

HEBREW BIBLE OLD TESTAMENT

The History of Its Interpretation

Edited by Magne Sæbø

III/1: The Nineteenth Century

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

Magne Sæbø, Hebrew Bible / Old Testament

Hebrew Bible / Old Testament
The History of Its Interpretation

Volume III/1

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VOLUME III
From Modernism to Post-Modernism
(The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries)

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VOLUME III

From Modernism to Post-Modernism
(The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries)

In Co-operation with
Peter Machinist and Jean Louis Ska, SJ

Edited by
Magne Sæbø

PART 1

The Nineteenth Century –
a Century of Modernism and Historicism

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

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Contents

Preface	15
1. Fascination with ‘History’ – Biblical Interpretation in a Century of Modernism and Historicism By MAGNE SÆBØ, Oslo	17
1. Roots of Historical Thinking and Historicism	21
2. Growth and Impact of New Historical Evidence	23
3. The Challenge of the Historicism	25

A. The General Cultural Context of Nineteenth Century’s Biblical Interpretation

2. Historical, Cultural and Philosophical Aspects of the Nineteenth Century with Special Regard to Biblical Interpretation By JAN ROHLS, Munich	31
1. Aspects of the Enlightenment’s Cultural and Philosophical Legacy	31
2. F.D.E. Schleiermacher – His Criticism of the Old Testament	38
3. G.F.W. Hegel – the Impact of His Philosophy on Old Testament Studies	45
4. Old Testament Studies and Protestant Theology at German Universities	52
3. The Phenomenon of ‘Historicism’ as a Backcloth of Biblical Scholarship By GUNTER SCHOLTZ, Bochum	64
1. The Rise of Historical Consciousness and the Term ‘Historicism’	66
2. The Way of Historicism in the Nineteenth Century	73
3. Historicism in Biblical Studies	80
4. Expansion of the Historical Context of the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament By STEVEN W. HOLLOWAY, Chicago	90
1. Introduction	94
2. The Bible in the Context of the Ancient Near East – the Significance of New Comparative Texts	95

3. The Historical Geography of the Holy Land 104
4. The Emergence of a so-called ‘Biblical Archaeology’ in Europe and North America 110
5. Expansion of the Anthropological, Sociological and Mythological Context of the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament
By J. W. ROGERSON, Sheffield 119
 1. Introduction 120
 2. Comparative Folkloristic Studies 121
 3. New Anthropological and Sociological Perspectives – the Case of William Robertson Smith and his Work 127
 4. New Mythological Studies 132
6. Expansion of the Linguistic Context of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: Hebrew Among the Languages of the Ancient Near East
By HOLGER GZELLA, Leiden 134
 1. Increasing Knowledge of the Semitic Languages 134
 2. Wilhelm Gesenius and the Development of Hebrew Studies 148
 3. Further Achievements in Hebrew Philology 156

*B. Main Regional and Confessional Areas
of the Nineteenth Century’s Biblical Scholarship*

7. The ‘New World’ of North America and Canada – and the Globalization of Critical Biblical Scholarship
By JAMES P. BYRD, Nashville, TN 171
 1. Biblical Criticism in the Early Nineteenth Century: Common Sense and a Democratic Scripture 176
 - 1.1. American Biblical Criticism Conceived: Joseph Stevens Buckminster at Harvard 177
 - 1.2. The Beginnings of Old Testament Scholarship in America: Moses Stuart at Andover 177
 - 1.3. Edward Robinson and the Innovation of Biblical Archeology 180
 - 1.4. Unitarian Biblical Scholarship at Harvard 181
 2. Mid-Century Challenges to the American Bible 183
 - 2.1. Genesis and Geology in America: The Old Testament and the Challenges from New Science 183
 - 2.2. The Bible, Slavery, and the Civil War 185
 3. The Formation of an American Academy of Biblical Scholarship: Early Collaborative Efforts 187
 - 3.1. Biblical Commentary: The Lange Project 188
 - 3.2. Biblical Translation: The Revised Version 189

4.	The Old Testament and Higher Criticism in the United States and Canada, 1880–1900	190
4.1.	The Old Testament and the University: The Vision of William Rainey Harper	193
4.2.	The Protestant Heresy Trial in the United States: The Case of Charles Briggs	195
4.3.	Historical Criticism and American Catholicism	198
4.4.	Historical Criticism in Canada	200
5.	Conclusion	201
8.	Protestant Biblical Scholarship on the European Continent and in Great Britain and Ireland By J. W. ROGERSON, Sheffield	203
1.	The Political and Ecclesiastical Background	204
2.	The Continent of Europe from 1800 to 1860	205
3.	Great Britain and Ireland from 1800 to 1860	209
4.	The Continent of Europe 1860–1899	210
5.	Great Britain and Ireland 1860–1899	215
9.	Biblical Scholarship in Northern Europe By JESPER HØGENHAVEN, Copenhagen	223
1.	The Historical Background	224
2.	Bible Reading and Bible Promotion in the Nordic Countries	225
3.	Biblical Scholarship at the Nordic Universities	226
4.	From Historical “Biblicism” to Historical Criticism	229
4.1.	Historical “Biblicism” – a Conservative Synthesis	229
4.2.	Historical Criticism – a New Synthesis Emerging	232
5.	Two Internationally Renowned Biblical Scholars: C. P. Caspari and F. Buhl	234
5.1.	Carl Paul Caspari	234
5.2.	Frants Buhl	236
6.	Bible Interpretation in N. F. S. Grundtvig and S. Kierkegaard	240
6.1.	Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig	240
6.2.	Søren Kierkegaard	242
10.	The Catholic Church and Historical Criticism of the Old Testament By GERALD P. FOGARTY, Charlottesville, VA	244
1.	Introduction	245
2.	The First Catholic Reaction to Historical Criticism	246
3.	The Catholic Attack on Modernism	252
4.	From Pius XII to Vatican II: The Catholic Embrace of Historical Criticism	257

11. Jewish Biblical Scholarship between Tradition and Innovation By EDWARD BREUER and CHANAN GAFNI, Jerusalem	262
1. Introduction	263
2. Approaches to Textual Criticism	266
3. On Authorship and Dating of Biblical Texts	278
4. Exegesis	292
5. Epilogue	302

*C. Special Fields and Different Approaches
in the Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament*

12. The 'History of Israel': Its Emergence as an Independent Discipline By JEAN LOUIS SKA, Rome	307
1. Introduction: The Development of a Historical Methodology in the Seventeenth Century	307
2. Modern Studies of History in the Nineteenth Century	309
3. Biblical Chronology	313
3.1. Joseph Justus Scaliger (1540–1609)	315
3.2. Denis Pétau (Dionysius Petavius) (1583–1652)	316
3.3. James Ussher (1581–1656)	317
4. The Emergence of an Independent History of Israel	319
4.1. Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677) and Richard Simon (1638–1712)	320
4.2. The Netherlands: Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) and Peter Cunaeus (1586–1638)	321
4.3. Great Britain and France: Moses Lowman (1679–1752); Bernard de Montfaucon (1655–1741); Humphrey Prideaux (1648–1724); Henry Hart Milman (1791–1868); Francis William Newman (1801–1890)	323
4.4. Germany: Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1798); Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803); Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette (1780–1849).	326
5. Georg Heinrich August Ewald (1803–1875)	329
5.1. The Purpose of Ewald's <i>History of Israel</i>	330
5.2. Ewald's Method	331
5.3. The Written Sources of a History of Israel	332
5.4. The Patriarchs in Ewald's <i>History of Israel</i>	335
5.5. Concluding Remarks	337
6. Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918)	337
7. The Other 'Histories of Israel'	341
13. 'Lower Criticism': Studies in the Masoretic Text and the Ancient Versions of the Old Testament as Means of Textual Criticism By RICHARD D. WEIS, Lexington, KY	346
1. Introduction	350

2. Abraham Geiger's <i>Urschrift und Uebersetzungen der Bibel</i> (1857)	. 351
3. Paul de Lagarde	. 358
4. Permutations: Nöldeke, Wellhausen and Cornill	. 362
5. Study of the Masoretic Text and Its Details (Masorah, Accents)	. 367
6. The Samaritan Pentateuch	. 372
7. Septuagint and Other Greek Versions	. 372
8. The Study of the Other Ancient Versions	. 377
9. Conclusions	. 379
10. Addendum: Development and Transformation of the Nineteenth Century's Legacy in the Twentieth	. 380
14. 'Higher Criticism': The Historical and Literary-critical Approach – with Special Reference to the Pentateuch By THOMAS RÖMER, Paris / Lausanne	. 393
1. W. M. L. de Wette	. 393
1.1. de Wette and Deuteronomy (1805)	. 395
1.2. de Wette and Vater	. 397
1.3. The Pentateuch as a Mythical Story of Origins	. 399
2. The Emergence of Theories about the Formation of the Pentateuch	. 400
2.1. Moses and the Pentateuch	. 400
2.2. Hexateuch instead of Pentateuch	. 406
2.3. Theories about the Evolution of Israel's Religious Ideas	. 407
2.4. The Three Main Models: Fragment Hypothesis, Supplementary Hypothesis and Documentary Hypothesis	. 410
3. Critical Investigation on the Formation of the Former and Latter Prophets	. 415
3.1. The Theory of Deuteronomistic Redactions in the Books of Joshua-Kings	. 415
3.2. Source and Redaction Criticism in the Latter Prophets	. 417
4. On the Way to Wellhausen: Reuss, Popper, Graf and the Invention of a Postmonarchic Priestly Document	. 420
15. The Work of Abraham Kuenen and Julius Wellhausen By RUDOLF SMEND, Göttingen	. 424
1. Introduction	. 424
2. Kuenen: Inquiry and History	. 426
2.1. Beginnings	. 427
2.2. <i>Historisch-kritisch onderzoek</i>	. 428
2.3. The Hexateuch	. 430
2.4. Prophecy	. 433
2.5. Religious History	. 434

3.	Wellhausen: Judaism and Ancient Israel	436
3.1.	The Early Works	438
3.2.	<i>Prolegomena to the History of Israel</i>	443
3.3.	<i>Israelite and Jewish History</i>	448
3.4.	Concerns and Criteria	450
16.	Albert Eichhorn and Hermann Gunkel: The Emergence of a History of Religion School By ERHARD S. GERSTENBERGER, Marburg	454
1.	Preludial	455
2.	University Spirit	456
3.	The Beginnings	456
4.	Interdisciplinary Work	458
5.	Focus on Jesus	459
6.	Christian Doctrine?	460
7.	Hebrew Scriptures	462
8.	Twentieth Century Developments	467
9.	Outlook	470
17.	In the Wake of Wellhausen: The Growth of a Literary-critical School and Its Varied Influence By RUDOLF SMEND, Göttingen	472
1.	Introduction	472
2.	Wellhausen as Literary Critic	474
3.	The Successors	476
3.1.	The Representative “Introductions”	476
3.2.	The <i>ZAW</i>	477
3.3.	First Variations	478
3.4.	Literary History	481
3.5.	<i>Geschichte des Volkes Israel</i>	482
3.6.	Commentaries	486
3.7.	Swan Songs	491
18.	A Conservative Approach in Opposition to a Historical-critical Interpretation: E. W. Hengstenberg and Franz Delitzsch By RUDOLF SMEND, Göttingen	494
1.	Introduction	494
2.	Hengstenberg	495
2.1.	Career and Church Politics	496
2.2.	The Old Testament	502
3.	Delitzsch	509
3.1.	Biography	510
3.2.	In Discussion	512

3.3. Judaism	516
3.4. Exegesis and Criticism	518
19. Studies on the Historical Books – Including Their Relationship to the Pentateuch	
By KARL WILLIAM WEYDE, Oslo	521
1. The Historical Books	523
2. Joshua – 2 Kings	525
2.1. Deuteronomy Re-Dated. Consequences for the Interpretation of the Historical Books: W. M. L. de Wette	526
2.2. Reactions to de Wette's Theory	527
2.3. A Postexilic Source in the Pentateuch and the Consequences for the Interpretation of the Historical Books. K. H. Graf	530
2.4. The Historical Books and the History of Israel. J. Wellhausen	532
2.5. Writing the History of Israel after Graf and Wellhausen	534
2.6. Joshua and its Literary Context: the Hexateuch Problem	535
2.7. Research towards the End of the Century	537
2.7.1. Scholars adopting the New Theories	537
2.7.2. Intermediary Critics	539
2.7.3. Researchers outside Germany	541
3. Chronicles	543
3.1. Questioning the Reliability. W. M. L. de Wette; K. H. Graf	543
3.2. The Chronicler's Source: " <i>ein spätes Machwerk</i> ". J. Wellhausen	546
3.3. Research towards the End of the Century	547
4. Ezra-Nehemiah	550
4.1. The Law in Ezra-Nehemiah	550
4.2. Sources, Date, Historical Reliability	551
20. Prophecy in the Nineteenth Century Reception	
By CHRISTOPHER R. SEITZ, Toronto	556
1. Introduction	558
2. Prophets and Law	561
3. Prophets in Order	564
4. Isaiah	570
5. Jeremiah and Ezekiel	574
6. Daniel	578
7. Conclusion	580
21. Studies of the Psalms and Other Biblical Poetry	
By KLAUS SEYBOLD †	582
1. The Legacy of the Eighteenth Century	585
2. Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette	587
3. Philology, History, Poetics and Linguistic-historical Commentaries	590

3.1. Hebrew Philology . . . . .	. 591
3.2. History . . . . .	. 591
3.3. Poetics . . . . .	. 592
3.4. Historical-linguistic Commentaries on the Psalms until 1860 . . . . .	. 592
3.5. Job, Song of Songs, Lamentations . . . . .	. 593
4. Conservatism: Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg and Franz Delitzsch . . . . .	. 594
5. New Aspects in the last Decades of the Nineteenth Century . . . . .	. 596
5.1. The Psalms . . . . .	. 596
5.2. Job . . . . .	. 597
5.3. Song of Songs . . . . .	. 598
5.4. Lamentations . . . . .	. 599
6. Bernhard Duhm's Commentaries of 1897 and 1899 . . . . .	. 599
7. Outlook into the Twentieth Century . . . . .	. 602
22. Studies of the Didactical Books of the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament By KATHARINE J. DELL, Cambridge . . . . .	. 603
1. Introduction . . . . .	. 605
1.1. The Scholarly Climate in the Early Nineteenth Century . . . . .	. 606
1.2. Scholarship in the Later Nineteenth Century . . . . .	. 607
2. Proverbs . . . . .	. 608
2.1. Dating and Authorship Issues . . . . .	. 608
2.2. Dating and Literary Issues . . . . .	. 609
2.3. The Character of Proverbial Wisdom and Use of Terminology . . . . .	. 611
2.4. Cross Reference with the Wider Old Testament and the Development of Ideas . . . . .	. 612
2.5. Late Dating Schemes at the End of the Century . . . . .	. 614
3. Job . . . . .	. 614
3.1. Did Job Live? . . . . .	. 615
3.2. Date and Authorship . . . . .	. 616
3.3. Stages of Literary Development . . . . .	. 617
3.4. Theological Purpose and Position in Wider Development of Ideas . . . . .	. 618
4. Ecclesiastes . . . . .	. 619
4.1. Solomonic Authorship? . . . . .	. 620
4.2. Links with the Greek World and Dating Issues . . . . .	. 620
4.3. Redactions and Epilogue . . . . .	. 621
4.4. Evaluations of the Message . . . . .	. 622
5. Conclusion . . . . .	. 624
23. The Question of a 'Biblical Theology' and the Growing Tension between 'Biblical Theology' and a 'History of the Religion of Israel': from Johann Philipp Gabler to Rudolf Smend, Sen. By JOACHIM SCHAPER, Aberdeen . . . . .	. 625
1. Introduction . . . . .	. 627
2. The 'Pre-history' of Biblical Theology . . . . .	. 628

3. The Beginnings of Modern ‘Biblical Theology’: Gabler, his Immediate Predecessors and Contemporaries, and the Collision with Kant’s Hermeneutics . . . . .	.630
4. ‘Biblical Theology’ and the Impact of Hegel . . . . .	.641
5. The Breakthrough of ‘Historicism’ Proper and its Consequences . . . . .	.645
6. Epilogue . . . . .	.650
24. Modernity’s Canonical Crisis: Historiography and Theology in Collision	
By STEPHEN B. CHAPMAN, Durham, NC . . . . .	.651
1. Modernity’s Canonical Crisis . . . . .	.656
2. J. G. Eichhorn: Canon as the Jerusalem Temple Archive . . . . .	.659
3. Moses Stuart: Canon as the Scripture of Christ and the Apostles . . . . .	.667
4. The Rise of the Three-Stage Theory . . . . .	.673
4.1. H. Graetz: Canon as Three Assemblies . . . . .	.676
4.2. H. E. Ryle: Canon as Three Canons . . . . .	.681
Contributors . . . . .	.691
Abbreviations . . . . .	.696
Indexes (Names / Topics / References) . . . . .	.705

Preface

The present third and final volume of the *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation* (HBOT) is divided into two parts, each with a closely similar structure. This has been done on practical and technical grounds, which means that HBOT III/1–2 should be regarded as a single volume divided into two, with one part volume devoted to the nineteenth century (Chaps. 1–24) and the other to the twentieth (Chaps. 25–50). This division, however, is admittedly not without historical problems, since it is difficult to draw a sharp borderline at the year 1900. The latter part of the nineteenth century is closely entwined in many ways with the beginning of the twentieth, with the consequence that a specific ‘period’ is noteworthy from approximately 1880 to 1914/18. In the subsequent treatment this will be strongly evident, first of all in chapters 16 and 17 with regard to the further development of the ‘literary-critical’ school and secondly with the rise of a ‘religio-historical’ one. It is also noteworthy in other directions.

With this volume a second and broader historical problem also arises, namely that concerning contemporaneity. The historiographical perspective of HBOT to some extent changes character as it approaches our present era and the historical distance is correspondingly shortened. This issue becomes still more acute in the twentieth century and will therefore be further discussed in the next part volume. In this respect, yet another difference from previous HBOT volumes becomes evident. Due to the growing fragmentation of subjects and methods in modern biblical studies, coupled with the discernible expansion and globalizing of the academic community, this final volume will be less focused on individuals than the preceding ones. It will generally be more thematically structured, whereby some important issues will be discussed in various contexts and from different viewpoints; in the present volume for example, there are several individual references to the historically key figure of W. M. L. de Wette with no separate biographical presentation of him.

The time for the conclusion of a volume is also a time for acknowledgments. In this instance I must begin with the Press. During the extensive period of publication of the HBOT volumes, with their inevitable delays for which the editor can only express regret, the persons responsible for the Theological Department at Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht have undergone several changes. I now have the greatest pleasure in expressing my warmest thanks to them all, especially Dr. Arndt Ruprecht, who initially launched the HBOT Project in the 1980s with the *Verlag*, and subsequently Dr. Jörg Persch and Christoph Spill who has taken responsibility for the present volume. The HBOT Project has been in good hands and the readers can be most grateful. Further, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the two Co-editors of Volume III, Professor Peter Machinist,

of Harvard University, and Professor Jean Louis Ska, SJ, of the Pontifical Biblical Institute Rome, for their manifold help and good advice, as well as to the linguist Consultant, also of this volume, Professor Ronald E. Clements, of Cambridge, for his required and most invaluable help.

However, without the individual contributions there would not be another HBOT volume. Therefore, the most heartfelt thanks must go to all authors of the present volume who have submitted their research, sometimes entirely new, to the service of the HBOT Project. Their individual essays have contributed significantly to the interpretation and research history of the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament. Additionally, some of the contributors have graciously rendered me extra assistance in the editorial work; to them I am particularly grateful and for their positive co-operation I am pleased to pay special tribute. Professor Rudolf Smend has not only contributed three essays but also shared with me his great insights into the research history of biblical scholarship; further, at relatively short notice, Professor Ska SJ took over Chapter 15 as did Professor Rogerson regarding Chapter 8 (in addition to his earlier Chapter 5), and Professors Gzella (Chapter 6) and Weis (Chapter 13) responded positively when I asked for further expansion to fields not originally foreseen and asked for. In all, I am deeply grateful to everyone.

Finally, I am yet again immensely indebted for financial support for the editorial work to the *Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters* and *Fridtjof Nansens Fond* as well as to my Faculty, the *Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology*, for technical support, also after my retirement; especially, I want to thank its Library staff as well as Dr. Øystein Lund.

Oslo, in May 2012

Magne Sæbø

CHAPTER ONE

Fascination with ‘History’ – Biblical Interpretation in a Century of Modernism and Historicism

By MAGNE SÆBØ, Oslo

General works: K. BARTH, *Die protestantische Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert: ihre Vorgeschichte und ihre Geschichte* (1947, ²1952, ⁵1985); ET: *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background & History* (New Edition; London: SCM Press 1972). – *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, 3. *The West from the Reformation to the Present Day* (ed. S. L. Greenslade; Cambridge: Cambridge UP 1963; repr. 1976, 1978). – T. K. CHEYNE, *Founders of Old Testament Criticism: Biographical, Descriptive, and Critical Studies* (New York: Scribner's Sons 1893). – R. E. CLEMENTS, *A Century of Old Testament Study* (Guildford/London: Lutterworth 1976). – L. DIESTEL, *Geschichte des Alten Testaments in der christlichen Kirche* (Jena: Mauke 1869; repr. Leipzig 1981). – R. M. DORSON, *The British Folklorists. A History* (London: Routledge 1968). – G. P. FOGARTY, *American Catholic Biblical Scholarship: A History from the Early Republic to Vatican II* (San Francisco: Harper & Row 1989). – P. GARDINER (ed.), *Theories of History* (with introductions and commentaries; New York: The Free Press 1959). – E. HIRSCH, *Geschichte der neuern evangelischen Theologie im Zusammenhang mit den allgemeinen Bewegungen des europäischen Denkens*, 5 (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn ³1964). – G. HORNIG, “Lehre und Bekenntnis im Protestantismus”, in: C. ANDRESEN (ed.), *Handbook der Dogmen- und Theologiegeschichte*, 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1984), 71–220, esp. 147–201. – E. G. KRAELING, *The Old Testament since the Reformation* (London 1955/New York: Schocken 1969). – H.-J. KRAUS, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag 1956; ⁴1988). – J. MEHLHAUSEN e.a., “Geschichte/Geschichtsschreibung/Geschichtsphilosophie”, TRE XII (1984), 565–698, esp. 643–658: “VII/2. 19.–20. Jahrhundert”. – W. PANNENBERG, *Problemggeschichte der neueren evangelischen Theologie in Deutschland* (UTB 1979; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1997). – H. GRAF REVENTLOW, *Epochen der Bibelauslegung*, IV. *Von der Aufklärung bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (München: Beck 2001); idem/W. FARMER, *Biblical Studies and the Shifting of Paradigms 1850–1914* (JSOT.S 192; Sheffield: Academic Press 1995). – J. W. ROGERSON, *Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century: England and Germany* (London: SPCK 1984). – F. MILDENBERGER, *Geschichte der deutschen evangelischen Theologie im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (ThW 10; Stuttgart e.a.: Kohlhammer 1981). – R. SCHAEFFLER, *Einführung in die Geschichtsphilosophie* (1973; 3. unver. Aufl. der erweit. 2. Aufl.; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1990). – R. SMEND, *Deutsche Alttestamentler in drei Jahrhunderten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1989); *From Astruc to Zimmerli: Old Testament Scholarship in three Centuries* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2007).

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*Die Historie unterscheidet sich dadurch von anderen Wissenschaften, daß sie zugleich Kunst ist. Wissenschaft ist sie: indem sie sammelt, findet, durchdringt; Kunst, indem sie das Gefundene, Erkannte wieder gestaltet, darstellt.*¹

Leopold von Ranke

The present part volume of the HBOT Project, assigned to *biblical interpretation in the nineteenth century with special regard to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testa-*

¹ L. von Ranke, *Idee der Universalhistorie* (1975), 72; cf. von Humboldt, *Ueber die Aufgabe des Geschichtschreibers* (1821/1980), 585–606, esp. 586f.

ment, is in various ways concerned with the understanding of 'history' as it was elaborated and developed in new historical thinking and research in this period. In particular it focuses on the notion and practice of 'historicism' since it is not for nothing that the century has been called "the age of historicism".² However, for obvious reasons, general characterizations of this kind need to be carefully analyzed and substantiated properly in order to be fully functional, and this is so both in respect of their content and of the historical perspectives involved. Even more is this the case since 'history' and 'historicism' constitute conceptions of great complexity and the discussion of them among historians shows that their descriptions are remarkably varied.³

As for the question of perspective, 'history' also has a history, and in looking for a clear viewpoint in this context it is advantageous simply to start seeking for the deep roots of historical thinking and of 'history' and 'historiography', whereby an appropriate frame of reference may be found for the notion of 'historicism' as well.

1. Roots of Historical Thinking and Historicism

In concept and matter the 'historicism'⁴ is a strictly modern phenomenon that first of all is characteristic of the nineteenth century, and in particular of its latter part. The provenience of the historicism, like the related 'modernism',⁵ has generally been defined and explained in relation to the Enlightenment of the preceding century.⁶ Adequate as this view may be, the perspective of historicism's manifold relations to the much broader phenomena of 'history' and 'historiography' requires no less attention, and all the more so as the wider field of 'history', which forms the matrix of the historicism, provides a background perspective that may be rewarding for understanding it.

'History', as is well recognized, has a long history. It goes back to Antiquity and Herodotus and exhibits various important changes along the road, first of all in the Renaissance where a momentous paradigm shift occurred and became strongly influential during the following centuries. In the culturally and spiritually new climate of this creative period, 'history' became something more than

² See f.ex. Mehlhausen, TRE XII (1984), 643f; Jaeger/Rüsen, *Geschichte des Historismus* (1992), 1.

³ This has been richly expounded in recent monographs; see the last section of the Bibliography above; cf. Jaeger/Rüsen, *ibid.* 214–236.

⁴ Equivalent to German '*Historismus*' the form 'historicism' is the usual English one, whereas 'historism' "seems to be disappearing in English usage", Lee/Beck, *The Meaning of "Historicism"* (1953/54), 568, n. 1; though, the two forms may be used interchangeably, as f.ex. by Karl Popper, see Lee/Beck, *ibid.* 575.

⁵ Theologically, 'modernism' is in the first place related to the Roman-Catholic Church, more rarely it is used in a broader sense; cf. i.a. Troeltsch, *Der Modernismus* (1909), *Ges. Schr.* II (1913), 45–67.

⁶ Cf. i.a. Meinecke, *Entstehung* (1959), 13–281; Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism* (1975); Jaeger/Rüsen, *ibid.* 11–28; Howard, *Rise of Historicism* (2000), concentrates on the works of W.M.L. de Wette and Jacob Burckhardt; see esp. the essay below by G. SCHOLTZ on 'Historicism', Chap. 3, sect. 1.

disparate chronicles, stories or legends. It was not universal in the same way as the older *sacra historia*, lacking any unique point of orientation. In the changed situation, however, ‘history’ became first of all a matter of human life and, as far as its individual features were concerned, these became focused upon their inner connections and ideas of causation.⁷ Here, some major aspects deserve special attention.

In the centuries after the Middle Ages (the Late Middle Ages, as some historians describe the period) early humanists looked back over the preceding period, under the catchphrase *ad fontes*, and in literary and other ways sought out classical forms and values of the Antiquity. In doing so the long span of time involved brought a new understanding of *distance* in time and of a sequence of differing *epochs*; and the awareness of historical distance and varying epochs became even more pronounced in the Enlightenment in which the combination of Renaissance and Enlightenment together brought further significant changes.⁸ In this new situation, ‘history’ in a modern sense was born. On the whole, it seems well-established to maintain that the simple comprehension of distance and historical perspective, coupled with the shifting of epochs in their chronological sequence and their inner cultural and causal relationship, became a fundamental characteristic of modern historical thinking and research. In the Renaissance was born not only a deeper understanding of ‘history’, but its humanist scholars created also a critical ‘historiography’.⁹

Secondly, an explicit *individualism*, also expressed in the phenomenon of *humanism*, became one of the main characteristics of the new way of thinking and living in the Renaissance, perhaps its most important one. Not only the extended historical outlook, referred to above, but predominantly also the individual human being each in his, or her, own time and context came into focus. Concern was definitely about ‘man in the world’ – to paraphrase a dictum by JULES MICHELET.¹⁰ Humanity was, furthermore, even regarded as the ‘centre’ and ‘measure’ (*homo mensura*)¹¹ of the world. More pronounced than in the Middle Ages with its collective mode of thinking (*Denkweise*), the individual human being was now presented in relative independence and freedom. Later, especially in the last part of the nineteenth century, prominence was given to a distinctive individualism in the form of so-called ‘free-thinking’ although the roots of this reached much further back.

Thirdly, a manifold *empiricism* proved to be another significant characteristic of the new way of life and thinking of the Renaissance. The novel thinking, or vision, revolved not only around the individual human being as the unique ‘centre’ and ‘measure’ of all things, but markedly also about human beings in their unique relation to their surroundings; it was, in other words, about ‘mankind *in*

⁷ See HBOT II (2008), 26–33, esp. 30; cf. Mandelbaum, *Historical Knowledge* (1967), 203–242.

⁸ See HBOT II (2008), Section B, Chaps. 13–26, and in Section C, Chaps. 27–29.

⁹ Besides of Petrarch, Leonardo Bruni and Flavio Biondo first of all Lorenzo Valla (1405–1457) carried out a historical critical scrutiny where also causal relations were disclosed; see HBOT II, 30f.

¹⁰ Michelet, *Renaissance, Réforme* (1855/1978), 51: “two things, although small, that belong to this age more than to any of its predecessors: the discovery of the world, the discovery of the man (*la découverte du monde, la découverte de l’homme*)”; see HBOT II, 32 and 40–42.

¹¹ See HBOT II, 41.

the world'. With this, moreover, the idea of the 'world' also received unprecedented attention, especially when this became object of the empirical observations and discoveries which were constantly being extended by modern research. More strongly than ever before, the world appeared to be an *experienced* world which generated a wide variety of empirically based knowledge.¹² Finally, it may be added that this empiricism was both expressed philosophically *in abstracto*,¹³ and probably more often in numerous observations of concrete relations in man's local environment.

To sum up, these particular features may be regarded as the three main roots of the unique fascination with history that flourished in the nineteenth century; but at this point there is still more to say.

2. Growth and Impact of New Historical Evidence

This diachronically extended view not only turned out to be important for a proper understanding of modern biblical interpretation, especially regarding the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, but it also proved to be especially significant synchronically. This resulted from the ever-widening *expansion* of the empirically based fresh knowledge when new fields of the human environment were explored and new critical methods were generated.¹⁴ Here, some main issues may be briefly commented upon.

In the first instance, the subject of 'the history of Israel' deserves special attention since it provides the meeting-point of various aspects and interests. The emergence of Israel's history as an independent discipline of study did not take place in isolation but was closely interwoven with other parts of modern biblical studies.¹⁵ As far as the historical content was concerned the comprehension of Israel's history changed fundamentally from being part of a theologically larger totality of 'sacred' history, or of a biblically based history of revelation (*Heilsgeschichte*),¹⁶ to becoming a subject in its own right. This history was politically and culturally embedded in the framework of a broader, and much older, history of the Ancient Near East.¹⁷ The changed context of Israel's history changed its character.

As indicated above, the new view of Israel's history was not only caused by external factors but was largely dependent on 'inner-biblical' concerns, based on the results of the fresh historical-critical scrutiny of the various scriptures of the Old Testament.¹⁸

¹² See HBOT II, Chap. 27, by CH. METHUEN.

¹³ See HBOT II, Chaps. 32, by H.J.M. NELLEN, and 33, by S. NADLER; see esp. Scholtz, Chap. 3 below, sect. 1.

¹⁴ See esp. the following essay by J. ROHLS, Chap. 2 below; cf. also n. 12 above.

¹⁵ See the description of the complicated emergence of 'the History of Israel' in Chap. 12 below, by J.L. SKA; cf. also HBOT II, Chap. 44, by H. GRAF REVENTLOW.

¹⁶ Cf. i.a. Murrmann-Kahl, *Die entzauberte Heilsgeschichte* (1992), esp. 75–204.

¹⁷ See below Chap. 4, by S.W. HOLLOWAY.

¹⁸ See HBOT II, Chaps. 34–37, by J.W. ROGERSON/H. GRAF REVENTLOW/CHR. BULTMANN, and Chaps. 40–41, by W. MCKANE/J. SANDYS-WUNSCH.

The historical-critical study of Scripture, then, developing new methodical approaches and presenting a flood of fresh and varying theories, revealed not least some hitherto unknown historical dimensions of the biblical scriptures, both within individual books and with regard to their relationships with each other. The final form of a given book of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament appeared, more or less, as a progressively elaborated composition or as an end-product of older and younger elements. The case appeared to be the same when it came to specific groups of books such as, in the first instance, the five books of the Torah/Pentateuch. These five books came to be a primary arena for scholars to single out and identify within them major literary 'sources' in a historical perspective; these were assumed to extend across all five books, thereby constituting the Pentateuch as a connected whole.¹⁹ In addition, the historical-critical and literary-critical approach was of great consequence for the much debated question of authorship of the books and their embodied parts.

Within a relatively short period this literary and critical approach was extended from the Pentateuch to the Historical Books,²⁰ the Prophets²¹ and the Psalms²² as well as to other books of the Old Testament, including the Wisdom Literature, which otherwise shared a quite distinctive context in the literatures of the Ancient Near East.²³

Regarding these and other realms of the expanding study of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, the general historical-critical methodology, together with the more specifically literary-critical approach, constituted the so-called 'higher criticism'. It made rapid and triumphal progress, although different in different areas, and in spite of substantial opposition from conservative criticism.²⁴ It was further supported by the more restricted and less keenly disputed 'lower criticism' which had the ancient versions and the history of the biblical text as its specific object.²⁵ Generally, the entire range of the different methodical approaches and special theories was recorded in summarized form in the new and steadily growing discipline of an 'Introduction to the Old Testament'. This, by its selection and arrangement of the disparate fresh material of theories and discussions, also became a creative part of the continuous progress of Old Testament studies.

Next the main historical-critical approach was accompanied and expanded by still other methodical procedures and studies. First, the linguistic expansion may be considered the most significant one since, when biblical Hebrew (and Aramaic) was embedded into the context of the manifold languages of the Ancient Near East; this fact became momentous not only for the linguistic aspect proper but had, in addition, more far-reaching consequences. The fresh decipherment of the scripts of these languages, especially of the hieroglyphic Egyptian and of the cuneiform Akkadian which took place in the nineteenth century, represented an

¹⁹ See below Chaps. 15 and 17, by R. SMEND.

²⁰ See Chap. 19, by K. W. WEYDE.

²¹ See Chap. 20, by CHR. SEITZ.

²² See Chap. 21, by E. SEYBOLD.

²³ See Chap. 22, by K. J. DELL; cf. also W. MCKANE, *Proverbs. A New Approach* (London: SCM 1970).

²⁴ See Chap. 14, by TH. RÖMER as well as Chaps. 15 and 17–18 (s. n. 17 above).

²⁵ See Chap. 13, by R. D. WEIS.

enormous scholarly achievement. It gave fresh access to vast and rich areas amounting to 'libraries', of ancient literatures.²⁶ In the setting of this very early literary and cultural context Israel was a 'latecomer' – a *homo novus*, both in historical perspective and in its essential character.

Closely related to the linguistic-literary aspects were the growing, and constantly expanding, comparative studies of the "anthropological, sociological and mythological context" of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament.²⁷ Not only was the individual Israelite human being exposed by this but so also was 'Israel in the world', i. e. the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament in its rich and variegated historical and cultural context. With all this a consequential shift of paradigm took place from a predominantly theological to a methodically secularized framework of the biblical studies, but not without fierce debates and considerable opposition.

Further to these approaches another significant expansion came about when the phenomenon of 'religion' was recognized and practiced as an issue of its own and when, toward the end of the century, religio-historical aspects were especially dealt with by the emerging 'History of Religion School' (*Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*).²⁸ At the same time there was not unexpectedly a growing debate, and at times grave tension amounting to "alienation" (*Verfremdung*),²⁹ between the traditional 'biblical theology' and this fresh and richly diverse religio-historical research.³⁰

The historical-critical approaches, which had originated and developed in a European and especially German context and which built on a great wealth of new historical evidence, soon spread to the rest of the Western world. They included the Roman-Catholic study of the Bible as well as the Jewish biblical scholarship.³¹

3. The Challenge of the Historicism

The nineteenth century displays a multifarious cultural context³² in which the new conception and practice of historical studies called 'historicism' proved to be greatly influential. In the framework of the broad historical-critical approach to the interpretation of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament it proved to be a watershed in the history of biblical interpretation,³³ the effect of which reached beyond the century, and in relation to which there was to be no way back.

²⁶ See Chaps. 4, by S. W. HOLLOWAY, and 6, by H. GZELLA.

²⁷ See Chap. 5, by J. W. ROGERSON; cf. also i.a. K. KERÉNYI, *Die Eröffnung des Zugangs zum Mythos. Ein Lesebuch* (WdF XX; Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchgesellschaft 1967).

²⁸ See Chap. 16, by E. S. GERSTENBERGER; cf. also i.a. Lüdemann/Schröder, *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* (1987).

²⁹ Cf. Zimmerli, *Biblische Theologie* (1980), 438.

³⁰ See below Chap. 23, by J. SCHAPER; cf. also Chap. 24, by S. B. CHAPMAN, on the canonicity of the Scripture.

³¹ See Chaps. 7–11, by J. P. BYRD/J. W. ROGERSON/J. HØGENHAVEN/G. P. FOGARTY/E. BREUER/CH. GAFNI.

³² See esp. Chap. 2 below, by J. ROHLS.

³³ For both the historical roots and the subject matter of 'historicism' see below Chap. 3, by G. SCHOLTZ.

The comprehensive international reference work on the interpretation of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament from the beginning to the present, written by Christian and Jewish scholars. This volume focuses on the Nineteenth Century.



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