

Is Biblical Archaeology Theologically Useful Today? Yes, A Programmatic Proposal

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The editors of this volume invited the contributors to present papers and later to write essays with the goal of finding a common ground that might facilitate a broader and more productive conversation between biblical scholars and archaeologists. The essays reveal that, while there is some common ground, there is no consensus. There is more agreement in the later periods than in the earlier periods, but there are differences of interpretation in each of the time periods. Moreover, the essay by Neil A. Silberman emphasizes that the lack of agreement by both archaeologists and biblical scholars is often motivated by political and philosophical presuppositions.

This lack of consensus and the presence of philosophical and political presuppositions force biblical scholars who have theological concerns to ask what they should do when the archaeologists cannot agree. Does one need to wait around until enough data are known to allow agreement? Does our postmodern setting prohibit consensus and the use of history and archaeology anyway? Will enough data ever be available to allow for firm theological conclusions?

These questions illustrate that one of the biggest challenges for Old Testament theology¹ is to articulate how the Bible can be “true” in a post-modern setting. In order to illustrate this challenge, I like to begin my

¹ This essay is written from the perspective of a Christian biblical theologian who attempts to integrate archaeological and historical data into a theological reading of the Bible. The conclusions presented here thus represent a particular viewpoint, but these conclusions (especially the definitions of “background” and “critical” history presented below) will be useful for Jewish and secular interpretations of the Hebrew Bible as well. For a clear articulation of ways that theological reflections can be useful for “Tanakh theology” or Hebrew Scriptures theology, see Werner E. Lemche, “Is Old Testament Theology an Essentially Christian Theological Discipline?” *HBT* 11/1 (1989): 59–71.

introduction to the Bible² course by assigning an article by William Placher entitled, "Is the Bible True?"³ I have several reasons for selecting this article. First, it is a well-written and persuasive articulation of what I label the mainstream argument by Protestants and Catholics for the truthfulness of the Bible. The second, more important reason for choosing this article is that it allows students to see how this popular argument leads us into a postmodern quandary from which the church has yet to emerge.

The example is helpful in the context of this collected volume on the archaeology of Jerusalem because biblical theologians face a problem when they are confronted with data like those presented in this book: How can these data be theologically useful in the absence of consensus? If we are unable even to determine with some degree of probability what actually happened, or if scholars disagree on what happened, then interpreters will ask how these data can possibly be used to understand the Bible as "true." Placher's approach is popular. However, as I argue below, it is an approach that we must move beyond.

The present essay moves beyond Placher's approach with an illustration of how the concept that I have defined as "historical imagination" might be used in a programmatic way to allow archaeological data to be theologically useful even in the absence of consensus. Since I have just recently published a detailed description of what I am calling "historical imagination,"⁴ the present essay only summarizes the earlier discussion. The focus of the present essay is to present a detailed explanation of how this proposal of historical imagination might be utilized with the archaeological data on Jerusalem. In the process, this review essay summarizes the papers presented in this volume, critiques their conclusions, and puts the different views presented in this volume in conversation with each other by using my programmatic proposal for historical imagination.

PLACHER'S APPROACH (= THE "MEANING" APPROACH)

Placher's argument that we must move beyond can be summarized succinctly. He begins with the acknowledgement that historical-critical research in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has shown that many

² REL 110 "The Bible" is an introductory, undergraduate course that I taught at Gustavus Adolphus College. The goals and method are somewhat different from an introductory seminary course.

³ William Placher, "Is the Bible True?" *ChrCent* 112 (11 October 1995): 924–28.

⁴ See Andrew G. Vaughn, "How Can a History of Israel Be Theologically Relevant in a Post-Modern World?" in *The Future of Biblical Archaeology* (ed. J. K. Hoffmeier and A. Millard; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, forthcoming).

parts of the Bible are not factual. We thus question how the Bible can be “true” if it is not factual. The reader of this volume will notice that many of the articles presented here also conclude that the Bible cannot be considered factual, at least in every detail. Placher responds to this situation by stating that the Bible is true because (1) what it means is true, and (2) his faith experience has shown him that the Bible can be trusted when it is read as a whole and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Students in my classes like this proposal because it makes sense on the surface and is attractive from a faith perspective. Yet one probing question reveals a weakness. I like to ask students, “How could you disprove Placher’s second reason, that his faith experience has shown him that the Bible can be trusted?” A few skeptical students inevitably try to argue that Placher has misunderstood his faith experience, but we all quickly realize that Placher has played what I like to call “the faith card.” A person’s faith experience is neither rational nor irrational. Thus, if the premise can neither be proved nor disproved, it hardly serves as a firm foundation upon which to build a larger argument.

Another problem with Placher’s position is that he posits truth to lie in “meaning” and not factual accuracy. Again, on the face of things this is an attractive (and popular) alternative. Even if the Bible is not completely factual, surely the meaning found in the Bible is true. The problem with this position has been thoroughly explored by Hans Frei in *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*.⁵

Frei convincingly demonstrates that the historical question of the factualness of the text has become the primary question in our critical method of investigating the Bible. Modern interpreters, including Placher, first ask if the events described in the narrative actually happened. If the event happened, then the narrative is true because there is a factual continuity. If the events are found not to have occurred, interpreters such as Placher argue that the Bible is true for some other deeper reason apart from its factualness. Placher and others argue that the text is true because what it means is true. At this point Frei rightly points out that, by associating *truth* with *meaning*, one must necessarily presuppose the meaning of the text *before* the narrative can be read. The end result is that the narrative itself becomes static—it stops serving as a dynamic guide for and witness to contemporary Christian faith.

Returning to Placher’s “meaning” method, we see that the meaning of the text must be determined before the narrative can be read and experienced as true. Yet how is this meaning determined? Placher’s faith stance

⁵ Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of the Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

has determined ahead of time that the Bible makes sense of his life, and this understanding dictates how he will determine meaning. The problem here is that Placher runs the risk of superdogmatism. His preconceived ideas about how God acts in the world control how he finds meaning in the text. Thus, not only does this “meaning” method eclipse the narrative and leave it static, but Placher also runs the risk of creating his own idea of truth when he reads the Bible. Silberman’s essay eloquently describes the danger that Placher’s system confronts with such a hermeneutic move: Placher runs the risk of letting his philosophical and religious ideology control his interpretation. Whereas Silberman indicates that such a bias is inevitable, I argue that there are ways out of this trap. The present essay is thus a programmatic proposal to assist biblical theologians (and archaeologists) in finding a way out of this philosophical trap.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM⁶

At this point it is enlightening to go back to the end of the eighteenth century to see how the Enlightenment has contributed to the problem articulated above. The Enlightenment philosophers argued that humanity was trapped or bound by anything around us that could not be explained or understood. Thus, there was an intense scientific and philosophical effort to explain the world in which we live. In this middle of this situation, David Hume posed a real problem: he showed that it is impossible to prove a relationship between cause and effect. In a modernist sense Hume’s work posed a true conundrum. If he were correct, nothing in the world could be understood, so humans were doomed to be trapped by their ignorance.

Immanuel Kant made a significant contribution by utilizing the idea of postulating instead of proving certain conclusions. Kant used the idea of imagination to show that humans must postulate the relationship between cause and effect, because the world would not make sense otherwise. In a similar manner, Kant postulated the existence of God because the world is not completely evil and there must be some force behind the good in the world that prevents evil from dominating. As we will see, Kant’s way of understanding reality is common for many interpreters who use archaeological data to understand the Bible and runs the risk of essentialism: everything must be explained, or there must at least be some essential continuity between what is described in the Bible and what happened. The continuity might not be proved, but it can reasonably be postulated.

⁶ The following section is a summary of my views published elsewhere. See Vaughn, “How Can a History of Israel Be Theologically Relevant.”

The problem with Kant's proof of God is that not all ways of knowing and thinking can be separated into rational and irrational categories. Humans instinctively or intuitively make certain conclusions, and these ways of thinking are central for understanding the concept of God. In other words, it is difficult to classify faith or religious belief as either rational or irrational ways of thinking. Friedrich Schleiermacher raised these problems and presented an alternative solution. For Schleiermacher, an intuitive awareness or feeling is more important for faith and a comprehension of God than is rational thinking. Schleiermacher did not mean that God does not exist outside of our psychological minds; however, that is the only way we as humans can have access to God. Schleiermacher thus concluded that God must be taken to be the "whence" or the object of the feeling (or awareness) of absolute dependence. In this way, Schleiermacher was able to show how the existence of God can be assumed or postulated based on the feeling of absolute dependence.⁷

In summary, we see that by middle of the nineteenth century, the responses to the Enlightenment presented humanity with a very hopeful situation. God could be understood either rationally or intuitively. As always seems to happen, the hopeful situation did not last long. The problem came to light with the skeptical humanism of Ludwig Feuerbach, who took arguments like those presented by Kant and Schleiermacher further and revealed that these philosophers had created a God who is a human construct. Kant (and, as we will see, archaeologists such as Dever and Cahill) ran the risk of essentialism and of creating a God who is a rational construct. On the other hand, Schleiermacher (and, as we will see, Placher) ran the risk of superdogmaticism. That is, Schleiermacher's concept of what God should be might be controlled by his intuition or his dogma. Feuerbach concluded that in either case God is a concept created by the collective mind of humanity.⁸

⁷ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (trans. X. XXXXX; XXXXX: XXXXX), §4.4, p. 16. He says, "As regards the identification of the absolute dependence with 'relation to God' in our proposition: this is to be understood in the sense that the *Whence* of our receptive and active existence, as implied in this self-consciousness, is to be designated by the word 'God,' and that this is for us the really original signification of that word." It is important to note here that for Schleiermacher the idea of "feeling" is not an emotion. It includes the idea of "awareness" or "self-consciousness" (ibid., §3.3, p. 6).

⁸ It is interesting to note that the essay by Silberman in this volume draws a similar conclusion. Silberman finds that one's ideology will control any interpretation. The logical result is that, like Feuerbach, Silbermann concludes that all interpretations are human constructs and controlled either by one's dogma or one's concept of essentialism.

MOVING BEYOND PLACHER'S PROPOSAL

Returning to Placher's proposal, we see that this "meaning" solution leads us in Feuerbach's fiery brook. Not only is the narrative eclipsed, as Frei so aptly describes, but we run the risk of superdogmaticism and creating a God who is a human construct. Such a possibility is especially dangerous when we realize that church dogma is guarded and controlled by the dominant and colonizing groups in our society. Silberman reminds us that the same is true for archaeological theories. If the Bible (or a particular archaeological position) is true because its meaning is true, and this meaning is controlled by the dominant groups, then we run the risk of creating an interpretation of God that is dangerous for women, minorities, the poor, and other disenfranchised groups.

So, is there a way to move forward when the historical data cannot be pinned down? Can we move forward when archaeologists do not agree? Are we hopelessly stuck? Clearly, I find that we must and can move forward, or I would not have chosen this topic. Yet before I present my programmatic proposal (and I intentionally choose the term *proposal* rather than *solution*), it is helpful to outline two common yet faulty ways that scholars have attempted to move beyond this impasse. The attempts to move beyond the impasse are especially relevant for the endeavor of using archaeological and historical data such as those presented in the present volume on the archaeology of Jerusalem.

THE ESSENTIAL CONTINUITY APPROACH

One way to find that the Bible is true is to argue that, even if some of the details in the Bible are found to be in error, there is an essential continuity between what is described in the Bible and the external facts. This approach characterizes the Biblical Theology movement that was promoted by William F. Albright and G. Ernest Wright. Today this approach is especially popular with conservative or fundamentalist Christian and Jewish faith communities. If one is able to find this type of essential continuity, then one is able to rely on an external, rational proof for understanding the concept of God that is described in the Bible. God is not a human construct because there is proof in the Bible that God really exists and acts in history in a particular manner. The problem here is that continued archaeological and historical research has shown that it is impossible to substantiate an essential continuity between the "facts" found in the Bible and external historical facts. Surely our investigation of Jerusalem emphasizes this "fact."

A more recent, albeit somewhat disguised, presentation of this method can be found in a book by archaeologist William Dever. His recent book *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They*

Know It? is a prime example of an attempt to integrate humanism with essential continuity.⁹ Dever's book presents an excellent rebuttal of the simplistic views set forward by the minimalists, but in doing so he limits the parts of the Bible that are most relevant to the history of the books by the Deuteronomistic History.¹⁰ Is one supposed to assume that history is not relevant for the rest of the Hebrew Bible, including all of the Prophets, Chronicles, and the Pentateuch? If one concludes that there must be an essential continuity present in the text for them to be valid, then this is the only logical conclusion that can be drawn.¹¹

We therefore see that, even if one attempts to select parts of the Bible that are essentially factual, the results are not satisfactory for the biblical theologians. Moreover, the way in which Dever has framed the question places him right back into Frei's eclipse. If one were to use Dever's method for doing Old Testament theology, the texts would either be valuable because there is some degree of historicity in them¹² or because they were true apart from the question of factuality. In either case, the historical question comes first and the meaning of the text second. The dynamic character of the narrative through contemporary interaction comes third, and so it is essentially lost.

RHETORICAL AND LITERARY APPROACHES

The problems with the essential-continuity approach and the presence of a lack of consensus such as exhibited in the archaeology of Jerusalem has led more and more biblical theologians to jettison history and archaeology and to turn to other approaches. Many of these scholars turn to rhetorical or literary readings as the primary means to uncover the theological meat of the Bible. Whereas the essential-continuity method went too far in an attempt to use history as a means to salvage the truth of the

⁹ William G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It? What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

¹⁰ Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know*, 97–101.

¹¹ Another way this problem surfaces is for some faith communities to conclude that some biblical "events" can be sacrificed (e.g., the conquest), while other biblical events must be retained (e.g., the resurrection).

¹² It is interesting that Dever argues for the importance and validity of some part of the historical books because he finds a certain degree of essential continuity between the historical narratives and the verifiable historical "facts." Yet one notes that this very approach of locating an essential continuity between the biblical narratives and the historical "facts" is one of Dever's chief criticisms of G. Ernest Wright (see among many studies William G. Dever, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries and Biblical Research* [Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990], esp. 17–22, 50).

Bible, scholars who rely solely on literary or rhetorical approaches have gone too far in their rejection of history as an alternative. In the following, I use the example of Jerusalem to illustrate how history (and archaeology) is a necessary corrective of literary and rhetorical readings as the biblical scholar attempts to make theologically relevant conclusions.

The extreme importance placed on knowing God solely through the literary or rhetorical interaction of the text leads to another drawback. If God can be known only through a literary or rhetorical interaction of the text, then one must ask if God is a literary or rhetorical construct. If so, then who creates this construct? Proponents of these approaches typically claim that they assume that there is an external reality of God, but the only way that contemporary faith communities can know God is through rhetorical or literary interactions with the text.¹³ In this sense, such approaches are very similar to Friedrich Schleiermacher's argument about how we can know God as the object of the feeling (or awareness) of absolute dependence. Schleiermacher assumes that there is an external reality of God, but this is the only way we can know God. The problem for both Schleiermacher and proponents of literary and rhetorical approaches is that such a philosophical move runs the risk of reducing God to a psychological or rhetorical concept.

HISTORICAL IMAGINATION AS A MEANS TO CORRECT THESE PROBLEMATIC ALTERNATIVES

In the essay cited above, I built upon the work of Leo Perdue and developed the philosophical concept of "imagination" as a helpful means to salvage the role of history in the theological enterprise.¹⁴ The concept of imagination allows us to *take* fragmentary parts *as* representing the whole. The important words in the philosophy of imagination are *take* and *as*.¹⁵ Various types of imagination come into play as we interact with a narrative: common imagination, creative imagination, religious imagination, and even

¹³ This section is developed more completely in Vaughn, "How Can a History of Israel Be Theologically Relevant."

¹⁴ Leo G. Perdue, *The Collapse of History: Reconstructing Old Testament Theology* (OBT; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 264–65.

¹⁵ It is important to emphasize that the fragmentary parts can be "known" and can be considered "facts." Again, imagination is not make-believe or necessarily hypothetical. Rather, imagination allows a person to consider all the pieces of information that are known and to look at them and evaluate them at the same time. Such a distinction will be important for us to keep in mind so that we realize that the different types of imagination described below presuppose an external reality that is already known. Therefore, in every instance the study of history and what is known is important even when using imagination to interpret texts.

ethical imagination. All of these allow us to *take* the narrative *as* representing reality.

Imagination allows us to organize varied perceptions, experiences, and even feelings into a coherent whole, but the danger is that limits or boundaries might disappear. We run the risk of entering into an “anything goes” type of mentality. If one does not recognize that all types of imagination are based upon a reality that is already established or events that are already known, one runs the risk of running into the problem of super-dogmatism. If imagination is purely subjective, then one’s theological and philosophical presuppositions will dictate what conclusions one may draw.

This is where the “history” part of what I am defining as “historical imagination” comes into play. The inclusion of history into the equation allows the interpreter to set necessary limits or boundaries around his or her possible interpretations. History defined in this way is what I define as negative or critical history. Critical (or negative) history asks “yes/no” questions and has a corrective function that helps us avoid misunderstandings in the text. As Perdue so aptly puts it, “the distance between text and reader, largely due to historical separation and culture shock, does and should continue. . . . Historical criticism makes readers in the contemporary world aware of the tremendous gulf that separates them from the narrative world constructed by biblical texts.”¹⁶

This critical (or negative)¹⁷ use of archaeology and history is consistent with what is probably a consensus view among scholars. Roland de Vaux presented a classic articulation of this negative or corrective use of archaeology about thirty years ago. In his essay, “On the Right and Wrong Uses of Archaeology,” he rightly affirmed that archaeology cannot prove the Bible.¹⁸ The Scriptures are *true* apart from historical data. Even if an account is found not to be factual, the account is still true in that it explains a religious truth. Thus, de Vaux (like Perdue) holds that the “right” way to use archaeology is to disprove or to support previously constructed interpretations of the biblical texts. I am pointing out that this corrective use of archaeology and history is what I am labeling “critical history” or “negative history.” Archaeology can clarify our interpretations, but the actual narrative is true regardless of what archaeology might turn up.

¹⁶ Perdue, *Collapse of History*, 259.

¹⁷ Once again, it should be emphasized that critical history can produce positive results. The term *negative* or *critical* is used because the goal is to ask questions that can have a yes or no answer.

¹⁸ Roland de Vaux, “On the Right and Wrong Uses of Archaeology,” in *Near Eastern Archaeology in the Twentieth Century* (ed. J. A. Sanders; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), 70–76.

We need to move beyond these proposals by Perdue and de Vaux, because history as they define it does not adequately allow for positive statements that do not seek to ask yes/no questions. Such positive statements that illuminate the background and setting of the narratives enlighten our interactions with the narratives that are “taken as” reality whether the narratives happened or not. Background history thus can make positive statements about the past without attempting to ask if an event happened or not, and these positive (background) statements serve to increase our imaginative capacity as we enter into these narrative worlds. For example, archaeology and history can help us understand the size of Jerusalem and how people lived in Jerusalem. These data play a role apart from asking critical (yes/no) questions; these data can enlighten and illuminate the narratives and the narrative world. This latter use of history that does not seek to ask yes/no questions is what I call “positive history” or “background history.”

I am defining *historical imagination* in such a way as to include both critical history (negative history that asks yes/no questions) and background history (positive history that illuminates the setting of the period without asking yes/no questions). This concept of historical imagination allows a contemporary interpreter of the Bible to be in conversation with the Bible and to avoid the essentialist or superdogmatist pitfalls outlined above. This concept of historical imagination is also useful for the archaeologist. Silberman has shown that Ussishkin is naïve in his essay to think that he is able simply to report on the objective facts; his ideology and philosophical presuppositions influence his conclusions just as much as the biblical scholar. Both the biblical scholar and the archaeologist need to find the middle ground that avoids the traps of superdogmatism and essentialism.¹⁹

In what follows, I review the archaeological data on Jerusalem in order to increase our historical imagination. There is no consensus, but we will see that many conclusions can be made with some degree of certainty. These conclusions can be separated into positive history (background history) and negative history (critical history). Both background history and

¹⁹ The proposal that I am presenting here is similar to the concept of post-positivist objectivity. The term *postpositivist* is used by literary critics to describe the concept that objective knowledge about the world exists even if all knowledge is theory mediated. In this way, postpositivists “refuse the definition of terms such as ‘objectivity’ and ‘knowledge’ as postmodernists have conceptualized them” (Paula M. L. Moya, “Introduction—Reclaiming Identity,” in *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism* [ed. P. M. L. Moya and M. R. Hames-García; Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000], 1–26, here p. 12).

critical history will be seen to have positive ramifications. From a critical-history standpoint, there is much background history that can influence how we read and become involved in the biblical narratives. From a critical-history standpoint, there are many yes/no questions that can be answered. These answers can limit the range of possible interpretations (both from an archaeological and a biblical standpoint). The limits may not be as precise as we might like, but at least they present us with some control and thus can serve as a starting point.

JERUSALEM DURING THE REIGNS OF DAVID AND SOLOMON

The four archaeological essays in this volume that discuss the tenth century B.C.E. (essays by Cahill, Finkelstein, Lehmann, and Ussishkin) present very different opinions about the nature of Jerusalem during the tenth century B.C.E. On the one hand, one might draw a reasonable conclusion that there is no consensus. Archaeologists cannot agree about the *facts* on the ground. Jane M. Cahill argues that the facts on the ground point to the existence of a city (not just a settlement) during the united monarchy. On the other hand, Israel Finkelstein and David Ussishkin use similar approaches to argue that Jerusalem during the tenth century was a small village and could not have been a major capital city. Gunnar Lehmann also concludes that Jerusalem during the tenth century was most likely a small village, and he relies on broader evidence from surveys that have been conducted throughout Judah.

Should the biblical scholar who wishes to speak about Jerusalem during David and Solomon's reign take this three-to-one majority to mean that Jerusalem was not an important city? Certainly not! Yet the same biblical scholar must be careful before speaking about a "united monarchy" in light of these archaeological studies. The one common denominator of all of the studies is that Jerusalem of David and Solomon was not the type of city that previous interpreters such as Yigael Yadin and William F. Albright envisioned. While there is no consensus, one can draw positive and negative conclusions from the data surrounding Jerusalem. The remainder of this section separates these conclusions into the areas of background (positive) history and critical history by using the definitions given above.

The archaeologists disagree on many details and theories, but they are unanimous in their assessment that Jerusalem existed during the reigns of David and Solomon. The archaeologists not only point to the existence of the Tel Dan Stela as evidence that the Davidic dynasty existed,²⁰ but they

²⁰ See Avraham Biran and Joseph Naveh, "An Aramaic Stele Fragment from Tel Dan," *IEJ* 43 (1993): 93.

also point to the continued settlement of Jerusalem from the Middle Bronze Age until the end of the Iron Age. It is thus reasonable to conclude that both David and Solomon occupied Jerusalem, and the question is about the nature of occupation during their reigns and not about the existence of occupation. This observation may seem trivial, but it is important nevertheless. Just like Merneptah's Stela, which mentions the existence of Israel at the end of the thirteenth century, the occupation of Jerusalem during the tenth century gives us a starting point to begin our investigation of the biblical narratives. Using the labels that I defined above, we can call this conclusion an example of background history or positive history.

The little piece of background history necessitates that we ask questions concerning the nature of Jerusalem during the tenth century. These questions can be labeled yes/no questions or questions involving critical history. These yes/no questions are quite helpful in assisting the historian to choose between previous theories about Jerusalem. During the early and middle decades of the twentieth century, scholars such as Albright and Yadin presented arguments for understanding Jerusalem as a major capital city during the reigns of David and Solomon.²¹ On the other hand, Albrecht Alt and his followers understood Jerusalem as an administrative center for the kingdom of Israel. Whereas Albright and Yadin envisioned Jerusalem as a large city, Alt posited that the settlement of Jerusalem would have been limited to the king, the royal guard, and his administration, because the city was to be neutral. Alt read the biblical narratives to suggest that the general populous would have remained in the lands of their inheritance throughout the First Temple period. Therefore, Alt concluded that the size of Jerusalem was more modest in nature through the entire First Temple Period and definitely during the reigns of David and Solomon. Alt did not deny the existence of a palace or temple during Solomon's day, but he emphasized the need for Jerusalem to be neutral while at the same time not growing into a large city.²²

As we attempt to ask a yes/no question that will clarify the possibilities presented by Yadin and Alt, we once again see that there is some consensus among the archaeologists even in the middle of disagreements. All of the archaeologists agree that the more significant periods of expansion in Jerusalem were during the Middle Bronze Age and the end of the

²¹ See the essay by Silberman in this volume for a representative bibliography.

²² Albrecht Alt, "Das Taltor von Jerusalem," *PJ* 24 (1928): 83–84; idem, "The Formation of the Israelite State in Palestine," in *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion* (trans. R. A. Wilson; New York: Doubleday, 1967), 285. See also the similar conclusion of one of Alt's students, Martin Noth, *The History of Israel* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 207.

Iron Age (the eighth and seventh centuries). Everyone agrees that during the tenth century the size of Jerusalem was more limited than in the eighth century. Whereas Ussishkin prefers the existence of a small temple and palace on the Temple Mount, Cahill prefers to posit the existence of a more grandiose palace and significant administrative center. Even though Cahill finds that Jerusalem was rather substantial because of extramural settlements outside the city wall, the fact remains that Jerusalem of the tenth century (no matter which chronology is used) was not a very large city. Even if Cahill is correct about the stepped stone structure and its mantle dating to the same time period, the data are more consistent with Lehmann's study that focuses on the population of Jerusalem but not its administrative significance. To be sure, if we were able to date the stepped stone structure and its mantle more convincingly, then we would be able to draw even more precise historical conclusions. At the same time, the little consensus that does emerge allows us to draw some important conclusions. Our yes/no questions reveal that, no, Jerusalem should not be understood as envisioned by Yadin and Albright. Rather, yes, it should be understood more in terms of what was envisioned by Alt. If it turns out that the City of David consisted of houses and not a citadel, then one will need to clarify Alt's administrative-center proposal even further.

In summary, we see that an important positive conclusion can be drawn from this critical (or negative investigation) that seeks to ask a yes/no question. A biblical scholar should prefer the interpretations of Alt concerning Jerusalem rather than the interpretations of Yadin and Albright. Of course, this analysis does not *prove* that Alt was correct, but it does lend credence to his theories. Again, as noted above, this is the very type of critical refinement that was previously advocated by de Vaux: archaeology can either support or disprove a theory about the Bible but not prove or disprove the Bible itself.

It must be emphasized that this critical investigation results in a positive conclusion: Jerusalem must be understood as a smaller town or city. This may or may not prove that Jerusalem functioned as Alt argued, but it does suggest that we should return to his theories once again.²³ It is at this point in our investigation that our conclusions allow us positive statements about the background of Jerusalem. Not only do we see that Jerusalem

²³ These historical argument should been as consistent with the conclusions of Nadav Na'aman, "The Contribution of the Amarna Letters to the Debate on Jerusalem's Political Position in the Tenth Century B.C.E.," *BASOR* 304 (1996): 17–27. Na'aman draws upon the Amarna material from the Late Bronze Age to show that Jerusalem could function as an administrative center without extensive archaeological remains being discovered.

existed during the reigns of David and Solomon, but we have a better idea of what that city was like. Both these positive and negative conclusions are very helpful for modern interpreters of the biblical narratives as they seek to be involved with the text.

Turning now to the theological ramifications of the above analysis, we perceive that these data can be divided into positive and negative categories, as suggested in the definition of historical imagination given above. As our imagination is increased, certain *positive* statements can be made about the background of Jerusalem that illuminates these narratives:

1. David and Solomon existed, as evidenced by the biblical narratives, the occupation of Judah and Israel, and the Tel Dan inscription.
2. Jerusalem was occupied during the tenth century.
3. The archaeological evidence neither confirms nor denies the existence of a temple or palace, but the nature of the temple and palace described in the Bible (if it existed) must be taken to have been more modest than argued by scholars such as Albright and Yadin.

These positive statements are few but nevertheless significant, for they give us a better understanding of the biblical portrait of Jerusalem. As we interact with the biblical narratives concerning Jerusalem, these positive statements allow us to increase our imaginary worlds of what Jerusalem would have looked like. The positive statements facilitate our interaction with the text as narrative.

The hermeneutical shift that I am advocating is similar to and indebted to the method employed by theologian David Tracy when he talks about being “involved with” a classic text. Tracy points out that a classic text “resists definitive interpretation” but continues to help “found or form a particular culture” in a dynamic manner.²⁴ Tracy points out that the goal of the Christian theologian is to be in “conversation” with our classic text par excellence, the Bible. As one engages in this conversation, the process of imagination is employed, and the above positive historical conclusions serve to illuminate the narratives that the theologian can interact with as narrative.

It should be emphasized at this point in our discussion that this interaction made possible by the heuristic concept of imagination does not mean that we leave the realm of reality.²⁵ Even while living in an era of

²⁴ David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 12.

²⁵ I am thankful to Neil A. Silberman for pointing out this truism, though Silberman does not necessarily concur with the way I use his observation.

so-called postmodernism, our ways of thinking and imagining reality are rooted in realistic assumptions and conclusions. This is where what I have defined as critical history (the asking of yes/no questions) comes into play as we undertake to be in conversation with our classic text, the Bible. These critical conclusions help keep us from going too close to the dangers of superdogmatism or essentialism.²⁶

In a similar way that we were able to make positive statements about Jerusalem, we can draw certain negative conclusions (answers to yes/no questions) about Jerusalem. The answers may be the result of a negative investigation, but they too will have positive ramifications.

1. Jerusalem was not a large, capital city during the tenth century.
2. Jerusalem did not undergo extensive expansion under Judahite kings until the eighth century. As will be seen below, the expansion may have begun in the ninth century, but the expansion reached a fulcrum in the eighth century.
3. Jerusalem may have had a temple during Solomon's time, but the absence of tenth-century pottery surrounding the Temple Mount suggests that the temple was more modest in size; here I find that David Ussishkin's arguments in his essay in this volume are convincing, whether or not he is correct about the low chronology.
4. As Lehmann shows, Jerusalem did not play a dominant, exclusive role in the administration of Judah during the tenth century. As Alt suggested, it might have served as an administrative center, but it was not the most largest or most populous city in Judah or Israel.
5. The movement of the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem by David can neither be supported nor disproved from the current archaeological data.

These negative conclusions help keep our imaginations in a realm of modernity and away from the dangers of an "anything goes" mentality. The negative conclusions place boundaries around our interactions with the text that we interact with as a literary narrative. For example, historical imagination necessitates that we redefine what is meant by the term *united monarchy*. We also see that the description of the buildup of Jerusalem may very well be rooted in the eighth or seventh centuries. These conclusions do not mean that David and Solomon did not unite a confederation of tribal groups. Rather, these conclusions mean that we must reevaluate

²⁶ In this regard, the proposal I am presenting is similar to the "middle ground" of postpositivism advocated by some literary critics. See the article cited above by Moya, "Introduction—Reclaiming Identity," esp. 6–8.

the factuality of these biblical descriptions. These conclusions help us as modern readers see that the biblical writer(s) had an agenda other than simply reporting the “facts” of the past. From a theological standpoint, surely these conclusions help place some boundaries around our literary and rhetorical interactions with the narratives.

Finally, I should add that the proposal that I am advocating leaves room for future research and refinements of our knowledge. For example, if Cahill’s assessment is found to be correct, then one would reasonably conclude that Jerusalem played a more significant role in David and Solomon’s reigns than might be the case if Ussishkin and Finkelstein are found to be correct. This conclusion would impact the positive and negative summaries presented above. The important thing is that we be able to begin the discussion without having to wait for all of the questions to be solved. The above example shows that some positive conclusions can be drawn even from the limited data that we have and that the limited data that we have available can also enable us to limit the possible range of interpretations.

JERUSALEM DURING THE REIGNS OF HEZEKIAH AND JOSIAH

Much more can be said about Jerusalem from a historical and an archaeological standpoint during the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E. than during the tenth century B.C.E. There are several practical reasons for this situation. At some point during the late ninth or early eighth century, Jerusalem began to expand outside the confines of the City of David. Although there was subsequent development in the areas of expansion, the intensity of rebuilding and renovation was not nearly as great in these areas as was found in the City of David from the Middle Bronze Age through the Iron Age. This simple fact means that there is more evidence that can be investigated. Another important reason for the increase in data from the eighth and seventh centuries is the presence of many extrabiblical texts from Assyria and Egypt that mention affairs in Israel and Judah. The presence of these texts provide a vast improvement over the situation of the tenth century and the reigns of David and Solomon.

BACKGROUND (POSITIVE) HISTORY FROM THE EIGHTH CENTURY

The additional data from the eighth century allow us to make a number of positive conclusions about the status of Jerusalem during Hezekiah’s reign and beyond. As pointed out above, positive conclusions need not ask yes/no questions to be vital to the task of increasing our background history of the period. The fact that the data before us does not necessitate a response to such yes/no questions does not signify that

this information is unimportant, for the background of an event provides valuable insight into the nature of the narrative.

The great expansion of Jerusalem during the eighth century is one of the first things that one notices from the essays included in this volume and a study of the archaeology of Jerusalem. In particular, Hillel Geva's essay on Avigad's excavations in the Jewish Quarter emphasizes that Jerusalem experienced growth in the area of the western hill from the late ninth or early eighth century throughout the eighth century. The presence of domestic architecture (Avigad's Stratum 9 in Area A) under the Broad Wall (Avigad's Stratum 8 in Area A) indicates that this expansion began much earlier than the end of the eighth century with Hezekiah's preparations for Sennacherib's campaign. Avigad's Stratum 9 from Area A contains some pottery that is comparable with Lachish IV, but Geva finds that the vast majority of the pottery from Stratum 9 of Area A is very close to forms found at Lachish III.²⁷ Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that the expansion on the western hill began toward the beginning of the eighth century or possibly as early as the latter part of the ninth century. In either case, the expansion began well in advance of Sennacherib's campaign at the end of the eighth century.

The conclusions from Avigad's excavations are supplemented by Gabriel Barkay's study of burial in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Barkay has shown that Iron II burial sites were found much farther to the north than the area of the western hill that was explored in Avigad's excavations. Since the custom was to situate burials just outside the city limits, Barkay draws the logical conclusion that Jerusalem would have expanded much farther past the confines of the western hill. The extent of this expansion also suggests that this phase began in either the late ninth century or early eighth century.²⁸

Ronny Reich and Eli Shukron's essay in this volume demonstrates that the expansion of Jerusalem in the eighth century was not limited to the west and the north. Reich and Shukron provide evidence from their excavations to show that Jerusalem also expanded to the east of the City of David during the late eighth century. While I find their hypothesis about the precise time frame in the late eighth century to be problematic, it is

²⁷ See the essay in this volume by Hillel Geva. See also the thorough excavation report by Nahman Avigad and Hillel Geva, "Iron Age II, Strata 9-7," in *Architecture and Stratigraphy: Areas A, W and X-2, Final Report* (ed. H. Geva; vol. 1 of *Jewish Quarter Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem Conducted by Nahman Avigad, 1969-1982*; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2000), 44-82, esp. 81-82.

²⁸ Gabriel Barkay, "Northern and Western Jerusalem in the End of the Iron Age" [Hebrew] (Ph.D. diss., Tel Aviv University, 1985), 451-58, fig. 167.

clear that the expansion toward the end of the eighth century (presumably during Hezekiah's reign) is consistent with the data summarized in the preceding paragraph. Therefore, Reich and Shukron's excavations provide further background history as the archeologists confirm that Jerusalem expanded into a significant city during the eighth century.

Whereas it is still debated whether David and Solomon really existed as anything other than legendary figures, the Assyrian and Egyptian texts from the late eighth century make it clear that Hezekiah and Jerusalem were important players in the world scene. The essays by Younger, Hoffmeier, and Roberts reveal that it is still difficult to interpret the significance of these extrabiblical texts precisely for the illumination of particular biblical narratives, but all of the essays reveal that Jerusalem and its kings played at least a relatively important role in world affairs. These extrabiblical texts thus validate the archaeological picture summarized above: Jerusalem was an important capital city by the end of the eighth century.

In addition to the general picture of Jerusalem at the end of the eighth century, one is able to draw some specific conclusions about the status of the city and its administrative importance during the reign of Hezekiah at the end of the eighth century. First, one cannot help but notice the massive Broad Wall and Israelite Tower found in Avigad's excavations of the Jewish Quarter. These features are associated with Avigad's Stratum 8 from Area A and Stratum 6 from Area W respectively. These strata from Areas A and W are contemporary and date to the late eighth century, or the period of Hezekiah. The Broad Wall and the Israelite Tower seem to have been constructed during the reign of this king in order to strengthen the city against an attack (presumably again the expected campaign of Sennacherib).²⁹

To this general image of Jerusalem during Hezekiah's reign, one may add a picture of an extensive central administrative infrastructure. An examination of the *lmlk* jar phenomenon reveals that Hezekiah had a kingdom-wide infrastructure for the distribution of royal goods and that he had significant storage centers throughout the kingdom. The data from the royal jars indicate that the centralized government controlled the distribution of royal commodities. This conclusion is important for our study of Jerusalem because it reinforces Jerusalem as a significant capital city that was central in running the affairs of the Judahite kingdom. These data indicate that not only had the population of Jerusalem grown since the tenth century but that its significance had grown as well.

²⁹ Avigad and Geva, "Iron Age II, Strata 9–7," 45–61; plan 2.1; photos 2.6–2.37. For details on the Israelite Tower, see Hillel Geva and Nahman Avigad, "Area W—Stratigraphy and Architecture," in *Architecture and Stratigraphy*, 131–97, esp. 148–58; plan 3.1.

All of these data illuminate the setting in which Hezekiah, Jerusalem, and Sennacherib interacted at the end of the eighth century. Although Sennacherib referred to Hezekiah as a bird in a cage, one should question the depiction of Hezekiah being completely unsuccessful in his rebellion against Sennacherib. The massive fortifications alluded to in the preceding paragraph appear to have allowed Hezekiah to escape Sennacherib's campaign with his life. In this sense, Hezekiah is the only king that we know of who did not pay for his rebellion against the Assyrian Empire with his life. It may be that the life of the governor at Lachish was sacrificed in order to drain the Assyrian resources, thus enabling Jerusalem and Hezekiah to survive even if they no longer were prosperous.³⁰ To this picture we should add that there is no evidence of destruction of any cities or villages north of Jerusalem during the late eighth century.³¹ Thus, from an examination of the background history leading up to Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem, one can ascertain many positive conclusions regarding the continued existence of Jerusalem during Hezekiah's reign at the end of the eighth century.

CRITICAL (NEGATIVE) HISTORY FROM THE EIGHTH CENTURY

Just as was the case for the study of tenth-century Jerusalem, these positive statements about Jerusalem during the end of the eighth century that were summarized in the preceding paragraphs allow the investigator to ask a number of yes/no questions with regard to previous interpretations of biblical Jerusalem. These yes/no questions (what I am defining as critical [negative] history) allow us to place parameters around the possible interpretations that might arise out of studying biblical texts that mention Jerusalem. Since there is much more data available from the late eighth century, I will only highlight one example of yes/no questions that bring clarity to our understanding of biblical Jerusalem. Other questions are certainly possible and viable, but the question explored in this essay is representative of how my programmatic proposal might be used with regard to the theological use of the archaeology of Jerusalem.

If one common denominator were available from the material of the late eighth century, that common denominator would be that Jerusalem grew into a significant capital city at least by the reign of Hezekiah. Given this conclusion, a question naturally follows: Did this expansion have its genesis during the reigns of David and Solomon or sometime later? In an

³⁰ I am grateful to Jeff Blakely for pointing this possibility out to me and for discussing the general picture of Judah at the end of the eighth century with me.

³¹ Andrew G. Vaughn, *Theology, History, and Archaeology in the Chronicler's Account of Hezekiah* (SBLABS 4; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 44–45.

earlier study of this topic, I argued that the expansion must have logically extended back to the united monarchy. My logic was that the so-called minimalist position about the development of Jerusalem during the eighth century was based upon the biblical interpretation of Albrecht Alt and his student Martin Noth.³² Alt and Noth argued that Jerusalem was only an administrative center during David and Solomon's reign, so they concluded that Jerusalem during Hezekiah's day would have been an administrative center as well. My earlier conclusion was based on the logic that if one were able to prove that Jerusalem during Hezekiah's reign was an important capital city, then Alt's earlier conclusion about David's Jerusalem could also be disproved.

Clearly, my logic was faulty. Archaeological studies that have been published in just the past five years make it clear that Jerusalem was not a large, thriving city during the tenth century. Jerusalem definitely existed, and there very well may have been a temple, but it does not seem to have been a very large city. Something happened between the end of the tenth century and the end of the eighth century for that situation to change, so there must have been a historical reason for this change.

In his essay in this volume, Israel Finkelstein suggests that the cause of the development of Jerusalem was the influence of the Omrides during the ninth century. He argues that Jerusalem was a small city before the ninth century that was unable to grow because the Judahite monarchy was not powerful enough. However, he posits that the Omrides could have helped Jerusalem grow several decades after the split between the northern and southern kingdoms. Finkelstein presents his theory as a new way of understanding the and expansion archaeology of Jerusalem; in reality, his observations are not new at all—they are Alt.

Like Alt and Noth, Finkelstein highlights the limited size of Jerusalem, and he also concludes that there must have been some reason for Jerusalem to change. What Finkelstein fails to recognize is that a small Jerusalem is just what one would expect from the biblical material.

Much of Finkelstein's research that has developed (or evolved) from his important surveys of Judah and Israel builds on Alt and his theory of territorial divisions. In a very important article in *From Nomadism to Monarchy*,³³ Finkelstein updates the theories presented in his dissertation and shows how there is a cyclical pattern of development in the area

³² *Ibid.*, 70–71.

³³ Israel Finkelstein, "The Emergence of Israel: A Phase in the Cyclic History of Canaan in the Third and Second Millennia BCE," in *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel* (ed. I. Finkelstein and N. Na'aman; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), 150–78.

later identified as Israel from the Early Bronze Age through the Iron Age I. Without going into the reasons for the changes, one sees that from the Early Bronze Age through the Iron Age I there was a pattern of increased settlement followed by decreased settlement. This pattern continued until the Iron Age II, when settlement continued to climb rather than go back down. Finkelstein rightly points out that, in light of this cyclical pattern, what is surprising is not the increased settlement during Iron Age I but the fact that settlement continued to increase during the Iron Age II. Finkelstein previously argued that the reason for this paradigm shift was the united monarchy. In other words, Finkelstein earlier concluded that the united monarchy provided the political reason for settlement to continue to expand instead of cycling downward. Because Finkelstein has redated the archaeological layers from his surveys to the ninth century, he now needs to find the political motivation for this paradigm shift in the ninth century. He may be successful in the north with the Omrides, but his arguments seem stretched when it pertains to the south and Judah.

First, much of the argument is based on evidence that is *not* found in Jerusalem. Even if Finkelstein is correct on his dating of the stepped stone structure in the City of David—and we must emphasize that his opinion is only as likely as other possibilities and not necessarily more probable—the silence of archaeological artifacts found to date does not mean that David and Solomon only ran a fiefdom. In fact, as is pointed out below, one should interpret these data as reflecting an administrative center that served to unite southern and northern groups. This is exactly what one would expect to find during David and Solomon's reigns. True, we may need to redefine what is meant by *united monarchy*, but Jerusalem could have served as a neutral city that was a part neither of the northern nor of the southern tribal allotments.

Second, Finkelstein uses biblical evidence selectively. Fortunately, we have moved away from an era in which biblical scholars scan archaeological finds in order to support a given biblical interpretation that they have already determined. However, one might argue that this is precisely what Finkelstein is doing, except that he is an archaeologist who scans the Bible for data that might support his interpretation without critically examining the biblical evidence. He assumes that the material concerning David's reign is no more reliable for reconstructing history than the material from Saul's reign. However, it is accepted that the character of the texts that describe the two monarchs is very different in form, content, and even number of chapters devoted to each king. Moreover, he assumes that, since the Deuteronomistic History underwent a major redaction during Josiah's reign, none of the material is historically reliable. This assumption does not demonstrate historical sensitivity to the variety of texts concerning both the premonarchical and the monarchical periods. In other words, not all of

these stories can be explained as the theological invention of the seventh century and later.

My third type of objection is that if Finkelstein is correct, his solution raises as many problems as it solves. As noted above, it is important to return to Alt's theory that popularized the view that David's Jerusalem was limited and functioned only as an administrative center for the king and his royal troops. Alt's reasoned that if Jerusalem functioned as a compromise capital that did not belong to the tribes of the north or to Judah, then Jerusalem must have remained a royal seat and not a city of Judah. Thus, Alt concluded that the City of David must have continued solely as an administrative center. If Finkelstein's interpretation is correct, one must ask why the northern nation of Israel helped support the Judahite buildup of the former capital city, which was supposed to be neutral. Indeed, the stated reason for the establishment of Yahwistic worship in Bethel and Dan was to avoid the very type of influence and interaction that Finkelstein suggests was initiated by the northern rulers.

In conclusion, I find Finkelstein's proposal that Jerusalem began to grow in the ninth century due to the influence of the northern kingdom of Israel a stretch. Again, a return to Alt can make sense of the limited archaeological finds from the Solomonic period in Jerusalem. Alt's arguments do provide the political motivation for breaking the territorial divisions of the north and the south and a change in the character of the monarchy in Israel with the reign of David. By establishing Jerusalem as a neutral capital, David would have had an incentive to settle the City of David only with his troops and to establish an administrative and citadel city.

As noted earlier, the problem with Alt and Noth's theory is that they were wrong about the nature of Jerusalem throughout the end of the Judahite monarchy. We see that just because Alt and Noth were wrong about the nature of eighth-century Jerusalem does not mean that they were wrong about tenth-century Jerusalem. The problem was that they did not explain how and why Jerusalem moved from a more limited administrative center in the tenth century into a thriving capital city in the eighth century. The archaeological data show us that such a development happened; our next step must be to ask why it happened.

With that question in mind, it seems that Alt and Noth were right about Jerusalem during the period of the united monarchy. There would have been a motivation to keep Jerusalem neutral as long as there was a united monarchy, so Jerusalem would likely not have experienced dramatic domestic expansion during Solomon's reign. However, once there was a split between Israel and Judah, the motivation for neutrality would have been lost. Thus, Finkelstein's proposal for an expansion of Jerusalem that began in the ninth century explains the biblical and archaeological data well. As Lehmann has shown in his essay, in the tenth century there was

a developed infrastructure in Judah outside of Jerusalem. It seems likely that this infrastructure would have continued to function after the split between the north and the south but that the royal city of Jerusalem that served as a small administrative center also would have begun to grow shortly after this split.

The archaeological data illustrate that the development did not reach an apex until the end of the eighth century. This is also what one would expect. The earlier Judahite kings were not as strong as Hezekiah, so Jerusalem did not reach its zenith of power until the end of the eighth century. At the same time, it is unlikely that Hezekiah's Jerusalem grew out of a vacuum. It seems most likely that the processes for development and growth started shortly after the split between the north and the south and that the crisis of Sennacherib's invasion provided the catalyst for the culmination in the growth.³⁴

In summary, all of these yes/no questions allow the modern interpreter to clarify a number of interpretations. We see that Hezekiah was one of the major builders (and probably the most important builder) of Jerusalem. Further, we see that the growth of Jerusalem did not happen overnight; the genesis went back at least a century and maybe even several decades after the split between the north and the south. In light of these observations, one can see just how important Hezekiah was in reforms of Judah and the writing of its history.

As one encounters the history of Judah in the Deuteronomistic History, one is constantly faced with the problem of whether a description is factual or not. As we discussed above with the biblical narratives on David and Solomon, the description of Jerusalem seems to be exaggerated in order to make an ideological point. Drawing upon the comments made by William Schniedewind in his essay, which attributed the genesis of the Deuteronomistic History to Hezekiah's reign, we are able to understand better why Hezekiah's ancestors (David and Solomon) were portrayed in such great terms. Hezekiah was a king who was portrayed as a second David, a king who had plans of expanding the kingdom and reuniting the northern areas with the kingdom of Judah.

Our study of Jerusalem reveals that, while there are factual kernels in these descriptions in the Deuteronomistic History, many of the descriptions are exaggerated. It seems that Jerusalem under David and Solomon was a

³⁴ In this regard, it is interesting to compare Jerusalem with Washington, D.C. The capital city of the United States did not begin to grow into a thriving city until after the Civil War. The parallel is definitely not exact, but the crisis of the Civil War, combined with an increased emphasis on the federal government after the war, certainly played a role in the city's expansion.

more limited administrative center, but this conclusion does not mean that David and Solomon did not succeed in uniting the north and south. Rather, it means that David and Solomon did not utilize Jerusalem in the same manner as Hezekiah would later use Jerusalem. This conclusion also places parameters around our interpretations of Hezekiah's reforms and his attribution as a second David. It seems that this attribution occurred during his reign and that Judahite history was rewritten or reinterpreted in order to emphasize the events of his day.

CONCLUSION

I began this essay by alluding to classes that I teach, and it is helpful to return to how this idea of historical imagination is instructive for my teaching. As students explore the wealth of narratives contained in the Bible, they discover that the biblical writers were constantly reinterpreting past promises in order to have the old promises make sense in a new day and in a new social location. In this way they learn how the biblical writers were doing the very thing that I advocate in this essay. Even when the biblical writers presented new interpretations that might have been considered radical, they were guided and informed by their past traditions and history. They took liberty to be in conversation with those traditions, just as Tracy suggests. In some cases, they even entered into arguments with those traditions.

While I am confident that there are still holes in my proposal and the analyses found in this essay, I humbly and yet passionately suggest that we as students of the Bible must see ourselves as continuing this conversation with our classic text *par excellence*, the Bible. I also suggest that the archaeologist should find the language to reach out to the biblical scholar who is primarily concerned with theological interpretation. If the archaeologist does not make the effort to reach out to biblical scholars and the larger public who are primarily concerned with understanding the Bible, then public support for the archaeology of the Levant will surely decrease. The proposal that I have presented encourages this conversation, and it is also attractive for our postmodern world, in which readers in different social locations will necessarily experience different texts in differing ways.

In the final analysis, I am confident that the reader will be able to locate my approach as either too essentialist or as falling into the trap of superdogmatism. In a sense, this may be the trap with which contemporary people of faith are doomed to wrestle—yet we must continue to wrestle. What I have presented in this essay is intended as the beginning of the conversation and not the conclusion. I look forward to continuing the conversation even if we can only can incomplete conclusions.

AUTHOR QUERIES

References are to page and line (e.g., 8.17 = page 8, line 17; 8.13up = page 8, line 13 up from the bottom of the main text) or to page and note.

- **5n7:** Since you include a quote here, we need the translator and publication data to include in the note (and the bibliography).
- **7.2–5:** I wonder if the following might be a little smoother than the current sentence: “Dever’s book presents an excellent rebuttal of the simplistic views set forward by the minimalists, but in doing so he limits the parts of the Bible that are most relevant to the history recounted by the Deuteronomistic History.”
- **10n19:** Should this read “even if all knowledge is in theory mediated”?
- **12n22:** I assumed that your original *PJb* stood for *Palästina-Jahrbuch*, which *SBLHS* abbreviates *PJ*. Correct me if I’m wrong.
- **13n23:** Should this be “should be seen”?