

**Biblical History as Testimony**  
Annotated Bibliography  
Daniel Bocchetti

**The Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, Ideology and History:**

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

While Dever's analysis operates, in part, from within the categories of modernity which do not allow an appreciation of the entirety of the Hebrew Bible as genuine history, this study is a sophisticated criticism of historical approaches that ignore documentary sources as well as a sensible recognition of the limits of archaeology in historical reconstructions. Dever, an archaeologist himself, concludes that the Bible was written from genuine historical sources, and that archaeology is *one of* the disciplines that can identify this historical core.

**Long, V. Philips, David Baker, & Gordon J. Wenham (Eds.), *Windows into Old Testament History: Evidence, Argument, and the Crisis of "Biblical Israel"*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.**

This is an invaluable volume whereby the authors rebuild a case for a positive appraisal of biblical Israel and for the historical value of Scripture in response to the recent trend in revisionist scholarship that has portrayed the Bible's picture of ancient Israel as a fiction. The scope of the volume is broad, and the essays span from a consideration of the models and methods of historical research; the value of the verbal testimony of biblical texts; extrabiblical evidence offered by archaeological and comparative literary studies; two case studies of the book of Chronicles; and lastly, an essay by Ian Provan on the philosophical assumptions and ideologies of history writing. (For another essay on the considering the same issues of ideology and philosophical assumptions in history writing, see Provan, Ian W. (1995). Ideologies, Literary and Critical: Reflections on Recent Writing on the History of Israel. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 114 (4), 585–606.)

**Kofoed, Jens Bruun (2005). *Text and History*. Ann Arbor: Eisenbrauns.**

Kofoed's book addresses the methodological issues that lie behind the use of biblical texts and their validity as sources for historical information. By evaluating specific test cases, Kofoed discusses the presuppositions underlying various methodologies and shows that later extant texts are not less valuable as sources of historical information.

Miller, J. Maxwell (2009). Is it Possible to Write a History of Israel Without Relying on the Hebrew Bible? In Diana V. Edelman (Ed.), *Fabric of History: Text, Artifact and Israel's Past*. Sheffield Academic Press.

Williamson, H.G.M. (2009). The Origins of Israel: Can We Safely Ignore the Bible? In Shmuel Ahituv & Eliezer D. Oren (Eds.), *The Origin of Early Israel-Current Debate: Biblical, Historical and Archaeological Perspectives*. New York: Routledge.

These two essays set out to precisely answer the question they ask, and their answer is an emphatic *no*. While these authors' understanding of the Bible as a source of historical information differs—and helpfully so—they unanimously argue that any attempts at historical reconstruction of ancient Israel that ignore the Bible as an important source are inevitably misguided.

Provan, Ian, V. Philips Long & Tremper Longman III (2015). *A Biblical History of Israel* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.

In this textbook, Provan, Long and Longman III reconstruct a history of ancient Israel that considers the biblical testimony seriously as an historical document. The Old Testament canon is the governing historical paradigm and the primary document for reconstructing Israel's history while not ignoring the disciplines of archaeology, sociology, and anthropology as well as nonbiblical sources. The authors also consider and offer criticisms of other primers in the field of ancient Israel research.

## **The New Testament, Theology and History:**

**Hahn, Ferdinand (1972). *Historical Investigation and New Testament Faith: Two Essays*. Robert Maddox (Transl.). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.**

Hahn's essays are valuable in that they provide an account of the limitations of the historical critical method in New Testament studies from the perspective of a historical critic. Hahn identifies epistemological assumptions as the underlying element of tension in the modern search for an uninterpreted historical Jesus. Hahn concludes that modern historians can only produce a scholarly narration of a plausible past that is not distinct, *in form*, from the early Christians narration of the life of Jesus.

**Johnson, Luke Timothy (1997). *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospel*. San Francisco: HarperOne.**

In this book Johnson offers a thorough criticism of the assumptions and presumptions of the Jesus Seminar. Johnson's offers an insightful differentiation of the historical Jesus from the "real" Jesus and argues that, although the historical Jesus is often considered as unearthing of the real Jesus of the past, it is but a testimony that must be trusted in faith, as much as the "Jesus of faith" of the church. In fact, the latter, Johnson argues, has a deeper relevance and a higher value than the former.

**Wright, N. T. (1992). *The New Testament and the People of God*. London: SPCK**

This first volume in the series *Christian Origins and the Question of God* is a historical, theological, and literary study of first-century Judaism and Christianity. In Part II of the book, Wright expounds the methodology of his study. It is a helpful discussion on the issues of epistemology and worldviews in the field historical research. Wright outlines a version of critical realism as a viable historical method in biblical studies that sees theology and history as complementary dimensions for a holistic study of early Christianity and the person of Jesus.

## **Advanced Readings in Theology and Philosophy of History:**

**Collingwood, R. G. (1967). *The Idea of History*. London: Oxford University Press.**

This seminal work surveys how the concept of history has evolved from the time of Herodotus to the twentieth century. Collingwood's study is insightful not only in showing how the assumptions in history writing are heterogeneous (Part I–IV), but it is also a classical exposition of the distinctiveness of modern history and its posture of suspicion (Part V).

**Iggers, G.G. (1984). *The German Conception of History*. Scranton: Wesleyan University Press.**

Iggers's study is an exhaustive critical examination of the modern German tradition of historiography. It analyses the theoretical assumptions of nineteenth and twentieth centuries German historians and relates these assumptions to their political ideology—from the cosmopolitan culture-oriented nationalism to an exclusive state-centered nationalism. This is a sophisticated historical critical analysis of the socio-political discourses that produced the ideology of the historical critical method: a superb genealogy of deconstructionism.

**Hart, Trevor A. (2004). *Faith Thinking: The Dynamics of Christian Theology* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Eugene: Wipf & Stock.**

Hart's book is an introduction to the vital questions of methodology in Christian theology. It argues that "faith commitments" are necessary not only in theology but in any serious acts of human knowledge. The realities of theology and history are considered as integral to one another. For Hart, any attempt to knowledge, whether historical, scientific or theological is bound to a process of "faith seeking understanding".

**Davies, Philip R. (1995). *Method and Madness: Some Remarks on Doing History with the Bible*. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 114(4), 699–705.**

In this short essay Davies expounds and defends the assumption behind a methodology for historical research representative of the Copenhagen school.

**White, Hayden (1990). *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press).**

White's ground-breaking book is a philosophical study that probes the notion of authority in history writing and examines the problems of the relation of meaning and truth in historical reconstructions. White's insightful study suggests that any history writing is inevitably bound to the narrative imagination of the author and argues that this does not undermine the truthfulness of a historical work, on the contrary: it is the inevitable form of any representation of reality.