Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 21 (1981)
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On Choosing Models for Recreating Israelite Pre-Monarchic History

To Michael C. Astour
On his 65th Birthday

This essay considers a recent publication in the Westminster Press's The Old Testament Library series: Israelite and Judaean History [IJH], edited by John H. Hayes and J. Maxwell Miller (1977). My purpose is not to review this book, for scores of publications already in print or forthcoming adequately fulfill this task. Rather it is to expand on editorial, methodological, and historiographic issues which have not received adequate attention.

Unlike many other volumes in the Old Testament Library series, IJH is not a translation of a European work, but is a bold undertaking conceived and developed by two biblical scholars from Emory University. The volume gathers contributors from three continents, with each author maneuvering within very loosely established guidelines. The editors assigned the periods before that of the Judges to 6 authors, all Americans, who contributed about 40% of the total volume. With the exception of a brief and underdeveloped section on "Judaism after the destruction of the Temple," six European scholars and one Israeli scholar wrote the remaining pages.

In their Preface Hayes and Miller assert that their "volume is not intended as simply another proposed reconstruction of Israelite and Judaean history. It is a handbook for the study of that history and one in which the reader can see different leading historians at work. One might expect that a composite handbook produced by a number of leading specialists with various scholarly backgrounds would be rather disjointed. This has not turned out to be the case although the careful reader will discover that the contributors are not always in agreement" (pp.xv-xvi). This quotation contains both an understatement and

a debatable conclusion. One does not have to be a "careful" reader to discover that, especially in the early chapters, the contributors are almost always in disagreement. Because its editors have, perhaps consciously, avoided espousing a philosophy of historical synthesis and have left it up to contributors to work within their own understanding of the nature, purpose, method, and limitation of historical inquiry, IJH does not succeed in overcoming its composite nature. The consequence of this lack of editorial guidance has permitted historical reconstruction to assume widely diverging, often mutually excluding, analogies and models. Especially in those chapters on Israel's pre-monarchic period, the juxtaposition of contributions with clashing historiographical presuppositions exacts its toll; for it relentlessly and repeatedly asks readers to suspend their confidence in each scholarly reconstruction as they move from one chapter to the next. Thus, IJH may be useful only to those who are most conversant with the manifold disputations within biblical scholarship. Readers who desire a handbook for the study of Israelite and Judean history will probably be better (perhaps: more easily) served by any one of the dozen single-author histories with consciously articulated goals and with clearly identified approaches. However, the publishers' expectation for IJH to become "an indispensable reference book for ... libraries" is certain to be realized. For, despite its dearth of modern Hebrew references, IJH is quite rich bibliographically and comes at a time when biblical scholars are sharply questioning past assumptions and are boldly promoting new lines of enquiry.

Apart from one chapter by Hayes which reviews historiography, primarily since the Renaissance, IJH offers contemporary recreations of twenty centuries in which Israel was born, developed, and experienced the Diaspora. It does not emulate the Old Testament's sense of history which begins with Creation. Translated into equivalent terminology, this notion would have obligated IJH - as it does many other recent formulations - to begin with some pages on the geography, climate, prehistory and ethnic environment of the Mediterranean littoral. Nor does IJH remain strict to its title, for "Israelite" and "Judaean," when associated with political and national, rather than with theological and tribal terminologies, would have limited the contributions to the few centuries which separated the foundation of the Northern and Southern kingdoms and the destruction of the Second Temple. Recon-

structions by Donner, Oded, Widengren, and Schäfer present that stretch of time in a manner which more or less follows the biblical historiographer's scheme: Oded, very much so; Donner, surprisingly so. This recontruction is supplemented, again more or less, by literary (Donner) and archaeological (Schäfer) data. The "Roman Era" segment of Leaney and Neusner stands apart in its reliance on evidence drawn perforce from outside the Old Testament.

But IJH's most exciting, albeit controversial pages, are surely those reserved to the debate on the history of Israel before the Divided Monarchy. Within them, W.G. Dever and W. Malcolm Clark assess the historicity and historical worth of traditions regarding the patriarchs; T.L. Thompson and Dorothy Irvin evaluate those regarding the Joseph and Moses narratives; J.M. Miller, A.D.H. Mayes, J.A. Soggin respectively reconstruct Canaan's occupation, the rule of the Judges, and the early days of the monarchy. It is obvious that each one of these scholars is well acquainted with the biblical text, very familiar with the issues as well as with the scholarship regarding its import, and has easy access to the epigraphic and archaeological remains of past civilizations. It is equally obvious that the reconstructions, or even the methods pursued in approaching reconstructions, differ substantially enough to make it impossible for them to recreate corroboratively a coherent history of pre-monarchist Israel. Why this might be so will be explored in the remaining paragraphs of this essay.

In attempting a reenactment of events in the life of any ancient culture, scholars must initially distinguish between the "facts" of history and the "vision," or, as it has been sometimes titled, the "truth" of history. The first deals with contents, with those moments and realities preserved for us either in written documents (annals, letters, sagas, etc.) or material forms (pottery, artifacts, etc.). The second category pertains to the manner in which these "facts" are selected, (de)emphasized, and arranged within a narrative in order to give meaning, coherence, and form to the final product. In studying the "facts," scholars tend to establish their reliability and usefulness as evidence, to assess their position within chronological contexts, and to study their effect on contiguous "facts" within the material. To do so, they use a methodology especially developed to isolate specific "facts" and to test them against their own environment. But whether the task is to evaluate the

pronouncement of kings as recorded in an annal or to arrive at the antiquity and function of a recovered potsherd, the approach and the goal pursued differ little; only the evaluator's preparation for that enterprise, and the vocabulary he employs, differ. To evaluate the "vision" of a historical document scholars try to measure the pulse of a narrative by gauging the manner with which "facts" are stamped linearly or are made to coagulate within a matrix. They also make judgments on the narrator's capacity to recreate a history as it must truly have happened.

In approaching the study of Israelite history, one should, moreover, distinguish between two sets of "facts" and "visions." The first set treats the Hebrew writer's choice of "facts" and the manner in which he fashions them into a dramatic narrative which testifies to God's vigilance over his chosen folk. The modern scholar who would investigate the Hebrew narrative need not judge the authenticity of these "facts" nor establish their quality and origin; he need only classify them and observe the manner in which the biblical historiographer entered them into the final narrative. The "vision" of the biblical historiographer could be analysed through methodologies established by literary criticism, treating the final product as any piece of literature which contains complex narratives. By examining the manner in which the Hebrew plots each episode, establishes the mood, constructs the language, and develops the characters, and by observing the position of episodes, modern critics try to ascertain the author's intent and point-of-view, to weigh the emphases he places on the sequence of his materials, and to gauge the tone he assumes as he develops his themes. The critic need not worry about the historicity of events that are portrayed, nor judge the veracity of the Hebrew historiographer. He needs only to draw conclusions on whether the Hebrew's work aimed strictly at shedding light on the past or at presenting the past in order to draw implications for the future. Such assessment does, however, permit scholars to speculate on the contexts which encouraged the Hebrew's reenactments of past events, to offer plausible conjectures on the meaning and purpose of the Hebrew writer's messages as they reached their earliest audience, to gauge the type and expectations of that audience, and to assess the shift in understanding and application of those messages as the audience changed during successive generations. In short, this focus on the first set of "facts" and "vision," on that of the Hebrew - as contrasted to that of

the modern historiographer - frees scholars from the burden of evaluating the historicity of each and every episode and allows them, instead, to measure the ability of the Hebrew writer to weave his material into a composition so authoritatively, convincingly, and coherently, that his ancient audience readily accepts both elements, "facts" and "vision," because it is so strongly persuaded by either one of them /1/.

Presentation and evaluation of the second set of "facts" and "vision" are tasks for the modern historian /2/. These researchers cull "facts" from archaeological and epigraphic discoveries, and supplement them by careful evaluation of the work of the Hebrew historiographer, applying the modern tools of biblical scholarship. Developed to explore the biblical text internally (philology, source, and textual criticisms, etc.) or, patterned after approaches current in other disciplines (history of religions, folklore, linguistic, literary analysis, anthropology, sociology, etc.), these tools permit the historian to identify, isolate, select, and use materials which he deems reliable and which can, therefore, be entered into his own retelling of Israel's past history.

However, when scholars try to form a narrative out of the events which precede the Dual Monarchy even what constitutes a "fact" is subject to intense debate: Can a literary tradition be dissected in search of its historical kernel? Can a burnt layer of an excavated tell be associated with an event mentioned in an epigraphic document? Could the behavior of non-Hebraic groups be used to establish the antiquity, let alone the historicity, of a biblical episode? Such moments of debate among biblical historians, easily documentable in the early pages of IJH, underscore the very tentative and fragile state of collecting raw evidence for recreating Israel's pre-monarchic periods. Because of this condition, the historian seeking a convincing realization is often forced to frame a canvas upon which he can mount this evidence, albeit debatable in its details. The power and the verity of his total realization will in turn, the historian hopes, confer upon the fragile evidence a cumulatively persuasive strength. The frameworks currently used by biblical historians have, superficially, been assigned to schools named after prominent scholars: Alt, Noth, Meyer, Gunkel, Albright, Pedersen, et al. It can be shown, however, that these great scholars themselves base their visions upon analogs and models which have been used successfully to reconstruct pasts more immediate and more familiar to them.

To demonstrate this point, it is necessary to present a historiographic tenet, admittedly the subject of intense debate, succinctly enunciated by John Dewey: "... all history is necessarily written from the standpoint of the present, and is, in an inescapable sense, the history not only of the present but of that which is contemporaneously judged to be important in the present ... The conceptual material employed in writing history is that of the period in which that history is written" (Meyerhoff, 1959: 162-169) /3/. This opinion, therefore, holds that the vocabulary and paradigms used to discuss the past can be made understandable only when they are chosen from those of the present. Thus, whenever a scholar compares kingship, democracy, absolutism, etc., in the Ancient Near East and in the OT, his comparison is understood by his audience - and by him, for that matter - not so much because he has recreated the political realities in Israel and in the Ancient Near East, but because he is using currently understood models as frames of reference. For those engaged in charting its overarching themes, rather than in merely amassing its details, history can, therefore, be a powerful didactic tool. Just as one can search the past for examples and models to understand the present, even to predict the immediate future, one can also use the models from the present to reshape the lesser documented moments of the past. Because biblical scholarship is pursued internationally, the models dominant in reconstructing the formative periods of Israel's history differ markedly. This is the case as much because they were originally designed to explain radically contrasting conditions which obtained in western nations during the 19th and early 20th century as because these models themselves were based on competing and diverse elaborations.

Using tools developed and sharpened after a century of rationalist and romantic historiographic speculations, nineteenth-century German historians, many of whom were witnessing the fusion of disparate states into a Hohenzollernian entity, searched their pasts for prognostications on the rise of the nation state. Two schools of thoughts, dependent on different methodological presuppositions, came to the fore. One school, commonly labelled "Prussian," or "Rationalist," generally looked for explanations in post-reformation Germany, when evidence, based on written documentations, could be trusted to reconstruct "history as it truly happened." Interest

was focused on the events that aided or hindered the process of German unification. The great achievement of Bismarckian diplomacy as it took advantage of potential crises and turned a paralysed Frankfurt Confederacy (Bund) into an Empire held center stage. German scholars launched extensive searches for the historical roots of nation-states, they devoted many pages to the personality and achievements of diplomatic and martial figures, and they pondered philosophical questions regarding the dominance of ethical laws in history. Although at its greatest moments of influence, about the turn of the century, this historiographical movement was abusing its potential and was serving chauvinistic goals, it nevertheless did create a heritage of scholarship in which the nation-state, because it was regarded as the highest manifestation of any single culture, received the largest share of historiographical attention /4/.

Although it was the Dutchman A. Kuenen who first (1869) exploited a model that severely limited reconstructing Israel's history to a period when the "facts" can be authenticated by means of extra-biblical materials - he would go no earlier than 800 BC in the history of Israel - his work was basically a study of the development of Israelite theology rather than history. It was left to Wellhausen's ardent follower, B. Stade, to offer the first purely historical assessment. Highly critical of the theologizing accounts of earlier scholarship, Stade's Geschichte des Volkes Israel, I, 1885, regarded anything before David's kingship as purely fanciful. Even the Davidic-Solomonic episodes, he claimed, were largely embroidered by wishful retrojections. But the "nation-state" model gained its greatest application to biblical scholarship when an old idea of H.G.A. Ewald (1864), elaborated by M. Weber (1923), was championed in the works of M. Noth. More than in any of its earlier manifestations, Noth's strict adherence to the rules of evidence permitted him to trace back the rise of the Hebrew "nation-state" no earlier than the occupation of Canaan. Preceding the accomplishments of Saul and David, accomplishments much colored by the bias of the Hebrew writers, a tribal confederacy would meet around a central shrine and deliberate over its future action. According to Noth, the failures of this amphictyony eventually led to the creation of the monarchy. Noth's thesis, strikingly reminiscent of the experiences of Bismarckian Germany, is itself based upon richly detailed and very carefully presented analysis of the traditions regarding the rise of the monarchy.

Even as the "Prussian" school was erecting monuments to the

consolidation of modern Germany by adhering to strict rules of historical evidence, a different approach became prominent, one which relied on data derived from various disciplines in order to recreate the cultural stages which led to the rise of the nation-state. Freed from slavish attachment to political documentation, researchers were able to trace German history from its earliest tribal stage, hundreds of years before the Reformation, the Napoleonic upheaval, the 1848 revolutions, and, for that matter, Bismarckian diplomacy /5/. The kulturgeschichtliche approach to the reenactment of history had its effect on German biblical scholarship. But while biblical scholars (e.g. Gunkel, Gressmann) assiduously applied the methodological tenets advanced by this approach to the study of various aspects or components of Israelite culture: law, religion, literature, society, etc., few attempted to write a re-creation of Israel's political distant past. The works which did become available used the documentation from the Ancient Near East to supplement the biblical "facts" and to place Israel within the contexts of its neighbors' histories (E. Schrader, 1863; 1872; H. Winckler, 1895-1900). The vision which gave a structure to their narratives, however, depended largely on the ancient Hebrew's own (cf. R. Kittel, 1888-1892), and was, therefore, quickly labelled "conservative," "apologetic," "theological," "pietistic," or the like. Within a generation, the followers of Kittel and Winckler exaggerated these tendencies, leading to the production of very "conservative" (e.g. F. Hommel, 1897) or baroque (F. Delitzsch, 1902) reconstructions (cf. Weidmann, 1967: 65ff.). Although Eduard Meyer tried to combine the best of the rationalist methodologies with the multi-discipline approaches of the kulturgeschichtliche school of historiography, his effort to produce a universalist history of the Ancient Near East, in which Israel was granted a severely limited role, was praised, admired, and eventually ignored (Weidmann, 1967: 88-94). It was left to American scholarship, taking advantage of this encyclopedic, cultural approach to historical re-creation, to provide a political model which confirmed the plausibility of the biblical account of Israel's early history.

Often painfully aware of the import of German biblical research, American biblical scholarship was at first either moved to challenge its tenets or content to expand modestly on its contributions. Edward Robinson, himself educated at Göttingen, attained international repute by laying the foun-

dations of geographical and archaeological explorations of the Holy Lands (Brown, 1969: 111-124). But original reassessment of biblical history did not emerge in America until the turn of the century, in the wake of a number of movements which sought to alleviate the ills experienced by post Civil War America. These movements, the most notable and influential of which was organized by Henry George (1839-1897), presented non-Marxist socialistic formulae ostensibly aimed at recapturing the aspirations of the founding fathers and resurrecting Jeffersonian ideals enunciated by the Declaration of Independence /6/. Some Protestant churches quickly adapted these reforming formulae /7/.

Sociology was inaugurated at Chicago in 1892 as a discipline with which to chart and evaluate the social needs of contemporary societies. As a rubric, "Biblical Sociology" was invented in 1895 apparently by Shailer Mathews (1895), Dean of Chicago's Divinity School /8/. "Biblical Sociology" aimed to extract social data from the Bible and to assess its import for understanding Hebrew society and culture. Louis Wallis was one of a handful of scholars who sought to apply sociological methodologies to reconstructing biblical history. In a series of articles written just at the turn of the century, mostly in the American Journal of Sociology, and in a series of progressively didactic books spanning almost half a century (1912-1953), Wallis labored independently from - indeed even at times anticipated - Weber. Using sociology because of its melioristic, rather than merely because of its pedagogical and methodological possibilities, Wallis found evidence in the biblical texts for ideals espoused by Henry George: inalienability of land, individual autonomy, and social justice /9/. Wallis operated on the assumption that Judges, Samuel, and Kings contained traditions which preceded those of the Hexateuch. According to him, the Hebrews, having settled as peasants in Canaan, eventually clashed with the class-conscious, land-holding, monopolistic Amorites. Israel succeeded in achieving its independence and establishing its hegemony once it armed itself with the idealism and ethics of Yahwism: "Only through a long struggle with materialistic and social problems was Israel fitted to see God" (1912: 298).

The few reviews which greeted Wallis's 1912 effort, the Sociological Study of the Bible, from among both American and German scholars were favorable. However, critics of Wallis's reformulations of his thesis, in 1935 and 1942, questioned his

total dependence upon internal evidence when profuse external testimonies from ancient cultures were being recovered by the spade (Hahn, 1954: 173-176) /10/. From our perspective, we might note that his model, depending as it did on retrojecting (Neo)-Jeffersonian ideals upon a historical context far removed in time and space and on finding biblical antecedence for a class struggle which was no longer deemed pressing in post World War I America, is still worth investigation if only to understand the ideological roots of recent efforts by Mendenhall and Gottwald to view Israel as rising from a Canaanite matrix /11/.

Between the two World Wars, American biblical scholarship continued occasionally to reconstruct biblical history in terms of a struggle for independence and of the birth of democratic ideals. As one example, a 1920 textbook by A.E. Bailey and C.H. Kent, pungently called History of the Hebrew Commonwealth, opened with chapters on "The Cradle of Democracy" (on Israel in Egypt), and proceeded with others on "The Struggle for Independence" (on the Judges' period), on "Democracy under Samuel and Saul" and, passionately, with yet others on "The Protest against Greed and Privilege," and on "The Demand for Clean Politics and Religion." Characteristically for that period, Ancient Near Eastern political documentation was called upon to buttress arguments.

This example, not unique for this period, called upon historical texts uncovered in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Anatolia to flesh out biblical evidence. But the archaeological remains of newly uncovered cultures - literary as well as artifactual - were to be fully exploited only when a new model, harking back to America's earliest moments as a frontier of western civilizations, permitted a reconstruction which, in effect, paralleled the biblical historiographer's own vision. Unlike any previous reconstruction offered by European and, for that matter, American, scholarship, this synthesis gathered inter- national attention and, in a world dominated by American culture, occasionally attracted international allegiance.

If German historiography channeled its ingenuity and resources to establish methodologies by which to understand the rise of nations and the cultures of past civilizations, American historiography labored to articulate a vision which was commonly held by the citizenry. From the earliest examples in which Puritan divines regarded their experience as confirming sacred history (numerous examples in S. Bercovitch, 1978), well

into the twentieth century, historians viewed their task as that of recounting the epic and heroic saga of a Chosen People. George Bancroft, one of America's most influential historiographers, an erstwhile biblical scholar who studied in Göttingen, worked under the assumption that history is God working in examples /12/. The narrative which was developed in his ten-volume History of the United States (1854-1882) and which was repeated, with variations, by other nineteenth-century researchers, told of an immigrant folk which, spurred by conscience or guided by destiny, arrived at a land luxuriant with possibilities. Struggling against a hostile environment, this folk succeeded in wresting the land away from its unworthy inhabitants and in shaking the yoke of an unjust and cruel overlord. Its inspired leaders, uncommonly brave, generous and far-sighted, founded a nation bound by a clearly articulated covenant, one in which a Bill of [ten!] Rights protected the citizenry. As the centuries progressed, other moments were assigned equivalence drawn from Scriptures: the Civil War offered manifest evidence of the wages for the fathers' sins; the frontier, a physical as well as a psychological wilderness, was to be conquered with missionary zeal; Armaggedon was to be repeatedly fought against political foes (England, Mexico, Spain, Germany) as well as against social ills (hunger, poverty, autocracy).

It ought not to be surprising, therefore, that a consciousness which has expressed itself in terms of an archetyped, secularized, sacred history could reverse the procedure and find eminent plausibility in a sacred history which seems to anticipate the many moments of American history. Moreover, because this consciousness was expressed so early in American history, whether from the preacher's pulpit or from the politician's stump, it became possible to regard the ancient Hebrews as similarly endowed with an innate sense of their own past. These two perceptions eventually permitted biblical scholarship in America to presume that however "late" were the penning down of traditions, (i) the Hebrew's "facts" were based on authentic, historically accurate, traditions, and (ii) the manner in which his "facts" were structured offered a plausible reconstruction of his earlier history.

Ever since Edward Robinson's days, American scholarship has appreciated the value of archaeology as a discipline which permitted access to the distant past. By the 1920's, however, the term "archaeology" no longer connoted merely the uncover-

ing of buried cities or the identifying of specific locales with places mentioned in the Bible. Rather, it had acquired a broader meaning, one which allowed its users to refer to the recovery of any material, epigraphic or artifactual, which could illuminate biblical passages. "Archaeology" could bring evidence to bear on the Bible even when the sites whose riches were being exploited lay hundreds of miles from Jerusalem. Thus, it became acceptable to speak of archaeology as "confirming" biblical narratives when all that was at stake was that an ancient text contained materials whose contents could be compared with certain passages from the Bible.

This expanded usage of the term "archaeology" coincided with the recovery of archives from Nuzi (1925-), Ugarit (1929-), and Mari (1933-). The masses of texts which saw publication in the 30's permitted a group of scholars, primarily in the Philadelphia-Baltimore area, to use analogical means to reconstruct a plausible context in which Israel's history unfolded. While the "Nation of immigrants" model was common to all and the approaches taken to validate that model were generally shared, these scholars differed in pinpointing the age in which the patriarchs flourished. The earliest line of thought, basing itself primarily upon the Late Bronze age Nuzi and Ugaritic documentation, located Israel's origins in the Amarna period. The second found progressively stronger corroboration in the Middle Bronze Age archives from Mari and Babylon. By the 1950's a school flourished, with W.F. Albright at its head, which, by showing how the social patterns reflected in the patriarchal narratives were unique to the Middle Bronze age, established a rather narrow time-band within which Israel's first patriarch, Abraham, began his trek southward. That this synthesis also offered confirmation of the reliability of the Hebrew historiographer's own structuring of his early traditions permitted it acceptance in conservative circles.

IJH took shape when the reconstructions based upon the models described above - the Hebrew's "Chosen People"; the German's "Rise of the nation-state"; and the American "Social clashes," as well as the "Nation of immigrants" models - were being tested. Whether based upon (oral) traditions, upon reliable "political" documentation, or upon application of sociological, literary, or archaeological methodologies, the approaches taken by IJH's contributors to the pre-monarchic period remain the same as those employed by earlier scholarship. Almost every

one of these contributors finds it necessary to rehearse at length the history of the scholarship that obtained in the area under his scrutiny and to accentuate the seeming disarray which has overtaken contemporary historiography since the deaths of Noth (1968) and Albright (1971). But the fact that the editors chose to open the historical reconstructions of Israel with a discussion on: "Palestine in the Second Millennium BC: The Archaeological Picture," can be regarded as an implicit confirmation that the "Nation of immigrants" model still dominates the conception of IJH.

W. Dever, an experienced archaeologist rather than a historian, distinguishes between "Syro-Palestinian" and "biblical" archaeology, but doubts the ability of either approach to contribute appreciably toward historical or theological reconstructions. Nevertheless, Dever's synthesis owes very little to his advocacy of a more constrictive usage of archaeology and actually proceeds on a course charted by the "Nation of immigrants" model. "Syro-Palestinian" archaeological results play a very minor role in a reconstruction which depends on the same archives - those of Mari - and on the same tenets, albeit more sophisticatedly verbalized: the analógic use of social data from Mari's archives. A certain amount of incongruity enters Dever's scheme because sociological methodology, best suited to illuminate activities during a relatively narrow stretch of time when the sharp clashes between factions produced the evidence at our disposal, is applied to reconstructing a broad and complex process which spanned centuries.

Clark's contribution rehearses the debate among the various interpreters of the biblical evidence regarding the patriarchs. As such, it might have been better placed before Dever's segment. His own, unobtrusively presented, views (pp.147-148) are of the nature of speculation on the cultural contexts which produced Israel's earliest traditions rather than on the historical value of those traditions.

Thompson is a historian who is not satisfied with any of the models presently available to biblical historiographers. He criticizes Noth's approach severely, and ignores those which inspired Albright on the one hand and Gottwald/Mendenhall on the other. He is attracted by E. Meyer's cultural perspective but is not convinced by Meyer's attempt to place fragments of Israel's history within a universalistic re-creation of the ancient world. Inspired by Gressman and Galling, Thompson would only deal with the history of Israel's traditions regarding the Joseph

and Moses narratives and would barely speculate on the historicity of the events that may have unfolded. Stimulating as his critique of modern historiography may be, his contribution nevertheless arrests the movement towards a chronological resetting of Israel's early past, harming IJH's aspirations for a developing survey of Israelite and Judaean history. Thompson's treatment is, however, loaded with insights and with choice apothegmatic statements guaranteed to goad other scholars into indignant responses. The largest portion of D. Irvin's contribution, placed within Thompson's section, is not appropriate to IJH's purposes. By its very nature, the typology of folktale motifs, concerned with arranging and comparing gleanings often far removed in time and space, is an atomistic undertaking. To achieve its purpose, such an undertaking is forced to shatter the narrative continuity which is so essential a feature of the historical process.

Miller offers a detailed history of the problem regarding the conquest before presenting a synthesis which tries to accommodate all models and to employ every available approach. Israel possessed the land when tribes, some more peacefully than others, some more recently than others, coalesced into an entity through a pan-Israelite consciousness. This occupation/ infiltration took place over a longish period of time, and involved elements at various levels of sedentarization. It may well be that Miller's reconstruction, offering a compromise and a composite, will convince to a degree inversely corresponding to one's attachment to any of the more perfectly etched models.

A.D.H. Mayes, a British scholar, surveys the Judges period as well as the reign of Saul. His judicious overview of the sources is followed by a long dissertation against Noth's amphictyonic scheme. His strictures are by now familiar. But in eschewing Noth's model, Mayes does little more than offer critical annotations to the Hebrew's own reconstruction of his past. He parades the judges, according each a few comments, and presents a reign for Saul which deviates minimally from the account in Samuel. The same observations can be applied to Soggin's contribution. Notwithstanding his opinion that "the kingdom under David and Solomon constitutes a datum point from which the investigation of Israel's history can be safely begun" (p.332; cf. Soggin, 1978; contra: Hallo, 1980), it needs to be asked whether such moments confirmed by negligible outside sources ought not be tested as searchingly as those of previous

periods.

The Hebrew historiographer has left us a theological narrative which testifies to the involvement of his ancestors with God. Beginning with Creation, this rich narrative stretched convolutedly, yet inexorably, toward the Exilic period. The story recalled many moments in which God would abandon his people only to offer them repeatedly opportunities for renewals: after Paradise, after the Flood; with Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, each judge, Saul, David, etc. Modern biblical scholars single out one of these moments at which to initiate their reconstructions of Hebraic history. When facing the dearth of extra-biblical evidence which directly and incontrovertibly authenticates the historicity of the biblical traditions, modern historiographers search their own pasts for models which could give coherence and plausibility to the reconstruction they undertake. We have detailed three schemes, based on the political realities as understood by 19th- and 20th-century historiographers, which have dominated modern reconstructions. To be sure, there are other formulations, especially by Scandinavian, Jewish, and Israeli scholars; but these have attracted fewer followers /13/.

In the last quarter of this century, however, altered historiographic perceptions in post-war Germany (cf. Kohn, 1954) and in post-Vietnam America have contributed to fracturing the models which informed the heretofore dominant reconstructions of Israel's early past. This condition, in turn, made it possible for critics to launch progressively damaging attacks against the approaches taken to validate the appropriateness of these models. Composed within this context, IJH can nevertheless serve a twofold purpose. Read on one level, some of its pages provide access to the research which is casting doubt on the reconstructions of previous generations, while other pages exemplify ways to retain the previous models by altering, emending, adapting, and supplementing the approaches which translate them into plausible re-creations of Israel's early history. However, when read on another, less obvious level, the oscillating equations and the constant tensions between the realities of the ancient Hebrew and those of the modern historiographer become, indeed, the real subjects of IJH's early chapters.

NOTES

1 An excellent case study for this principle can be obtained by turning to Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Regum Britanniae. This twelfth-century masterpiece was full of "facts" which were quickly questioned by its earliest audience. Yet the nationalistic vision of Geoffrey was so powerfully appealing to those who had just settled England, that his inventions were forgiven, and even became the authoritative "facts" for generations of historical and literary compositions. The Tudor historiographers, in particular, depended heavily on Geoffrey's spurious events. On this topic, see the 5th chapter of Hanning, 1966; Brooke, 1976. In his 9th chapter, "History Writing," Clanchy, 1979, remarks as follows on the authoritative nature of medieval written documentation, even when its "facts" were total inventions: "In this bewildering world, where holy men forged documents and writers of fiction were concerned to tell the literal truth, it may seem surprising that written record ever got a good name at all or established itself as reliable form of communication ... Although it is true that monks were common forgers, they compensated for this by imbuing script with sacred associations. All writers of the twelfth century - whether forgers, romancers, or simple scribes - drew on this rich reserve of awe and faith" (p.257). I think that the same insight can be applied to the (early) pages of Livy and Tacitus.

2 To be a bit more subtle about it, one may have to subdivide the second set of "facts" and "vision" into two enterprises, distinguishing between the tasks of the modern historians and those of their critics. Because in biblical scholarship those engaged in one task are often involved in the other, the distinction between these separate exercises may easily be blurred. To clarify this distinction the present study might be be brought into discussion. If the Hebrew writer, as noted above, can be said to operate under the first set of "facts" and "vision," then the contributors of IJH, in so far as they promote their own reconstructions, can be judged as guided by their own set of "facts" and "vision" of history. In turn, by detailing the historiographic criteria and presuppositions developed in IJH, I am subject to my own understanding of evidence and its use in historical writings.

3 Meyerhoff's volume contains articles which support or dispute this claim. Under the rubric "Historicism," many specialized encyclopedias and dictionaries will give background and bibliography to the issues at stake, e.g. M. Mandelbaum in

the Encyclopedia of Philosophy and G. Iggers in the Dictionary of the History of Ideas (the latter being particularly rich in up-to-date bibliography). Useful suggestions regarding a methodology for comparative history are made in Mandelbaum, 1980.

4 The literature on German historiography is enormous. The same entries as those cited in note 3, above, plus those under the rubric "Historiography," will provide quick and easy access to the literature. Dry, elementary, but nevertheless useful, are the pages within Fitzsimmons, 1954. Difficult, but always interesting is White, 1973. Oden, 1980, considers the influence of German historiography on biblical scholarship.

5 Weintraub, 1966, is particularly helpful on the influence of J. Burkhardt and K. Lamprecht. The latter sharpened the debate regarding the methodologies for writing about history, insisting that "history as it continues to be" ought to be the motto of the historian. Lamprecht's vision of history as shaped by a national consciousness must certainly have influenced biblical scholars. Weintraub, p.167, summarizes one of Lamprecht's sketches regarding the development of the German Volk (this term conveys a mystical ideal which is not easily transmutable into English):

> From a community of kinship groups (Geschlechtergemeinschaft) grew, especially through the experience of the migrations, a community of Völkerschaften (i.e., loosely federated tribal groups with a strong consciousness of common destiny and experience); when these settled, they formed larger and more cohesive groups of tribes, the so-called Stämme, which coalesced, over many centuries of certain common experiences and through the appearance of territorial states which partly cut across them and partly coincided with them, into the modern Volk, the nation.

6 On Henry George, see Rose, 1968; Spiller, 1963: 977-982. George's cause, as he perceived it, was rooted in the Old Testament. This point is most clearly and consciously made in George's oration "Moses," first delivered at the Young Men's Hebrew Association of San Francisco, 1878. There, George tried to show that the Mosaic Code is a safeguard against economic and political exploitation, and also implied (pp.22-23) that the Code's provisions were reestablished in the Declaration of Independence.

G.B. Shaw, Emma Lazarus, Upton Sinclair, Samuel Gompers,

Leo Tolstoy, W. Rauschenbusch, and both Roosevelts are among the many prominent leaders and thinkers who declared themselves either inspired or influenced by Henry George; cf. Rose's last chapter.

7 Conveniently, see Nicklason, 1970; White and Hopkins, 1976, and C. Strout's chapter, "The Social Gospel and the Aristocrat of Manufacture," 1974: 224-245.

8 The term quickly came into vogue in journals edited in Chicago. On sociology as a research tool at Chicago, see Faris, 1967. Most useful for our purpose is his first chapter on "American Sociology at the Turn of the Century." On the sociohistorical approachs at Chicago's Divinity School, see Arnold, 1967; Rylaarsdam, 1965: 1-16.

9 A pamphleteer, educator, novelist, and traveller (in what was then Palestine), Wallis eventually (1925) became secretary to the Joseph Fels Commission. A wealthy soap manufacturer (his firm being Fels Naphta Co.), Fels became a convert to George's "single tax" philosophy and invested time and money in proselytizing in its behalf. Wallis dedicated two of his volumes (1935, 1942) to Joseph and Mary Fels respectively.

Wallis wrote widely and prolifically on many issues. Those of concern to us were published in 1912, 1935, 1942, and 1953.

10 Cf. Hahn, 1954: 175-176, and notes 54-56 to these pages. Hahn also gives an overview of the application of sociology by W.C. Graham and H.G. May.

11 E.g. Gottwald, 1979. Gottwald mentions Wallis in note 10 of p.714.

12 Bancroft's firm belief in the fact that "God is visible in History" is most succinctly and eloquently stated in his 1854 address to the New York Historical Society (printed in his 1855: 481-517). Assessment of Bancroft as a historian is most easily available in Nye, 1964. Canary, 1974, contains a valuable chapter on Bancroft's "Narrative Synthesis," where he investigates Bancroft's vision of history and his ability to construct convincing and coherent narratives. On Bancroft's influence on later American historians, see Loewenberg, 1972. Overviews of the American historiographic traditions after Bancroft are available in Fitzsimmons, 1954: 399-428; Spiller, 1963: 526-540.

Bercovitch's 6th chapter, "Epilogue: The Symbol of America," offers numerous, even if exuberantly presented, examples to indicate that Bancroft's reconstructions were peculiar neither to the 19th century nor to historical writings.

13 Two recent volumes consider the way the Victorians recreated an ancient Greece in the image they chose to promote for Britain: Jenkyns, 1980; Turner, 1980. Of the two, Jenkyns's volume is the more entertaining, dealing mostly with the impact of an invented Greece upon the arts and letters of the turn of the century England. Turner's study assesses soberly and effectively the manner in which a new vision of a democratic Greece was promoted by supporters of a British imperial democratic regime. E.M. Butler's The Tyranny of Greece over Germany, Cambridge, 1935, can still be read with profit even if the "Tyranny" of the title is more the product of the author's anti-fascist sentiments than the result of a well-proven thesis.

It might well be that British absorption with "classical" models - Rome in the 18th, Greece in the 19th century - by which to actualize a vision for England's destiny could explain its scholars' apparent lack of interest in promoting a biblical reconstruction that is peculiarly British. Apart from Milman's interpretation (1829), which primarily aimed to use the OT as a chart for the development of human society (cf. IJH, pp.55-59), I know of no elaboration which does not depend upon German or American models. The case is similar for French biblical scholarship, with the most iconoclastic reconstruction of Israelite history, that of Renan (1887-93), devoted to unraveling the manner in which man progressively and rationally attained the truth of God's existence.

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