

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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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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