁷⁴ He held that an excavation team should be filled with individuals of varying skills. Such skilled members included an architect or surveyor, a photographer, and several draughtsmen and recorders. The importance of ceramics was exhibited as Albright viewed a Palestinian pottery specialist as an uncompromisable necessity. Also noteworthy is Albright's belief that "women often make the best archaeologists."⁷⁵ He upheld equality and was fully supportive of women in the field. His primary concern was that mixed gender teams far from a town can increase maintenance costs as additional housing was necessary for such a team.

Of great importance is the American school's work in archaeological method. They positioned themselves as scientific archaeologists following in the tradition of Sir Flinders Petrie.⁷⁶ Thus a great deal of effort was taken to separate themselves from the old school of archaeologists who dug with the purpose of finding tablets and museum pieces. This old school lacked the understanding that an object separated from its relative

⁷⁴ G. Ernest Wright, *Shechem*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 33-34.

⁷⁵ William Foxwell Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, 13.

⁷⁶ William Foxwell Albright, *New Horizons in Biblical Research* (London: Oxford University, 1966), 1.

location and context in the excavation suffered an immediate loss of its historical worth. The Americans responded by placing an emphasis on proper technique, meticulous observation, and accurate reporting. All of this was to “preserve otherwise irreplaceable data.”⁷⁷

Much of the excavation techniques were rooted in the Wheeler-Kenyon Technique.⁷⁸ This involved the careful use of test trenches to determine stratification prior to digging. When walls were uncovered, additional test trenches at right angles to walls were excavated. This was a departure from digging trenches horizontal to the wall, which had been the earlier standard. The sides of the trench were next smoothed and all signs of strata drawn to scale, carefully labeled, and finally reported. This information was vital to making decisions concerning the future of the excavation.

The practical application of this technique is intriguing. The ideal presentation of the strategy is to uncover the whole of a stratum across the excavation at the same time. This would allow the site to be drawn and photographed as a unit, freeing the excavator to uncover the next layer. Unfortunately, as cities are not built on flat surfaces, the ideal proved to be impossible. Accordingly, the excavator adapted to digging by color and texture of the soil rather than depth, utilizing significant architectural features as the marker that a new stratum had been reached.

It is in this process that the Wheeler-Kenyon Technique was essential. Since the composition of the levels was unknown, the entire balk was not uncovered. Instead a probe trench was excavated. This allowed for an identification of the sequence of levels so that the entirety of the balk could next be addressed. This technique provided a series

⁷⁷ G. Ernest Wright, *Shechem*, 33-34 and 185.

⁷⁸ William Foxwell Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, 21.

of plans detailing the revealed levels. The sides of the trench helped determine the vertical relationship of the balks. Subsequent levels were carefully labeled and photographed to ensure accurate recording. Pottery sherds examined through a ceramic typology allowed these soil levels to be dated. The balk was then removed upon completion of one level, in preparation for the next. A careful removal after proper recording was “often an invaluable check on the accuracy of interpretations already made.”⁷⁹ Upon completing the excavation of a stratum, a master section illustration was finally created through the input of the supervisors, the director, and the chief architect. They believed that a skilled team was “likely to be far more accurate than the interpretation of any single individual.”⁸⁰

These techniques exist to alleviate three major excavation difficulties. First is that the archaeologist begins with an upside-down perspective of the site, seeing the end of a city prior to its foundation. Careful record keeping is essential so that earlier finds can be reexamined following the uncovering of its earlier context. Second, working on a flat surface obscures the perspective of how the site once stood. The archaeologist must think, dig, and report in three-dimensions. Third is the need to maintain an over-all awareness of the site. Although the primary focus of the archaeologist is on his/her balk, s/he must be alert to the development and discoveries occurring in surrounding fields within the excavation so as to better place the discoveries of one’s balk into proper context.⁸¹

⁷⁹ G. Ernest Wright, *Shechem*, 189.

⁸⁰ This helpful description of the excavation techniques of the American school can be found in Wright’s *Shechem* on pages 187-190.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 186.

Alongside of the progression in excavation techniques arose the development of typology tools. Typology is the study of the forms, decorations, and functions of objects made by the hand of humanity. Stratigraphy and typology are deeply intertwined so as to provide a historical context for cultural developments. Only through a precise understanding of stratigraphy is it possible to consider the material cultures that existed at the various occupations. Relating these two disciplines allows for the cultural data to hold a historical and sequential context.⁸²

It is widely considered that Albright's greatest contribution was his work in archaeological typology and chronology. He sought to create a ceramic dating system that would eliminate the high degree of subjectivity known to exist in ceramic typology. Albright's typology built upon the foundation established by early excavators, especially Petrie. The goal was for each subsequent archaeological dig to add to and refine this typology.⁸³ The ceramic typology developed as it became possible to associate dates with each unique form of pottery. This became possible as datable discoveries such as inscriptions were found alongside the sherds. This was a much more common occurrence outside of Palestine, making Petrie's work in Egypt invaluable to the typology's development. The use of such a typology coupled with the abundance of pottery sherds at each layer of an excavation site allowed for tentative dates to be associated with each stratum. However, Albright was hesitant to maintain that the ceramic typology could

⁸² William Foxwell Albright, *History, Archaeology and Christian Humanism* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 20.

⁸³ G. Ernest Wright, "The Archaeology of Palestine," in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. G. Ernest Wright (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961), 74-75.

provide absolute dates, as absolute dates are dependent upon “comparative archaeology, radiocarbon, inscriptions, etc.”⁸⁴

It is important to consider this hesitancy concerning absolute dates. A caution was commonly offered by the American school when utilizing non-written materials: flexibility must be allowed when using such things as cultural and social patterns to date sites and levels. Claims of illumination of the Bible through non-written materials were to be made with a great deal more caution than when using written documents as evidence.⁸⁵ To restrict claims, even those tempered by methodology, is an important progression from the previous time period in archaeology to this one.

A major challenge to the authority of the American school was that historians and archaeologists called into question the methods and motives of these biblical archaeologists. These criticisms forced the development of the scientific methodology we have discussed, but the critics continued to question the motives of the individuals who were carrying out the method. They wondered if those who came to Palestine with previous training as biblical scholars could hold any motive or interest other than a desire to employ archaeology as an apologetic. Albright stated that the scientific quality of Palestinian archaeology had not been negatively affected by the involvement of biblical scholars. Albright recalled “scarcely a single case where their [biblical scholars working at excavations] religious views seriously influenced their results.”⁸⁶ G. Ernest Wright admitted that much of the excavation at Shechem had been undertaken by clergymen and

⁸⁴ William Foxwell Albright, *History, Archaeology and Christian Humanism*, 20.

⁸⁵ Two such warnings can be found in: David Noel Freedman, “The Chronology of Israel and the Ancient Near East,” in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, ed. G. Ernest Wright (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961), 205. As well as: William Foxwell Albright, *New Horizons in Biblical Research*, 4.

⁸⁶ William Foxwell Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, 219.

biblical scholars who taught in theological seminaries and university departments of religion. It was Wright's hope that the methodology and careful reporting of the excavation would serve to strike down the stereotype that biblical scholars failed to foster a historical interest. Wright defended the biblical archaeologist as no less devoted to the use of archaeological and historical method than their colleagues in other fields.⁸⁷ These developments served as an ominous foreshadowing of the criticism that biblical archaeology would face in the future.

Archaeological Method In Action – Tell Beit Mirsim as a Case Study

Tell Beit Mirsim was a showcase excavation led by Albright in which he sought to solidify his ceramic typology. Albright's efforts consisted of four campaigns to Tell Beit Mirsim, which is located in the southern Shephelah of Judah, west and southwest of Hebron. Tell Beit Mirsim was characterized as "modest in its yield of museum pieces, chary of inscriptions, it has yet thrown disproportionate light on many hitherto obscure corners of Palestinian antiquity."⁸⁸ This excavation provides an opportunity to examine how these digs were recorded, what the discoveries were used to say, and in what ways the author connected these discoveries with the Bible.

The archaeological reports painstakingly created by the American school far surpassed earlier archaeological records.⁸⁹ Travelogues were replaced by exacting

⁸⁷ G. Ernest Wright, *Shechem*, xvi.

⁸⁸ William Foxwell Albright, *The Excavation of Tell Beit Mirsim in Palestine: Vol. III The Iron Age*, vol. 21-22 of *The Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, ed. Millar Burrows and E. A. Speiser (New Haven: Yale University, 1943), xvii.

⁸⁹ The Americans held the Tell Beit Mirsim reports as the pinnacle of excavation reports. Interestingly, these reports are difficult to locate and it seems that the importance and primacy that they once held has faded. These reports include: William Foxwell Albright, *The Excavation of Tell Beit Mirsim in Palestine: Vol. 1 The Pottery of the First Three Campaigns*, vol. 12 of *The Annual of the American*

descriptions of each discovery down to the smallest pottery sherd with its relative location in the stratigraphy noted. The condition of the sherd was recorded as well as any coloration or inscription that was visible on the object. Each of these descriptions held a reference to a plate which provided photographic evidence of the sherd. These excavation reports reveal a major step towards a scientific approach to biblical archaeology, which had previously been controlled by adventurers and the so-called old school of archaeologists.

An exploration of the interpretations of the discoveries from the Tell Beit Mirsim excavation reports offers some interesting insights into the philosophy of the American School. These interpretations reveal the importance of Albright's ceramic typology. Albright integrated the Tell Beit Mirsim pottery with the typology established by Petrie so as to modify Petrie's typology and to call into question those dates recorded by Petrie that Albright felt were inadequate.⁹⁰ Fitting discoveries into a typology enabled Albright to make interpretations based upon the evidence in its context.

The school also looked for potential foreign relationships. Egyptian, Syrian, and other non-native pottery forms being found in Palestine illuminated possible relationships and people movements. One such example involved the end of a certain Philistine class of pottery occurring at Israelite sites between the late eleventh or early tenth century.

Albright interpreted this end as being "roughly synchronous" with the fall of Philistine

Schools of Oriental Research, ed. Henry J. Cadbury (New Haven: Yale University, 1932). William Foxwell Albright, "The Excavation of Tell Beit Mirsim in Palestine. I A: The Bronze Age Pottery of the Fourth Campaign," in *The Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research* vol. 13, ed. Millar Burrows and E. A. Speiser (New Haven: Yale University, 1933), 55-127. William Foxwell Albright, *The Excavation of Tell Beit Mirsim in Palestine: Vol. II The Bronze Age*, vol. 17 of *The Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, ed. Millar Burrows and E. A. Speiser (New Haven: Yale University, 1938). William Foxwell Albright, *The Excavation of Tell Beit Mirsim in Palestine: Vol. III The Iron Age*.

⁹⁰ For example, William Foxwell Albright, *The Excavation of Tell Beit Mirsim in Palestine: Vol. I The Pottery of the First Three Campaigns*, 29-30.

domination outside of the Pentapolis.⁹¹ Pottery was thus used as evidence of a people movement within the ancient Near East.

Also, the further illumination of ceramic typologies by excavations could help bring interesting interpretations to light at other sites. For example, a particular class of cooking pot rims from the Late Bronze age corresponded with a common class found on the surface of the mound of Ai. According to Israelite tradition, Ai fell immediately after Jericho. This would place the fall of these locations at ± 1400 BCE. Albright felt that this would agree with the work done by some other scholars who also placed the fall of Jericho at this same time.⁹²

A final example of the interpretations possible from ceramic typology was of a particularly crude and low-quality pottery class discovered at a stratum associated with Middle Bronze I. Albright interpreted this pottery alongside of other Palestinian sites with corresponding periods of crude pottery. He believed that this low-quality pottery suggested that Western Palestine had been overrun by desert nomadic tribes during the last portion of the third millennium, resulting in a period of sweeping poverty. These nomads began to settle in the twenty-second and the twenty-first centuries B. C. However, it took until the eighteenth century for this region to become densely populated and to experience an associated upturn in the quality of pottery created by the society.⁹³ This explains why crude pottery was common for such an extended period of time. Pottery evidence enabled the archaeologists to make interpretations regarding the rise and

⁹¹ Ibid., 55.

⁹² William Foxwell Albright, "The Excavation of Tell Beit Mirsim in Palestine. I A: The Bronze Age Pottery of the Fourth Campaign," 85.

⁹³ William Foxwell Albright, *The Excavation of Tell Beit Mirsim in Palestine: Vol. II The Bronze Age*, 16.

fall of societies and the occurrences of people movements, and to check the findings of other scholars.

As biblical archaeologists, these discoveries were often linked to the biblical accounts in an effort to check for illumination and correlations.⁹⁴ A specific form of city fortification from the late eleventh and early tenth centuries correlated with the building efforts of Saul and David was one such example. A casemate chamber was excavated at Gibeah and was judged to be a form rarely used after the reign of David. Albright interpreted the evidence to mean that “historically we can attribute these fortifications only to King David, circa 975 B. C.”⁹⁵ He described David’s need to defend against the Philistine threat and the possibility of narrowing the dating of these chambers to within the first seven years of David’s reign as after that time Tell Beit Mirsim would have been east of the established border. In such a matter and with such evidence Albright often looked for means to connect his excavations with the biblical witness in order to illumine the world surrounding the Bible.

A second example involved a discovery made in the top stratum at the end of the second Tell Beit Mirsim campaign in 1928. A jar handle with the stamped impression of a seal was unearthed among jar handles and sherds of the Iron IIB phase. The inscription read לֵאֱלִיָּקִים נֶעֱרַיִכֹן and is translated, “belonging to Eliakim steward of Joiachin.” As the jar-handle was found at the top of its phase, it likely corresponded to the end of the pre-exilic period. This would have been a time of poverty as the foreign invasions had crushed any commerce or industry as well as having placing demands for the paying of

⁹⁴ This is most commonly witnessed to in William Foxwell Albright, *The Excavation of Tell Beit Mirsim in Palestine: Vol. III The Iron Age*.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

tribute.⁹⁶ Two other seals bearing the same inscription had come to light at other excavations, including at Beth-Shemesh, making it difficult to associate this seal with the short reign of Joiachin. The difficulty was largely due to the economic interruptions caused by the Chaldean troops, making it impractical to believe that economic systems had continued unaffected. Accordingly, the seal was assigned to the reign of Zedekiah. As Zedekiah was appointed king by Nebuchadnezzar, a large portion of Judah would have viewed him as a regent of Joiachin until his return.

Interestingly, these seals have provided a chronology for understanding the excavation of Beth-Shemesh. Some scholars had speculated that Sennacherib had destroyed the town, but the existence of this seal instead points towards destruction at the hands of the Chaldeans. However, archaeologists were unable to prove Babylonian destruction due to “the absence of clear stratification” and “to the inadequacy of the archaeological examination.”⁹⁷ However, the existing evidence was “completely in accord” with the references to the destruction of Judah in Jeremiah.⁹⁸ Albright utilized such discoveries to oppose those who minimized the devastation of the conquest.

Albright was a biblical scholar and was devoted to the use of archaeology to illuminate the Bible. His careful recording of the sites, his historical interpretations aided by the ceramic typology, and his interest in comparing the discoveries with the biblical witness all speak to this devotion. Albright was also committed to a scientific approach to

⁹⁶ William Foxwell Albright, “The Seal of Eliakim and the Latest Preëxilic History of Judah, with Some Observations on Ezekiel,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 51, no. 2 (June 1932): 79.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 104

⁹⁸ Ibid.

archaeology, but he was unwilling to move away from work that enabled him to ‘cast light’ upon the biblical accounts.

The Purpose of Archaeology and the Rhetoric Employed

Each archaeologist holds to a distinct purpose for archaeology. What the interpretations are construed to mean, how the discoveries are used in comparison to the Bible, and who the intended audience is are all elements of the archaeologist’s motivation. Each archaeologist also employs certain rhetoric to address his/her discoveries. Three archaeologists have been selected as a representation of the purpose and rhetoric employed by the American school of archaeologists. These archaeologists are Albright and two of his students, G. Ernest Wright and John Bright.

As the father of the school and of modern biblical archaeology, Albright’s purpose and rhetoric will be addressed first. Albright was devoted to the better understanding of the history of Israelite religion. He hoped to demonstrate the historicity of biblical tradition and to “confirm the traditional picture of the evolution of religious life and thought through Hebrew, Israelite, and Jewish history.”⁹⁹ Albright sought to develop the study of biblical history into a scientific discipline through archaeological research. This was done through rigorous methodology and increased precision. Albright even envisioned archaeology holding a close affiliation to the physical sciences, cultural anthropology and linguistics. He spoke against second-tier archaeologists concerned with popularizing theories confirming the Bible who failed to utilize precise science or to

⁹⁹ William Foxwell Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, 5th ed. (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1969), 170. And William Foxwell Albright, “Archaeology and Religion,” *Cross Currents* 9, no. 2 (Spring 1959): 117.

protect against fallacy.¹⁰⁰ He was devoted to “careful and critical investigation” of unwritten documents to bring new and significant light to the biblical world.¹⁰¹ For Albright, the relationship between archaeology and the Bible was best described as: “In order to utilize the archaeological data to the fullest advantage we must supplement them by reference to literary sources such as the Bible and the Graeco-Roman authors.”¹⁰²

In relationship to how archaeology was to be received, he hoped that scientific archaeology would serve to check all extreme views. The radical and the ultra-conservative would not receive the necessary support from the discoveries and deductions to justify their interpretation of biblical traditions. Future discoveries were counted on to “continue the process of rehabilitation,” without expecting to return to a naïve attitude that was possible prior to archaeology and the scientific examination of biblical history.¹⁰³ Albright hoped that archaeology would enable people to come to faith and to hold a renewed appreciation for the Bible.

Each new discovery was to illustrate the Bible as a whole, not just a single point, as the biblical world was rediscovered and examined.¹⁰⁴ His research was intended to clear up difficulties and to fill in the gaps in the biblical scholar’s knowledge of the biblical world.¹⁰⁵ Albright’s practical purpose for archaeology “makes it increasingly possible to interpret each religious phenomenon and movement of the Old Testament in

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 58, 62.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 64, 132.

¹⁰² Ibid., 67.

¹⁰³ William Foxwell Albright, “Archaeology and Religion,” 112.

¹⁰⁴ William Foxwell Albright, “King Joiachin in Exile,” in *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader*, ed. G. Ernest Wright and David Noel Freedman (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1961), 112.

¹⁰⁵ William Foxwell Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1968), 55.

the light of its true background and real sources, instead of forcing its interpretation into some preconceived historical mould.”¹⁰⁶

Albright’s rhetoric focused upon language of light and illumination. Nearly all of his archaeological publications exhibited this language.¹⁰⁷ Palestinian archaeology was credited with casting indirect light upon biblical personalities, but Albright was unwilling to credit the finds with direct light due to Palestine’s lack of written discoveries.¹⁰⁸ He also used stronger phrases such as “in strict agreement with the results of excavations” and “again archaeology confirms the data provided by written records” to provide an effect of certainty to his claims.¹⁰⁹

Interestingly, Albright described difficulties of reconciling archaeological discoveries with the Bible as “divergences.” It was his opinion that nearly all of these divergences could be attributed to “the nature of oral tradition, to the vicissitudes of written transmission, and to honest, but erroneous combinations on the part of Israelite and Jewish scholars.”¹¹⁰ He felt that such divergences held little impact upon the historical picture that was visible in the Bible as a whole. The use of the language of illumination and divergence reveals that Albright believed that the biblical tradition was correct at its core and that its “very omissions and refractions have given it a considerably

¹⁰⁶ William Foxwell Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, 170.

¹⁰⁷ A small sampling of examples can be found in: William Foxwell Albright, *The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963), 51. William Foxwell Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, 227, 230, 235. William Foxwell Albright, *New Horizons in Biblical Research*, 5. William Foxwell Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, 132, 140, and 144. And William Foxwell Albright, “The Archaeological Background of the Hebrew Prophets of the Eighth Century,” *Journal of Bible and Religion* 8, no. 3 (August 1940): 131-136.

¹⁰⁸ William Foxwell Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, 230.

¹⁰⁹ William Foxwell Albright, *The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra*, 4.

¹¹⁰ William Foxwell Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, 169.

greater religious and pedagogical value than historical accuracy of the annalistic type could possibly have possessed.”¹¹¹

The second scholar whose purpose and rhetoric will be examined is Albright’s student, G. Ernest Wright. Wright described the purpose of biblical archaeology as studying excavation results to extract every fact that “throws a direct, indirect, or even diffused light upon the Bible.”¹¹² It was not the intended purpose of biblical archaeology to prove the factuality of the Bible. Rather, biblical archaeology served to cast light upon the historical world of the Bible and its historical and cultural events.¹¹³ Archaeology had the purpose of filling in background and providing the stories with a correct setting.¹¹⁴

Wright was also aware of the difficulties of archaeology. Later in his career, he confessed to having held a tendency to overstate the interpretation of the discoveries. He then made a commitment to a more cautious and judicious qualification of any assertions, to make plain what evidence justified a claim.¹¹⁵ He admitted that archaeology involved the theologian in certain risks. One risk was the fear that archaeology would reveal that the biblical events never took place. Wright believed that archaeology had done a great deal to “substantiate and illuminate” the biblical story, so this was of minimal concern. Nevertheless, archaeology held the potential to be negative as biblical events were compared to physical, scientific evidence. One such example was the scientific evidence

¹¹¹ William Foxwell Albright, “Archaeology and Religion,” 117.

¹¹² G. Ernest Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*, abridged ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), ix.

¹¹³ G. Ernest Wright, *The Old Testament Against Its Environment* (London: SCM Press LTD, 1968), 12. This work questions how far the study of the religious environment of Israel can explain its faith.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, x.

¹¹⁵ G. Ernest Wright, “Is Glueck’s Aim to Prove that the Bible is True?” in *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader*, ed. G. Ernest Wright and David Noel Freedman (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1961), 16.

for the existence of humanity and the earth far earlier than the accounts found in the biblical record. These negative possibilities were the reasons that Wright held to the importance of illuminating the Bible rather than attempting to prove it as true.¹¹⁶

Wright utilized language of light and illumination to describe the archaeological discoveries, as did Albright.¹¹⁷ Also, as mentioned above, Wright wrote against those who used language of proving of the Bible.¹¹⁸ Wright was willing to describe a social period testified to by archaeology, but he would not claim this as proof of the truth of the Bible.¹¹⁹ Wright expressed a similar purpose and rhetoric with Albright. However, he maintained greater restraint when describing archaeological interpretations and did not use the language of confirmation.

The third American archaeologist is another of Albright's pupils, John Bright. Bright was most well-known for his *History of Israel*.¹²⁰ This work consulted archaeological evidence in its description of Israelite history. Interestingly, he described writing a history of Israel's origins in the "proper sense" as "impossible."¹²¹ This was because of the limitations of archaeological and biblical evidence. Archaeology did not prove the Bible and the Bible authors were not concerned with strict historical reporting, leaving the historian at a significant disadvantage. Instead, archaeology had the ability to "vindicate the antiquity and authenticity of the tradition" and to cast light upon biblical

¹¹⁶ G. Ernest Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*, ix-x.

¹¹⁷ Examples of this include: G. Ernest Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*, ix and 21.

¹¹⁸ Interestingly, Wright goes on to credit Albright with "The introduction of the theme, 'archaeology confirms biblical history,' into the discussion of *scientific* archaeological matters." G. Ernest Wright, "Is Glueck's Aim to Prove that the Bible is True?" 17.

¹¹⁹ For example: G. Ernest Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*, 21-22, 25.

¹²⁰ John Bright, *A History of Israel* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959).

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

history. However, one must be cautious to avoid giving archaeological evidence too much interpretive value as it is unable to prove the Bible and the stories within it. Archaeology possessed an indirect witness that provided a picture of the world surrounding the stories, but it did not testify directly to the stories themselves.¹²² Bright's purpose for archaeology was to illumine the world surrounding the Bible without overvaluing the evidence's ability to prove the Bible itself.

Faithful to Albright's influence, Bright utilized the rhetoric of light and illumination as well.¹²³ Bright also employed visual language, such as "illustrating," "supporting," and "lending a picture." Bright shared his school's hesitancy to speak of "proving the Bible."¹²⁴ Bright considered such language as an overstatement of the evidence. He also viewed authors who accepted such language as having reasons and motivations outside of the benefit of their readers.¹²⁵ Bright's rhetoric maintained many of the same nuances established by Albright while sharing Wright's conservative approach to archaeological evidence.

Through this examination of three key figures in the American school, it becomes evident that a similar purpose and rhetoric was employed throughout. Biblical and Palestinian archaeology served to illuminate the biblical world. It positioned biblical stories within a proper cultural context as the facts of the excavations were considered alongside the biblical accounts. An increasing hesitancy to use language of confirmation

¹²² Ibid., 67.

¹²³ For example: John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 51, 63, and 67. And John Bright, "A New Letter in Aramaic," in *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader*, ed. G. Ernest Wright and David Noel Freedman (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1961), 105.

¹²⁴ John Bright, "Has Archaeology Found Evidence of the Flood?" in *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader*, ed. G. Ernest Wright and David Noel Freedman (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1961), 33.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 35.

and proof developed with Albright's students even though Albright himself often lacked the same conservative nature. The language of casting light, providing illumination, and creating a visual for the biblical world was common throughout the American school of archaeologists. The similarities of rhetoric and purpose reveal that the pupils maintained a great respect for Albright and consistently sustained their teacher's methods and language.

Application of Archaeological Evidence for Biblical Studies

The American school of biblical archaeologists made great strides towards enabling students of the Bible to better understand the social world from which it came. In addition to illuminating the biblical traditions, these scholars provided an expectation for the future and for the potential of biblical archaeology as well as facilitating a healthy understanding of Israel's faith in light of archaeology.

These three scholars possessed a defined vision for the future of Palestinian archaeology. Along with becoming closely associated with anthropology, it was hoped that refined archaeological method would open additional opportunities. Albright believed that chemical, geological, and biological methods would increase in importance as archaeological method developed. In addition, he hoped that the funding necessary for a thorough excavation would decrease while the relative importance of the discoveries would increase.¹²⁶ He hoped that a fuller meaning of biblical tradition would be discovered through the work of the archaeologist, the historian, and the philologist and

¹²⁶ William Foxwell Albright, *History, Archaeology and Christian Humanism*, 116.

that this interdisciplinary approach would exceed the understandings possible prior to developed scientific research.¹²⁷

It was also important to the American school to prepare its readers for future discoveries and to temper expectations. These scholars warned that expecting the Bible to be proven true was an unlikely outcome. One such warning was that a character from Genesis was unlikely to appear in a contemporary inscription due to the lack of importance and the nomadic nature of the people. A second warning in regards to the conquest stated that “the archaeological evidence, it must be admitted, is not at all points unambiguous.”¹²⁸ In light of this was Bright’s interpretation of the archaeological evidence linked to the book of Judges. The book of Judges described continuous, yet intermittent fighting with both internal and external conflicts. Archaeological evidence testified to a similar occurrence in the twelfth and eleventh centuries. In such a way, archaeological evidence could illuminate the Bible through correlated textual accounts and material remains. The discoveries could speak to the social world surrounding the Bible and could provide a historical background for the accounts, but direct confirmation of the biblical traditions was an unrealistic expectation.¹²⁹

Another potential use for archaeological evidence was to clarify unclear or unknown words and ideas. For example, the Hebrew word *hammanim* had no explicit definition. However, during excavations in northern Syria several small altars were discovered. Their apparent usage was for the burning of incense and inscribed on the sides of the altars was the word *hamman*, providing a function and a definition for the

¹²⁷ William Foxwell Albright, “Archaeology and Religion,” 117.

¹²⁸ John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 118.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 154.

undefined term.¹³⁰ Through such discoveries, lexicons were expanded and each new discovery informed the lexicographer of the origin of previously unknown terminology.

The American school believed that archaeology could inform a person's understanding of Israel's faith and religion. Archaeology was not to cancel the uniqueness of Israel's faith. One example was that despite the similarities with other cultures and the shared common traditions of much of Genesis 1-11, Israel maintained a distinct faith as "she borrowed only what she could assimilate."¹³¹ Even as archaeology explained the history of the ancient Near East, the miracle of Israel's faith remained unshaken. Albright felt that archaeology made the miracle more acceptable and believed that "archaeology can help enormously in making the miracle rationally plausible to an intelligent person whose vision is not shortened by a materialistic world view."¹³² His hope was that archaeology would allow the historical and cultural background of the Old Testament to inform and interpret the religious phenomenon of the Bible.¹³³ It was not the American school's goal to discourage faith, but rather it viewed itself as facilitating a stronger, better informed faith that understood the world in which the Old Testament was created.

The American school was a group of scholars who desired for archaeological discoveries to illuminate the Bible and its social world. A precise, meticulous methodology was developed to enable a scientific approach to biblical archaeology. Albright's efforts in developing Petrie's ceramic typology eased the process of dating

¹³⁰ G. Ernest Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*, 14.

¹³¹ John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1967), 127.

¹³² William Foxwell Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, 255.

¹³³ William Foxwell Albright, *Archaeology and the religion of Israel*, 170.

sites and strata. Sites such as Tell Beit Mirsim revealed discoveries which held biblical significance that were useful for understanding the world of the biblical traditions. These scholars unveiled a misunderstood social and cultural world and allowed their discoveries to shine light upon the biblical accounts. Held in balance with their scientific method was an affirmation of the miraculous faith of Israel and a hope that this faith would become more palatable through the dedicated efforts of archaeology. This group of scholars assisted to elevate Palestinian archaeology from the search for inscriptions and museum pieces to a scientific exploration of the ancient Near Eastern world.

Chapter 3

The Pinnacle Period of the American School

Biblical archaeology experienced a boom in both popularity and methodology through the work of Albright and his students. A scientific approach was developed and explored through excavations at Tell Beit Mirsim and Shechem. The next generation of archaeologists represented the pinnacle of the Albright school. Methodology was raised to the highest possible standard for the time period. The excavation at Gezer served as both a methodological showcase and as a training ground for the next generation of American archaeologists. However, in much the same way that Delitzsch's lecture brought about a shift in biblical archaeology at the beginning of the century, another lecture would bring about another tumultuous shift in the field. William G. Dever, director of the Gezer excavation and student of G. Ernest Wright, brought about this shift with his lecture to Seabury-Western Theological Seminary. This chapter will explore the pinnacle of the Albright school and its descent from prominence through an interaction with the methodology, the excavation at Gezer as a methodological case-study, the purpose and rhetoric employed during this period, and the influential lecture delivered by Dever which brought about a paradigm shift in the exploration of the ancient Near East.

Methodology

The methodology of the 1960s and early 1970s continued to build upon the foundation established by Albright. Stratification and ceramic typology remained the core of Palestinian archaeology. Albright's vision of multidisciplinary excavations developed and expanded. Finally, the creation of the field school at Gezer facilitated the training of

a future generation of archaeologists. These developments heralded the methodological progress of the school.

In the field of stratigraphy, time-tested methods such as the “Wheeler-Kenyon” excavation technique remained the standard of the American excavations. This excavation strategy was employed at most American excavations following its successful application at Tell Beit Mirsim, Shechem, and Jericho. In later seasons at Gezer, Dever responded to criticism that the Wheeler-Kenyon stratigraphic method was ill-suited for “large exposures or major architecture” by paying painstaking attention to consistent digging and balk reconstruction.¹³⁴ The developed methodology of *Gezer IV* was meant to demonstrate that “the system works.”¹³⁵ This demonstration utilized excavated structures, restorable pottery and other artifacts, all of which could be located through the stratification maintained by careful excavation and one meter thick balks. These objects and the clarified stratigraphy of the Gezer site was meant to silence the critics of the Wheeler-Kenyon technique and to defend the early work of the Gezer site. The devoted attention to the development of stratification techniques as well as its defense against critics demonstrates the essential role of stratigraphy in the American school approach.

True to the Albright tradition, methodology continued to embrace the importance of ceramic typology alongside of stratigraphy. One of the methodological distinctives of the period was a “meticulous, on-the-spot ceramic analysis” begun by Wright.¹³⁶ It was first introduced by Wright at Shechem, where Dever’s career began as a student

¹³⁴ William G. Dever, *Gezer IV: The 1969-71 Seasons in Field VI, the “Acropolis,”* part 1 vol. IV (Jerusalem: Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology, 1986), 6.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹³⁶ William G. Dever, H. Darrell Lance, and G. Ernest Wright, *Gezer I: Preliminary Report of the 1964-66 Seasons*, vol. I (Jerusalem: Hebrew Union College Biblical and Archaeological School, 1970), 9.

archaeologist. The importance of ceramic analysis was its ability to provide a check for the identification and the separation of loci.¹³⁷ As pottery from each locus was excavated, it was carefully kept free of contamination from pottery of other loci. This care was necessary so that when a sherd of a later period appeared unexpectedly, the archaeologist was able to seek for ways to explain this aberration. This forced the archaeologist to evaluate and re-examine. It was often during this process that a pit or a terrace was discovered, thereby explaining the unexpected sherd. This scrutiny was possible only if exacting care was taken while gathering the pottery sherds. Just as with stratigraphy, rigorous method and care must be taken if the excavations were to reveal the greatest, clearest, and truest possible insights.

The vision for multidisciplinary excavations was applied during this period, facilitated by the development of “New Archaeology.” The New Archaeology movement was brought about by an influx of “natural science, social science, ethnography, and environmental studies.”¹³⁸ Proponents of New Archaeology believed that there must be a shift away from utilizing archaeology to simply describing the past. Instead, archaeology should serve to explain the past. There was a move away from traditional historical approaches and towards scientific hypothesis-testing with the goal of being “explicitly scientific.”¹³⁹ These new interests saw geologists, physical and cultural anthropologists, and zoologists working alongside of the more traditional historians, linguists, stratigraphers, and ceramic experts in hopes of extracting data that might illuminate the

¹³⁷ William G. Dever and H. Darrell Lance, eds., *A Manual of Field Excavation* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1978), 5. It is important to note that the content of this work was written in 1972-73 and reflects the state-of-the-art methodology for the relevant period.

¹³⁸ William G. Dever, “Archaeological Method in Israel: A Continuing Revolution,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 43, no. 1 (Winter 1980): 46.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

site. No longer were pottery, architecture and small artifacts the discoveries of greatest value. Now “industrial wastes, occupational refuse, natural sediments, animal bones, and seeds” provided insights into the social development of the people of the site and the development of their culture.¹⁴⁰ This influx reveals a purpose shift for archaeology. Archaeology had become “the reconstruction of the life-ways of the people who lived at the site, the study of the processes of culture change and the testing of hypotheses set up by the project designer.”¹⁴¹

The final defining methodological development of this period was the institution of the field school at Gezer. Dever stated that “having to explain to enthusiastic but irreverent students what we were trying to do literally *forced* us to think through and articulate our methods!”¹⁴² This field school brought about field excavation manuals and better facilitated a consistent method used across a site. Not only did the field school serve to train new archaeologists, it also enabled the established archaeologists to formulate a methodology to pass on to future generations of archaeologists.

The core of Albright’s methodology remained consistent throughout the peak period of the school. Yet, it took on new characteristics, several of which he had foreseen. Stratigraphic method was defended and shown to be an effective way of understanding a site. Ceramic typology adopted a meticulous excavation method so that it might serve as a check for the identification and separation of strata. The multidisciplinary approach anticipated by Albright was applied through the arrival of New Archaeology and through the increased scientific methodology. Finally, the field

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ William G. Dever and H. Darrell Lance, eds., *A Manual of Field Excavation*, 2.

¹⁴² William G. Dever, “Archaeological Method in Israel: A Continuing Revolution,” 46.

school brought about an articulated methodology and a well-trained future generation of archaeologists that could continue the work of its teachers. Albright's methodological foundation witnessed a house being built upon it.

Archaeological Method in Action – Gezer as a Case Study

Gezer was the prize excavation of this time period with multiple seasons and publications devoted to the exploration of the site. Dever, along with H. Darrell Lance, were co-directors of this prestigious excavation and set out with three major goals: to reexamine the areas excavated by Robert Stewart Alexander Macalister in 1902-1909, to implement rigorous and interdisciplinary methodological techniques, and to train young archaeologists and provide them with field experience. Gezer also provides an opportunity to observe the interpretations of the discoveries and their relationship with the Hebrew Bible.

In order to understand Dever and Lance's first goal, it is important to understand how these men viewed the earlier excavation of Gezer. The Irish archaeologist Macalister began the excavation of Gezer in 1902 on behalf of the Palestine Exploration Fund. This was the largest dig undertaken in Palestine to this point and the methodology of Macalister and his generation was ill-prepared for such an excavation. In what Dever considered an archaeological tragedy, Macalister admittedly set out to "turn over the whole mound."¹⁴³ He began with massive, forty-foot wide trenches, dug to the bedrock, and running the length of the tell. As each trench was completed, the debris from the subsequent trench would be used to fill it in. Macalister admitted that the complex stratigraphy of the tell surpassed his own ability to maintain his goal to "follow the

¹⁴³ William G. Dever, "Excavations at Gezer," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 30, no. 2 (May 1967): 49.

natural division of the remains into epochs and culture levels, and to give a bird's eye view of the city's life, so far as excavations could reveal it, at each successive stage of the city's history."¹⁴⁴ The end result of this difficult excavation and the lack of methodological precision at the turn of the century was that a great deal of material was removed from historical context with no means of locating it within a historical reconstruction. It was into this situation that Dever accepted his first directorship of a major site.

In light of the methodological shortcomings of the earlier Gezer excavations, the goal of focusing on method and interdisciplinary technique was perfectly sensible. The excavators were committed to carefully extract what little undisturbed information remained in order to fully and correctly interpret it.¹⁴⁵ Wright's role as primary advisor during the initial seasons facilitated the application of lessons learned at earlier American sites, especially Tell Beit Mirsim and Shechem.¹⁴⁶ The excavation team committed itself to the highest scientific standards known to Near East excavations at that time and brought in various experts for a multidisciplinary exploration, a revolutionary approach. It was the expressed desire of Dever to take less out of the ground, yet to obtain more information from this material. This commitment reveals the development in archaeological method since the days of Macalister. Gone were the days of excavating an entire site. They had been replaced with a multidisciplinary, disciplined approach that desired the least possible disturbance while acquiring the maximum amount of data.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 50.

¹⁴⁵ William G. Dever, H. Darrell Lance, and G. Ernest Wright, *Gezer I*, 9.

¹⁴⁶ This is especially clear in the early publications in light of the number of ceramic typology references to Albright's work at Tell Beit Mirsim. E.g. William G. Dever et al., *Gezer II: Report of the 1967-70 Seasons in Fields I and II*, vol. II (Jerusalem: Hebrew Union College/Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology, 1974), 51.

The final goal of the Gezer excavation was to train a new generation of archaeologists. The development of the field school brought about solidified methodology and field manuals that describe a proper approach to excavations. A particularly striking statement was made in Dever and Lance's field manual that aptly described the work at Gezer: "'To excavate is to destroy.' The archaeologist who has not pondered the implications of this sober but true statement is not a scholar but a treasure hunter."¹⁴⁷ In light of the poor methodology and the insufficient training that had characterized earlier generations of Near Eastern archaeology, the Gezer field school sought to educate young archaeologists in cutting-edge scientific research. The lack of methodology of early archaeologists, such as Macalister, would not be tolerated in an increasingly modern, scientific culture. This awareness of the destructive nature of excavation was easily witnessed at Gezer, a site plainly exhibiting the need to reexamine insufficient earlier excavations, to keep meticulous records, to create established methods, and to pass this learning on to the next generation.¹⁴⁸

The excavation of Gezer provides an excellent understanding of the truth claims of the American school at its peak. There was freedom to relate the archaeological finds with events found in the biblical texts. There was no separation between archaeology and its relationship with the biblical accounts, so archaeologists were free to consider potentially biblically-relevant interpretations of archaeological discoveries.

¹⁴⁷ William G. Dever and H. Darrell Lance, eds., *A Manual of Field Excavation*, 74.

¹⁴⁸ The Gezer field school proved to be an amazing success and was credited with training over 1400 staff and students. This is made more remarkable when one considers that 20 eastern Mediterranean dig directors were trained at Gezer during Dever and Lance's directorship. The Tel Gezer Excavation and Publication Project, "History of Research," The Gezer Project, <http://www.gezerproject.org> (accessed May 20, 2008).

One such example is the 1 Kings 9:15-16 account of Gezer and the discovery of a destruction layer and its possible interpretations. This example will reveal the archaeologist's willingness to seek parallels between archaeological discoveries and the biblical account, a willingness that quickly fades at the close of the pinnacle period. The Gezer publications of Field II provide this description: "overlying the scorched earthen floors of Stratum 7 was a dramatic destruction level—black ash, chunks of charred timbers, calcined plaster, tumbled stones, and mudbrick debris—reaching a depth of twenty inches."¹⁴⁹ This same destruction layer was found in the pre-gate phase of Field III and Stratum 4 of Field VI.¹⁵⁰ Dever associated this particular debris field with the account found in 1 Kings 9:16, in which an Egyptian Pharaoh invaded Gezer, captured it, burnt it with fire and eventually gave it over to Solomon as a dowry.¹⁵¹ The reason for this interpretation was that the presence of a casemate wall and "dark, red-slipped and hand-burnished wares," common of the Solomonic period allowed the destruction layer to be dated in the mid-late 10th century.¹⁵² This discovery was accompanied by evidence of an apparent major culture change beginning in the mid-10th century, witnessed to by the discovery of "new fortifications, a new architectural orientation, new ceramic wares and repertoire."¹⁵³ In light of the discoveries, the archaeologists declared that the evidence was "entirely consonant" with the biblical account of a city destroyed and then

¹⁴⁹ William G. Dever, "Excavations at Gezer," 60.

¹⁵⁰ William G. Dever et al., "Further Excavations at Gezer, 1967-1971," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 34, no. 4 (December 1971): 130.

¹⁵¹ William G. Dever, H. Darrell Lance, and G. Ernest Wright, *Gezer I: Preliminary Report of the 1964-66 Seasons*, vol. I, 61.

¹⁵² William G. Dever et al., *Gezer II: Report of the 1967-70 Seasons in Fields I and II*, vol. II, 59.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

rebuilt in the time of Solomon into a cultural center.¹⁵⁴ The author substantiated biblical tradition and directly linked archaeological discovery with the biblical account. However, direct use of archaeological evidence while considering biblical characters such as Solomon would quickly become mired in difficulty.

Gezer was the prize of the American school. It was an opportunity to display a developed excavation methodology, Albright's ceramic typology, and a commitment to multidisciplinary excavation and research. It revealed the steps in method, discipline, and interpretation that had developed since the turn-of-the-century. It also served to train a future generation of American archaeologists that could readily step into the tradition. Interestingly, the interpretation of the archaeological discoveries bore a distinct similarity to Albright's, viewing the biblical account as a means of understanding archaeological evidence. Archaeology was illuminating the Bible. Albright's vision was coming to light. The pinnacle of biblical archaeology had arrived. Sadly, it was not to last for long.

The Purpose of Archaeology and the Rhetoric Employed

This generation of archaeologists continued very similarly to their teachers in the areas of the rhetoric of interpreting the archaeological discoveries, the individual archaeologist's purpose for excavation, and the relating of discoveries to the biblical accounts. As a student of Wright and a member of the "house Albright built," Dever exhibited several similarities with these earlier archaeologists in the area of purpose and rhetoric. However, there were also points of development or departure. Dever and the Gezer field reports will serve as a representative selection of the purpose and rhetoric employed by the Albright school during this time period.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

In light of New Archaeology, the purpose of biblical archaeology had shifted away from Albright's desire to confirm the traditional picture of the life and culture described in the Bible. Instead, New Archaeology was far more interested in reconstruction. Dever described the purpose of archaeology as "the reconstruction of the life-ways of the people who lived at the site, the study of the processes of culture change and the testing of hypotheses set up by the project designer."¹⁵⁵ At this time Dever understood archaeology's purpose to be the discovery of the culture and the material culture shifts of the majority of people at a site. At this point, the American school began to be interested in a field wider than strictly the life and culture represented in the Bible.

What Dever did not view as the purpose of archaeology is even clearer. Dever was extremely wary of those who believed that the purpose of archaeology was to prove the Bible.¹⁵⁶ He described this view of archaeology's task as a misunderstood relationship and a "most dangerous error."¹⁵⁷ Dever instead argued that biblical faith, though based on history, is "beyond history." No discovery could prove that God led the Hebrews out of Egypt. Establishing the likelihood of the events described may be possible through archaeology, but the proving of the events occurring exactly how they are described by the biblical authors was beyond the scope of archaeology. Instead, for Dever the acceptance of these biblical accounts as they are told was a matter of faith and "cannot be proved – nor for that matter disproved – by archaeology."¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ William G. Dever and H. Darrell Lance, eds., *A Manual of Field Excavation*, 2.

¹⁵⁶ Shalom M. Paul and William G. Dever, eds. *Biblical Archaeology* (New York: Quadrangle/New York Times Book Co., 1974), ix-x.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., x.

Dever's rhetoric is much less focused than that of his teachers. While language of light and illumination dominated the writings of Albright, Wright, and Bright, Dever did not share this same tendency. This is not to say that the language of shedding light is completely absent, but rather that the use of such rhetoric became much less prevalent.¹⁵⁹ This departure from illumination language reveals a sudden development of rhetoric in a short matter of time.

Dever's rhetoric for describing the relationship between the destruction layer at Gezer and 1 Kings 9:15-16 described above provides an interesting look at how he understood the relationship between archaeology and the Bible. Dever was unafraid to associate the archaeological evidence with the biblical account and description of the event. He went so far as to utilize language of "highly likely," "entirely consonant," "must represent," and "provides further confirmation."¹⁶⁰ In relation to 1 Kings 9:16 Dever set his excavation alongside of the biblical tradition and viewed them as congruent and explanatory of one another. He also adopted a rhetoric that would not be unfamiliar to his teachers, yet was more restrained than many of Albright's proof claims.

Dever adopted a purpose and rhetoric that viewed archaeology as able to describe the culture and lives of the peoples found in the Bible. Where the Bible did not widely discuss such matters as architectural developments, archaeology was able to fill in the gaps. Though Dever was willing to consider archaeological evidence alongside of biblical tradition, he was hesitant to claim that the discoveries proved the events to have occurred

¹⁵⁹ William G. Dever, H. Darrell Lance, and G. Ernest Wright, *Gezer I: Preliminary Report of the 1964-66 Seasons*, vol. I, 63 has one such occurrence of light language (e.g. "only very little light was shed").

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 61. And William G. Dever, "Excavations at Gezer," 60. And William G. Dever et al., *Gezer II: Report of the 1967-70 Seasons in Fields I and II*, vol. II, 59. And William G. Dever et al., "Further Excavations at Gezer, 1967-1971," 130.

exactly as the biblical writers described them. His purpose and rhetoric certainly held strong similarities with his teachers, but the dismissal of light language and the reluctance to approach the proving of biblical accounts exhibits developments within the American school during this pinnacle period.

Retrospects and Prospects and the Break from Biblical Archaeology

The American school was pushed from its pinnacle by the same man who directed its premier excavation. In January 1972, Dever delivered the William C. Winslow lectures to Seabury-Western Theological Seminary. There Dever unveiled a call to separate archaeology and biblical scholarship. In much the same manner of Delitzsch's *Babel und Bibel*, these lectures brought about a revolution of biblical archaeology. When the dust settled, the discipline envisioned by Albright and his students would largely be unrecognizable to them. In these lectures Dever called into question earlier biblical archaeologists and the current conservative environment of biblical studies and archaeology. Next, he presented the separation of Palestinian archaeology from biblical studies. Finally, he proposed a new meaning for the phrase biblical archaeology.

Dever's criticisms of the biblical archaeologists were focused on the areas of confused motivations, poor excavation and field technique, failure to train staffs, and uncompleted publications.¹⁶¹ Dever believed that too often biblical archaeologists held a preconceived notion of what would be discovered prior to an excavation. This led to questionable motives and a biased view of their discoveries. Embarrassing moments such as the supposed proof for the Noahic flood at Ur caused some to believe that the biblical archaeologists allowed their bias towards the biblical accounts to begin interpreting the

¹⁶¹ William G. Dever, *Archaeology and Biblical Studies: Retrospects and Prospects* (Evanston, IL: Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, 1974), 18.

evidence prior to its discovery. Even when this was not the case for an individual, being a member of a group writing to an audience that believed that archaeology could prove the Bible often called into question the archaeologist's objectivity and scientific abilities.¹⁶² This confusion of motivation called the biblical archaeologists into question and Dever believed that it was likely impossible to remove this lingering suspicion.

Dever also accused the American excavations in Palestine of not having been defined by scientific and methodological devotion. As evidence of this he cited renowned stratigrapher Sir Mortimer Wheeler, who considered excavations in Palestine as examples of "bad excavation technique."¹⁶³ Although, while it was impossible to deny the lack of modern excavation technique through the first 100 years of biblical archaeology, it is unfair of Dever and Wheeler to single out the biblical archaeologists and Palestine for being of a singular quality of poor technique. The overall discipline of archaeology was plagued by the lack of method, the search for museum pieces, and the overabundance of untrained adventurers and treasure hunters. The majority of the archaeological field could be characterized by poor excavation technique with the biblical archaeologists trailing behind the general trends due to a number of its members being untrained in archaeological method. While the excavation of the biblical archaeologists often did lack the methodological maturity of the wider discipline, it is important to recall that this plague did not fall solely on the biblical archaeologists.

Dever's third accusation is the failure to have sufficiently trained staffs. At the heart of this accusation is the fact that many biblical archaeology excavations had been largely staffed by clergymen and biblical scholars. It was a concern noted by Albright at

¹⁶² Ibid., 17.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 18.

Tell Beit Mirsim and by Wright at Shechem. They had hoped that a commitment to methodology and careful reporting would prevent any scientific data from being negatively impacted by the involvement of scholars who lacked archaeological training. However, Dever did not feel that staff members were acceptably trained and that this had lessened the potential scholarship of the excavations.

Lastly is the accusation that the American school had been characterized by poor and uncompleted publications. The unfortunate fact-of-the-matter is that many details of excavations went unpublished and, thus, unknown. An undeterminable number of discoveries were lost through the failure to publish as the archaeologists took their discoveries with them to their graves. The failure to publish has been especially true of those in fields that touch upon religion and Dever was right to bring this accusation to mind as it continues to be a concern into the present. Overall, Dever was well-based in his calling into question the American school in regards to its publications, its untrained staffs, its failure to develop methodology, and a possibly biased motivation of how archaeology views the Bible. However, it is important to remember that failings in publications and methodology were not unique to the American school, but rather characterized early archaeology as a whole.

Dever was quite aware of the conservative realm in which biblical archaeology had functioned and he resisted any limiting of the possibilities of the field. Dever felt that biblical archaeology was largely an American construct, while the British, German, French, and Israeli archaeological schools had managed to avoid a “fundamentalist brand” of biblical archaeology.¹⁶⁴ A conservative, fundamental view captured Palestinian archaeology in America early on and infused in it a vision for the “illustration and

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 20-22.

defense of the Bible” (italics Dever’s).¹⁶⁵ Palestinian archaeology had been under the power of biblical studies since its inception and it held little potential for developing into an independent discipline. Dever believed that this was an environment that did not occur in other national schools and that it was severely limiting the potential of the American school.

It is in Dever’s discussion of the relationship between archaeology and the Bible that his understanding of the need for separation between biblical studies and archaeology becomes most evident. Dever did not share his tradition’s commitment to aid those seeking to prove or defend the Bible. He did not hold Albright’s commitment to the historicity of the biblical tradition. He more closely aligned with Wright’s desire to fill in the background of the biblical world. However, Dever refused to hold himself only to the biblical tradition and history. Dever desired to separate himself from his teachers, from those who often mistook archaeology as a means of proving the Bible. Instead, Dever looked to set himself strictly as a scientific archaeologist.¹⁶⁶

Not only did Dever desire to separate himself from the biblical studies world, he believed that several scientific developments were bringing about the end of the American understanding of the relationship between archaeology and the Bible. The first of these was that the world of archaeology was becoming increasingly methodologically complex and multidisciplinary. Dever held that this quickly-changing revolution would force those interested in archaeology to become professional archaeologists. It was his belief that there would no longer be room for a person trained in biblical studies to make

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 11.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 16-17.

the transition into the archaeological world.¹⁶⁷ Other concerns included the sky-rocketing price of excavations, the emphasis on professionalism and specialization, and the shift to an increasing number of students who were uninterested in the correlations between religion and archaeology. Last was the uncertain political situation of the Middle East.¹⁶⁸ Dever believed that the amateur archaeology of his teachers had come to a close, that New Archaeology was to be embraced, and that it was time for a redefinition of the relationship between biblical studies and Palestinian archaeology.¹⁶⁹

In light of this redefinition Dever proposed a separation of Palestinian archaeology and biblical studies.¹⁷⁰ Also, he advocated for a redefinition of biblical archaeology, both in term and in concept. Dever believed that a separation was inevitable due to the rapid shifts within archaeology. He also believed that the separation could prove beneficial for both fields. Biblical studies and archaeology would be freed of responsibilities to one another, thereby allowing the fields to better specialize. However, Dever was also aware of the danger for both fields of a complete severing of the relationship. Biblical studies would be thrust into study largely lacking outside sources. The grave danger of this approach is that textual study without external sources can result in inbred thinking. This occurred during the time period prior to the exploration of the documentary hypothesis, the utilization of archaeology, and the interactions between biblical studies and the “tangible remains from the past.”¹⁷¹ Such a reoccurrence must be

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 22-23.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 23-25.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 26.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 30.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 28.

avoided. Archaeology would also suffer if it were to become a strictly intellectual, secular enterprise. For Dever, archaeology's relationship with biblical studies provided archaeology with a level of importance because the Bible views history as both valuable and meaningful.¹⁷² To be a technician or specialist with no vision to synthesize would deprive both disciplines.

Dever hoped that a separation would allow for "a practical division of labor."¹⁷³ Each specialist would be freed to pursue the full potential of his/her field and to attain an appropriate level of professionalism to further the discipline. The danger of lacking this level of professionalism is the inability to dialogue and to be taken seriously among one's colleagues, the frustration of which Dever is well aware.¹⁷⁴ Although Dever believed that a separation between the disciplines of biblical studies and Palestinian archaeology was necessary, he did not believe that a complete divorce was a desirable goal.

Instead, the independence of the disciplines must be held in tension with a dialogue between the two. Complete severance must be avoided because in a multidisciplinary, New Archaeology approach, such separation equaled the archaeologist ignoring a possible means of understanding evidence. Though Dever proposed a making of space and a granting of independence, he presented hope for potential dialogue so that each field will not be unaware of the innovations of the other.

Dever also described a renewed definition of biblical archaeology that set aside the limited scope of the present discipline and found a new, widened identity. It was his opinion that the adjective "biblical" limited the scope of the discipline, restricting a field

¹⁷² Ibid., 29.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 30.

¹⁷⁴ Such a circumstance is described in Ibid., 33-34.

that could encompass the inhabitants of sites both prior to the biblical accounts and those following after.¹⁷⁵ The term could also prevent recognition of professionalism, thereby causing an unnecessary rift between those excavating in Palestine and in other fields of archaeology. The reason for the rift would be that biblical archaeology could allude to there being a field of archaeology that functioned to confirm the Bible and that the Bible needed such archaeological confirmation.¹⁷⁶ Dever thus proposed a name shift to Syro-Palestinian archaeology in light of the geographic area of study. This would still allow for interested archaeologists to specialize in the biblical time period, but would remove a potentially divisive and limiting name. Even an interest in the biblical time period required further specialization in which the Bible would serve as a secondary illuminating literary remain, not the driving force of interpretation.¹⁷⁷ With such an approach, archaeology could meaningfully illuminate the background of the Bible, but no longer lay claim to establishing the meaning of texts. For Dever: “it can augment, but it cannot authenticate. In short, Archaeology can bring understanding, but by the very nature of its own limitations it can neither create nor destroy faith.”¹⁷⁸ According to Dever, the only hope for both biblical studies and Syro-Palestinian archaeology to reach their full potentials was for these fields to become two separate, independent disciplines connected through respectful dialogue.

The unquestioned connection between biblical studies and the archaeology of Palestine had been called into question by one of the American school’s favorite sons.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 33.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 34.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 36.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 42.

The short-comings of the early archaeologists had created what Dever viewed as a divide that professionalism and specialization could not overcome. The controversy sparked by *Archaeology and Biblical Studies: Retrospects and Prospects* ushered in the present period of archaeology with the American school falling from its brief pinnacle and was accompanied by the rise of the postmodernists.

Chapter 4

The Redefining of Biblical Archaeology and the Rise of the Postmodernists

Dever's lecture to Seabury-Western Theological Seminary signaled the close of the pinnacle period of the school that Albright built. In its place arose a tumultuous period in which a proper understanding of the discipline of biblical archaeology struggled to emerge. Following a prolonged period of debate surrounding the proper understanding of Syro-Palestinian archaeology and the Bible, a new group of voices arose with a completely different understanding of the Bible and its historical accounts largely influenced by postmodernism. It is the debates with these postmodernists that have largely defined the discipline into the present. This chapter will follow the writings of Dever as a means of understanding a representative of the American school dealing with the debates regarding archaeology and the Bible. Then the chapter will examine his rebuttal of the postmodernists in order to understand how a student of the Albright tradition encounters this new challenger.

Response to *Retrospects and Prospects* and the Debate of Biblical Archaeology

As is to be expected, Dever's lectures were met with a surprised response. Scholars who considered themselves biblical archaeologists questioned how a man who had so recently co-authored a book entitled *Biblical Archaeology* could call into question the right of the discipline to exist as one united field of study.¹⁷⁹ Two major critiques of Dever's stance will be explored along with several further explanations from Dever himself. These will serve as representative samples to illustrate the division and strong

¹⁷⁹ The before-mentioned book is: Shalom M. Paul and William G. Dever, eds. *Biblical Archaeology*.

feelings within the debate, the understanding of the death of biblical archaeology fostered by Dever, and the potential new biblical archaeology as based in a dialogue between biblical scholars and Syro-Palestinian archaeologists.

One of the first major critiques of Dever's stance came from Hershel Shanks, founder of the Biblical Archaeology Society and editor of the *Biblical Archaeology Review*. Shanks believed that this was a debate based in semantics rather than in substance and, while agreeing with Dever on many points, felt that Dever was "simply wrong" when it came to the conclusion that the term biblical archaeology must be done away with.¹⁸⁰ Shanks began by considering the charges leveled against the biblical archaeologists by Dever. Shanks believed that it was possible to cease allowing bias to lead motivation by being conscious of how "our theological commitments affect our archaeological conclusions."¹⁸¹ He also hoped that the secular archaeologist would hold to the same commitment and avoid an anti-Bible bias which could influence his/her conclusions. He also agreed that the time of the amateur is over, but questioned Dever's conclusion that the biblical scholar could not understand both biblical and archaeological material.

Shanks did not deny that specialization and methodology had made it difficult for a biblical scholar to step into the world of full-time archaeology. He went on to agree that "there are no more Albrights" and the ability for one person to possess a complete

¹⁸⁰ Hershel Shanks, "Should the Term 'Biblical Archaeology' Be Abandoned?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 7, no. 3 (May/June 1981), <http://members.bib-arch.org/publication.asp?PubID=BSBA&Volume=7&Issue=3&ArticleID=6&UserID=0> (accessed March 14, 2008).

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

mastery of such a wide field had passed and an age of specialization had emerged.¹⁸² However, he held that if each stratum was given the same care as those of the biblical period, there would still be room for the biblical scholar in the sifting through of material remains and in the consideration of their impact on the literary remains. It was Dever's acknowledgement of potential illumination of the Bible in his discussion of a mutually beneficial dialogue that led Shanks to believe that this was largely a battle of semantics in hopes of escaping the negative, amateurish connotations that had followed biblical archaeology from its earliest days. This conclusion led Shanks to agree with Dever's points, yet to question the necessity of his conclusion regarding the end of biblical archaeology. Rather than abandoning biblical archaeology, the archaeologist should be more cautious and more committed to science. It was Shanks' hope that rather than disposing of the name, a new era could arise where biblical archaeologists no longer were considered amateurs or unprofessional. He hoped that this perception would be replaced with a devotion to a high level of scholarship and a commitment to the field.

The second review of Dever came from his Gezer excavation co-director, H. Darrell Lance. Lance believed that Dever had completely misread the situation and that his proposal must be "utterly rejected."¹⁸³ Lance argued that the issue was not with biblical archaeology, but rather with the public's presuppositions concerning the Bible. He went on to say that it was not the responsibility of the archaeologist to educate the public that a critical examination of the Bible was possible. Lance believed that the

¹⁸² Hershel Shanks, "The Dangers of Dividing Disciplines," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 18, no. 5 (Sept/Oct 1992), <http://members.bib-arch.org/publication.asp?PubID=BSBA&Volume=18&Issue=5&ArticleID=5&UserID=0> (accessed March 14, 2008).

¹⁸³ H. Darrell Lance, "American Biblical Archeology in Perspective," *Biblical Archaeologist* 45, no. 2 (Spring 1982): 99.

tradition founded by Albright was built upon empirical study and was a critical, modern discipline. There was no need to defend the tradition against a critical public. Lance defended the term as a necessary one and dismissed those who question the discipline by stating that their condescension “is their problem.”¹⁸⁴

Lance continued that biblical archaeology and Palestinian archaeology were not the same discipline and that biblical archaeology was indeed an American discipline as it was following Albright and his definition. Lance understood biblical archaeologists as those who work in Palestinian archaeology with the goal of elucidating the biblical accounts.¹⁸⁵ Biblical archaeology was not primarily an archaeological discipline, but rather a subset of biblical studies. Lance saw the issue as not of the continued existence of biblical archaeology, but rather an issue of the study either being “done critically or naively.”¹⁸⁶ However, Lance’s commitment to the critical discipline was held in tension with a commitment to illumination of the Bible. He advocated that technical expertise and specialization be balanced with application to the biblical text. He argued that just as a multidisciplinary excavation needed stratigraphers and geologists, it also needed biblical archaeologists to help interpret the data.

A comparison of these two scholars reveals an unlikelihood that they might come to an agreement. Dever was focused on acceptance of the American school as professional archaeologists in the wider field and desired independence from religious studies to gain freedom from negative connotations. Lance was focused on a belief that the responsibility of the archaeologist was to interpret the data and the flood of

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 100.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

information meant that biblical archaeology must carry on bringing elucidation to the Bible and the world around it. There was no need for separation, just a need for commitment to critical excellence in the midst of interpretation. Their differing purpose for archaeology led to these two scholars holding largely differing views of archaeology's future, its responsibilities, and the necessary requirements in order to facilitate the discipline's growth.

In these reviews Dever found further evidence for the death of the old biblical archaeology and noted its inevitability. But, he also continued to consider the potential of a new biblical archaeology based in dialogue. In regards to his reporting of the death of biblical archaeology, Dever declared that the death of the previous generation's biblical archaeology as an academic discipline had already taken place by the time of his Seabury-Western lectures; he simply noticed its death and delivered the obituary.¹⁸⁷ Dever even declared Lance's review as another obituary and fond tribute since Lance described Albright as the only figure that could hope to fulfill the definition of biblical archaeology.¹⁸⁸ Dever argued that such a broad definition of biblical archaeology, placing it as equivalent to all Near Eastern studies, was broad enough to make it meaningless.¹⁸⁹ Dever welcomed biblical scholars such as Lance and Frank Moore Cross to define biblical archaeology as it related to biblical studies as an autonomous discipline, but to leave Syro-Palestinian archaeology to its own methods. For Dever, biblical

¹⁸⁷ However, he claimed to be flattered by those who credit him with killing biblical archaeology: William G. Dever, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries and Biblical Research* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1990), 22.

¹⁸⁸ William G. Dever, "Retrospects and Prospects in Biblical and Syro-Palestinian Archaeology," *Biblical Archaeologist* 45, no. 2 (Spring 1982): 104.

¹⁸⁹ William G. Dever, "Retrospects and Prospects in Biblical and Syro-Palestinian Archaeology," 103-104.

archaeologists were welcome to contemplate archaeological discoveries, but he questioned their ability to become an independent discipline due to a lack of individual “rationale, methodology, objectives, status, or support.”¹⁹⁰ Dever believed that the discipline as Albright knew it could not stand in an era of specialization. The broadness of the field had surpassed mastery. The field of biblical studies and archaeology was to be left for the biblical scholars, leaving archaeologists to their own pursuits. For Dever, the age of biblical archaeology as an academic discipline had passed away and he did not mourn it.

The responses to these reviews also provided a further understanding of why Dever felt that biblical archaeology’s death was inevitable. Dever found many faults with the biblical archaeology of the 1950s. First, he described the American school as having drawn an agenda from questions raised by biblical research rather than from the archaeological evidence.¹⁹¹ Secondly, he believed that the older school failed because of: its amateur status and unprofessional standards of fieldwork and excavation; its theological naiveté; its parochial research interests; its inability to compete for secular funding, its reactionary character and failure to meet the challenge of newer interdisciplinary approaches and the rise of national schools in the Middle East.¹⁹²

A combination of these factors allowed “nonsense” to be printed by so-called experts in the name of biblical archaeology, distorting the work of critically

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 103.

¹⁹¹ William G. Dever, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries and Biblical Research*, 19.

¹⁹² William G. Dever, “Biblical Archaeology: Death and Rebirth,” in *Biblical Archaeology Today, 1990: Proceedings of the Second International Congress on Biblical Archaeology* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993), 706.

minded scholars.¹⁹³ While Lance argued that what others think does not matter, Dever adamantly disagreed. He believed that biblical archaeology died because the larger discipline of archaeology ceased to take it seriously as biblical scholars and archaeologists both visualized an illusion of holding claim to a wider field than they were able. Driving this concern home is a recalled conversation with Wright in which Wright pondered an irony of his work; his archaeological work was dismissed by biblical scholars and theologians and his theological work was dismissed by his archaeological colleagues.¹⁹⁴ Too broad of a field and an influx of amateurs prevented biblical archaeology from establishing itself as an independent discipline and from being taken seriously by the disciplines that it takes part in, which led to its demise as an academic field.

However, Dever did not call for the complete dismissal of biblical archaeology, but rather hoped for its re-identification as a dialogue between critically-minded scholars in the “independent but interrelated” disciplines of biblical studies and in Syro-Palestinian archaeology.¹⁹⁵ He asserted that this was more along the lines of what Albright intended for the field than the identity that it had developed.¹⁹⁶ Dever believed that such a dialogue could create a respectable field, but only if the biblical texts could be seen as ideology, or ideologically-informed history, thus holding archaeological context

¹⁹³ William G. Dever, “Retrospects and Prospects in Biblical and Syro-Palestinian Archaeology,” 104-105.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 104.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 107.

¹⁹⁶ William G. Dever, “What Remains of the House That Albright Built?” *Biblical Archaeologist* 56, no. 1 (March 1993): 31.

and interpretation in tension.¹⁹⁷ Such a tension would allow critical, scientifically-minded scholars to approach biblical texts without the complete constraints of religious tradition and interpretation. This would allow the Bible to be approached as a “curated artifact,” holding meaning in both an ancient cultural context and in a modern context. This span of cultural meanings would then be kept in mind when using the biblical texts to dialogue with archaeological discoveries, thus balancing modern interpretations with a visualization of the meaning of its original context.¹⁹⁸ Twenty-five years after his lecture, Dever stated that though his primary concern was the establishment of Syro-Palestinian archaeology as an independent discipline, he was confident that biblical archaeology would develop into a complementary field. With decades of separation, Dever continued to believe that the only means for the two fields to fully develop their potential was to separate and then each to interact “from its own perspectives and objectives.”¹⁹⁹ Biblical archaeology’s demise was brought about by an inability to gain the trust of the broader archaeological community due to a belief that biblical archaeology was limited by preconceived biases and a pervasive amateurism. However, considering the Bible alongside of the archaeological evidence needed not pass with the old school of biblical archaeology. Dever held that a dialogue would allow both disciplines to grow and to inform one another.

¹⁹⁷ William G. Dever, “Biblical Archaeology: Death and Rebirth,” 710.

¹⁹⁸ William G. Dever, “Archaeology, Texts, and History-Writing: Toward an Epistemology,” in *Uncovering Ancient Stones: Essays in Memory of H. Neil Richardson*, ed. Lewis M. Hopfe (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 109.

¹⁹⁹ William G. Dever, “Can “Biblical Archaeology” be an Academic and Professional Discipline?” in *Archaeology, History and Culture in Palestine and the Near East: Essays in Memory of Albert E. Glock*, ed. Tomis Kapitan (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 15.

Methodology

In archaeology, no methodology remains in vogue for too long. The time of Dever's advocating of the separation of biblical studies and Syro-Palestinian archaeology was no different. As the discipline continued to adapt and grow, archaeological method did as well.

Before addressing the progress, it is interesting to note what Dever considered the foundation of his method. Despite his open and often painful break with biblical archaeology, Dever maintained that he sought to build upon the methodological foundation laid by Albright. He credited Albright with creating a sound methodology that continued to hold value as it was based in ceramic typology and stratigraphy. Likewise, he acknowledged Albright for recognizing "the necessity for using constantly new archaeological discoveries to place the Bible in context and thus to render it more intelligible."²⁰⁰ Despite his desire for Syro-Palestinian archaeology to venture out as its own discipline, Dever continued to "rebuild upon the secure foundations" laid by his teachers.²⁰¹

The most notable methodological development of the 1950s-1970s was the sudden dismissal of "New Archaeology." Less than twenty years into its prominence, this scientific, multidisciplinary approach fell from favor during the 1980s. In its place arose "post-processual" or "contextual archaeology," which Dever adopted in the early 1990s. Just as New Archaeology surpassed its predecessors in complexity, post-processual archaeology surpassed it. The movement was characterized by six major trends: a disenchantment with testing laws of cultural change and the development of elegant

²⁰⁰ William G. Dever, "What Remains of the House That Albright Built?" 34.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

theories; a return to inquiries based on material culture data rather than other disciplines; a return to chronology and history writing; an examination of social, environmental, and cultural change; an idealist approach regarding the role of symbol, ideology, and religion in shaping a society; a belief that archaeology was applicable to a modern context and held “moral value in an endangered world.”²⁰² The cause for the prominence of post-processual archaeology was the critique of New Archaeology’s failures in objectivity and its vulnerability to manipulation according to the biases of the archaeologist. Post-processual archaeology sought to counter this tendency by considering all forces impacting a society as holding potential value upon social consciousness. These then were utilized to write a history and construct a culture for the site being excavated. As the scientifically rigorous New Archaeology failed to satisfactorily construct the ancient world, post-processual archaeology arose to provide a means to consider a more ideological, social, cultural, and applicable approach to the discipline.

The Purpose of Archaeology and the Rhetoric Employed

During this turbulent and formative period, Dever’s purpose for archaeology and his rhetoric took on new aspects. There was also a sense of return as his rhetoric began to pay tribute to his teachers. This section will consider Dever’s role and purpose for archaeology, several potential benefits for how this purpose enabled the discipline to interpret discoveries, and, ultimately, the language employed for these interpretations.

²⁰² This description of post-processual archaeology can be found in William G. Dever, “Biblical Archaeology: Death and Rebirth,” in *Biblical Archaeology Today, 1990: Proceedings of the Second International Congress on Biblical Archaeology* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993), 708.

Dever's purpose was based upon a simple proposition: archaeology was a unique discipline seeking to investigate culture.²⁰³ Archaeology offered evidence not subjected to later interpretation, setting it apart from curated artifacts, such as the Bible. For Dever, one of archaeology's greatest contributions was an examination free of filters. It was then that the archaeologist might glimpse "true colors."²⁰⁴ Archaeology served to reconstruct a broad cultural context and an element within this pursuit was the illumination of "daily life in Biblical times."²⁰⁵ In relation to literary remains, archaeology was able to supplement and complement. Ultimately, Dever described his purpose for archaeology as a discipline seeking to answer: "'What was life like in antiquity, in this time and place and social setting?'" And, further: "What can we learn from that universal human nature, experience, and destiny?"²⁰⁶

Dever's purpose for archaeology exhibited two potential benefits. The first was archaeology's ability to discover the biblical world beyond the field of vision provided by the text. Archaeology allowed the normative features of life to be reconstructed in order to understand "what really happened."²⁰⁷ It allowed folk religion, popular piety, and religious practice to illuminate the ancient cult. This expanded beyond the priestly,

²⁰³ William G. Dever, "Impact of the 'New Archaeology,'" in *Benchmarks in Time and Culture*, ed. Joel F. Drinkard Jr. et al. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 344.

²⁰⁴ William G. Dever, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries and Biblical Research*, 11.

²⁰⁵ William G. Dever, "What Archaeology Can Contribute to an Understanding of the Bible," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 7, no. 5 (Sep/Oct 1981), <http://members.bib-arch.org/publication.asp?PubID=BSBA&Volume=7&Issue=5&ArticleID=3&UserID=3672> (accessed March 14, 2008).

²⁰⁶ William G. Dever, "Archaeology in Israel Today: A Summation and Critique," in *Recent Excavations in Israel: Studies in Iron Age Archaeology*, ed. Seymour Gitin and William G. Dever, The Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research 49 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 150.

²⁰⁷ William G. Dever, "What Archaeology Can Contribute to an Understanding of the Bible."

idealist, and “elitist” recollections preserved by the biblical writers.²⁰⁸ Rather than strictly the biblical account, Israelite folk religion could then be investigated and compared alongside of the religions of its neighbors.²⁰⁹ Archaeology served to uncover a cultural environment that the literary remains failed to preserve.

The second benefit considered the potential value of pottery beyond its use for establishing chronology and identifying strata. Dever identified significant fields of information, such as shifts in settlements, changes in local culture or contact with outside cultures, and developments in technology as possible implications for pottery.²¹⁰ This work was a prime example of post-processional archaeology’s cultural approach, which considered new means of interacting with discoveries. This study of ceramics allowed a cultural world to be reconstructed, thus informing the archaeologist of social and cultural events that would otherwise be lost.

Dever’s purpose for archaeology pushed the discipline to consider parts of the culture that had been unnoticed, such as this expanded study of ceramics. If archaeology was to investigate culture and post-processional archaeology was to write history in light of culture, many new interpretations soon become possible. The discipline had begun to look to provide a voice for a broader culture that had largely been left mute.

Dever’s rhetoric is interesting due to a partial rediscovery of a linguistic trend common to his teachers. Interestingly, it was during this period of proposed separation between biblical studies and Syro-Palestinian archaeology that the language of

²⁰⁸ William G. Dever, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries and Biblical Research*, 128.

²⁰⁹ William G. Dever, “Impact of the ‘New Archaeology,’” 346.

²¹⁰ William G. Dever, “Ceramics, Ethnicity, and the Question of Israel’s Origins,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 58, no. 4 (December 1995): 204.

illumination and light resurfaced. Such examples employed by Dever include: archaeology illuminates daily life in the biblical period, biblical studies is dependent on the light of archaeology, the Bible is illuminated by chance discoveries, new light has flooded the field of biblical studies through archaeology, and the ancient cult can be illuminated by archaeology.²¹¹ This reoccurrence after a period of near-complete absence causes the reader to wonder the reason for the rediscovery. It may be that in order for Dever to maintain the audience that followed his writings while he remained within the biblical archaeologist community, he adopted the language of his teachers. Though arguing that biblical archaeology was dead, Dever began to sound very much like those who championed the movement that he now eulogized.

However, Dever refused to accept any sort of confirmation-seeking rhetoric. Although such language can be found in the work of Albright, Dever only followed the rhetoric of his teachers as far as illumination. Dever often identified those who utilize such language as belonging to an ended generation or as being an amateur in the field.²¹²

In conclusion, Dever sought for the cultures of the archaeological sites to be reconstructed through careful exploration and investigation. He believed that archaeology could provide a means of understanding the cultural context of an earlier world, which could also enlighten the literary remains of these same cultures. Interestingly, during this period of new growth and new purpose, a familiar rhetoric of illumination arose once

²¹¹ Examples can be found in: William G. Dever, "What Archaeology Can Contribute to an Understanding of the Bible." William G. Dever, "Retrospects and Prospects in Biblical and Syro-Palestinian Archaeology," 104. William G. Dever, "Archaeology in Israel Today: A Summation and Critique," 150. And William G. Dever, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries and Biblical Research*, 3 and 128.

²¹² Examples of this trend can be found in: William G. Dever, "What Archaeology Can Contribute to an Understanding of the Bible." William G. Dever, "Impact of the 'New Archaeology,'" 346. And William G. Dever, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries and Biblical Research*, 4-5, and 26.

again. In a period of pushing away, there was a hearkening back to the American school and its formative rhetoric.

The Fate of Syro-Palestinian Archaeology

Syro-Palestinian archaeology quickly encountered discipline-threatening struggles. By 1995, less than twenty five years after his proposed separation, Dever was forced to consider that the discipline that he sought to free might not survive. The catalyst for this realization was the loss of funding and the inability to accept new graduate students into the Syro-Palestinian archaeology program that he had founded at the University of Arizona. This was a tremendous shock and painful experience for Dever, who had left full-time fieldwork in order to found this graduate program. It was the nation's largest Syro-Palestinian archaeology program and its loss greatly reduced the number of Ph.D. students in the field. This development forced Dever to consider how Syro-Palestinian archaeology came to be in this condition and to ponder the future hope for the discipline's survival.

For Dever, the failing of the discipline could largely be attributed to a lack of funds and a loss of interests in the humanities in America. The cost of conducting excavations continued to skyrocket along with becoming increasingly complex due to multidisciplinary developments. This led to the inability for a single university, or even a consortium of institutions, to fund an excavation. This was coupled with funding agencies, such as the National Geographic Society and the National Endowment for the Humanities, decreasing their contributions. Furthermore, American universities decreased their support for the humanities and declined to fill archaeological positions upon the retirement of those currently filling the positions. There was also the loss of the

traditional support centers of seminaries and churches, although this loss of support was largely an ailment of Dever's own creation caused by his separation of the discipline from biblical studies.²¹³ This financial emergency caused some to question if the discipline had been ready to be removed from its partnership with biblical archaeology. Dever claimed that the loss of support for the humanities and the financial cutbacks at universities, along with the loss of traditional support within biblical circles, could not have been anticipated.²¹⁴ Originally, Dever had questioned if biblical archaeology could survive if separated from Syro-Palestinian archaeology. Instead, it was now Syro-Palestinian archaeology that was struggling to survive.

Just as the American excavations declined, Middle Eastern national schools rose to prominence and these schools viewed the relationship between archaeology and biblical studies quite differently from their American counterpart. For these schools, the Bible was approached as a national constitution, not an exclusively religious text. They did not share many of the same interests as the American school, especially in regards to its impact on "American religious and cultural life."²¹⁵ The separation from biblical studies and the loss of interest, support, and funding caused the young American discipline to falter, while the Middle Eastern national schools quickly rose to prominence and replaced the American schools in many aspects of the Syro-Palestinian excavations.

In light of the present, Dever was forced to consider what the future might hold for Syro-Palestinian archaeology. Dever believed that the essential steps for securing a

²¹³ William G. Dever, "The Death of a Discipline," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 21, no. 5 (Sep/Oct 1995), <http://members.bibarch.org/publication.asp?PubID=BSBA&Volume=21&Issue=5&ArticleID=3&UserID=0> (March 14, 2008).

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

future was the solidification of senior positions and endowed chairs at universities, thereby ensuring future generations of archaeologists would be trained and have places of employment.²¹⁶ If the American school of Syro-Palestinian archaeology was to be established, it must have means of attracting high-level students and of offering a top-level education. The future of the discipline relied on the reestablishment of funding, the reenergizing of interest, and the asserting of proof that the illumination of lost cultures would provide a meaningful benefit to modern scholarship and society.

Nearly a decade had passed and these future hopes had not succeeded and Dever was left considering the future of Syro-Palestinian archaeology, the rebirth of biblical archaeology, and a potential return to the biblical world which he left unceremoniously thirty years prior. The future of the discipline was not what Dever had initially envisioned. Ultimately, he became certain that if Syro-Palestinian archaeology were to survive, it would reside in conservative Christian circles “in which the Bible, for better or worse, is still taken seriously and there are institutional commitments of people and resources.”²¹⁷ The pursuit of funding and institutional support had fallen short and the discipline was being forced to secure itself in any way possible, regardless of its envisioned ideals. Dever stated that his taking Syro-Palestinian archaeology out of the biblical world, to “seek its fortune” in the broader discipline of archaeology likely would

²¹⁶ In William G. Dever, “The Death of a Discipline,” Dever called for those interested in biblical archaeology to fund Syro-Palestinian programs. He held that his discipline’s ability to place the Bible within a cultural context was a necessity for biblical studies. Funding failures caused an “emergency” that forced him to appeal to *Biblical Archaeology Review*’s readership, something that Dever typically avoided. Dever believed that those interested in biblical studies must invest in the discipline or it would not survive. This request is an interesting, and seemingly desperate, attempt from a scholar that had attempted to create a strictly secular discipline.

²¹⁷ William G. Dever, “Syro-Palestinian and Biblical Archaeology into the Next Millennium,” in *Symbiosis, Symbolism, and the Power of the Past*, ed. William G. Dever and Seymour Gitin (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 522.

not succeed. He had to consider “crawling back” to the biblical world and openly worried that his reception by the biblical world would be an unwelcome one due to his secular nature. Additionally, he feared that he would be dismissed in the secular field of archaeology due to his return to biblical studies. Dever had come to encounter the same concerns that overwhelmed Wright, his teacher and friend, at the end of his career. Dever’s separation of the two disciplines led to the same conundrum faced by his teacher, who had striven to hold these same disciplines together.

In the present, this development is set alongside of Dever’s recognition of the arrival of a new biblical archaeology, which is now a “mature, autonomous, secular, and professional academic discipline.”²¹⁸ The failings of Syro-Palestinian archaeology and the reestablishment of biblical archaeology might mean that the relationship between the two disciplines will have “to be confronted and defined” in the future.²¹⁹ However, with the passing of the Albrightian generation and the establishing of the separation carried out by Dever, this relationship will not be easy to establish. The “biblical connection” that Dever sought to remove from his discipline may once again become the lifeline that sustains the discipline.²²⁰

As for the future of Syro-Palestinian archaeology, the discipline will be forced to confront its relationship with biblical studies, establish itself as an autonomous discipline, overcome the lack of funding, overcome the loss of interest and support for the humanities, and establish itself alongside the Middle Eastern national schools in order to avoid elimination from the field. Dever is hopeful that these will be growing pains rather

²¹⁸ Ibid., 513.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 522.

²²⁰ Ibid.

than death throes for Syro-Palestinian archaeology and that the field will ultimately be able to meet these challenges.²²¹

Dever and His Response to the Postmodernists

The mid-1990s witnessed the rise of a new school of biblical studies and archaeology. This school's origin was centered within the Copenhagen School of Biblical Studies and was championed by such scholars as Niels Peter Lemche, Thomas L. Thompson, Philip R. Davies, and Keith W. Whitelam. This group is difficult to name as these scholars have not identified a name for their view of history and the Bible.²²² Their opposition has offered up names, such as revisionists, biblical minimalists, and nihilists, but it would be irresponsible to adopt the rhetoric of the opposition if these scholars are unwilling to name themselves. For the purpose of this chapter I will address this group of scholars as the postmodernists, as their rise and much of their scholarly approach is rooted in postmodernism.

Although the postmodernists have written extensively with intriguing approaches to biblical studies and archaeology, this body of work is beyond the scope of this chapter. Instead the chapter will focus on Dever, as a representative of the American school, and his response to the challenges presented by the postmodernists. This chapter will also consider the postmodernist critique of Dever so as to reveal the strengths of both sides of the confrontation. This will demonstrate that the potential for dialogue between these two

²²¹ Ibid., 523.

²²² In Hershel Shanks, "Face to Face: Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 23, no. 4 (Jul/Aug 1997), <http://members.bib-arch.org/publication.asp?PubID=BSBA&Volume=23&Issue=4&ArticleID=1&User ID=0> (accessed March 14, 2008), Lemche and Thompson decline to offer up a name for their group of scholars when asked.

groups has reached a stalemate due to an inability to communicate and a tendency to degrade the opposing scholars.

Interaction with the Postmodernists and Rebuttal of Their Approach

Following the works concerning the uncertain fate of Syro-Palestinian archaeology, Dever largely shifted his view to countering the assertions of the postmodernists. In order to understand Dever's concerns with the postmodernists and their school of thought, this section will consider the names that he utilized to describe this school, his description of their characteristics and agenda, and his critique of their methodology and conclusions.

As before-mentioned, Dever utilized the titles of "revisionist," "biblical minimalist," and "nihilist" for his description of the postmodern school. An understanding of these three names is beneficial to understanding Dever's concerns. The term "revisionist" was often set opposite of "traditionalist." It was a term once used by Lemche and Thompson to describe those histories that discounted the biblical texts of holding any historical value as well as those that rebuked early scholarship for ignoring historical methodology.²²³ It was not a term that the postmodernists rejected being called. Instead they felt that it "doesn't seem to signify anything."²²⁴ Revisionism questions traditional scholarship's acceptance of positivist bias concerning the biblical accounts and is coupled with a desire to explore beyond the traditional approach.

²²³ Niels Peter Lemche and Thomas L. Thompson, "Did Biran Kill David? The Bible in the Light of Archaeology," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 64 (December 1994): 17. And Niels Peter Lemche, "Early Israel Revisited," *Currents in Research* 4 (1996): 21.

²²⁴ Hershel Shanks, "Face to Face: Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers."

The second term widely used by Dever was “minimalist” or more exactly “biblical minimalist.” This term was set opposite the term “biblical maximalist.” As maximalists are scholars who desire to obtain as much information as possible from a source, a minimalist is one that is seen as able to say very little or nothing about the past. Therefore, the term biblical minimalist refers to a scholar who states that the biblical account offers up little to no historically accurate accounts of early Israel. This term offers up an extreme and short-handed interpretation of the postmodernists’ approach to biblical studies and it is easy to understand why Davies would consider the term biblical minimalist to be a “sneering epithet.”²²⁵

The final term widely used by Dever to describe the postmodernists was “nihilist,” “biblical nihilist” or “new nihilist.” This was set opposite of the term “positivist.” Dever adopted the term’s philosophical meaning of “the denial of the existence of any basis for knowledge or truth” to assert that the postmodernists held a view of the Bible devoid of history.²²⁶ Dever declared the postmodernists to be the new nihilists because their “radical undercutting” of traditional approaches to the Bible “results in nothing – except ideology.”²²⁷ Be it “revisionist,” “biblical minimalist,” or “nihilist,” Dever embraced each of these terms to highlight and disagree with a method or approach employed by the postmodernists. Interestingly, not only did the postmodernists largely reject any of these terms, with the exception being a neutral feeling towards

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ William G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It?* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 5.

²²⁷ William G. Dever, “Archaeology, Ideology, and the Quest for an “Ancient” or Biblical Israel,” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 61, no. 1 (March 1998): 46.

revisionist, this group of scholars declined to label themselves at all other than to identify themselves as historical and biblical scholars.²²⁸

In order to understand Dever's reaction to the postmodernists, it is important to examine what Dever considered to be their characteristics and agenda. He believed that four main points established the central tenets of the movement. First, the biblical text in its present form was composed in a later age, likely the Hellenistic era.²²⁹ Thus the postmodernists viewed the Bible as holding little or no historical value; the narratives were set in "an imaginary world of long ago that never existed as such."²³⁰ Accompanying this view was the supposition that "ancient Israel" was a literary construct and could not be reconstructed through material or literary remains. Second, biblical texts should be considered separate from historical context. Interpretation should be done through literary analysis, viewing the Hebrew Bible as a "social construct" reflecting "religious interests and propaganda of a late, elitist theocratic party within Judaism."²³¹ This conclusion explored the desired impact of the writer and his/her history, rather than looking for the history of a nation. Third, traditional historical approaches were to be avoided. The group of scholars was committed to the study of the biblical texts outside of historical considerations, so traditional approaches became either obsolete or akin to fundamentalism. Lastly, as there was no ancient Israel, there should be no further attempts to write a history of Israel. Instead, histories of Palestine should replace these

²²⁸ Hershel Shanks, "Face to Face: Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers."

²²⁹ Niels Peter Lemche, "Conservative Scholarship on the Move," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 19, no. 2 (2005): 242.

²³⁰ Niels Peter Lemche and Thomas L. Thompson, "Did Biran Kill David?" 19.

²³¹ William G. Dever, "The Search for History in the Bible: Save Us from Postmodern Malarkey," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 26, no. 2 (Mar/Apr 2000), <http://members.bib-arch.org/publication.asp?PubID=BSBA&Volume=26&Issue=2&ArticleID=3&UserID=0> (accessed March 14, 2008).

efforts. Moreover, these histories should be free of biblical or nationalistic biases.²³² In light of these main points, it is easily understood why an archaeologist would take such strong offense. A potential conclusion of this agenda was that any archaeology relating to the biblical world quickly became irrelevant, “if not perverse.”²³³ While the postmodernists pursued a course of scholarship that viewed the Bible apart from historical considerations, Dever felt that his discipline was being dismissed as archaic and unnecessary.

While Dever charged the postmodernists with lacking an archaeological approach, it is important to recognize the archaeological voice most closely connected with the movement, Israel Finkelstein of Tel Aviv University. Although Finkelstein declined to accept the more extreme postmodern position that regarded the Bible as completely unhistorical, his work had been co-opted by the postmodernists for support. Just as Dever charged the postmodernists with failings, Dever also offered several critiques of Finkelstein in the face of the postmodernist challenge. First, he felt that Finkelstein, by giving up on his theory regarding Israelite ethnicity, not only abandoned the biblical archaeology dialogue; he left the field to be dictated by non-archaeologists.²³⁴ Secondly, Finkelstein was known to deny discoveries that contradicted his claims. One such occurrence was Finkelstein’s approach to the Merneptah Stele. The common interpretation of the Merneptah Stele failed to support his approach to Israelite ethnicity,

²³² These main points can be found in William G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It?* 26-27. And William G. Dever, “The Search for History in the Bible: Save Us from Postmodern Malarkey.”

²³³ William G. Dever, “Archaeology, Ideology, and the Quest for an “Ancient” or Biblical Israel,” 41.

²³⁴ William G. Dever, “Israelite Origins and the ‘Nomadic Ideal’: Can Archaeology Separate Fact from Fiction?” in *Mediterranean Peoples in Transition*, ed. by Seymour Gitin et al. (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1998), 230.

so instead he stated that the Egyptian scribe came upon the name “Israel” by chance. This chance meant that the stele was inadmissible evidence. Dever was left unsure how to engage with an individual that employed such a dismissive approach for dealing with contrary evidence.²³⁵ Thirdly, Dever questioned Finkelstein’s decision to approach the question of “why the Bible was written” through the use of archaeological evidence. Dever believed that this question was impossible for archaeology to weigh in on as motive was beyond the scope of excavation and critical interpretation. Dever even questioned if Finkelstein had adopted the methods of the old biblical archaeologists in order to attract a larger audience for his books. Sadly, any hope for dialogue between these two archaeologists had been lost due to ill will, harsh reviews, name calling, accusations of forgeries, and questioning of methodology.²³⁶ There was a great deal of pride and confidence in the theories espoused by both sides and these clashes removed any potential for constructive dialogue between these two scholars.

To understand the conflict between Dever and the postmodernists, it is important to consider what the sides viewed as their primary differences. This section will consider three of Dever’s major points of contention with the postmodernists in the hope that an understanding of Dever’s resistance will be reached.

The first point of contention was that Dever felt that the postmodernists failed to take archaeological data seriously. One of Dever’s earliest misgivings concerning the movement was that none of the major proponents had significant archaeological

²³⁵ William G. Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 204-206.

²³⁶ Hershel Shanks, “Debate: In This Corner: William Dever and Israel Finkelstein Debate the Early History of Israel,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 30, no. 6 (Nov/Dec 2004), <http://members.bib-arch.org/publication.asp? PubID=BSBA &Volume=30& Issue=6&ArticleID=12&UserID=0> (accessed March 14, 2008).

experience, or a grasp of current methodology and purpose, nor an appreciation for “its potential for history-writing.”²³⁷ Similar to when Dever called for the separation between biblical studies and archaeology, he once again questioned how those untrained in archaeology could establish what archaeology was and was not able to do. The postmodernists’ unwillingness to consider archaeology silenced any potential interdisciplinary dialogue, meaning that Dever’s vision for biblical archaeology was not possible within the postmodern movement.

Dever strongly declared archaeology was not mute, but rather that “many historians seem to be deaf.”²³⁸ He asserted that archaeology could testify to the existence of a people and provide a long-dead culture with a voice via the *realia* of ancient Palestine. Dever believed that the Hebrew Bible, although permeated with “propagandistic intentions,” contained a memory of a real past and archaeology alone could help to interpret this memory.²³⁹ For Dever, archaeology was a prime source for understanding ancient Israelite culture, especially when literary remains failed in this pursuit. Archaeology had not undergone the editing faced by the text and the breadth of its quantity made it possible to reconstruct a wider culture than that testified to in the Bible.²⁴⁰ Dever demanded that the postmodernists come to recognize archaeology’s potential prior to dismissing it as inapplicable to biblical studies. Dever’s desire for a separation between biblical studies and archaeology now faced an opponent that was

²³⁷ William G. Dever, “The Identity of Early Israel: A Rejoinder to Keith W. Whitelam,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 72 (1996): 5.

²³⁸ William G. Dever, “Revisionist Israel Revisited: A Rejoinder to Niels Peter Lemche,” *Currents in Research* 4 (1996): 42.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

²⁴⁰ William G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It?* 173-174.

content to maintain this very separation while continuing with scholarly work absent of archaeological input.

The second point of contention was the dismissal of an author's ability to write a history of Israel and Palestine. If the biblical scholars were unwilling or feel that such a project was impossible, Dever was willing to forego the dialogue with biblical studies and instead allow the archaeological revolution to drive the project. Instead of biblical scholars, "some of us mere archaeologists" would take on the project.²⁴¹ While Dever stated that he preferred a dialogue with biblical scholars and textual specialists, he believed that a history of Israel and Palestine must be written.²⁴² Dever believed that archaeological discoveries could serve as a control for the reading of biblical texts, yet the postmodernists were unwilling to adopt this approach and take on the writing of a history of ancient Israel.²⁴³ For Dever, such unwillingness was a major shortcoming of the postmodernist movement.

Third, just as Finkelstein denied the value of the Merneptah Stele, the postmodernists also called into question several of the influential discoveries that failed to be explained by their approach. One example was the Tel Dan Stela, of which the interpretation and the authenticity were questioned by the postmodernists. One explanation was that the inscription "Beth David" was a place name similar to Bethlehem. Furthermore, Lemche questioned if the stela was in fact from the ninth century and he doubted its authenticity, although he cited no evidence for such a claim.²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ William G. Dever, "The Identity of Early Israel: A Rejoinder to Keith W. Whitelam," 19.

²⁴² William G. Dever, "Revisionist Israel Revisited: A Rejoinder to Niels Peter Lemche," 46.

²⁴³ William G. Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* x.

²⁴⁴ Hershel Shanks, "Face to Face: Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers."

A second example was Lemche's charge that the Ekron inscription, found by Seymour Gitin whom Dever advised for his Ph. D., was also a planted fake. His reason for believing so was that the two Assyrian kings named on the inscription were both known to scholarship. He felt that such an instance of knowing both kings, rather than one known and one unknown, meant that the Ekron inscription was likely a forgery.²⁴⁵ A third instance of such forgery charges came in regards to the Solomonic gate at Gezer, which will be addressed below. Overall, the postmodernists' willingness to declare archaeological discoveries as forgeries without considerable evidence left Dever incredulous. He cuttingly declared that the postmodernists would not respond to new evidence for "their minds are made up; do not confuse them with facts."²⁴⁶ The lack of archaeological experience, the disinterest in writing a history, and the denial of important discoveries meant that communication between Dever and the postmodernists quickly descended into name-calling and mud-slinging. A major difficulty that faced the dialogue between the group represented by Dever and the postmodernists was that they have no common ground on which to begin. Instead, both groups were left in a state of distaste, distrust, and dismissal.

Postmodernist Critiques of Dever

It is essential to be aware of some of the critiques raised by the postmodernists in response to Dever. However, several of the following critiques have come through Dever's or Shanks' telling of them. Their interpretation likely has affected the original charges and needs to be kept in mind while considering those charges.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ William G. Dever, "Histories and Non-Histories of Ancient Israel: The Question of the United Monarchy," in *In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel*, ed. John Day (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 84.

As alluded to above, the most surprising accusation was that Dever went to excavate at Gezer looking for a Solomonic gate. Thompson, who excavated at Gezer under Dever's direction in 1967, was the first to make this charge and asserted that he "knew that we were looking for Solomon's gate."²⁴⁷ When confronted by Dever, Thompson declined to expand on this charge. Dever maintained that regardless of the Bible, the gate was a "historical and archaeological matter" and had to be dated, a belief in a biblical Solomon had nothing to do with dating the find.

Additionally, the postmodernists considered Dever to be a member of the Albright school who has simply wandered away from its beliefs.²⁴⁸ He was charged with often using personal attacks and with never having initiated a development within scholarship. Instead he was described as being content to follow after other scholars.²⁴⁹ Interestingly, the postmodernists viewed their confrontations with Dever as being similar in form and language to Wright's confrontation of the scholarship of Albrecht Alt and Martin Noth.²⁵⁰ According to the postmodernists, Dever's methodology was questionable, his scholarship lacked originality, and his rebuttals often began at the personal level.

Dever and Shanks also recounted several of the critiques, which Dever claimed to be blatant misrepresentations.²⁵¹ He characterized Thompson as having accused him of trying to prove the historicity of the patriarchs, of combining archaeology, Near Eastern history, and the Bible, and of being bereft of method and entirely driven by biblical

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Niels Peter Lemche, "Conservative Scholarship on the Move," 249.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 249-250.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 243-245.

²⁵¹ This same claim of misrepresentation, but at the hands of Dever, can be found in writings of the postmodernists, such as Niels Peter Lemche, "Conservative Scholarship on the Move," 210.

accurate theory.²⁵⁵ However, it is just as possible that Finkelstein's low chronology and his questions regarding the Merneptah Stela and Israelite ethnicity will find further support. Perhaps the postmodernists and their approach that moves away from a historical view of the Bible will find continuing support and will bring a light to the biblical text as literature that has not been possible through the search for historical context and material remains. The questions that face this era of biblical studies and archaeology have not been answered, but rather are continually being formulated. It must be the hope of the scholarly community that these differing viewpoints will find ways in which to communicate in order to further understand both the material remains uncovered by archaeology and their relation, if any, with the literary remains of the biblical text.

²⁵⁵ William G. Dever, "Excavating the Bible or Burying it Again?" *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* no. 322 (May 2001), 74.

Conclusion

The developments of methodology, rhetoric, and archaeological purpose can be traced largely to cultural shifts, popular enthusiasm, and the complications that are implicit when matters of faith are involved. Tumult has proven inevitable for the same reasons that archaeology has proven so intriguing for a popular audience: its potential impact on religion and faith communities. Each period addressed in this work provides a valuable lesson regarding the impact of culture, intrigue, and faith upon the relationship between archaeology and the Bible.

The early period of archaeology and the Near East can be characterized by its surprise at the discoveries being made and popular interest fueling a desire to dig as fast and as broadly as possible. It is unrealistic to hold these early excavations to the methodological and scientific standards of the modern excavations. There simply had not been time for the discipline to develop these categories. Instead, its infancy was fueled by curiosity, eagerness, and a nationalistic desire to explore the lands of the Bible. A cultural shift and a change of perspective would be required for the field to become a discipline.

It was the emergence of modernism that forced the transformation from this early period of exploration into a field of excavation and method. This is seen most clearly through Delitzsch's *Babel und Bibel*. While the early period had proven willing to accept sweeping claims justified by archaeological evidence, Delitzsch exhibited that this attitude could have painful and embarrassing results. *Babel und Bibel* revealed a need for scientific method and specialization to enter the discipline to limit the claims that were made using archaeological evidence. While popular interest had fanned the flames of

archaeology, the rise of modernity declared that adventurers and artifact hunting must give way to archaeologists and systematic scientific methodology.

The second period can be characterized as methodologically developing, yet still attached to the biblical text in a way that allowed broad claims and overstated rhetoric while limiting the challenges that could be made in regards to the biblical accounts. Albright and Wright's commitment to the Biblical Theology movement restricted the questions that could be asked of the text. Rather than putting forward a new approach to the Patriarchs, the Exodus, or the Conquest, this period of the American school championed these accounts as historical despite the limited evidence for such claims. Sadly, this commitment has meant that many of the ideas of these archaeologists have been disproved or dismissed as conservative or biased. The rhetoric of illumination and light offered hope to their evangelical readers that archaeology would prove a material champion for the historicity of the Bible against its critics. Rather than tempering those expectations by instead promoting the value of understanding the cultures that produced the Bible, the rhetoric of confirmation declared the texts as unfailingly attested to by archaeological evidence. Unfortunately, these biases meant that rather than considering evidence that challenged the perceived meaning of the biblical account, such evidence was dismissed as "divergences" innocently preserved through failings of those transmitting the oral tradition into the written text.²⁵⁶ Although this period laid the methodological foundation for the American school, its commitment to the Biblical Theology movement and its hesitancy to ask questions of the historical accounts limited its impact and has led to the dismissal of its discoveries.

²⁵⁶ William Foxwell Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, 169.

The third period witnessed Dever beginning to recognize that these commitments and biases might forever limit the American school if not checked. This was evident in his early career and then cemented with his Seabury-Western lecture. The earliest indication that Dever was aware of the limitations of being connected with the Biblical Theology movement and with an evangelical audience was his move away from the widely-used illumination and light rhetoric.

Although Dever still considered the implications of discoveries at Gezer upon the biblical accounts, gone was the prominent rhetoric of the early American school. As scholars such as James Barr questioned Biblical Theology, Dever moved to separate his discipline from the faltering movement. However, I believe that his decision largely to dismiss the benefit of biblical scholars accompanying excavations was an overstep. Perhaps a more proper relationship could have been established by ceasing to limit archaeology's impact to matters of the biblical texts, as Dever called for, yet to also continue to involve the biblical scholar as a literary expert. A healthy relationship may have been established by asserting archaeology as a scientific discipline, as well as continuing to invite the involvement of historians and biblical scholars to assist in the interpretation of discoveries. In this scenario, the archaeologists would have the benefit of a scholar devoted to the literary remains of a culture as well as being able to hold the theories of the biblical scholars to a scientific criticism. The biblical scholars would have the benefits of considering their theories alongside of material remains. While the separation from the Biblical Theology movement was essential to the integrity of scientific archaeology, it is a shame that Dever felt it necessary to entirely dismiss the biblical scholar from the excavation.

The fourth period witnessed the rise of postmodernism and modern archaeology was sent reeling in much the same way that it was with the rise of modernity two generations prior. Postmodernism and the postmodern scholars called into question the validity of archaeology and its relationship to the biblical text in a way similar to modernism's call for archaeology to develop scientific integrity a hundred years earlier. This period reveals that no discipline can remain static. There is a need for constant re-evaluation and response in light of culture. It will be the challenge of future archaeologists to contemplate if their discipline is able to have a valid impact on literary remains or if the postmodernists are indeed correct in considering literary remains entirely separate from the material remains unveiled by archaeology.

This thesis has tracked the developments of method, rhetoric, and archaeological purpose and it has become evident that matters of faith, culture, and popular interest have had profound and lasting impacts upon the relationship between the Bible and archaeology. We are now left looking to the future of this relationship hoping that a new generation of archaeologists will arise to take on the challenges that face this discipline and will champion new and critical ways of interpreting the Bible in light of archaeological evidence.

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