American Biblical Archaeologists and Zionism: The Politics of Historical Ethnography

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AMERICAN BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGISTS AND ZIONISM:
THE POLITICS OF HISTORICAL ETHNOGRAPHY

By
BROOKE SHERRARD

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AJA: American Jewish Archives
APJI: The Archives of Progressive Judaism in Israel at Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem
APS: American Philosophical Society
ASOR: The American Schools of Oriental Research
FSAC: From the Stone Age to Christianity
HDS: Harvard Divinity School
HUC/BAS: Hebrew Union College/Biblical Archaeology School
SBL: Society of Biblical Literature
YDS: Yale Divinity School
This project explores the relationship between American biblical archaeologists in the mid-twentieth century and the most pressing political issue of the context in which they lived and worked, Zionism. It focuses on a set of American religious studies scholars who engaged the rapidly changing Middle East from the American Schools of Oriental Research in Jerusalem during a time when the area changed from British to Jordanian to Israeli rule. While much recent scholarship historicizes academics and critiques the politics of scholarship, very little work has been done to understand these scholars’ positions in the history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, thus allowing the aura of scholarly objectivity, neutrality, and commitment to value-free science that has long surrounded them to continue. But as I show here, archaeologists did enter the debate over Palestine in a substantial way, with their positions on the conflict during the decades before and after the state of Israel’s founding weaving their way explicitly and implicitly through both their personal papers and publications.

I draw on theoretical insights about history, ethnography, and historical ethnography that have engaged the field of North American religions in recent decades to reconstruct the archaeologists’ cultural theories and how these theories underpinned their political desires for the area they considered the Holy Land. The defining difference in their arguments was their understanding of culture. I argue that those archaeologists who envisioned the ancient world as replete with cultural change and hybridity opposed the establishment of a Jewish state, while those who envisioned the ancient world’s ethnic boundaries as rigid and impermeable favored it. I support this argument by combining readings of the archaeologists’ writings with archival research documenting their heretofore almost unknown political involvement either for or against the establishment of an ethno-national state in Palestine.

Many of the scholars in the latter group belonged informally to the “Baltimore school,” founded by William Foxwell Albright, who held that biblical archaeology was corroborating the Hebrew Bible’s historicity and showing how different the ancient Israelites and Canaanites had been, as discussed in Chapter One. During the 1940s, Albright also lectured frequently on behalf of a Jewish state. Others, most prominently Millar Burrows, discussed in Chapter Two, held a more cautious view of the Bible’s historicity and believed the archaeological data showed that the ancient Israelites and Canaanites were culturally similar, not different. Burrows resigned his positions in scholarly organizations in order to publish a book about the Palestinian refugee crisis.
in 1949. Chapter Three details American rabbi-archaeologist Nelson Glueck’s mid-career shift from opposing a Jewish state to supporting it and the dramatic corresponding shift in his scholarship about the ancient past. It is important to note that when Glueck and Burrows opposed a Jewish state, it was not because they favored an Arab state. They rejected ethnic nationalism in any form, and they used the theoretical basis for that opposition—that cultures are not essentially homogeneous, or mutually exclusive, or unchanging over the centuries—to combat modern ethnic nationalism through their scholarship.

Chapter Four shows the way the differences between Israelites and Canaanites were drawn in even bolder lines by biblical theologian and archaeologist George Ernest Wright, who considered his support for Israel non-political and harshly criticized archaeologists who took pro-Palestinian positions. Chapter Five shows the way that two archaeologists who became associated with pro-Palestinian positions, Paul Lapp and Albert Glock, grounded their arguments in an appeal to the flexibility and hybridity of cultures and a rejection of scholars’ ability to be objective. The epilogue discusses the way this debate is playing out today at the City of David archaeological site in Jerusalem.
INTRODUCTION

William G. Dever, an intellectual “grandson” of William Foxwell Albright through his doctoral adviser, G. Ernest Wright, began his career by championing the death of biblical archaeology. In the 1970s he put forward the alternative paradigm of Syro-Palestinian archaeology, which he felt many in his generation had already embraced. For Dever, the foremost problem with the history of his field was its entanglement in religious concerns. He appealed to the marginalized legacy of less religiously driven expeditions that predated Albright to give Syro-Palestinian archaeology a distinguished American pedigree. He wished to put Syro-Palestinian archaeology on the same footing with other world archaeologies, as suggested in his anecdote about a conservative Christian who spent his longed-for visit to the Holy Land volunteering on Dever’s dig and who later wrote a letter to complain that “he might as well have been digging in Nebraska.” Dever was thrilled: “we thought that it was one of the finest compliments we had been paid over the years!” For those who looked askance at biblical archaeologists for proverbially holding a Bible in one hand and a spade in the other, Dever wanted to remove the Bible.

Dever has continued to envision the region’s archaeology as a history of progress in scientific methodology, and to define such progress largely in terms of how thoroughly religious concerns have been removed from the work. He believed Israeli archaeologists had accomplished this goal and viewed American archaeologists unfavorably in comparison. He suggested that “Biblical Archaeology’ is a peculiarly American phenomenon” because the field had been packed for decades with “professional Biblical scholars, or clergymen, Rabbis, priests, and others with more than a passing interest in the study of the Bible.” In 1974, he praised Israeli archaeologists for being “without exception secular scholars, entirely divorced from the religious Establishment—and, in fact, from Departments of Bible in the Universities.” He appreciated that they referred to their field as “Archaeology of Eretz-Israel” (the land of Israel) rather than invoking the Bible.

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2. Ibid., 12.
3. Ibid., 11.
4. Ibid., 21.
5. Ibid., 22.
Based on a narrow definition of “religious” that was limited to personal religiosity, Dever thus believed Israeli archaeologists had freed themselves of religious concerns, including the need to confirm the Bible. However, the argument that archaeologists have achieved freedom from religious concerns echoes an earlier claim made by the Albright school that they were basing their scholarship on external data and not personal religious beliefs. Dever did not anticipate the torrent of criticism later directed toward Israeli archaeologists regarding precisely the period he was discussing. They may not have named their field after the Bible, but they often drew on it as a nationalist blueprint, a problem that was difficult to see so long as one believed the Israelis were secular and that the definition of secular included freedom from biblical presuppositions. The archaeologists were operating as part of an elite Israeli culture that did not practice religion but relied heavily on the Bible. Israeli leaders David Ben-Gurion and Moshe Dayan, neither of whom saw themselves as practicing Judaism as a religion, both wrote books detailing their nationalist readings of the Bible. They read the Bible in combination with archaeological artifacts that they attributed to ancient Israelites or Judeans to support the Israelis’ right to take over the land their remote ancestors had inhabited.

Criticism of this tendency within Israeli archaeology has come from multiple camps, including the Israeli academy, for example in works by Nachman Ben-Yehuda and Yael Zerubavel on the explicitly political nature of Yigael Yadin’s dig at Masada; Shlomo Sand’s recent criticism of Israelis for using archaeology to retroject a homogeneous Jewish ethnicity into the distant past; and archaeologist Raphael Greenberg’s ongoing efforts to deconstruct the religio-nationalist narrative presented at the City of David archaeological site in Jerusalem, the subject of this work’s epilogue. Palestinian critics include Nadia Abu el-Haj, who demonstrates that Israeli archaeologists purposefully destroyed Islamic layers and who critiques the way contemporary Jerusalem is marketed to tourists on the assumption that archaeology proves the

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Jews own the land. Nur Masalha sees Israeli archaeologists’ and leaders’ use of the Bible as religiosity hiding under a secular guise. Archaeologist Ghada Ziadeh-Seely asks whether Palestinian archaeologists should create a rival nationalist archaeological narrative or fashion a multicultural archaeological narrative that would serve to undercut both Israeli and Palestinian nationalist claims (she favors the latter but understandably feels some sympathy for the former).

Critiques of nationalist and settler-colonialist uses of archaeology did not, however, often extend to the American biblical archaeologists who were the mentors and colleagues of many of the Israeli archaeologists under discussion. One exception is Keith Whitelam’s *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History* (1996). He accuses biblical archaeologists of also implicitly supporting Zionism by engaging in a search for ancient Israel based on a historicized reading of the Bible, which he thinks is better treated as literature than history. Whitelam argues that the archaeologists were searching for an Israel of their own imagining, one that was the “taproot of Western civilization.” In the process, he argues, they ignored the majority of the area’s history and misunderstood the real Israel that existed, which would have looked nothing like the Westernized ancestors they were seeking.

Whitelam is seen as one of the minimalists in the much-discussed maximalist-minimalist debate. Minimalists are characterized by the belief that the Bible was written many centuries after the events described and says a great deal about the time period in which it was written but next to nothing about the ones it purports to describe. Maximalists believe that the biblical text contains a core of historical material that is worth trying to identify. Dever, though sometimes describing himself as a mediating moderate, is the foremost spokesman for the maximalist position. Professing frustration with the terms maximalist and minimalist, Dever responded to Whitelam’s insistence on the political nature of biblical archaeology by despairing, “Next, I suppose, we will see ‘Zionists’ vs. ‘Anti-Semites.’” While either of those terms would be too

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extreme to describe American archaeologists’ camps today, Dever’s complaint does get at a key distinction: scholars who the minimalists believe support Zionism implicitly through their support for the existence of ancient Israel are often aghast at this charge because they believe they are politically neutral. The minimalists, who are pursuing their skeptical reading of the Bible in large part to have an effect on the role ancient Israel plays in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, are sometimes accused of anti-Semitism for calling widespread beliefs about the relationship between ancient Israel and modern Israel into question.

Critiques like Whitelam’s tend to paint all past Western scholars as villains. Whitelam invokes fellow minimalist Philip Davies’ work as though it puts the question of biblical historicity to rest. Davies, he writes, has shown “that the ‘ancient Israel’ of biblical studies is a scholarly construct based upon a misreading of the biblical traditions and divorced from historical reality.”\(^\text{15}\) Masalha also sees the work of the minimalists as settling the question: ancient Israel did not exist, therefore the Israelis’ land claims are inaccurate. Heavy reliance on the minimalists causes scholars to miss the larger point that the presence of ancient remains does not equal a twentieth-century land claim. The more useful argument would be to challenge that method of utilizing archaeology, both by Israeli nationalist archaeologists and by minimalists like Whitelam. Denying that the ancient Israelites ever existed suggests that if conclusive evidence of the Israelites ever came to light, these scholars would concede that this shows the land belongs to the Jews.

I disagree with Whitelam that biblical archaeology in and of itself implies support for the modern state of Israel. Some biblical archaeologists opposed Zionism, and those who did wrote their books in such a way as to undermine the idea of Zionism. Whitelam’s broad brush obscures the way some American archaeologists, including many who were committed to their religious traditions, interpreted the Bible and the archaeological record differently from Albright and thus came to different conclusions. Millar Burrows, who risked his career to write on behalf of Palestinian refugees and whose overall philosophy of archaeology differed markedly from Albright’s, does not appear in Whitelam’s index. Paul Lapp, who protested the 1967 war and refused to dig in the occupied territories, is only mentioned because he identified a fortress with Saul, which Whitelam writes off as “typical of the history of the search for ancient Israel.”\(^\text{16}\) The

\(^{15}\) Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel*, 3.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 164.
more interesting and complex story turns out to be one with more attention to the differences among the actors.

Unlike Dever, I find the most telling thing about the American biblical archaeologists to be not whether they were religious but what they thought the relationship was between cultures, both ancient and modern. It is true that almost all of them were ordained in Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish traditions. However, this by no means rendered them homogeneous. By investigating the main figures in mid-century biblical archaeology—William Foxwell Albright, Millar Burrows, G. Ernest Wright, Nelson Glueck, and Paul Lapp—I will show that each figure had a position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that made itself known in his writings about the ancient past.\(^7\) Dever and I are in agreement that Albright, Wright, and Glueck were the three most prominent American biblical archaeologists. In a footnote, he adds Lapp. I have added Burrows, as Wright once did in an apologetic letter to him after he had rather belatedly been named a Life Trustee of ASOR: “If anyone among our number, along with Albright and Glueck, has deserved this small accolade, it is certainly you!” Wright assured Burrows.\(^8\)

The debate over Palestine waged by archaeologists during the decades before and after the state of Israel’s founding wove its way explicitly and implicitly through both their personal papers and their publications. The defining difference in their arguments was their understanding of culture. Those who saw cultures as homogeneous and definable favored political Zionism, or the establishment of a Jewish state. Those who saw cultures as fluid, difficult to define, blurry at the boundaries, interacting with each other, changing each other, and internally heterogeneous—ideas that have come around again as a postmodern understanding of how culture works—opposed political Zionism.

This work takes as a starting point the concept of the Albright school (also called the Baltimore school because of its home base at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore). Albright, trained by Paul Haupt, one of the foremost higher critics teaching in the United States at the time, reacted against his mentor’s way of thinking. Influenced by the conservative mode of thought ascendant in the 1920s at the Jerusalem school of the American Schools of Oriental Research—the main American scholarly organization for Near Eastern archaeology—he

\(^7\) Dever, *Archaeology and Biblical Studies*, 10.
elaborated on the basic argument that archaeological finds were providing evidence of the Bible, not controverting it, and thus putting to rest the higher critics’ skeptical readings of the text. Albright was a scientific positivist in the sense that he thought that archaeology could give a clear picture of the past, and that the picture it was giving consistently corroborated the Bible with each excavation. Albright believed archaeologists were in the business of compiling objectively verifiable facts. This put him at odds with archaeologists who believed they were interpreting evidence, and that a human’s fallible interpretation always stood between him or her and the data. Undoubtedly Albright was interpreting the data, but he advanced his interpretations as the truth about what happened. That truth corresponded to an astounding degree—some said too astounding—with the Truth of the biblical text. However, as minimalist Thomas Thompson perceptively points out, the Bible is not in itself the problem. The biblical text can be mustered to create either inclusive or exclusive narratives, depending on which portions are chosen and how they are used. Therefore, though Albright claimed objectivity, looking at which texts he chose to see as being corroborated and what implications the narratives he favored had for the political situation is one way of getting at what his interpretations of the data were.

Albright self-consciously built up a school of thought among his students and admirers to propagate the idea that the Bible was being corroborated. Burrows, a contemporary of Albright, was decidedly outside the Baltimore school’s orbit. Yet he was also a major figure in ASOR, serving as the president for almost twenty years and playing a prominent role in the discovery and study of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Burrows, who spent most of his career at Yale, also spent much of it quietly undermining the assumptions and conclusions of the Albright school, though it often seemed he was drowned out by the Albrighteans and their confidence in the Bible.

Chapter One situates Albright against the background of the higher criticism that he rebelled against and explores the formation of the Baltimore school as a Judeo-Christian endeavor that worked to exclude those who did not think about the Old Testament as a historically accurate text that was best read in a straightforward manner. The chapter also addresses Albright’s period of political activism. Many scholars have taken his descriptions of his political neutrality at face value. The archival research in this chapter detailing the six years

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he lectured on behalf of political Zionism in public venues in the 1940s corrects that misperception.

Chapter Two investigates the philosophical and political differences that put Albright and Burrows at odds with each other. These two men exemplified opposite poles within scholarship: Albright boldly proclaimed his findings as objective truth, while Burrows’ epistemological caution struck some readers as so excessive as to weaken his scholarly authority. Albright primarily saw differences between groups; Burrows primarily saw similarities. Albright, borrowing scientific metaphors of crystalline structures, argued that cultures were unique and perdured for centuries; Burrows found it difficult to draw boundaries between cultures. Albright was a Zionist; the strongest stand Burrows took in his scholarly career was against Zionism. The chapter shows not only that these scholars’ views were embedded in their writings, but also investigates their political activism. Whereas Burrows applauded the dialectic between the extreme poles of Israelite and Canaanite religion for producing a fruitful and robust tradition, Albright stressed the way the primitive Israelites’ purity ensured their continuing purity. Burrows gave up his leadership position at ASOR to publish a book about the plight of the Palestinian refugees in which he also gave up the language of neutrality. “Fairness is essential, but fairness is not the same thing as neutrality,” he wrote by way of explaining his break from scholarly convention. “If one side is right and the other wrong, neutrality is not just.”

Albright trained Glueck in archaeological techniques, particularly pottery dating, in the 1920s in Jerusalem. Glueck, who had earned a Ph.D. in Germany and was also mentored by Julius Morgenstern at Hebrew Union College before succeeding Morgenstern as president of that institution, gradually shifted toward more and more recognizably Albrightean positions. Almost four decades after his training, he wrote to Albright,

Everybody has some kind of ego-fulfillment. Mine, from the time I began to work under you in 1927 and to be strongly influenced by you ever since, is to receive a word of approval every now and then from you. You have been and remain my teacher and mentor and friend and hero, and I shall never stop being everlastingly grateful to you for your instruction, helpfulness, example and encouragement.

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Chapter Three shows how Glueck shifted from one way of thinking about culture to another, and how that mapped onto a corresponding change in his politics. Glueck’s works provide an especially illuminating illustration of the thesis presented here because he demonstrates both sides of it at different points in his career. The chapter traces the shift in his popular writings from envisioning the ancient world as replete with cultural change and hybridity to envisioning its ethnic groupings as pure and essential, and their boundaries as rigid, a change that mirrored his political shift from supporting a culturally diverse Palestine to supporting a Jewish ethno-national state.

Wright, Albright’s third Ph.D. graduate, did perhaps the most to further Albright’s legacy. He founded the Biblical Colloquium, a by-invitation-only working group that met to discuss issues in biblical studies, which was composed almost entirely of Albright students. Wright exhibited a lifelong loyalty to Albright and his school of thought. In 1969, two years before Albright’s death, he wrote that “to be a student of Dr. Albright is to become a member of a yahad, an entirely spontaneous, unplanned but nevertheless self-conscious group. … Thus there is a sense in which Dr. Albright has created a future life for himself here on this earth. His sons are now busily producing his grandsons and great grandsons.” Chapter Four shows how Wright’s blending of archaeology with theology simplified the task of separating the good Israelites from the bad Canaanites, a basic difference between good and evil that mirrored his understanding of the difference between good religion and bad religion among his contemporaries. When Wright adopted stances favorable to Israelis, he masked the political nature of his decisions with the rhetoric of objectivity and neutrality, while castigating ASOR members who took pro-Palestinian positions.

While many biblical scholars in the United States today can easily trace their intellectual lineage as grandsons and great grandsons of Albright, as with any school of thought, the generation of the grandsons is markedly different from the grandfather. The 1970s brought sweeping change in how Albrightians viewed their field, one aspect of which was Dever’s critique of the Baltimore school’s religious underpinnings. Another early dissident was Paul

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Lapp, who was originally Albright’s Ph.D. student and then transferred to Harvard to finish under Wright after Albright’s retirement. The outspoken Lapp differed with his mentors on issues of historical certainty, cultural influence, and twentieth-century politics. Chapter Five discusses Lapp’s rebellion against his mentors both in terms of scholarship and in terms of politics, which is approached through the case study of a 1968 protest against the Israeli military in which Lapp and several other ASOR members participated. Another archaeologist of the same generation who lodged similar complaints about the politics of biblical archaeology was Albert Glock, who continued Lapp’s dig in the West Bank as a conscious effort to demonstrate the long-term cultural continuity of the villagers there and thus call into question Israeli claims to the area.

The epilogue comments on how questions of cultural identity and whether cultures are static or changing is at the heart of a contemporary conflict over the City of David archaeological site in Jerusalem. The organization running the site takes an Albright-like position on the ability to know whether the Israelites were there and what their relationship was to the Canaanites. It presents the evidence in such a way as to bolster support for the contemporary right of the Israelis to control the area, and even to displace Palestinians living near the site. Tel Aviv University archaeologists who disapprove have taken up positions about archaeological ethics that are remarkably similar to Burrows’ or Lapp’s to attempt to undermine the link between Israelites/Israelis and the land that is assumed at the site.

I. Nationalism and Archaeology

Archaeology, when it has affected nationalist claims in Israel and elsewhere, has done so as contestable narrative masquerading as objective science. Inquiries into what the objectivity discourse in archaeology hides have often argued that much of it was nationalism. While the pivotal edited volume Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology (1995) did not, to the editors’ regret, cover the Middle East, the essays shed light analogically on the Middle East and collectively argue that “the issues associated with the relationship between archaeology and nationalist politics, whether considered historically or in terms of contemporary developments, are ubiquitous.”

24 When ethnic nationalism is at stake, archaeologists’ narratives often work to

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retroject that ethnic group as far into the past as necessary, and nationalists have at times manipulated archaeology to provide a pretext for uprooting unwanted people. Readings that suggest that one of the current ethnic groups in a region was there first can be especially dangerous, such as when they have been used in the Caucasus “to destroy the cultural legacy of others or to uproot and kill local peoples who have been living in specific areas for centuries.”

The authors of the essay on the Caucasus ask, “Should the maximal extent of the Armenian kingdom, which existed for less than fifty years during the first half of the first century BC, be used as a relevant yardstick for what properly constitutes ‘historic Armenia’?” While most readers would say “no,” one faction of Armenian nationalists says “yes,” a situation that is a close parallel to Jewish nationalists who want to claim what they regard as the full extent of ancient Jewish sovereignty.

Another example occurred recently in the Americas. In 1996, a skeleton was found that archaeological consultant James Chatters thought looked Caucasian and less than 400 years old. “I’ve got a white guy with a stone point in him,” he told The New York Times. Then, dating indicated the skeleton was 9,200–9,500 years old. Chatters, who knows skull shapes cannot be used to determine race in all cases, came to be terribly embarrassed about his vernacular use of the term “white guy.” Native Americans claimed the skeleton as their kin and demanded it be buried without further scientific investigation. A white supremacist group that taught that whites had settled the Americas before Native Americans filed their own lawsuit and claimed, “Kennewick Man is our kin.” The only way Kennewick Man could be kin to either group is if contemporary ethnic dividing lines applied 9,500 years ago.

Many Native Americans were extremely upset by the suggestion that Kennewick Man was not “Native American,” particularly those who believe whites and Native Americans were created separately. David Hurst Thomas suggests that this belief, even though it may be age-old in some tribes, has taken on a special resonance in light of recent history. According to Thomas, the controversy shows that, in the second half of the twentieth century perhaps more than at any other time, many Native Americans believe “that native people and whites have separate

26 Ibid., 156.
28 Quoted in Ibid., xxii.
histories and that the two peoples were created separately and can never live together.”

This statement could easily be applied to what many Israelis and Palestinians believe about the archaeological record. But Thomas believes good can come out of the Kennewick Man controversy, writing that it “challenges us to define when ancient bones stop being tribal and become simply human.”

Neil Asher Silberman, perhaps the foremost critic of Middle Eastern archaeology, argued in 1982 that the nineteenth-century European powers used archaeology as one aspect of their struggle to gain control over the Holy Land. In 1989, he published a volume of essays that argued for the depoliticization of archaeology by attempting to replace grand, heroic narratives with more modest ones that more accurately reflect the state of archaeological research. For example, he suggests that Cypriot archaeology is less valuable for what it says about ethnic groups in the past—though that is many people’s main interest in it—than for what it can show about the spread of sugar throughout the area. At the site of Troy, in modern Turkey, Silberman reflected on the fact that even as a child in elementary school he learned that Heinrich Schliemann dealt a mortal blow to those who believed the ancient Greek tales were only myths by using the scientific methodologies of archaeology to discover Troy. The conclusion quickly jumped to, and one encouraged by Schliemann, was that discovering a city corresponding to Troy meant the ancient tale also happened. At least, Silberman notes, there is not currently an ethnic conflict over Troy; nonetheless, it represents a parallel to the way the Baltimore school used ancient texts.

Silberman’s chapters on Israel suggest, somewhat obliquely, that Israelis are right to question the dominant interpretation of Masada, that archaeologists should weigh time periods more equitably rather than focusing only on what they consider the ethnic Jewish past, and that they should stop destroying Ottoman-era remains. A chapter on Egypt’s Elephantine Island suggests that Egyptians are wary about excavation of the island, the site of an ancient Jewish settlement and alternative temple where important papyri have been found, lest Jews claim it based on this ancient inhabitation. The site of the temple had not been found, and Silberman realized the German-Swiss team working there in the 1980s wanted to keep it that way. An

29 Ibid., xxxii.
30 Ibid., xxiv.
archaeologist assured Silberman that the Jewish temple there “was just one chapter of many in the long history of Elephantine Island,” though Israeli tourists kept asking him about it. The archaeologist, Silberman wrote, “plainly felt trapped by an archaeological and political controversy that was not of his own making, yet one from which there was little hope of escape.”

II. Changing the Questions Asked about Biblical Archaeology

Like Dever, much of the historiography of Near Eastern archaeology tends to interpret changes in the field since the 1830s in terms of becoming increasingly scientific. For many observers, becoming more scientific has largely meant acknowledging the many ways biblical archaeologists presupposed the biblical text’s historicity when interpreting their finds, and rooting out those preconceptions and their influence on archaeological conclusions. Philip J. King, author of an institutional history of the American Schools of Oriental Research, sees the history as one of steady scientific advance. So does Thomas W. Davis, who further argues that the problem of presupposing the Bible to be true has been solved among Near Eastern archaeologists. Dever also sees the age of overtly religious Near Eastern archaeology to be in the past. Until “about 1970,” he has argued, the field “was really not so much a branch of Near Eastern archaeology as it was a subsidiary of Biblical and theological studies, indeed a chapter in the history of American religious life,” suggesting that this situation cleared up thereafter. P. R. S. Moorey argues that those who wish to use archaeology to illuminate the Bible should accept that they are in a branch of biblical studies rather than a branch of archaeology. However, as Burke O. Long warns, presuppositions based on the Bible are a moving target, and Near Eastern archaeologists continue to hold them in ways they have not yet come to terms with.

33 Ibid., 182.
However, seeing the field in terms of scientific advance may not be the most useful model considering that practitioners who claimed to be scientific were so often using that claim to mask religious suppositions. Albright’s claims to placing the Bible on a scientific footing through archaeology were dependent on the idea that science could be externally verifiable and objective. If it were not, then it might be just an interpretation, and if it were an interpretation, then it was an interpretation influenced by one’s subjectivity. Albright would quickly have been open to the charge that he was finding what he wanted to because it suited his religious outlook. While he was indeed occasionally subjected to that charge, his elaborate edifice of scientific neutrality seems to have held such criticism at bay, certainly enough so that it did not threaten the prominence of his career during his lifetime. When Albright’s father, Wilbur Albright, wrote him to congratulate him on the success of From the Stone Age to Christianity, he expressed joy that the Bible was being validated by science. “The Old Book was a safe and sufficient guide to our fathers and their pious relatives,” Wilbur Albright wrote. “I am so glad you are able to establish … its veracity. The argument is incontrovertible.” Albright’s argument, that all archaeology so far had confirmed the Bible, was actually far from incontrovertible, but his frequent claims that it was must have provided great comfort to many readers.

I argue that one way to get beyond a model of scientific advance in analyzing the history of biblical archaeology is through attention to the archaeologists’ working theories of culture. These views can be understood by reading their extensive popular writings. Attention to this factor demonstrates less a straight line of progress based on evidence of overt religiosity than it does an implicit debate based on ways of seeing the world. Long before the articulation of postmodernism, some biblical archaeologists conceived of their subjects in terms of cultural change and hybridity. Others, however, conceived of ethnic identity as essential and unchanging, with rigid prescriptive boundaries between the ancient people they were most interested in—the Israelites—and the other peoples around them.

There are four ways of seeing the difference between the two worldviews of archaeologists that are outlined below: whether they saw culture as fluid or static, whether they supported cultural Zionism or political Zionism, whether they focused in their writings on cultural similarities or cultural differences, and whether they believed in scholarly relativism or scholarly objectivity. Archaeologists’ desires for the political fate of what they all considered the

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39 Wilbur Albright to William Foxwell Albright, 2 April 1941, APS.
land of the Bible oriented their visions of the past. Those who opposed political Zionism believed Arabs and Jews could coexist without the need for a specifically Jewish state. They operated with a worldview in which cultures were fluid and therefore not easily separated from each other, an argument they made by focusing on similarities between the Israelites and Canaanites. Their appeal to knowledge as relative and perspectival allowed them to argue that traditional readings of the Bible might not be the best ones for understanding past cultural relations, and that the text may need to be read against the grain. On the other hand, those who supported political Zionism believed the Jews were a special people who needed a specifically Jewish state. Because they believed that knowledge could be objective, they believed that one reading of the Bible—their own—was the objectively correct one and not simply one possibility. In that reading, cultures were static and strictly bounded, different peoples had separate governments, and the modern Jews were obviously the descendants of the ancient Israelites.

**Culture: Static versus Fluid.** In the early 1980s, myriad critics of nationalism argued that the invention of ethno-nationalist tradition often involves constructing the nation in question as a pure ethnic group and retrojecting that understanding into the distant past. Many historians and theorists have worked to undermine this view of ethnic nationalism by showing that pure ethnic groups do not exist. One of the shifts that made these modes of inquiry widespread was the critique of anthropology, the discipline that more than any other is concerned with studying culture. In much the same way that Albright’s claims to being scientific covered his political concerns, Mary Louise Pratt demonstrates that anthropologists who became invested in a scientific, objective model of ethnography could thereby cover their roots in the personal and experiential genre of travel writing. Pratt and the other essayists in the pivotal collection *Writing Culture* (1986) critique the classic style of anthropology with discussion of potential ways forward. Rather than viewing ethnographers as scientific instruments recording data that happen to be later published in book form, the essayists in *Writing Culture* encourage scholars to see ethnographers as historically and culturally contingent writers producing partial truths, a move that highlights the “constructed, artificial nature of cultural accounts.”

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The scientific model of ethnography, with its dense descriptions of cultures that led to them seeming frozen in time, belied the reality of cultural change. The belief that a culture could exist in a pure form was identified as one of the main problems: for one thing, belief in it could lead to ethnic chauvinism, and even ethnic cleansing.

For another, it was inaccurate. Many critics of postmodernism especially decry the position held by some postmodernists that all narratives are equally valid. While some postmodern theorists do posit this, using it as a devastating critique of postmodernism is a straw man argument, given that most postmodernists continue their work on the basis of passionately held views, not because they think all views are equally valid. My position is that some narratives better fit the evidence being treated, and further that some narratives are more politically responsible than others. Theorists such as Homi Bhabha have supplied new cultural theories to combat both the inaccuracy and the deadly outcomes engendered by views that previously were commonly held. Bhabha focuses on the cultural hybridity created by colonizer-colonized relationships.43 Others stress that cultures must be understood as mixed all the way back.

Also in this regard, I would be remiss not to mention Edward Said, whose importance to this project is not only in his insistence that taking into account the political ramifications of scholarship and literature enhances rather than diminishes our understanding of it, but also in his embodying of the central questions here. Said’s experiences as a Palestinian influenced his polemical masterpiece, *Orientalism* (1978), and initiated the ways of discussing the relationship between Americans, Europeans, and Middle Easterners that this work builds upon. Some may object that Said spent a great deal of his childhood in Cairo, not his birthplace of Jerusalem, but that detail only strengthens the argument against narrow nationalist identities. Said’s in-betweenness, being both in between Cairo and Jerusalem and later in between East and West, shaped his perspective. “Ever since I can remember, I have felt that I belonged to both worlds, without being completely of either one or the other,” Said wrote in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993).44 In large measure because of Said, academics have shifted from seeing “culture” (or, in

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43 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).
this case, “scholarship”) as an arena “antiseptically quarantined from its worldly affiliations” to probing it for political import.

Such analyses of cultural hybridity and the politics of scholarship have not always been easy for the academic world to absorb; for example, the Black Athena controversy in the mid-1990s swirled around Martin Bernal’s contention that ancient Greek culture was heavily influenced by Egyptian and Phoenician cultures. In other words, the time and place often identified as the font of Western civilization was as mixed up as any other, and furthermore, it was mixed with cultures not usually identified as Western. The reason anyone thought otherwise, he contended, was because Western scholars between 1785 and the present had constructed a culturally pure ancient Greece to suit their age of nationalism. Perhaps not surprisingly, a book-length response from a fellow academic was titled Not Out of Africa: How Afrocentrism Became an Excuse to Teach Myth as History. But, as Jacques Berlinerblau points out, Bernal’s argument was not Afrocentric in the way that many Afrocentrists see it, which is that important civilizational advances came from Africa and that African civilization is superior. Bernal would have no interest in proclaiming any pure African civilizations either. As Berlinerblau evocatively recaps the argument, Bernal “contends that the delicate flower which we refer to as Classical Greece is a hybrid from its seed to its stem to its petals.”

Another related situation is the issue of “upstreaming” in Native American studies, or taking Native Americans’ origin stories as recorded in 1850, or even 1960, and using them as accurate statements about the tribe’s culture and history in the pre-contact period. This goes against a growing anthropological understanding of culture as constantly changing, and of that change being partly driven through contact with other cultures, in this case the centuries of contact with Europeans that occurred before most such origin myths were recorded. The absence of written records to compare versions of the story against lent credence to a model of cultural essentialism. Albright argued that the much later biblical texts reflected accurately the Israelites’ culture and relationship to the Canaanites because oral societies have better memories and their

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49 Ibid., 58.
stories do not change over the years. In a similar way, anthropologists believed Native American cultures had long existed in the same form in the absence of earlier records to compare their informants’ narratives to, and archaeological excavation itself did not yield the kind of information that would contradict such narratives.

Anthropologists and historians interested in tracing change over time among Native Americans have sometimes run into stiff resistance. One of the most common grievances against anthropologists has been that they believe they can know Native American history better than Native Americans. Vine Deloria, Jr., the most outspoken such critic, argues that Native Americans know more about their origins than outsider anthropologists and maintains that Native American origin stories in which Native Americans emerge from the land—thus a separate origin from the rest of the world’s humans—are more plausible than the land-bridge theory.\footnote{Quoted in Thomas, \textit{Skull Wars}, 207.} However, it is also possible that Native Americans found stories of separate origins more compelling after their encounters with Europeans. We simply do not know what stories these oral cultures passed down before contact.

Much more recently, Shlomo Sand applied theories critical of nationalism and ethnic purity to the history of the Jewish people in a manner that unleashed a barrage of criticism from supporters of the state of Israel as a Jewish state. Depending on one’s perspective, the title \textit{The Invention of the Jewish People} was either a somewhat overworn homage to \textit{The Invention of Tradition} and similar titles, or it was a deliberate provocation; one suspects that the readers who kept it on Israel’s bestseller list for months saw it as the latter. Sand, a historian of modern Europe at Tel Aviv University, crossed disciplinary boundaries that had been erected at Israeli universities between general history and the history of the Jewish people. These boundaries fostered the sense that the Jewish people were unique among the world’s peoples and that different methodologies should be used to study them. Reflecting on the anthropological turn in historical studies, Sand writes, “Sometimes it seems that most of the scholars who have specialized in the history of the People of Israel have yet to hear about this strange new form of historiography.”\footnote{Sand, \textit{The Invention of the Jewish People}, 248.}

One of Sand’s many questions is: how did it go from being racism to suggest that the Jews are a race to the current situation, when it is racism to suggest they are not, or, more
accurately, to suggest they are by and large not descended from the ancient Israelites? Sand shows that Jewish writers, once eager to discuss the Jewish proselytism that occurred around the Mediterranean basin, in the Arabian Peninsula, and especially in Eastern Europe to account for the large numbers of Jews who once lived in those areas, over time eschewed the topic of conversion and began to claim that these settlements were the result of Jewish migration. Sand’s most fascinating discussion for the purposes of this project is his finding that educated Jewish Zionists went from believing that the native Arabs they encountered in Palestine were obviously descendants of the ancient Israelites to believing that they obviously were not. Sand argues that the ethnic rigidification that occurred in Jewish historiography over time particularly occurred at two key points, the Arab riots of 1929 and the Six-Day War of 1967. Indeed, in 1918, David Ben-Gurion and Itzhak Ben-Zvi, who would later serve as Israel’s prime minister and president, respectively, co-authored a book in which they wrote,

To argue that after the conquest of Jerusalem by Titus and the failure of the Bar Kokhba revolt Jews altogether ceased to cultivate the land of Eretz Israel is to demonstrate complete ignorance in the history and the contemporary literature of Israel … The Jewish farmer, like any other farmer, was not easily torn from his soil.\textsuperscript{52}

This was their argument for cultural continuity through the ages. But, disillusioned by the 1929 riots, Ben-Gurion later contributed to the myth of the exile, in which Israelis came to believe that the Romans had forced the great majority of the Jewish people into exile in 135 CE. Even though, as Sand demonstrates, historians have not provided evidence for an exile of more than the elite population, the idea of a Roman exile caught on partly because it echoed the Babylonian exile and partly because it explained why so few Jews were in Palestine in the nineteenth century. It also explained why they would have left, a crucial issue for those who argued Jews would never have voluntarily left the land promised to them by God. It was not enough to believe that the Jews had been exiled, though; on top of that, “the modern Palestinian fellahin became, in the eyes of the authorized agents of memory, Arabian immigrants who came in the nineteenth century to an almost empty country and continued to arrive in the twentieth century,” in an attempt to weaken Arab claims to continuity in the land and distance Jews from any ancestral relationship to them.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{52} Quoted in Ibid., 186.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 188.
In a response to his critics, Sand came back to this point. “I have been accused of claiming that the Palestinians of today are” direct descendants of Judeans, he commented, but pointed out that it was not he who thought so but rather the youthful Zionist leaders he had quoted at length. Sand stuck to his anthropological understanding of the more complex origins of any “people”: “I believe that today’s Palestinians derive from a variety of origins, just like all contemporary peoples. Each conqueror left his mark in the region: Egyptians, Persians and Byzantines all fertilized the local women and many of their descendants must be there still.”

If this understanding changes exclusionary ethnic narratives, that is an improvement; however, Sand continues, the genetic makeup of today’s Palestinians “is not so important in my view.” Creating new genetic narratives is not the point; thinking outside of them is.

**Cultural Zionism versus Political Zionism.** Scholars discussing Zionism often make a distinction between “cultural Zionism,” supporting the right of Jews to immigrate to Palestine, and “political Zionism,” support for a Jewish ethno-national state. For example, in a 1942 article published in the Zionist periodical *The New Palestine*, Albright announced that he had become a “political Zionist” to differentiate himself from cultural Zionism. Supporters of cultural Zionism, who were the foremost Zionists in the first part of the twentieth century—among them Judah Leon Magnes, Ahad Ha-Am, Martin Buber, and Louis Brandeis—gradually became anti-Zionists in the eyes of political Zionists. They came to oppose many of the principles and actions of political Zionists, even as that position gained traction among Jews between the 1929 riots and the founding of the state of Israel in 1948. Though some of the archaeologists discussed here would doubtless have rejected the word “Zionist” because for them it meant political Zionism, none of them opposed Jewish immigration to Palestine and thus could be termed cultural Zionists. However, in this work, the term “Zionism” on its own refers to political Zionism.

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54 Ibid., 318.  
55 Ibid.  
56 Sand’s ultimate goal was to argue that Israel cannot be democratic until it relinquishes its identity as a Jewish state and accepts all the peoples within its borders as citizens with equal rights. His hundreds of pages meditating on the diverse origins of any person or group was his method for making this argument, a touchy one to make in a country that in 1985 passed a law that no one running for the Knesset could, “expressly or by implication,” include anything in their campaign that entailed “(1) negation of the existence of the State of Israel as the state of the Jewish people; (2) negation of the democratic character of the State; (3) incitement to racism.” It is good Sand is not running for the Knesset, considering his overarching argument about the present is that as long as the state of Israel is the state of the Jewish people and not a state for all the people within its borders, it will not be a truly democratic state.  
The difference that separated archaeologists who supported cultural Zionism from those who supported political Zionism lay in how they interpreted cultures. Albright’s worldview in this regard led him to see the Jews as attempting to preserve an age-old culture that was in danger of being lost, rather than seeing the multiplicity of Jewish cultures in different times and places throughout history. Attention to this view of cultural preservation sheds light on why, after Israel was founded, Albright championed the ethnic nature of the state and why he saw the state’s principal enemy as “the Arabs” as though that were also a homogeneous entity, rather than focusing on the specific grievances of the Palestinian Arabs who were directly affected by the state. Occasionally, Zionists, including Albright, accused non-Jewish anti-Zionists of being Arab nationalists, in effect just being for the other side. The archaeologists here, as demonstrated by their views of cultures as fluid, were in fact against ethnic nationalism in general.

For much of its history, Reform Judaism in America was associated with an anti-Zionist position. These Reform Jews have often been accused of primarily worrying that Jews, including themselves, would no longer be welcome in other countries if a Jewish state existed. However, Thomas Kolsky shows that the primary concern was to combat ethnic exclusivism. Well-known American Jewish anti-Zionists, such as Elmer Berger, argued passionately against Zionism because of its element of ethnic nationalism and exclusion of others. Palestinian intellectual Nur Masalha, though he believes the solution must be secular, nevertheless echoes an earlier Reform Jewish generation’s anti-Zionist principles when he calls for a solution based “on a joint Palestinian-Jewish struggle for equality and universal human rights.”

**Similarity versus Difference.** My methodology for analyzing the archaeologists’ views of ancient cultures is based on comparison, primarily whether they believed characteristics that they assigned to ancient Israelites to be similar or different from characteristics they assigned to ancient Canaanites. Also fruitful was paying attention to comparisons made between those groups and later groups, such as Wright’s positive comparison of Israelites to American cowboys and his negative comparison of liberal Protestants to Canaanites. Religious studies theorist J. Z. Smith, who persistently draws attention to matters of comparison, provides a model of such

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analysis regarding a closely related subject matter in *Drudgery Divine*. He analyzes the historiography of scholarly comparisons between early Christianities and religions of Late Antiquity, which were often called “mystery cults.” Smith finds that apologetic historians of early Christianity often claimed that Christianity was sui generis and unique, also a common claim found here for the Israelites’ religion. Smith argues that when scholars compared early Christianity to “mystery cults,” they were really comparing their positive valuation of Protestantism to their negative valuation of Catholicism. They felt ambiguity toward Judaism, believing Judaism had helped protect Christianity from negative environmental influences but also that Christianity had superseded it. My project deals with a time period in which triumphal Protestantism was giving way to cross-religious alliances between like-minded believers, in this case Protestants, Catholics, and Jews with similar approaches to the Old Testament.

David Chidester draws on Smith’s contention that the comparisons religious studies scholars make are not innocent in *Savage Systems*, in which he argues that the “discovery” of African religions had nothing to do with the Africans’ actual cultural systems; rather, the Europeans’ “discovery of religion arose out of the practice of comparison itself,” based on “analogies between indigenous customs and known religions.” Chidester shows that Europeans interpreted and reinterpreted African religions in wildly disparate ways that mapped onto changing power relationships between the Europeans and Africans. For example, when the Africans rebelled, Europeans reverted to interpreting them as having no religion, a condition associated with being less than human. Europeans used the conclusion that they were less than human to justify taking over their land. Chidester labels the European tendency to place each religion into a “separate, hermetically sealed compartment into which human beings can be classified and divided” a form of apartheid. This insight from the area of the world associated with apartheid throws light on this project because those archaeologists who most wanted to divide Israelites and Canaanites into hermetically sealed compartments also most wanted to divide Israelis and Palestinians into ethno-national states, while those who viewed Israelites and Canaanites as overlapping groups produced by a common environment believed Israeli and

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63 Ibid., 14.
64 Ibid., 4.
Palestinians could coexist as equal citizens in a state determined not by ethnicity but by their inhabitation of the same geographic region. While Smith and Chidester focus on examples of Protestants and Europeans using comparative religion to divide themselves from others and marginalize them, this project highlights debates between archaeologists who embedded their desire for such division in their scholarship and archaeologists who embedded a desire to overcome such division in their scholarship.

**Objectivity versus Relativism.** One way of classifying the archaeologists discussed here is between those who believed in objectivity as an academic ideal and those who rejected the possibility of objectivity. Peter Novick defines historians’ ideal of objectivity in a way that corresponds well to Albright’s beliefs: “a commitment to the reality of the past, and to truth as correspondence to that reality; a sharp separation between knower and known, between fact and value.”65 Above all, “Truth is one, not perspectival.”66 While seeing truth as perspectival sometimes appears to be a more recent development, Novick argues that the interwar period was characterized by strong scholarly currents criticizing the ideal of objectivity.67 Many American historians were upset by the way German historians endorsed nationalist German accounts of World War I. Further, they became aware that they had taught and written in such a way as to advance the American side in the war. This situation led to a “heightened awareness of strains in the concept of objectivity.”68 Albright, who spent only scanty time in the field and who considered the pinnacle of his career the publication of his philosophy of history, could just as easily, and perhaps more accurately, be termed a historian as he could an archaeologist. In his defense of the ability of historians to pursue and even attain scholarly objectivity, as he believed he had done in his gathering of archaeological facts, Albright demonstrated not that he was a product of his time and did not know any better—a defense occasionally put forth by his admirers—but rather that he rejected the critiques of objectivity of which he was well aware. As Albright himself acknowledged, his belief in historical objectivity comprised part of his conservative reaction against historical relativists of the 1920s like C. A. Beard and C. L.

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66 Ibid., 2.
67 Ibid., 133.
68 Ibid., 116.
Becker. Wright further simplified the issues at stake in making claims to objectivity in his theological approach to the archaeological data. On the other hand, scholars like Burrows and Lapp adopted a cautious, perspectival approach.

Postcolonial theorists have shown the way the appeal to universal values—with science perhaps foremost among them—have been used to judge native cultures inferior and to displace them when convenient. Albright’s view that he could make archaeology and even history an objective science and his views of the native Arab culture in Palestine fit well with the views of many Israeli archaeologists and cartographers. Meron Benvenisti, in his study of the way the Israelis claimed the landscape by assigning biblical names, recalls going on these naming excursions with his father, and his eventual realization that these were not “innocent scientific excursions,” they were meant to “draw … a renewed title deed” based on one understanding of the Bible.

Albright’s colonial attitude toward non-Western cultures was one factor in his support for Zionism, as he argued in his New Palestine piece, “The Near East Needs the Jews.” His first, highly idealistic, argument was that a strong minority like the Jews might persuade the other myriad cultures of the area to get along better. However, his second argument was that the non-Western people in the area would benefit, and indeed already had benefited, immeasurably from the Jews’ innovations. This argument, heavy with colonialist overtones, was extremely common among political Zionists. The New Palestine editors supplied a supportive photo of about a dozen traditionally dressed Arab men looking at a machine, above the caption, “Civilization! This modern tractor on a Jewish colony is a never-failing object of interest for nearby Arabs.”

The development of insights about the subjectivity of knowledge deeply influenced the postmodern revolution in scholarship. The book that paved the way for asking postmodern questions about biblical archaeology is Burke Long’s Planting and Reaping Albright (1997), in which the author situates Albright in his historical, political, and scholarly context in a way that Albright, as a champion of objectivity and positivism, would almost certainly have found unrecognizable. He locates the stakes involved as being greater than simply the question of archaeological progress and instead analyzes “Albright’s embrace of scientist as culture hero and

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the mythification of Self as Master Knower.” Long, himself trained in a milieu in which Albright and his students were held up as “anecdotal exemplars of uncommon brilliance,” uses a methodology of “radically historicizing” these figures so that they “are rendered in smaller, human terms.”

Long’s book, with its lengthy exposition of what postmodernism is, received a somewhat cool reception. For example, Dever, not only the field’s leading archaeologist but in recent years its leading polemicist, dismissed Long’s postmodernist lens as “an angle of vision … so narrow, and, I would argue, so ideologically motivated that it results not in an adequate critical portrait of Albright, but rather in a caricature.” Interestingly, despite Dever’s view that the discussion of Albright’s ideology says more about Long than about Albright, he did not comment on what he thought it actually did say about Long. He repeated Long’s conclusions, based, as he rightly notes, on “thousands of letters, unpublished diaries, field notes, and other memorabilia”—materials I have also reviewed, and found generally supportive of Long’s analyses—just to dismiss them as “postmodernist piffle.”

Dever’s What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It? (2001) is a polemic meant to discredit the minimalists by exposing their postmodern agenda. He not only accuses them of “thinly-disguised postmodernism,” suggesting they are purposefully concealing unsavory academic influences, he defines postmodernism as “nihilism.” This is an interesting choice of words considering that Dever is steeped enough in the historiography of the field to know that nihilism was Albright’s insult of choice for textual critics who seemed to him to be undermining the Bible.

John J. Collins’ much fairer assessment of the minimalists in The Bible after Babel (2004) also shies away from postmodernism, or, more accurately, from the term “postmodernism.” Acknowledging Whitelam as the most postmodern minimalist, Collins suggests that the minimalists “who have written the most extensive histories,” Thomas Thompson and Niels Peter Lemche, “seem to me to be quite old-fashioned, empirical

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72 Long, Planting and Reaping Albright, 2.
73 Ibid., 10.
75 Ibid.
76 Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?, 27.
77 Ibid., 246.
historians.” Collins’ overall project appears to be one of integrating postmodernism into a biblical studies field terrified of the term by showing readers that it is already a part of their heritage. He convincingly argues that the attention to textual criticism developed over generations in biblical studies finds a legitimate part of its outworking in the questions about power, memory, date of authorship, and the ability to reconstruct history that scholars like Thompson and Lemche bring to their scholarship. Collins’ argument that postmodernism is not a faddish interloper but rather a logical phase made possible in part by the previous generation’s scholarship nonetheless suggests that “postmodernism” still needs to be soft-pedaled to be acceptable in biblical studies. A recent article in the Journal of Biblical Literature, written by three scholars trained in historical-critical methods but increasingly sympathetic to postmodernism and hoping to foster dialogue, begin their piece with a dismal description of what they see to be the present state of affairs: “As everyone in the Society of Biblical Literature knows,” they write, “historical critics and postmodernists are entrenched, embattled groups that speak to one another across the field of biblical studies only in sniping, intellectually unengaged footnotes.”

In the present work, “objective” is considered the opposite of “subjective,” with the understanding that knowledge is subjective, not objective, in the sense that it is known by humans, who can never fully escape their own subjectivity. Therefore this knowledge is contingent, not absolute. This insight, vital to postmodernism and yet hardly invented that recently, provides the basis upon which the questions in this work can be asked. For readers uncomfortable with postmodernism—again, more accurately, with the term “postmodernism”—I refer further back to Max Weber, who in 1920 wryly observed that his fellow scholars, who were “product[s] of modern European civilization,” had a tendency to believe that, “in Western civilization, and in Western civilization only,” cultural phenomena appeared that were of “universal significance and value.” Albright believed his scholarship was of universal significance and value; inquiring what the stakes were in these claims to universality yields important answers.

78 John J. Collins, The Bible after Babel: Historical Criticism in a Postmodern Age (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005), 34.
**III. Biblical Archaeologists and American Religious History**

From John Winthrop to Ronald Reagan and beyond, a stream of thought in American Protestantism has conceived of America as a city on a hill for the rest of the world to witness and emulate. Winthrop’s Puritan settlers, reenacting biblical narratives, thought of their settlements as a new Zion, a land waiting to be filled and made useful by Protestants. Such a narrative seemed to complement the Protestant tenet that no space was particularly more sacred than any other, and facilitated a break with the Old World. The sites where the biblical narrative unfolded were of no especial concern when Zion could be anywhere.

By the early nineteenth century, however, some of the descendents of those early Protestant settlers were showing quite an interest in the old Zion. The outpouring of emotion for the physical site of the biblical narrative—what Christians called the Holy Land—that occurred in the nineteenth century may seem irreconcilable with the new Zion narrative, the power of which has been such that scholars writing about American interest in the Holy Land feel compelled to address how interest in both an old and new Zion could even be possible. John Davis, author of a book on nineteenth-century Holy Land paintings by Americans, *The Landscape of Belief* (1996), asserts that Americans became interested in the Holy Land in the nineteenth century *because* they were the new Zion. Brian Yothers argues, on the other hand, that American fascination with the Holy Land was only possible “precisely because they did not identify themselves entirely with the biblical Israel,”81 building on Reiner Smolinski’s article in which he shows that both ideas were present. Smolinski does not deny that Puritans spoke about themselves as a new Israel, but he shows they also thought there continued to be something special about the Jews. Cotton Mather wrote that the New Jerusalem would “be seated over the Land of Israel, which will now again be possessed by the Israelitish Nation,”82 and Smolinski quotes many other similar passages by Puritan writers.

Studying the way American Protestants have thought about the Holy Land has slipped by the wayside in the field of American religious history in part because of this continuing idea that the Puritans and most Protestants after them saw America as the new Israel, which throws

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attention off how much they were thinking about the original one. Burke Long in *Imagining the Holy Land* (2003) argues that talk about the Holy Land in the nineteenth century in the United States strengthened Americans’ belief in their nation and their religion as chosen and special, because they were the ones attending to the legacy of biblical Israel, which is a more satisfying combination of the two factors. Long does not see this as a reason to give up on the new Israel trope completely, however, arguing that the more Americans thought of themselves as the new Israel, the more they wished to also be identified with the old Israel. This can be seen, for example, in the intense Hebraism of the Mormon church or in the anti-Semitism of the white supremacist seedline theology, which teaches that the ancient Israelites of the Bible could not be the Jews of today because they were ultra-masculine warriors and states that the ancient Israelites dispersed to Europe while inferior peoples known as Jews moved into Palestine after they left and claimed the Old Testament story for their own.

American travelers who wrote about the Holy Land form an important precursor to the biblical archaeologists, whose observations often formed a recognizable part of the discourse about the Holy Land fostered in the nineteenth-century travelogues. When Americans began to travel to the Holy Land in increasingly large numbers beginning in the 1830s, not only did they approach it in a distinctively Protestant way, their approach illuminates how Americans understood their Protestant identity vis-à-vis the non-Protestant world. Little was more American in the nineteenth century than anti-Catholicism. These travelers were Protestants steeped in a cult of origins in which stripping away Catholic traditions in order to uncover the ways of the early church remained paramount. Their desire to see the Bible lands was complicated by a rejection of traditional pilgrimage, especially the pilgrimage sites, which struck them as perfect examples of the accretion of Catholic tradition. Travel writers decried the foolishness of their fellow travelers for their naïve embrace of non-Protestant pilgrimage sites, though there is little to no evidence of American travelers who admitted to embracing those sites. Presumably they all kept visiting in order to better develop their own denunciations.

Edward Robinson, who conducted a topographical survey of Palestine in 1838, reflected these issues in his description of approaching Jerusalem for the first time just before Easter. Robinson found the ceremonies distasteful. His Protestant viewpoint manifested itself in a sense of revulsion concerning the Greeks’ “mockery” and the Latins’ “mummery” during Holy Week. For him the ceremonies obscured “the city itself, in relation to its ancient renown and religious
associations; not as seen in its present state of decay and superstitious or fraudulent degradation.\textsuperscript{83} What mattered for Robinson was not the backward living population but the superior ancient population. His horrific afternoon at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre led him to a passage that says more about what he was doing there than mountains of evidence gleaned from his measuring tape or potentially ancient place names collected from Arabs. In an invective about the many centuries through which the monks’ fraudulent versions of things had been allowed to prevail, Robinson declared the ecclesiastical sites to be “OF NO VALUE, except so far as … supported by circumstances known to us from the Scriptures, or from other contemporary testimony.”\textsuperscript{84} Robinson’s feelings about the Christian traditions that were robust in Jerusalem reveals an inclination that is undoubtedly even more Protestant than scientific toward stripping back the layers of what he found to reveal underneath that which was authentic and original—which for Robinson could only be the Jerusalem of Jesus’ time. The implication of this line of reasoning is that absolutely nothing that happened there between Jesus’ crucifixion and the contemporary period matters. The twelfth century BCE matters because of the Israelites; the twelfth century AD does not. This is a method, whether conscious or not, of erasing any inhabitants except the ones favored by this viewpoint.

Using the standard of the Bible, travel writers condemned the native inhabitants for being backward and incapable of managing Palestine. For example, missionary William Thomson, author of the \textit{The Land and the Book} (1860), pointed out that there were no wheeled vehicles in Syria even though they had been mentioned in the Bible, and explained that “when the wild Arabs of the Mohammedan desolation became masters, wheeled vehicles immediately sunk into neglect, and even contempt. . . . Nor will they ever re-appear till some other race than the Arab predominates, and a better than the Turk governs.”\textsuperscript{85} Americans were disappointed that the land was not as fruitful as described in the Bible, and they blamed it on the Arabs. It was degenerated, many observers thought, from a combination of prophecies coming to pass and bad management, but it could be regenerated. J. Donald Hughes points out that the Mediterranean areas actually did experience a fall from natural abundance to lack thereof, and offers non-supernatural explanations as to how the process came about. Though many American travelers assumed that

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., Vol. I, 255.
\textsuperscript{85} W. M. Thomson, \textit{The Land and the Book; or, Biblical Illustrations Drawn from the Manners and Customs, the Scenes and Scenery of the Holy Land} (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1860), 20–21.
Arabs must have destroyed the landscape after Jews lost control of the area in antiquity, Hughes argues in *Ecology in Ancient Civilizations* (1975) that attitudes for or against environmental protection did not matter much; all Mediterranean peoples eventually exhausted their environments. The inhabitants, seen by most Western observers as ancient relics with little capacity for development or leadership, would not be up to the task. Western intervention, led by the regions boasting the living faith of Christianity and not deadened forms of it like Catholicism or Orthodoxy, held the promise of intervening in the land of Christ and restoring it to its deserved glory.

Many Zionists have maintained that this is exactly what happened, only at the hands of Jews rather than Christians. Zionist historiography has often accepted as truth the nineteenth-century Western view that Palestine was ruinously fallen from its biblical glory days and that the Arabs were to blame. Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, perhaps the most well-known Israeli scholar to write on nineteenth-century Western travelers, in 1979 matter-of-factly launched his book with the claim that, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, “Palestine was but a derelict province. . . . The Sublime Porte [the Ottoman seat of government] only showed interest in it because of the holy places and the meagre revenue extorted from the wretched inhabitants. The country was badly governed, having no political importance of its own; its economy was primitive; the sparse, ethnically mixed population subsisted on a dismally low standard; the few towns were small and miserable; the roads few and neglected. In short, Palestine was but a sad backwater of a crumbling empire—a far cry from the fertile, thriving land it had been in ancient times.”

The political implications of what Americans had to say concerning Arabs’ inability to manage the land were picked up by Zionists. The most abused such text is Mark Twain’s *The Innocents Abroad*, a favorite of Israeli leadership. Former and current Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu approvingly quotes Twain’s descriptions of nineteenth-century Palestine to prove it was a wasteland—after all, the great Mark Twain said so. He then points to improvements in population, agricultural production, and infrastructure to argue that Israelis made something out of the land whereas previous inhabitants had not. Former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir has also quoted *The Innocents Abroad* to make the same point.

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87 Masalha, *The Bible & Zionism*, 44.
Hebrew translation of just the Holy Land section—the only part of *Innocents* with any appeal for Zionist apologetics—has been published called “Pleasure Excursion to the Holy Land.”

In *A Durable Peace*, Netanyahu strings together a page and a half of block quotations from Twain’s book that makes Palestine in 1867 sound almost unfit for habitation, a place featuring only “unpeopled deserts,” “rusty mounds of barrenness,” and here and there a “stupid village.” Netanyahu’s crowning quotation is Twain’s observation that “Palestine sits in sackcloth and ashes. Over it broods the spell of a curse that has withered its fields and fettered its energies … Palestine is desolate and unlovely. … It is a hopeless, dreary, heartbroken land.”

Netanyahu’s understanding of these passages is predicated on taking Twain’s descriptions at face value. He does not comment upon the biblical phrase “sackcloth and ashes,” which indicates that Twain was alluding to prophecies and suggests the lenses with which he was viewing the land. As Jeffrey Melton demonstrates, pretensions to complete truthfulness such as the one Netanyahu quotes by Twain to support the credibility of this humorous travelogue as a source were standard fare in travel books at the time, notwithstanding the fact that most travel books, Twain’s included, consisted in large part of the authors’ various reactions to what previous travelers had written.

Many scholars have rightly noted the Protestant nature of biblical archaeology. In the nineteenth century, Robinson, seen by many ASOR archaeologists as the “father of [American] biblical archaeology,” felt queasy when he encountered Catholic and Jewish rituals on his trips to Palestine. However, by the mid-twentieth century, many Jews and Catholics were reading the Old Testament in a way remarkably similar to Robinson’s, which is to say, with the conviction that its historical passages occurred as described, and that securing proof was not only possible but assured. This cross-religious cooperation coincided with what Will Herberg captured in *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, his reconfiguration of American religious history that Martin Marty has called “the most honored discussion of American religion in mid-twentieth-century times.”

Kevin M. Schultz has recently dubbed the 1940s and 1950s “Tri-Faith America” and traces how

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the extreme nativism of 1920s and 1930s America led into a period when clergy fought for Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism to be seen as equally American. Their name for it, “the Judeo-Christian tradition,” has become so powerful as an interpretation of American history, Schultz points out, that few now realize it “was an invention of the middle of the twentieth century.”92 Mark Silk argues that this religious triumvirate overcame the nativist period largely as a response to European totalitarianism; after “the revelations of the Nazi death camps, a phrase like ‘our Christian civilization’ seemed ominously exclusive.”93

Albright’s warm embrace of Catholic and Jewish students exemplified one facet of this ecumenical flowering. The son of austere Methodist missionaries who feared Catholics as a child growing up in Latin America and who met Jews for the first time in graduate school, Albright not only became an advocate for Jewish and Catholic scholars, he imagined himself to embody all three traditions. He felt close to Catholics because his wife converted to Catholicism and raised their four sons Catholic; his second son became a Christian Brother. He felt close to Jews because of their interest in and scholarship on the Hebrew Bible. Increasingly frustrated by the direction in which Methodism was moving toward the end of his life, Albright often remarked that Jews and Catholics were becoming more interested in studying the text and the archaeology of the Hebrew Bible than were the Protestants whose forerunners had pioneered it.

Deborah Dash Moore argues that one of the main arenas for fashioning the “Judeo-Christian tradition” was in the armed services during World War II, where Jewish soldiers fought alongside Protestants and Catholics to save Americans from ultranationalist regimes. Undermining many Americans’ sense that “the Judeo-Christian tradition is, in fact, a real tradition, that it has existed for centuries”94 by showing its recent origins helps draw attention to the ways in which Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish clergy and laypeople worked to fashion this more inclusive narrative of American life. Moore’s overwhelmingly positive narrative, though, does not investigate the status of other religions in American life in that period; for example, a Muslim soldier who served in World War II and was denied his request for an “M” on his dogtags later successfully petitioned Dwight Eisenhower to add “M” to the options. Interestingly,

given the narrative’s overall arc toward greater cross-religious inclusion and coexistence, Moore concludes her book with a celebration of the state of Israel. Her contention that the United Nations’ partition proposal for a Jewish state and an Arab state “would integrate Jews as equals into the family of nations” makes more sense in relation to Jews’ experiences being forced out of German and Russian nationalist movements and thus forging their own than it does in relation to their being a vital part of a process that convinced Americans that Protestants, Catholics, and Jews were all equally American.

I hope that this project will encourage critical examination of the “Judeo-Christian tradition” not only in terms of its origins but in terms of what it included but also what it excluded. For example, when Glueck established a biblical archaeology school in Israel, he simultaneously founded his annual ecumenical Summer Institute on Near Eastern Civilizations. At this institute, Glueck promoted the conception of the state of Israel as a miraculous rebirth of the ancient Israelite polity to receptive clergy and faculty. Glueck’s mystical Zionism was on one hand exclusive to Jews but on the other relied on the enthusiastic support of many Christian clergy and religious studies faculty. The ecumenical nature of this Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish alliance masked the way in which the ecumenicity was based on a shared belief in the authority and historicity of the Old Testament, and thus excluded members of religious traditions for whom this was not the case.

In recent decades, conservative evangelical American interest in Israel as the site of end-times events has garnered much attention as a potentially explosive nexus of religion and international politics. The wildly successful multi-volume *Left Behind* series by the premillennial dispensationalism theorist Tim LaHaye and evangelical Christian writer Jerry Jenkins envisioned a post-Rapture world in which much of the action occurred in the Middle East and revolved around the conversion of friendly Jews. In *The End of Days*, historian Gershom Gorenberg details non-fictional alliances between such seemingly disparate groups as the Third Temple Institute of orthodox Jews in Israel and evangelical Texas Christian cattle ranchers, who have banded together to try to produce a completely red heifer for use in purification rituals. The Jews want to rebuild the Jewish Temple on the current site of the Dome of the Rock, while the

95 Ibid., 253.
evangelicals want to usher in the end times, which they think will postdate the rebuilding of the Temple.

Such religious schemes would seem a world apart from the mild, scholarly archaeologists detailed here. But scholars like Albright, knowingly or not, provided much fuel for this fire. Glueck, for example, once brashly wrote that no archaeological discovery had ever contradicted the biblical text, an idea that was taken up and repeated over and over in evangelical circles. Indeed, LaHaye’s series *Babylon Rising*, which began in 2003, chronicles the exploits of an Indiana Jones–like biblical archaeologist, Michael Murphy, who fights evil while unearthing artifacts that “prove” the Bible. He teaches a college course called Biblical Archaeology and Prophecy, described in its syllabus as “Studying the Past, Proving the Bible, and Reading the Signs of the Prophets.”97 The first day of class features a snippet of dialogue between Murphy and a student:

“Let me ask you some questions: Did Noah really build an ark and fill it with two of everything?
“Did Moses really part the Red Sea with a wave of his staff?
“Did a man named Jesus really live and breathe and walk around the Holy Land two thousand years ago, teaching and healing and performing miracles?
“How can we truly know any of this for sure?”
A slender hand went up at the back of the hall. It belonged to a blond girl with long, straight hair and big, round glasses he had seen once or twice in the university chapel.
“Because the Bible tells us,” she said in a quiet but confident voice.98

The element of prophecy sets LaHaye’s vision of archaeology apart from Albright’s and marks it as part of the late-twentieth-century Christian evangelical phase of interest in Israel. But LaHaye’s assurance that archaeology will prove the Bible because there is no chance it did not happen in precisely the way he understands it is intellectually closer to Albright than many would like to admit. Albright and his closest followers, with their confidence in science and their confidence in the Bible, form an important chapter in understanding the current religio-political situation involving Christian evangelicals and Israel that has been skipped over in the linkage of the nineteenth-century romantic travelers directly to the evangelicals and their walk-where-Jesus-walked tours. Their academic cachet, however, should not exempt them from scrutiny as part of this trajectory.

98 Ibid., 60-61.
IV. Conclusion

In his book-length polemic against the minimalists, Dever outlines his own historical approach: that texts are products of their time, that authors have intents, that texts have meanings, that historians must strive to understand the time period in which the text was produced. In many ways that is the approach taken to understanding the texts—though admittedly not very ancient texts—that are analyzed here. In one respect, though, I must differ from Dever. “Above all,” he wrote, “the question of the modern appropriation of the perceived meaning of a text must be kept strictly separate during the initial interpretation in fulfillment of the requirement of ‘disinterestedness.’”99 Even if it were desirable, such a separation is not possible, as this project shows by demonstrating the ways in which mid-century archaeologists appropriated ancient texts in order to comment on their present, even if they were unwilling to admit or unaware that they were doing so. Moreover, there is no question that this work is a comment on my present, in both ways I am aware of and ways I am not.

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99 Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?, 16.
CHAPTER ONE
WILLIAM FOXWELL ALBRIGHT AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOLARLY OBJECTIVITY AND POLITICAL ZIONISM

In an article about William Foxwell Albright’s 1919–1929 decade in Jerusalem, Neil Asher Silberman quotes Albright’s claims to scholarly and political neutrality that Albright established as early as 1920 and repeated again to a reporter soon after returning to Baltimore. Based on the postmodern tenet that no scholar could really be neutral or have no impact on his or her surroundings, especially in a situation of great strife such as the one Albright encountered in 1920s Palestine, Silberman suggests that future scholars should figure out what Albright’s impact was. He offers his groundwork on Albright’s experience in the 1920s as “a historical preface to what I hope can be a continuing discussion of the modern political and ideological nature of Albright’s legacy.”

This chapter presents two answers: 1) about a decade after returning to Baltimore, Albright became an active political Zionist, invoking his period in Jerusalem to establish his credibility; and 2) his pro-Zionist stance was implicit in his writings, some of which were widely read.

Albright did not believe his pro-Zionist political work affected his scholarship because he believed his scholarship had been placed on an externally verifiable objective footing. However, his way of constructing the relationship between the ancient Israelites and Canaanites bore striking resemblance to his Zionist politics and worldview concerning cultural interactions. This chapter looks at the way Albright responded to the threat he perceived to be posed by higher criticism by arguing that archaeology provided an objective, scientific basis for the progressive accumulation of knowledge, as opposed to textual critics’ endless literary constructions. It explores the way he formed a Baltimore school of biblical archaeology that reassured the public that the events described in the Bible really happened. That school was based on a Judeo-Christian coalition of scholars whose commonality lay in their way of reading the Old Testament, a commonality Albright argued was based on objective, scholarly data and not on a constructed religious outlook.

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Finally, the chapter reconstructs Albright’s pro-Zionist work based on archival material and shows that it was based on the same understanding of the relationship between cultures as was his understanding of the Israelites and Canaanites: that cultures are strictly bounded from one another, experience very little change over long periods of time, and can easily be destroyed if changed too much. Though at the level of detail Albright admitted some similarities between Israelite and Canaanite culture, at the macro level he set up a clear-cut opposition, as in the title of his final monograph, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: An Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths* (1968). One of his most well-known views was his insistence that the book of Joshua was an accurate representation of the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites, and that this annihilation had been necessary for the Israelites’ religion to survive: if more Canaanites had been left alive, he argued, Israel’s purity would have become hopelessly defiled. This matched his views on Zionism, which were underpinned by ideas about the necessity of preserving homogeneous, unchanging group cultures.

Albright inspired a degree of scholarly interest after his death that can be summarized as hagiographical in the 1970s and 1980s, critical in the 1990s, and more recently defensive against the 1990s criticism. He was born in 1891 in Chile to Methodist missionaries Wilbur and Zephine Albright. The family returned to Iowa when Albright was 12. Later in life, he often referred to himself as a native of Latin America, perhaps because he felt foreign in Iowa, and because he always looked back on Iowa as an intellectually barren place that he was lucky to have escaped.²

The tone for much Albright scholarship was set four years after his death when his former assistant, Leona Glidden Running, and his Ph.D. student David Noel Freedman published the biography *William Foxwell Albright: A Twentieth-Century Genius* (1975). Running, the primary author, writes that, because of Albright, “[Julius] Wellhausen and his school, dominant since the latter part of the nineteenth century, were in retreat. William Albright literally turned biblical studies around and gave them a new direction.”³

Philip King’s 1983 history of ASOR repeats the common story that Albright listened attentively but neutrally to both sides in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, pointing to his fluency “in modern Hebrew and Arabic” as having been “a distinct asset … especially in the 1920s,

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³ Ibid., 2.
when a sympathetic ear (and tongue) were appreciated by both political sides.” In 1984, a conference titled “Homage to William Foxwell Albright” was put on in Maryland by the American Friends of the Israel Exploration Society and resulted in The Scholarship of William Foxwell Albright: An Appraisal, edited by his Ph.D. student Gus W. Van Beek. The mostly laudatory volume summarizes Albright’s contributions to Semitic epigraphy and paleography, history, and philology, emphasizing the breadth of his knowledge, his willingness to transgress scholarly boundaries to create new conclusions, and his synthetic mind. But one dissenting voice could be heard. Delbert Hillers closed his chapter, “ungraciously no doubt,” with a criticism of the great master. “Prepared as we all are to think the worst of that people whom the Israelites are supposed to have extirpated,” Hillers writes, “Albright did nothing in his work on Ugaritic and Canaanite religion to mitigate the effect of our prejudice.” The Canaanites and their religion deserve to be treated with respect, Hillers argues, and Albright spread prejudice against them far and wide in his popular writings. Hillers did not, however, comment on what the ongoing implications of this prejudice might be for living people.

The 1990s brought a more critical attitude toward the archaeologists and their presumptions of neutrality. A special issue of Biblical Archaeologist in 1993 commemorates the centennial of Albright’s birth, but without taking a tone of awe or reverence. William Dever makes the trenchant observation that “while Albright often appeared ingenuous (as geniuses frequently are), his creation of the ‘Albright school’ was absolutely deliberate, even programmatic.” And, because Albright spent only 30 weeks of his life in the field, Dever writes that he “was not primarily an archaeologist … [he] seized upon archaeology at one particular point in his career; and he exploited its potential brilliantly.” He dismisses Albright’s methodology of objectivity as “flawed,” even “quaint.” Dever notes that Albright’s understanding of the biblical conquest of Canaan has been completely overturned: “[George] Mendenhall was right 30 years ago; there was no ‘conquest.’” Dever’s insight that Albright

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4 King, American Archaeology in the Mideast, 231.
7 Ibid., 28.
8 Ibid., 29.
9 Ibid., 30.
10 Ibid., 33.
exploited archaeology’s potential opens the question of why he exploited it, and what the consequences were. I argue that it is more than just Albright’s support for the Bible’s historicity; much worth examining lies in which of multiple stories he picked to believe was historical, for instance the ruthless conquest in Joshua over the more difficult, less genocidal one in Judges.

Burke Long’s *Planting and Reaping Albright* (1997), with a title that evokes the circular logic often employed by the Baltimore school, investigates the problematic consequences of that logic for biblical studies, though with minimal attention to Zionism. Albright presupposed the Bible to be true even though he said he did not, Long demonstrates, and he was so deeply Protestant that this must have influenced him in myriad ways—possibly, Long suggests, to the detriment of his non-Protestant acquaintances, though that element of Long’s argument is in question here given Albright’s strong sense of Judeo-Christian commonality.

This critical turn produced a backlash, as demonstrated in the 2002 special edition of *Near Eastern Archaeology*, titled “The House that Albright Built.” The title, a positive rendering of Dever’s sceptical query a decade previous, “What Remains of the House that Albright Built?”, suggested that much more remained of that house than recent critics had allowed. Seymour Gitin’s leadoff article is the most defensive, remarking that “whether or not Albright was totally successful in his attempt at objectivity is open to debate.”¹¹ This ignores Dever’s and Long’s sound methodological arguments against the very term, which, if they were heeded, might succeed in moving the debate over Albright beyond the dead-end question of how objective he managed to be. Gitin also accuses critics of anachronistically judging Albright on later archaeological standards, as well as using Albright’s basic “approach”—a term he uses vaguely—while giving him no respect.¹² Without specifically mentioning Dever’s contention that Albright was primarily a historian, not an archaeologist, issue editor J. Edward Wright begins his article with the claim, “As David Noel Freedman has noted, Albright was no historian.”¹³ This is odd given that Albright’s magnum opus was *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, a work he presented as history. Peter Douglas Feinman’s *William Foxwell Albright and the Origins of Biblical Archaeology* (2000) uncritically celebrates Albright’s thrashing of Julius Wellhausen. According to Feinman, Albright created biblical archaeology as part of “a

¹² Ibid.
war against Higher Criticism, the Documentary Hypothesis, the irreverent forces of darkness, and nihilism.”\(^{14}\) Feinman takes Albright’s own statements claiming he defeated Wellhausen as airtight proof that this is indeed what occurred.\(^{15}\) J. Edward Wright elsewhere argues that critics “fault him essentially for not measuring up to today’s standards in archaeological methodology and in ideological self-awareness.”\(^{16}\)

The impulse to protect Albright’s legacy with a “product of his time” argument ignores other products of that time who thought differently. As the discussion of Millar Burrows in the next chapter shows, other scholars at the time had greater ideological self-awareness. Perhaps the real tragedy is not failing to give Albright the benefit of the doubt but rather assuming that no one at Albright’s time could have been more self-examining or methodologically reflective than he was. That Albright looms so large over the field today suggests that Long’s description of the Albright school’s “collective ambition and will to dominate American biblical scholarship” is not only valid, its ramifications are still reverberating.\(^{17}\) Meanwhile, many of Burrows’ ideas, such as seeing Canaanites and most Israelites as culturally similar while only a small percentage of Israelites championed pure Yahwism, have become widespread.\(^{18}\)

I. Archaeology as an Antidote to Higher Criticism
As an undergraduate at Upper Iowa University, Albright published his first article on archaeology, “Recent Discoveries at Elephantine,” in the *Upper Iowa Academician*.\(^{19}\) While there he formed a friendship with fellow student Sam Geiser, who went on to become a biology professor in Texas. For years the two exchanged letters in which Albright expressed his desire to break down the barrier separating science from the humanities. Because he considered archaeology a science that illustrated human history, he ultimately believed his scholarship had achieved this goal. Thus, he argued, what was lacking from higher critics’ work was the scientific element of archaeology, which provided the tangible realia of the human past.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 6–8.
\(^{17}\) Long, *Planting and Reaping Albright*, 2.
Albright did not pioneer the idea that archaeology was disproving higher criticism. He did, however, bring a sophistication to the argument, which was already emanating from early-twentieth-century ASOR archaeologists in Jerusalem. Mark Elliott’s *Biblical Interpretation Using Archaeological Evidence, 1900–1930* (2002) details various conservatives who held the opinion that archaeology was disproving higher criticism in the period right before Albright. Elliott is at pains to separate Albright from most of them based on his vast learning and innovation in the field in order to save him from the charge of fundamentalism. But at base, Albright was still making the same argument they were, no matter how many ancient languages he knew. The counter-arguments, that archaeology could prove little regarding biblical individuals and that it was being misused by scholars with conservative biblical agendas, also existed before Albright, as Elliott shows, and were represented during Albright’s scholarly apex by Burrows. Albright’s overwhelming success training like-minded students may have worked to stave off for a while the flood of this type of criticism that broke loose in the 1970s.

Scholars commenting on Albright have noted that he often changed his mind, sometimes causing him to appear moderate and flexible. There is some truth to his having often changed his mind, though, as Peter Machinist points out, “the changes are far less dramatic and unpredictable than have sometimes been supposed and are really to be subsumed … under basic presuppositions and methods that remained throughout the lifetime of his work.” What seems equally clear is what a useful rhetorical strategy this was. Albright used the trope of having changed his mind—and thus not being inflexible, dogmatic, or unscholarly—often only to drive home the sureness of his conservative readings of the Bible. One of many examples that could be multiplied occurs on page 2 of *From the Stone Age to Christianity*. “I now recognize that Israelite law and religious institutions tend to be older and more continuous than I had supposed,” Albright explained. “In other words, I have grown more conservative in my attitude to Mosaic tradition.”

Albright understood the higher critics’ project to be to question whether events in the Bible happened as recorded, beginning, it seemed to him, with the presupposition that they did

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22 Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, 2.
not. Albright, on the other hand, saw no reason to rely on anything but the “plain sense”\textsuperscript{23} of the Bible unless confronted with overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Though Albright largely accepted the documentary hypothesis associated with Wellhausen, in his writings Wellhausen’s name became the scapegoat for all the wrongs he perceived to have been carried out in the name of higher criticism. He did not, for example, accept the idea that portions of the Old Testament were composed centuries later than the events described and thus reflected the politics and culture of those later periods, also a position associated with Wellhausen. Instead, he argued that even if they had been composed later, they accurately reflected the time periods they were supposed to describe because he believed oral cultures were capable of transmitting stories over centuries with little change. This is a further example of Albright’s belief that cultures changed little over long stretches of time, a stance that put him at odds with much of the academy and yet underlay his theories about the Bible that were heavily influential in biblical studies and in the public’s understanding of biblical archaeology.

But more than anything, Wellhausen is a symbol in Albright’s work. As J. M. Sasson argues, Albright had no interest in understanding Wellhausen’s project as Wellhausen, motivated by “neither religious skepticism nor historical nihilism,” seems to have understood it: “as a lesson about what happens when dogma supplants faith.”\textsuperscript{24} The search for one truth that could unite all Christians when the Bible was properly understood through these new methods—a grasp of the higher critics that could never be gained from reading Albright’s denunciations of them—brought Wellhausen’s and Albright’s project much closer to his philosophically than, one imagines, Albright could have admitted. Peter Katz once wrote to Albright to correct his charge that Wellhausen had been anti-Semitic, a correction Albright humbly accepted. The problem was, he confessed to Katz, “that Wellhausen was to me always a rather repellent figure.”\textsuperscript{25} On the other hand, “I consider Wellhausen as the greatest figure in O.T. research during the nineteenth century, and accept his arrangement of the relative order of the chief Pentateuchal sources without hesitation.” Albright may indeed have considered Wellhausen the greatest figure in nineteenth-century Old Testament research; of course, given his feelings about higher criticism, that may be because he saw the field as rather weak during that time.

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\textsuperscript{23} Albright did not use the term “plain sense,” but Peter Machinist’s invocation of it regarding Albright’s thought is useful. Machinist, “William Foxwell Albright,” 395.
\textsuperscript{25} William Foxwell Albright to Peter Katz, 8 August 1949, APS.
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Another higher critic whom Albright resembled more than is at first apparent was his graduate adviser, Paul Haupt, against whose views Albright reacted strongly as soon as he graduated. Albright later claimed that he had been for a time dazzled by higher criticism and turned into a liberal by the likes of Haupt, but that, almost as soon as he arrived in Jerusalem, the overwhelming archaeological evidence in favor of the Bible’s historicity left him no choice but to adopt a positivistic reading of the Old Testament’s historical portions. “During these fifteen years,” Albright claimed in an autobiographical sketch, “my initially rather skeptical attitude toward the accuracy of Israelite historical tradition had suffered repeated jolts as discovery after discovery confirmed the historicity of details which might reasonably have been considered legendary.”

But, as Feinman points out, one factor drawing Albright to Johns Hopkins was that in the 1910s studying under Haupt “was the best place” for Albright “to arm himself with some of the tools of the trade … to achieve his goal of illuminating religion through science.”

For example, Haupt wrote an article in 1885 attempting to explain a scenario in which an all-encompassing flood could actually have happened. This was going farther than Albright later would, since he very early rejected the historicity of the biblical flood story and argued instead that the pre-Abrahamic parts of the Bible were indeed folklore and not meant to be taken literally.

The attempt to harmonize science and religion was not their only shared characteristic. Both men were impressively accomplished at very young ages, with Haupt having already made important scholarly contributions at age 21. Both were felt by their students to be larger than life and difficult to disagree with; both held the position of head of Johns Hopkins’ Oriental Seminary for multiple decades; and both produced bibliographies so extensive as to astonish and amaze their colleagues. In the words of Albright’s student, G. Ernest Wright, Haupt “had an impact upon American oriental studies, including the Old Testament, exceeded only by his pupil and successor, W. F. Albright.”

Albright’s Ph.D. under Haupt was in Assyriology. Though Assyriologists were often interested in the Bible, the field reflected the desire of academics in the nineteenth century to

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28 Ibid., 192.
move away from the particularism of focusing only on the Bible. Thus, they studied the texts of Assyria and Babylonia, “the nations that, according to the Bible, had conquered ancient Israel.”

Bruce Kuklick argues that, by the 1880s, Palestine had been so trod over by missionaries and tourists that many scholars turned to Mesopotamia. This popular interest in Palestine “may have rendered” it “too familiar and even too popular for the more sober students.”

Assyriologists’ professional organization, the American Oriental Society (AOS), formed in the 1840s. According to Rachel Hallote, this way of conceiving of their field meant they “had all but erased their original connection to the Bible.” This was the case, for example, for James Henry Breasted (1865–1935). Albright admired him greatly in many ways, but he could not bring himself to mention Breasted’s name without harshly criticizing his nontheistic humanism.

Breasted earned a Ph.D. in Egyptology, coined the term “Fertile Crescent,” and headed up the University of Chicago’s Oriental Institute from its founding in 1919. As these details would suggest, Breasted considered the Middle East the cradle of civilization, but with very little interest in Palestine in particular, and certainly no interest in pinpointing it as the most important patch of land on earth.

Albright wrote a conflicted memorial of Breasted originally published in 1936, the year after his death, in which he applauded Breasted’s accomplishments, particularly for coming “on the scene just when the humanities most needed a champion.” But he regretted Breasted’s meliorism, which Albright considered even worse than that of the average liberal Protestant because “there was nothing theistic” about it.

The final chapter in Long’s book on Albright and his students, “Fictive Self,” questions Albright’s oft-repeated story of a conservative conversion in Palestine in the face of indisputable evidence. He argues that Albright was probably much less affected by higher criticism during his graduate school years than he claimed, never really absorbing the overbearing Haupt’s teachings.

Long sees Albright’s 1920s conservatism as more a reversion than a conversion, arguing that

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35 Ibid., 225. Albright was indebted to Breasted, however, particularly in the area of epistemology. Breasted had also argued that the science of history was as proper a science as biology so convincingly that he became only the second Orientalist elected to membership in the National Academy of Sciences, the first being charter member William Dwight Whitney (1827–1894). Albright became the third.
“some elements in Albright’s approach to the Bible seem in retrospect to have been fixed long before he went to Baltimore for graduate training with Haupt.”

J. Edward Wright disagrees with Long’s “psychologizing,” writing that he prefers “to take Albright at his word” when he told the story of this conversion several decades later, rather than adopt Long’s “deconstruction of Albright’s correspondence.” A set of letters Albright wrote at the time do not need “deconstruction,” however, to see the difference between them and what Albright wrote later in life. In 1922, he did not bother to be obsequious or dissimulating with Haupt, writing him that, though he valued his training at Johns Hopkins, “my historical points of view remained unchanged, I fear.” When asked to contribute to the Haupt Festschrift in the same year—hardly after 15 years of contemplation—Albright wrote to the editor that “this is undoubtedly a matter which requires great tact” because “I am now opposing practically all of the views with which his name has become associated in recent years.”

Long describes the humiliation Albright felt under Haupt, who, many reported, demeaned his students. Albright vowed not to publish his dissertation, because he felt Haupt had rewritten it. It was now Haupt’s work, and Albright disagreed with it. Albright’s graduate colleague Paul F. Bloomhardt felt that he suffered similarly under Haupt, as he wrote only a few months after Albright set off for Palestine. After Haupt’s revisions to his dissertation, Bloomhardt complained, “what he would have me prepare now for publication might be entitled ‘Haupt’s Contributions to the Interpretation of Haggai.’ The Hauptian character of the result is so evident at first glance that I fail to see how the publication of it will do anything but reflect adversely on me both in the general field of scholarship and among my confreres in the church.”

Albright certainly had reasons for mixed feelings about Haupt, who, though he rewrote his work, pushed hard to put Albright out in front for various opportunities. He recommended

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36 Long, Planting and Reaping Albright, 124.
38 William Foxwell Albright to Paul Haupt, 11 October 1922, APS.
39 William Foxwell Albright to Aaron Ember, 6 October 1922, APS. Interestingly, Haupt’s overbearing personality affected even this Festschrift. “A few days ago I was foolish enough to show Professor Haupt your very masterly article on Professor Haupt as Scholar and Teacher,” Aaron Ember, the Festschrift editor, apologetically wrote to Albright. “He was very pleased with it, but he made several suggestions. He would like you to insert some remarks on the following topics: staff-meetings, meetings of the university Philological Association, Society of Biblical Literature, AOS, International Congresses … Of course Professor Haupt does not want you to know that he has suggested this himself”: Aaron Ember to William Foxwell Albright, 2 February 1925, APS. Haupt’s behavior provides some insight as to why his students might have kept their opinions to themselves.
40 Paul F. Bloomhardt to William Foxwell Albright, 3 February 1920, APS.
him highly for the Jerusalem school directorship, argued for a higher salary, and negotiated a job for Albright’s fiancée, who joined him in Palestine, where they were wed.41

All this supports Long’s suggestion, however, that Albright was never liberal so much as that he learned in graduate school to delay his conservative tendencies.42 This is demonstrated by Albright’s comments in a 1920 letter he sent to James Nies: “I have recanted all the more or less novel opinions proposed in my article ‘Historical and Mythological Elements in the Story of Joseph,’” he informed Nies, “which had been taken over from Haupt in the second part of the paper.”43 The same letter demonstrates the youthful Albright’s incredible confidence about his own projects. He was planning a monograph on the beginnings of Hebrew history, he wrote, and was in a hurry to find a publisher because “I believe I have at last solved the main questions of early biblical history, including especially the chronology.”44

There is good reason to think that Albright’s relationship with biblical conservatives working in Jerusalem brought out own deeper convictions in a scholarly environment that encouraged them. Albright first traveled to Palestine in 1919 as the recipient of ASOR’s Thayer Fellowship, which funded a year at the Jerusalem school. When Arabist W. H. Worrell stepped down as Jerusalem school director amid intractable interpersonal problems with others at the school,45 the breakup of his marriage,46 and financial difficulties,47 the ASOR committee, acting from across the ocean, had to replace him quickly. Albright’s many publications and the fact that he was already in Jerusalem were in his favor, though his youth was not.48 The committee decided to take a chance on him, and he became the school’s first long-term director—the vision the committee had harbored for Worrell—serving from 1920 to 1929. During a one-year sabbatical in 1926–1927, he presented more than a hundred lectures around the United States about ASOR and its activities, and, according to King, “enrollment in the Jerusalem School

41 Paul Haupt to William Foxwell Albright, 22 May 1920, APS.
42 Long, Planting and Reaping Albright, 131.
43 William Foxwell Albright to James Nies, 11 November 1920, APS.
44 Emphasis added. Albright hastened to add: “Having shaken myself free from Haupt’s hypotheses does not, however, mean that I like or appreciate him less. The training and inspiration I received under him are vital to all my work.” William Foxwell Albright to James Nies, 11 November 1920, APS.
45 Long, Planting and Reaping Albright, 119.
46 W. H. Worrell to William Foxwell Albright, 14 December 1924, APS.
47 King, American Archaeology in the Mideast, 56.
48 Ibid., 58.
increased from that time.” Albright served as director again in 1933–1936 by spending half the year in Jerusalem and half in the United States.

If Albright was overwhelmed by anything in Jerusalem, it was not by the facts but rather by an interpretation of archaeological data that masqueraded as being not an interpretation at all but as being the incontrovertible, objective data. J. Edward Wright argues that Albright should not be considered a fundamentalist because he rejected “the sometimes bizarre interpretations that can be found among his fundamentalist colleagues,” in particular Melvin Grove Kyle. But, Long points out, it is difficult to “imagine what Albright could have discovered during those first nine months in British mandate Palestine that would have ‘jolted’ him out of his skepticism.” To believe this trope is to believe that the facts on the ground that Albright alluded to really existed, when it was actually an interpretation of the archaeological data that Albright encountered. Wright argues that Kyle—who wrote about archaeology for The Fundamentals series—held views that “were certainly not Albright’s, and they provide a clear contrast to Albright’s more considered opinion.” It is true that Albright was not quite as strait-laced as Kyle, a vowed opponent of jazz music and playing cards. Albright even once had to try to persuade him to participate in a dig with Catholic priests, who Kyle feared would be winebibbers. But I would argue that the difference between Kyle and Albright was more in the rhetorical strategy than in the substance of their views. Indeed, Albright’s appeals to science occasionally sound as though they were lifted from Kyle’s writings.

Kyle, Albright, and an ecumenical host of scholars set off in 1924 to explore the Dead Sea under the joint auspices of ASOR and Xenia Theological Seminary. Kyle’s resulting popular narrative, Explorations at Sodom (1927), captured the tenor of the expedition and put forth a remarkably similar vision of the relationship between archaeology and religion that Albright would ever afterward espouse. Looking at Kyle’s account of the expedition is a way of understanding the scholarly culture Albright entered in 1919 Jerusalem, and the one that he must have been thriving in, in order to be supported as Jerusalem school director. Kyle, who had

49 Ibid., 85.
54 William Foxwell Albright to Melvin Grove Kyle, 4 November 1932, APS.
already spent a great deal of time in Palestine and written books along the same lines in previous decades, held the view that science could only prove the Bible, not disprove it, because the truth of the Bible was unimpeachable. Indeed, he hoped in Explorations at Sodom to write something interesting enough to do justice to the “journalistic fashion” in which he believed “the Pentateuch” itself had been written.55

Kyle recounted how announcement of the expedition brought scores of eager inquiries as to what they were “going to find,” a request that “provoked a smile, a subtle scientific smile,”56 for these inquirers seemed to think the scientists were going into the expedition knowing what they were going to find. But, Kyle explained, science works the opposite way, and this expedition was scientific. Kyle listed carefully the names and religious affiliations of the expedition members, which showed “that there was nothing sectarian in the expedition,” which thus, he believed, meant that the “strictly scientific character of the work may be assured.”57 He himself was Presbyterian and the president of Xenia; Albright was Methodist; the flint and stone expert was a Jesuit, Pere Mallon; the Department of Antiquities representative was Na’im Makhouli, a local Greek Catholic; the Thayer fellow and two Xenia students represented various Protestant denominations; and Eliezer Sukenik was a Russian Jew who had moved to Palestine. “This unusual combination of faiths certainly relieves the expedition of any possible suspicion of sectarianism,” Kyle wrote. And yet in the next sentence he touched on the cornerstone of this ecumenism: “All these were men of devout reverence for the Old Testament Scriptures.”58

In some ways Explorations at Sodom was a classic Holy Land narrative.59 Kyle was certain that his own two eyes were making incredible biblical connections. “As I looked far over the well-cultivated fields, I understood why Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh wished to remain on this side Jordan rather than to pass over to the stony hills of the Promised Land,” he wrote upon seeing the Dead Sea.60 He felt that this place was so timeless that the patriarchs might be anywhere: “In this land of primitive things we seem to have been suddenly transported into the patriarchal world, and it seems as if it were a former age and another state of existence.”61 And

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55 Kyle, Explorations at Sodom, 20.
56 Ibid., 11.
57 Ibid., 24.
58 Ibid., 26.
59 For more on the characteristics of nineteenth-century Holy Land narratives by American Protestants, see Yothers, The Romance of the Holy Land in American Travel Writing.
60 Kyle, Explorations at Sodom, 28.
61 Ibid., 34.
he took on previous travelers, scoffing at their reports of “horrid smells” and “pestilential swamps,” which he experienced nowhere around the Dead Sea. He had an explanation for why past writers would have made such mistakes: they wrote “under the spell of the dreadful tragedy which took place here. They have not been untruthful, but psychology sometimes makes people ‘see things.’” But, “If we are finding mistakes in travellers’ accounts of this place, it is not so with the Biblical account,” or, presumably, with Kyle’s powers of observation.

King’s description of Kyle’s epistemology in his ASOR history remains valid: “It was Kyle’s assumption that if it could be proved that something might have happened, it was thereby proved that it had happened.” This does indeed smack of scientifically indefensible fundamentalism. Yet it is only a more obvious form of Albright’s lifelong methodology of coming to conclusions that supported the Bible’s historicity, ignoring the possibility that there might be other interpretations of the data, and dismissing anyone who disagreed with him as outdated, absurd, or of sinister intent. It was based on the belief that facts, irrespective of interpretation, were objectively piling up and all pointing in one direction: toward the historicity of the Bible. Without naming names, Kyle reminded readers of the attack he felt sure they also believed was under way on the biblical text, but then informed them that “the radicals are much disturbed, and well they may be,” because “Field-men of Bible lands are nearly all facing in the opposite direction.” Though they “have not, as yet, progressed very far,” he admitted, “it is the direction which determines where one is going.” Kyle’s admission that facts remained few is interesting in light of Albright’s later claim that the facts he encountered in Palestine at that time were overwhelming.

Kyle insisted that these were facts, not interpretations of facts, but not because he did not understand the latter argument. For him, science was the accumulation of facts, and it was the public’s ignorance that made them occasionally wonder “if the archaeologist knows and knows that he knows, or if he only makes a more or less clever guess,” in other words, an

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62 Ibid., 51.
63 Ibid., 52.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid., 83.
66 Ibid., 18.

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interpretation. Kyle’s book endeavored to “clear the atmosphere” by making plain “that archaeology in Bible Lands is a real science, as trustworthy as any other historical science.”

Kyle’s final paragraph in Explorations at Sodom reiterated the inevitability of this hand-in-hand march of science and religion: “Archaeological research is progressing rapidly,” he assured his readers, “and, when the trustworthiness of Scripture is finally and completely established, any theory based upon the untrustworthiness of the ancient documents will come down like a house of cards.” Switching to italics, he impressed one last lesson on his audience: “Facts are final.”

The influence of Kyle can be contrasted with an influence Albright later shrugged off, that of Palestinian folklore studies. In the early 1920s, Albright was interested in collecting Palestinian folklore to shed light on biblical customs. He worked with a group of interested Palestinians who performed the fieldwork. Much of their findings were published in the Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society. Albright’s initial assumption that the Palestinian peasants’ mind was “in so many respects no doubt, like his Israelite and Canaanite predecessors” was, in Silberman’s view, a “Euro-centric leap of faith” that it was important to move beyond. However, there may have been a political motivation for Albright’s turn away from Palestinian folklore. In the nineteenth century, almost every traveler to the Holy Land assumed the locals, their customs, and their costumes reflected biblical times. By the 1920s, scholars who were interested in Palestinian culture tended to connect biblical peoples to the Palestinians, and some used this to advocate for their rights vis-à-vis the Jewish immigrants. As will be shown in a later chapter, Nelson Glueck as an anti-Zionist stressed the perdurance of culture through the millennia in Palestine, and then later as a Zionist rejected the notion that Palestinians had been in the area more than a couple of centuries. Decades later, Albright would recall with a shudder that he at one time sympathized with the Palestinians. Interest in folklore may have been a scholarly manifestation of that sympathy.

The way that interest in folklore promoted a pro-native and anti-Zionist agenda can be seen in the work of Taufik Canaan, one of the folklore collectors, who in 1927 published a hefty volume titled Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine. Canaan, a native Palestinian

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67 Ibid., 20.
68 Ibid.
69 Emphasis in original. Ibid., 141.
Christian with a medical degree from the Syrian Protestant College (now the American University of Beirut), served for many years as ASOR’s physician. He was also the president of the Palestine Oriental Society the year his book was published. In 1936, he published two pamphlets, “The Palestine Arab Cause” and “Conflict in the Land of Peace,” which detailed his hopes for Arab self-determination in Palestine.

What Canaan compared and contrasted in his book on Palestinian folklore shows how he felt about the political situation. Native Palestinians from the ancient Israelites to the present Christians and Muslims shared a common culture, he argued, a culture he deemed superior to the Western Jewish and Christian cultures he saw colonizing the area. Like many anthropologists and folklorists, Canaan feared the loss of the culture he loved. “The primitive features of Palestine are disappearing so quickly that before long most of them will be forgotten,” he warned readers, because of “the great influences which the West is exerting upon the East.” Because he was not a trained archaeologist, Canaan announced that he was “not attempting to do more than place on record the bare material which I have collected.” But of course there was more to his book than that. Canaan saw Palestine as containing two basic cultures: native Palestinian culture (“simple, crude, but uncontaminated”) and Western culture (“more sophisticated but more unnatural”). For Canaan there was an essence to Palestinian culture that had persisted since the beginning of human history, and that remained the same under the thin veneer of the later elite textual religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam that had only appeared to colonize the area.

Despite his claim to leaving the work of comparison and analysis to the “real” archaeologists, Canaan compared three groups—Palestinian Christians, Palestinian Muslims, and folk religious practices in the Bible—and found them all remarkably similar. “The shrines are mostly situated on an elevated place,” he wrote, by way of description, and then affirmed the biblically literate reader’s logical leap: “This choice of situation is not a new custom, for we read that the people of the ancient Orient used to choose such places for the erection of their temples and the worship of their gods.” Because the Old Testament portrayed the high places as where the Canaanites worshiped, they had long been considered pagan. For example, Kyle, when identifying a “high place” at Kirbet Kerak during the Dead Sea expedition, shivered at the

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72 Taufik Canaan, Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine (London: Luzac & Co., 1927), front matter.
73 Ibid., v.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid., 3.
76 Ibid., 5.
thought that “Here … the people of ancient Kir gathered, far from distractions of business or pleasure or labour, and performed—what strange, perhaps horrid rites?”

But Canaan simply did not recognize any important difference between Canaanite and Israelite religion. After all, he pointed out, “the ark of Noah, Moriah and Abraham’s sacrifice, Sinai and the Law, Ebal and Gerizim” all happened on some pretty high places.

“It is the same also with Jesus,” he continued. “On a mountain he was tempted, was transfigured, preached, prayed, was crucified, and from a mountain he ascended to heaven.”

Though many other scholars would be critical of a model of cultural perdurance, Canaan gave no sign of questioning it, writing that none of this would be the least bit surprising to anyone as soon as they realized “that these same Palestine” peasants “are heirs and to some extent descendants of the heathen inhabitants of prebiblical times, who built the first high places.”

This predilection for high places “was adopted from their predecessors by the Israelites and by them transmitted to following generations.” Unlike Albright or other writers convinced of the superiority of the Israelites’ religion, Canaan did not argue that the Israelites refined this practice, purified it, consecrated it to Yahweh, or changed its meaning. Instead he placed the Canaanites and the Israelites into a monocultural history that led down to the present-day local shrines of the Palestinians. The reason the Jews were left out of most of his formulations was because most of the ones he knew were Western, not indigenous local peasants. When applicable, he included Jews’ folk practices, such as when he explained that the hand decorations found in shrines represented the hand of Fatimah among Muslims, the hand of Mary among the Christians, and the hand of God among the Jews.

Canaan saw textual religion as pertaining to the elite form of religion he associated with Westerners. “Popular religion,” Canaan explained, “is in many ways hostile to the religion of the Quran and the Bible.” Even so, Canaan tended to read the Bible as brimming with folk religion, and possibly nothing else. He connected the tradition of sacred stone piles, which he said was common among Palestinian Christians and Muslims, to the book of Joshua, when “the Israelites

77 Kyle, Explorations at Sodom, 42.
78 Canaan, Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine, 6.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid., 280.
81 Ibid., 6.
82 Ibid., 12.
83 Ibid., 137.
erected stones at Gilgal as a memorial after crossing the Jordan.” For those skeptical that Christians venerated rocks, Canaan reminded them of “Golgotha, and the pillar where Christ was bound and scourged,” and, particularly among native Palestinians, “the sacred stones of St. George, the ‘Milk Grotto,’ and the rock on which Elijah is supposed to have rested.” He played up interactions between Muslims and Christians that would seem to indicate their underlying similarities, recounting tales of Christians who participated in Ramadan and Muslim mothers who, after losing a child, vowed to baptize their next child to place it under Jesus’ protection. He recounted that both Christian and Muslim women visited the milk grotto in Bethlehem where legend says Mary’s milk dripped to increase their own milk.

Canaan described Jesus as a local Palestinian saint or god. Just as he wrote about other local saints, he wrote that Jesus’ special powers remained in effect, with women using the water near the place they believed he healed a blind man to treat eye problems. Folk religion even had an influence on contemporary politics, as Canaan showed in his story of the Laurel Lady, associated with a tree, who appeared “during the attack of the British (1917) standing on the top of the tree, with a greenish garment, a light head-shawl and a sword in her hand, which dripped with blood” and who used her powers to repel the troops several times. A certain sacred terebinth tree was associated with Turkish rule, and the people said that when the tree died the Turks would depart from Palestine. And “it so happened that during the last year of the war it dried up, and soon afterwards Jerusalem was taken by the British troops.” Canaan’s text, with its claims to innocence, shows how commentators on the past invested that past with political meaning. He made the Palestinians the true heirs to the ancient Israelites and collapsed current practice into the past to give his belief in the Palestinians’ right to their ancestral land a timeless quality.

Another individual with whom Albright interacted in Jerusalem was the Rev. Herbert Danby, an Anglican minister with strong Zionist tendencies. He came to Jerusalem at age 30 in 1919—the same year as Albright—to serve as church librarian and consultant to the Anglican archbishop of Jerusalem, Rennie Miles MacInnes. MacInnes opposed Zionist aspirations and

84 Ibid., 76.
85 Ibid., 79.
86 Ibid., 181–182.
87 Ibid., 110.
88 Ibid., 65.
89 Ibid., 71.
90 Ibid., 72.
sympathized with the local Arab population, and found that Danby was his opposite. For Danby, according to Shalom Goldman, “the relationship between Christian Hebraism, philo-Semitism, and support of Zionism was unusually direct.”  

Danby was a prominent member of the Palestine Oriental Society, as was Albright. The letter Danby sent to Albright upon hearing the news of Haupt’s death in 1927 points both to the close relationship the two must have had and to Danby’s way of forcefully expressing his opinions, in this case of Haupt’s worth. “We had a considerable shock when the news came of Paul Haupt’s death—not that he was personally lamented,” Danby wrote glibly, “but because we had a horrid shock lest you should be offered his post.”

Haupt’s death is indeed what eventually tore Albright away from Jerusalem when, two years later, he accepted an offer to replace his mentor at Johns Hopkins. His reputation as an expert on Palestine had spread; as he wrote at the beginning of the fall semester, “The Baltimore Jews are calling on me for addresses.” B’nai B’rith wanted to hear his views “on the ‘fundamental causes of the recent developments in the Palestine area,’” but, he assured his correspondent, “I decline to touch on political and related matters.”

In the 1930s, Albright does appear to have stayed quiet on Zionism; his activism remained deferred until 1941. During the intervening time he was extremely concerned about events in Germany. As a reader of German with German roots, Albright had been appalled by the winners’ actions after World War I to block the alleviation of German suffering. As James Nies wrote a sympathetic Albright in 1920, “Almost every German Assyriologist is at the present moment actually in want of food.” Albright’s attentiveness to events in Germany also led him to understand almost instantaneously the ramifications of Adolph Hitler’s rise to power in 1933, and he put in a great deal of effort trying to help dismissed academics find positions in the United States. Julius Lewy, professor of Semitic philology at the University of Giessen, lost his job in July 1933. As soon as Albright read the news, he wrote to Lewy’s wife to offer to persuade Johns Hopkins to hire Lewy to teach the half-years Albright was spending in Palestine. On October 4, 1933, he sent letters to higher-ups at Johns Hopkins asking them to hire Lewy in the Oriental Seminary because he “was dismissed by the German Government from

92 Herbert Danby to William Foxwell Albright, 8 March 1927, APS.
93 William Foxwell Albright to C. C. McCown, 21 September 1929, APS.
94 James Nies to William Foxwell Albright, 19 December 1920, APS.
95 William Foxwell Albright to Mrs. Julius Lewy, 20 July 1933, APS.
his post in early July, along with other liberals, Jews, and a woman whose only fault was her sex.”96 He passed on Lewy’s information to Franz Boas of Columbia University, who was chairing a committee to place German Jewish academics in the United States,97 and wrote Yale to suggest that Lewy might be the perfect successor to a recently deceased Assyriologist.98 Lewy taught Albright’s half-year at Johns Hopkins once and then was hired on a more permanent basis by the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York.99

Albright himself was the leading candidate for the Yale job he suggested Lewy for, though he had previously suggested Albrecht Goetze. On December 12, 1933, not long after reading that Goetze, a non-Jewish professor of Semitic languages and Oriental history at Marburg, was dismissed by the Nazis in 1933 as “politically unreliable,”100 Albright wrote “to withdraw my candidacy for the Yale chair of Assyriology on behalf of Götze, who deserves it and needs it more than I do.”101 When Yale began to also consider Lewy for the position, however, Albright was torn. His recommendations apparently frustrated Franklin Edgerton, who pointed out that they were “distinctly more unfavorable to” Goetze “than any previous estimate which I remember getting from you,” suggesting that Albright was more concerned about helping Lewy.102 Then, Yale offered Albright the job anyway, with a salary increase, first-year sabbatical, and department chairmanship.103 After about a week, Albright declined, though many times afterward he reminisced about almost going to Yale to chair what he considered “the second most important Semitic department in America,” after the University of Chicago.104 His family did not want to leave Baltimore, and, as he wrote to his old chum Sam Geiser, such a post would entail “an obligation to spend most of my time on Assyriology and less on Palestine.”105 Albright feared that if he left Johns Hopkins, the Oriental Seminary might cease to exist, whereas “the Yale Semitic department will surely not be discontinued.”106 Not least, Albright knew that the livelihoods, and even the lives, of German scholars, Jewish and non-Jewish, hung in the

96 William Foxwell Albright to Joseph S. Amon, 4 October 1933, APS.
97 William Foxwell Albright to Franz Boas, 26 July 26 1933, APS.
98 William Foxwell Albright to George Dahl, 31 July 1933, APS.
99 William Foxwell Albright to Albrecht Goetze, 2 May 1934, APS.
101 William Foxwell Albright to ? Sturtevant, 12 December 1933, APS.
102 Franklin Edgerton to William Foxwell Albright, 4 March 1934, APS.
103 Edgar Furniss to William Foxwell Albright, 15 February 1934, APS.
104 William Foxwell Albright to Ephraim Speiser, 23 February 1934, APS.
105 William Foxwell Albright to Sam Geiser, 20 February 1934, APS.
106 William Foxwell Albright to Franklin Edgerton, 26 February 1934, APS.
balance. In sending his regrets to Franklin Edgerton, he encouraged him to use the money “to try out a number of German scholars, two at a time, if you wish it.”\(^{107}\) Indeed, Albright’s turning down the position did lead to an offer to Goetze, who retired from Yale in 1965.

II. The Formation of a Judeo-Christian Baltimore School

The 1930s was also a period in which Albright worked to form the Baltimore school and developed his philosophy of history, as delineated in *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, first published in 1940. Albright, who strongly disapproved of liberal Protestantism, forged through the Baltimore school an alternative ecumenism that borrowed from the language and aims of the mostly liberal Protestant ecumenical movement but located similarity in belief in the historicity of the Old Testament. This way of reading the Old Testament brought Albright’s students together in a unity of purpose that distinguished them from traditional biblical interpretations, the liberal biblical studies strains in the academy, and the fundamentalist backlash that denied that critical study could improve understanding of the Bible. This ecumenism therefore included many Jews while it excluded most of the ecumenical movement, composed largely of liberal Protestants who tended to focus on the New Testament and, based partly on the arguments of biblical literary criticism, dismiss Old Testament events like the conquest as unworthy of their conception of God.

As much of the scholarship has pointed out, Albright was a Protestant, and this affected his worldview. I would add, however, that this did not mean he had difficulty connecting with non-Protestants. Most of his early students were Jews; many of his later students were Catholics. Albright’s obvious pride in his many Jewish and Catholic students and admirers necessitates an interpretation that does not simply acknowledge that he was a Protestant in a certain time and place and presume that this explains his point of view. As he was fond of pointing out, almost all Protestants contemporaneous to him disagreed with him, with fundamentalists on one side and liberal Protestants on the other. Rather than having typical Protestant views, Albright self-consciously attempted to spread his atypical views among his students. By instilling his plain-sense reading of the Old Testament among others for whom the Old Testament was also a sacred text, he was able to foster a conservative Bible-based ecumenism that, I argue, contributed to the growing obviousness of the “Judeo-Christian tradition” and lack of attention to what that

\(^{107}\) William Foxwell Albright to Franklin Edgerton, 26 February 1934, APS.
excluded. In the Baltimore school’s divide between good religion and bad religion, the good religion of those Protestants, Catholics, and Jews who venerated the Old Testament in this way fell on one side of a line, while the bad religion of liberal Protestants, fundamentalist Protestants, and Muslims, derided as ahistorical and thus lacking reason, fell on the other.

Albright argued that a “common intellectual approach” to the Old Testament could be achieved while leaving theological differences off the table. “I am not in the least anxious to see a union of religious groups or attitude,” he wrote:

Lecturing as I do constantly to Catholic priests and theological students, Protestant ministers and seminaries, and to Jews of all types and descriptions, I can see the merit of a common intellectual approach, which honestly faces the absolute difference of religious viewpoint and recognizes merit in each without surrendering one’s own religious convictions in any respect. As you see my stand in critical matters is an intellectual position, not a religious one.  

In other words, Albright held that this common intellectual approach had no bearing on religion because of his conviction that scholarship and religion could be separated just as much as scholarship and politics could. This approach, involving as it did a non-skeptical way of reading the text, a faith that the Israelites’ actions were justified, and a belief that the Bible was slowly and steadily being vindicated by archaeology, could not really be said to have no bearing on the religious outlook of one who held it. The question is not whether it had a bearing on religious outlook, but what that bearing was. Among the scholars discussed in this work, Albright, Wright, and late-career Glueck demonstrated an implied link between the ancient Israelites and the modern Israelis. Their plain-sense and anti-metaphorical reading of the Old Testament appealed to Zionist-oriented Israeli archaeologists, many of whom worked with Albright at some juncture, as they set about digging up a specifically Jewish past, marginalizing remains they perceived to be non-Jewish, and encouraging the connection formed in readers’ minds between the ancient past and the present that appeared to add up to God-given Jewish ownership of the land.

Upon accepting a position at Johns Hopkins after his adviser’s death, Albright wrote the university’s president, F. J. Goodnow, that he would not soon forget his “eight years at the head of an institution which counts Protestants of all groups and tendencies, Catholics, and Jews, both Orthodox and Reformed, among its supporters and members.”

108 William Foxwell Albright to “Graham,” 11 March 1938, APS.
109 William Foxwell Albright to F. J. Goodnow, 26 January 1928, APS.
to Goodnow to keep that spirit alive at Johns Hopkins’ Oriental Seminary. In a way similar to Melvin Grove Kyle when he explained that the Dead Sea expedition was scientific because it included experts from a variety of religious backgrounds, Albright saw his ability to interest and inform anyone interested in the Old Testament as evidence of his own “strict neutrality.”

While never giving up on Protestantism, Albright saw himself as uniquely positioned to be, in his way, Catholic, Protestant, and Jew all at once. He could not remember ever having met a Jew until he arrived at the Oriental Seminary, but as a student there he came into contact with several Jews studying under Haupt. As a child in Latin America he had been terrified of Catholic priests, and had absorbed various anti-Catholic sentiments from his missionary family. Albright’s feelings about Catholics began to warm during his decade in Jerusalem, as he met Catholic priests who were serious archaeologists, and as he began to raise a Catholic family. His fiancée, Ruth, who joined him and married him there, converted to Catholicism about a year into their marriage, much to Albright’s shock at the time. She studied the faith under the Catholic fathers at the Ecole Biblique, a French biblical archaeology institute near ASOR both geographically and epistemologically. Fiercely proud that his wife held a Ph.D. in Sanskrit from Johns Hopkins, where they met as graduate students, he became even more proud to repeat frequently in his letters that his wife and four sons were Catholic, and that his second son, Hugh, chose at age 15 to become a Christian Brother and later taught mathematics at LaSalle. As Albright liked to say, he had “a Catholic wife and four Catholic sons,” was “a practicing Methodist,” and was also “practically an adopted Jew.” Albright’s frequent claims to being an honorary Jew and Catholic suggest that he did believe coming to a consensus on the Old Testament’s historicity could flatten theological differences, and that this would be for the better. After all, he considered himself, in some real way, to embody all three at once. Indeed, he had very little good to say about any Protestants other than those who were his own students. He saw the potential among Jews and Catholics for reading the Old Testament as a straightforward historical document coming to fruition during his lifetime, while Protestants seemed to him to be determinedly leaving it behind, on the one hand, or retreating into fundamentalism, on the other.

For Albright, Protestants had been at their best when they focused on the Bible. And Catholics, often accused of not reading the Bible, had, in Albright’s view, moved into that niche

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110 William Foxwell Albright to Wilbur Albright, 10 October 1937, APS.
111 William Foxwell Albright to “Graham,” 11 March 1938, APS.
as Protestants were moving out of it. “Especially among Lutherans and Methodists, the opposition to the O.T. has forced it out of an increasing number of seminaries,” he complained to Albrecht Alt. “On the other hand, there is a remarkable revival of interest in the O.T. among American Catholics.”

He was incredibly pleased to be named “an honorary member of the Catholic Biblical Association of America,” and to be as far as he knew the first Protestant to receive such an honor.

While occasionally scholars comment that Albright favored Protestants, and particularly Methodists, it appears that the opposite is true. He was hardest on Methodists, next hardest on other Protestants, more accommodating to Catholics, and most accommodating to Jews. He was hardest on Methodists as a group because he felt that the church of his youth was becoming ever more liberal. He was extremely regretful of the direction he saw the Methodist church moving, namely, away from the Bible. He complained that “biblical studies and everything related to them stand on a lower level today in Methodist studies” than before. While he encouraged young Methodists to study the Bible, he thought it a losing battle. He did not, however, ever leave that church. According to his biographer Leona Running, one of Albright’s sons convinced him not to leave the Methodist church, saying that if he did then his neutral stance would be compromised in the eyes of many.

When Albright learned that Thomas Kepler of Oberlin, whom he considered a radical theologically, was the primary contributor to the new Methodist Sunday School materials, he wrote that he was “sorry to see the church of Wesley fall on such evil days,” but, as a layman, he could “do nothing whatever in so hierarchically an organized church as the Methodist, where even the minister is helpless in the face of district superintendent and bishop.”

Writing to the son of one of his father’s friends from his missionary days, Albright wrote, “It is now a common thing to find Methodists in high places in ecclesiastical life who are atheists, holding entirely naturalistic positions. Fortunately my father had no idea how far this process had gone when he died.”

When the dean of Drew Theological Seminary asked Albright for recommendations of a Methodist in Old Testament studies, Albright was sorry to say that his “own students … have

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112 William Foxwell Albright to Albrecht Alt, 16 May 1946, APS.
113 William Foxwell Albright to “FitzGerald,” 28 November 1944, APS.
114 William Foxwell Albright to “Family,” 24 October 1943, APS.
115 Running and Freedman, William Foxwell Albright, 426.
116 William Foxwell Albright to Lester Plowman, 26 August 1949, APS.
117 William Foxwell Albright to S. Alfonso Canut de Bon, 15 August 1950, APS.
not included many Methodists,” and the only one he could think of was not experienced enough yet for the job.\textsuperscript{118} He confided to one of his Jesuit students a couple of weeks later that “unfortunately there is not a single sound biblical scholar in the entire Methodist Church.”\textsuperscript{119} He griped to Wright not to expect too much from one associate, because he was “just too much a Methodist to see the point of our theological approach, and his Yale training prevents him from utilizing the archaeological data adequately.”\textsuperscript{120} When his Ph.D. student Dewey Beegle was hired by a Methodist college and wrote to his mentor about his success in the classroom, Albright replied that he “was considerably heartened by your news” about his students’ developing interests. “If one can get students reasonably excited about matters of theology, it is indeed an important step forward.”\textsuperscript{121} This wording suggests that while he took pains to argue that what he was doing was scholarly and objective, not religious, he did in this case conflate Old Testament study with theology.

Liberal Protestants as a whole ranked only slightly above the Methodist subgroup. Liberal Protestants who no longer believed that the events of the Old Testament actually happened, or, even worse, believed events like the conquest had happened but did not believe God approved of such bloodshed, were decidedly outside Albright’s ecumenical circle. Albright noted with glee that \textit{From the Stone Age to Christianity} was appealing to everyone but liberal Protestants, including conservative Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and, according to him, even “non-religious scholarly circles.”\textsuperscript{122} Liberal Protestants could not stand his view of history, he believed, because they had become so anti-historical. They believed in progress and metaphysical systems, mistakes similar to those that had been made in the past, before Catholics turned back to the Bible. “Scholasticism easily becomes a fossilized academic tradition,” he argued, “and Neo-orthodoxy frequently becomes irresponsible, but the living faith of the Bible will prevail.”\textsuperscript{123} He complained to Robert Michaelson at the University of Iowa, who wished to hire a New Testament specialist, in 1960, that “actually the number of young men who are trained in this field is astonishingly low.”\textsuperscript{124}

\textsuperscript{118} William Foxwell Albright to Clarence T. Craig, 28 August 1952, APS. 
\textsuperscript{119} William Foxwell Albright to Roger T. O’Callaghan, S.J., 6 September 1952, APS. 
\textsuperscript{120} William Foxwell Albright to G. Ernest Wright, 8 August 1950, APS. 
\textsuperscript{121} William Foxwell Albright to Dewey M. Beegle, 30 May 1966, APS. 
\textsuperscript{122} William Foxwell Albright to Wilbur M. Smith, 22 February 1941, APS. 
\textsuperscript{123} William Foxwell Albright, excerpts from an address given 30 September 1952, in Baltimore, APS. 
\textsuperscript{124} William Foxwell Albright to Robert Michaelson, 29 January 1960, APS.
Albright primarily saw two religious groups as irrationally ahistorical, liberal Protestants and Muslims. Albright encountered many Muslims in his decade in Jerusalem, and later in his two expeditions to Arabia. He tended to regard them as simple and child-like. In one interesting way, they shared something in common with liberal Protestants, which was that they were not concerned enough with historicity. For Albright, the Judeo-Christian tradition, properly understood, was based on facts. “Arabian tradition is worthless for such historical purposes,” he informed an inquirer. “There is no way of telling” the answer to her question “except from the traditions stated in the Bible.” Albright’s student David Noel Freedman, born Jewish, was a gifted student who at age 17 both graduated from college and decided to become a Presbyterian. Albright’s student David Noel Freedman, born Jewish, was a gifted student who at age 17 both graduated from college and decided to become a Presbyterian. Once, when he was asked to give talks on Jewish-Christian relations, he wrote nervously to his mentor that he had “only the most chaotic ideas on the subject,” and was puzzled to find that “for some reason I am regarded as an expert, though almost totally alienated from one group, and not entirely at home in the other.” If there was an expert on such problems, Freedman felt, it was Albright. “I think I would get a lot out of a conversation with you about it; for you of all men are much at home with both groups.”

Even so, Albright sometimes demonstrated a yearning to identify more fully with Jews. In 1944, I. B. Berkson of the American Zionist Emergency Council informed Albright of rumors floating around suggesting that the reason Albright supported Zionism was because he was “intermarried with” Jews. “At any rate,” Berkson wrote, “I told him that I thought you neither looked like a Jew, acted like a Jew, or smelt like a Jew; and as far as I knew, you were a direct

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125 William Foxwell Albright to Esther Kellner, 20 January 1967, APS.
126 William Foxwell Albright to Nelson Glueck, 4 April 1936, APS.
127 David Noel Freedman to William Foxwell Albright, 23 March 1953, APS.
descendant of Japheth.” Albright’s response illuminates the way he felt about Jews compared with others. “I wish I had some Jewish connection through marriage,” he replied. “Your informant probably assumed that [W. F.] Stinespring (my sister’s husband) is Jewish because he translated Klausner’s *From Jesus to Paul* into English. Unfortunately, Stinespring is a Pennsylvania Dutchman from the Valley of Virginia (he is also an anti-Zionist). My wife has a second cousin living in town (one Thornley Martin), whose mother is Jewish.”

It might not have been surprising if Albright had said it was unfortunate that Stinespring was not a Zionist; his wording, regretting that Stinespring was not Jewish, shows Albright’s desire to be close to Jews and be accepted by them. In an interview, Stephen Mann told Running that “it was quite plain in the later years of his life that he was growing closer and closer to Judaism, and on several occasions he confessed to me that he found himself far more happy with Jews than he did with his co-confessional Methodists.”

Stinespring, an ordained Presbyterian, spent most of his career at the Methodist Duke University Divinity School. He participated in the same constellation of scholarly interests as his brother-in-law. His main scholarly interest was the way the Old Testament was used in the New Testament. He spent 1932–1935 and 1963 at ASOR in Jerusalem, and served on the State Department’s Anglo-American Committee on Palestine in 1946. But, in Albright’s view, he was the kind of Christian who had become so liberal in his Protestantism that he might not even qualify as a Christian anymore. Albright provided a recommendation for Stinespring that was part glowing—“Stinespring controls the original sources, he has the scholar’s attitude, he is qualified to do worth-while research, he has a broad culture, he is a splendid teacher, and he is one of the most upright men whom I have ever known”—and part damning. “I frankly do not know just what his religious beliefs are, since we never discussed them. … I attend church in Palestine much more than he does, but that isn’t surprising when you realize that for many years he never saw the inside of a church in America except as a member of the choir.” Albright recommended inviting Stinespring for a year as a visiting professor so that the dean could judge whether his commitment to Christianity, or lack thereof, came up to Duke’s requirements.

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128 I. B. Berkson to William Foxwell Albright, 19 September 1944, APS.
129 William Foxwell Albright to I. B. Berkson, 21 September 1944, APS.
131 William Foxwell Albright to Dean Elbert Russell, 21 February 1936, APS.
Stinespring frustrated Carl Voss of the Christian Council on Palestine, an organization composed of Christian clergymen and religious educators, in his efforts to organize Christian college professors’ support for Zionism. He was “disturbed and chagrined” at the opposition they were getting from Bible professors in “our more liberal seminaries,” and he wrote to Albright to let him know that “not a little of this opposition seems to come from your brother-in-law.”\textsuperscript{132} Voss asked Albright if he could write to Stinespring to help bring him around. “I never discuss anything except professional matters with Stinespring,” Albright replied. Granting that Stinespring was “an exceedingly independent and honest man,” he was also “a socialist and a theological liberal, so we simply do not discuss either socio-political or theological questions.”\textsuperscript{133}

Albright learned not long afterward that he did have a Jewish relation by marriage, a little more distant than Stinespring. His correspondence with his relative Helen Abrams, nee Robbins, demonstrates the way the question of ancient times and contemporary issues were mixed up in ordinary people’s minds, and indeed shows the sorts of everyday anti-Jewish attitudes that Albright sought to end. In 1945, Helen wrote him asking for advice. She had divorced her first husband, “a cruel person,” and had been married ten years previous to a Jewish man, “the kindest, most generous man I ever knew.”\textsuperscript{134} Helen’s question was: “We would like to know, in your opinion (as I feel you are an authority) are the Jewish people entitled to Palestine, and did they actually kill Christ.” She continued, “My children have had to listen to slurs against my husband’s race for a long time. They don’t like to hear it, but I’ve told them to ignore it, as it is untrue. Please let me know about these things. My marriage is built on love + respect, so nothing you say could have any bearing on this. Only, you spent many years in Jerusalem + thereabouts, so I feel that you do know.”\textsuperscript{135}

Helen closed by stating that someday she would love to meet her famous relative and introduce him to her children and their stepfather. Albright replied that he believed the Jewish people “are entitled to a home in Palestine,” and then wrote a long paragraph reassuring Helen that her husband was not a Christ killer:

“The question of whether the Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus seems to me irrelevant to the present situation of the Jewish people. The mere fact that a Roman governor was also responsible for the death of our Lord is the best illustration of the

\textsuperscript{132} Carl Hermann Voss to William Foxwell Albright, 21 December 1943, APS.
\textsuperscript{133} William Foxwell Albright to Carl Hermann Voss, 24 December 1943, APS.
\textsuperscript{134} Helen Abrams to William Foxwell Albright, 5 November 1945, APS.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
The historic fact that the Jews are only partly responsible in any case. Besides, the same Jews were responsible for the coming of Jesus into the world and for the authorship of the entire New Testament, since I do not believe that a single disciple or apostle was of non-Jewish origin. If the Jews of today are still partly responsible for the death of Christ, the Christians are far more responsible since they have both Jewish and non-Jewish blood in their veins.\textsuperscript{136}

Only three months later, Albright had the opportunity to meet these relatives when he began a term as a visiting professor at the University of Chicago. At that time he learned that Helen was a convert to Judaism and that the family was raising the boys Jewish.\textsuperscript{137} The \textit{Chicago Daily Tribune} wrote up a story on the famous visiting academic, referring to him in the headline as “Jewish Expert” and mentioning that he was living with the Abrams family while in Chicago. The Jewish expert used the forum to explain his views on Zionism. Albright added, according to the article, that “all reports of Jewish persecution of Arabians are false.”\textsuperscript{138}

Albright worked to ensure that Jewish scholars would be more fairly represented in scholarly circles. “Convinced as I am, that the future belongs to your school of thought, I’ve been thinking to gathering a group of your students plus two or three others (probably Gentiles) for at least a yearly meeting,” Wright informed Albright in 1950.\textsuperscript{139} Albright, true to his vision of scholarly work that enveloped all who valued the Old Testament, wrote back to tell Wright he needed to include at least one Jewish scholar.\textsuperscript{140} This was not dissimilar to the time Albright agreed to Luther Weigle’s request to serve on the Old Testament section of the American Standard Bible Committee, on one condition: that Weigle correct his oversight of not having invited a single Jewish scholar. Albright suggested Harry Orlinsky. In closing, he reiterated, “In my opinion it would be disgraceful to launch a cooperative Christian enterprise of this kind without a Jewish member—so disgraceful in fact that I shall tender my resignation unless some Jewish scholar is invited.”\textsuperscript{141}

Albright’s creation of a school of thought that brought scholars together around a way of reading the Old Testament was a conscious endeavor. In 1934, only five years after returning to the United States and starting to teach at Johns Hopkins, he wrote to his college friend Sam

\textsuperscript{136} William Foxwell Albright to Helen Abrams, 9 November 1945, APS.
\textsuperscript{137} William Foxwell Albright to Harry Orlinsky, 19 January 1946, APS.
\textsuperscript{139} G. Ernest Wright to William Foxwell Albright, 2 August 1950, APS.
\textsuperscript{140} William Foxwell Albright to G. Ernest Wright, 8 August 1950, APS.
\textsuperscript{141} William Foxwell Albright to Dean Luther A. Weigle, 8 April 1945, APS.
Geiser that, “Between Jerusalem and Baltimore,” he was beginning “to have a respectable number of students, some very good,” and to see “the beginnings of an ‘Albright School,’ which will make itself felt in American scholarship some day.”

Pleased at the significant numbers of Jews and Catholics who studied with him at the Oriental Seminary, he once wrote to his family that the glue that held the school together was “a conservative attitude toward the Old Testament and a keen realization of its religious values.” Many of his students enthusiastically took up the mantle of the Albright school.

His joy at seeing a specific way of reading the Old Testament being adopted across denominational lines was reflected in his tendency to count his students based on their religious affiliations, and to advertise the success of the graduate department based on those numbers. In 1932, when he had only recently taken over the department (which thus also reflects on the student body’s composition under Haupt), all six graduate students were Jewish. In 1937, he wrote his father that there were “ten graduate students” in the Oriental Seminary: “four Protestants, four Jews, and two Catholics.”

In 1943, he wrote his family that the Oriental Seminary that year was composed of “two or three Presbyterian ministers, two doing full-time work, one Lutheran, two or three Jewish students, and one extremely brilliant Jesuit student. … So we shall have our usual heterogeneity of religious affiliation.”

By the early 1950s, the number of Protestant students in the Oriental Seminary was dropping. In 1951, Albright wrote that “we have lost most of our Protestants with virtually no replacements,” but that “we have four Jesuits and a much larger group of Jews.” Mitchell Dahood, a Jesuit who graduated that same year, had only a week earlier written to his adviser to let him know that “My only hope is that I will be able to carry on the fine tradition of the Baltimore school.” Albright’s first Jesuit student, Roger T. O’Callaghan, graduated in 1946 and died in a car accident only a few years later. Other Catholics who studied under Albright included William Moran, Joseph Fitzmyer, and Raymond Brown. As Albright found when a non-Catholic university became very interested in hiring one of them, they were often obligated

\[142\] William Foxwell Albright to Samuel Geiser, 10 June 1934, APS.
\[143\] William Foxwell Albright to “Father and Family,” 2 October 1943, APS.
\[144\] William Foxwell Albright to Nelson Glueck, 14 November, APS.
\[145\] William Foxwell Albright to Wilbur Albright, 10 October 1937, APS.
\[146\] William Foxwell Albright to “Father and Family,” 2 October 1943, APS.
\[147\] William Foxwell Albright to G. Ernest Wright, 27 September 1951, APS.
\[149\] William Foxwell Albright to Hugh Albright, 10 April 1954, APS.
to serve in small Catholic colleges. Albright attributed the interest of Catholic students to Catholics’ growing interest in the Bible, and the dropping number of Protestants with what he saw as Protestants’ decreasing interest in the biblical text.

On the face of it, what set the Albright school apart from the previous generation of biblical scholars was the incorporation of archaeological evidence. What that meant in practice was that the Albright school members made an appeal to what they considered objective evidence, not acknowledging the interpretation they were putting on the data, and rejecting what they considered subjective or interpretive scholarship. One member of that older generation was Julius Morgenstern, the president of Hebrew Union College who worked hard to persuade his former student Nelson Glueck to take over his job. “One thing Morgenstern has never learned to understand is: the priority of documents and archaeological data over all literary constructions,” Albright once explained about Morgenstern, whom he considered a dear friend.

He is a gifted scholar, with a fine synthetic mind as well as a wonderful personality, but because of his wrong approach to evidence he has completely failed to build a school. His best pupil, Nelson Glueck, turned from him to follow me, a development which must have hurt Morgenstern. It is a measure of the man that I have never heard any complaint from him.150

Albright advised 57 Ph.D. students who graduated between 1931 and 1962. (David Noel Freedman, who once self-deprecatingly joked to Albright that he had been named his mentor’s “‘appreciator’ in scholarly circles,”151 included a list of these graduates in the Albright bibliography he compiled.152) It is not entirely possible to quantify the number of people in the Baltimore school or their influence beyond his students, but some comments can be made on the Baltimore school’s unofficial membership. It also included young archaeologists Albright had worked with in Jerusalem, many of whom went on to comprise the first generation of Israeli archaeologists. One example was Ruth Amiran, who, Albright remembered fondly, began her studies with him in Jerusalem when she was still a teenager.153 The school also included students who attended without graduating, such as Emmanuel Gitlin, who in the 1960s included on his curriculum vitae a list of his fellow graduate students during his years of attendance, 1946–48,
presumably to bolster his credentials by virtue of having trained in such distinguished company.154 The school included many figures who came to Johns Hopkins for postdoctoral research or temporary teaching positions, for example Harry Orlinsky. It could be said to include the many readers and admirers of Albright, many of them faculty at other institutions, who wrote him fan mail, often thanking him for putting the Bible on a solid, objective footing after a generation of uncomfortably probing biblical scholarship.

In 1965, Freedman wrote an encyclopedia article about his mentor for the Encyclopedia Judaica and sent a copy to Albright for fact checking. After the customary declarations that Albright was “the dominant figure in Old Testament Studies” with a grasp of the field “unparalleled in modern scholarship,” Freedman wrote that he “was also the principal architect of the ‘Baltimore School’ which numbers among its adherents leading biblical scholars in the U.S.A. and abroad.” Although Albright retired “several years ago, his eminence and influence have been maintained through his writings and the work of his students, and their students, for the tradition of the Baltimore School flourishes on numerous university campuses.”155 Thus, though the school of thought became diluted, it also included students taught and influenced by Albright’s Ph.D. students, many of whom, like Freedman, consciously sought to perpetuate it.

Nowhere was this more the case than Harvard Divinity School. Two of the Baltimore school’s leading representatives, G. Ernest Wright and Frank Moore Cross (whom Albright more than once called “the best student I have ever had”156) spent the bulk of their careers at Harvard. Cross alone trained more than 100 Ph.D. students.157 As Albright wrote to his son Hugh, “It looks as though the Baltimore Old Testament school would swallow up Harvard Divinity School, with two of my best men there as professors!”158 Albright was happy to report after a visit to Harvard that Wright and Cross were “completely transforming the approach to biblical studies there.”159 Wright, Albright’s third Ph.D. graduate, demonstrated his devotion to carrying on the Baltimore school in his creation of the Biblical Colloquium, a scholarly group that met periodically to discuss new scholarship and was composed of men who had worked under Albright in some capacity. The organization also arranged to publish inexpensive reprints of

154 Emmanuel Gitlin’s curriculum vitae, APS.
155 David Noel Freedman to William Foxwell Albright, 6 August 1965, APS.
156 William Foxwell Albright to Seymour A. Smith, 14 March 1949, APS.
158 William Foxwell Albright to Hugh Albright, 22 February 1958, APS.
Albright’s earlier works and some works of other members to spread their scholarly viewpoint more widely.

Albright and the Baltimore school had an opportunity to make a long-term impact on the field of biblical studies with their Anchor Bible series. In 1956 Jason Epstein of Anchor Books approached Albright about producing a series that would retranslate the Bible and provide commentary based on archaeological advances. Albright agreed to become general editor of the Anchor Bible series, with Freedman as coeditor. The series was based on the view that archaeological evidence was transforming biblical studies. As a press release explained in 1964, the year the first two volumes were published, “Archaeological discoveries of last 50 years call for new translation of the Bible.” According to a brochure, it would be “more like the original biblical text” and would strive “to reproduce the Bible’s original flavor and spontaneity.” The reasoning about participant selection demonstrates Albright’s view that archaeology provided a non-theological basis for agreement among Bible-believers of varying stripes. “This Bible has no relation to any church or religious organization of any kind,” he assured a worried correspondent. “Contributors are Catholics, Jews, and Protestants, and have been selected solely because of their scholarship and friendliness to modern archaeological discovery, without reference to their theological views.” (“Friendliness” marked the difference between scholars who believed archaeological discoveries would only be able to illuminate a little about the biblical past, as opposed to those who believed they illuminated a great deal.) For Albright, the presence of scholars of varying religions did not lead to a certain type of theological outlook but rather to a non-sectarianism that ensured objectivity. Like many of Albright’s projects, the Anchor Bible series revolved around the promise of being able to get below the level of interpretation to an objective layer. If this were possible, then the Bible could be a unifying factor, when seen for “what the Bible says, and not with a sectarian interpretation of what it means.” The brochure innocently suggested that removing that layer was both possible and desirable:

Differences among Western religions are often theological, not basically scriptural. The Bible is, in fact, the most powerful unifying element in the present interfaith dialogue.

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160 Jason Epstein to William Foxwell Albright, 31 January 1956, APS.
161 Anchor Bible series press release, September 1964, APS.
162 Anchor Bible Series brochure, APS.
163 William Foxwell Albright to Antonio Neves-Pedro, 29 May 1961, APS.
164 Anchor Bible Series brochure, APS.
Thus, a product of our Ecumenical Century may be, at the same time, the most important working tool of future ecumenism.\textsuperscript{165}

The moment was ripe for Catholic participation in a way that may have earlier been impossible because of overtures toward joint Catholic-Protestant participation in biblical translation and research from Rome. The first Catholic priest to accept an assignment was Dahood, who was born to Lebanese immigrants in Montana and who had earned his Ph.D. under Albright in 1951. He obtained ecclesiastical permission to participate in the project while a professor at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. Freedman, after visiting Dahood in Rome on his way to Jerusalem, was pleased to report to Albright that Dahood believed more Catholic priests could now be enlisted to provide volumes, “since Rome has shown the way.”\textsuperscript{166}

The series was not entirely a Baltimore school production, however, something that rankled Wright. “I’ve sure hit the ceiling on a couple of things I’ve heard,” Wright groused to Albright, “such as Speiser being given Gen. and the suggestion that H. L. Ginsberg be given 1st Isa.”\textsuperscript{167} This may be a dismissal of Jewish scholars, a position that Wright often flirted with, but Albright understood him to mean that that Speiser and Ginsberg thought about the Bible differently than the Albrighteans. Albright assured Wright that Ginsberg “has been moving steadily to the right,” which made him an acceptable choice.\textsuperscript{168} Albright had always had a soft spot for Speiser, and, even though Albright knew they would not be able “to iron out all differences,” he assured Wright that he did not “know a single scholar in America outside our own immediate group, who has the background to do as good a job on the background and translation.”\textsuperscript{169} Not everyone could be from the Baltimore school.

As a scholarly enterprise marketed to non-scholars, the Anchor Bible series ran into a few snags. The editors at Anchor approved public relations language that spoke of a common Bible that would be acceptable to all faiths. Newspapers ran stories based on the Anchor materials that suggested that the scholars were producing, as the \textit{San Jose Mercury News} put it, what “may prove to be the long-awaited ‘Common Bible.’”\textsuperscript{170} When Albright’s local \textit{Baltimore Sun}

\textsuperscript{165} Anchor Bible Series brochure, APS.
\textsuperscript{166} David Noel Freedman to William Foxwell Albright, 22 October 1959, APS.
\textsuperscript{167} G. Ernest Wright to William Foxwell Albright, 29 June 1956, APS.
\textsuperscript{168} William Foxwell Albright to G. Ernest Wright, 2 July 1956, APS.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{170} “Scholars Translating Scriptures in Quest for ‘Common Bible,’” \textit{The San Jose (California) Mercury News}, 10 November 1960.
repeated the words “Common Bible” in a story by Frank Henry,\textsuperscript{171} he worriedly wrote to Freedman to ask, “How about the term ‘Common Bible’? is this Mr. Henry’s idea or is it official?”\textsuperscript{172} Instead of the wording of acceptance by different faiths, he suggested “prepared jointly.”\textsuperscript{173} When R. B. Y. Scott wrote to Doubleday to complain that the promotional materials made it seem like this project was geared more toward religious leaders—who, as he pointed out, were extremely unlikely to adopt it—than toward scholars,\textsuperscript{174} editor Eugene Eoyang explained to Freedman that, as a business matter, he did “not think there are enough scholars in the world to respond to a ‘dignified, scholarly’ appeal to warrant our having invested as much money as we did in the project.”\textsuperscript{175} And by Eoyang’s standards, the series was selling well. He reported that 7,000 copies of Genesis sold in less than two weeks, and that the company projected that subscription sales to the entire series would soon reach 10,000.\textsuperscript{176}

Albright delineated his philosophy of history in \textit{From the Stone Age to Christianity}, his attempt at a synthetic history of humankind that placed the biblical story at the center. It presented his vision of a Judeo-Christian tradition separated from all forms of irrational, ahistorical paganism that spanned from the period of the Israelites and Canaanites to the present. He retrojected monotheism to the time of Moses and opposed the true monotheists—the Israelites—to the peoples around them. Albright first published \textit{From the Stone Age to Christianity} in 1940, and substantially rewrote later editions. The edition read here, from 1957, has the advantage of reflecting Albright’s thoughts after the foundation of the state of Israel—including referring to the Babylonian Jews of the exile as comprising “a vigorous proto-Zionist movement”\textsuperscript{177}—and the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which he believed proved the almost entirely Jewish origins of Christianity and would over time prove that the Gospels were written sooner after Jesus’ death than most other biblical scholars had thought possible. He assured readers in the 1957 preface “that I have not yielded any of my basic positions, and believe that they stand more firmly than ever, thanks to a vastly enlarged mass of evidence not available in 1940.”\textsuperscript{178}

\textsuperscript{171} Frank Henry, “Bible in Today’s Idiom,” Baltimore Sun, 4 December 1950, APS.
\textsuperscript{172} William Foxwell Albright to David Noel Freedman, 24 November 1960, APS.
\textsuperscript{173} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{174} R. B. Y. Scott to “The Head of the Publicity Department” at Doubleday, 26 October 1964, APS.
\textsuperscript{175} Eugene Eoyang to David Noel Freedman, 30 October 1964, APS.
\textsuperscript{176} Eugene Eoyang to William Foxwell Albright, 5 November 1964, APS.
\textsuperscript{177} Albright, \textit{From the Stone Age to Christianity}, 324.
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., v.
The volume presented Albright’s philosophy of history. He argued that not only was archaeology scientific when done properly, as he had long maintained, but that so was history. As Machinist has noted, the bulk of Albright’s longer works dealt with “the larger lines of development of the history of the ancient Near East,”179 as well as the attempt to “write ‘universal’ history” of the sort that had been “in the air” in the nineteenth century.180 Machinist considers the historical syntheses to be “the weakest by far” of Albright’s writings, “in terms of innovation and argumentation.”181 They were also the most likely to be read by nonspecialists. He received gushing fan mail after this book appeared, including from Wilbur Smith, professor of English Bible at Moody Bible Institute. “Frankly, if I had my life to live over,” Smith enthused, “I would come to Johns Hopkins for three solid years of work at your feet, and would devote myself day and night to acquiring some of the discipline and a few fragments of the vast knowledge which characterize everything you do.”182

Another fan was Albright’s father, Wilbur, who wrote that he was “greatly pleased with the conclusion”—that all archaeology so far supported the Bible. He complained about Harry Emerson Fosdick’s recent Holy Land narrative, because Fosdick was not an expert like his son. “His ‘facts’ or data are mostly obtained from the gray matter stored in the cranium,” the elder Albright scoffed. His son was the authority, and his son was saving the Bible. “The Old Book was a safe and sufficient guide to our fathers and their pious relatives,” Wilbur Albright continued. “I am so glad you are able to establish … its veracity. The argument is incontrovertible.”183

According to Albright, historians were capable of adhering to “just as rigorous a method as is used by natural scientists.”184 Further, like science, history was properly universal, not particularist. For Albright the writing of history encompassed “the story of man’s total past.”185 As FSAC demonstrated, Albright’s version of universal history had Palestine as its center, even before the biblical period, since “Palestine, with rich cranial and skeletal remains from Galilee and Carmel,” had “replaced France as the focus of prehistoric research.”186 He dismissed those

179 Ibid., 388.
180 Ibid., 399.
181 Ibid., 402.
182 Wilbur Smith to William Foxwell Albright, 17 July 1945, APS.
183 Wilbur Albright to William Foxwell Albright, 2 April 1941, APS.
184 Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity, 2.
185 Ibid.
186 Ibid., 29.
who believed this area of the world received disproportionate attention by arguing that evidence that “other civilizations of the Old World were all derived from this culture center or were strongly influenced by it” was quite enough to provide those critics with “an unanswerable reply.”\(^{187}\) And, as scientists used the data they collected to establish patterns and hence “natural laws,” once a historian had established enough historical facts as objective, he also could begin to arrive at the elucidation of the natural laws of history.\(^{188}\)

Albright’s main argument about religion was that true monotheism—not henotheism or polytheism—had been the religion of the Israelites since Moses. This did not preclude the possibility that others around Moses were not as advanced. Even today, Albright argued, “the ignorant or moronic are often polytheists or henotheists in an age of monotheism, as every experienced priest or pastor or orthodox rabbi knows. Many backward Catholics are polytheists, many ignorant Protestants are tritheists, and unthinking Jews express henotheistic ideas.”\(^{189}\) Protestants were tritheists only when they lacked the proper understanding of the trinity; “It should hardly be necessary to add that the trinitarian idea of God has immeasurably enriched the concept of monotheism, without in the least detracting from its unified character,” Albright explained.\(^{190}\) By arguing for the earliest possible monotheism, Albright rejected the common biblical studies trope, espoused by Burrows and many others, that religion had evolved through various stages in the Bible, culminating in Christianity. For Albright, it was already complete in all ways except for Jesus at Moses’ time. He was so certain that, he wrote, “in the light of the now available data, it is perfectly clear that the period between 1350 and 1250 B.C. was ideally suited to give birth to monotheism.”\(^{191}\) The liberal use of phrases like “perfectly clear” slammed the door in his critics’ faces and reassured like-minded readers, similarly frustrated that “nearly every book and passage of the Old Testament has been stigmatized as a literary forgery by at least one scholar.”\(^{192}\)

One could believe in the historicity of the biblical narratives, Albright argued, to the great delight of many Christian and Jewish readers, based on common sense. It was “absurd” to deny that Moses founded “the Israelite commonwealth,” because the tradition that he had done so

\(^{187}\) Ibid., 32.
\(^{188}\) Ibid., 82–83.
\(^{189}\) Ibid., 288.
\(^{190}\) Ibid., 394.
\(^{191}\) Ibid., 12.
\(^{192}\) Ibid., 78.
remained so strong. If one only thought about it correctly, oral tradition was obviously the best way of passing anything down, especially in times and places where writing was used sparingly, and especially among peoples like the Israelites, who laid great stress “upon noble lineage and the validation of claims of property or prestige.” And yet the Gospel of John could not have been written as late as some scholars claimed, Albright reasoned, because clearly the “personal allusions” in that gospel were “so intimate and express so sensitive and delicate a spirit on the part of the author that pious fiction is psychologically almost unthinkable.”

In other ways, though, the beginnings of Christianity, something Albright almost never wrote about, were rendered off limits by his own framework of historical laws. Because the beginnings of that history dealt with events that occurred on a very particularist level, “here the historian has no right to deny what he cannot disprove”; for Albright the events of the Resurrection put the historian “in the presence of authentic mysteries” before which one must “stop and not attempt to cross the threshold into a world where he has no right of citizenship.”

Therefore, since “there can be no complete factual judgment,” the decision “must be left to the Church and to the individual believer, who are historically warranted in accepting the whole of the messianic framework of the Gospels or in regarding it as partly true literally and as partly true spiritually.”

Albright did not necessarily deny that Israelites may have had negative characteristics, but when they did, it was simply human nature. He vociferously disagreed with Arnold Toynbee’s charge that intolerance and the claim of uniqueness in Western culture stemmed from ancient Israelite roots. “Actually, nearly all peoples, both primitive and sophisticated, claim uniqueness, while intolerance … is universally human,” he rebutted. The same went for sacrifice, common in the ancient world. Moses retained sacrifice because for people at the time it “was so vital” a part of people’s culture “that it may be doubted whether Moses could have omitted it from his system without seriously weakening its appeal to worshippers.” Elsewhere, he had cautioned a National Geographic staff member against including information in an article that might paint Israelites in a bad light. “It is hard for us to recover the bitterness attending the

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193 Ibid., 258.
194 Ibid., 72.
195 Ibid., 388.
196 Ibid., 390.
197 Ibid., 399.
198 Ibid., 6.
199 Ibid., 266.
constant border raids between men of Judah and Edom nearly 3,000 years ago,” he explained. If they killed innocent people as part of tribal blood-feuds, that was to be expected. However, those who did not know enough about tribal cultures to know that should be protected: “I should advise against permitting” such “tendentious anti-Israelite statements in an article in the NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC.”

Albright stressed the way the primitive Israelites’ purity ensured their continuing purity. “It was fortunate for the future of monotheism that the Israelites of the Conquest were a wild folk, endowed with primitive energy and ruthless will to exist, since the resulting decimation of the Canaanites prevented the complete fusion of the two kindred folk which would almost inevitably have depressed Yahwistic standards to a point where recovery was impossible,” Albright explained. “Thus the Canaanites, with their orgiastic nature-worship, their cult of fertility in the form of serpent symbols and sensuous nudity, and their gross mythology, were replaced by Israel, with its pastoral simplicity and purity of life, its lofty monotheism, and its severe code of ethics.”

Believing objectivity is impossible, Albright argued, is the biggest obstacle to realizing that historical knowledge and scientific knowledge are the same. “The relativists” think there is “a fundamental difference between historical and scientific knowledge.” One of the reasons he gave was that data, particularly archaeological data, was realia: “archaeological data are just as contemporary as are the facts gathered laboriously by astronomers through telescopes and spectrosopes, since the latter are also tangible records of events which transpired in the past.” Scientists were supposed to establish the laws of their fields, the purpose that Albright took up in this work regarding history. This was based partly on his belief in the homogeneity of the group. “There is no way of telling how an individual will react” to events, but, Albright argued, that had nothing to do with the perduring laws governing that individual’s group, “the material, social, and mental characteristics of a given culture” that he believed could be studied scientifically. Studying the ancient past lent itself to a greater degree of scientific accuracy because more recent events dealt more with individuals, especially charismatic leaders who might influence a group.

200 William Foxwell Albright to Catherine Bell Palmer, Research Staff, National Geographic Society, 30 August 1955, APS.
201 Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity, 281.
202 Ibid., 113.
203 Ibid., 114.
204 Ibid., 116.
in an unexpected way. Cultures could experience changes, though, when taken over by other cultures, or, for example, during the “abrupt break between Judaism and Christianity in the first century A.D.,” which bolstered his argument that, without crisis, cultures remain the same. He claimed the break was “followed by nearly two thousand years in which Judaism and Christianity themselves have changed little … Protestantism is not a new religion, but simply an effort to return to early Christianity.”

An example of the former, a culture taking over another, was when the Israelites took over the Canaanites. Though elsewhere usually wary of using the terms “race” or “racial,” in the following passage Albright justified the tradition account of the brutal conquest of Canaan to prevent “racial mixing”:

> From the impartial standpoint of a philosopher of history, it often seems necessary that a people of markedly inferior type should vanish before a people of superior potentialities, since there is a point beyond which racial mixing cannot be without disaster. When such a process takes place—as at present in Australia—there is generally little that can be done by the humanitarian—though every deed of brutality and injustice is infallibly visited upon the aggressor.

Much more chilling than the casual remarks on the supposed destruction of the Canaanites many centuries ago was Albright’s commenting on the inevitability (though admittedly not on the morality) of a contemporaneous genocide, all the while standing on the pedestal he constructed of being the objective seer of inexorable historical laws. Further, it recalls Albright’s suggestions elsewhere that the Jews were just such a people of superior potentialities in the twentieth-century Middle East.

### III. Albright and Political Zionism

Albright seems to have stuck to his appearance of neutrality from 1929 until 1941. He then began speaking in favor of political Zionism. On January 23, 1941, he accepted an invitation from a Baltimore physician, Herman Seidel, to speak to his Labor Zionist group “on a Palestinian topic, the exact nature of which you may decide upon.” The talk occurred February 28, 1941. Though the topic of the speech is not mentioned in the exchange, it seems that this willingness to speak to an overtly Zionist group coincided with Zionists’ growing recognition of

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205 Ibid., 124.
206 Ibid., 280.
208 William Foxwell Albright to Herman Seidel, M.D., 23 January 1941, APS.
209 Herman Seidel, M.D., to William Foxwell Albright, 21 January 1941, APS.
Albright’s sympathies and his increasing willingness to transgress his previous boundaries of scholarly neutrality on this issue. Prominent Reform Rabbi and outspoken political Zionist Stephen S. Wise asked him on February 14, 1941, to join the American Palestine Committee, a group of “distinguished leaders in American public life.”²¹⁰ The committee was originally formed by Emanuel Neumann in 1931 to gather together prominent Americans, mostly non-Jews, into a pro-Zionist organization. American Zionist leaders, Wise informed Albright, “are deeply appreciative of such action taken by Christian friends of our causes.”²¹¹ Three days later, Neumann followed up by writing to Albright that “we are extremely anxious to have you serve as a member” of the American Palestine Committee.²¹² Albright officially endorsed the American Palestine Committee’s May 8, 1941, statement in favor of allowing Palestinian Jews to form a Jewish army to protect their community.²¹³ Interestingly, it was the very issue of the Jewish army—composed of Jews and for the protection of the Jews in Palestine—that caused a vocal minority of anti-Zionist American Reform Jews to form the American Council for Judaism in February 1942. When the formerly non-Zionist Central Conference of American Rabbis endorsed the idea of a Jewish army for Palestine, dissenters reacted by forming the ACJ.²¹⁴

In August 1941, Albright accepted an invitation²¹⁵ to speak to a Zionist group in Wilmington, Delaware. It was sent by Rabbi Isadore Breslau, who asked him to lecture “on ‘Recent Excavations in Palestine’ or some subject connected with Zionism.”²¹⁶ On October 19, 1941, Albright wrote to his father, not entirely truthfully, that though he was pro-Zionist he was not acting on this view.

I am turning down or postponing requests for lectures or addresses right along. The news that I am now sympathetic with political Zionism (in its less chauvinistic aspects) leaked out through a letter which I wrote to the head of a non-Jewish organization in

²¹⁰ Stephen S. Wise to William Foxwell Albright, 14 February 1941, APS.
²¹¹ Ibid.
²¹² Emanuel Neumann to William Foxwell Albright, 17 February 1941, APS. An April 18, 1941, letter from the committee’s chairman, U.S. Senator Robert Wagner, thanked Albright for joining and informed him that the membership “now comprises approximately five hundred members throughout the country, including seventy United States Senators, one hundred and twenty Representatives, Cabinet Members, and other high government officials, twenty-one Governors, prominent clergymen, university presidents, civic leaders, publishers, editors and writers and men of affairs”: U.S. Senator Robert Wagner, Chairman, American Palestine Committee, to William Foxwell Albright, 18 April 18 1941, APS.
²¹³ William Foxwell Albright to Emanuel Neumann, 10 May 1941, APS.
²¹⁴ Kolsky, Jews Against Zionism, 3.
²¹⁵ William Foxwell Albright to Rabbi Isadore Breslau, 5 August 1941, APS.
²¹⁶ Rabbi Isadore Breslau to William Foxwell Albright, 4 August 1941, APS.
Philadelphia, so I have been invited to give a number of addresses at big Jewish gatherings in various cities. I have sidestepped all so far.  

Albright wrote this two days after Neumann enthusiastically thanked him for accepting an invitation to speak at a Philadelphia Zionist meeting. On December 14, 1941, Ephraim Speiser, the University of Pennsylvania’s distinguished Jewish Assyriologist and, from Albright’s viewpoint, a respected elder, wrote to gently warn him that “it would be a … serious waste if you allowed your various activities (important as they unquestionably are) to interfere drastically with your publications.”

One of the reasons Albright was such a sought-after speaker on Zionism was because he brought his mien of scholarly objectivity with him. This was similar to the reason many Zionists adored Walter Clay Lowdermilk’s *Palestine: Land of Promise*, which concluded that Palestine could absorb four million more immigrants. Not only was Lowdermilk not Jewish, he was the assistant chief of the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture. Regardless of the fact that Lowdermilk peppered his narrative from the first page with romantic allusions to the Bible, fans of the book focused on his status as a non-Jew and a scientist. The situation with Albright was similar. Many considered him the foremost biblical expert in the world. Given Albright’s insistence that biblical archaeology was a science, his pronouncements carried with them the cachet of science and masked the religious worldview that informed that scholarship. One of the most prominent Zionist leaders in America, Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, asked Albright to speak to his congregation in Cleveland “a little about the archaeological work which you have carried on in Palestine,” alongside “something about the importance of Palestine today.” Albright replied that, per Silver’s suggestion, he would speak on “‘Archaeology and Zionism,’ thus bringing in both my own field of research and the modern Zionist movement, with the accent on the latter.”

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217 William Foxwell Albright to Wilbur Finley Albright, 19 October 1941, APS.
218 Emanuel Neumann to William Foxwell Albright, 17 October 1941, APS.
219 Ephraim Speiser to William Foxwell Albright, 14 December 1941, APS.
221 Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver to William Foxwell Albright, 14 December 1942, APS.
222 William Foxwell Albright to Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, 3 January 1942, APS. Albright was relied on as an expert in any facet of the Middle East, as demonstrated by the fact that he accepted an invitation to speak on modern Muslims’ religious beliefs to military officers. He was invited by Lt. Col. Hardy Dillard of the School of Military Government in Charlottesville, Virginia, who was concerned “that our men should gain some insight into the practical consequences which might result from a failure to understand” Muslims: Lt. Col. Hardy Dillard, A.U.S., director of instruction, the School of Military Government, to William Foxwell Albright, 11 March 1943, APS.
As both a non-Jew and a scientist, Albright considered himself an objective outsider to the problem of Zionism. In November 1943 he spoke to a Jewish group in New Orleans and wrote afterward to the organizer, Baruch Braunstein, that “I really believe that the two groups were brought closer together and that I succeeded in dissipating some of the prejudices” of the non-Zionists in the crowd, who he thought were swayed by hearing someone who “would look to the problems raised objectively, and who favored Zionism without taking part in any inner Jewish dispute.”\(^{223}\) The work being done by the language of objectivity and neutrality is especially clear here as Albright accuses non-Zionists of being prejudiced and describes himself as being simultaneously objective and pro-Zionist. Additionally, Albright drew upon the personal experience he gained in the 1920s, and often emphasized the access he had had to many sides of the issue while in Jerusalem. For example, after the *Christian Century* published an anti-Zionist letter by an Arab, Albright wrote to the editor that he had developed his stance on Zionism only after much weighing of the evidence. “I had a great many friends among both Arabs and Jews of all parties and political complexion,” he wrote. “Since I traveled constantly and explored all corners of Palestine, … I became intimately familiar with the facts in the case.”\(^{224}\)

Ruth Albright shared her husband’s views on Zionism, and often spoke in his stead. For example, when Albright felt unable to accept the invitation of Mrs. Chas. Auerbach—who praised him for “the remarkable impression you made during your recent visit here for the conference of the United Palestine Appeal”—to return to Cleveland to speak to Hadassah on the subject of “the full meaning of Zionism and its place in a democratic world,”\(^{225}\) Albright offered his wife instead. “She is an experienced and able speaker,” he assured Mrs. Auerbach, “having given hundreds of public addresses, mainly on Palestine, during the past ten years. … Incidentally, she has pinch-hit for me a number of times and has given entire satisfaction, since she is definitely a more interesting speaker than I am.”\(^{226}\) To another inquirer he wrote, “It never rains but it pours.” However, he was happy to serve because, he said, “I can speak with the zeal of a fresh convert to moderate political Zionism.”\(^{227}\)

\(^{223}\) William Foxwell Albright to Baruch Braunstein, 11 November 11 1943, APS.
\(^{224}\) William Foxwell Albright to the Editor of the *Christian Century*, 16 June 1943, APS.
\(^{225}\) Mrs. Chas. Auerbach to William Foxwell Albright, 30 January 1942, APS.
\(^{226}\) William Foxwell Albright to Mrs. Chas. Auerbach, 2 February 1942, APS.
\(^{227}\) William Foxwell Albright to Dr. Schloessinger, 13 January 1942, APS.
By using the term “political Zionism,” Albright was distinguishing himself from the cultural Zionism espoused, for example, by Hebrew University President Judah Leon Magnes, who was quickly falling out of favor among Zionists as the drive for an ethno-national state became preeminent. Jacob Billikopf of the Labor Standards Association wrote Albright to inquire as to his view of Magnes, who was Billikopf’s former wife’s uncle, complaining that Magnes did not deserve the vicious attacks he was receiving from Zionists.\(^{228}\) Magnes advocated a binational state, and, despite placating comments from many Zionist corners, predicted that a tragic population transfer would result if a Jewish ethno-national state came into being. He refused to participate in political Zionism because he opposed on principle the idea of an essentially Jewish state. “As you suspected I am also a warm admirer of Dr. Magnes,” Albright carefully wrote to Magnes’ nephew-in-law, but he had always been inclined “to think that his attitude on political Zionism is rather unrealistic.”\(^{229}\) Another thinker who espoused cultural rather than political Zionism was Ahad Ha’am, who, Neumann bitterly wrote to Albright, “has done our movement infinite harm” with his idea of Palestine as only a “spiritual center.”\(^{230}\) The “two heads of the leading universities in Palestine and Syria”—Magnes and AUB President Bayard Dodge, respectively—were “somewhat lacking in practical judgment,” Albright was sorry to say; Dodge especially, he felt, was “an incorrigible idealist.”\(^{231}\)

Use of the term “political Zionism” suggests that Albright was aware of the political nature of what he was doing, as do several comments he made in letters. This may seem an obvious point, but it is made in regards to Albright’s later claims to having always been reasonably neutral. “Since coming out in support of political Zionism last year I am kept busy evading lecture engagements,” he wrote to Louis Finkelstein, president of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. “All my old reasons for adhering strictly to a neutral position on Zionism as such have been knocked into a cocked hat by the remorseless logic of history.”\(^{232}\) To Sam Geiser he wrote that he was “ashamed to say that I have been running around a lot during the past year and a half speaking at Jewish meetings and for Zionist or Jewish-Appeal organizations,” since “it does take much time and I don’t know how useful it is.” However, he added, “I am so sorry for the Jews because they have fewer Gentile friends than ever, especially

\(^{228}\) Jacob Billikopf to William Foxwell Albright, 17 September 1942, APS.  
\(^{229}\) William Foxwell Albright to Jacob Billikopf, 20 September 1942, APS.  
\(^{230}\) Emanuel Neumann to William Foxwell Albright, 21 November 1941, APS.  
\(^{231}\) William Foxwell Albright to C. J. Friedrich, 15 May 1946, APS.  
\(^{232}\) William Foxwell Albright to Louis Finkelstein, 8 February 1942, APS.
among scholars.”

To his Ph.D. student John Bright he wrote, “I have been speaking for Jewish groups in … [a] big way,” because “friendly goys are all too rare at present.”

In December 1943, Albright was sent on a more difficult assignment to Richmond, Virginia, where Henry Atkinson of the Christian Council on Palestine warned him that he would be up against a strong chapter of the American Council for Judaism. Atkinson characterized the ACJ as “a rabidly anti-Zionist group” and believed the “hostility of leading anti-Zionists” was muting the “mass sentiment of the Jewish community, which is pro-Zionist.” He presumed that the only reason the American Council opposed Zionism was the fear that Jews would no longer be seen as patriotic Americans. Therefore, he wrote Albright, “your visit to Richmond is of significance, first, because of your distinction as a Christian scholar and as an expert on Palestine, and secondly, because your attitude toward Jewish Palestine, coming from a Christian, is in itself the best refutation of the fears and phobias of the leaders of the American Council for Judaism.” Albright was pleased to be able to report after that his “moderate position (combined with enthusiasm for Zionist achievements in Palestine and Jewish achievements in the world at large) appeared to conciliate such non-Zionists and anti-Zionists as were there.”

While he did not think he could permanently change anti-Zionists’ minds, either the Jewish or Christian ones, he remarked that this was all right, since his goal “is to present the situation in such a way as to silence opposition temporarily.”

It was typical of the detractors of the ACJ, which was led by Rabbi Elmer Berger, to dismiss their anti-Zionist stance as one of fear for their own place in American society. Berger’s assistant David Goldberg wrote to Albright to explain that while the ACJ opposed the British White Paper because it limited immigration specifically of Jews, and hence was discriminatory, they continued to oppose “a Jewish state anywhere in the world” based on the same principle. “I would say that we are not against the political independence of a state in which Jews should chance to be a majority,” Goldberg continued. But if it were designated a Jewish state, that would be “tantamount to establishing a race-state or a religion-state—a source of permanent evil.” It was the ACJ’s chief goal to “fight the Jewish state idea” because its members believed it

233 William Foxwell Albright to Sam Geiser, 23 May 1943, APS.
234 William Foxwell Albright to John Bright, 3 May 1942, APS.
235 Atkinson to William Foxwell Albright, 17 December 1943, APS.
236 Atkinson to William Foxwell Albright, 17 December 1943, APS.
237 William Foxwell Albright to Carl Voss, 24 December 1943, APS.
238 Ibid.
239 David Goldberg to William Foxwell Albright, 5 September 1944, APS.
was “fraught with trouble without end.” Based on the same principle, the ACJ stood for equal rights for Jews anywhere in the world, an argument that critics often recast as simply their own fears that American Jews would be expected to move to Palestine. Thomas Kolsky finds, however, that the primary reason among ACJ members was indeed a principled stand against ethnic nationalism.

Albright participated in the public relations campaign against King Ibn Saud’s statements condemning Zionism in an interview in the May 31, 1943, issue of Life magazine. Carl Alpert, managing editor of The New Palestine, wrote to Albright asking him to “dispatch a brief letter to the editors of Life pointing out the inaccuracies, the irrelevancies, or the immorality found in Ibn Saud’s statement.” Albright’s letter fulfilling this request made a series of picky points about the translation from Arabic that seemed rhetorically meant to daze the editors with his superior knowledge as an academic. He further accused Life of softening Ibn Saud’s anti-Zionist stand in translation choices. But the letter also demonstrates that one of Albright’s ongoing blind spots regarding Zionism was that he did not believe Jews as a group could harm others. He argued that Ibn Saud’s statement was false because “it asserts that the Arabs of Palestine have suffered and will suffer more at the hands of the Jews,” even though “occasional exceptions may be quoted to upset any rule.” Per his philosophy of history, the actions of individuals were simply aberrant; he did not see Jewish culture as violent, so Ibn Saud’s examples were just a number of aberrations. He rejected the violent Zionists (many of whom became statesmen in the new Israel) as “pathogenic,” an “utterly insignificant minority.”

Yigael Yadin, a major figure in both the Israeli military and Israeli archaeology who was never one to hide the political ramifications of his own work, once said approvingly of Albright that he “identified with no hesitation the modern Israel with the ancient Israel.” Yadin thought it was “the Bible, or his biblical interests” that “brought him to support Israel, but later on I think it developed and became a much deeper and more sophisticated approach to the State of

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240 David Goldberg to William Foxwell Albright, 5 September 1944, APS.
241 A recent biography of Elmer Berger recounts the fascinating story that Kolsky chose the ACJ as a dissertation topic even though as a Zionist he disapproved of it. But his study ended up being so favorable to the ACJ that he had to change dissertation advisers in order to graduate. Ross, Rabbi Outcast, 166.
242 Carl Alpert to William Foxwell Albright, 31 May 1943, APS.
243 William Foxwell Albright to the editors of Life, 1 June 1943, APS.
244 William Foxwell Albright, typescript, “Memorandum on Political Problems of Syria-Palestine,” APS.
Though this was no doubt the most plausible explanation for Yadin, Albright’s papers actually show the opposite. He very early supported Zionism as a solution to the refugee problem caused by the Holocaust, while his identification of the biblical and modern Israel became more prominent over time.

Another reason for Albright’s Zionism was his colonial viewpoint that the Arabs were childlike and incapable of bettering themselves on their own. He often suggested that the Arabs should thank the Jews for having brought Palestine into the modern age. “From personal knowledge I can affirm with confidence that the Arabs of Palestine already owe a great deal, economically, socially, politically, culturally, to Zionist achievements in Palestine. … The Arabs still continue to gain far more than they lose,” he claimed. Indeed, Albright suggested that the Arabs had been equally, and equally unfairly, ungrateful to their British and French colonizers. He criticized them for “failing—as usual in such cases—to appreciate the remarkable progress” that the British and French colonial rulers had brought them in only “the past twenty-odd years.”

And of course, as shown in *FSAC*, Albright believed that modern Jews were something more than the inheritors of ancient Israel’s legacy. Based on his ideas about minority groups and the slow pace of cultural change within them, he believed that the ancient Israelites and the modern Jews formed one homogeneous and essential cultural grouping, indicated by his use of a singular personified “Israel”:  “At least thirty-five centuries have passed since the ancestors of Israel first settled in Palestine,” he wrote in a piece titled “Palestine as a Contributing Factor in the Solution of the Jewish Problem.” “Again and again it has been nearly wiped out; it has been exiled in Egypt, in Mesopotamia; it has wandered in ever widening circles as its sons have found refuge from persecution in more and more distant lands.” In his conclusion, he tied the biblical restoration of the exiled Jews to Palestine to the Zionist movement, and opined: “I have no hesitation in saying that the new Restoration of Zion is destined to exert an effect on world history scarcely less significant than the first Restoration.”

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246 Quoted in Ibid., 380.
247 William Foxwell Albright to the editors of *Life*, 1 June 1943, APS.
248 William Foxwell Albright, typescript, “Memorandum on Political Problems of Syria-Palestine,” APS.
249 William Foxwell Albright, typescript, “Palestine as a Contributing Factor in the Solution of the Jewish Problem,” APS.
250 Ibid.
After several years, Albright’s Zionist activities began to wear on him. For one, he wondered if he was making a difference, especially since he spoke mainly to Jews and almost never to Christians. Writing to Carl Voss of the Christian Council on Palestine, an organization composed of Christian clergymen and religious educators, to congratulate him on his efforts, Albright apologized that “I shall be of such little use much, if not all of this year; but now that the Christians of America are waking up at last to the justice of the Jewish cause, I can relax my own” efforts, which he thought were ineffective “because I know so many more Jews than I did Christians, and was thus engaged in carrying coals to Newcastle.” Several months later he refused Voss’ request that he speak to a group of missionaries to Muslims about the issue. “Probably all the missionary representatives in the group would react hostilely to me,” he told Voss, because “they dislike pro-Jewish Christians” and they “instinctively dislike Americans who have lived long in the Near East without any connection with any of their enterprises.” As the son of missionaries who did not indicate any conflicted feelings about missions, Albright wanted to make clear that he had no problem with missions. It was instead his consistent disdain for any political activism for Arab causes, and his ability to separate that from the political cause of Zionism, which he felt the course of events had made necessary. Missionaries to Muslims, he informed Voss, “try to compensate for their lack of proselyting success by pro-Moslem political activity.” In other words, they had no good reasons for their positions.

Second, he grew weary of what he considered the excesses and polemics of the various sides. In 1946 he resigned from the Christian Council on Palestine over a detail published with his name attached in The New York Times that he considered a “direct distortion of the facts.” Columbia University professor Philip K. Hitti was upset to see Albright’s name on the advertisement, which included the statement that most Arabs in Palestine at the time were descendants of nineteenth-century immigrants, and thus were not the product of centuries of habitation. Though this was a common Zionist trope, Albright informed Voss that this “is at least 90% false as it stands” and promised Hitti he would resign because of it. He went on to explain to Voss, the Council’s executive secretary, that this sort of wild exaggeration had always bothered him about Arab culture, so he was doubly saddened to see American Christians engage

251 William Foxwell Albright to Carl Voss, 16 October 1944, APS.
252 William Foxwell Albright to Carl Voss, 30 March 1945, APS.
253 Ibid.
254 William Foxwell Albright to Carl Voss, 29 March 1946, APS.
255 William Foxwell Albright to Carl Voss, 13 March 1946, APS.
in it. He felt he could not countenance such distorting rhetorical strategies because “short-term gains by employment of such methods always cancel out in the end, as the Arabs should have learned long ago, but unhappily have not learned.”

Another upset party was Khalil Totah, a Christian Arab who had been a school principal in Jerusalem in the 1920s and wrote to Albright in terms that suggested they knew each other then. He had recently moved to the United States and become the executive director of the Institute of Arab and American Affairs. He wrote to Albright complaining about the sentence in _The New York Times_, but also that he had felt personally attacked by Christian supporters of Zionism, who “heaped so much abuse on the Arabs.” “I have always considered you a friend of the Arabs and still hope that you are,” he concluded, wishing his best to Ruth and the boys, who “must be grown up by now.”

One wonders how Totah would have felt had he known the abuse Albright regularly heaped on Arabs as a group.

This incident, symbolic of the extremism and hard feelings that Albright was sorry to see taking over the debate, led to his effective retirement from overt political Zionism. “Anyway, I am going to stick to my last,” he wrote to F. Ernest Johnson of the Federal Council of Churches on June 18, 1946, “and not participate in propaganda; when feelings are aroused to the point of fusion there is no place for a scholar who sees both sides.”

That did not mean, however, that support for Zionism did not remain implicit in Albright’s writings. In 1949 Albright contributed the lead-off article, “The Biblical Period,” to Louis Finkelstein’s three-volume series _The Jews: Their History, Culture, and Religion_. Finkelstein’s wish to have Albright discuss the history of the Jewish people through the entire biblical period in the series’ first chapter demonstrates not only his respect for Albright as a scholar but also the degree of acceptance that Finkelstein must have felt Jewish readers would have for this decision. The article was widely discussed and even reprinted in a stand-alone format, which perhaps is not surprising given the extent to which it assured the reader that the Bible is true, and that therefore the Israelites/Jews/Christians-who-believe-in-the-Judeo-Christian-tradition are at the center of human history. As always, the Israelites were defined by their differences from others. First of all, Albright announced that Hebrew origins were clearer

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256 William Foxwell Albright to Carl Voss, 29 March 1946, APS. Voss replied with citations from books that made this claim, not to validate it but to show that he did not run the advertisement in bad faith. Carl Voss to William Foxwell Albright, 26 March 1946, APS.
257 Khalil Totah to William Foxwell Albright, 18 March 1946, APS.
258 William Foxwell Albright to F. Ernest Johnson, 18 June 1946, APS.
and better known (from the biblical narrative) than the origins of any other ancient people, including Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Phoenicians, Greeks, and Romans. “We look in vain for anything comparable,” Albright informed a largely receptive audience, to the uniqueness, simplicity, clarity, and moral uprightness of the ancient Israelites.\(^{259}\) Though readers may have received the impression in the past that biblical scholars were casting doubt on the Bible, Albright assured them that “the archaeological discoveries of the past generation have changed all this” except among “a few die-hards among older scholars.”\(^{260}\) The discovery of “limited movements in the hill country of Palestine” and “easy travel to Mesopotamia and Egypt” is “so perfectly in accord with conditions in the Middle Bronze Age,” Albright wrote with characteristic certainty and dismissal of other possible interpretations, “that historical skepticism is quite unwarranted.”\(^{261}\) The light shed on the Bible by cultural knowledge from the Nuzi documents has so “brilliantly illuminated many details in the patriarchal stories which do not fit into the post-Mosaic tradition” that “our case for the substantial historicity of the tradition of the Patriarchs is clinched,” and there is thus “no reason to doubt the general accuracy” of the patriarchal narratives.\(^{262}\) The Bible’s own tone of veracity assured its truthfulness: “the Patriarchs come alive with a vividness unknown to a single extrabiblical character in the whole vast literature of the ancient Near East.”\(^{263}\) Moses, an ethical genius, was forced to deal with inferior forms of religion, such as the “Egyptian myths,” which “swarmed with crudities,” and the Canaanites’ “extremely depraved practices”: “Ritual prostitution of both sexes was rampant … the cinaedus (homosexual) formed a recognized guild in Canaanite temples… The ‘Creatress of the Gods’ (Asherah) was represented as a beautiful naked prostitute, called ‘Holiness’ in both Canaan and Egypt.”\(^{264}\) Moses’ new faith “reacted violently against all kinds of sacred prostitution and human sacrifice, against magic and divination, and against funerary rites and cult of the dead.”\(^{265}\) Any similarities between the proto-Israelites led by Moses and the Canaanites was a matter of meaningless external form. “Though we may freely concede strong Canaanite influence on formulation and legal terminology,” Albright claimed, it is “incredible


\(^{260}\) Ibid.

\(^{261}\) Ibid., 6.

\(^{262}\) Ibid.

\(^{263}\) Ibid.

\(^{264}\) Ibid., 10.

\(^{265}\) Ibid.
that the Book of the Covenant should reflect Canaanite jurisprudence in either spirit or
details.”266

Lest there be any doubt about the relationship between the Bible and contemporary Jews,
Albright termed the return of Jews from the Babylonian Exile “the Zionism of the Restoration,” a
time of “pure religious idealism which reminds one in certain respects of the cultural idealism of
Ahad Ha-Am and Eliezer ben Yehuda in the generation before the First World War.”267 And as
some scholars had claimed that “Judaism was created by the Persian Empire” allowing the Jews
to return to Palestine, scholars were also apt to say that “Zionism has been created by the
British.”268 Albright disagreed vehemently. “Judaism and Zionism were both developed by the
Jewish people, working against great odds,” with “benevolent assistance at critical moments
from the Persian and British imperial authorities”269—and, one might add, from Albright
himself.

Albright returned to Palestine a handful of times after Israel’s establishment, in 1953,
1957, and 1969. He was received as a hero, not only by his many students and associates in
archaeology who lived there, but also by the Israeli public. Archaeology was of great
importance to many Israelis who believed it was recovering a Jewish past in the land. When he provided a
Jewish associate traveling to Israel with a letter of introduction, the associate wrote back to
Albright that he had the opportunity to visit Yadin’s dig at Hazor. “When word got around that I
had a letter from Albright, I became somewhat of a celebrity,” he wrote. “They thought I was a
great archaeologist who had come to pronounce the word on Hatzor! I quickly put them at ease.”
The introductory letter provided the holder with a power not to be taken lightly: “The name of
Albright is magic in Israel and I must say that I guarded against the danger of pronouncing it in
vain.”270

Albright’s 1953 trip was preceded by a touch of intrigue. When it came to his attention
that the Jordanians had found a Bar Kokhba letter dating to the Second Jewish Revolt that they
were not keen to share with the Israelis, he arranged to have a copy of the letter made and sent to
Israel in the possession of his student Sam Iwry.271 Several months later, he arrived in Israel,

266 Ibid., 11–12.
267 Ibid., 49.
268 Ibid., 53.
269 Ibid.
270 Jerome Lipnick to William Foxwell Albright, 15 December 1955, APS.
271 Running, William Foxwell Albright, 275.
where he visited digs and gave lectures. In Beersheba, almost 3,000 people came to hear him speak.\textsuperscript{272} In a radio address upon his return Albright expressed his happiness that Israelis were so interested in archaeology, because “every educated Israeli understands how closely the study of ancient remains is linked to the history of his ancestors, and how much light is shed by archaeology on the geography and settlement of modern Palestine.”\textsuperscript{273} He also supported Yadin in his quest to purchase the four Dead Sea Scrolls that were owned by the Syrian Orthodox Church. Metropolitan Athanasius Yeshue Samuel wanted to sell the scrolls to raise money for his church, but he had made it known that he did not wish to sell them to Jews. William Brownlee, one of the ASOR scholars to first see the Dead Sea Scrolls, explained the metropolitan’s position in an unpublished manuscript: “like the other Arabs,” he wrote, “the Syrian Orthodox folk had been alienated by the violent methods of Zionism in the Holy Land; and, unfortunately this had come to mean alienation from all Jews. Even if the metropolitan himself had been willing to sell to a Jew, he would have been ostracized by his own people.”\textsuperscript{274}

And yet, through subterfuge, the metropolitan ended up selling them to a Jewish American posing as a non-Jew who was buying them on behalf of the Israeli government. Harry Orlinsky took on an assumed name when he inspected the scrolls for Yadin so as not to raise suspicion, and Yadin made the purchase without revealing his identity to the metropolitan. The buyer agreed to pay $250,000. The metropolitan received $150,000. Historian Weston Fields learned from former Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek that the note for the remaining $100,000 was never paid and instead “was framed and for years hung on the wall in the Ministry of Finance in Jerusalem as a kind of humorous reminder of … how ludicrous the very idea of repayment became once the scrolls came to Israel.”\textsuperscript{275} This sentiment—regarding the true ownership, not the lack of payment—was echoed by Albright. “Needless to say, I was tremendously thrilled,” Albright wrote when he heard the news. “These priceless documents belong in the Hebrew University.”\textsuperscript{276}

In 1957 Albright traveled to Israel to accept an honorary doctorate from the Hebrew University, whose president at the time was archaeologist Benjamin Mazar.\textsuperscript{277} In 1965, Avraham
Biran wrote to ask the Albrights to attend the opening of the Israel Museum, including the Shrine of the Book, built to house the Dead Sea Scrolls and designed to resemble the top of the jars the scrolls were found in. The “opening of the Israel Museum without the Albrights will be no opening,” Biran wrote. However, Albright had to decline because he was scheduled to give the Jordan Lectures at the University of London.

The handwritten notes to a lecture Albright gave to a capacity audience in Detroit’s Shaarey Zedek synagogue in January 1968 show he still felt the Jewish people were unique in world history. “Why are the Israelis so much interested in archaeology?” he asked rhetorically. The answer was that they were the only people to have been restored to their own land twice in history—the restoration from Babylon and the establishment of the state of Israel—“whereas no other people has been similarly restored even once.” He traced the sufferings of the Jewish people in an unbroken line from ancient times to the present, from “state slavery for generations in Egypt” to “amazing restoration under Persians, miraculous victories of the Hasmonaeans, destruction of Jewish Palestine by the Romans after two nationwide revolts, wanderings and persecution by Christians, Moslems and pagan Mongols in the Middle Ages, attempts by Hitler, Stalin and the Arabs to liquidate the entire accessible Jewish people.” According to a write-up in the Detroit Jewish News, he proclaimed in the speech that “there was never a time when Israelites were savages, barbarians or primitive. They were not ignorant, were ready to take advantage of opportunity and this is what made them great.”

The same characterizes a statement Albright made for the twentieth anniversary of the Hebrew University. This institution was unique in two respects, Albright wrote: “in the tremendous chronological sweep of its inheritance and in its international character.” This intellectual inheritance “goes back to the prophets and sages of Israel, from whom there is an unbroken chain of transmission extending to the present day,” he argued. “There is no other example in history of such uninterrupted intellectual and spiritual tradition.” In a similar request, he was asked to provide a statement for an archaeological exhibit on the land of the Bible. He wrote:

278 Avraham Biran to William Foxwell Albright, 17 February 1965, APS.
279 William Foxwell Albright, handwritten notes, lecture given in Detroit’s Shaarey Zedek synagogue in January 1968, APS.
280 Ibid.
282 William Foxwell Albright to Samuel B. Finkel, 15 February 1945, APS.
The importance of Palestinian archeology for Israel and for supporters of Judaism everywhere is just as striking. In no country does archeology arouse such widespread public interest on the part of the public as in Israel. Archeology sustains and increases interest in the glorious past of the Hebrew people; it forms an unbreakable link between land and culture, religion and national rebirth. It is no accident that General Yigal Yadin is himself an archeologist and the son of an archeologist.\textsuperscript{283}

In 1969, fifty years after he first traveled there in 1919, Albright made a final trip to Jerusalem. While there he was honored by being named a Worthy of Jerusalem, an honor that until that time had only been bestowed on individuals who were both Jews and residents of Jerusalem, and was given to those over age 70 who had made a contribution to the city. The \textit{New York Times} reported, “Three generations of Palestinian archeologists crowded into Jerusalem’s City Hall today to honor their mentor.”\textsuperscript{284} Mayor Teddy Kollek presented the award. According to the reporter, he said that Albright’s name “had become a household word in Israel, where archeology is easily the most popular hobby.”\textsuperscript{285} Nachman Avigad, head of Hebrew University’s archaeology department, was quoted as saying, “If today the historical accuracy of the Bible is beyond question, it is due in no small measure to the work of Professor Albright.”\textsuperscript{286} Josef Aviram remembered about this trip, shortly after the 1967 war, that Albright “was so happy about the united Jerusalem!”\textsuperscript{287} Yadin, who took him to see the Masada dig, remarked that “at that time he was so frank and open in supporting Israel politically, even in public press conferences, that I had to caution him a bit that he should perhaps be more careful on that.”\textsuperscript{288}

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\textsuperscript{283} William Foxwell Albright to Louis M. Rabinowitz, 9 October 1952, APS.
\textsuperscript{285} Quoted in Ibid.
\textsuperscript{286} Quoted in Ibid.
\textsuperscript{287} Quoted in Running, \textit{William Foxwell Albright}, 377.
\textsuperscript{288} Quoted in Ibid., 378.
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CHAPTER TWO

WILLIAM FOXWELL ALBRIGHT, MILLAR BURROWS, AND CONFLICTING VIEWS OF ANCIENT CULTURES AMONG ASOR LEADERS

In May 1971, G. Ernest Wright, in his capacity as ASOR president, sent Millar Burrows some good news. “At yesterday’s meeting of the Board of Trustees, an error was corrected which should have been rectified years ago when Albright retired from the Board. At that time a new category of ‘Life Trustee’ was created,” Wright wrote. “Yesterday the Trustees voted warmly and enthusiastically to elect you a Life Trustee of our organization. … If anyone among our number, along with Albright and Glueck, has deserved this small accolade, it is certainly you!”

By that time, Burrows, a tall, quiet Ohioan whose family history recounts a legend of Mayflower descent, was probably used to being overlooked.

Burrows, a contemporary of Albright, held top leadership positions in the American Schools of Oriental Research. Albright directed ASOR’s Jerusalem school from 1920 to 1929 and 1933 to 1936 and afterward seemed to many to be the organization’s patriarch, regardless of his official position. Burrows served two years as Jerusalem school director and as ASOR president from 1934 to 1948. These two men exemplified opposite poles within scholarship on all four of the binaries laid out in the introduction: Albright, borrowing scientific metaphors of crystalline structures, argued that cultures were unique and, if forced to change too much, did not adapt but instead shattered. Burrows believed cultures were fluid and mutually changed each other when they interacted. Albright was a political Zionist, believing that a Jewish state should be founded, whereas Burrows was a cultural Zionist, believing that Jews, especially Holocaust refugees, should be allowed to emigrate to Palestine but should form a government with non-Jewish inhabitants. Albright saw primarily difference between the ancient Israelites and Canaanites, no less than between the Western Jews in Palestine and the native Arabs, whose culture he frequently maligned. Burrows saw primarily similarities between Israelites and Canaanites and assumed that the majority of Israelites were more or less Canaanites in their religious culture; likewise, he believed Jews and Arabs could find enough common ground to coexist in Palestine. Albright wanted to unite the sciences and the humanities by holding the humanities to scientific standards. He believed that scholars who were truly objective were able

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to produce scientific facts. Burrows, a relativist, cautioned against too quick an assumption that one’s own tradition was superior and also cautioned against the chimera of objectivity, arguing that scholars always and necessarily interpreted the facts they were analyzing.

Burrows’ archaeology textbook, What Mean These Stones? (1941), is a record of dissent from the Albright school. Burrows cautioned throughout that very little can be learned from archaeology that could shed light on the Bible. He was so cautious, in fact, that James Kelso complained to Albright that the book had a disappointingly “agnostic” spirit—not only regarding God, but also regarding methodology. “He seems neither for nor against any debatable material; too many of his evidential points are hairsplitting; his book lacks conviction,” Kelso groused.² Herbert Gordon May wrote to Albright that, while Burrows’ book was full of interesting material, he awaited the appearance of G. Ernest Wright’s archaeology textbook because there “is still a need for a study of archaeology and the Bible which will be more typical of the approach of the Biblical Archaeologist.”³ May’s wording suggests that Burrows’ methodological concerns ran so deep they placed him outside the field, even while he appeared to be one of its deans.

In 1949 Burrows published a book about the Palestinian refugee crisis titled Palestine is Our Business, in an attempt to convince Americans that tragedy had befallen the Palestinians in 1948 during what had seemed to many like a miracle for the Israelis. He resigned as ASOR president, citing the book’s political nature. Burrows believed remaining involved with ASOR while pursuing what was to him obviously a political agenda would compromise the institution’s officially neutral stance.⁴ Albright had not found it necessary to take such a step while lecturing in favor of Zionism.

It was not a foregone conclusion that Burrows would become as involved with ASOR as he did. In 1915, after being educated at Cornell and Union Theological Seminary, Burrows traveled with his bride to rural Texas to serve as a Presbyterian minister. Five years later, he took a job as college pastor and Bible teacher at Tusculum College in Tennessee, and found teaching more fulfilling than preaching. As his son, Edwin, later explained, “Charismatic preaching and raw fundamentalist doctrine were foreign to Millar’s more ecumenical, if not skeptical, approach to

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² James Kelso to William Foxwell Albright, 11 November 1941, APS.
³ Herbert Gordon May to William Foxwell Albright, 31 March 1942, APS.
⁴ King, American Archaeology in the Mideast, 117.
religion.” In 1923 he enrolled in graduate school at Yale, afterward accepting an offer to serve as visiting professor at the American University in Beirut in 1930–1931. While at AUB, he was asked to direct ASOR’s Jerusalem school for 1931–1932. That year precipitated a lifelong involvement with ASOR and a prominent career in biblical studies.

Burrows’ writings, even those before he traveled to the Middle East, were characterized by a methodological openness, with reflection on how and why he had come to his conclusions. Furthermore, they were characterized by his focus on the similarities between the religions and cultures he was discussing, a minimizing of the differences, and the caveat that traditions are always developing. His first book, *Founders of Great Religions*, appeared in 1931 and analyzed figures such as Lao-Tze, Confucius, Buddha, Zoroaster, Moses, Muhammad, and Jesus with a comparative eye. “We must not allow ourselves to think of the founders of religions other than our own as queer old heathen,” he wrote. Anticipating the later insights of postcolonialism, he cautioned his readers that “we are not concerned to demonstrate the superiority of one founder over the others. … If, for instance, we compare the civilization of Europe and Asia on the basis of European ideas and tastes, naturally we shall find European civilization superior.”

In most of the chapters, Burrows pointed out how characteristics of non-Christian religions that might seem unsavory were actually similar to Christian characteristics, reminding those who might criticize the Buddha for leaving his wife and child, for example, “that Another once said, ‘If any man cometh unto me and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.’” Reluctant to accept all the details of the Prophet Muhammad’s life as morally upstanding, Burrows argued that “in this respect the life of Mohammed recalls that of the ancient Hebrew king and poet, David.”

Burrows pressed the idea of internal heterogeneity within religious traditions, locating these differences in the humans who practiced religions and not in theological systems abstracted from them. Remarking that some scholars have doubted whether Lao-tze was really Chinese, because he seemed so different to them from other Chinese, Burrows reasoned, “Probably the

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7 Ibid., 223.
8 Ibid., 82.
9 Ibid., 160.
truth is rather that the Chinese, like other peoples, are not all alike.”

He particularly stressed these differences within Christianity, and how these differences cast doubt on any aspirations to general Christian superiority: “We speak of Christianity as one religion, as though it were a single definite system of beliefs and practices,” he wrote.

But what is Christianity? Is it Protestantism or Catholicism, Modernism or Fundamentalism? When we claim that Christianity is the best and highest of the world’s religions, do we mean that everything which goes by the name of Christianity is better than anything which goes by the name of Hinduism or Judaism? Does our claim of superiority include the Coptic and Nestorian Churches of the East along with the many varieties of American Protestantism? … And a similar diversity is found in all the great religions.

However, Burrows’ openness to other religions, as exemplified by *Founders of Great Religions*, did not always manifest itself in practice during his first year in Jerusalem. There, he exhibited typical Protestant American disdain for the traditional holy sites, with a preference for the natural sites, over which he roamed during his year in Jerusalem, and the archaeological sites, which he oversaw.

On his experiences in Jerusalem, he wrote: “Constantine, or the Empress Helena, or whoever started the craze for building churches over Biblical sites, will have much to answer for on the Day of Judgment.”

Burrows demonstrated longstanding Protestant tropes in his writings about his first year in Jerusalem in other ways as well. No one familiar with the Bible, he argued, could spend time in the Holy Land without experiencing “many moments of keen realization” when contact with the land illuminated the text, when “the old familiar story comes back to him with a new meaning.” And if observing the land led to this kind of illumination, then digging in it did even more so. “In such ways as these one comes close in Palestine to the life portrayed in the Bible,” Burrows wrote. “Still closer is one brought by visiting archaeological excavations.”

The Arabs, especially the Bedouin, seemed to embody the text in their food and customs. But he did not entirely primitivize them. Instead he remarked on how much social interaction they had with Westerners, thus emphasizing cultural change and interaction over static

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10 Ibid., 22.
11 Ibid., 4.
12 For more on Protestant Americans’ preference for natural sites over those with Catholic or Orthodox shrines built on them, see Stephanie Stidham Rogers, *Inventing the Holy Land: American Protestant Pilgrimage to Palestine, 1865–1941* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2011).
13 Quoted in Edwin Gladding Burrows, *The Cup & the Unicorn*, 64.
15 Ibid., 217.
differences between East and West. He met people “even in remote villages” who had lived in America and returned. But even those who had not traveled had often achieved “polylingualism” as a result of “many contacts with foreign merchants and tourists.”

During this early period of his career, though, Burrows also registered strong disapproval of Eastern Christians. In a 1933 article titled “Crusades and Missions in Palestine,” Burrows wrote that he felt none of the crusading spirit because, in his view, “there might sometimes be more true religion in a mosque than in a church.” This was not necessarily the product of approval of other religions so much as his disapproval of eastern Christians. Like many a Protestant traveler, he expressed horror at the Easter celebrations at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre:

The frantic struggle for the fire, however, was anything but decorous, and the veritable riot which arose over one of the church banners, requiring the utmost efforts of the police to restore order, was disgraceful. The thought that all this was supposed to be in commemoration of the risen Prince of Peace was almost unbearable. … I could not help thinking as I watched that it would be much better if there were a mosque over the place.

“I do not for a moment mean that Islam is as good as Christianity,” he hastened to add. But “there are many kinds of Christian profession, and not all of them are better than Islam at its best.”

Like Albright, Burrows wrote after returning to the United States in 1932 that he had spent his time in Jerusalem with his “eyes and ears open and” his “mouth shut” on the conflict between the Jews and Arabs. But as early as 1933 he published his thoughts on the matter in the *Journal of Religion*. Coming to the opposite conclusion from Albright, who also considered himself a “neutral observer,” Burrows wrote that, “so far as the political aspect of the question is concerned, a neutral observer is bound to sympathize to a considerable degree with the Arabs,” apparently not recognizing at the time that no matter how valid he felt this position was, it was not neutral. He recognized, however, that one of the main problems was that “many good people

16 Ibid., 216.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid., 313–314.
21 Ibid., 270.
feel that the Bible has settled the matter by declaring that the land belongs to the Jews and that they will recover it,” and that “for such people there can be no question of justice; God hath spoken.” In a radio interview ten years later during World War II, Burrows said that he opposed, and believed the American people as a whole opposed, “imperialism or the colonial system that goes with it.” He did, however, believe in the softer influence of missions. Because missionaries were largely prohibited by law to proselytize Muslims in the Middle East, they had, besides trying to turn native Christians into Protestants, worked with Muslims in non-religious ways such as schools and hospitals. This allowed them to pursue “the development of Christian ideals and character in the people without asking them to change their religion,” which, Burrows believed, had resulted in “many people in the Near East who without ceasing to be loyal Muslims have been profoundly influenced by the best elements of American Christianity.”

Burrows’ *Bible Religion: Its Growth in the Scriptures* (1938) demonstrated many of the characteristics Albright disliked most about liberal Protestants. Like Albright, he suggested that, despite the splintering of Protestantism, those interpretations could grow closer together again. But he emphasized the importance of reading between the lines of scripture—particularly in the Old Testament—and applying one’s sense of Jesus’ teachings to determine how to judge Old Testament passages that felt unsavory. Burrows emphasized that scripture must necessarily be interpreted, and thinking interpreters must often base their conclusions on their sense of Jesus’ teachings, rather than relying on what might seem to be the plain sense of the words. “Well-meant and honest” Christians making judgments without taking the sense of Jesus’ teachings into account had, he argued, led to such things as preachers telling “grieving mothers that their dead babies were in hell because they had not been baptized.”

Burrows, like many Protestant Bible scholars, saw instead a growth of religion from lower to higher forms, culminating in Jesus. His evolutionary schema of religion’s growth in the Bible was precisely what Albright fought against in his insistence that Moses had been fully monotheistic. For Burrows, “The revelation recorded in the Bible was progressive in the same

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22 Ibid., 270.
way that one’s knowledge of any subject grows steadily year after year.”

This applied particularly to what Burrows identified as the worst misunderstanding of the Old Testament: the conquest. “We cannot believe now that it was ever God’s will that men should massacre one another as Joshua massacred the Canaanites, but Joshua thought it was God’s will,” he explained. So while both believed the conquest occurred, Albright believed it was God’s will and preserved Israelite cultural purity while Burrows believed the Israelites had misunderstood God’s will. Burrows continued to use similar reasoning about the spirit of the law interpreted through Jesus even in his final book, in 1977. In *Jesus in the First Three Gospels*, Burrows argued that the gospels differ because Christians are not supposed to take them literally, but rather are supposed to realize that there are discrepancies. The realization that there are discrepancies ideally would “preserve us from slavery to the letter and compel us to seek the true spirit of the Gospel.”

Burrows also believed that the writings of the Old Testament were recorded long after the events and reflected those later times, rather than the times of the stories themselves. “The book of Genesis gives us not so much the religion of the patriarchs themselves,” he wrote, “as the religion of the much later writers who told the story and interpreted it.” Rather than focusing on the stories’ historicity, as did Albright, Burrows read them as documents written by individuals who, because of the gradual evolution of ideas about God, had a different understanding of religion than the individuals they were writing about, and who furthermore interpreted the stories to fit their time period and the needs of the people for whom they were telling them.

This focus on internal heterogeneity was in contrast to Albright, who saw the world in terms of minorities and majorities whose group cultures were consistent over time. In her biography, Leona Running speculated that Albright had such sympathy for minorities because he had so often felt like one himself. First he was a minority “as a Protestant missionary’s child in Catholic Latin America,” then “as a Christian in Moslem Palestine with close friendships in the Jewish group,” and even in the United States “with a wife and family who were Catholics in a predominantly Protestant land.” Albright seems to have enjoyed identifying with minorities and disparaging majorities, which for him included the Muslims in Palestine and the Protestants in

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26 Ibid., 19.
27 Ibid., 21.
the United States. Burrows, a member of the liberal Protestant majority that Albright especially disliked, took a quite different approach to the relationship between cultures. He argued for the inevitability of syncretism and praised it as an indispensable factor in pushing the development of Israelite religion forward. Rather than place cultures into majorities and minorities, or religions into Judeo-Christian or non-Judeo-Christian categories, Burrows tended to see overlap and similarity, as in his contention that the similarities among world religions should make Christians more cautious about feeling superior.

In a piece originally published in 1944 titled “Some Functions of Organized Minorities,” Albright argued that the problem of protecting minorities from majorities was as old as time. The Assyrians excelled, he wrote, at dealing with minorities “by a general massacre or by forcible removal to other regions,” practices that have “been copied by the Nazis of our day.”31 While Muslims had shown “a type of clemency hitherto little known” toward Jewish and Christian minorities, their status as the majority led them to make minorities “suffer under severe civil disabilities and fiscal exactions,” and he found the Christians’ record in Europe even worse.32 Though he believed that the strongest country would be one in which thriving minority groups were protected—which was his interpretation of the meaning of the U.S. Constitution33—he rejected the idea that minority groups should assimilate. He argued that cultures were “organisms and crystalline structures,” behaving like other organisms and structures in the natural world, and when cultures began to break down and blend together they formed horrendous “amorphous masses.”34 When “a population of heterogeneous origin” starts to mix together its constituent cultures too much, Albright warned, it “inevitably replaces the lost forms by a new national ethos on a lower level.”35 He cited as “a well-known example” the “decay of popular music in America since the melting pot began to boil in earnest.”36 Another example was Jewish assimilation in Germany, their willingness to give up many Jewish traditions in exchange for achieving full German-ness, and “we all know how much good their cowardice did them.”37 Of course, for Albright, religion was the paramount feature of any culture and so it would be difficult for him to imagine that some German Jews may have wanted to give up their religious practices. When this

31 Albright, History, Archaeology and Christian Humanism, 196.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., 197.
34 Ibid., 199.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid., 200.
piece was reprinted in a 1964 essay collection, Albright included a postscript apologizing for accusing Holocaust victims of cowardice.\textsuperscript{38} In the postscript he also commented on the Civil Rights Movement, praising Martin Luther King for helping make African Americans “one of the best-organized minorities in American history.”\textsuperscript{39} Their place in American culture, after so much suffering and adversity, was coming to fruition, he thought, which he did not believe could have happened if they had been granted “a new commonwealth—say in Georgia and Florida, as urged by many a century ago”\textsuperscript{40}; they would “have remained on a level somewhat comparable to that of Haiti”\textsuperscript{41} because they would form the majority in their country.

Albright presented a list of reasons why minority groups should be valued and protected by majorities. First, they “tend to be more productive in proportion to numbers than the majorities among which their members live”\textsuperscript{42}—and for him the Jews in America were the consummate example—because the difficulties of being in a minority led them to work harder to overcome adversity and thus to work harder at everything in life. Second, the mild irritation of seeing a minority achieving so much, Albright argued, tends to spur majority members to greater achievement; without minorities, majorities become an “inert mass.”\textsuperscript{43} Also, the presence of minorities can ensure the continuation of democracy and freedom by creating a test to see whether it is working.\textsuperscript{44} “America became great through the migration of minorities,” Albright argued, “and she will remain a great democracy by respecting the right of men and minorities to differ in all matters not affecting the traditional fundamentals of right and wrong!”\textsuperscript{45} For him modern Jews exhibited similar characteristics to the early Christians, because neither were “well integrated as a group.” For modern Jews, he believed, this resulted in their producing “an astonishingly high proportion of the significant intellectual achievements of our age,” and therefore the “state of excitation” caused by being an unintegrated minority group was to be desired.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 212.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 214.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 213.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 214.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 200.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 201.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 203.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 204.
\textsuperscript{46} Albright, \textit{From the Stone Age to Christianity}, 99.
On the other hand, Burrows did not celebrate group homogeneity. He criticized Ezra’s decision to require Jews who had married foreigners to divorce, citing the book of Ruth, which he attributed to the same period, as a protest against this “proud exclusiveness” in its pointed story of a Moabite girl who turns out to be an ancestress of King David.47 Burrows read the split into two kingdoms as an expression of “the democratic spirit of the ancient Hebrew religion”;48 and concluded with the idea that, while he believed there was an underlying unity to the Bible, that unity allows room for differing interpretations on so many issues that Burrows could characterize the Bible as promoting “a great deal of diversity.”49

In an article on Old Testament syncretism, Burrows argued for the inevitability of syncretism and praised it as an indispensable factor in pushing the development of Israelite religion forward. Though later purist reactions gave the impression of an originally pure religion of Yahweh, Burrows argued that “Hebrew religion was already a syncretistic product when it first appeared on the stage of history. Before that it had doubtless gone through several stages of syncretism, which now we can only conjecture with more or less probability.”50 He favored the Kenite thesis, in which Moses learned about Yahweh from Jethro in the desert, but for Burrows, regardless of where Moses learned about Yahweh, “his conception of Yahweh unquestionably combined elements from the religion of his Hebrew ancestors with others from his Egyptian environment.”51 When the followers of Yahweh came into contact with the Canaanites and their deities, the conflict was between a desert religious system and an agricultural one; the Canaanites engaged in fertility rituals, common among peoples dependent on agriculture, that offended the Yahwists. It was not, Burrows argued, primarily a conflict “of monotheism against polytheism.”52 “That the religion of Moses was monotheistic,” he continued, “I cannot regard as probable, in spite of Prof. Albright’s effort to prove this.”53 Living among the Canaanites led to a blending of their religious ideas, which, Burrows pointed out, led directly to the tradition of Old Testament prophecy, with Yahwist purists calling the people in one direction, away from the gods of Canaan. He read David’s reign as largely successful in its purism, combined with “its

47 Burrows, Bible Religion, 59.
48 Ibid., 43.
49 Ibid., 87.
51 Ibid., 11.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
strong assertion of national unity and independence,” but short-lived, as syncretism was a defining feature of Solomon’s many alliances. Babylonian exiles preserved their heritage jealously in a strange environment, while Jews remaining in Palestine fell into “the old tendencies toward syncretism.” Here he demonstrated his preference for theories of cultural hybridity over cultural purity:

Throughout the process we see a kind of oscillation and tension—perhaps, to be fashionable, I should say ‘dialectic’—between syncretism and puristic reaction. Extreme purism might have produced spiritual inbreeding and degeneration. The opposite extreme would have been absorption and complete dissipation. Judaism avoided both of these perils. Thus it remained alive, and grew, and produced abundant fruit.

Not only did the conditions of religious difference in Palestine create the reaction of the desire for religious purity—a common enough reading of the Old Testament—but for Burrows these non-Israelites were not only necessary but positive for Israelite religion. Without syncretism, and without the dialectic between syncretism and reaction, Israelite religion would not have developed into the great world heritage he believed it became.

In 1938 Burrows became part of the original Standard Bible Committee, which prepared the Revised Standard Version of the Bible on behalf of the National Council of Churches. One of a handful of scholars who felt at home working in either Testament, Burrows distinguished himself as the only member to work on the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Apocrypha. Also during this time he developed a thoroughgoing methodological caution toward the relationship between archaeology and the Bible that undermined the Baltimore school’s positions, though with little effect on the larger scholarly conversation. Burrows’ 1941 biblical archaeology textbook quietly pled for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between the biblical text and archaeological discoveries than that which emanated from the Albright school. Already in 1934 Burrows had published a piece critiquing the prevalent notion of biblical archaeology, attributing it to poor publicity even though, as we have seen, it was more directly attributable to his colleagues. “Now in the interest of truth,” he proclaimed, “it should be frankly and plainly recognized that as a matter of fact very little has been found which is of any

54 Ibid., 13.
55 Ibid., 14.
56 Ibid., 16.
57 Edwin Gladding Burrows, The Cup & the Unicorn, 68.
help in verifying the accounts of the Hebrew and early Christian historians.”  

This is quite different from Albright’s lifelong claim that the sheer amount of incontrovertible proof he encountered in Palestine in the 1920s turned him conservative. For one, Burrows argued that any evidence that was found had to be interpreted, and provided examples of “what a delicate and complicated matter the interpretation of a bit of archeological evidence may be.” While he did think archaeology could contribute to knowledge, he thought it paramount to recognize that “more problems are raised than are solved by archaeology.”

Though Albright and his students were perhaps the main culprits, Burrows did not call them out, instead finding it unfortunate that “a vague notion” was afoot among the public that “the details of the Scriptural record are being confirmed step by step with each new discovery.” Besides the point that one kind of truth—historical accuracy—was being conflated with another—the religious truth of the Bible’s “spiritual teaching”—the concept of “proof” was too strong. Again, Burrows insisted on the recognition that there were different interpretations of scripture, implicitly refuting Albright’s claim that archaeological evidence was creating a body of objective data that could minimize difference. Rather, Burrows argued, “The assertion that archeology confirms what the Bible says implies that what the Bible says is rightly understood. This is often, however, a matter of interpretations.” Not only were texts always interpreted when they were read, archaeological evidence was interpreted as well. Whether interpretation—and hence subjectivity—was good or bad was moot, because it was inevitable:

In attempting to determine the bearing of archeological discoveries on larger historical problems, it is impossible to avoid some degree of personal judgment. We may save the scientific good name of archeology by limiting it to the area within which objectivity is attainable. We may then say that the subjective element comes in when we pass from archeology to history. But since it is only by taking that step that archeology achieves any real significance, we shall do better to avoid such a narrow definition, and to include historical interpretation within the scope of archeology.

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59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
62 Ibid., 3.
63 Ibid., 4.
64 Ibid., 17.
“What is cited as proved by archaeology is frequently some individual’s interpretation,” Burrows continued, adding that excavators should be read critically because they “sometimes adopt too readily interpretations which make their discoveries seem especially important.” In order to show how difficult it would be to reach the level of “proof,” Burrows employed the example of the Siloam inscription, easily one of the pieces of archaeological evidence that most certainly refers to a biblical story. The Bible tells the story of a tunnel built under King Hezekiah to supply Jerusalem with water that was built by two groups digging toward each other and meeting in the middle. The Siloam inscription describes just such an event, though without naming King Hezekiah, and was found in just such a tunnel. Even this incredible fit did not, Burrows contended, constitute proof. The more nuanced and responsible way to put it was not that the inscription proved the accuracy of the Bible story but that “it is reasonable to infer that the inscription and biblical account refer to the same accomplishment.”

Burrows attributed the genius of the Israelites as passed down through the Bible not to the Israelites as a group versus the Canaanites, but rather to a few brilliant individual Israelites who not only opposed Canaanite religion but also the religious practices of almost all their fellow Israelites. There was thus a “vast difference between the religion of Israel as a whole”—the Canaanite-like religion of most Israelites—“and the religion of the spiritual pioneers whose experiences and insights have found lasting expression in the Bible.” He found it more impressive that individuals could oppose the mainstream than if it had been more widespread.

In 1946 Burrows published An Outline of Biblical Theology, meant to be used in seminary education. Acknowledging ministers’ move away from the Bible in preaching, partly because of concerns over the arguments made by higher critics, Burrows sought to help ministers reground their messages in the Bible. He took the position that the Old Testament must be interpreted through the New Testament message of Christ in order to determine which parts are useful and which not. He made a distinction between the history of religion in the Bible—“what the religion of the ancient Hebrews and early Christians was”—and biblical theology—“what was God’s judgment on that religion, and what significance it has for us.” Albright, because he believed Moses had been a monotheist, would not have made this particular distinction between

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65 Ibid., 26.
66 Ibid., 28.
67 Ibid., 289.
history of biblical religion and biblical theology. Just before it appeared, Albright mentioned in a letter to a colleague that “Burrows’ O.T. Theology is in press and should appear soon.” It “should be a very sound piece of work,” he commented, “though not original and not calculated to arouse any deep religious sentiment among students who use it.”  

Soon after the book appeared, Wright, later to become almost synonymous with the term “biblical theology,” wrote his mentor to complain about Burrows’ point of view, deeming it worthless for seminary education. “I will be interested to see what you say about Burrows’ book,” Wright wrote. “I did not like it at all; though I never want to let Burrows know that; in fact, I think it is a terrible book. I am sure that Burrows is sound and produces many good facts but to me what he has is really not biblical theology.”  

The phrase “produces many good facts” is telling; Burrows, who believed all facts were interpreted by scholars, would likely not have agreed that this was his goal or have accepted it as high praise.

To contrast Burrows’ view of biblical theology to Wright’s, Wright believed he could use the external, objective evidence of archaeology to arrive at a final answer as to what the theology of the Bible is—the outcome of “producing many good facts.” Burrows defined biblical theology as bringing the results of biblical studies to laypeople, not crystallizing one particular outcome but seeing religion as “always a living movement, involving an intellectual element but in such a way that belief is closely bound up with experience, worship, and conduct.” Also, Burrows’ adherence to the belief that biblical religion evolved into better forms culminating in Jesus probably annoyed Wright, who argued that Protestants had blasphemously replaced the centrality of God with Jesus. Burrows’ description of that evolution—in which “monotheism may be traced back to polytheism, polytheism to animism, and animism to animatism, which may then be explained as merely a spontaneous, unreflecting, and erroneous reaction of the primitive mind to its environment,” laid humans’ growing understanding of God at their own feet rather than, in Wright’s view, being progressively revealed to them by God.

Burrows also subtly denigrated Albrightean archaeologists’ view of their work with his comment that “Much ink has been wasted also, and is still wasted, in the effort to prove the detailed historical accuracy of the biblical narratives. Actually they abound in errors, including

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69 William Foxwell Albright to H. H. Rowley, 1 August 1946, APS.
many contradictory statements. Archaeological research has not, as is often boldly asserted, resolved the difficulties or confirmed the narrative”\textsuperscript{73} step by step. “Not only are false ideas expressed,” he continued, “wrong practices are sanctioned or allowed to pass without protest, such as slavery, polygamy, and wars of conquest and extermination.”\textsuperscript{74} He criticized the Old Testament for viewing humanity mainly by people group—as did Albright—and championed the New Testament in this regard, arguing that “over against all this the distinctly individualistic attitude and ideas of the NT are conspicuous.”\textsuperscript{75} And he explicitly promoted a value that he said could not be found in the Bible, tolerance: “a sympathetic, appreciative attitude toward other faiths or other interpretations of Christianity than our own, provided the spirit of the effort is that of free sharing, with open-minded willingness to hear and consider fairly the convictions of others.”\textsuperscript{76} Preferring tolerance to intolerance was based on the same reasoning as opposing slavery: accepting “the principle that what is ultimately authoritative for us is that which commands the assent of our own best judgment, accepted as the witness of the spirit within us.”\textsuperscript{77} 

Notwithstanding his Protestant disdain upon first seeing the Holy Land, Burrows developed sympathies for the peoples of the Holy Land that came to fruition when he returned to Jerusalem as school director in 1947–1948, making him the director at the moment the Dead Sea Scrolls were brought to the door, and during the 1948 hostilities.\textsuperscript{78} His second term as Jerusalem school director was fraught throughout, and Burrows had little desire to witness the whole war and its aftermath. Six weeks before the pull-out of British troops, he and his wife evacuated, on April 2, 1948, less than a month since Albright had declared the scrolls ancient, on March 8, 1948.\textsuperscript{79}

Albright had been considering returning to act as director again. Burrows warned him in no uncertain terms that he would not be welcome in Palestine, and would even possibly be in danger, because Arabs were quite aware of his Zionist position. In March 1948, Burrows

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 44.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 47.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 145.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 283.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 50.
\textsuperscript{78} His successor, Ovid R. Sellers, suffered more in the 1948 war when he was shot out of the sky taking an Arab plane from Beirut to Jerusalem in September 1948; he survived and fulfilled his term as director. King, \textit{American Archaeology in the Mideast}, 111.
\textsuperscript{79} Nevertheless, Weston Fields recounts, Burrows had done enough work on the Isaiah scroll during that time that he was able to use that work when helping prepare the Revised Standard Version of the Old Testament, which first appeared in 1952. Fields, \textit{The Dead Sea Scrolls}, 80. Fields does an excellent job in this book of placing the events of the Scrolls’ discovery and study against the background of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
reiterated this warning, and pointed out that it originally came from Jewish archaeologist Immanuel Ben Dor, whose reasoning Burrows seconded. “The difficulty, as I’ve explained, is that you are known here as pro-Zionist,” he informed Albright. Indeed, Burrows said, he had heard two years previous that Albright’s “reputation in this respect” was “militating against us [ASOR] among the Arabs over here and in Syria.” Rumors were circulating that Albright might return, which, Burrows reported, was in itself causing trouble. “Dr. [Taufik] Canaan asked me last summer whether it were true that you were coming back,” Burrows wrote, “and when I told him you were he said nothing whatever, giving me a distinct impression that he was not enthusiastic.” And just that morning at breakfast, an Arab employee who had never met Albright said he had heard from several people that ASOR was bringing in “an extreme Zionist” to direct the school the next year. Burrows said he had defended Albright by trying to point out that he was no longer politically active:

I told him it was true that you had expressed sympathy with Zionism in the past, but I didn’t think you had ever been extreme, that I knew you had many Arab friends here and had had Arab students when you were director before, and that you had recently written me that you were disgusted with the Zionist leaders and were determined to be, as you put it, an extreme neutral.

The Arab employee “said that was good, but the trouble was that what you had been before was well known to people who would never hear about your change of mind or wouldn’t believe it.” Albright’s response to Burrows’ concerns, in a letter to Glueck, suggests that he thought he could simply say he was not political and that would clear up the whole misunderstanding. “It is true that I was engaged for a couple of years in Zionist propaganda, but what I published was very moderate and I have long since withdrawn from all quasi-political activity, being disgusted with the mendacity of both propagandas,” and thus, he was nothing more than “a quiet scholar who keeps out of trouble.” He thought Burrows was blowing his role in the affair a bit out of proportion, especially in his suggestion that Albright might be an assassination target. This was

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80 Millar Burrows to William Foxwell Albright, 6 March 1948, box 1 folder 14, “Correspondence 1948,” William F. Albright Papers Coll. 002, ASOR.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
86 William Foxwell Albright to Nelson Glueck, 25 February 1948, APS.
not, however, due to his warm feelings toward the Arabs. The school building itself probably was in danger, he wrote, “since the Arabs are not likely to spare any foreign property when they go on a rampage.”

Before he got out of Palestine, Burrows did witness the beginning of the Palestinian refugee problem. This led him to write *Palestine Is Our Business*. Burrows resigned from ASOR leadership to write the book, dedicated “To the Homeless and Destructive Native People of the Holy Land.” In it, Burrows took pains to point out that he was no longer affiliated with either AUB or ASOR because

the institutions named … are engaged only in education and research and have no political affiliations or commitments whatever. I am no longer employed by either organization, nor am I an officer of either of them. *While teaching there about the remote past, I learned something about the present.*

One of the reasons he had left the organizations was because he had come to the realization, not surprising given his theoretical underpinnings, that neutrality was not possible, or, even if it were possible, desirable.

This is not intended to be a report of dispassionate research, nicely balancing pros and cons and avoiding any commitment. … What is needed in such a case as this is not the disinterested objectivity of a historian dealing with the past, or a scientist dissecting a corpse. This is a question of the most immediate and vital concern to many hundreds of thousands of living people. … Fairness is essential, but fairness is not the same thing as neutrality. If one side is right and the other wrong, neutrality is not just.

Burrows grounded his knowledge in his three years in the Middle East, which he used to refute claims such as the one that Arabs had all left by choice with anecdotal evidence of giving aid to refugees fleeing in terror, some under orders from Jewish military units. He argued that Palestine was Americans’ business as Christians. As Christians, they should be concerned about what goes on in the Holy Land, and they should be made aware what supporting the Zionists meant for other groups in Palestine, including the Arab Christians. “Even if we dare to reverse Jesus’ metaphor and claim that there is a beam in our neighbor’s eye” regarding what had come to pass

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87 Ibid.
88 Interestingly, the year before, his brother Edwin Grant Burrows, an anthropology professor at the University of Connecticut, published a book about the diverse origins of the Hawaiians that demonstrated similar views of cultural change and fluidity, along with asking for understanding for Japanese-Americans in light of Japan’s role in World War II. Edwin G. Burrows, *Hawaiian Americans: An Account of the Mingling of Japanese, Chinese, Polynesian, and American Cultures* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1947).
90 Ibid., 11–12.
in the Holy Land, he warned, “there is at least a splinter in our own.”\textsuperscript{91} The United States deserved a great deal of blame, he charged, for not gladly accepting Jewish refugees during and after the Holocaust.\textsuperscript{92}

His concern for both Palestinian Muslims and Christians showed how much his views on Eastern Christians had changed since 1932. He included the text of a letter recently received from an Arab Christian friend who had fled his home in Jerusalem to nearby Bethlehem, which ended up on the Jordanian side of the 1948 border. The Christian was writing with bad and good news: the bad news was that he had heard that his home, including 2,500 books, had been destroyed; the good news was that his wife had given birth in Bethlehem, which, he wrote to Burrows, “reminded [me] of his Master … so I have great hopes that my little son will follow in the footsteps of the Master when he grows to be a man.”\textsuperscript{93}

Reflecting his thought processes in other contexts, Burrows did not base his arguments on Arabs as a group versus Jews as a group but rather took pains to illustrate the range of positions that had been taken within the Arab and Jewish communities. Many Arabs held nationalist ideas he found just as noxious; many Jews were not political Zionists. He had not envisioned a Palestine free of Jews, but rather one where the communities, with their different cultures and customs, could have coexisted. Palestine could be a homeland for Jews without it being a Jewish state, he maintained.\textsuperscript{94} Instead, because Arabs had so often been made to feel inferior in their own land and had been treated imperialistically throughout the process of Jewish settlement, “The Arabs’ hatred of the Jews, a relatively new thing,” had become “so deep and bitter that it will not be removed for generations.”\textsuperscript{95} Certainly, he argued, the differences between these groups were only cultural, given the mixed-up ethnic makeup of both groups:

The unity of the Arabs among themselves (like that of the Jews, for that matter) is in reality not racial but cultural. The Arabs of Palestine are such by language and culture and only part by race, for the blood of Crusaders, Romans, Greeks, perhaps Israelites and even Canaanites, flows in their veins; indeed, if the truth were known, it might be found that they have as much of the blood of the ancient Hebrews as the Jews themselves have. In the past as compared with the western nations, they have shown relatively little antagonism for Jews as such.\textsuperscript{96}

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 48.  
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 69.  
\textsuperscript{93} Quoted in Ibid., 54.  
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 83.  
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 43.  
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., 43.
This description of the diverse origins of the Arabs living in Palestine is startlingly similar to Shlomo Sand’s recent description, quoted in the introduction, given that it was published sixty years before Sand’s work became the subject of controversy in 2009. Both scholars wish to draw attention to the myth of homogeneous group cultures in order to show, in this case, that the idea that the Jews or the Palestinians have essentially unchanging group identities persisting over hundreds of years contributes to the belief in their essential difference and thus the need for separate ethno-national states today.

Burrows also sent a handful of letters to The New York Times. For example, he wrote one to contest a previous letter writer’s contention that the Palestinian refugee problem was caused when Palestinians fled the incoming Arab armies. Why, he asked, did they then end up in the areas those armies were coming from? Burrows pinned Palestinians’ flight on hearing the news of the Deir Yassin massacre. The previous writer saw this incident as regrettable but out of the ordinary for the Israelis; Burrows thought that whether it was their best behavior or worst was irrelevant next to the fact that it was a major cause of the refugee crisis, and that the refugee crisis had cleared up a major demographic issue for the Israelis.97

Burrows donated profits from the book to refugee relief.98 Additionally, from 1954 to 1957, he served as president of American Middle East Relief, Inc., which conducted food and clothing drives on behalf of Palestinian refugees. Also among the officers were Hitti, Dodge, and Russ Bouton, Jr., of the Arabian American Oil Company.


In fact, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* was very dry, aside from the narrative portion, in which Burrows recounted the fascinating details of the Scrolls’ discovery, purchase, and trips around the city to be examined, all while ASOR members were making rushed arrangements to get out of there before war broke out. Otherwise, the book as a whole shows Burrows’ extremely cautious nature regarding scholarship. He spent time describing nearly every piece of scholarship produced on the scrolls to that time, weighing the evidence judiciously, and remarking on which theories he found more or less convincing, while saying very little positive.

Burrows’ works on the Dead Sea Scrolls continued his focus on heterogeneity within traditions. In Neil Asher Silberman’s view, Burrows “moved quickly to calm the faithful” when he informed readers that nothing in the Scrolls could harm Christianity. I would argue that Burrows thought nothing in the Scrolls could harm Christianity because they showed what he already believed: that influences on Christianity were diverse. Because readers interpret texts, the Dead Sea Scrolls had no one fixed meaning, and because one’s personal view of Christianity involved a strong dose of one’s own conscience, literal readings of ancient texts did not determine what Christianity meant for individuals in the twentieth century. Conversely, Albright, as we saw in the last chapter, supported Israeli efforts to purchase all the Dead Sea Scrolls because for him they represented the specifically Jewish past and strengthened the link between Judaism and Christianity.

*More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls* in 1958 responded directly to the popularization of Dead Sea Scrolls discourse. He wrote it, not so much because a great deal more scholarship had been done, but because so much of that scholarship and public reception of it suggested connections between the Qumran community and early Christianity that he found unjustified. Scholars were making possible connections, then exaggerating those possibilities into hypothetical scenarios that were being taken seriously. As usual, Burrows believed archaeologists had a responsibility to make only claims that were warranted by the evidence, and to express caution and skepticism about their conclusions so that readers would not get carried away.

This second Dead Sea Scrolls volume thus could be said to be even more interested in calming the fears of Christians, though not necessarily, as Silberman suggests, to paper over

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anything new the Scrolls might reveal. Rather, Burrows made arguments about the historical development of religion to suggest that it would not really matter if the origins were not quite what Christians had usually envisioned. And if Christianity were related somehow to the Essenes, it would be another way in which Christianity was similar to Judaism, which was already well known. Burrows argued that scholars were understanding, “increasingly so of late, that Christianity is closely related to other religions at many points and has acquired and assimilated much from other religions.” Finding one more instance of that phenomenon, therefore, should not shatter one’s worldview.

As Christianity spread in the Roman Empire and beyond, it came into contact with other religions too, found that it had something in common with them, and was more or less influenced by them. Judaism itself, in fact, had been influenced by other religions and cultures long before the dawn of Christianity.

One reason for concern over the scrolls, Burrows felt, was that laymen had less knowledge of similarities between Christianity and other religions than scholars did. Those who were startled by “similarities of thought and language between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament were not aware of the abundance of such parallels in other Jewish sources,” he reasoned, unlike their “grandfathers,” who “knew their Apocrypha and Josephus” well, before laymen and even ministers lost interest in reading such texts. Burrows assured his readers that, after “the first flurry of excitement” about the implications of the scrolls, it would become more apparent “that our appreciation of the Hebrew and Christian tradition is not destroyed but enhanced.”

Burrows threaded his interests in the similarities between religions and the way they mutually influenced each other throughout his writings. While the Baltimore school tended to draw a line between certain kinds of Jews and Christians on one side and the rest of the world on the other, Burrows believed that influences went in all directions and that Christianity and Judaism only looked unique when constructed in such a way as to throw attention off their many similarities to other religions. This way of understanding religions was reflected in his views of the ancient Israelites and Canaanites, who he saw as more similar than different, as well as his views of the Palestinians and Israelis, who he refused to see as essentially incompatible.

103 Ibid.
104 Ibid., 51.
105 Ibid., 48.
CHAPTER THREE

“THE COMPULSION OF GEOPOLITICS”: NELSON GLUECK’S SHIFT FROM FAVORING CULTURAL HYBRIDITY TO JEWISH NATIONALISM

As director of the American Schools of Oriental Research in Jerusalem in 1932–1933, 1936–1940, and 1942–1947, American biblical archaeologist and Reform rabbi Nelson Glueck upheld ASOR’s official stance of political neutrality, stating, “We are partisan only to scientific research. No other attitude can be tolerated.”

In 1937, Glueck attributed the safety of ASOR members during periods of unrest to “the well known, strenuously maintained, and generally respected political and religious neutrality of the School.”

But Glueck’s politics were indeed present in his writing, in ways that were perhaps more powerful for having been submerged beneath the standard mid-century veneer of objectivity. While Glueck did not explicitly discuss political views in his scholarly books, I argue that the historical ethnography of ancient cultures he provided in these texts shifts from a model of culture as fluid to a model of culture as static that maps onto his shift from opposing political Zionism to supporting it. This chapter thus illuminates the non-academic stakes that were involved for scholars in adopting one of these theoretical models over another.

Glueck is commonly remembered as a Zionist, and it is not often recognized that he spent the first half of his career opposing political Zionism. This chapter traces Glueck’s shift from opposing political Zionism in order to protect a culturally diverse Palestine to favoring political Zionism and working to elide difference, even arguing that the Jewish community could overcome internal differences and achieve mystical unity through their unique connection to the land. Glueck, who always supported cultural Zionism, spent much of his adult life in Palestine, as did his fellow American Reform rabbi and mentor on the Arab-Israeli issue, Judah Leon Magnes. Magnes, the first chancellor of the Hebrew University, chose to emigrate to Palestine, yet his cultural Zionism, like Glueck’s, often entailed vehemently opposing the goals of political Zionists in order to protect the status of non-Jews. In April 1948, Magnes took heed of warnings that his life was in danger and moved to New York, where he died only a few months later.

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1 Quoted in King, American Archaeology in the Mideast, 101.
3 Ross, Rabbi Outcast, 85.
Glueck’s timely political change allowed him to enjoy safety and prestige in the newly formed state.

Glueck published three books designed to make the results of his archaeological site surveys accessible to a popular audience: *The Other Side of the Jordan* (1940), *The River Jordan* (1946), and *Rivers in the Desert* (1959). His political shift manifested itself in his writings in terms of his implicit theory of culture. At first Glueck characterized ancient Palestine as a paragon of cultural hybridity, taking special care to point out the ways the ancient Israelites mixed with other peoples. After 1948, he shifted to foregrounding the biblical narrative and applauding the ancient Israelites’ efforts to purge the area of heterogeneity.

Regardless of his ASOR ties, throughout the tense 1930s and 1940s Glueck advanced the idea that the British mandate or an international administration should govern Palestine for as long as possible to avoid the formation of an Arab state, a Jewish state, or both. In 1947, he was named president of Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati in part because he still opposed political Zionism. However, a few months after Israel’s founding, Glueck adopted a fervently mystical political Zionism characterized by a belief in the special relationship between the Jewish people and the land and rejected his previous view that others groups also had a special relationship with the same land. As HUC president, he sought to spread this version of Zionism among American Reform Jews, notably by building a campus in Jerusalem and requiring all HUC rabbinical students to study there for one year. Glueck also hosted an ecumenical summer institute for clergy and religious studies faculty at HUC in Jerusalem. This support for what Americans were coming to think of as the “Judeo-Christian tradition” may sound paradoxical, but a reading of participant testimonials demonstrates that the institute served to strengthen the Jewish claim to the land through appeals to a shared biblical heritage.

Glueck’s career was indisputably prominent at mid-century, but he has not received extensive treatment in studies on either American biblical archaeology or Israeli nationalist archaeology. An exception is Philip J. King’s institutional history of ASOR, in which Glueck receives nine pages and one scolding footnote for working as a spy for the U.S. Office of Strategic Services during World War II. For King, this “compromised” his political

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4 Michael A. Meyer, “A Centennial History,” in Samuel E. Karff, ed., *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion at One Hundred Years* ([Cincinnati]: Hebrew Union College Press, 1976), 177. While many Reform Jews had become Zionists by the 1940s, HUC retained a strong anti-Zionist contingent longer than most Reform institutions.
evenhandedness” and cost him “the confidence of Arab friends,” given that he carried out much of his mission—which, according to Floyd Fierman, involved formulating an escape plan for the British if they lost the battle of El Alamein—while living among the Bedouin. “It is an unwritten law in the Mideast,” King reminds readers, “that archaeology and politics should never be mixed; when they are, it is to the detriment of archaeology.”

Fierman—who romantically describes Glueck as “a solitary rabbi-archaeologist” and “the real-life Indiana Jones of his day”—objects to King’s criticism, arguing that “freedom was a higher cause than archaeological neutrality.” And few academics today, more than a quarter-century after King penned his conviction that politics and archaeology could be separated, would accept that such a separation is possible. Indeed, there were many ways Glueck and his fellow ASOR members chose not to remain neutral in the political milieu of their day, with espionage being only an especially obvious example. I would argue that the more meaningful examples are those, such as Glueck’s positions against and then for a Jewish state, that were clearly political but that went unremarked upon in internal ASOR correspondence or works like King’s.

Glueck was born in 1900 to Lithuanian immigrants and raised in the largely anti-Zionist milieu of pre-World War II Cincinnati, Ohio. He attended Hebrew Union College, a center of Reform Jewish learning, in Cincinnati and was ordained a rabbi in 1923 in that tradition, which at that time denied that future return to Palestine formed an essential component of Judaism. “At various times,” as Samuel E. Karff writes, “Reform served as code word for a non-Zionist or anti-Zionist orientation.” Reform Judaism as articulated in the 1885 Pittsburgh Platform discouraged special emphasis on the physical territory of Palestine. The 1937 Columbus Platform, forged during a period of acrimonious debate over the issue among Reform rabbis, worked to restore Palestine’s importance to Reform Judaism.

The two biographies of Glueck celebrate his latter political position but seem unaware of the former. The authors take for granted that he devoted his life’s work to finding evidence of ancient Jewish presence in Palestine in order to make a twentieth-century land claim. Ellen Norman Stern describes Glueck as such a well-known and revered figure in Israel’s early days.

8 Ibid., 22.
9 Karff, “Introduction,” in *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion at One Hundred Years*, xii.
that he was known simply as “The Professor.” Glueck “enjoyed a special status among Israelis,” she wrote, because “he proved by his theories what they had for so long tried to explain to the rest of the world: the Jewish people had always belonged to the land of the Bible.”¹¹ In a 2006 biography by Jonathan M. Brown and Laurence Kutler, the authors paint a picture of the volatile Palestine of 1936, where “biblical archaeology is seen by many Palestinian Jews as part of the struggle to establish a legitimate claim.” That is why, they write, Glueck arrived in Palestine with “first a Bible and then a field handbook, and with a scholarly mien, suggest[ing] that the route of the exodus from Egypt . . . ran along ancient sites bordering Trajan’s highway in Transjordan.”¹²

Thus, Brown and Kutler, along with Stern, claim that Glueck came to Palestine expressly to prove the land belonged to the Jews. This heavily Zionist interpretation obscures our understanding of the first half of Glueck’s career. Neither book cites Glueck explaining his career choices in this way. Before 1948, he simply was not doing anything of the kind. Afterward, while he became more interested in specifically Jewish heritage, he likely would still have rejected the claim that archaeology’s main point was to settle a political dispute. These biographies, however, demonstrate that this has been a common way of understanding Glueck’s career.

William Dever is well known for critiquing Glueck’s archaeological mentor, William Foxwell Albright, and his students for their “biblical archaeology bias,” meaning they presupposed the Bible to be historically accurate when they interpreted archaeological data.¹³ Dever’s comments on Glueck in 2000, however, strive to preserve parts of his legacy in the face of methodological advances. Dever argues that, despite Glueck’s insistence on following Albright in dating the lives of biblical characters, many of Glueck’s conclusions about settlement patterns were of lasting worth. However, Glueck did match up his finds with biblical stories in a way that made the land and the book read in harmony with each other. One of his most well-known sentiments, often repeated by biblical conservatives, was that “it may be stated

categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference.”¹⁴ Not allowing that there might be alternative interpretations of data other than those supplied by the Bible surely qualifies as a biblical archaeology bias. Thomas W. Davis’s reading of this statement, on the other hand, places Glueck at the heart of the Albright school. Indeed, he goes so far as to say that Glueck’s “views on the reliability of the Bible helped give the Albright school an aura of fundamentalism.”¹⁵

Not unlike his biographers, Dever champions Glueck’s idiosyncrasy, writing that “the flaws in Glueck’s archaeological work in general over some thirty years were due not so much to the direct influence of the ‘biblical archaeology’ movement . . . but to his own unique temperament, personality, and intellectual and spiritual odyssey.”¹⁶ But Glueck’s ideas about archaeology were not idiosyncratic. The best context in which to view his work is as a member of the Albright school. He received his archaeological training from Albright in Jerusalem and claimed the utmost loyalty to him.

For his part, Albright highly esteemed Glueck and his many other Jewish students and colleagues who shared his views of the ability of archaeology to corroborate the Hebrew Bible’s historicity, feeling he had more in common with Jewish scholars than with his fellow Methodists. Burke Long argues that Jewish students did not quite fit into the Protestant faith world that was mid-twentieth century biblical studies.¹⁷ Of course, in many ways this was true. Protestants putting together committees had a way of omitting Jews—not to mention Catholics—from their lists. Albright, however, many times intervened in such situations and sent strongly worded letters insisting that qualified Jewish and Catholic colleagues be included.

I. Ethnic and Religious Diversity along the River Jordan

As a young man, Glueck was influenced by the Jewish anti-Zionist movement, particularly what it warned would be the negative unintended consequences of ethnic nationalism for both Jews and non-Jews.¹⁸ Glueck was concerned that ethno-nationalism of any kind would harm the many

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¹⁸ For a history of the processes by which American Reform Jews went from being largely anti-Zionist to largely Zionist, see Kolsky, *Jews Against Zionism*. 
groups making up Palestine’s cultural mosaic. Glueck’s early works reflect this attitude toward the relationship between cultures.

For example, Glueck’s views of the Bedouin in *The Other Side of the Jordan* are emblematic of his view that the history of Palestine was one of cultural persistence and hybridity. Fluent in Arabic, Glueck traveled through the Transjordan accompanied by a single guide at a time, either Ali Abu Ghosh, a Muslim Arab, or Rashid Hamid, a Muslim Circassian, both of whom had ties to the Transjordan Department of Antiquities.¹⁹ They often stayed with Bedouin tribes, whom Glueck would scrutinize for clues to the biblical patriarchs’ lifeways. He wrote that once, while chatting with some Bedouin, he started to wonder, “Were these the Arabs of Zeinati, or were these the Israelites of Jabesh-Gilead?”

It was all I could do to refrain from turning to one of them and asking him how on that memorable night they had got past the Philistine guards on the city wall of Bethshean! Or had none been posted that evening?²⁰

Glueck valued the Bedouin for what he saw as their ability to yield such biblical knowledge. However, it is important to note that Glueck saw the Bedouin as backward, which went along with his belief—also that of countless other biblically oriented travelers—that God had cursed the area with desolation. Because the Bedouin seemed cursed with backwardness, Glueck thought they must have been there since ancient times. Hence, Glueck was eager to find biblical illustrations among them, even though they were not Jews and even though he would later dismiss them as recent interlopers on the Palestinian scene with an inferior claim to the land.

Glueck’s most powerful statement of cultural persistence and hybridity was *The River Jordan*, which moves from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea, making the Jordan the central means around which to tell the stories of the peoples who lived along its banks throughout history. It was published in 1946, between the end of the Holocaust and the state of Israel’s founding. Neither the fate of Europe’s Jews nor the unrest in Palestine are mentioned. Even so, it reflects Glueck’s political attitude toward Palestine in the mid-1940s.

*The River Jordan* celebrated Palestine as an area to which many cultures and civilizations had contributed, and which should be of interest for this reason, not because of a more narrowly defined biblical history. It embraced the accomplishments of non-Israelite civilizations. Even

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though Glueck saw the development of belief in one god as elevating this region above others, he appreciated and wanted others to appreciate the cultures of other peoples, particularly the Nabataeans, the Arab civilization associated with the ancient city of Petra that flourished around the turn of the common era and which Glueck believed had intermarried with the Judeans. The history of the Jordan valley was for him a great pageant of peoples. Describing the site of Beth-shan, he encouraged the reader to “[f]lip the pages and get a moving-picture impression of the actors crossing the stage of history”: “Canaanites, Egyptians …, Hittites, Babylonians, Philistines, Israelites, Scythians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, and Crusaders.” Suggesting that cultural change and interaction were positive, he added, “And remember, the play has just begun!”

In The River Jordan, Glueck stressed interactions between cultures, pointing out that the beloved Ruth, ancestor of both King David and Jesus, was a “non-Israelitess,” and speaking of the rather less beloved King Herod, a “cosmopolitan part Jew, whose mother was a Nabataean and whose father was of Idumaean extraction,” as “in effect one of the greatest ambassadors to the Gentiles that the Jews had ever had.” Because he saw the ancient Israelites as a nomadic people who later became settled, he called them Bedouin and imagined he could “see the aged sheikh, David, seated on his donkey.” “The Injadat Arabs,” he wrote, were thought by some to be the “descendents of the ancient Gadites, one of the two and a half tribes . . . that settled on the east side of the Jordan.” Whether the blood of the ancient Israelites flowed through their veins did not matter, Glueck wrote, because either way, their sheikh “is a perfect gentleman, a born leader, and a splendid companion, full of wit and wisdom. Abraham may well have looked like him.”

The River Jordan presented a cultural persistence model in which Glueck stressed the similarities between present-day inhabitants and biblical figures, and in which he brought out similarities between the practices of members of different religions. As in a tell, where layers showed that town after town had been built on the same spot, Glueck interpreted cultural and religious practices as though they were layers building up over time. He interpreted religions as

22 Ibid., 85.
23 Ibid., 221.
24 Ibid., 95.
25 Ibid., 78.
26 Ibid.
mixing as a result of cultural persistence when writing about Paneas, the site of a Roman temple. On the same cliff, “on whose side Pan niches can still be seen,” the Muslims had built a shrine to Sheikh Khudr, “who is venerated in Moslem as well as Christian tradition” (by Christians as Saint George). He interpreted the Muslim shrine as the persistence of cultural memory because it seemed to him to say, “Like the Roman temple that preceded me, I, too, testify to the fact that this is holy ground.” As in a tell, the Roman level was culturally just below the Christian and Muslim levels.

Glueck also merged the biblical story of Jephthah sacrificing his daughter to fulfill a vow with a custom among Muslims of hanging rags and strings on a tree on a certain mountain. “It matters not that the worshipers are superficially Moslems,” he wrote; the patrons of such a sanctuary “are pagans, by whatever name they may be known” because the traditions persisted from a pre-Islamic period. Yet he also hoped that it was the “high place” where “the daughter of Jephthah and her companions retired, and the maidens of Israel for long thereafter repaired, to wail over her untimely death.” This site, he thus suggested, revealed a blend of Israelite, Roman, and Muslim veneration.

Against the silent background of Arab and Jewish unrest in Palestine, Glueck explained to an Arab shepherd that the sherds in his hand told the story “of a past to which both of us belonged.” The shepherd asked, in what Glueck, perhaps naively, saw as “utter simplicity,” what the sherds said about the future. Glueck replied, “Allah ya’ref”—only God knows that.

_The River Jordan_ thus fashioned a narrative that glorified Palestine’s age-old cultural hybridity at the same moment its author was opposing the establishment of a Jewish state, attempting to get Jerusalem designated as an international zone, and working closely with Magnes in his efforts for Arab-Jewish reconciliation. These were increasingly unpopular positions. In 1947 Glueck convinced the American Jewish Committee to donate $5,000 to Magnes’ efforts, though apparently he could not convince the AJC to admit to it. Magnes peevishly wrote to Glueck that he was “almost tempted to suggest that the American Jewish Committee keep its money if, in order to improve Arab-Jewish relations, it has to resort to

27 Ibid., 24.  
28 Ibid.  
29 Ibid., 103.  
30 Ibid.  
31 Ibid., 104.  
32 Ibid., 244.
bookkeeping subterfuges.” Magnes then blamed the AJC for compromising the safety of Jews living in Arab countries through that organ’s support for the United Nations’ partition plan of November 29, 1947, which would have divided Palestine into a Jewish state and a Palestinian state and made Jerusalem an international zone. Magnes and Glueck opposed this partition, which would have created two states with ethnic nationalism as their unifying principle.

Glueck replied, assuring Magnes that “fear of [the AJC’s] name being mentioned in this connection has died down.” He apologized that the appropriation of $5,000 was “tiny,” remarking that he was “somewhat depressed” that “[m]illions of dollars are available and squandered for fighting anti-Semitism but it is heart-rendingly difficult to find funds and interest for building up a positive philosophy of life.”

“I have been deluged with requests since partition went into effect, at least nominally,” Glueck continued, “to write articles or make statements explaining why I thought partition was wonderful. I have always replied that were I to write such articles or make such statements, all I could say would be that all of us ought to don sackcloth and strew our heads with ashes that partition had come to pass.” Glueck’s concern about the implications of ethno-national states put him in a difficult minority position.

Glueck continued his arguments against a Jewish state after his inauguration as HUC president on March 12, 1948. In a document dated April 2, 1948, Glueck criticized partition for “the evil of the divisiveness it carried with it.” He argued in favor of controlled Jewish immigration and administration by a combination of Great Britain, the United States, and the United Nations, a solution he believed would find “acquiescence from both Jewish and Arab sides, if there were a guarantee that neither group could ever be treated as a minority, but would enjoy a political and economic equality.”

On April 5, 1948, Glueck sent a letter to Charles Taft, president of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America and a fellow Cincinnatian. He asked Taft to make a public appeal for the internationalization of Jerusalem because he thought it was “highly desirable for

33 Magnes to Glueck, 16 December 1947. MS20/A1a-2/8 Glueck–Personal, AJA.
34 Glueck to Magnes, 2 January 1948. MS20/ A1a-2/8 Glueck–Personal, AJA.
35 Ibid.
36 Nelson Glueck, 2 April 1948. MS20/A1a-5/2, Palestine, AJA.
37 Ibid.
38 Taft, the son of President William Howard Taft, later served as mayor of Cincinnati.
public appeals to stem from all sides and particularly from that of Christendom.”

He enclosed a statement Taft could use as the basis of his appeal. The letter must have worked. An unsigned editorial in the April 19, 1948, edition of the *Cincinnati Times-Star* titled “Save the Shrines of Jerusalem!” reported that “Charles P. Taft … has appealed to the United Nations for protection of Jerusalem and its shrines.”

In early May 1948, even as warfare raged in Palestine, Glueck criticized the Jewish community in Palestine for their failure to cross cultural boundaries and integrate. “One of the sorriest records of Jewish endeavor there,” Glueck wrote, “has been the long and continued and, on the whole, absolute failure to integrate Jewish life there with Arab life and to make the economy of the country one integral and indivisible part.” Glueck made such criticisms despite his familiarity with the violence between Jews and Arabs over the recent decades; despite all this, he had not yet decided the Arabs were his enemy. He pleaded with the audience to “demand immediately the internationalization of Jerusalem” and to save the people there, “large parts of which for a number of weeks have survived on edible grasses” because of the warfare between Arabs and Jews. On May 14, 1948, Jewish forces triumphed, and the state of Israel was declared.

The state’s founding did not in itself change Glueck’s mind. Three months later, he met with U.S. Secretary of State George C. Marshall. According to Glueck’s notes, he stressed to the secretary that “the State of Israel,” which, despite Glueck’s earlier efforts, was now “an historic fact,” could perhaps be persuaded to give up its part of Jerusalem to create the proposed international zone.

This begs the question of why Glueck changed his mind about political Zionism, a change that appears to have occurred in about September 1948; he sounded Jewish nationalist themes in a meeting with Harry S. Truman on October 1. Since I have found no record in either published texts or archival documents in which Glueck acknowledges, much less analyzes, this change, it is difficult to say. The timing demonstrates that knowledge of the extent of the Holocaust did not immediately tip the scales. One change is that Glueck began in 1948, for the first time, to feel pigeonholed as a Jew by some of his colleagues and by Arabs in general. His

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39 Glueck to Charles Taft, 5 April 1948; MS20/A1a-5/2, Palestine, AJA.
40 “Save the Shrines of Jerusalem!” *Cincinnati Times-Star*, 5 April 1948.
41 Nelson Glueck, undated, MS20/A1a-5/2, Palestine, AJA. This document appears to be comments Glueck delivered to the Executive Committee Meeting of the American Jewish Committee, May 1–2, 1948.
42 Nelson Glueck’s notes from interview with Secretary of State George C. Marshall, 27 July 1948. MS20/A1a-5/2, Palestine, AJA.
ability as an individual to cross cultures was being rapidly curtailed in ways he had not previously imagined. In February 1948, he wrote an emotional letter to Albright about how terrible it made him feel that the current director of ASOR’s Jerusalem school, Millar Burrows, thought Glueck should not return because as a Jew he might put himself and the school at risk.

Glueck had trouble believing his Jewishness could hurt the school because he had gotten along during many troubled periods. During the 1936–39 Arab–Jewish riots, for example, Glueck’s Jewishness had mattered little, even in ASOR’s heavily Arab neighborhood. The riots had not stopped him from his habit, which was to “work and travel and wander about in the blue, practically alone in accordance with my fancy, remaining in the field for weeks at a time.” Glueck’s pain at being reduced to a label comes through in the following passage:

To be told now, however, that my connection with the School has stamped it as being Jewish, and thus endangered it, that by reason of the fact of there being some Jewish tradesmen (among the majority of Arabs) who delivered goods and services to the School, and because Jewish scholars were allowed to visit our School library, and because occasionally some of my Jewish friends visited me (among the overwhelming majority of my Christian friends …), and because several individuals have told Burrows … that it is bad for a Jew to have headed the School, to be told that after all my years of service at the School and in almost always trying times, is a bit hard for me to take.

An individual confronted with the erosion of all he believed to be true about the ability of cultures to fruitfully coexist, reduced to being only a member of his culture, forbidden from entering Arab countries, in danger even in familiar Arab neighborhoods, fashioned a new worldview to cope with this turn of events.

II. Mystical Jewish Nationalism

Jack Ross, in a recent biography of Elmer Berger, America’s most prominent Jewish anti-Zionist and one of Glueck’s advisees at HUC, suggests that Glueck did not really become a political Zionist so much as he went along with the majority’s wishes, suggesting he “likely remained a Magnes Zionist in his heart.” While this makes sense to the extent that many rabbis’ principles

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43 Nelson Glueck to William Foxwell Albright, 22 February 1948, APS.
44 Ibid.
45 Ross, *Rabbi Outcast*, 77.
regarding the matter changed little, what suggests to me that the change was more thorough was
the way it manifested itself in Glueck’s writings as a shift in his underlying cultural theory.

Glueck could not have done the research that went into *The River Jordan* after the
establishment of Israel in 1948. Many of the areas covered in that book, and all of the areas
covered in *The Other Side of the Jordan*, became instantly unavailable to him when the borders
were established. A *Time* magazine cover story on Glueck observed in 1963 that “Jordan
officials still denounce him as a spy who mapped their country to help Israeli invaders,” a
charge that doesn’t add up given his opposition to political Zionism at the time of his
archaeological survey of Transjordan. Between 1948 and 1967, he was cut off from ASOR,
located in the side of Jerusalem governed by Jordan, and he mourned having to make an
international phone call to an institution just a couple of hundred yards away.47

These events influenced Glueck’s decision to turn his attention to another desert survey,
this time of the Negev, the triangular area in the south of the newly formed state. Gone were the
days of traveling with one Muslim companion; Glueck instead traveled with members of the
Israeli army, who were charged with protecting him from Arab snipers.48 Glueck did not like
traveling in such a large group, but he did enjoy picking out members of the army who were
most interested in archaeology.49 A photograph in *Rivers in the Desert*, his book about the Negev
explorations, shows the soldiers at the Red Sea seated around Glueck while he reads aloud
“passages of the Bible telling about the arrival of the Israelites at Elath on the Red Sea.”50 He
thought this was an excellent opportunity to teach soldiers about their heritage: not the area’s
diverse heritages that had once fascinated him, but rather their specifically Jewish one.

Glueck was developing close relationships with Israeli leaders, including David Ben-
Gurion. Though *Rivers in the Desert* did not broach the topic of the contemporary uses to be
made of Glueck’s Negev survey, Ben-Gurion charged him with determining whether the area
could support large-scale settlement of Jewish immigrants to Israel. Glueck’s hope for his
expedition was that he could help turn the Negev into an area as productive and flourishing as
what he glimpsed in the archaeological record.51

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49 Leonard, “Unearthing the Past,” 60.
*Rivers in the Desert* reflects Glueck’s changed views on Zionism. The book tells a chronological history of the Negev from prehistoric peoples to Byzantine times. Rather than a treatise on the achievements of a variety of civilizations, the bulk of the narrative is taken up with explaining the ancient Hebrews’ relationships to the land, from the migration of Abraham to the Israelites wandering under the leadership of Moses to the Davidic and Solomonic kingdoms to the establishment of Judea. He hypothesized that Abraham must have lived within a three-century timespan because that was when he found evidence of widespread habitation in the Negev, which would have been necessary to confirm the Bible’s record of Abraham stopping at many inhabited places and being able to survive such a journey. He dubbed this timespan the Pax Abrahamitic, describing it as a period of a “growing population which pushed even into marginal lands such as the Negev and made careful use of every available acre in dry creek beds,” also his vision for Israel’s future Negev use. Though Abraham would have been a marginal figure in this flourishing of civilization, Glueck’s naming the period after him would suggest that, as the progenitor of the Jewish people, he was the single most important individual at the time. This thus demonstrates the extent to which the biblical story had taken center stage for him since he wrote *The River Jordan*.

The chapter covering the Israelites’ conquest of Canaan and the Davidic and Solomonic kingdom is titled “This Is the Blessing,” a reference to the Promised Land itself. The chapter focuses on the conflict between the Israelites and those from whom they wished to wrest the land, a conflict, he wrote, that “raged for many centuries and in some ways was never resolved.” This bellicosity, with its foreshadowing of the twentieth-century conflict, provides a distinct contrast to his way of describing cultural relations in *The River Jordan*. Rather than seeing the land as a pageant of peoples, by the late 1950s his words suggested frustration with the Israelites’, and perhaps the Israelis’, inability to totally vanquish others:

> Even after the adversaries had been annihilated or absorbed, their memory and influence remained amazingly alive. The iron armored Philistines were eradicated, but the impress of their power and culture was perpetuated in the name of Palestine.\(^5^4\)

Glueck further read the past against the present as he described the Israelite tribal confederation as a “young state” that “had not been killed aborning”\(^5^5\) and suggested that it would have been

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\(^5^2\) Glueck, *Rivers in the Desert*, 76.  
\(^5^3\) Ibid., 115.  
\(^5^4\) Ibid.
better for the Philistines “had they accepted the newcomer in the arena of the ancient Near East and worked with it for their common welfare.” Glueck likened the ancients that he had previously seen as the forebears of his old friends, the Bedouin, to animals in relationship to the Israelites when he wrote that ancient Israel’s ability to settle the Negev was occasioned by “governmental control” that allowed them to tame “Bedouin groups . . . that for centuries had roamed about the Negev like untamed beasts of the field.” Ancient Israel’s Negev settlement made it “possible for Israel to move to the fulfillment of its destiny . . . of expanding southward towards the Red Sea.” With the word “destiny” Glueck connected current events to the Bible, writing that although a kingdom of Judea was reestablished, “it was never able to repossess the totality of its former estate and reach out again as far as the Red Sea,” a feat that “was accomplished only by the creation of the modern State of Israel.”

For the first time in his popular works, Glueck cast doubt on the idea that the Bedouin who were his contemporaries could actually be the descendants of biblical peoples. Falling back on his habit of erasing time by merging the Bedouin with biblical figures, Glueck wrote that he was briefly tempted to ask a Bedouin “against whom he had fought and when and where” when the Israelites invaded the Negev. “But then I suppressed the questions, remembering that all the Bedouins of the Negev had infiltrated there in comparatively recent times from Arabia and that their tribal lore could not assist my quest into antiquity.” Also for the first time in his many retellings of the historical move of peoples across the area, Glueck painted the spread of Islam unfavorably, calling the “fires of Islam” an “irresistible force”; Muslims, with the “fury of their evangelism by the sword[,] swept . . . as far east as India and as far west as Spain.”

After the publication of *Rivers in the Desert*, Glueck spoke and wrote often of his belief that the Negev had been vital to ancient Israel and was similarly vital to modern Israel, linking the two in mystical terms. In response to calls for the state of Israel to cede parts of the Negev to Jordan or Egypt as an area for settling Palestinian refugees, Glueck made claims that went much further than his earliest argument about the Negev, made to President Harry Truman in late 1948, that through irrigation and river management “the entire Negev could be reclaimed and many

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55 Ibid., 148.
56 Ibid., 147.
57 Ibid., 169.
58 Ibid., 187.
59 Ibid., 184.
60 Ibid., 247.
tens of thousands of settlers could be placed on its now arid wastes.” He came to argue that to give up any of the Negev would be to cut off a piece of the land God had promised to the Jews. He appealed to Christians as allies, religiously because early Christianity had flourished in the Negev, and politically because the state of Israel represented a Western outpost in the Middle East. Though he had seen the 1948 borders of Israel drawn by men, he claimed they were drawn by God, who promised the land to the Jews eternally. Peace in the Middle East, Glueck warned, “cannot be bought at the expense of Israel’s birthright of land.”

Glueck was made an honorary citizen of Eilat, an Israeli town on the Red Sea. In an address there, he stressed mystical attachment to the land. He speculated that if the Israelites, standing on the shores more than thirty centuries ago, had been able “to foresee all the conflict which awaited them, even the most stouthearted among them might have been forgiven for shrinking back”; however, perhaps “they would have pressed on anyway, possessed as they were by the Promise which had been made to their fathers.” Though the ancient Israeliite town named Eilat had not been located, Glueck found the bestowal of the name on a new settlement miraculous, stating that the “continuing miracle … for all of us” was that “once again the people of the State of Israel have rebuilt a city on the shores of the Gulf of Aqabah and have given it the name that Uzziah gave” the ancient town. This was miraculous because, Glueck said, he could not explain it in terms of “completely mathematical or scientifically rational factors.” Of course, from another point of view, the events that led to the new Eilat were entirely explicable and needed no recourse to the miraculous to understand; this sort of rhetoric, however, discouraged the asking of too many questions.

In another signal of rigidified ideas about cultural groups, Glueck said he would gladly “go to war” before giving up a centimeter of the Negev to an Arab state or to “that non-Arab conglomerate that calls itself Egypt.” This turn of phrase suggests that he saw an ethnic purity to the category “Arab” to which the people of Egypt did not measure up. He appeared to see this

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61 Nelson Glueck, “Notes on conversation with President Harry S. Truman at breakfast at the Netherland-Plaza Hotel, 8:00 A.M. October 1, 1948,” 11 October 1948, MS20A1a-5/2, Palestine, AJA.
62 Glueck to Bernard Cherin, 17 November 1958, MS20A1a-69/13 Rivers in the Desert, AJA.
64 Nelson Glueck, “The Approach of Judaism to Social and Political Problems,” Delivered at the Eilat Archaeological Congress on 14 October 1962, MS160/2/1, General Writings A, AJA.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
lack of purity as a shortcoming, a position that could not be further from his celebration of cultural mixture in *The River Jordan*.

Thanks to second editions, Glueck was able to obscure evidence of this previous viewpoint. In 1968 he published a substantially rewritten version of *The River Jordan*. Nothing in the volume indicated that a former edition existed, and the alterations Glueck made shifted it from a celebration of diversity and coexistence to a defense of political Zionism. A new first chapter was added titled “To Spy out the Land,” a phrase taken from Numbers 13:17 and referring to the Israelites’ reconnaissance of the Promised Land before their conquest of it. The chapter served to orient this new edition around the Bible by first expounding on the river’s importance to biblical history before other histories were discussed. Updated portions reflected Glueck’s surroundings and political temperament when he wrote that the toughened and weary Israelites who crossed the river after forty years of wandering in the desert would let nothing stop them from entering the land, and furthermore from “coming back to it thereafter like homing pigeons whenever they were dispersed.”68 In another new passage, he lauded the Jews who chose to return to Palestine after the Babylonian exile as “early Zionists.”69 “How glad they must have been to see their city of palms again, how delighted their children born abroad must have been with it!”70 he enthused.

Where Glueck had once seen the blending and changing of cultures over the centuries, he had shifted to seeing a mystical and essential oneness to Judaism. He argued that Jews, regardless of their differences on other matters, felt the same ineffable experience when they encountered the physical land of Israel. “I will never forget how he arrived in Jerusalem shortly after the Six Day War,” wrote Ezra Spicehandler, director of Jewish Studies at HUC in Jerusalem, after Glueck’s death. “He walked the streets of the Old City, which he had known so well as a young scholar, intoxicated not with victory but with a certainty of prophetic fulfillment.” When he touched the soil, Spicehandler wrote, “he underwent a spiritual transfiguration which invested geography and pottery with mystical import.”71 Glueck had become swept up in the mystical ideas about Jewish unity centered on the land that swept up

69 Ibid., 186.
70 Ibid., 187.
71 Ezra Spicehandler, “An Appreciation: by Ezra Spicehandler, Director of Jewish Studies, HUC, Jerusalem.” Folder HUC/205, APJI.
many Israelis at the time. Pushing the idea of an experience that could neither be explained or shared with non-Jews was a useful way of denying other groups’ claims to the area.

As one of the few individuals allowed to enter Israel directly after the 1967 war, Glueck decided to make available his diary from that period, published as Dateline: Jerusalem. He wrote of being “overwhelmed with exultation and thanksgiving about the miraculous victory of Israel.” Glueck was thrilled to gain access to many sites and people that had been off limits to him since 1948. He briefly took over ASOR, where he had not been able to set foot for nearly twenty years. Much of the book concerned the state of archaeology as a result of the war, and tended to subsume the human element under the archaeological one, especially regarding beautification plans for the Old City. He approved of the “great courtyard” that had “been levelled within the last few days in front of the Western Wall, enabling many thousands of people to congregate there at one time and making it possible for the impressive beauty of the great blocks of some of the lower parts of the Herodian wall to be seen.” He did not mention, though with his comprehensive knowledge of the Old City he must have known, that what was leveled to create the plaza was the Maghariba Quarter, which was hundreds of years old and had been home to at least 650 people. This attitude toward the beautification of Jerusalem at the expense of its poorer inhabitants reflected an assumption that the value of the archaeological record could be used as an excuse for removing unwanted persons.

To Glueck’s delight, it seemed that all the Jews in Israel were flocking to see Jerusalem after the 1967 war. His suggestion for the territories was that “the part of Palestine occupied largely by Arabs [be] made into a separate Arab canton, with largely self-governing powers, contained within the state of Israel,” which hearkened back to his hopes for a non-divided Palestine in 1948. Even so, Glueck found the new borders satisfying for biblical reasons. During a meeting with President Zalman Shazar, their “discussion turned to the ancient boundaries of Israel,” and the president asked for a copy of Rivers in the Desert, in which Glueck had discussed the matter. He “explained to the President that the boundary lines indicated by the description of ‘from Dan to Beersheba,’ referred only to the most thickly inhabited parts of ancient Israel, but that the outermost limits were variously described in the Bible” as extending

72 Glueck, Dateline: Jerusalem, 8.
71 Ibid., 12.
73 Glueck, Dateline: Jerusalem, 15.
76 Ibid., 17.
from southern Syria to northern Sinai. Later, he told a reporter that the “present territory held by the Israeli armed forces corresponds almost exactly to the Solomonic boundaries,” except for extending to the Suez Canal. A particular narrative of biblical territorial extension, mapped onto the present, was instilled with an air of scholarly validity when it came from the man known as “The Professor.”

III. Hebrew Union College and the Judeo-Christian Tradition

In 1963, Glueck’s plan for Hebrew Union College came to fruition when he dedicated the newly built Jerusalem branch of the school, built just a few hundred yards from the Mandelbaum Gate that separated West Jerusalem from Jordanian-controlled East Jerusalem. It included the Biblical Archaeology School (now known as the Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology), which Glueck hoped could provide an ASOR-like institution to scholars in Israel. The school allowed him to continue ecumenical activities that fostered a connection between Christians and Jews, while at the same time protecting the idea that Jews’ attachment to the land was unique.

Glueck’s turn toward Jewish nationalism did not preclude what might seem a paradoxical commitment to the genteel ecumenism the United States was known for at mid-century. Indeed, he gave a benediction at John F. Kennedy’s inauguration that included a few somberly delivered lines in biblical Hebrew. Glueck dedicated HUC’s Jerusalem campus by inaugurating the ecumenical summer institute. Glueck used this institute to disseminate his new vision of the land’s importance being biblical, rather than being the site of the flourishing and blending of multiple important civilizations. President Shazar wrote to give his “special blessing” to the scholars of the first summer institute, reminding them that “the study of archaeology” has “a very special place in this country,” and offering his prayer that, through their endeavors, “truth will spring from the earth.” On March 27, 1963, an Academic Convocation was held at which Walworth Barbour, the ambassador of the United States, announced a grant from the U.S. State Department to fund the summer institute. Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion gave the

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77 Ibid.
78 Ibid., 44.
79 Zalman Shazar, 7 July 1963. MS160/1/13, S-Z, General; unidentified, AJA.
convocation and “noted the importance of the establishment of the School and welcomed it as a bridge between America and Israel.”

This institute had an impact on the field of religious studies. Of the twenty-six participants that year, twenty-three listed their occupations as being either college professors or graduate students. Jacob J. Enz, a professor at Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana, reported that the Bible had come alive for him in a way it never had before. “Now,” he wrote, “… the mountains and hills of Palestine are forever a part of me.”

The summer institute continued after Glueck’s death. In 1973 and 1974, the institute was named “Summer Seminar in Israel: The Jewish Sources of Christianity: Literary and Archaeological.” Sister Mary Justine, an associate professor of religious studies at Roman Catholic College in Buffalo, New York, reported that she had always been “intrigued to find out what precisely it was that made Judaism a living thing and decided to take a second look. Now the land of the Bible became a living page as I visited the sites and probed the secrets of this beautiful country.” The Rev. Robert E. Price, pastor and Ph.D. candidate at Duke University, wrote that he had “come to realize more fully the treasure we have in the Judeo-Christian tradition.”

In 1974, under the direction of Eric Meyers of Duke University, the institute participants visited sites that “were centers of life at a time when Judaism and early Christianity coexisted in the Galilee.” Harvey Guthrie, an instructor in English and religion at Northfield Mount Hermon School in Massachusetts, wrote that he had a “richly rewarding time” learning “about both past and present Israel.” Thus, students at the institute had no trouble seeing a mystical connection between the ancient Israelites and the modern state whose leaders had chosen to name it Israel, and they carried this view back with them to their classrooms. As the wording of a generic press release sent to their home newspapers suggested, the participant “hopes to share with his students this unique experience of ‘digging up’ the past—intellectually, physically and spiritually—

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80 “The 1963 Summer Institute on Near Eastern Civilizations Jerusalem School of the Hebrew Union College A Summary Report,” HUC/144, APJI.
81 Ibid.
82 Participant comment sheets, HUC/118, APJI.
83 Ibid.
84 Press release, 1974, HUC/118, APJI.
85 Ibid.
adding depth to their understanding of the Jewish roots of Christianity and creating further bridges between the two religious communities.”

An interfaith Ph.D. program for Christian ministers was begun at HUC in the 1947–1948 school year that Glueck worked in coming years to fund and expand. A public relations document from 1951–1952 claims that it “is one of the bright characteristics of the American liberal academic tradition that an institution which is essentially a rabbinic institution can welcome Christian scholars, ministers, as students and send them out as scholars prepared to teach in Christian institutions.” In a 1964 fundraising letter, Glueck outlined the accomplishments of the program, which took in ten to fifteen new Christian students each year, who earned Ph.D.s in areas such as “Hellenistic Literature [and] Rabbinic Studies,” being held to the same requirements “as for our Jewish graduate students.”

Glueck envisioned that the program would contribute to interfaith relations through its wide reach, predicting that its graduates would soon be teaching in most seminaries in the country. Sensitive to questions of why a Jewish seminary would offer such a program, Glueck wrote that the school had “never publicized this program for fear that it might be considered as either a publicity or fund-raising gimmick or as a missionary endeavor. Obviously, it is neither. The only thing I ever say to the entering graduate Christian ministers is that I hope when they finish their studies with us they will leave as better Christians because being better informed Christians than when they entered.”

A prospective Christian fellow, Marvin Runner, wrote a letter to Glueck saying that he was deeply impressed by Glueck’s article in National Geographic and that he had visited Palestine himself, where he found “that there was something about Palestine which drew one irresistibly to it.” He had hoped to work with Albright, but Albright was not teaching that year, so he corresponded with G. Ernest Wright, who recommended Glueck’s program. Gus W. van Beek, a fellow, wrote a letter of thanks for his fellowship and shared his future plans to pursue a Ph.D. with Albright.

Press release, 1974, HUC/118, APJI.
“Interfaith Program,” MS20/A1a-18/4, Christian Fellows, AJA.
Glueck to Leslie Paffrath, 25 May 1964. MS20 A1a-105/2 Interfaith, AJA.
Ibid.
Ibid.
Marvin Runner to Glueck, 16 February 1948. MS20/A1a-1/13, Christian Fellowships, AJA.
Ibid.
Ibid.
Gus W. van Beek to Glueck, 17 March 1948. MS20/A1a-1/13, Christian Fellowships, AJA.
In a 1951 letter to Carl Kraeling concerning funds for archaeological students, Glueck maintained that Jewish students should not be given special treatment for funds earmarked for digs in Israel, even though, because Jews were not welcome in the Kingdom of Jordan, Jewish candidates were not eligible for the funds to work at ASOR.94

In a 1968 fundraising letter Glueck called the interfaith Ph.D. “the apple of my eye” and “the capstone of our entire academic structure,” adding, “We are doing nothing that is more meaningful.” He argued that the small amount of funds expended on this program amounted to much more than millions of dollars spent from a defensive position by national Jewish organizations on “anti-discrimination” work.95

In a speech opposing what he called the “spiritual barbarism” of the 1952 McCarran anti-immigration bill, Glueck defined Americanness through the “deep and daring Biblical idealism of America which motivated responsible representatives of separate religious loyalties to embrace it,” suggesting that giving in to values of “insular exclusivism, ferocious racism, and shattering religious pessimism and negativism” would unwittingly give an upper hand to “Communist subversion and aggression.”96 His very equation of America’s idealism with being biblical echoes the practical exclusions that went on in his ecumenical work, exclusions of all those for whom no part of the Bible was a revered text.

An additional tension in Glueck’s thought after 1948 was that he praised diversity within Judaism, especially when trying to get the Reform movement recognized by the Orthodox Jewish establishment in Israel, but at the same time continued to push mystical Zionism as an essential unifying factor for all Jews. “We do not want and will not accept any Jewish Ultramontanism,”97 he wrote of the Orthodox who opposed any recognition for Reform, likening their influence in Israel to what many Americans would have agreed were the excesses of European Catholicism, and thus not the expression of true ecumenical religion as it was being practiced in America.98 In a piece titled “The Prospects for Reform Judaism in the State of Israel,” Glueck argued that Orthodox Judaism created more secularism in Israel because the populace associated it with legalistic arguments unsuited to the world they were living in. It is no wonder that Glueck

94 Glueck to Kraeling, 17 October 1951. MS 20/A1a-20/3, Kraeling, Carl H., AJA.
95 Glueck to S. H. Scheuer, 2 April 1968. MS160/1/13, AJA.
96 Nelson Glueck, “Against Hierarchical Authority” MS160/2/1 “General Writings A,” AJA.
97 Ibid.
appears to have been more at home among Protestant Americans than among Jews from traditions other than Reform.

Glueck practiced ecumenism to an extraordinary degree in his hiring at HUC/BAS, bringing on board a large number of Christian biblical archaeologists to staff the biblical archaeology school when other Jewish and Israeli archaeologists were available. He asked Albright to be the first American Visiting Professor at the school, but when Albright could not fulfill the obligation, Frank Moore Cross came instead.\(^{99}\) The second year, Wright served as the American Visiting Professor. This put American archaeologists into conversation with Israeli archaeologists in a way that was not possible otherwise because they would ordinarily have spent time at ASOR, which was on the other side of the Mandelbaum Gate. Additionally, Glueck hired Dever to run the archaeological school from 1964 to 1970. The faculty demographics only began to change after Glueck’s death under the directorship of Biran.

At the institute, relations between Christians and Jews were strengthened, along with uncritical and religiously based support for the state of Israel. While Glueck’s associates were sometimes surprised at the depth of his commitment to ecumenism, it reflected his understanding of how important Christians had been to the Zionist project, an importance that is still being realized in new works on Christian Zionism, such as Shalom Goldman’s, in which he attempts to correct the deficiency in traditional narratives of Zionism, in which “Christians do not feature … except as antagonists.”\(^{100}\) This strengthening, however, was to the detriment of relationships that might also have included the other peoples of Palestine and other histories, whether biblical or not; the championing of a Judeo-Christian tradition as opposed to other configurations is largely a matter of framing, as demonstrated by Richard Bulliet’s *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization*.\(^{101}\)

Glueck also worked to strengthen Jewish support for Israel. One of the ways he sought to spread mystic attachment to the land among fellow Jews was by requiring HUC rabbinical students to spend a year in Israel, starting in 1970. In that year, Glueck held dedication exercises at HUC in Jerusalem for a new dormitory to accommodate the American students. According to Glueck, the year in Israel would make them capable of explaining to America’s Jewish youth,

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\(^{99}\) Albright to Glueck, 11 October 1963. MS 20/A1a-102/2, Albright, Wm, AJA.


“many of whom are radical in their thinking, the true meaning of Israel and show how wrong and false is the ideology of much of the radical youth in America. The latter include all too many of Jewish origin, who blindly make common cause with the anti-Semitic and anti-Israel Panthers and others of their like and who include Israel in their so-called anti-imperialistic slogans.”

He spoke of “the ineluctable compulsion perceived by almost all Jews everywhere to strike roots in this sacred land and especially in this sacred city of Jerusalem.” However, the very reason for bringing the rabbinical students to Jerusalem was to make sure that this sense could be instilled in them, indicating it did not come naturally to all Jews to feel this way.

Prime Minister Golda Meir spoke at the dedication as well. Addressing the American rabbinical students, Meir compared them to the potential immigrants to Israel who wrote letters to her. Putting aside the economic need of those settlers, and the fact that the rabbinical students were not making aliyah, at least not yet, she tied both groups together by saying they both felt a mystical pull to the land:

> Letter after letter ends on the same note: I am prepared for anything, but I have one desire, and that is to live and die in Israel. When I see them in my mind’s eye and then look at the group of students I just addressed in the other room, how wide is the difference between them! One group is so utterly different from the other, except for this one factor, which cannot be rationally explained.

Like Glueck, Meir fell back on the language of mystical and non-rational experience to shield her claims from scrutiny and to argue that the one factor that held all Jews together was the land. Meir went on to heap praise on Glueck for his contributions to Zionism:

> What is the wonderful thing which Nelson Glueck has done for us? … He wanted to prove that the spirit of the Jewish people is rooted in the soil, in the simplest and most physical sense of the word. … Go out and see: Israel is a stone here, a tree there, a road, a hill; study the books he has written about the Jordan Valley and the Negev.

The language of mystical experience thus constituted a powerful way of marginalizing others’ claims to the land, and a powerful mechanism by which to pressure fellow Jews into accepting political Zionism.

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103 Ibid.

104 Golda Meir, “Address by Her Excellency, Golda Meir, Prime Minister of the State of Israel, on the Occasion of the Dedication of the Residence Hall of the Jerusalem School and Her receiving of an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, October 13, 1970,” Translated from the Hebrew, Folder HUC/34, APJI.

105 Ibid.
IV. Conclusion

Glueck wrote long before James Clifford made the claim that “the poetic and the political are inseparable, that science is in, not above, historical and linguistic processes.”106 This investigation of Glueck’s way of writing historical ethnography demonstrates not only that his implicit theory of culture changed, but that his views of culture and his political outlook were inseparable. Before 1948, his pleas for a culturally diverse Palestine embedded themselves in his words as a celebration of cultural hybridity that long presaged late twentieth-century theorists like Homi Bhabha.107 After 1948 his new politics led to dramatic changes in his writing, embedding in it an implicit defense of political Zionism based on a vision of Jews as mystically unified around what he came to see as Judaism’s one essential component, the land.

When Nelson Glueck looked around in the desert, he sometimes imagined that time had been erased and that he might encounter Abraham in the next Bedouin tent. At other times he wished to feel the sands of time doing their work. It “is a pity that one cannot live for a thousand years or two,” he once wrote, “because in the course of time the silly man-made borders are expunged . . . by the compulsion of geopolitics.”108 The thought that over a long period of time conditions could be improved provided Glueck at least a bit of comfort in the face of the thought that, “in the meantime, infinite hardships and suffering are created, individual lives moulder away, entire generations become unnecessarily imprisoned.”109 In Glueck’s case, enthusiasm for the romantic nationalism of Zionism—the geopolitics of his time—masked the nuanced reality of the multiethnic and multireligious populations of Palestine even for an individual as deeply steeped in that reality as he had been. The fluidity of cultures that Glueck once celebrated turned into a belief in the rigid separation of ethnic groups that continues to characterize many people’s understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Glueck’s early work shows that this state of affairs is not natural, and that the sands of time do shift.

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108 Glueck, Dateline: Jerusalem, 59.
109 Ibid.
CHAPTER FOUR

“THE OLD TESTAMENT AGAINST ITS ENVIRONMENT”: TRUE RELIGION VERSUS FALSE RELIGION IN GEORGE ERNEST WRIGHT’S THEOLOGICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

Little exasperated George Ernest Wright more than liberal Protestants who ignored the Old Testament. “The importance of the Old Testament to the Christian church,” he bluntly explained in his first book, *The Challenge of Israel’s Faith* (1944), “is a perfectly obvious fact to anyone who knows much about it.”¹ The Old Testament contained “theological propositions” that had “an eternal validity and a decisive importance for the Christian of this day.”² To support this argument, Wright portrayed Israelite religion as eternal and unchanging, rather than the result of historical development. This purposefully static view of Israelite religion opposed the widespread theory in biblical scholarship at the time, held for example by Millar Burrows, that an evolution of thought among the ancient Israelites had led to monotheism and continued to progress, eventually culminating in Christianity. For Wright, the idea of development lay “emphasis inevitably upon the process of human discovery rather than on revelation.”³ If there appeared to be different conceptions of God in the Bible, it was because God revealed himself more clearly over time, not because humans grew in understanding.

Albright’s third Ph.D. student (1937), Wright exemplified his mentor’s school of biblical archaeology and, as a leader in the mid-century biblical theology movement, explicitly combined archaeology and theology. In this theological archaeology, the ancient Israelites and Canaanites were radically different because God had made them so. If scholars had found similarities between them, Wright found ways either to recast those elements as differences or to dismiss them as meaningless to his larger point that the Israelites were the only ancient people who valued history. In the process he constructed a parallel contemporary binary between those who understood the Old Testament as primarily historical—certain Jews, Protestants, and Catholics—and all the rest of the world’s peoples, who were, he believed, as sunk in forms of paganism as the Canaanites had been. Belief in the historicity of the Old Testament thus marked the difference between true religion and false religion, a simple binary into which Wright could

² Ibid., v.
categorize all forms of faith. Wright provides a further example of the argument that archaeologists who tended to see the Israelites and Canaanites as more different than similar, who foregrounded the biblical period as the most important part of Near Eastern history, and who saw their own work as objective were also sympathetic to Zionist aspirations for a Jewish ethno-national state in the twentieth century.

Unlike his mentor, Wright did not engage in pro-Zionist activities. However, his way of writing about both the past and the present implied support for Israel. Both the ancient Israelites and some present-day Jews fell on the right side of his good religion–bad religion binary. On the wrong side, with the Canaanites, were Palestinian Christians, who showed little interest in the Albright school’s way of reading the Old Testament; liberal Protestants, who downplayed the conquest narrative; and, not least of all, Muslims, the largest religious group in Palestine at the time. And God’s mighty acts were not yet over. Clues in his writings show that Wright approved of the modern state of Israel and considered it the miraculous rebirth of the ancient polity described in the book he spent his life trying to persuade Christians to treasure more, the Old Testament.

In some ways, Wright’s writings implied even more support for a reborn Israel than Albright’s because Albright did not explain away all the similarities he saw between Israelites and Canaanites. As shown in chapter 2, Albright left behind many negative quotes about the Canaanites. However, John J. Collins asks that we at least recognize that Albright, “to his credit, reflected on the problem at some length,”⁴ such as in his piece “The Role of the Canaanites in the History of Civilization.”⁵ Wright’s binary discouraged mulling over the Canaanites’ positive attributes, which would have blunted the force of his theological points.

As we saw with Albright, Wright believed his own political stands not to be political at all but rather to be neutral. At Wright’s funeral service in 1974, several leading Israeli archaeologists expressed their gratitude to Wright for being unafraid to interact with them in the 1960s, when ASOR in Jerusalem was under Jordanian control and when most scholars living at ASOR believed interacting with Israelis would upset their Jordanian hosts. Avraham Biran, who had been one of his graduate school colleagues at Johns Hopkins, fondly remembered the

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⁴ Collins, *The Bible after Babel*, 64.
moment in 1961 when Wright, though he “hesitated,” became “the first foreign scholar to send us [Israelis] slides of his excavations, … and in 1964 he became the first archaeologist working in Jordan to deliver a lecture in West Jerusalem.” In 1964–65, he resided in Israel, teaching at Nelson Glueck’s Hebrew Union College/Biblical Archaeology School.

While his ASOR colleagues were certainly correct to think that this sort of action had political import, it is also true that the border created in 1948 hindered exchange between American biblical archaeologists and the Israelis, who were excavating a great deal. What is striking is that two of the Israelis whose words were printed in the funeral program applauded Wright not for taking what they considered to be the correct political stand but for taking the only apolitical stand. Yigael Yadin, lauding Wright’s stifling of pro-Palestinian activities at ASOR in the 1960s, praised Wright for, even “at the most delicate periods,” dealing “with scientific problems without the prejudice shown sometimes by others.”

Biran also remembered that, after the Six-Day War, Wright rejected ASOR members’ suggestion that laying low was best. Wright maligned that idea by saying, “That is also a political judgment.” He proclaimed the apolitical solution, to Biran’s approval, to be continuing “business as usual.” For Wright this entailed ASOR working with Israeli archaeologists, though one could easily argue that that had not been business as usual.

This chapter explores the way Wright, as a theologian but operating under the aegis of archaeology as a scientific endeavor, constructed a rigid separation between the ancient Israelites and ancient Canaanites. His belief in God’s mighty acts in history led him to insist that the conquest of Palestine occurred in as bloody a manner as described in the book of Joshua, and that the slaughter was good because God ordered it. Wright further argued that Jesus was best understood as one of God’s mighty acts rather than as love, as a teacher, or as the divine son of God. Through this theological argument, Wright constructed the main difference among the world’s peoples as being not what they believed about Jesus but whether they believed in the historicity of the Old Testament.

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7 Yigael Yadin, “G. Ernest Wright as an Excavator and Archaeologist,” In *In Memoriam G. Ernest Wright*, box 1 folder 1 “Wright, George Ernest Biographical Materials (1 of 2),” HDS.
8 Biran, “G. Ernest Wright as Spokesman for American Archaeology,” HDS.
9 Ibid.
I. The Relationship between Faith and Science

Critics of the Albright school’s thinly veiled religiosity must have found it frustrating that one of its leading proponents was a self-professed theologian. For Wright, the real problem was scholars who studied the Bible without a faith, or with theirs bracketed. No responsible study of the Old Testament could fail to relate to the true meaning of the Christian faith. This conviction extended even to curtailing the careers of the non-religious. When Burrows asked his advice on appointing the next director of the Jerusalem school, Wright replied that “[Herbert] May would do a good job” because he “belongs to the Albright school in general, and we ought to have a man out there who is”; he advised against one of Burrows’ suggestions because he was “a pure secular archaeologist.”

Wright argued that biblical scholars who studied the archaeology or epigraphy of the Old Testament and yet with all this knowledge did not comment on its relation to faith were derelict in their duty. Biblical scholars, with their intensive specialization in “the languages of Scripture, in ancient and in biblical history, in literary and textual criticism, and even occasionally in archeology,” were largely to blame for turning Christians away from the Old Testament because they approached it as “a detached, dissecting technician or historian.”

For Wright, this subject matter was as different from all others as the Israelites were from the Canaanites. Scholarly detachment could be reserved for studying humankind’s many mundane cultures but fell short when studying this one special case.

For example, Wright found the standard Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew lexicon inadequate because it avoided discussing the proper understanding of religious concepts. “Driver’s long articles on the prepositions are excellent,” but, Wright complained, the lexicon provided little “if one desires to be taught about those things for which the Old Testament exists.” “The preposition ‘on, upon,’ is described in fourteen columns of text, while ‘righteousness’ is given less than four.” This comment shows that, despite occasional pronouncements encouraging scholarly debate over the Old Testament’s meaning, Wright believed it had one particular, incontestable meaning that most Christians were missing because they focused their attention elsewhere. Of course, if Brown-Driver-Briggs had turned theological, Wright might have disagreed with its interpretation, just as he remained at odds with

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11 Wright, The Challenge of Israel’s Faith, 103.
his Presbyterian denomination’s teaching on the Old Testament and wrote extensively on his mostly failed attempts to make an impact on its declaration of faith.

But depending on the audience he was targeting, Wright could also claim that academics’ personal religiosity had no bearing on their scholarly outcomes. The most technical work Wright offered to the public, *Shechem: The Biography of a Biblical City* (1965), sought to bolster biblical archaeologists’ professional credibility by combating the notion that “the terms ‘Bible’ and ‘Palestine’ smack of ‘religion’ and everything that is unscientific.”13 Wright wrote that he had decided to write so extensively on the excavation’s methodologies and discoveries in order to demonstrate its scientific rigor, even though the dig “has been conducted by those who for the most part are ordained clergymen and specialists in biblical studies, and who teach in theological seminaries for the training of clergy or in departments of religion in colleges and universities.”14 Though Wright was proud of that fact, he was aware that other archaeologists did not always take them seriously for this reason. Wright presented his book in hopes “that what is here written may suggest that this stereotyped view is untrue to the actual situation.”15

Of course, the sticking point regarding the archaeologists’ pretensions to science, even at the Albright school’s apex of influence, was whether they were presupposing the Bible’s historical accuracy and fitting finds into that narrative. In a widely read spat, J. J. Finkelstein accused the Albright school of trying to prove the Bible, a charge Wright denied.16 In a recent history of biblical archaeology, P. R. S. Moorey writes that Wright “placed himself in a particularly exposed position when he appeared to argue that recent archaeological research had established the reliability of the biblical history that was central to his faith.” As Moorey points out, when addressing “the general reader, for whom he was so often writing,” Wright tended to suggest that “biblical archaeology was indeed primarily concerned to prove the truth of the Bible.”17 That legacy not only lived on when the public read his books but when students were assigned his two textbooks, *The Westminster Historical Atlas to the Bible* (1956, co-written with Floyd Filson) and *Biblical Archaeology* (1957), the former of which especially became a standard in the field, “on the must-purchase list of countless students” who “entered expanding

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14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
university and college programs in the study of religion and theology during the 1960s.”

18 In the *Biblical Archaeology* textbook, addressing the question of whether it was appropriate for biblical archaeologists to try to prove the Bible, Wright answered that the scholar “knows that the primary purpose of biblical archaeology is not to ‘prove’ but to discover.” Then, circularly, he implied that the question was moot because all their discoveries did prove it:

The biblical scholar no longer bothers to ask whether archaeology ‘proves’ the Bible. In the sense that the biblical languages, the life and customs of its peoples, its history, and its conceptions are illuminated in innumerable ways by the archaeological discoveries, he knows that such a question is certainly to be answered in the affirmative.  

II. The Israelites against the Canaanites

The very title of Wright’s *The Old Testament against its Environment* (1950), which formed a set with Floyd Filson’s 1952 *The New Testament against its Environment*, demonstrated his stance that the ancient Israelites had been in their world, “yet were never quite united with the world.”

The title signaled his focus on the differences between the Israelites and their surroundings rather than the similarities, with the word “against” providing an element not just of difference but of hostility. “We must not forget,” Wright cautioned, “that during the days of Israel the great religious struggle was that between polytheism and monotheism, between a base, magical, licentious superstition especially known in Canaanite religion and the more enlightened, pure, even austere monotheism of Israel.”

When Harry Orlinsky had commented on *The Challenge of Israel’s Faith* in manuscript form, he went after Wright’s very thesis, pressing him to see that the Israelites were not so very different from any other group, though to no avail. “… a people who lived in the world, yet were never quite united with the world.’ I find this statement of no real value,” Orlinsky wrote, in his customary brusque manner. However, Orlinsky, who tended toward the same politics, was only disagreeing with how far Wright took the differences. He wanted Wright to highlight some similarities so that the main difference would shine more brightly. “All peoples have something in common with the peoples round about them and something uncommon,” Orlinsky continued.

20 Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*, 27.
22 Wright, *The Challenge of Israel’s Faith*, 64.
It “so happens that what was uniquely Israel’s has come to be regarded more highly than anything peculiar to any of the other peoples.” Orlinsky also questioned Wright’s construction of Israelite homogeneity. “When Israel entered the country, she possessed a common religious and historical tradition …’ I wonder,” he mused.23 A reviewer went further, undermining Israelite homogeneity. He suggested the book should be retitled The Challenge of Professor Wright’s Faith, reasoning that “Israel had as many types of faith as she had conflicting parties, and the author has selected and used material as desired.”24 None of this budged Wright in his conviction that all new archaeological data from Palestine confirmed “that biblical monotheism and polytheism are simply two different religions and the former by no empirical means can be shown to be an evolution from the latter.”25

Wright conceived of the ancient Israelites in terms of culture, ethnicity, and religion but, as a post-Holocaust theologian deeply aware of the consequences of racist theories, not as a race. “The peoples or nations of the earth … receive in the Bible both positive and negative evaluation,” Wright wrote in The Biblical Doctrine of Man in Society (1954). As part of the World Council of Churches’ Ecumenical Biblical Studies series, the book emerged from committee work, though Wright was the principal author. “In as much as they [peoples or nations] exist, it is felt that they must have behind them an affirmation of God. In as much as they are alienated from God and serve their hand-made idols, they are under the divine condemnation.”26 Biblical stories that judged peoples as homogeneous groups for their religious practices were for Wright both historically accurate and theologically defensible. But this did not just pertain to biblical times. Even “biblical eschatology,” Wright proclaimed, “does not appear to contemplate the abolition of nationality.”27 On this point in particular, a long footnote explained that Wright was the only committee member who believed this to be true. It was so upsetting to other committee members—who believed nationality would be overcome in the Kingdom of God—that they insisted on their dissent being recorded in one of the book’s handful of footnotes. Wright’s belief in the essential and eternal nature of people groups—so important

27 Ibid., 54.
they would last through the end of time and beyond—is striking, as is the fact that he stuck so closely to this belief as to cause an unresolvable dispute within the committee.

Scholars had previously argued that the Canaanite and Israelite cultures were difficult to distinguish from each other, and that the probable reason was that there might have been very little difference between them. Wright quoted an argument from H. R. Hall published in 1913 to this effect, then rebutted it, writing that no, “differences are indeed clearly apparent.” 28 One difference he saw was between the complex civilization of the Canaanites and the simplicity of the Israelites. Wright argued that, in Israelite towns, houses “possessed none of the refinements of the Canaanite buildings,” and art “was very crude.” 29 The Song of Deborah, for Wright, captured the artless, brave spirits of the early Israelites. Characterized by its “intense nationalism” and “religious enthusiasm,” it provided a colorful picture, according to Wright, of “the condition to which the central tribes of Israel had been reduced by the Canaanite oppression.” 30 Blaming the Canaanites as oppressors was a telling choice of words, given that the Israelites were the ones attempting to conquer the Canaanites’ land.

Wright insisted that the important parts of Israelite religion existed nowhere around them. The central propositions of Israelite religion, according to Wright, were precisely “those central elements of Biblical faith which are so unique and sui generis.” 31 By not finding these elements in their context, Wright claimed that God provided the ideas that made Israelite religion different. If there were no precedents, then how could the Israelites have had these ideas about God on their own? For example, Wright believed Israel was the only people group to see itself as a miracle. He argued that, because he had not found similar self-conceptions in surrounding cultures, the Israelites could not have made this idea up; it was given to them by God. “Nor can the environment provide the answer” to Israel’s ability to survive, he continued, because the Old Testament itself (without accounting that it might be a source biased toward its protagonists) “bears eloquent witness to the fact that Canaanite religion was the most dangerous and disintegrative factor which the faith of Israel had to face.” 32

Though “many leading scholars of the last two generations” had found ample similarities and suggested evolutionary schemas leading from polytheism to Israelite religion to Christianity,

28 Wright, Biblical Archaeology, 88.
29 Ibid., 89.
30 Ibid., 94.
31 Wright, The Old Testament Against its Environment, 7.
32 Ibid., 12.
Wright argued that the fruits of archaeology had laid this school of thought to rest. Rather than acknowledging that these were two different interpretations of the available data, Wright claimed that archaeological evidence had made it “difficult to see how any other conclusion” than his own was “justified by the facts as we now know them from the vast accumulation of knowledge about the Biblical world.”

Such evolutionary schemas have been criticized for implying that Christianity is the most evolved and thus most superior of thought systems. However, Wright’s aggressively worded argument and retreat to the sui generis explanation show that the evolutionary thinkers should at least be given credit for placing these thought systems in relationship and not opposition to each other. Wright divided humankind into two categories, those whose religious ideas were wrong because they were created by humans and those who were right because God had chosen to reveal his nature to them. Interestingly, he further rejected the idea that Christianity was the most superior expression of religion because, in his view, Christians easily degenerated into subjective spirituality. For Wright the ancient Israelites had the superior conception of God, a conception that regarded God not as a father or a friend, but as a majestic sovereign.

Wright’s review of Thor Heyerdahl’s *Kon-Tiki* demonstrated that for him the Israelites, because they had access to the one true religion, were simply outside the normal rules of anthropological or archaeological thinking. When critiquing Heyerdahl, Wright ridiculed the idea that similarities between stone sculptures in Peru and Easter Island meant that members of the same culture must have colonized Easter Island. “A simple fact has been demonstrated again and again,” Wright argued. “People are people, and several people can get the same idea independently, as every scholar learns to his chagrin.” This theory of the independent provenance of ideas would suggest that the Israelites’ novel conception of God was indeed possible without divine intervention. However, Wright did not apply the same rules to understanding the Israelites as to understanding any other culture, because they were for him set aside by God.

Wright made his contribution to the textbook arena in 1957 with *Biblical Archaeology*, a hefty hardcover volume with glossy pages and 220 illustrations. Demand, combined with complaints about the price, led in 1960 to an abridged trade paperback with no illustrations.

33 Ibid., 7.
34 G. Ernest Wright, “Thor Heyerdahl and His Papyrus Boat,” 8 June 1970 box 5 folder 6 “‘Thor Heyerdahl and His Papyrus Boat’ (draft, manuscript), 1971” HDS.
There was no mistaking Wright’s definition of biblical archaeology as being only those discoveries “which directly illuminate biblical history.” One of the clearest themes in a book read by countless Bible students over the next generation was that the Israelites were superior to the Canaanites. Wright found this to be so obvious a point that he did not feel the need to lay out the criteria for this judgment, considering it self-evident.

In this widely read book, Wright argued that not only were the Israelites superior to the people around them, they were superior to the people living in the area later on who might appear to bear a resemblance to them. Wright cautioned readers not to take his use of the term “nomad” to describe the ancient Israelites to mean that they were like the “dirty, uncouth, uncivilized people of the type which are common in the Syrian and Transjordanian semidesert land today.” Though this conception would “probably” not be accurate, Wright did not explain exactly why it would be inaccurate, besides implying he had more respect for the Israelites than for the Bedouin he had encountered. He did, however, suggest an alternative model for understanding the Israeliite lifestyle: “Perhaps it would be better to think of them as breeders of live-stock, halfway between the modern nomad and the American ranchers and cowboys of the last century.” Turning the Israelites into cowboys taming a decadent Oriental landscape was a method by which to put the Israelites in complete opposition to their own surroundings that would resonate with 1950s America. The readers could envision themselves as ancient Israelites, with whom, Wright told them, they shared the same values. It conjured up a set of popular associations with the taming of the American West, including bravery, self-reliance, and the subjugation of American Indians, often portrayed as being just as backward, pagan, and as unworthy of retaining their culture and even their lives as Wright portrayed the Canaanites to be.

Wright recast characteristics that other scholars saw as similarities as differences. The Israelites’ sacrificial system, “while in outward form it resembled” the systems of the polytheists, was actually different because it “was believed to be God’s gift by revelation to Israel.” Yes, the Israelites had borrowed from the Code of Hammurabi. But “the refinement produced by the purity of the Israelite faith sets a great gulf between the Old Testament accounts and the crassly

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35 Wright, Biblical Archaeology, 15.  
36 Ibid., 45.  
37 Ibid.  
38 Ibid., 144.
Though some had focused on similarities between the Israelites’ written records surrounding ones, yet the Bible “radiates an atmosphere, a spirit, a faith, far more profound and radically different than any other ancient literature.” For those who still feared similarities between the Bible and other ancient literature were all too real, he patiently explained: “The progress of archaeology, of textual, literary, and historical criticism has never obscured the fact that the biblical writers were the religious and literary giants of ancient times, though they themselves would never have said so.” Wright did not delve into the aesthetic criteria by which he arrived at this judgment.

Whereas the surrounding polytheists turned to nature mythology to understand themselves, the Israelites turned to history, producing a book that Wright found not to be mythological but rather primarily historical. “Yahweh … was no dying-rising God like Baal of Canaan. He was the living God,” a direct challenge, in Wright’s view, to Canaanite conceptions. While genre comparisons could be made between other ancient literature and the Bible, Wright argued that other scholars did not understand that these comparisons were in “the areas of law, poetry, didactic or proverbial sayings and creation myths,” not history. Wright held up the historical portions of the Bible as what set it apart. The rest was secondary both for faith and for scholars, who were too easily led down the path of searching for similarities when they strayed from studying the Bible as history.

Therefore Wright could dismiss the similarities between the biblical flood story and Babylonian versions that was so routinely held up as evidence of similarity. First, Wright considered the flood story to belong to the part of the Bible before the reliable history started; similarities in such obviously mythological writings were to be expected. Second, he argued, the Babylonian flood was portrayed as “a rash and irresponsible act of a god in anger,” not the purposeful God of the Old Testament. Third, one Babylonian story focused on the tree of life and the desire to extend life, while the biblical story focused on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, a focus that for Wright in itself proved the difference between Israelites and others.

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39 Wright and Filson, eds., The Westminster Historical Atlas to the Bible, 25.
40 Wright, Biblical Archaeology, 27.
41 Ibid., 27.
42 Wright, The Old Testament Against its Environment, 26.
44 Ibid., 28.
because, “[a]s far as we now know, there was no such tree amongst the mythologies of the neighboring peoples.”

Just as with the teachings of Jesus, the teachings of the Old Testament had been a fertile ground for finding similarities with other religions. Wright acknowledged that much of the Psalter had been shown to be “drawn for the most part from an international movement concerned with the character education of the individual,” and for that reason “swarm[ed] with words, phrases and allusions which were taken from the works of Canaanite poets.” But Wright found the Old Testament’s teachings to be of much less worth than its history sections, so he argued that, again, similarity could be expected here without harming the Israelites’ uniqueness.

Wright further argued that the Israelites had entirely different categories upon which they based their religion. The polytheists’ categories were order, harmony, and integration, which made “the status quo” into “the focus of attention”; hence the Israelites were the only ancients capable of social change in pursuit of justice, which for him explained why “the most energetic movements for social reform have occurred in those countries heavily influenced by this Judeo-Christian point of view.” He contrasted this to “Zoroastrianism and Mohammedanism,” which, he claimed, knew nothing of “a righteousness that loves the weak and the outcast, a mercy in righteousness directed toward those whom the world’s justice passes by”—that, Wright claimed, was “phenomenal and unique.”

Most tellingly, Israelite nationalism only appeared to be similar to other nationalisms. Because God provided the basis for the Israelites’ society, their nationalism was sanctified and therefore “utterly different from that of overweening nationalisms.” Wright defended the Israelites’ calling themselves the chosen people; they were “giving the only explanation possible” for their history, given how often they had interacted with God. This provides some insight into Wright’s opinion that Arab nationalism was of the mundane variety and therefore harmful, whereas Jewish nationalism promised to provide a good home to people who needed it, and bore no structural similarities to any of the world’s other nationalisms. The Jewish people

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47 Wright, The Old Testament Against its Environment, 44.
48 Ibid., 46.
49 Ibid., 60.
50 Ibid., 48.
51 Ibid., 50.
continued, from Wright’s perspective, to be unique and set apart from all the other peoples. As he put it, “all ancient civilizations fell to pieces, save one—the people of Israel.”

The Old Testament was not complete, however, for Christians or Jews. This was not necessarily an argument for Christian supersessionism. Christianity found fulfillment in the New Testament, but, Wright argued, Jews found fulfillment in the Talmud, which worked to “summarize and to make relevant the faith of the fathers.” The New Testament, for Wright, was largely a commentary on the Old Testament, given that so much of it consisted of allusions to the Old Testament. Christians who did not realize this, he warned, would end up basing their faith not on the Old Testament conception of God but on “that which we ourselves provide,” which would turn out to be nothing more than the polytheists’ nature- and human-centered worldview.

Combining their expertise in the Old Testament and New Testament respectively, Wright and Filson collaborated on a Bible atlas, published in 1945 and revised in 1956, that had a major impact on biblical studies. Burke Long, in a recent extended critique of the book’s place in cultural history, primarily decries its maps, which suggested that the routes of the Exodus and the locations of biblical cities were far more settled as scholarly questions than they actually were. In addition to creating the false impression of sure knowledge of biblical times, the oversized volume, replete with color maps of Palestine at various time periods, advanced Wright’s vision of Israelite-Canaanite relations, with hints as to what implications those relations had for the present day.

In a sermon delivered in 1941, Wright appeared to sympathize at least a little with other Christians’ concerns about the Joshua narrative. He argued that God had used Israel as an instrument for his larger purposes, which did not necessarily mean that their individual actions were without sin. In this case he compared the modern world unfavorably to the past:

Far be it from us with all our humanitarianism, however, to sit in too stern judgment upon Joshua. … And we Americans perhaps had less right than most modern nations to sit in judgment on [ancient Israel] when we have exterminated thousands of Indians in every portion of our land, and have crowded the rest into great concentration camps. No, our modern world has not attained the level of Old Testament ethics, let alone surpassed it.

52 Wright, The Challenge of Israel’s Faith, 68.
53 Wright, The Old Testament Against its Environment, 75.
54 Ibid., 112.
55 Long, Imagining the Holy Land, 189.
56 G. Ernest Wright, address, box 2 folder 2, “Kansas Convocation of Ministers (Addresses) 1941,” HDS.
However, this relativizing of Joshua’s actions disappeared over time in favor of championing them.

In their atlas, Wright and Filson provided a confident answer to the debate within biblical studies about the nature of Joshua’s conquest. Was it the unified, lightning assault with maximum destruction to the Canaanites as depicted in the book of Joshua, or was it the series of ongoing struggles against opponents who were not easily vanquished, as depicted in the book of Judges? Following Albright, they mustered archaeological data pointing to widespread destruction of cities and towns in a time period that could have been that of the conquest. For them this showed that the book of Joshua depicted actual events and therefore was not the nationalistic exaggeration that many had argued. For example, one “exceedingly strong fortress” that had been excavated was “violently destroyed about 1220 BC, and the conflagration is certainly to be attributed to Israel.”57 They did, however, nod briefly to the Judges narrative, thus avoiding the impression that a historical narrative in the Bible was incorrect. They suggested that, after the initial assault, “the inhabitants who still offered resistance” put up “a continuous struggle,” thus providing the basis for the Judges narrative.58

Since there were at least two possibilities in the Bible for how the conquest happened, and because scholars on one side of the debate or the other could claim that while one account was more accurate the other was either too zealous or too self-effacing, the insistence of the Albright school on a violent conquest was more than simply part of their effort to bolster the credibility of the Bible. They picked one of two alternatives that were both biblically supported. They wanted a particularly bloody conquest to be true, and interpreted their evidence to show that it had been, because they believed the ancient Israelites’ ability to destroy the peoples in their path demonstrated the superiority of the Israelites’, and, by extension, the scholars’, God and his message. Further, the ability of the right military with the right message to destroy, remove, subdue, or subjugate those who were inferior on the basis of wrong religious beliefs and a civilization judged to be backward struck a chord with the segment of the Zionist movement that argued their case based on the backwardness of the Palestinians and their perceived inability to care for and develop the land.

57 Wright and Filson, eds., The Westminster Historical Atlas to the Bible, 40.
58 Ibid., 39.
The Israelites, Wright and Filson made clear, had been justified in destroying the Canaanites because God was on their side. The Canaanites, the “original inhabitants” of Palestine, shared in the general moral inferiority of all non-Israelites. From the Canaanites’ perspective, the authors acknowledged, the Israelites having “deprived them of most of Palestine” was “a disaster.” However, several of the Canaanites’ shortcomings, the authors argued, contributed to their swift defeat by the Israelites. For example, “politically they never were a united people” (not coincidentally an extremely common argument against the authenticity of Palestinian nationalism), and the development of their civilization had been “hindered” by “the extremely low level of its religion,” indeed, the “barbarous character” of their polytheism. At the same time the authors saw the Canaanites’ civilization as ripe for destruction because it was, in their view, so advanced as to be on the downward slope, “weak and decaying.” Another way they supported their claim that the Israelites had conquered and settled in quickly was that in many cities the culture seemed to shift from a complex civilization to a poor and simple one after the cities’ destruction. The humble Israelites’ poverty—a testimony “to a civilization very different from that of the Canaanites”—provided further evidence of their moral superiority over the Canaanites.

Consequently, “it was small loss to the world when in parts of the Palestinian hill country” Canaanite civilization “was virtually annihilated.” The Israelites’ conquest provided the opportunity for “the purity and righteous holiness of the God of Israel” to shine against the background of the preexisting “pagan and immoral religion.” Further, Israel’s great leaders brought a unity to their people unavailable to the Canaanites. The “charismatic nature of Israel’s leadership” was a force for unity “to which little among the neighbouring peoples can be compared,” Wright declared elsewhere, without acknowledging that perhaps texts about any possible charismatic Canaanite leaders might have been lost, or might never have been written down in the first place. The second edition of the atlas, published in 1954, reflected the

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59 Ibid., 33.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid., 34.
62 Ibid., 36.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid., 45.
65 Ibid., 36.
66 Ibid.
67 Wright, Biblical Archaeology, 87.
establishment of the state of Israel in such a way as not only to approve of it but to champion it as the successor of the ancient Israelite polity, as seen in the wording “Today … Israel reoccupies the Negeb.”

The textbook favored intolerance and frowned on tolerance. The Israelites’ intolerance for the customs of others, up to and including their destruction of those others, was to be commended since it was in the service of the one true God. This could be contrasted to the tolerance Wright and Filson accused the Romans of later showing the Jews and other minorities, a tolerance that “was possible because polytheism was basic in Roman religion.” The only positive thing about this tolerance was that it saved Judaism, Wright suggested elsewhere, since “Judaism in this world was looked down upon as simply a horrible religion.” As mistaken as Wright found that view of Judaism to be, he continued to view all other religions of the ancient world, other than those categorized as belonging to his beloved Judeo-Christian tradition, as not only simply horrible, but as worthy of destruction.

But Wright’s ability to present different frameworks to different people showed that he had some sympathy for the native population’s predicament. While at Glueck’s HUC/BAS in 1964–1965, Wright had an opportunity to speak to the native Christian population at a conference. During the question-and-answer session, an Arab Christian from Haifa named Elias Koussa asked Wright “what he would say to a Christian Arab ‘over yonder’ who finds it difficult to disassociate the modern Israel state from biblical people.” Wright, who as we saw often equated ancient and modern Israel, ridiculed the idea when speaking to Arabs. The attempt “to link ancient Israel with modern Israel,” he assured them, was nothing more than “political fantasy.”

I am astonished to find that this difficulty exists. I can understand how politics and people who do not know the history of biblical people could fall for this line. I can see how a Jew says it, but I don’t understand how a Christian can say it. Ancient Israel and its people are very different from modern Israel.

Wright emphasized that such a linkage contributed to the myth of racial purity, stating that, “as for blood relationship, I do not believe that the present Jew in Israel has any more of Abraham’s

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68 Wright and Filson, eds., The Westminster Historical Atlas to the Bible, 68.
69 Ibid., 88.
70 Wright, Biblical Archaeology, 272.
71 Dwight Baker, typescript of article about Dr. Wright, box 2 folder 8, “Stella Carmel Conference (Article about Dr. Wright) 1964–1965,” HDS.
blood than I have.” He appealed to the Arabs’ Christian heritage to keep them from discounting the Old Testament as belonging to the Jews.

The Old Testament is really the Christians’ book for they understand it and the Orthodox Jews have misinterpreted it. This is what I think the Christian Arabs should be saying, and it is a surprise to me that they are not. … True, Christians share Israel’s great heritage and in that sense we have descended from the ancient Hebrews, as have the Jews.72

Of course, Wright had elsewhere suggested that the rabbinic tradition was an equally valid outworking of the Old Testament tradition as Christianity; here, he displayed a Christian supersessionism that rarely manifested itself in his body of work. He was encouraging Christian Arabs not to abandon the Old Testament just because they associated it so closely with the Israelis’ history, but his suggestion that they proclaim themselves the real inheritors of the book would probably have done little to ease tensions.

Despite these comments to the Arab Christians, Wright frequently appealed to Jewish ways of understanding the Bible to show Christians where they had gone wrong. He understood that one of the reasons Christians shied away from the book of Joshua was that they thought of God as a God of love. He argued that this view of God was only possible for those who based their views solely on the New Testament, and thus was an incomplete understanding of God that had to be overcome. Christians and humanists “have adopted this simplistic view of the Bible,” Wright complained, even though “Judaism, not to speak of modern scholars of ancient Israel’s life and faith in her own world, finds no such deity in the literature of Israel as a whole.”73 The other problem was that intellectuals were too quick to interpret the history of the Israelites’ wars as being like other wars, ignoring the Bible’s contention that God was operating in these wars. Wright noted that scholars had come to frequently observe that “all wars are thought by the participants to be sanctified by the sacred institutions of both sides of the conflict.”74 The difference in the Israelites’ case, Wright argued, was that these wars truly were God’s plan for human history. Wright did not extend this level of assurance to any later wars, arguing that the Crusaders had been arrogant fools for claiming God was on their side. The reason he knew God had acted on behalf of the Israelites against the Canaanites was because the Bible said he had, which for Wright was a contention that could not be interrogated.

72 Ibid.
74 Ibid., 28.
III. Jesus as One of the Mighty Acts of God

In his theological writings, Wright found many faults with his contemporaries’ practice of Christianity, especially when compared with the religion of the Israelites. He disagreed with many widespread notions of who Jesus was, criticizing Christians who defined him as love, as a teacher, and as the divine Son of God. Wright argued that the best way to define Jesus was as one of the mighty acts of God in history. By defining Jesus this way, Wright brought the two sides of the hyphen in “Judeo-Christian tradition” closer together and strengthened the dichotomy between that tradition and all others, a strict separation that operated like the one between the Israelites and the Canaanites.

Wright’s neo-Orthodox focus on God as the sovereign of the universe represented what he described as a shift from a pietistic upbringing. He eschewed the emotionalism with which he had been raised with the air of a convert, commenting wryly that the “writer was so indoctrinated with this point of view in his younger years that even now he does not feel that he has really worshiped unless his emotions have been stirred up and his eyes become watery.”75 For Wright the biggest problem facing Christians was their tendency to replace God with Christ as the center of their devotion. Wright associated the proper understanding of God with the Old Testament, and emotion with the New Testament. Christians who read only the New Testament, then, tended toward an emotional faith that was subjective rather than objective, and individualistic rather than community-oriented. Further, this faith redefined “love” from what Wright took it to mean in the Old Testament, namely, social justice and therefore a force for reforming society, into simply an emotion, an emotion that encouraged stasis and stripped Christianity of its ability to transform the world. When this stasis occurred, Wright argued, Christianity denatured into something reminiscent of Wright’s version of Canaanitism: static, incapable of effecting change, no longer a divinely inspired religion but simply a man-made one, no deeper or more satisfying than any of the rest.

According to Wright, American theology had become confused by the heritage of frontier evangelicalism, with its emotional revivalism, anti-intellectualism, sentimentalism, and devotion to Christ, as exemplified in frontier hymns that have become favorite targets of the anti-

75 Wright, The Challenge of Israel’s Faith, 50.
sentimental, such as “Softly and Tenderly Jesus is Calling” and “In the Garden.” Wright criticized pop music for its basis in the same empty emotion of love, citing a song he had heard on the radio that borrowed the lyrics of an old hymn but substituted “for the name ‘Jesus’, the words ‘you-girl’.” This was possible because “in both, the emotion is the end of everything, the central experience celebrated.” And yet he accused New Testament Christians of being incapable of progressing even as far as pop music, in that pop music occasionally exhibited a social conscience. In this regard he admiringly cited Elvis Presley’s “In the Ghetto.”

Wright ridiculed those who based their arguments on having an inner sense of the true religion of Christ. When Christians resorted to their feelings, he criticized, “there are no rules. Each situation presents a new challenge for me to act as I think Christ might have acted,” a subjective judgment that “generally reduces and demythologizes Jesus Christ to a sweet person” as vapid as the Beatles’ latest offering, “‘Love, love, love, all you need is love!’” Interestingly, elsewhere Wright had made the same claim for how he knew Isaiah was a true prophet, writing that “there is something within, which tells us that Isaiah is absolutely right.” Adopting the voice of Isaiah, Wright scolded modern American Christians for making the same mistakes as the ancient Israelites were portrayed as making: “Hear the word of the Lord unto you,” he warned, putting new words to a biblical cadence. “Your many churches, your expensive organizations, your gold and your silver and your brass; your exclusive attention to the even operation of your churches, your desire to be nothing more than ‘nice’ people … —these things and many more have become offensive to the Almighty.”

Wright argued that God could be objectively understood and encouraged anthropomorphizing because it made God seem more real and less abstract. He feared that a subjective understanding of God, based on the religious feeling of individuals rather than on a shared understanding of God’s nature, would obscure what he believed to be the uniqueness of the biblical God. That God “was differentiated from all other gods of antiquity” because “he stood alone, without sexuality, without wife, and without children.” Wright opposed the

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77 G. Ernest Wright, sermon, box 2 folder 5 “Wright, George Ernest Sermons (Miscellaneous) (1 of 2) 1953–1974.” HDS.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
81 Ibid., 1.
82 Ibid., 55.
abstract God, indefinite and without content, who was “invoked in our churches when we tritely and solemnly reiterate: ‘God is a spirit.’”

It was acceptable, Wright argued, to anthropomorphize God because reference to the human experience was the best way for humans to understand God. God was not, however, primarily a father. This overly familiar relationship stemmed from love-obsessed New Testament Christians; the best metaphor, according to Wright, was God as sovereign over his people. “He was a living, active, powerful God,” Wright argued. Hence, anthropomorphism in Old Testament religion “was the very reason for its dynamic and virile character.”

Christianity, Wright argued, was principally about these acts of God and not about Jesus’ ethical teachings, which, it seemed to him, was a common misconception of Christians he knew. Jesus was not important for what he taught but rather because he himself was one of God’s mighty acts in history. It was when Christians focused on Christ’s teachings that they began to notice that they were similar to the teachings of many other religions, giving them the sense of “all religions as having a basic common denominator.”

This was the downfall of the Qur’an, “a religious heresy of biblical faith” in comparison to the Bible, because it was “chiefly a series of teachings from the auditions and visions of the prophet Mohammed.”

Wright disliked the focus on Jesus’ teachings because so many parallels to them could be found in the other world religions. Jesus’ teachings were thoughts that humans were capable of having in many different times and places. In God Who Acts, Wright argued that modern Christians had misunderstood the basis of biblical theology because they thought in terms of Hellenic categories rather than Hebrew categories. Systematic theology, he argued, was Hellenic and thus foreign to the experience of the Hebrews. He stressed that if biblical theology is focused on history, and therefore on real actions that occurred over a period of time during which conditions changed, then it is neither abstract nor static. Therefore Wright argued that biblical theology, unlike systematic theology, is changing, diverse, and flexible. However, at the same time, the book showed that ancient Israel was for him a homogeneous and unified people, so

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84 Wright, The Challenge of Israel’s Faith, 66.
85 Wright, God Who Acts, 18.
86 Ibid., 40.
much so that they could be referred to by the singular pronoun “she” with no loss of depth.\(^87\) Considering diversity of thought within that entity did not serve Wright’s purpose.

Wright particularly decried the state of affairs in foreign missions, where missionaries focused on Christ’s teachings as not necessarily different than other religions but as qualitatively superior, causing the missionaries “unwittingly to become an agent of the Western feeling of superiority in its patronizing dealing with the ‘inferior’ people.”\(^88\) (Of course, Wright was not immune to making arguments of qualitative superiority, such as when he proclaimed the superiority of the Bible because it was so clearly “the cream of the literature which the ancient East produced.”)\(^89\) Without acknowledging that arguing for Christianity’s radical difference might lead to even more of an undeserved superiority complex, Wright appealed to missionaries to teach Christianity’s “utterly unique and radical departure from all contemporary pagan religions.”\(^90\) While one could argue that the Chinese might have difficulty understanding the national story of one ancient ethnic group, Wright simply stated that it “is unrealistic to assume that Israel’s belief in herself as the especially chosen recipient of Divine favour was simply the projection of the nation’s egoism or the over-compensation for an inferiority complex.”\(^91\) He did not explain exactly what he thought was unrealistic about it.

Wright’s final book, *The Old Testament and Theology* in 1969, made one last attempt to convince Christians that focusing on Christ and love dissolved their religion into other thought systems. God as the sovereign of the universe who acted in history was what set the Bible apart “amidst the variety of religious forms in the world.”\(^92\)

Wright used archaeological textual discoveries to bolster his point. His explanation of the terms used for Jesus, including “Everlasting Father” and “Prince of Peace” in Isaiah, was that they were terms actually used for God, since culturally it was common to give children names that were the attributes of a deity. Reasoning that since this was a common practice, these names for Jesus really “are names of God, and they describe various ways in which God acts in the world.”\(^93\)

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\(^87\) Ibid., 11.
\(^88\) Ibid., 18.
\(^89\) Ibid., 18.
\(^92\) Ibid., 50.
Wright pushed the point about Christ’s unimportance relative to God further than he had before. If these names referred to God, not Jesus, then these attributes “do not describe the person of the Messiah”; “nor do they confer deity on the Messiah.”

He used this reasoning about the cultural context—that children were called by the attributes of their parents—to suggest the textual basis upon which Christians built their belief in the divinity of Christ was a misinterpretation.

To me the very term ‘incarnation’ is a bad one, and it is certainly unbiblical. God is active and works by his Spirit, but he does not fuse himself in some mysterious way with human flesh. … The combination of God’s planned and purposive act with Christ’s complete love and obedience in life and in death produced the ‘Servant of the Lord,’ ‘the Son of God,’ ‘the Pascal Lamb,’ and the victorious, risen ‘King,’ stationed ‘on the right hand of God’. I myself cannot see why such language and conception fail to do complete justice to the Person of Christ.

Far from his earlier supersessionism toward Jews, Wright was dissolving what many would see as the biggest barrier between Judaism and Christianity, the divinity of Christ, and forging a Judeo-Christian tradition that no longer had to tolerate theological pluralism because Christians and Jews would be able to conceive of God the same way. “Jesus is to be understood,” Wright continued, “as the specially adopted son of God.”

Christ’s role had been to universalize this religion, making it open for any individual who wanted to follow it—or, in Wright’s view, to restore the potential for universalism he detected in the early Israelites’ beliefs that finally came to fruition through Jesus.

IV. The Judeo-Christian Tradition Versus Idolatry

Fusing Judaism and Christianity made it easier to oppose them to all other thought systems, reducing all possibilities into two categories. As in ancient times when God separated the Israelis from the Canaanites, in modern times the Judeo-Christian tradition was separate from all the world’s other religions. Because of the truth of God’s having acted in history throughout the Bible, all other claims to the divine were rendered false. Jews and Christians, Wright argued, belonged to the only faiths to affirm that God had worked in history at all, and this was how one

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95 G. Ernest Wright, “The Unity of the Bible,” 20 Sept. 1954. Box 5 folder 9 “‘The Unity of the Bible’ (manuscript), 1954,” HDS.
97 Ibid., 27.
could separate these two faiths, with their correct vision of God as a God of action, from all the rest, mired in idolatry.

Christian scholars magnified “the differences in conception or emphasis” between the Old and New Testaments “out of all proportion,” and went even further when they posited religious evolution within the Old Testament, disregarding the “uniformity in point of view” that Wright found in “the bulk of the Old Testament literature.”

The real differences were not within the Judeo-Christian tradition; they were between that tradition and all others.

The progress toward civilization did not need to be charted within the Judeo-Christian tradition when that tradition could simply be opposed to the lack of true civilization still existing outside it. After ruminating in a sermon on an upsurge of interest in African art, Wright proclaimed that the reason he remained a committed Christian “even in one of the world’s greatest centers of academic paganism” (presumably Harvard, where he was employed at the time) was that it was “the one commitment that is any enemy of primitivism.” This was the very primitivism, he warned, to which anyone seriously interested in African art was reverting.

Wright brought this understanding of the Old Testament as the center around which varying traditions could be harmonized to his ecumenical work. Archaeological discoveries, he believed, could create a conservative consensus by controlling the interpretive excesses of both liberals and fundamentalists. Whereas study of the Old Testament had blossomed among higher critics between 1890 and 1910, “this time,” he predicted, scholars would be “more seriously concerned with its proper role as a vital part of the Church’s life.” Not only might advances in Old Testament research contribute to “moderating the tension” between wings of Protestantism, they could bring Jews and Catholics under the same umbrella. He believed the “new and deep theological interest among many younger Jewish rabbis” and the “phenomenal growth of Roman Catholic interest in Biblical study”—which he witnessed firsthand during his years in Albright’s Oriental Seminary—was resulting in “mutual understanding and stimulation.”

Wright yearned for a harmonious whole, in which questions would be settled, rather than the periodic reevaluation and reinterpretation of evidence. Thus for Wright scholarship was about the narrowing of difference and the pursuit of consensus. David Noel Freedman echoed this desire,

99 G. Ernest Wright, sermon, box 2 folder 7 “Sermons and Services, Harvard University, 1965–1971,” HDS.
101 Ibid.
and the role of Oriental Seminary graduates such as he and Wright in pursuing it, when he wrote to Wright that “it seems to me … that among us at least there seems to be a growing body of material which we hold in common along with a fairly homogeneous approach to it,” which Freedman saw as “an encouraging sign” that “suggests that the production of a sound biblical theology in America may not be far off.”

In 1963 Wright hosted the Protestant-Catholic Colloquium at Harvard, which resulted in the edited volume Ecumenical Dialogue at Harvard. Held between the two sessions of the Second Vatican Council, the colloquium brought together an illustrious list of Protestants and Catholics to discuss points of agreement in their traditions. “Ten years ago the Colloquium would have been an impossibility,” Wright’s Harvard Divinity School colleague George H. Williams wrote in the introduction. While Protestant denominations had “been pressing deeper into ecumenical issues” for “half a century,” official Catholic participation was spurred by the Council.

The colloquium’s main speaker was Cardinal Bea, a figure who embodied both archaeology—as a biblical scholar who had embraced the incorporation of archaeological evidence and the former rector of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome—and ecumenism—as the recently named president of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, a body charged with reformulating the Council’s document on ecumenism.

The area in which Protestant-Catholic ecumenism was old hat was biblical studies. Wright provided the write-up of the colloquium’s biblical studies seminar, and was pleased to report that it “was immediately apparent that a majority of the group were acquainted with one another,” which “marked a difference between our seminar and the others” because in biblical study, “ecumenical discussion at a scholarly level is already far advanced.” Historical study of the Bible was overcoming Christian differences, Wright wrote, by “taking us behind Protestant provincialism, behind the Reformation itself, and behind the medieval and patristic

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developments”\textsuperscript{105} to reveal the truth of what the Bible taught. Yet this was not \textit{sola scriptura}, which Wright blamed for splintering Protestantism, the Enlightenment, and the eventuality of higher criticism and its attendant destructiveness. \textit{Sola scriptura} “came to mean Scripture as interpreted in a given Church tradition,” which was not, Wright argued, the pursuit of “what the Bible actually taught. If Scripture stands over the Church, then it also stands over these traditions in interpretation.”\textsuperscript{106} Multiple interpretations were not to be expected; they were rather the indication that all groups save one were wrong. Wright turned to historical evidence, which, he claimed, “has meant a greatly increased accuracy in the interpretation of biblical literature” that “is now providing a ground for unity and a checkrein on divisive tendencies.”\textsuperscript{107} This included the metaphorical interpretive traditions that had been practiced by Jews and Catholics but were precisely what Jews and Catholics who enrolled at Albright’s Oriental Seminary wished to avoid. In this sense the participants in the Protestant-Catholic colloquium were coming together in agreement on a way of reading the Bible that had previously held little sway outside certain historically minded Protestant circles.

The next chapter uses the case study of an internal conflict over politics in ASOR to investigate the way his theological stance made Wright resolutely pro-Israel. His position, because it was based on what he believed to be his careful elucidation of objective, essential truths about the state of humankind rather than on contingent conclusions open to reinterpretation, allowed him to consider being pro-Israel an apolitical position to take. He retreated to these arguments of objectivity and neutrality when castigating a group of young scholars at ASOR, including his beloved student Paul Lapp, for protesting an Israeli military parade in 1968.

\textsuperscript{105} Wright, “Seminar I. Biblical Studies,” 295.
\textsuperscript{106} G. Ernest Wright, typescript of “Chapter 5. Seminar I. Biblical Studies: Record and Interpretation,” box 1 folder 26, “Catholic-Protestant Colloquium (Chapter on Colloquium Seminar) 1963,” HDS.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
CHAPTER FIVE

PAUL LAPP AND ALBERT GLOCK: THE NEXT GENERATION’S REBELLION AGAINST OBJECTIVITY AND ZIONISM

Paul Lapp and Albert Glock, who both earned doctorates under students of Albright, rebelled against the Albright school’s epistemology with their insistence that knowledge is relative and political. They did not believe that archaeological data were objective facts with inherent meaning that could be understood correctly by the initiated. They believed that archaeological data were necessarily interpreted, and that interpretations differed depending on one’s subjectivity. They questioned the “Judeo-Christian tradition” that linked ASOR’s old guard to Israeli archaeology, and they strove to include the two groups that this formulation most obviously excluded, the Eastern Christians and Muslims who comprised Palestine’s native population. They opposed the possibility that scholars can be politically neutral, and suggested that because bias cannot be eradicated, scholars must choose their political positions carefully and thoughtfully. After the 1967 war, both chose to stand against Israeli occupation and against ethnic nationalism of any kind.

I. Paul Lapp and the Sources of History

A Missouri Synod Lutheran minister when he entered the Johns Hopkins Ph.D. program in 1955, Paul Lapp worried Albright. Would a member of a denomination that was well known for stubborn opposition to textual criticism be open to more sophisticated scholarly viewpoints? Lapp, however, was not a company man. When fellow Albright doctoral student Nancy Renn became engaged to him, she wrote excitedly to Wright—her undergraduate professor and inspiration for pursuing the Ph.D. with Albright—to let him know that, even though Lapp was “Lutheran—and a Missouri-Synod one at that,” she “would describe him as an ecumenical one with a Wright theology!”

Albright’s concern about possible fundamentalism was misplaced. Lapp, who eventually earned his Ph.D. under Wright after Albright’s retirement, was open to a range of viewpoints, both scholarly and political. They were often viewpoints, particularly in the political realm, that

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1 Albright, she reported, was pleased with the marriage because “now he knows he’s not wasting his time” on a female student who might “have married just anyone” and left the field. Nancy Renn to the Wright family, 4 May 1956, box 7 folder 37 “Lapp, Nancy (Renn), 1956-1965,” HDS.
his mentors found distasteful. Lapp spent a decade in Jerusalem and surrounding areas, during which time he became so sympathetic to the viewpoint of the native populations vis-à-vis the Israelis that he caused what seemed, from Wright’s position as ASOR president, to amount to an international public relations fiasco.

Never lukewarm in his positions, Lapp was known to be difficult to get along with because of his high expectations for himself and others, and because of his brutal honesty about others’ abilities and their scholarship. “Sometimes it was hard to love Paul Lapp,” confessed Edward Campbell, one of his closest friends. “Even I, as one of his teachers and sponsors,” Wright wrote by way of explanation on Lapp’s behalf to potential employers at McCormick Seminary, “have been ‘spanked’ for inadequate archaeological reporting.” However, Wright continued, Lapp was “an honest and genuine person” and “quite warm, a good friend—provided that one is not too touchy about his honesty.”

In 1970, Lapp drowned while swimming off the coast of Cyprus, where he had relocated after his refusal to excavate in what had become the Israeli-occupied West Bank. His body was taken to Palestine and buried in the cemetery of the Ecumenical Institute. Campbell stressed the ecumenical nature of the funeral, at which “Anglican canon John Zimmerman officiated, while pall-bearers included Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Christians as well as Moslems. Jewish colleagues mourned with the others.” Lapp was 39, and though he had developed a reputation for opposing his mentors and not sparing others’ feelings, his ASOR colleagues seemed almost universally to consider him their next great genius. A memorial notice in The Biblical Archaeologist noted that he had already “reached a position of prestige and respect in Palestinian archaeology unequaled among those of his own generation and rarely surpassed by his elders.” An unsigned obituary provided by the faculty of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Lapp’s institution when he died, lauded the “universality” of his interests—that is, his ability to be interested in questions that did not pertain to the Bible. It also recounted his warmth toward humankind, from his deep interest in his students to his relationship with Arab workers in the

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6 Campbell., “Paul W. Lapp: In Memoriam,” 60.
field, a relationship that did not feel as tinged with colonial baggage as had Glueck’s when he loudly proclaimed himself a friend of the Arabs. “It was the ability to closely identify with the workmen,” his obituary writer opined, “which caused this man to become intensely involved in what he regarded as a grave injustice inflicted by an indifferent world upon the Palestinian.”

Lapp’s writings exhibited a commitment both to methodological rigor and to methodological transparency. Rather than determine what a given dig had to do with the Bible, develop an interpretation of what that meant for faith, and push that thesis—Wright’s methodology—Lapp explored various points of view to impress upon his non-specialist audience the inability of archaeologists to provide incontrovertible proof of anything, only to advance hypotheses they felt best fit the data and to welcome the development of better hypotheses.

In *Biblical Archaeology and History* (1966), the result of a series of lectures, Lapp demonstrated his commitment to transparency, even at the cost of exploding the historian’s pretense to authority over the subject matter in front of the uninitiated. He strove to explain, to an audience that he identified as undergraduates and laymen, the methodological issues with writing history that he thought most historians and archaeologists suppressed in conversations with outsiders, and possibly even in conversations with each other.

Lapp made his political views explicit in the preface, which he signed “Jerusalem, Occupied Jordan.” The reason Westerners did not understand the political problems in Palestine, he felt, was their lack of ability to see more than one perspective. “The Six-Day War resulted in the liberation and reunification of Jerusalem from an Israeli perspective,” Lapp argued, “but to the residents of Jordanian Jerusalem it has meant occupation by a conquering power, with fear of that knock on the door at night followed by arrest and indefinite incarceration.” He noted that, despite the unfortunate situation, there had been benefits for scholarship. “In any case,” he remarked, in a tone that suggested how much less important scholarship was to him than the dignity of the Palestinians, “since the war it has been possible to observe archaeological work in Israel, and Israeli colleagues have been most cordial in sharing their material and ideas.”

Lapp devoted almost a third of the slim volume to a discussion of the sources of history in an effort to convey the difficulty of knowing anything about the past. Refuting Wright’s quest

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8 Unsigned obituary, in Lapp, *The Tale of the Tell*, 125.
10 Ibid., viii.
11 Ibid.
for objective truth, Lapp argued that there were three main sources: literary sources, nonliterary sources such as those provided by archaeology, and, often overlooked, the historian him- or herself, with all the subjectivity, special insights, and blind spots that the individual brought to the understanding and writing of history. “It seems obvious why an Irish Catholic of East Harlem—if there is one—writes a history of Irish Catholics of East Harlem, but is it?” Lapp asked. “Perhaps it is a result of a personal struggle for self-understanding, perhaps a way to call for social justice, perhaps an easy way to an M.A. degree, perhaps a combination of these and other drives.”

Lapp observed that historians of the ancient past tended to think they could come to certain conclusions about a period for which the written sources were “infinitesimal.” He summarized the task before the historian this way: “Does he want to emphasize more the vast ignorance about what he is writing … ? Does he want to emphasize the heterogeneous opinions held by writers on his subject?” In this regard he approvingly cited Millar Burrows’ books on the Dead Sea Scrolls, noting that Burrows wrote “two long books detailing virtually every major hypothesis about the Scrolls published before his books were written.” Rather than informing readers what they should believe about the Scrolls, “Burrows’ approach is extremely negative; only rarely does he consider the evidence sufficient to judge between the heterogeneous views of the scholars he quotes.”

Rather than taking Wright’s perspective that the Old Testament presented an objectively true history of God’s mighty acts in history, Lapp argued that the Bible was hardly written as history at all, but rather as polemic, with objectionable viewpoints weeded out. Thus, while he agreed with Wright that the Bible presented a clear thesis, “the conviction that in all events described God is working out the salvation of his people,” Lapp saw this not as objectively true but rather as the very point that renders it suspect as history because it shows the Bible is not a text consisting “of a historian’s assertion built upon his evaluation of the sources.” Lapp criticized biblical theologians (without naming Wright, though he certainly was in this category) for constructing “a framework which fails to take most history and most human achievements

12 Ibid., 24.
13 Ibid., 17.
14 Ibid., 93.
15 Ibid., 95.
16 Ibid., 41.
seriously,” focusing on the history of the biblical chosen people to the exclusion of other peoples and focusing only on the acts they attributed to God. Other observers might have attributed these acts, including the Hebrews’ conquest of Palestine, to humans.

In the late 1960s Lapp began writing a standard treatment of Palestinian archaeology that he hoped would replace Albright’s *The Archaeology of Palestine*, originally published in 1949 and revised in 1960. After his death, Nancy combined the three chapters he had completed with a variety of his other writings under the title *The Tale of the Tell*. Like his previous book, it focused on questions of methodology and process, laying out the strengths and weaknesses of each type of archaeological method that had been used in Palestine and comparing the field’s accomplishments unfavorably to what archaeologists had accomplished in other parts of the world. One of the problems was a lack of agreement on what the term “biblical” meant in biblical archaeology. “At its worst,” he suggested, “biblical archaeology deals with bits and pieces of Palestinian archaeology with biblical implications.” But at its best it dealt with biblical times and connected Palestine to the rest of the world, to “Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Egypt, Greece, Rome, and beyond.” Focus on the Bible was holding the area’s archaeology back, he argued; the many Old Testament specialists who “overburdened” the ranks of the dig staffs, he suggested, might be better replaced with specialists in “art, history, geology, hydrology, meteorology, palaeobotany, data processing, soil analysis and the like.”

While no conclusion was certain, Lapp argued that work could proceed because some conclusions made more sense than others and therefore could be held contingently. Indeed, he weighed the evidence for whether there was a conquest of Palestine in the late thirteenth century and concluded, based on destruction patterns, that there probably was. Where he intervened was at the point of deciding what that meant. The probability of the conquest was not a solid enough foundation for saying that archaeology was slowly and surely confirming the Bible’s historical accuracy. Further, he found it a logical fallacy even to suggest that such confirmations of historical accuracy would amount to a confirmation of Christianity; no amount of historical corroboration of the bare facts of the narrative could do that. “It is the height of sacrilege,” he

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17 Ibid., 58.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., 23.
21 Ibid., 111.
argued, “to think that archaeologists in their layers of dirt and tatters of walls would have a key to answering the question, ‘Is the Christian’s faith in God true?’”

The same held true for Albright’s identification of “Saul’s fort.” Lapp reasoned that, combining the evidence of the biblical text with the evidence of when the fort was built, it probably was Saul’s. He believed it was all right to say this as long as two things were kept in mind: 1) it had not been proved that it was Saul’s fort, it was only a best guess; and 2) the guess that it was Saul’s fort should not lead to logical leaps regarding what finding Saul’s fort means for religion or nationalism. In the sense that he thought the fort could be labeled Saul’s (though only contingently), he was a traditional biblical archaeologist. But his refusal to believe knowledge could be objective helped him see the ramifications of that knowledge. He believed the general public could be educated to understand that finding Saul’s fort did not necessarily entail connecting the fort to a modern ethnic group and seeing the fort as evidence of that group’s ownership.

Lapp’s confidence in archaeologists’ ability to educate the general public as to the underlying methodologies and assumptions of archaeology, and to thereby rein in fanaticism, was admirable. But while Lapp explained these ideas well and forcefully, he was up against his fellow archaeologists’ fear of letting go of their authoritativeness in their writings, and in their continuing desire to promote the very conclusions about the relationship between archaeology and the Bible that Lapp found dangerous.

Lapp spent about a decade in residence in Jordanian Jerusalem during a period when Albright and Wright were spending almost all their time in the United States, and Glueck was splitting his time between the United States and Israeli Jerusalem. Witnessing the Israelis’ takeover of East Jerusalem during the Six-Day War in 1967, and with it the fleeing of many Palestinian acquaintances, outraged Lapp and several others in residence at ASOR.

Lapp’s views on Israel were already well known in Jerusalem’s scholarly community and were not precipitated by the Six-Day War. As his scholarship shows, his worldview was oriented toward epistemological humility, and, as we have seen, that orientation tended to correspond to a critical stance toward ethnic nationalism. Not being sure one could ever know something for certain seemed to correspond to not being sure ethnic labels corresponded to reality. About a

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22 Ibid., 90–91.
23 Ibid., 84.
year before the war, Lapp upset Wright with his refusal to lecture at institutions he considered Zionist. For Wright, the apolitical thing to do was to lecture on a “non-discriminatory basis” to any member institution of ASOR that “requests your services,”24 regardless of the institution’s politics. Lapp countered that the apolitical thing to do was to avoid institutions taking a clear political stand because he was living in Jordanian Jerusalem and ASOR policy had often centered on not offending host countries.25 “During my terms of administration at the Jerusalem School I did my best to execute the policies of the Trustees in this delicate area,” Lapp protested. “Your note, implying that … I should feel obligated to lecture to Zionist-related institutions, would seem to be opposed to both these policies. Zionism is, among other things, a modern political instrument supporting a state with which our host country has not come to peaceful terms.”26 He went on to argue that he did not consider the Hebrew Union College to be off limits because it was primarily an educational institution and not a political one, but he did not want to speak to the Israel Exploration Society because it “is not merely Zionist-related, it is an institution of the State of Israel”; such a speech, he argued, “would certainly be construed as a slap in the face by Jordan.”27

II. The Protest of 1968

As president of ASOR, Wright instantly saw the events of the Six-Day War as a potential public relations problem, and was glad that Father William van Etten Casey (“selected precisely because of his administrative experience, good judgment and ability to write top notch

25 Lapp was correct that ASOR members living in Arab countries occasionally made themselves welcome by identifying closely with their host countries’ interests. William H. Brownlee, working at ASOR’s Amman Center when the Six-Day War took place, wrote a letter to King Hussein of Jordan attempting to give the monarch advice about how to proceed. “I sincerely hope that my words to Your Majesty do not seem to be an impertinence,” Brownlee wrote, before suggesting that the Arabs’ failure in 1948 had been due to their insistence on an Arab nationalism to match Jewish nationalism, and thus their unwillingness to accept the internationalization of Jerusalem. As “a non-Arab,” he suggested, “I may be able to see the wisdom of seeking some sort of middle ground,” and proposed to the king that perhaps at this juncture the West Bank could be internationalized: “Although this would be a grievous loss to Jordan, it would be preferable to letting Israel rule West Jordan!” William H. Brownlee to King Hussein, 22 June 1967, box 1 folder 10 “Amman Center 1967–1969” Coll. 018 G. Ernest Wright Papers, ASOR.
27 Ibid.
Newsletters”28) had just arrived to become the school’s director. He knew that having Glueck running the school, as he briefly did after the Israeli takeover of East Jerusalem, might give the impression that ASOR would merge with Glueck’s HUC/BAS or would be taken over by the Israeli government. “[W]e cannot keep quiet,” he wrote Lapp weeks after the war; ASOR members should promote to Arabs “the wide-ranging nature of American archaeological work in [the] Middle East”—in other words, not simply focused on the ancient Israelites—and promote to Israelis the importance of ASOR’s and USAID’s archaeological work at West Bank and Jordanian sites like “Samaria, Qumran, Amman Forum, Petra, etc.,” so that all would know that the “vast sums of moneys poured in there” from Americans for archaeological work were “for no political purposes.”29

Casey’s late summer newsletter was so complimentary of Israel’s actions that Ray Cleveland wrote an agitated letter to Glueck complaining about the ASOR propaganda machine. In this newsletter, at least, Casey did what he had been sent to Jerusalem to do. “The picture of a happy, united Jerusalem presented by Fr. Casey’s long newsletter … is a distortion of the situation which exists in the Arab-inhabited sector,” Cleveland wrote. “Very responsible and intelligent scholars who spent the summer in Jerusalem are about as happy under the treatment they receive as the French in Paris were during the Nazi occupation.”30 Cleveland then proceeded to attack the old guard’s pretensions to a cool detachment:

You, Albright and others most likely would be quite happy to see the Jerusalem school become an American-Israeli organization geared in every way to the publicity requirements of the conquerors of the city. You have control over the ASOR and you have a viewpoint which is reflected in the general news media. There is very little we can do. You are able to discredit me and others by saying that we are “politically motivated”—whatever you mean by that—but in fact you are not exempt from human foible and it could be perhaps that it is you who are politically motivated, as well as lacking the normal humanitarian concern for native populations which are being trampled by European colonists.31

An incident the year after the Six-Day War illuminated the uneasy relationship between scholarship and politics in ASOR, and the intolerance among ASOR’s old guard for pro-Palestinian positions. Casey, Lapp, ASOR residents George Landes and Robert Fortna, and

29 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
dozens of other Americans and British living in East Jerusalem signed a letter that was printed in the *Jerusalem Post* of April 29, 1968, protesting the Israeli military’s plan to route a parade through parts of recently occupied East Jerusalem.

Wright accused the signers of committing an offense against ASOR’s policy on politics that was unique in the organization’s history, fuming, “This is the first and most outrageous violation of this rule in … living memory.”32 (At Wright’s funeral service, Yigael Yadin triumphantly quoted this line, as embarrassed as Wright may later have been of it, as proof of Wright’s impartiality.)33 The flurry of international mail that the newspaper protest set off persisted for months and illuminated disagreements among ASOR members over what constituted violation of the policy. Rather than seeing the protest as against one particular Israeli action, Wright saw it as a general attack on Israel. He sent a letter reprimanding Casey harshly as the school’s director and informing him that the ASOR trustees had voted to censure the participants (later he admitted it was not an official censure). Curiously, Wright mentioned that most people present at that meeting agreed with the protesters that the parade route was provocative. “Yet that was not the issue,” Wright insisted. “The issue is that ASOR appointees must scrupulously refrain from open political talk or activity, especially in the present surcharged atmosphere, yet not only that, but on all occasions.”34

Casey replied with an eight-page letter in which he argued that the protest had been an “act of simple humanity and not a political act” because it was designed to protest the daily ill treatment of East Jerusalemites by the Israeli military. “On these terms it would be wrong not to protest in whatever way one can when defenseless people are bullied and humiliated by superior physical force,” he pleaded.35 They had acted as private individuals, Casey insisted. “We requested the Jerusalem POST not to identify us institutionally or professionally, and the POST was scrupulously correct in honoring this request,” though at least one subsequent letter to the editor about the protest ad identified them as ASOR residents.36 And presumably some readers of

33 Yigael Yadin, “G. Ernest Wright as an Excavator and Archaeologist,” In *In Memoriam G. Ernest Wright*, box 1 folder 1 “Wright, George Ernest Biographical Materials (1 of 2),” HDS.
35 Father William van Etten Casey to G. Ernest Wright, 20 May 1968, box 1 folder 35 “Protest of 1968 2/2” Coll. 018 G. Ernest Wright Papers, ASOR.
36 Ibid.
the Jerusalem Post would have recognized the ASOR residents’ names. However, their connection to ASOR became more obvious as the controversy heated up. Wright, after sending off his initial angry letter to Casey, sent copies of it to “John Zimmerman, Anson Rainey, Bill Dever, and to the following Israelis: Mazar, Yadin, Avigad, Malamat, Shafer, … Aharoni, Biran and the Dothans” in order to persuade them that ASOR policed such activity.\(^\text{37}\)

To Casey it was obvious that ASOR members had violated the politics policy fairly often. He argued that Glueck’s role as an undercover OSS spy during World War II could make every subsequent director “suspect as a secret political agent of the U.S.”\(^\text{38}\) But a much more to-the-point example was that, in July 1967, a group of Christians had published a statement in The New York Times praising Israel’s annexation of Jerusalem as a reunification of the holy city, a statement that read in part:

> For Christians, to acknowledge the necessity of Jerusalem is to acknowledge that Judaism presupposes inextricable ties with the land of Israel and the city of David, without which Judaism cannot be truly itself. Theologically, it is this dimension to the religion of Judaism which leads us to support the reunification of the city of Jerusalem.\(^\text{39}\)

This appeal to correct religion—the claim by a group of Christians that “Judaism cannot be truly itself” without access to the physical Jerusalem—thus wrapped a political statement in theological protection. Three of the sixteen signers of this document, James M. Robinson, Frank Moore Cross, and David Noel Freedman, were major figures in ASOR; Freedman was chosen as Casey’s replacement despite the publication of this statement. Casey wondered pointedly if this pro-Israel stance were not exactly the reason for Freedman’s appointment at such a crucial time. “Is it possible since this is your first appointment of a Director of the School in the new political situation, that he was appointed precisely because of his professed political sympathies?” he prodded Wright.\(^\text{40}\)

Wright replied that Casey’s invocation of Glueck and the New York Times ad were “hardly applicable. Nelson Glueck’s WWII activity was completely hidden from public view and

\(^{37}\) G. Ernest Wright to Edward Campbell, 19 June 1968 box 1 folder 34 “Protest of 1968 1/2” Coll. 018 G. Ernest Wright Papers, ASOR.

\(^{38}\) Father William van Etten Casey to G. Ernest Wright, 20 May 1968, box 1 folder 35 “Protest of 1968 2/2” Coll. 018 G. Ernest Wright Papers, ASOR.

\(^{39}\) Qted. in Ibid.

\(^{40}\) Ibid.
was a harmless work for our own government. It was no open action against a host country. The Robinson, Cross and Freedman signatures were printed in this country.  

For his part, Wright was not really naïve enough to think the New York Times ad had no ramifications because it was published in the United States—or at least five years later he had realized it. In 1973 he wrote that he had tried hard to appoint the best First Vice President for ASOR he could, to take over in case he died from his heart condition, which he did only months later. He had just recommended Frank Moore Cross when he found out that Cross had “signed a rather strong statement in support of the Israelis which appeared in the New York Times” a few weeks previously. “If I had only known he was going to do something like that again,” Wright despaired, “I would never have considered his appointment as First Vice President.”

While many both inside and outside Israel had found the rerouting of the parade route disturbingly provocative to the recently conquered population, others could not separate protest of that event from a general attack on Israel’s existence. They appealed, as had the New York Times signers, to the Judeo-Christian alliance. Baruch C. Levine wrote to Wright that the protest, not to mention reports in the U.S. press that were critical of Israel’s actions in the war, “showed very little appreciation for the pathos and the struggle intrinsic to Israel’s destiny,” a destiny that, while he felt it was limited to Jews, was “interwoven” with Christians’ because of the two groups’ “common Scriptures.” Levine suggested that the signers of the protest “face a crisis as Christians” if they could not come to terms with a correct understanding of modern Israel’s place in God’s plan for humanity.

It is perhaps not surprising that ASOR members who were pro-Arab sympathized with and justified the four protesters’ action as either not political after all, or as only as political as

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41 G. Ernest Wright to Father William van Etten Casey, 29 May 1968, box 1 folder 34 “Protest of 1968 1/2” Coll. 018 G. Ernest Wright Papers, ASOR.
43 The parade went ahead as planned on May 2, 1968. Amos Elon sets the stage for his 1971 history of Zionism at this very parade. According to Elon, 25 percent of all Israelis attended the parade (7), where “[t]here was dancing in the streets and old-timers wandered starry-eyed through the teeming squares” (1). Elon does not mention reports in the U.S. press that were critical of Israel’s actions in the war, “the controversial parade of 1968 did indeed become the last display of its kind in Israel,” he writes. “The critics had not been totally unsuccessful and subsequent Independence days were staged as civilian events” (9). Amos Elon, The Israelis: Founders and Sons. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971.
45 Ibid.
pro-Israel actions that occurred in ASOR all the time, while those who were pro-Israel found it, to again quote Wright’s first letter to Casey, an “outrageous departure from reason, common sense and good judgment.”\textsuperscript{46} ASOR member Anson F. Rainey echoed the sentiment that the Palestinian sympathizers were radicals, whereas pro-Israel archaeologists were just good people. He wrote to complain to Wright that “ASOR has been a center for vicious anti-Israel and anti-Semitic propaganda for as long as I have been in contact with it here in Jerusalem,” a state of affairs that he contrasted with “the broad humanistic outlook of its guiding spirit, Prof. W. F. Albright.”\textsuperscript{47}

George Mendenhall came to the protesters’ defense by arguing to Wright that the policy to treat the host country well did not apply in this case because Israel was not the host country but rather the occupying force. “Was Germany the ‘host’ country in Norway, 1944?” he asked hotly. “Or Japan in the Philippines in 1945? Such language is violently partisan politically, and you ought to avoid it.” In case Wright missed his point, Mendenhall continued, “there is no social unit more committed to the double standard today than the Israelis and their sympathizers, including you.”\textsuperscript{48} Admiringly citing Burrows’ decision to step down from ASOR leadership to publish \textit{Palestine Is Our Business}, Mendenhall cited further evidence of Wright’s double standard, that he had “appointed Freedman Director \textit{after} he spoke out in favor of the Israeli \textit{Anschluss}” in \textit{The New York Times}.\textsuperscript{49}

Glueck wrote Wright to complain that Casey’s eight-page-long defense of himself made him feel dirty. His incensed response to Casey’s letter shows how much the two sides were talking past each other. Where Casey had stated that being accused of hating Israel was as uncomfortable as it would be for Wright to suddenly learn that he was thought of as a “racist,”\textsuperscript{50} Glueck thought Casey was actually calling Wright a racist and concluded that Casey was “either a very wicked or a very sick man.”\textsuperscript{51} Wright replied to Glueck that Casey’s self-defense letter

\textsuperscript{46} G. Ernest Wright to Father William van Etten Casey, 6 May 1968, box 6 folder 9 “American Schools of Oriental Research, (2 of 2), 1938–1974,” HDS.
\textsuperscript{47} Anson F. Rainey to G. Ernest Wright, 8 May 1968, box 1 folder 35 “Protest of 1968 2/2,” Coll. 018 G. Ernest Wright Papers, ASOR.
\textsuperscript{48} George Mendenhall to G. Ernest Wright, 10 June 1968, box 1 folder 34 “Protest of 1968 1/2” Coll. 018 G. Ernest Wright Papers, ASOR.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} Father William van Etten Casey to G. Ernest Wright, 20 May 1968, box 1 folder 35 “Protest of 1968 2/2” Coll. 018 G. Ernest Wright Papers, ASOR.
\textsuperscript{51} Nelson Glueck to G. Ernest Wright, 29 May 1968, box 1 folder 34 “Protest of 1968 1/2,” Coll. 018 G. Ernest Wright Papers, ASOR.
made him feel dirty, too. Indeed, the responses Wright received from supporters of the Palestinians unnerved him. They even seemed to be based on arguments he could not quite hear. Conversely, the Christians and Israelis who were writing to him on the other side of the issue, in his view, “simply” struck a tone that was “one of disappointment that scholarly friendships are disrupted in this way on the part of people who should be engaged in other activities.”

Wright’s initial May 6 response did not resonate with the ASOR trustees as much as he might have anticipated. In a statement, they mildly reprimanded both sides in the dispute, and rejected, with “all the sincerity and vigor of which we are capable,” the notion that the four protesters could have a “hate-Israel attitude” since all four “possess too great a respect for people as persons to have sponsored any such attitude.” The trustees stated their belief that the four professors signed as individuals, not as ASOR representatives, and that they confined their protest to “one specific issue on which many Americans and Israelis were agreed.” Additionally, they disapproved of the tone and part of the content of Wright’s May 6 letter.

Wright then sent Casey a conciliatory letter in which he apologized but patronized Casey’s attitudes as naïve. “This is your first experience in Israel, and you have been shocked by what you have seen,” he wrote Casey. “Those of us who have known Israel intimately from the inside for some time have not been so shocked because, as I tried to suggest in my cable, there is little new in policy here. What has happened was completely predictable from past precedents. Anyway, war is always hell.” This does not take into account that Casey, who saw himself as a principled anti-war priest, might not think that Israeli actions toward Palestinians during the Six-Day War were better or more understandable simply because they resembled long-standing Israeli policy toward Palestinians. Just two years later, Casey created a stir by devoting an entire issue of *Holy Cross Quarterly* to Daniel and Philip Berrigan, priests who protested the Vietnam War; this event, not his controversial year in Jerusalem, became the second paragraph of his 1990 obituary.

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52 G. Ernest Wright to Nelson Glueck, 7 June 1968, box 1 folder 34 “Protest of 1968 1/2,” Coll. 018 G. Ernest Wright Papers, ASOR.
53 George G. Cameron, Alfred H. Howell, Thomas W. Phelps, Oliver C. Reynolds, and John W. Warrington, memo of a special committee meeting of ASOR trustees, box 1 folder 34 “Protest of 1968 1/2,” Coll. 018 G. Ernest Wright Papers, ASOR.
54 G. Ernest Wright to Father William van Etten Casey, 29 May 1968, box 1 folder 34 “Protest of 1968 1/2,” Coll. 018 G. Ernest Wright Papers, ASOR.
Wright further patronized Casey by suggesting that Casey must have been coerced. “I have known you for a short time comparatively, and yet in that time feel that I have come to know you well,” he wrote. “[C]onsequently, I know that you could not possibly have been a part of that protest unless you were under unbearable social and moral pressures” from the likes of Lapp, from whom Wright had come to expect such behavior. Since Casey had arrived at ASOR “very pro-Israeli in viewpoint”—potentially one of the reasons Wright appointed him, besides his flair for newsletters—Wright concluded that the flip-flop had nothing to do with reality and everything to do with Casey’s “volatile personality” and “the fine, calculating hand of Paul Lapp.”

In 1969 The Jerusalem Post ran a story about ASOR that threatened to cause trouble not with Israelis but with Arabs. Titled “Tea and Sympathies,” it began with a description of the daily teatime in the ASOR garden, then turned to sympathies—contending that ASOR had been free to be apolitical before 1948, then was given a reprieve by being in Jordan, but that after 1967 had found it impossible to avoid political entanglements. It was not Israel’s takeover that caused ASOR’s political dilemma, the author contended; ASOR could have continued as a genteel throwback to nineteenth-century garden parties if “Arab archaeologists and antiquities officials” had not “ruled that any archaeologist or institution which dug in Israel or the occupied territories would be barred from working in any Arab country.” Edward Campbell and Paul Lapp chose to suspend their West Bank digs to avoid the ban, while Joseph Calloway of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary continued his. The school “had been labouring under a cloud,” journalist Abraham Rabinovitch continued, since the 1968 protest letter in The Jerusalem Post, and he discerned an attempt to appease Israel in the ASOR board’s decision to replace Casey with Freedman, who, the author explained, was born Jewish and converted to Christianity as a teenager, then became a Presbyterian minister and earned a doctorate with Albright. (For his part, Freedman fretted in a letter to Wright after the article appeared that “Israelis have called me to say that they liked it, which immediately made me wonder and worry.”)

57 G. Ernest Wright to Aaron Shaffer, 22 May 1968, box 1 folder 35, “Protest of 1968 2/2,” Coll. 018 G. Ernest Wright Papers, ASOR.
“Dr. Freedman took over his new post in June and wasted little time in showing that a new wind was blowing,”

60 soliciting Israeli subscribers to ASOR publications for the first time and planning four digs in the coming season, three in the West Bank and one in Israel proper.

“My object is to make this an Institution of the country,” Rabinovitch quoted Freedman as saying. 61 Freedman, as the journalist noted, had signed the New York Times ad in 1967 praising the reunification of Jerusalem. Rabinovitch seemed far more aware than Wright that changing from Casey to Freedman was not changing political activism for apoliticism, but rather one type of politics for another.

III. Albert Glock and the Politics of Cultural Survival

Another archaeologist who witnessed the effects of the 1967 war was Albert Glock, who eventually devoted his life to the cause of Palestinian archaeology. Glock, also a Missouri Synod Lutheran, studied for a Ph.D. under George Mendenhall at the University of Michigan while serving as a minister in Normal, Illinois. Edward Fox, who has studied Glock’s private papers, traces his “first public act of opposition” to 1960, 62 when he wrote an article in defense of scholars who broke off from Concordia Theological Seminary and formed a seminary in exile (which eventually joined the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America [ELCA]). After Glock read the article aloud at a department meeting at Concordia Teachers College, where he taught, his colleagues locked it in a safe so it could not be circulated. From then on, Fox observes, “[t]aking the minority view was an instinct that he was to follow at every crossroads in his life.” 63

Glock first traveled to the Middle East in 1962 to participate in the ASOR excavation at Tell Ti’innik, considered the site of biblical Taanach, that was directed by Lapp. This dig was the first sponsored by the Missouri Synod, which was explicit about its willingness to fund research that illuminated the Bible but not research that might contradict it. 64 When Lapp died in 1970, Glock took over this excavation, which Lapp had put on hold because of the occupation. He dug, not to return to business as usual or approve of the occupation, but rather to oppose it.

61 David Noel Freedman, quoted in Rabinovitch, “Tea and Sympathies.”
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid., 60.
Tell Ti’innik became symbolic of Glock’s differences from the biblical archaeology establishment. He did not want to excavate biblical Taanach, he wanted to excavate centuries of cultural change and continuity at Tell Ti’innik. He theorized that archaeology should benefit the natives in an area. This was best done, he believed, not in a search for glorious archaeology, but rather by attention to daily life. Glock wanted Palestinian archaeology to focus on questions that were difficult for non-archaeologists to find interesting. He disliked the focus by both Western and Arab scholars of Islam on Islamic art history because, while “it is a heritage that elicits pride,” he thought studying the daily life of Palestinians would be more illuminating. Because “the villages in Palestine are ignored,” he claimed, “the real character of Palestine has yet to be studied.” While this could be used for nationalistic purposes, it was not intended to glorify Arabness but rather to establish the rights of the people from these small villages to stay on their land by showing they were the inheritors of a long historical process.

Taanach had been considered a Canaanite stronghold; Glock criticized the tendency of post-1967 archaeologists to comb the West Bank for sites and then label the high ones Israelite and the low ones Canaanite based on biblical descriptions of settlements because, he argued, the ancient remains were not ethnically identifiable. Glock detested ethnic labeling, which he thought was caused by biblical categories of “Israelite” and “Canaanite” being applied to archaeological remains despite anthropological theories that warned against such labeling. He did, however, see progress occurring in this area:

A few years ago it was common to hear that the four-room house, the collar-rim storejar, plastered cisterns, and field terraces were markers of Israelite villages of the twelfth to eleventh centuries B.C. Today we know that most of these markers were older or found in areas not presumed to have been occupied by Israelites: the force of new evidence has gradually brought about a revision of entrenched interpretations.

Because Palestinians feared archaeology, Glock often had difficulty connecting with them. However, he knew that this was because, for them, archaeology “and conquest were indistinguishable: they were part of the process by which the land they live on had been taken

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66 Ibid.
67 Fox, *Sacred Geography*, 50.
In 1976 Glock put his belief that archaeology could be both by and for native populations into practice when he started teaching once a week at Bir Zeit University in the West Bank. In 1978 he was elected director of ASOR in Jerusalem, by then known as the W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research, but disliked the job because of what he increasingly saw as its old-fashioned and politically irresponsible focus on the Bible. In 1980, he was voted out of the directorship, which allowed him to turn his attention entirely to the West Bank. As Fox puts it, “He had discovered that what he had thought of in his younger days as the land of the Bible was in reality the land of the Arab-Israeli conflict.” That understanding precluded a retreat into claims of scholarly objectivity and the belief that the past and present could be divorced. Glock spent the rest of his life trying to repair the damage he believed biblical archaeology had wrought on the native population of Palestine.

Glock published little overall during his lifetime. In fact, two of his three most important articles were published posthumously by the Journal of Palestine Studies. Glock found it perfectly obvious that biblical archaeology, with its search for the Israelites and the identification of modern Jews as the inheritors of the Israelites, had alienated Palestinians from the archaeology of the land they lived on. His article “Archaeology as Cultural Survival” laid out the need for a new kind of archaeology in Palestine. “If we are to preserve an understanding of Palestine’s cultural history,” he wrote, “we cannot allow the Arab people of Palestine to continue as the losers in the archaeologist’s cultural conquest.” It was no accident that Glock used the word “conquest” for what archaeologists had done, the same word applied to the Israelites’ conquest of Canaan and the Israelis’ conquest of Palestine. “It is clear that the story communicated by the winners is heavily biased, filtering out the unwelcome ‘noise’ of the vanquished.” The archaeology of the common people of either the present or the past had been ignored, he argued, because “the ‘archaeological record’ has been selectively used to document and sometimes defend the version of the past required by Christian and Jewish Zionists to justify the present occupation of Palestine.” Because for Israelis “the thirteen centuries of Arab

69 Fox, Sacred Geography, 54.
70 Ibid., 73–74.
71 Glock, “Cultural Bias in the Archaeology of Palestine,” 51.
72 Ibid., 50.
73 Glock, “Archaeology as Cultural Survival,” 71.
presence and cultural impress are peripheral,” Palestinians had experienced an “alienation … from their own cultural past.”

In a 1985 article, Glock compared tradition and change in two archaeologies, namely the archaeology of the Americas and biblical archaeology, and argued that biblical archaeology came up painfully short in the area of theory and method. Traditionally, he observed, biblical archaeology had required the mastery of several ancient languages, while archaeology of the Americas required very little language work. This was one of the reasons, he wrote, that “with rare exceptions American archaeologists in Palestine have majored in Bible and minored in Archaeology,” with very little attention to theory and method. Biblical archaeologists also tended to have very little training in anthropology. This was not just in relation to archaeology of the Americas, but also in relation to archaeology of the rest of the Middle East. The lack of attention to theory manifested itself, in Glock’s view, in the lack of discussion of why sites were chosen. He thought it was obvious they were chosen for their biblical connections, but unlike archaeologists elsewhere, biblical archaeologists rarely explicitly discussed why they had chosen a site. It was Glock’s belief that Yadin had chosen to dig at biblical Hazor to look for evidence of the Israelites’ conquest of Canaan, and furthermore that Yadin was particularly interested in this topic because of his military role in the Israelis’ conquest of Palestine. “The reasons for excavation are not surprising nor in themselves subject to criticism,” he added. “One is, however, amazed at the almost complete absence of any detailed rationale for the excavation.”

Glock believed all scholarship was political. He argued that while it was good that archaeologists were coming to recognize their biases better, the point was not to attempt the impossible task of eradicating one’s bias but to make sure that one’s bias was a responsible, self-reflective one. “Bias is an inescapable academic reality,” he argued, “but it can be made useful by harnessing it to serve the needs of the people whose past is being investigated and whose cultural self-understanding is at stake.” In his case, he wanted to overcome the colonial baggage of archaeology by training Palestinian archaeologists.

In 1982 Glock led a group of Palestinian students on an excavation of abandoned refugee camps near Jericho in the West Bank. They studied the modern garbage that had been thrown

74 Ibid., 71.
76 Ibid., 465.
77 Glock, “Cultural Bias in the Archaeology of Palestine,” 45.
78 Ibid., 49.
away in the recently abandoned site and studied the configuration of the buildings to try to determine which villages the refugees had come from by comparing them to the formation of abandoned villages inside Israel. In 1987 he excavated the Ottoman remains at Tell Ti’innik even though most biblical archaeologists ignored Ottoman remains and Israelis were notorious for bulldothing them to get at layers they believed were related to the Israelites. Excavating Ottoman remains was part of Glock’s stated goal to “make certain that no period or part of a country’s cultural landscape is scanted because it is of no value to the status quo.”

After the First Intifada started in 1987, the Israeli authorities closed Birzeit University for five years because of the institution’s reputation for fostering Palestinian opposition movements. Birzeit faculty tried to continue teaching when they could meet with students in private, but, according to Fox, none was more successful than Glock. Also during that time, he worked on All That Remains, a definitive study of abandoned and destroyed Arab villages inside Israel that was edited by Palestinian intellectual Walid Khalidi and published in 1992.

Glock, who had been living in the West Bank for years on a tourist visa that had to be renewed every three months, refused to leave during the intifada. In 1992, while visiting the family home of one of his archaeology students, he was shot to death by a masked gunman who was never apprehended. Fox wades expertly through the morass of accusations that piled up after the murder. For many Israelis, he was obviously killed by Palestinians, either by extreme nationalists or extreme Islamists who did not want foreigners in the West Bank. For many Palestinians, he was obviously killed by Israelis who feared that what he was digging out of the ground would explode the Israeliite mythology and show the land belonged to the Palestinians. This only scratches the surface of the theories Fox explores, though with the conclusion that there is so little evidence in the case that the gap between the evidence and any theory is as wide as the gap between archaeological evidence and the biblically oriented theories Glock fought against. Nothing Glock could have found would have proved who owned the land; thinking so was missing his point. “There are no archeological facts,” Glock insisted, “only hypotheses and relative explanations.”

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79 Ibid., 57.
80 Fox, Sacred Geography, 114.
81 Quoted in Ibid., 19.
Avraham Biran and William Dever, both with strong ties to the Baltimore school, have defended, both implicitly and explicitly, the ability of scholarship to be free of politics. Biran, who in 1994 published a popular account of his long-term excavations at Dan, presents facts in such a way that they appear not to have been interpreted. The book throughout takes the position of presenting innocent knowledge along with taking the Hebrew Bible at face value. Consequently, questions of what such evidence means, how it should best be interpreted, or what is at stake in a given interpretation, are not asked.

Biran’s discussion of Dan does not address any possible political entanglements. On the other hand, a trio of recent works by Dever expresses outrage that anyone, especially archaeologists, has suggested that there are political ramifications to biblical archaeology, and maintains that if done properly archaeology can be free of such ramifications. Dever is close to many in the Israeli archaeological establishment. In a recent book he thanks his “many Israeli colleagues, with whom I have worked for years ‘viewing the land’ (Josh. 2:11), trying to learn the facts on the ground.” This turn of phrase merits some attention considering that this book was published after Nadia Abu El-Haj’s book, which she titled Facts on the Ground to call attention to the frequent use of this term in Israeli archaeological jargon. The phrase suggests that these “facts” need no interpretation and that their meaning is clear to all: the ancient Israelites were here, God gave the land to them and their descendants, and they were the progenitors of the Jewish people. Dever does not question that relationship, though he does question similar efforts to demonstrate the cultural continuity of the Palestinians.

I. From Palestine to Baltimore to Israel: The Career of Avraham Biran

One demonstration of the close ties between Albright and the first generation of Israeli archaeologists is the career of Biran, Albright’s second Ph.D. graduate, who became a leading figure of Israeli archaeology. Born Abraham Bergman in 1909 in Palestine, his Romanian great-grandfather had emigrated there long before Theodor Herzl’s success in fostering a Western European Zionist movement. After traveling to the United States to study at the University of

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1 Dever, Who Were the Early Israelites?, ix.
Pennsylvania, Bergman enrolled at Johns Hopkins and earned his Ph.D. in 1935. He at one point engaged in a war of words over Zionism with Taufik Canaan, whose Palestinian folkloric studies, as shown in Chapter One, implicitly argued that the only really important cultural difference was between the Palestinian peasants, whether Christian, Muslim, or Jewish, and the Europeans, including the Zionist settlers. Biran, on the other hand, had become involved at a young age with the trend of walking around the countryside looking for signs of ancient Jewish presence, not questioning the implicit logical leap that such evidence would give Jews rights to the area. When Albright died, Biran approvingly remembered his adviser with a sentence that encapsulated the relationship the two of them saw between Israelites and Israelis: “A seeker of the truth of ancient Israel, he was a faithful friend of modern Israel.”

In 1966, Biran began a long-term excavation project at Tel Dan in Israel, and in 1994 published a popular account of the history of the settlement that blended archaeological and biblical evidence in a manner emblematic of the Baltimore school. The dig began against the background of contemporary events, when Biran chose the site in order to explore it before it was potentially damaged in war. The inhabitants of Kibbutz Dan also wished to know whether the kibbutz was named after the actual biblical Dan, an identification made by Edward Robinson in 1838. Starting in 1974, when Biran was named director of the Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology, the dig became a joint expedition between that organization, the Israeli Department of Antiquities and Museums, and the Harvard Semitic Museum.

Two underlying views particularly characterize Biran’s narrative: First, that archaeology is an objective science. In response to the question, “Why excavate?” Biran answered that archaeologists excavate because of “insatiable intellectual curiosity and the search for knowledge,” suggesting that such knowledge is innocent and value-free. Second, that the Bible can be read completely straightforwardly as an accurate depiction of past events is taken for granted. Biran does not include a single caveat in the book gesturing to the history of biblical criticism and the questions it raises about when the texts were written in comparison to the times they described, or about whether they were written by authors with reasons for framing the

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4 Ibid., 10.
narratives in certain ways. Perhaps this is because, as he indicated in his remembrance of Albright in *The Jerusalem Post*, he believed Albright had put the matter to rest.\(^5\)

His reliance on the accuracy of the Bible—not to mention his interest in monumental archaeology over social and anthropological questions—is demonstrated in his discussion of the golden calf. According to the Bible, Jeroboam I set up a golden calf in Dan. Thus, Biran reports, when the excavators found “the remains of the sanctuary precinct,” this was “probably the place where Jeroboam I set up the Golden Calf.”\(^6\) They did not find it, which for Biran made sense because no one could expect a golden calf to go unpilfered. “Its precious gold,” he wrote, “was no doubt carried off by any one of the foreign kings who conquered Dan.”\(^7\) Biran’s reliance on even the smallest details of the biblical narrative is demonstrated in his discussion of the scepter found at Dan. Biran warns readers against associating it with the only scepter mentioned in the Bible, that extended toward Esther, because the Esther story is dated later and because “that scepter was of gold.”\(^8\)

The excavators determined that the site was biblical Dan based on an inscription that mentioned Dan. Making this identification, however, is far different from presupposing that everything described in the Bible happened as recorded. The most talked-about find at this site was the Tel Dan inscription, which, by mentioning “the House of David,” became the first extrabiblical evidence for David. Biran does not expound here on that discovery, which came right as the book was being prepared for publication and therefore is mentioned only briefly in the introduction and conclusion. Biran’s discussion of the inscription is more judicious than his discussion of Jeroboam; he does not suggest here that the inscription proves the veracity of all details of David’s life (though it comes as no surprise that that was one way news of the inscription was received).

The book covers the prehistory of Dan in some detail. The second millennium B.C.E., Biran wrote, began “with no hint as to the momentous events that would shape the history of the city in the following centuries.”\(^9\) This suggests, though Biran did not explicitly say so, that his main interest is in the history of the Jewish people; it would be hard to imagine anyone outside Judaism and Christianity being particularly interested in a city that briefly became a rival

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5 Biran, “Albright—last of the giants.”
7 Ibid., 168.
8 Ibid., 198.
9 Ibid., 47.
northern cultic site in Israelite times for its own sake and not for what the archaeology could show about larger issues. Biran then embarks on a lengthy exploration of many facets of Dan during the Israelite period, liberally sprinkled with biblical references. At the end, however, Biran dispenses with everything after the biblical period in half a page: During the Roman period, the inhabitants built water installations. Then the name Dan “from the Hebrew verb ‘to judge’ was kept alive in the Arabic name Tell el-Qadi meaning Mound of the Judge,” and even more straightforwardly in the names ‘Ein el-Dan and Nahr el-Dan for the nearby spring and river. Finally, in 1939, Jews who settled there named it Kibbutz Dan.\(^\text{10}\) This demonstrates the indifference often shown to the post-Judean period generally by the Baltimore school and many Israeli archaeologists, many of whom seem not even to have considered whether anything after that period could be of value for contributing to humankind’s “insatiable intellectual curiosity and the search for knowledge.”\(^\text{11}\) This quick dismissal of these time periods suggests that there is much more at stake in what is included and what excluded than an innocuous-sounding appeal to the search for knowledge would suggest.

## II. William Dever: Unity in Ethnicity, Diversity in Religion

In the 2000s, Dever published three books in which he became more Albrightean than his early days as an outspoken opponent of “biblical archaeology” would have suggested. The first, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?* (2001) is discussed in the introduction and includes extended attacks on the minimalists and postmodernism more generally. The other two each develop one of his main points from that book. *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* (2003) argues that, despite the efforts of the minimalists to show otherwise, the Israelites were a real ethnic group with real unity and real boundaries—with an emphasis on the word “real” as opposed to “socially constructed.” He appeals, as did Albright, to a common grounding in the Western tradition and to the validity of archaeological data as an external, objectively real source of knowledge to make his points. Conversely, *Did God Have a Wife?* (2005) makes what is in some ways quite an opposite argument, that Israelite religion was deeply diverse and that it is about time scholars realize that what they may conceive of as orthodox Yahwism was extremely rare.

\(^\text{10}\) Ibid., 273.
\(^\text{11}\) Ibid., 10.
Albright spent his later years producing philosophies of history that placed the Bible at the center of human history, although by that he tended to mean only Western history, for him the only one that mattered because it had so clearly, in his view, soared to heights far beyond what any other region of the globe had produced. This is echoed in Dever’s distaste for the interpretive turn in humanities scholarship and his argument that the Bible has had so much influence in Western culture that if it were devalued, Western culture might collapse. His disgust with the fact that biblical histories are now being written by people he terms “deconstructionist literary critics, political activists, New Left ideologues, radical feminists, Third World Liberation theologians, social constructivists, multiculturalists, New Age pop-psychologists, and the like”\textsuperscript{12} is palpable.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Dever claims his ability to be neutral. Creating a schema of five levels, from assuming the Bible to be true to assuming it cannot be true, he places himself in his middle category, “approach[ing] the text, as well as the external data, with \textit{no preconceptions}.”\textsuperscript{13} Rejecting efforts to rename ancient periods “Late Bronze” and “Iron I,” Dever declares that, “for the sake of convenience,” he refers to them as “Canaanite” and “Israelite.”\textsuperscript{14} His insistence on these ethnic labels indicates that he either has not completely digested the arguments against them or that he has an underlying political agenda for using them. His nonchalant use of the phrase “for the sake of convenience” suggests the former but, much like his constant use of terms like “common sense” to bludgeon his opponents with ridicule rather than argument, may indicate the latter. (For example, Dever dismisses Thompson’s argument that “ethnicity” was not important to people in the ancient world with the sentence, “Such statements are too absurd to require further comment.”\textsuperscript{15}) It certainly indicates Dever’s refusal to acknowledge that his work, too, may be playing a political role.

There is no doubt Dever covers his bases by acknowledging that scholars cannot be entirely objective. Yet he makes it difficult to believe he means it. He criticizes scholars who apply the insight that objectivity is not possible to archaeology: “For more than a generation now,” he complains, “nearly every history of ancient Israel … has mindlessly repeated the assertion that archaeological data can only be ‘subjectively’ interpreted, or worse still that in the

\textsuperscript{12} William Dever, \textit{Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?} (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 3.
\textsuperscript{13} emphasis in original, Ibid., ix.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., xi.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 19.
end archaeology is ‘mute.’”\textsuperscript{16} If archaeological data can be interpreted some other way than subjectively, that must be objectively.

In this regard he appeals to Albright. As “Albright pointed out long ago, at the beginning of the ‘archaeological revolution,’” he argues, “our finds constitute \textit{realia}. They constitute tangible remains, facts on the ground that often produce an interpretive consensus.”\textsuperscript{17} This is an interesting contention given that nearly all conclusions Albright came to have been replaced by later interpretive consensuses, which have had as much or more to do with changes in archaeological theory as they have had to do with new “facts.”

In \textit{Who Were the Early Israelites?} Dever begins with an introduction arguing for the importance of the Bible to the Western tradition and assuring readers the historical events described therein really matter. Here he demonstrates a propensity toward seeing people groups as internally homogeneous. For one, he refers to the ancient Israelites as “Israel,” a telling way of homogenizing this group by reducing it to a singular entity.\textsuperscript{18} He acknowledges that archaeology suggests the exodus and conquest did not occur as described in the Bible, so he articulates these stories’ importance to Israelite history by arguing that these events were “as fundamental to later Israelite history, to the biblical vision of the people’s selfhood, as the American Revolution is to the uniquely American experience and sense of destiny.”\textsuperscript{19} Dever thus claims that people groups, whether Israelite or American, are unique and have destinies, a claim that would suggest a strong sympathy with strictly bounded nationalisms. He insists that there really was an Israelite ethnicity that was understood by the Israelites as such. And yet the historiography and evidence Dever outlines seem to indicate the opposite: that the people living in ancient Palestine at the time period he is addressing were culturally heterogeneous and that the Israelites emerged from the many groups that fall under the category “Canaanite.” For example, Dever agrees that the early Israelites were “largely \textit{indigenous},” something “which previous academics tended to resist but which virtually all scholars now accept.”\textsuperscript{20} In other words, the Israelite ethnicity probably emerged from Canaan.

\textsuperscript{16} William Dever, \textit{Did God Have a Wife?: Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel} (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005), 62.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 76.
\textsuperscript{18} Dever, \textit{Who Were the Early Israelites?}, x.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 74.
One of Dever’s reasons for believing in a strictly bounded Israelite ethnicity is that the biblical writers—who he freely admits were writing centuries after the fact—believed in it. In another case of insisting the biblical writers should be taken more seriously, he criticizes scholars for going against their wishes by attempting to explain miracles. “They are miracles, supernatural events,” Dever insists. “To say otherwise would be to negate Yahweh’s power over nature [and] … is profoundly against the spirit and intent of the biblical writers.”

This makes it even more jarring that his next book is about how Israelite religion was extremely diverse, even though, in his view, the biblical writers did not want readers to realize that.

Dever believes the Israelites emerged from the Canaanites and were a biological amalgamation: “The unique culture that emerges in the 12–11th century B.C. is not homogeneous and reflects an ethnic mix.” Even by the end of his book, he is only talking about “proto-Israelites” who share almost everything culturally with Canaanites. Yet, when he defines ethnicity, he defines it first and foremost as a group that is biologically self-perpetuating. It is almost as though his belief in “unique” people groups is so strong that the fact that he is arguing that his proto-Israelites were ethnically and culturally heterogeneous cannot get in its way.

Above all, his disgust with the minimalists’ political discussions makes it difficult for him to admit how close they come to each other in this debate.

Describing the way Israeli archaeologists searched in vain in the Sinai Peninsula when Israel briefly controlled it for evidence of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, Dever remarks that had such a place been found it “would have amounted to a national shrine.” There may be an implicit critique here; it is certainly an explicit admission that many Israeli archaeologists search for evidence of Jewish origins and use it for nationalistic purposes. Yet in another passage, the one quoted below, Dever suggests that Israel is the rebirth of an ancient state. He even seems to suggest that the U.N. should really have awarded the West Bank to the Jews because the ancient Israelites mostly lived there:

In an ironic twist of history, the establishment of the State of Israel in the UN-sponsored partition of Palestine in 1948 left the new nation without its ancient heartland, the West Bank, which was designated part of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, with an Arab population.

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21 Ibid., 16.
22 Ibid., 154.
23 Ibid., 19.
24 Ibid., 77.
For Dever, the Jews as descendants of the Israelites makes sense, but, taking a common Zionist cue, he casts doubt on Palestinian claims by arguing they have not lived there long enough. Regarding Whitelam, Dever writes, “even those sympathetic with his anti-Israel rhetoric have pointed out that the Palestinians of the present conflict were not present in ancient Palestine.” “They did not emerge as a ‘people’ at all until relatively modern times. Not only is this bad historical method, it is dishonest scholarship.”25 While allowing some room for criticism of Whitelam’s polemical excesses, there is a fundamental misunderstanding here. Dever believes in the uniqueness of people groups; Whitelam does not. For Whitelam, “Palestinian” describes those who lived in Palestine over the centuries. But for Dever, the fact that there was not a “Palestinian people” until recently settles the argument (and echoes the rhetoric of the Zionist slogan “a land without a people for a people without a land,” which, since all Zionist leaders were perfectly aware that there was an indigenous population, should be understood as saying that the natives did not form “a people,” and therefore did not deserve their own nation-state).

Interestingly, as we saw in the chapter on Albright, it was this very Zionist claim that bothered Albright so much that he ended his pro-Zionist lectures, for he saw it as dishonest to claim the Arabs were recent inhabitants. And as Rashid Khalidi argues in Palestinian Identity (1997), modern Palestinian identity is without a doubt the response to political changes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. That has little to do with how long the ancestors of the people who think of themselves as Palestinians have been there. As much as Dever hates the term “social construct,” Palestinian identity today is demonstrably a social construct, as is Israeli identity, and as was Israelite identity by the biblical writers. If the concept of identity as a social construct is not acknowledged, it falsely appears that the Palestinians only began to exist recently just because modern Palestinian nationalism only began to exist recently. As mentioned in the introduction, Shlomo Sand has shown the way Zionists shifted from believing the Palestinians were as likely as themselves to be descended from the ancient Israelites to inventing the canard that most of the Arab population moved to the area in the nineteenth century. These were two different ways of socially constructing this native population that had everything to do with political climates.

*Did God Have a Wife?* investigates the evidence for widespread religious diversity among Israelites. Dever argues that what Christians and Jews might think of as orthodox

25 Emphasis in original, Ibid., 139.
Yahwism barely existed. In so doing he expresses interest in “ordinary people in ancient Israel” and “ordinary people today” rather than “the extraordinary few who wrote and edited the Hebrew Bible” or the “scholars, theologians, and clerics who study religion dispassionately and claim authority.”

Dever argues “that the interpretation of archaeological artifacts is more ‘objective,’ and therefore often more trustworthy, than the interpretation of biblical and other texts.” His use of scare quotes around “objective” suggests that he finds the arguments against the word ridiculous and only pays lip service to them. He goes on to list what can be known objectively about a pot, mainly that it can be dated to a certain period and its function can be ascertained. However, this is a far leap from the pot illuminating the culture of those who used it. The assurance he promises based on what we can know about a pot is then transferred onto his understanding of folk religion in ancient Israel, which he argues was based on family shrines that were tended by women and which was marginalized by the elite scholars who in writing the Bible attempted to write these practices out of existence. This is not an unreasonable argument by any means. What is unreasonable about Dever’s approach is his insistence that he has transcended mere interpretation. For example, he uses language like “it requires no great feat of imagination to see what is going on here,” as though any thinking person would come to the same conclusion. At another point, he discusses sheep and goat knucklebones found in bowls. What were they used for? Dever says the “answer is clearly for ‘magic.’” Use of the word “clearly” indicates no room for other possible interpretations.

Dever claims that his conclusions are based on archaeological data, which provide an “empirical, factual basis for understanding the practices (if not the beliefs) of Israelite folk religion.” He writes with pride of his “insistence that our constructs must be founded on facts wherever possible, not on ideological fancies.” An intermediary between facts and ideological fancies might be theory. Indeed, Dever does occasionally reason from parallel situations around the world, which would seem to not constitute the facts in the case at hand. But ultimately he believes he is not interpreting the data so much as providing the only possible correct meaning of

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26 Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?*, ix.
27 Ibid., 85.
28 Ibid., 118.
29 Ibid., 125.
30 Ibid., 9.
31 Ibid.
it. His dismissal of theory can be seen in his dispute with Mark Smith, who had the temerity to point out that Dever’s constant appeal to “common sense”\textsuperscript{32} does not pass muster as an argument. Dever’s response was, “Perhaps Smith, ordinarily a fine scholar, needs more of the ‘common sense’ for which he castigates me.”\textsuperscript{33} Of course, Smith was not castigating him for having common sense; he was castigating him for his undertheorized use of the phrase “common sense.”

Dever comes to similar conclusions about women’s folk religion as Carol Meyers. He writes that he disagrees with her “on only one major point throughout her work, namely her contention that ‘the artifacts of Israelites sites are silent about who used them.’”\textsuperscript{34} If the artifacts were silent and did not have inherent meaning, “this book could never have been written.”\textsuperscript{35} This is another indication of how iron-clad Dever believes his interpretation is. Meyers is pointing out that scholars interpreting evidence of an ancient cult among Israelite women are making their best guess drawing on a range of data, texts, and theories. Despite claims to the contrary, Dever is doing the same. Dever decides here that archaeology is not mute because he is so convinced of his own interpretation that he believes it silences all other interpretations, and therefore has attained the level of truth, not scholarly contingency.

As perhaps should be obvious from Dever’s dislike of relativists and insistence on the reality of Israelite ethnicity, he despairs about the way debates in archaeology are intertwined with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He manages to admit that some Israelis may have abused archaeology a little in the past, though he seems much more frustrated by Palestinians doing it. He identifies the most strident claim on either side as being “Your people didn’t really exist here at all; your religious myths have invented them!”\textsuperscript{36}—the argument against Jewish claims advanced by Whitelam. Dever also criticizes Hamdan Taha, director of the Palestinian Authority’s Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, for being “inclined to defend his colleagues’

\textsuperscript{32} Smith writes: “For example, W. G. Dever has long been known for his important archaeological research and sustained interest in the social sciences. However, in his theoretical stance toward the historically pertinent material embodied in the Bible and archaeological record, Dever shrinks back to an entrenched position of what he himself characterizes as ‘common sense.’ Why is this? I would only offer my suspicion that Dever’s difficulties stem from a pragmatism (he characterizes his model as one of ‘neopragmatism’), which evidently eschews philosophy.” Mark S. Smith, \textit{The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel}. 2nd ed. The Biblical Resource Series. [1990] (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), xix.

\textsuperscript{33} Dever, \textit{Did God Have a Wife?}, 205.

\textsuperscript{34} Quoted in Ibid., 239.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 239.

\textsuperscript{36} Dever, \textit{Who Were the Early Israelites?}, 237.
tactics as fair turnabout.”37 What he finds even less defensible is “Israeli archaeological revisionists who fuel the fire”—that is, Israeli archaeologists who cast doubt on our knowledge of the ancient past at least partly in order to redress the wrong they believe has been done to the Palestinians. For example, Ze’ev Herzog “went public for the first time with the indigenous origins theory of the emergence of Israel that he and his colleagues had been espousing quietly for a decade.”38 Dever believes the exact same thing, but he thinks Herzog, who calls himself “post-Zionist,” should not have “gone public” with a tale that Herzog had specifically crafted to create a narrative inclusive of Palestinians.

Many Israeli archaeologists, much more moderate, rejected the post-Zionist argument as aligned with the minimalist or revisionist schools of biblical scholarship at Copenhagen and Sheffield, which I have characterized above as essentially nihilist—those for whom there was no early Israel, and no need for one.39 Dever approves of scholars rejecting anything that may come uncomfortably close to these minimalist positions. Thus, in the end, he comes quite close to saying that most while archaeologists agree that Israelites emerged from Canaanites, it is better to suppress that theory around those who might use it to question the status quo. Using archaeology to probe the situation in which Israelis and Palestinians form rigidly distinct ethnic groups that can be retrojected hundreds of years into the past would, for Dever, be an inappropriately political use of archaeology.

III. Conclusion

In many ways, secular Israeli archaeologists today have acknowledged their discipline’s baldly political history. It is difficult not to, since the political stakes were often not that well hidden. As Nachman Ben-Yehuda points out, Yadin rarely missed a chance to expound on the political nature of the archaeological work he was doing for the Israeli people.40 Awareness of the political flexibility of archaeology is now being employed by two groups previously marginalized by the dominant secular Israeli archaeology: religious Jews and Palestinians. Michael Feige writes about the blossoming interest in archaeology among the religious settlers of

37 Ibid., 238.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid., 239.
the Gush Emunim, who train in archaeology in order to find evidence of Israelite settlement because they think it gives them the right to inhabit the West Bank.\textsuperscript{41} Ghada Ziadeh-Seely writes frankly of the attempts by Palestinians to create their own national archaeology because such a project carries such clout. Aware of the political implications of archaeology, Ziadeh-Seely suggests that the main question before Palestinian archaeologists is whether to pursue the overt agenda of making an exclusive claim to the land, or whether to pursue the overt agenda of showing that Palestine has always been a multi-ethnic land. A student of Albert Glock, she advocates for the latter.\textsuperscript{42}

Whitelam’s book often reads like a pro-Palestinian screed, and perhaps this is the reason it has often been dismissed. He also seems to truly believe that an alternative past history exists that will show the land belongs to the Palestinians. The present work takes the position that no matter what occurred in ancient Palestine, whether the Bible happened exactly as recorded, somewhat as recorded, or not at all, the uses of this ancient past should be denaturalized and removed from current debates, no easy proposition when the Albrightean worldview is so deeply entrenched in so much of the popular understanding of archaeology.

Despite his belief that the Jews were at the center of human history, Albright did not see, or claimed he did not see, how this position could have political ramifications regarding Israel. John Trever wrote him apologetically to let him know that he had struck one sentence from an introduction Albright wrote, in which he had claimed that “Contemporary events point to profound new manifestations of the power behind historical destiny.”\textsuperscript{43} Trever diplomatically explained that, “Although no normally intelligent person should take this as a pro-Zionist statement, many Muslims are bound to do so, by interpretation.”\textsuperscript{44} Though the sentence is ambiguous, Trever’s note suggests that some people—maybe even normally intelligent ones—might have a hard time figuring out what Albright might be referring to other than modern Israel.

Later in life Albright remarked that he had “settled down to determined neutrality” after his “first two or three years in Palestine”\textsuperscript{45}—a convenient forgetting of the 1940s. He frequently caricatured Palestinian grievances. The Arabs wanted to exterminate the Jews, Albright claimed,


\textsuperscript{43} Quoted in John Trever to William Foxwell Albright, 7 April 1954, APS.

\textsuperscript{44} John Trever to William Foxwell Albright, 7 April 1954, APS.

or at least the worst of them did. “Our incredibly stupid and ignorant ‘liberals’ don’t understand this any better than they understand the nature of mass human tensions in any other part of the world,” he sneered. Albright was himself as convinced of basic Jewish and Arab difference, incompatibility, and cosmic opposition as the most hardline conservatives on either side of the conflict.

Albright uncharitably conflated the most extreme Arab arguments with those of scholars, including his former Ph.D. student Ray Cleveland, who graduated in 1958. “Ray is one of the people who become so emotionally bound up with the Arabs that they cannot see any other side to the problem,” he complained to Wright. “Most of them would be willing to see all the Israelis slaughtered by the Arabs. Yet they are not willing to consider even the slightest inconvenience to the latter.” No doubt Cleveland would have been surprised and hurt to know that his adviser thought he supported the slaughter of Jews. What Albright missed about his pro-Palestinian colleagues was that they did not see the world in terms of homogeneous groups. Presumably they wanted Jews and Arabs to see things in a more complex manner as well.

In 1939 John Flight sent a letter to Wright describing an SBL meeting at which Elihu Grant was pretty emotionally wrought up, but said some coherent things. Among others was his old chestnut about the present-day Arabs being the descendants of the ancient Canaanites who ‘were in the land’ before the Hebrews ever showed up the first time! What do you think of that argument? Don’t you think it’s just about as sick as the Germans’ Aryan piffle?

Flight’s problem with Grant’s statement appears to be that Grant wanted to replace one essentialist, dangerously biological, nationalist story with another in order to make a land claim. And this is the impasse: What happened in the ancient past does not determine what the present-day political situation should be. Digging up endless Israelite villages—even if they could be identified as Israelite, which as we have seen is an open question—does not justify the state of Israel. If such finds appear to bolster the arguments for Israel, that is simply because they are not being thought through. However, making arguments for Palestinian heritage in the area and digging up Arab remains does not prove or bolster Palestinian nationalist claims either, and for

47 Ibid.
the same reasons. When Nelson Glueck, Millar Burrows, or Paul Lapp opposed a Jewish state, it was not because they favored an Arab state. They rejected ethnic nationalism in any form, and they used the theoretical basis for that opposition—that cultures are not essentially homogeneous, or mutually exclusive, or unchanging over the centuries—to try to combat modern ethnic nationalism. There is much honesty and self-reflexivity in the decision by archaeologists who believe nationalist archaeology is damaging to craft narratives that lead to different, more inclusive conclusions. However, making and explicitly defending such a conscious choice can and does lead to the criticism, from those cloaking themselves in the protection of scientific objectivity, that one is willfully politicizing the subject matter rather than acknowledging the inability of the subject matter not to be politicized. As we have seen, some American biblical archaeologists’ appeals to objective readings of historical documents yielding scientific certainty resonated with Israelis’ desire to recover a national past.

The realization that interpretation is inevitable leads to the realization that “facts” can be marshaled to tell various stories. One can use the facts to tell a story about Jewish ownership; one can tell a story in which the native peoples have a greater right to the land. A third possibility is one that takes into account cultural change and hybridity and breaks down the often unexamined assumption that past ownership by one people group is compelling evidence of any sort. This path, while also being most progressive in its integration of anthropological theory, holds out the hope of telling the story that will be the most just for those who today inhabit Israel/Palestine. Though still a minority position, it has been taken up by the archaeologists involved with the Israeli non-governmental organization Emek Shaveh, the subject of the epilogue.
EPILOGUE

At the City of David archaeological site in Jerusalem, visitors can go on a three-hour tour to learn about the site’s importance for Jewish history. Chief archaeologist Eilat Mazar—granddaughter of Benjamin Mazar—has discovered a large building built on the bedrock that she argues was King David’s fortress. The tour is prefaced by a fifteen-minute 3D video titled “The City of David—Where It All Began,” featuring an actor dressed in khaki with a Bible tucked under his arm. “Amos” intones that archaeologists have been digging up the area’s past with the help of the shovel and the help of the Bible. The film, which informs audiences that Jerusalem is the eternal Jewish capital, ends by showing several twentieth-century Jerusalem landmarks and proclaiming that the eternal Jewish capital is being expanded.

In less than a decade, the site has gone from one among many excavations to a tourist destination hosting more than half a million tourists each year. Located just outside the Old City walls in the heavily Palestinian area of East Jerusalem occupied in 1967, it is perhaps the clearest current example of the way the ancient past is employed as a tool in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Understanding the stakes involved has been facilitated by dissenting archaeologists’ efforts to denaturalize the connection made there between ancient Israelite presence and current Israeli occupation. An examination of both the official narrative and the alternative narrative(s) demonstrates how important the issues examined in this project still are. The official narrative posits a clear distinction between Israelites and Canaanites, painting the Israelites as the heroes and the Canaanites as the enemy that existed only to be vanquished through God’s will. The modern-day inheritors of the Israelite legacy are understood to be the Jews, on the unspoken assumption that Jewish identity has been basically constant for 3,000 years.

According to City of David guides who provide the official narrative to tourists, when King David left Hebron to found a capital city, he chose Jerusalem and captured it from a group referred to as the Jebusites, usually understood to be a subset of Canaanites. He then founded the original Israelite Jerusalem at the foot of a hill by the water source known as the Gihon Spring. The main part of the city later moved up the hill to the area now known as the Old City. Thomas Thompson, writing about the search for David’s city before the current iteration of conflict over the site, argues that this is one of many examples of archaeologists picking seemingly at random among multiple biblical variants the one they choose to see as historically accurate. The

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existence of multiple narratives suggests the Bible was not intended as a linear recounting of historical events and that it clashes with modern understandings of history.

While the City of David is a national park, its operations have been privatized and since 1996 it has been run by the settler group Elad. As with many other sites associated with biblical characters, Orthodox Jews wish to settle at the City of David to be as close to it as possible. Founder David Be’eri has said he established Elad with the explicit goal of “Judaizing” Silwan. Additionally, Elad has been involved in legal battles to force families from homes in the densely populated Palestinian town of Silwan, which has a population of about 45,000. Elad has succeeded in taking over some homes in Silwan and moving settler families into them. About 500 settlers live there, protected by armed guards.

In 2005, the municipality of Jerusalem set out to demolish 88 Palestinian homes in Silwan to clear the area around the site, arguing that the homes were built illegally, without the proper permits. This has been a common tactic for tearing down Palestinian structures built since 1967 because Palestinians are granted very few building permits while their population continues to grow rapidly. International pressure caused the city to cancel those demolition plans, however. More recently, supporters of demolition have argued that some homes are on a site of archaeological importance that must be preserved as part of the Jewish heritage. Elad argues that the valley between the City of David and the bulk of Silwan, a neighborhood known as Boustan, was the site of the King’s Garden mentioned in the Bible. Therefore, they say, it is important to re-create that garden. In order to do so, homes must be removed. Demolition orders, which have not yet been carried out, have been issued for 22 houses in Boustan.

It would be difficult to determine whether a garden briefly occupied the site many hundreds of years ago, and impossible to show a connection between that garden and the kings of Israel. However, the fact that the Bible mentions a garden has led some, most prominently Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat, to conclude that common sense dictates the garden must have been in the valley. Barkat’s position that Jerusalem must not be divided in a peace settlement is well known. Therefore, it is not surprising that Barkat supports efforts to demolish the 22 Palestinian homes to re-create the garden. Each Israeli archaeological site and each Israeli settler in East Jerusalem makes it more difficult to divide the city in a peace agreement in which the

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Palestinians could utilize East Jerusalem as a capital of a future Palestinian state.

In October 2010, *60 Minutes* broadcast correspondent Lesley Stahl investigated the controversy surrounding the City of David. She found the political implications obvious: Those half million tourists visiting the City of David each year encounter “an implicit message: that because David conquered the city for the Jews back then, Jerusalem belongs to the Jews today.”

She spoke with Doron Spielman, who works for Elad as the site’s international director of development. When Stahl remarked that she had seen dozens of Israeli soldiers going on the tour, Spielman explained that “when we bring them here they understand that they’re not just fighting for today, they actually represent the return of the Jewish people to Israel after thousands of years.” Spielman disputed the language of “settlements” and “settlers” to describe Elad, possibly because of their negative connotations since they have been used to describe Israelis settling in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem. However, he did acknowledge that the organization’s twin goals were “archaeology and rebuilding a Jewish neighborhood,” the latter of which clearly indicates a settlement, since Jewish Israelis who move into the occupied territories to stake a claim to the area as Jews are settlers.

The *60 Minutes* piece revolved around whether there was actual evidence that King David, or, going even further back, Abraham, had ever been there. This thus cast doubt on Jewish claims about the past. The report also cast the parties in the dispute as disparate ethnic groups—Jews and Palestinians—who both deserve their own state. Spielman was so ensconced in his view that an essentially unchanging Jewishness extended back to the day David took over the city for all time on this people’s behalf that he managed to suggest that he himself had been alive for 3,000 years, stating, “If coming back to my home after 3,000 years is a stumbling block to peace then I think that that is not a very good peace.” He further showed that he thought Jews and Palestinians came from mutually exclusive, and internally homogeneous, traditions when he argued that “the Arabs have Mecca, they have Medina and they may also be interested in Jerusalem. But for the Jews, this is our only home.” This suggests that a generic “Arab” would feel more at home in Mecca than in Jerusalem even if that person had been born and raised in Jerusalem, and discounts the presence of Christian Palestinians, who would not feel reverence

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4 Stahl, “Controversy in Jerusalem.”
5 Quoted in Ibid.
6 Quoted in Ibid.
7 Quoted in Ibid.
for Mecca.

Spielman showed Stahl a tunnel being dug under the homes of Silwan. She said the Palestinians she talked to worried about the tunnel undermining their homes’ structural integrity. Spielman rebutted that the residents only pretended to be worried about that because they were actually worried about “what the tunnel means.” For Spielman the only possible meaning of the tunnel, one that he assumed would be apparent to all, was that it means further evidence of past and therefore present Jewish ownership. The tunnel, he explained, would eventually lead to the Western Wall Plaza, and those who walked through it “will have undergone an experience that shows the Jewish Temple was important 600 years before Muhammad.” That is, of course, one possible meaning of these sites, but, since meanings, or interpretations, are not inherent in archaeological data, it is only one of several possible meanings that could be given to the tunnel. In light of anthropological work on the fluidity of cultures over time, it becomes one of the least compelling. However, archaeologists often find the gap between subtle arguments about cultural change and Spielman’s segregating of “Jews” and “Arabs” into two obviously different and internally homogeneous groups difficult to overcome.

The alternative narrative is provided by Emek Shaveh, an Israeli NGO that monitors archaeological work in Israel, most prominently in the City of David. In 2011 it published a visitors’ guide to the City of David co-written by Tel Aviv University archaeology professor Raphael Greenberg, who has actively worked to change the City of David narrative. The visitors’ guide lays out Emek Shaveh’s view of archaeology:

We view archaeology as a resource for building bridges and strengthening bonds between different peoples and cultures, and we see it as an important factor impacting the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Our fundamental position is that an archaeological find should not and cannot be used to prove ownership by any one nation, ethnic group, or religion over a given place. We believe archaeology tells a complex story that is independent of tradition, religious or otherwise, and that listening to this story and bringing it to the wider public can promote values of tolerance and pluralism.

Emek Shaveh also coordinates an alternative three-hour City of David tour that frames the site’s history in terms of multiple possible narratives. According to Greenberg, the principles of the group supporting the alternative archaeology tour include “allowing everyone to find their own links to the past,” not assigning “different value to different cultures,” and that it “is not our

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8 Quoted in Ibid.
9 Greenberg and Mizrachi, From Shiloah to Silwan, 1.
business to establish links between modern ethnic identities (e.g., Palestinians, Israelis, Europeans) and ancient ones (e.g., Judeans, Canaanites, or Crusaders). We do not use archaeology to prove precedence.”10 The visitors’ guide also attempts to make up for the denigration that has sometimes been heaped on Canaanites, referring to “bold and resourceful Canaanites” who “harnessed the spring” in order to support Jerusalem’s first settlement.11

In summer 2009, I went on one of the alternative archaeology tours, led by one of Greenberg’s graduate students. The tour occurred on a Friday afternoon, when the official tours stop for Shabbat. The guide summarized the viewpoint of the alternative archaeology movement in Israel: first, that the government should not allow right-wing religious groups to run national parks. Second, that archaeology should not be appropriated in the service of either proving or disproving the Bible but rather should be used to learn about past cultures. Third, that archaeology should be used to empower the people who live in the place where the site is, rather than, as in this case, using archaeology to make them unwanted outsiders to the site’s “real” history, and, in fact, trying to use archaeology as a tool to remove them. Thus, the guide said, the City of David archaeological site is a part of the village of Silwan, and should be promoted as a public space where the Palestinians of Silwan feel as comfortable as anyone else, and where they feel that a heritage is being studied that does not exclude them.

The guide pointed out that there is no evidence that any of the biblical kings associated with the site were there. This does not mean that these kings existed or didn’t exist; the evidence is silent. On the other hand, the evidence does point to this area being an early Israelite Jerusalem, based on eighth and seventh century B.C.E. coins bearing the names of Israelite royal family members and written in Hebrew—which happens to be the same language as ancient Canaanite. (Calling the Hebrew language Canaanite is not as radical as it may first appear. Albright himself considered Hebrew a dialect of Canaanite and argued that “the Hebrew language and poetic style were quite certainly Canaanite in origin.”12) However, the larger point, the guide added, was that even if such an inscription were to be found, it would by no means give one group the right to take land from another.

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11 Greenberg and Mizrachi, From Shiloah to Silwan, 5.
The site includes Hezekiah’s Tunnel, where visitors armed with flashlights can wade through the cool water and see the place where the plaque was found in which workers described their achievement of building two tunnels and meeting in the middle. It is known as Hezekiah’s Tunnel because it closely matches the description of a tunnel that, according to the Bible, the Judean King Hezekiah had built. Though the inscription does not mention Hezekiah by name, it is reasonable to infer that the story refers to the same tunnel. However, the guide argued, archaeologists should be less concerned with the political history of kingdoms and more with what archaeological evidence shows about ancient cultures. In this case, the inscription contributes to our understanding of the period in which the alphabet was becoming simplified, leading to more widespread literacy. Thus, the inscription demonstrates that at least some common people—the workers who built the tunnel—were literate enough at that time to create it. This argument fits in with a more widespread movement in archaeology worldwide to see the discipline as searching for the anthropological past rather than the political past. Archaeologists are looking for evidence of what people ate, what they created, what their homes were like, and in this case when and how common people gained access to literacy.

In July 2009, Palestinian residents of Silwan opened a visitors’ center, the inside of which was papered in photocopies of demolition orders, to try to explain their point of view to outsiders. As Greenberg writes in Public Archaeology, the presence of increasing numbers of Jewish settlers using the site as a reason to move into the neighborhood has created “conflict with local Palestinians … at the very basic level of existence.”13 Archaeologists must not hide behind neutrality in such a situation, Greenberg writes, arguing that in this case neutrality masks “the greater political project of ‘unifying’ Jerusalem,”14 which in itself uses the language of unity to mask the way a unified Jerusalem blocks the peace process by blocking the return of occupied territories.

“Archaeologists,” Greenberg suggests, “are required not only to refrain from doing harm, but to engage in activities that will promote understanding rather than conflict.”15 For him this response entails educating the public about the sophistication and nuance that archaeologists bring to their craft, and thus combating the “superficial approach to history and archaeology”16

14 Ibid., 36.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
presented at City of David and many other tourist sites. He recounts the site’s ironic history as an Israeli dig: When Yigal Shiloh of the Hebrew University excavated from 1978 to 1985, he angered Orthodox Jews who said he disturbed a cemetery, a conflict that led to Shiloh’s excavation becoming “a symbol of secular resistance to religious encroachment on scientific research.”\(^{17}\) But when the government allowed Elad to manage the park, it “introduced a new, powerful narrative exploiting to the hilt the biblical and Jewish connotations of the site (and excluding almost every other viewpoint).”\(^{18}\) Greenberg sees hope in the fact that the settler narrative is so new that competing narratives that historicize that newness and thus cast doubt on its claims to absolute truth could still flourish. Encouraging such nuanced presentation at the site could make “Silwan and the City of David a place in which archaeology might contribute to peace rather than to conflict.”\(^{19}\) This goes beyond the City of David to a scenario in which, through responsible, ethical archaeological practice, Jerusalem “can be celebrated as a palimpsest of world cultures, rather than the exclusive property of this or that group.”\(^{20}\)

The debate over whether the City of David should be excavated to find evidence of an ancient Jewish past or whether it should be excavated to learn more about the past to which all current inhabitants of the area belong is a contemporary phase of the debates this project has explored. In the anti-Zionist phase of his career, when showing an Arab shepherd some sherds he had found, Nelson Glueck explained that the pottery told the story “of a past to which both of us belonged,”\(^{21}\) precisely the goal of Emek Shaveh today. Emek Shaveh’s alternative narrative, which attempts to be more just to all inhabitants of Israel/Palestine, is explicitly based on anthropological theory and archaeological ethics. Like Burrows, Lapp, Glock, and Whitelam, Emek Shaveh argues that scholarship is political, and that scholarship that claims otherwise deserves special scrutiny. They based these arguments, sometimes implicitly and sometimes explicitly, on the theory that cultures are not essential, that they are fluid and that their boundaries are blurry, which makes arguments about essential Jewishness not only politically dangerous but untenable.

The official narrative is the less theorized of the two. It is based on unexamined assumptions about Jewish identity as having been mystically stable for millennia, and on appeals

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 41.
\(^{18}\) Ibid.
\(^{19}\) Ibid., 44.
\(^{20}\) Ibid., 46.
\(^{21}\) Glueck, *The River Jordan*, 244.
to a public that by and large finds the assumption that the Bible is historically accurate to be comforting. The position of the official narrative bears close resemblance to the position of Albright, whose continuing influence in the archaeology of the land of the Bible can be seen in just such locations. Albright, who believed the current state of Israel was the rebirth of the ancient polity and who argued that archaeological discoveries were consistently corroborating the Bible, concealed his political desire for Israel/Palestine beneath a rhetoric of objectivity, neutrality, and adherence to scientific principles. The City of David official narrative takes it as a simple fact that David’s takeover of Jerusalem occurred historically as recorded in the Bible, and takes the link between the ancient Israelites and the contemporary Jews as another such simple fact. From there it is only a short leap to seeing the Palestinians as recent interlopers who have no place in this narrative about essential, eternal Jewishness.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Brooke Sherrard was born in Centerville, Iowa. She graduated from Truman State University in Missouri in 2003 with a double major in journalism and Spanish. In 2006 she completed a master’s degree in religious studies at the University of Iowa. At Florida State, she studied in the American religious history track of the religion department. She is interested in encounters between Americans and the Middle East, particularly the area many call the Holy Land.