

Review Article

THREE ROUNDS WITH A HEAVYWEIGHT IN THE MAXIMALIST-MINIMALIST 'CONTEST': A REVIEW OF THE DEVER TRILOGY¹

Hendrik Bosman
Department of Old and New Testament
Stellenbosch University

Abstract

WG Dever is a well known archaeologist who for more than a decade has become entangled in an exhausting polemical debate with so-called "minimalists" (PR Davies, NP Lemche, TL Thompson, KW Whitelam etc.). This review article attempts to describe common trends of thought in three of his recently published monographs and evaluate whether he has succeeded in reaching the goals he has set for himself. In conclusion no attempt will be made to harmonize the "maximalist-minimalist" debate since despite the often acerbic rhetoric, much needed attention was generated for gaining more conceptual clarity about the historicity of Old Testament narratives.

Key words: Archaeology, History of Ancient Israel, WG Dever

1. Introduction

One seldom has the opportunity to scrutinize three monographs on related topics written over a period of four years by one author. Although the short space of time triggers a certain hermeneutic of suspicion about the rigour and the depth of the scholarship reflected in the monographs, the solid scholarship reflected in much of the author's earlier research convinces the reviewer to press ahead with the scrutiny of WG Dever's trilogy.

In calmer moments of well reflected scholarship, Dever (2003a:60) has been astute in identifying some of the most important questions to be addressed by Old Testament / Hebrew Bible research: "How is a "past" created? How does our reconstruction of the past shape us? And, above all, who *owns* the past" (his emphasis). Dever's pivotal contribution to write the obituary of "Biblical archaeology" as a hermeneutical and even a theological construct, is well known and he made a significant contribution to the debate on how one can reconstruct the history of ancient Israel. When scrutinizing the trilogy, it will be asked if he continues to make a constructive contribution to clarify the important questions he has identified.

¹ Dever, WG 2001. *What did the Biblical Writers Know and When did They Know it? What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. ISBN 0 8028 4794 3. Hardback \$25.00.
Dever, WG 2003. *Who Were the Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. ISBN 0 8028 0975 8. Hardback \$25.00.
Dever, WG 2005. *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. ISBN 0 8028 2852 3. Hardback \$25.00.

My discussion of Dever's trilogy will attempt to evaluate his contribution to scholarship in terms of his own agenda of "secularizing" his branch of archaeology. To put it in his own words (Dever 2003a):

- a) to eliminate the longstanding biases resulting from theological, political, and cultural presuppositions;
- b) to create an autonomous, professional discipline that could take a respectable place within the mainstream of Near Eastern archaeology; and above all
- c) to foster a dialogue between this newly-independent branch of archaeology and Biblical studies, not a monologue as previously, in the belief that each discipline needed and could benefit from the other.

2. 'What did the Biblical Writers Know and When did They Know it?' (2001)

The author eventually, after more about 270 pages, answers the questions reflected in the title: "they knew a lot and they knew it early" (Dever 2001:273). What arguments lead to this conclusion? On the surface Dever's book seems to function as a polemical counter for the "new revisionist school", of which PR Davies, NP Lemche, TL Thompson and KW Whitelam are identified as prominent members. If one, however, pays attention to the author's "Foreword" other concerns than a polemical attack on the "minimalists" emerge.

In an almost nostalgic way Dever acknowledges that this book "has been 35 years in the making" and that he wants to be "up-front" about his own ideology as a writer (Dever 2001:ix). He recalls his childhood as being "reared on the Bible" by his father who was a warm and compassionate "old-fashioned fundamentalist" and entertains the interesting possibility that his "own homiletical style in the classroom and in popular lectures come from him" (Dever 2001: ix).

He traces his academic career from a liberal arts college in Tennessee to a doctorate at Harvard under GE Wright in the early 1960's and how he was increasingly challenged by the critical study of the Bible. Wright introduced him to archaeology and his first dig was at Shechem in 1962. On completing his dissertation at Harvard, one year was spent at the Hebrew Union College where he came into contact with Nelson Glueck who was instrumental in his eventual appointment as director of the WF Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem. Through his direction of excavations at Gexer, Shechem and several West Bank sites he was impressed by the potential of "a dialogue between archaeology and biblical studies" in which "the *realia* of archaeology could illuminate ancient Israel" (Dever 2001:x).

Dever (2001: x) returned to the United States in 1975 to take up an academic appointment in a department of anthropologically-oriented archaeology where he develops a "new style of 'biblical archaeology'". At the same time he (nominally) converts to Judaism, since he prefers to call himself a "secular humanist" who finds the Jewish *tradition* to be suitable to him (Dever 2001: x).

After reading *In search of 'Ancient Israel'* by Philip R Davies in 1992, he immersed himself in what he describes as "revisionist" and "postmodern" literature and this initial challenge and eventual response led up to the writing of the present volume (Dever 2001: x). On posing the question why he wrote the book, he frankly responds: "Because I had to, not only to counter the 'revisionists'" abuse of archaeology, but to show how modern archaeology brilliantly illuminates a *real* Israel in the Iron Age, and also to help foster the

dialogue between archaeology and biblical studies that I had always envisioned" (Dever 2001:x).

In a word of warning to the reader Dever (2001:x) describes this book as a "popular" and a "polemical" book that is intended to be accessible for the nonspecialist and with enough footnotes for the more scholarly reader to pursue matters of academic interest. It should therefore not come as a surprise that the rhetoric employed by Dever in this book has a "homiletic" ring to it, denouncing the minimalists in a "booming voice" that inhibits the very dialogue he initially wanted to establish and nurture.

In the **first chapter** Dever (2001: 1-21) approaches the *Bible as History, Literature and Theology*. He takes note of the fact that the Bible remains a mysterious book, despite it being the classic in Western culture for centuries and contrary to numerous recent attempts by television and the printed media to popularize the Bible (Dever 2001: 1-2).

He laments the trend in many theological colleges and seminaries to replace tuition in Hebrew and Greek with what he calls "more stylish courses in liberation theology; feminist approaches to the Bible, new literary criticism..." (Dever 2001: 3). A warning is sounded by Dever that one should not allow biblical tradition to be attacked in such a way that it is jettisoned without being able to put something in its place. Asking: "Is the Bible 'Historical' at All?", Dever points out that even the most critical biblical scholarship in the previous two centuries did not deny the historicity of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament in the same way as it is done by recent revisionist histories. This farewell to the Old Testament as history must be taken seriously and Dever (2001: 5) is of the opinion that these "revisionist histories" constitute "the denial of the existence of any basis for knowledge or truth."

At least Dever must receive credit for asking "What kind of 'History'?" do we find in the Hebrew Bible? Although English only used one word "history" in this regard, one has to face up to the challenge of considering different kinds of history – each with its own methodology, aims and materials (Dever 2001: 5):

- The academic discipline of the writing of history (Historiography).
- A less formal and narrative version of history (History).
- Accounts of the past consisting of mainly mythical and folklore elements (Story).
- In short the following aims can be discerned in the engagement with the past: political history, intellectual history, socio-economic history, technological history, art history, ideological history, natural history and cultural history.

As part of a discussion of the so called "Bankruptcy of 'mere philology'", several academic skirmishes between minimalists and maximalists in the 1990's are described (Dever 2001: 6-9). In the words of Baruch Halpern, who quotes Jacob Burkhardt, the "desperation among exclusively text-based historians" can be "characterized as the 'spiritual bankruptcy of philology' in itself" (Halpern 1996: 23).

Although Dever (2001: 10) agrees that the "revisionists" are correct that "it is no longer possible simply to read the Hebrew Bible at face value as 'history'"; he strongly disagrees that this implies that no history can be gleaned from some biblical literature.

One can summarize the programmatic first chapter as follows: On the one hand, the Bible is not the unquestioned narrative framework into which all archaeological discoveries must fit. On the other hand, the Bible is not "history" in the modern sense of the word, but it can still contribute to historiographical reflection. Dever then poses the provocative alternative: Is the Bible really mute in the historical sense of the word or are the historians deaf?

The Bible also does not contain one coherent Biblical Theology, but it remains profoundly important for theological thought. One is still left with the question if central events in the Bible can be theologically significant without being historically verifiable – amongst others by archaeology?

In the **second chapter** Dever (2002: 23-52) discusses the *Current School of Revisionists and their Nonhistories of Ancient Israel*. At first he acknowledges that the “revisionists have pointed to a real crisis” and that they “did not themselves bring about this crisis” (Dever 2001:23-24). He continues by pointing out that recent trends in contemporary biblical studies have contributed to the ongoing devaluation of the biblical texts as historical sources. After not so vigorous discussions of the “postmodern agenda”, “deconstructionism” he attempts to identify a “postmodern ideology” with a supposed “revisionist agenda” that in the end amounts to a “revolution” (Dever 2001: 24-28).

This chapter consists of polemical argumentation that makes use of somewhat opportunistic representations of the opposing side of the argument – real dialogue requires a more concerted effort to understand the presuppositions of the partners in conversation! Against this décor of disputed and questionable epistemology, PR Davies, TL Thompson, KW Whitelam, NP Lemche are paraded as “revisionists” who are responsible for “nonhistories” of ancient Israel – or in the words of Knauf: a “pseudohistory of nonevents” (Dever 2001: 28-40). Even Finkelstein is to some extent linked to the “revisionist” camp due to his publications on “ethnicity” and the “date of the rise of the Israelite state” (Dever 2001: 40-44).

In **chapter 3** the question is posed *What Archaeology is and what can it contribute to Biblical Studies?* (Dever 2001: 53-95). A concise and erudite summary is provided of the development of archaeology in Syro-Palestine from the nineteenth century up to the turn of the millennium. In this historical survey of the rise and demise of biblical archaeology some interesting observations are provided about the linkage between biblical archaeology and biblical theology in the two decades after the Second World War. With more enthusiasm the rise of Syro-Palestinian archaeology is described of which Dever can at least claim to be the godfather of. Syro-Palestinian archaeology is depicted as a “specialized, professional and secular” discipline – an example where the product reflects important characteristics of the creator or initiator (Dever 2001: 62). The contribution that archaeology can make to Biblical Studies is that it makes the Bible more tangible and “real” and it allows both artefact and text to be “read” or interpreted in view of one another (Dever 2001: 67).

Chapters 4 – 5 provide numerous examples of Dever’s erudition and undoubted archaeological expertise when a detailed discussion is offered of the most important archaeological discoveries in the twentieth century (Dever 2001: 97-243). Two examples will have to suffice: on the one hand, textual references in Judges and 1 Samuel are associated with archaeological findings concerned with village settlements in the twelfth century BCE; on the other hand he succeeds in linking the descriptions of the temple of Solomon in the books of Kings and Chronicles with the remnants of Syro-Palestinian temples erected in the period from the Middle Bronze to the Iron Age.

To his credit one must recognize that Dever does not attempt to misuse archaeology to prove the historicity of the Bible. He rather opts for a method of “convergences” in terms of which he identifies instances where the context (*Sitz im Leben*) of the Bible corresponds with archaeology. What is not clear is how Dever decides when “convergences” are in order or not. Dever will have to provide clearer criteria for his decision that patriarchal narra-

tives and the narratives concerned with Saul do not allow for “convergences”, but from Solomon onwards it does. Simply to assert the “unhistorical” nature of the narratives due to a postulated scholarly consensus in this regard is not enough!

In the final **chapter 6**, Dever (2001: 245-194) once again poses a question: *What is left of the history of ancient Israel, and why should it matter to anyone anymore?* From the start Dever (2001: 245) is of the opinion that the crisis in the “current study of the history of ancient Israel” not only concerns theologians and clerics but “all who cherish the Western cultural tradition, which in large part derives from values enshrined in the Bible.”

On a very broad canvas Dever (2001: 245 - 256) proceeds to describe how he perceives “the Western Tradition” and “the Enlightenment” to be under attack due to the impact of Postmodernism. In a synthesis characterized by generalizations the previously identified “revisionists” are now unmasked as being “typical postmodernists” due to their ideology, politics and rhetoric (Dever 2001: 257-262). After demonstrating how he thinks the “revisionists” got it wrong by denying that texts are conditioned in terms of time and space; that language is not indeterminate but specific and that it is nonsense to argue that *how* texts signify is more important than *what* they signify. This is enough grounds for Dever (2001: 265-266) to formulate an “indictment of all the minimalist approaches to the Hebrew Bible and to the history of ancient Israel.” With sweeping statements with little or no argumentation he concludes that the minimalist approach:

- “is hardly innovative, much less ‘revolutionary’ – in fact he depicts it as ‘New Age pap’ that stems largely from a failure of intellectual and theological nerve.” This diatribe utilizes rhetoric that does not do any academic cause any good, least of all the case Dever is so passionate about!
- “is arrogant and pretentious in its claims to ‘new knowledge’ – not so much ‘post – Enlightenment’ as *anti-Enlightenment*...”
- “is ultimately frivolous, parroting and exalting cleverness above sensibility.”
- “masquerades as ‘progressive’ scholarship, but is really demagoguery.”
- “in practice amounts to nihilism since it has ‘no epistemological foundations.’”

In a final **conclusion** Dever (2001: 295 -298) summarizes his own book as follows:

- a) He focused on *methodology* “to unmask the revisionists’ ideology and the postmodernist paradigm that lies partly hidden behind it.” This according to Dever is a “faulty methodology” to approach the texts of the Hebrew Bible.
- b) To counter the conclusion made by the minimalists Dever endeavoured to show “how archaeology provides a *context* for many of the narratives in the Hebrew Bible.”

In a last fervent plea Dever (2001: 298) states that “Ancient Israel *is* there, a reality perhaps often hidden in the idealistic portraits of the Hebrew Bible or obscured by its overriding theocratic version of history, and also hidden in the dirt awaiting the discoveries of the archaeologist.”

There are two sides to Dever’s book: as a summary of Syro-Palestinian archaeology it is erudite and informative; but as a polemical critique of the minimalist trends in Old Testament scholarship it does not escape being passionately partisan for his own cause. Dever seems to be unnecessarily contentious and ignores areas of agreement with of all people TL Thompson (2001: 309), who indicates some of these areas of agreement: “he does agree with me that the whole (Bible) was ‘finally woven into a composite, highly complex liter-

ary fabric sometime in the Hellenistic period... He similarly shares my view of the Bible as a library, including many different literary forms from myth to prophecy and apocalyptic... and sees its authors as 'having ancient sources, going back to at least to the 8th century, BC.'

3. 'Who were the Israelites and Where did They come From?' (2003)

Dever (2003: ix) starts his **Introduction** with a sweeping statement that sets the tone for much of the rest of the book: "For nearly two thousand years the so-called "Western cultural tradition" has traced its origins back to ancient Israel." He continues by asking: "But what if ancient Israel was "invented" by Jews living much later, and the biblical literature is therefore nothing but pious propaganda?" His conclusion is characteristically blunt: "The story of Israel in the Hebrew Bible would have to be considered a monstrous literary hoax, one that has cruelly deceived countless millions of people..."

The question regarding the use of "archaeological evidence as a "control" in rereading the biblical texts" is answered by Dever's helpful suggestion to consider five approaches in doing so (2003: x):

- a) The assumption that the biblical text is *literary true* and to consider external evidence as irrelevant.
- b) To consider the biblical text to be *probably true*, but to search external corroboration of the biblical text.
- c) To approach the biblical text with *no preconceptions* and to identify the "convergences" between text and external data, whilst remaining sceptical about the rest.
- d) To contend that nothing in the biblical text is true, *unless proven by external data*.
- e) Reject the text since the Bible *cannot be true* at all.

It is also enlightening to take note of Dever's own choice: "I shall resolutely hold to the middle ground" and this indicates (c) as his personal preference since he is of the opinion "that truth is most likely to be found there" (2003: x).

Throughout the book Dever attempts to identify "convergences" between Syro-Palestinian artefacts and the biblical text. This is easier said than done! A very brief summary is provided of "The current crisis in understanding the origins of Early Israel" in the **first chapter** (Dever 2003: 1-5). In the second chapter the question is posed: "The 'Exodus' – history or myth?" and the author finds no conclusive evidence for any "convergences" and therefore is unable to answer his own question (Dever 2003: 7-21). The **third chapter** discusses "The conquest of Transjordan" and succeeds to point out one possible "convergence" between Tell el-Umeiri and the Reubenites – but as Dever himself comments this "convergence" is ironical since it concerns a site that is not even mentioned in the Bible (2003: 35)!

The **fourth chapter** shifts the focus to "The conquest of the Land west of the Jordan: theories and facts" (Dever 2003: 37-74). Different theories concerning the settlement of Israel in Palestine are considered by Dever in the light of possible convergences with available archaeological evidence. After testing the conquest, peaceful infiltration and peasant revolt models of Israelite settlement; Dever proposes the emergence of Israel in Iron Age I from lowland Canaan in **chapters 5 to 7** (Dever 2003: 75-128). The three main pillars for Dever's theory on the emergence of Israel are:

- a) The archaeological record of the Late Bronze Age (15th-13th century) in Palestine that indicates a degeneration of the Canaanite city-states.

- b) The Amarna Letters where one can discern a process during which wealth was consolidated in the hands of a minority during the collapse of the city-states in Canaan.
- c) The resulting gap between the affluent and the poor as the most important motivation for the agrarian reformers to migrate to the sparsely populated hill country.

Thus the early or proto-Israelites are depicted as agrarian reformers with a social vision and in light of the Merneptah stele Dever (2003: 188-189) presumes that they settled in the hill country of Ephraim and Manasseh with land reform as the driving force – in a way similar to the Shaker and Amish movements in the United States (**chapters 8 tot 11**)!

Dever (2003: 237-241) is correct to conclude the second part of his trilogy with a word of caution: modern Israelis and Palestinians can hardly equate themselves “with ancient Israelite conquerors” or “beleaguered ancient Canaanites”. Syro-Palestinian archaeology reminds modern combatants in the Near East that during the Late Bronze and Iron Ages the ancestors of both the Israelis and the Palestinians inhabited the Promised Land!

After reading this book one is still in the dark as to the reasons for the “Canaanite colonists who settled in the hill country to become a separate ethnic group.” Reasons are provided why they moved but not why they changed!

4. ‘Did God have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel’ (2005)

In the last part of the trilogy, Dever sets out to reconstruct the practice of religion in ancient Israel “from the ground up” by utilising predominantly archaeological data.

In **chapter one** Dever defines his task and approach in “*Defining and contextualising religion*”. He presents himself as “an archaeologist and an anthropologist and therefore a historian” (Dever 2005: 8). With these credentials he sets out to study the folk or popular religion of ancient Israel which he contends can be accessed by “archaeology alone” (Dever 2005:12).

Chapter two is concerned with “*The history of the history: in search of ancient Israelite religions*”, whilst “*Sources and methods for the study of ancient Israel’s religions*” is considered in **chapter three**. In both these chapters Dever provides a survey of approaches to Israelite religion, reflects on biblical sources and throughout (again!) argues for the priority of archaeology in the historical reconstruction of ancient Israel’s religion. Despite the priority of archaeology there is a surprising reliance on biblical texts as sources to describe the everyday life and the history of the religion of Israel.

Cultic terminology and related activities as discussed in **chapter four** under the heading “*The Hebrew Bible: Religious reality or theological ideal*”. In the **chapters five to seven** crucial aspects are discussed: “*Archaeological evidence for folk religions in ancient Israel*” (chapter 5); the controversial topic “*The goddess Asherah and her cult*” (chapter 6); as well as “*Asherah, women’s cults and ‘official Yahwism’*” (chapter 7). In chapter five Dever’s main premise seems to be that the official religion of Israel was closely linked to written texts, which had to be distinguished from popular Israelite religion that was in fact the more prevalent Israelite religious praxis. Dever acknowledges a persistent ambiguity about Asherah: is Asherah a consort of YHWH or a type of hypostatization of the “feminine” side of God? (Dever 2005: 19& 256). Little differentiation is allowed between different periods of the history of Israelite religion – the official religion of the monarchic period surely differs markedly from the post-exilic religion. The same is probably true of the popular religion.

One might consider the history of the goddess Asherah for a brief moment: Asherah as goddess is found primarily in Ugaritic texts from the fourteenth to the twelfth centuries and Dever does not provide any convincing argument to bridge the more than four centuries between Ugarit and the Bible. The mystery why Asherah has not been found in any Phoenician text of the first millennium is also not discussed by Dever (Ahituv 2006:64). An additional nagging problem is that many of the references to Asherah in the Hebrew Bible (1 Kings 15:13; 2 Kings 21: 3,7; 23:7 etc), seem to be related to a cultic object like a wooden pole and not to a female deity (Ahituv 2006: 65).

The arguments of the book, and to some extent elements of the first two books, are summarized in the **last two chapters**: “*From polytheism to monotheism*” (chapter 8) and “*What does the goddess do to help?*” (chapter 9). In most of chapter eight Dever depicts the authors of the Bible doing their level best to hide or conceal the popular or folk religion. Somehow Dever came to the opinion that the folk religion was morally superior to monotheistic Yahwism. Dever eventually comes to the conclusion that the popular religion (not the official book religion) was by and large a “domestic religion” with strong emphasis on “women’s cults and their role in family rituals” (Dever 2005: 251). The book or official religion, however, eventually evolved to become an exclusive Yahwistic version of monotheism. Therefore the official monotheistic religion, in contrast to the popular religion, remained an artificial construct that emerged from the exile in Babylon (Dever 2005: 252).

Without denying a diversity of Yahwisms existing in the history of Israelite religion, it seems very artificial for Dever to presume such a stark distinction between establishment or book religion and folk or popular religion (Ahituv 2006: 62).

Although this last part of the trilogy is not a calm and collected summary of the religion of ancient Israel, it does provide much food for thought and might even stimulate better mutual understanding between the biblical text and historical context of material culture accessed by archaeology.

5. Conclusion

The controversy between the “maximalists” and the “minimalists” uses rhetoric similar to the strong language used during the confrontation between Albright, on the one hand, and Alt and Noth, on the other hand. Thus Albright considered Noth’s point of view to be “nihilistic”, while Dever made many similar references to the “minimalists” (Noth 1960: 262; Lemche 2005:203).

An ironic remark is appropriate with regards to Dever’s longstanding critique of the concept of “Biblical archaeology” (Dever 1997: 315-319; Bartlett 1999: 54). He made a major contribution to expose the ideological and even fundamentalist use of the term. But one is still tempted to enquire whether his critique makes the term to be redundant and of no heuristic value? Surely, the term “Biblical archaeology” can also be defined in an inoffensive way “as the archaeology of sites associated with the Bible” (Fritz 1999: 116; Cobbing 2002: 361). “Biblical archaeology” is not required to “prove” the Bible one way or the other, since it does not necessarily entail an ideological position – it merely indicates “an area of interest or specialization as valid as any other” (Cobbing 2002: 362). This remark must not be construed as an intimation that Dever, despite his extended campaign against “biblical archaeology”, has remained a “closet Biblical archaeologist” (Zevit 2004: 3-19; Henige 2006: 88).

The use of “convergences” by Dever makes him prone to an almost inevitable circularity in his argumentation. Biblical narratives from approximately the eighth century BCE are considered to contain traditions that are of historical significance because they converge

with the manner in which Dever interprets available archaeological data. Very little room for difference of opinion is tolerated by the author and the surprising vehemence of Dever's criticism of Finkelstein's theory of nomadic resedentarization illustrates this point.

Dever might be offensive in much of his criticism of the so called postmodern minimalists, but he has taken at least a long needed step towards the discussion of the philosophical and epistemological presuppositions of his adversaries. The rigorous pursuit of a dialogue between the historical study of biblical texts and archaeology will need clear heads and cool temperaments to make any headway – Dever might have pointed to the way to do it, not necessarily how to do it!

Let me conclude by evaluating the trilogy by Dever according to the criteria he set out for his own contribution to scholarship (2003a: 58):

- a) *“to eliminate longstanding biases resulting from theological, political and cultural presuppositions”*. Despite Dever's attempt to be upfront about his own presuppositions, his passion for archaeology and the Hebrew Bible did not allow him to do justice to this first criterion. Instead of stimulating self-critical introspection, he has triggered numerous indignant responses of self-justification.
- b) *“to create an autonomous, professional discipline that could take a respectable place within the mainstream of Near Eastern archaeology.”* Despite Dever's admirable and longstanding critique of an ideological slanted biblical archaeology, the discipline “biblical archaeology” has redefined itself and thus gained a new lease of life. The Bar-Ilan University has recently launched a campaign to raise \$50 million for a proposed Institute for Biblical Archaeology! Time will tell if Dever's suggestion to refrain from using both biblical archaeology as well as Syro-Palestinian archaeology will have any significant impact. As alternative Dever (2003a: 60) proposed *“to adopt the current modern names of the various political entities in the region... we should simply speak of ‘archaeology of Israel’ ... ‘archaeology of Palestine’ ... ‘archaeology of Jordan.’”*
- c) *“to foster a dialogue between this newly-independent branch of archaeology and Biblical studies, not a monologue as previously, in the belief that each discipline needed and could benefit from the other.”* Dialogue must not be confused with heated debate. There can be no doubt that Dever in his numerous altercations with the minimalists over more than a decade has stimulated vigorous debate. A next generation of scholars will have to judge if this debate created as much new light on the respective academic disciplines as it did heated thrust and parry.

Bibliography

- Ahituv, S 2006. “Did God really have a wife?” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 32/5: 62 -66.
- Bartlett, JR 1999. “Archaeology and Biblical Studies,” in (ed.) JH Hayes, *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation A-J*. Nashville: Abingdon, 49-56.
- Cobbing, FJ 2002. “Biblical Archaeology,” in (ed.) J Barton, *The Biblical World* Volume 1. London: Routledge, 345-362.
- Davies, PR 1992. *In search of ‘Ancient Israel’*, (JSOTS 148). Sheffield: JSOT.
- Dever, 1997. “Biblical Archaeology,” in (ed.) EM Meyers, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East* Volume 1. New York: Oxford University Press, 315-319.
- Dever, WG 2001. *What did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know it? What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

- Dever, WG 2003a. "Whatchamacallit. Why it's so hard to name our field." *Biblical Archaeological Review* 29:4, 56-61.
- Dever, WG 2003b. *Who Were the Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Dever, WG 2005. *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Fritz, V 1999. "Biblical Archaeology", in (eds.) E Fahlbusch *et al.*, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* Volume A-D. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 115-116.
- Halpern, B 1996. *The First Historians: the Hebrew Bible and History*. University Park: Penn State University Press.
- Henige, D 2006. "A war of pots and kettles: the dubious discourse of WG Dever". *SJOT* 20/1: 77-95.
- Lemche, NP 2005. "Conservative scholarship on the move." *SJOT* 19:1, 203-252.
- Noth, M 1960. "Der Beitrag der Archäologie zur Geschichte Israels." *VTS* 7, 262-282.
- Thompson, TL 2001. "Methods and results: A review of two recent publications." *SJOT* 15: 306-325.
- Zevit, Z 2004. "The Biblical Archaeology versus Syro-Palestinian Archaeology debate in its American institutional and intellectual contexts" in JK Hoffmeier and A Millard (eds.), *The future of Biblical Archaeology: reassessing methodologies and assumptions*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 3-19.