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George E. Mendenhall and Gary A. Herion, Ancient Israel's Faith and History: An Introduction to the Bible in Context

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tations in Ecclesiastes, it is therefore difficult to concur with Miller's precise conclusions.[19] Nevertheless, as an extended treatment of an elusive and significant term, his study offers a valuable point of reference for future investigation.

The final chapter ("Implications," pp. 157–80), which incorporates portions of a previous article in *CBQ* 62 (p. xii), deals with broader matters of introduction and background, locating Qoheleth in relatively uncontroversial fashion as a realist within the ancient Near Eastern wisdom tradition, as one who "provides a rationale for faith and for appreciating the good gifts of God in the midst of life's pain, tensions, and paradoxes" (p. 180).

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[19] The fundamental problem in any analysis of *hebel* is that it pervades the entire book of Ecclesiastes, implicitly if not explicitly, like blood through the body; thus a piecemeal and relatively unnuanced approach that does not first deal exhaustively with the book as a whole will inevitably exert a reductionist effect on one's understanding of both.

Ancient Israel's Faith and History: An Introduction to the Bible in Context. By GEORGE E. MENDENHALL. Edited by GARY A. HERION. Louisville, Kentucky; London; and Leiden: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001. Pp. xx + 284 + 28 figs. + 7 maps + 7 tables. $29.95 (paperback).

This attractive volume consists of transcriptions of popular lectures given by senior American biblical scholar George E. Mendenhall in Michigan in the 1980s and 1990s, edited (one suspects heavily and competently) by Gary Herion, and, "then [Mendenhall] read everything, deleting, adding, and transposing material to create the finished text, beginning with his preface" (p. xv, Herion's foreword). In keeping with the original intent of the lectures, the text, divided into eight chapters, contains suggested readings, sidebars, illustrations, and maps but no footnotes. The volume clearly targets an educated, conservative Protestant lay readership. Biblical

and ancient Near Eastern specialists desirous of following the argumentation behind Mendenhall's historical reconstructions should deal with his publications that are aimed at fellow academics.[1]

Unfortunately, the title of the book misleads, since the destination of the faith and history is first-century Christianity.[2] Like his teacher, W. F. Albright in his *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, Mendenhall endeavors to weave a seamless cultural tapestry from the proto-Israelite Early Bronze Age through the origins of Christianity, in order to vindicate Jesus of Nazareth as a successful reformer of authentic Yahwism. In his nineteenth-century style taxonomy of religious morphology (pp. 1–7), Mendenhall presents religious development as an evolutionary progression from the creation of a new community based on adherence to novel revelation, through progressive indigenization of worship and values, followed by a degradation of the formative ideals through institutionalization and power-serving bureaucratization, and culminating in a repristination that leads the inspired community back to its original values and shared symbols. That the Protestant Reformation serves as the blueprint for this model is seen in explicit cross-cultural comparisons and references to Martin Luther. Scholars possessed of an articulate grasp of non-Western religions, including the religions of the ancient Near East, will recognize the parochial confines of this model: nonspecialists may be deceived into accepting the author's universalistic claims at face value.

Together with his trademark sociopolitical analyses, Mendenhall's encapsulation of Israelite history presents a generic American school invocation of biblical archaeology, ancient Near Eastern parallels, and the Bible rewritten as Protestant *Heilsgeschichte*. The usual suspects make their stage call: the Amorite hypothesis (pp. 20–21), the 12-tribe amphictyony (pp. 73–100), dimorphic nomadism (pp. 14–17), treaty/covenant theology (pp. 55–70, 119–21, 145–47, 226–30), the diagnostic paranoia of Saul (pp. 110–11), the

[1] See the bibliography cited on pp. 265–67.
[2] The cover illustration, a color reproduction of a damaged image of Diana of Ephesus dramatically lined against a black background, is more representative.

expansive Davidic Empire (pp. 115–16), iden-
tification of Deuteronomy with the book of the
law found in the time of Josiah (pp. 168–71),
casting the Jerusalem temple *qedeshim* as male
cult prostitutes (pp. 170–71), and the superiority
of the Judaism of Jesus over that of his contem-
poraries (pp. 5, 212–30). To his credit, Menden-
hall acknowledges the existence of contemporary
critical approaches to biblical historiography (i.e.,
the Minimalists, who earn a "see also" reference
in the subject index to fiction). He positions
himself as a centrist historian, noting that, for
instance, the Exodus story veers too sharply from
ancient models of fiction-writing to be treated as
fiction itself (pp. 43–44). All well and good, but
the tension between Mendenhall's advocacy of
the American school comparative method and
his theologically driven hermeneutics creates
dissonance for the reader operating outside the
theological circle, and his handling of historical
evidence often fails to inspire confidence.

For example, his description of the Tell
Taʿyīnāt temple, the oft-cited type-specimen of
the Solomonic temple, as a "Phoenician-style"
structure ignores its evident situation within the
typology of Bronze Age Syrian temples built
with a megaron layout (p. 126).[3] Identification

of a drawing of a ninth-century Assyrian winged
human-headed bull (p. 136, palace of Aššur-
nāṣir-apli II) as an example of a cherub ("calf")
cannot be supported by known Assyriological
iconographic conventions and ignores the promi-
nent genitalia of the original sculpture. The bald
assertion "evidence from Mari and from as far
away as India suggests that weaving women were
often closely linked with prostitution" (p. 171,
noted in connection with the Josianic reform) is
probably little more than a specimen of sloppy
writing, but it highlights a pervasive misuse of
the comparative method. In his animadversion
against the promulgation of divination during
Manasseh's reign (pp. 164–65), Mendenhall
fails to consider licensed forms of Yahweh divi-
nation that occur in the Hebrew Scriptures, such
as Urim and Thummim. The well-seasoned claim
that the Philistines, like other Sea Peoples, sur-
rendered their cultural identities within two or
three generations of Levantine occupation (p. 48)

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[3] Four *Langraum* temples with portico *in antis*
were constructed at Tell Ḥuwēra in the third millen-
nium; W. Orthmann, "L'architecture religieuse de Tell
Chuera," *Akkadica* 69 (1990): 1–18; H. Dohmann-
Pfälzner and P. Pfälzner, "Untersuchungen zur Urba-
nisierung Nordmesopotamiens im 3. Jt. v. Chr.: Wohn-
quartierplanung und städtische Zentrumsgestaltung
in Tall Chuēra," *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 9 (1996):
1–13. Four temples, all of the megaron type, were
found at Late Bronze Age Emar; see J. Margueron,
"Architecture et urbanisme," in D. Beyer, ed., *A
l'occasion d'une exposition: Meskéné-Emar: dix ans
de travaux, 1972–1982*, Mission Archéologique de
Meskéné-Emar (Paris, 1982), pp. 23–39, especially
the twin temples (fig. 4) and also "Emar: un exemple
d'implantation hittite en terre syrienne," in J. Mar-
gueron, ed., *Le Moyen Euphrate: zone de contacts et
d'échanges: Actes du Colloque de Strasbourg 10–12
mars 1977*, Université des Sciences Humaines de Stras-
bourg: Travaux du Centre de Recherche sur le Proche-
Orient et la Grèce Antiques 5 (Strasbourg, 1980),
pp. 285–312; W. T. Pitard, "The Archaeology of
Emar," in M. W. Chavalas, ed., *Emar: The History,
Religion, and Culture of a Syrian Town in the Late
Bronze Age* (Bethesda, Maryland, 1996), pp. 17–18,

21; W. Orthmann and H. Kühne, "Mumbaqat 1973: Vor-
läufiger Bericht über die von der Deutschen Orient-
Gesellschaft mit Mitteln der Stiftung Volkswagenwerk
unternommenen Ausgrabungen," *MDOG* 106 (1974):
58–77 (Steinbau 1) and 77–79 (Steinbau 2); W. Orth-
mann, "Mumbaqat 1974: Vorläufiger Bericht über
die von der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft mit Mitteln
der Stiftung Volkswagenwerk unternommenen Aus-
grabungen," *MDOG* 108 (1976): 25–44 (Steinbauen 1
and 2, dated to approximately 1400–1200); D. Machule,
"Tall Munbāqa: Die spätbronzezeitliche Stadtanlage und
die Häuser," in P. Matthiae, M. van Loon, and H. Weiss,
eds., *Resurrecting the Past: A Joint Tribute to Adnan
Bounni*, PIHANS 67 (Leiden, 1990), pp. 199–214;
D. Machule, "Munbāqa, Tall. B. Archäologische," *
RLA* 8, pp. 418a–19b. Margueron, "Architecture et
urbanisme," pp. 32–33, asserts that the megaron-type
temple is an architectural type attested in Syria from
the first half of the third millennium to the middle
of the first millennium, a style that includes the Tell
Taʿyīnāt temple; see also Timothy P. Harrison, "Tell
Taʿyinat and the Kingdom of Unqi," in P. M. Michèle
Daviau, John William Wevers, and Michael Weigl,
eds., *The World of the Aramaeans II: Studies in His-
tory and Archaeology in Honour of Paul-Eugène Dion*,
Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement
Series, vol. 325 (Sheffield, 2001), p. 125. Add to this
list the *Langraum* South Temple excavated in the Late
Bronze city at Tell al-Furayy; see A. Bounni and
P. Matthiae, "Tell Fray: ville frontière entre hittites et
assyriens au XIIIe siècle av. J-C," *Archéologia* [Dijon]
140 (1980): 39.

needs rethinking in light of the Tell Miqne-Ekron temple inscription dedicated to an archaic Greek deity.[4]

Mendenhall's sociopolitical readings of Bronze and Iron Age culture in Western Asia have acquired the patina of reputable hypotheses within the biblical studies guild but may confuse lay readers of this volume who cannot separate surmise from "fact." Within the ambit of his famous peasant-revolt model, the community that formed the Israelite tribes was based not on racial, cultural, or shared economic concerns but consisted rather of urban outcasts and refugees voluntarily united in a common vision of ethical behavior as manifest in the covenantal kingship of Yahweh. This utopian egalitarian society exercised holy war as a purely defensive tactic, rejecting the oppressive political structures that define the Late Bronze Age Canaanite city-states (chap. 4). An unbiased glance at the biblical texts of Joshua and Judges and a passing familiarity with the archaeological horizon of the age raises the suspicion that Mendenhall's tribes of Yahweh have more in common with liberal American mid-twentieth-century Protestant theologies of a perfect social order than the gritty reality of the past. Similarly, Mendenhall's reduction of Yahweh's chief Canaanite adversaries, Asherah and Baal, to hypostasizations of (negative) Canaanite will-to-power fails to do minimal justice to the function of these deities within the divine economy of Syria-Palestine.[5]

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[4] C. Shäfer-Lichtenberger, "PTGJH—Göttin und Herrin von Ekron," *Biblische Notizen* 91 (1998): 64–76 and idem, "The Goddess from Ekron and the Religious-Cultural Background of the Philistines," *IEJ* 50 (2000): 82–91, collated the text and sustains the original reading PTGYH. She argues that the name was compounded from Pytho and the theophoric element Gaia in a relatively well-attested pattern and suggests that a Bronze Age cult of Gaia/Demeter from Pytho, the Delphic shrine, immigrated with the Philistines to the southern Levantine coast.

[5] Note the definition of Baal in the glossary p. 262: "A label for any ancient Near Eastern god associated with power and manifested in storm, war, and kingship. Actually, as the deification of the state, a Baal symbolized the value of coercive force and political control. The early Israelites opposed the revival of Baal worship because it promoted power considerations above ethical ones."

"But the fact remains that the Bible . . . is the only important aspect of *any* of these ancient civilizations that survives to the present day" (p. 23, italics in text). In common with many conservative commentators, Mendenhall adopts the ethnic and cult polemics of the Hebrew Scriptures as his own.[6] The Canaanites, captains of spiritually debased power-drunken city-states, gave way somehow to the utopian ideals of tough-minded Yahwistic peasantry. In time, through the election of a traditional Middle Eastern sovereign, the Israelites revert to the reprehensible and self-destructive power-politics of their Canaanite antagonists by the creation of the historical kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Israel and Judah, through the abnegation of their Yahwistic heritage, succumb to ethical paralysis, and history sweeps the kingdoms aside. The pattern repeats. "[T]he early Christian community, probably beginning with Jesus himself, had an understanding of scripture that was not only *different* from the Jewish religious establishment of the time but also based on *older* Israelite understandings of the religious tradition" (p. 205, italics in text). Judaism itself grew legalistic and cancerously riddled with empty ritual (Mendenhall's laws of elaboration and contrast, p. 5) and so was superseded through the first-century reform movement of Jesus, a reversion to the genius of true Yahwism. Christian supercessionism of this blatancy, thankfully, is becoming rare in mainline Protestant academic publications.

I fear I cannot recommend this book to any audience. If a conservative Christian reader is interested in a general survey of Israelite history, B. S. J. Isserlin, *The Israelites* (Minneapolis, 2001), for example, methodically covers the same pre-Christian ground and with a minimum of theologically controlled reconstructions of the sort that reduce Mendenhall's work to

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[6] At the most trite level of cultural interdependence, where would Mendenhall's superior Western civilization be today without the Roman alphabet (with origins in the West Semitic world), the 24-hour day (Mesopotamia), and foundational mathematical discoveries (Egypt and Mesopotamia), which led, ultimately, to the creation of the personal computer upon which *Ancient Israel's Faith and History* was edited into readable prose?

an extended—and very dated—confessional manifesto.

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Forgiveness in a Wounded World: Jonah's Dilemma. By JANET HOWE GAINES. Society of Biblical Literature, Studies in Biblical Literature, no. 5. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003. Pp. xi + 179. $26.95 (paperback).

Intended for a general readership, this book argues that forgiveness can help "heal" the world in which we live, heal the wounds of national and international conflict, heal the psychic wounds we inflict on ourselves. The book of Jonah, Gaines argues, depicts a divine precedent for such forgiveness, at the same time illustrating the human difficulty in realizing this ideal.

She divides her book into six chapters, the first of which sets the parameters of the study. Four following chapters are devoted to an exploration of the biblical book and how forgiveness emerges as a central theme. The concluding chapter asserts the salubrious effect of forgiving, citing, among other things, the success of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, and asserts the difficulty that Jewish survivors of the Holocaust face trying to forgive former concentration camp guards for the murder of their relatives (especially because Jewish tradition stipulates that only the victim can offer forgiveness). Gaines's book, therefore, mixes self-help advice with biblical exegesis. The success of the book will probably depend on the reader's predisposition toward certain axioms as well as the reader's capacity to indulge the occasional sermonic tone. If the reader can affirm that "our egos are strong and our flesh is weak" (p. 81), can affirm that "without God's forgiveness, human beings would remain in a broken state" (p. 165), can affirm that "by imitating Christ and forgiving those who do not ask for forgiveness, we become part of a circular process involving the divine and the human"

(p. 157), then he or she may find the book's thesis convincing.

Gaines's exegesis comprises the meat of the book. She appeals to a diverse range of authorities, including nineteenth-century Assyriologists, Freud, Jung, Elie Wiesel, Joseph Campbell, the Talmud, and other postbiblical Jewish writings. References are made to everything from *Moby Dick* to the *Star Wars* character Han Solo. Not infrequently these details appear fanciful; she writes that it is possible to consider "Nineveh as being connected to the fish" (p. 84) based on the cuneiform representation of the city name, which supposedly includes a fish. Many observations seem to be offered for the sake of curiosity rather than for anything they contribute to the elucidation of the theme of forgiveness.

In a similar way, Gaines includes multiple interpretations of words, images, and motifs that seem at times incidental to her thesis. The multiple readings are sometimes even confusing. On p. 44 the sea is characterized as "dark, violent, potentially deadly," though it is also "symbolic . . . of amniotic fluid that is both a sign of human immaturity and the potential for growth" and still later is "the primal source of all things" (p. 84).

No philological problems are addressed thoroughly. (Frequently, multiple English translations are cited for difficult words.) Moreover, Gaines makes few references to more basic, balanced commentaries, such as Jack Sasson's. There are few connections drawn to other ancient Near Eastern texts.

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Waiting for Josiah: The Judges. By PHILIPPE GUILLAUME. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series 385. London: T & T Clark International, 2004. Pp. xiii + 325. $125.95.

The title of this Geneva dissertation is extracted from the third of Guillaume's proposed seven developmental stages of the biblical book of Judges. Building on key contributions by W. Richter, E. A. Knauf, M. Cogan, W. Beyerlin,