An Examination of Biblical Archaeology's Impact on Exegetical and Theological Method with Attendant Case Study

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Abstract

The chief concern of this paper is to examine how one can integrate archaeological data into the exegetical and theological processes so that one might profitably learn how to understand and rightly apply the text. This paper will argue that archaeology informs the exegetical process through providing historical and literary context to the study of the Bible when properly understood, and that it can also be useful in the theological process as one seeks to rightly integrate illumination from other sources. After an analysis of how archaeology can be rightly integrated in the exegetical and theological processes the paper will assess the profits and dangers of archaeological integration offering a current case study exemplifying the risks of integrating archaeological findings in the exegetical and theological processes from William Lane Craig's most recent work on the Historical Adam.

Keywords

Biblical Archaeology, Theological Method, Exegetical Method, Historical Adam

Cover Page Footnote

Introduction

Christians have long held that the Bible is a source of truth that informs how they should live their lives. The question has not been so much a matter of if, but how? In *Four Views on Moving beyond the Bible to Theology* Gary Meadors posits the question asked by interpreters and readers of the text: "What do you do as a Christian who desires to please God, to follow the leadership he has provided, and to obey his Word?"[1] Meadors then makes an assertion that all evangelicals could assent to when he states, "God has provided a special, inspired text for our benefit, but he has not provided inspired commentaries. The believing community glorifies God by engaging the debate about how the Bible informs contemporary questions it did not always originally envision."[2] *Four Views on Moving beyond the Bible to Theology* is ultimately concerned with theological method, specifically the realm of practical theology, and the application of the text for a contemporary audience. However, long before theological method is initiated, prerequisite tasks are accomplished through exegesis.

The chief concern of this paper is to examine how one can integrate archaeological data into the exegetical and theological processes so that one might profitably learn how to understand and rightly apply the text. This paper argues that, when accurately understood, archaeological study should be integrated into biblical and theological study as it informs the exegetical process by providing the historical and literary context for the study of the Bible which informs theological method. Beginning with an analysis of how archaeology can be rightly integrated in the exegetical and theological processes, this paper assesses the profits and dangers of archaeological integration with two case studies exemplifying the benefits and risks of integrating archaeological findings in the exegetical and theological processes.

The Role of Archaeology in Exegesis

The preferred exegetical method for evangelicals, according to Walter C. Kaiser Jr. is the "grammatico-historical" method.

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[1] Gary T. Meadors and Walter C. Kaiser, eds., *Four Views on Moving beyond the Bible to Theology*, Counterpoints Bible & Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 8.

[2] Meadors and Kaiser, *Four Views on Moving beyond the Bible to Theology*, 8.

> The aim of the grammatico-historical method is to determine the sense required by the laws of grammar and the facts of history (…) what we would understand by the term literal (to use a synonym derived from Latin). Thus, the grammatical sense, (…) is the simple, direct, plain, ordinary, and literal sense of the phrases, clauses, and sentences. The historical sense is that sense which is demanded by a careful consideration of the time and circumstances in which the author wrote. It is the specific meaning which an author's words require when the historical context and background are taken into account.[3]

However, the ability to arrive at this sense has been deeply affected by chasms of time, between two through four millennia, culture, and language. To bridge these chasms, an exegete must become a man of many hats. Those who labor in the Old Testament, which will serve as the basis of this study, are required to know multiple cultures, languages, and historical accounts in order to exegete any singular portion of the text. The Old Testament, written in Hebrew and Aramaic, contains accounts of those who lived, worked, and traveled through Mesopotamia, Assyria, Persia, Babylon, Egypt, and Canaan. These territories each had their own religions, qualms, traditions, languages, governments, and other localized phenomena which impact biblical interpretation over the 1500 years of the writing the text of the Hebrew Bible. The authors of these texts were seemingly not concerned with explaining details that were commonly understood by participants in these cultures. Thus, for today's audience, it seems that the knowledge of these facets of life were taken for granted when addressed to their original context. The contemporary interpreter however must find a way to obtain this background knowledge if they are to be competent exegetes. Robert B. Chisholm Jr. explains in his work *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Using Biblical Hebrew* that one "cannot preach credibly and competently from the Old Testament without a working knowledge of Hebrew and basic exegetical skills" neither can they teach, or rightly interpret without these facilities.[4] A craftsman is only as good as their tools and their ability to employ them. The field of biblical archaeology has been of immeasurable profit for deriving the historical background of these diverse cultures and languages. The question left to be answered is: where does biblical archaeology fit into exegetical method?

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[3] Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching*, Kindle. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998). Kindle Locations 1161-1174.

[4] Robert B. Chisholm Jr., *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Using Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), Kindle Locations 68–69.

Exegetical Method

Exegetical methods must be employed rigidly if one is to understand a text that was written millennia ago. Chisholm lists seven steps for his exegetical method. In abbreviated form, exegesis requires: 1. A basic understanding of the literary form to be analyzed, 2. A working facility in the original languages for the text under consideration, 3. Guidance on text-critical decisions, 4. The ability to precisely determine the meanings of words and phrases, 5. A syntactical analysis, 6. A form analysis that is sensitive to the literary form, 7. Development of an interpretive method.[5] Each of these seven steps are critical for proper exegesis. However, Chisholm's work was slightly hampered by its failure to elaborate more on the literary forms, or how to develop an interpretive method. It is precisely at these two points where historical and literary contexts, enhanced by archaeology, are so informative as they supply the necessary background information for understanding a text. For observations concerning historical and literary context, the exegete is severely hampered in interpretive ability if they are without a basic knowledge of the background of the cultures that influenced the authors and audience of the text. This is where the field of biblical archaeology can assist the interpreter in the exegetical process.

The Employment of Archaeology

Biblical archaeology is a subset within the larger field of archaeology and can be considered an interdisciplinary endeavor. Randall Price defines the field of biblical archaeology in his *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*. Price states that biblical archaeology is…

> an application of the science of archaeology to the field of biblical studies. The Bible, as Old Testament, is a selective account of the history of a people and a place in relation to God. (…) In relation to these concerns, biblical archaeology deals with the tangible remains of the history of the places and the people within, or providing reference to, the biblical context. The Bible has a theological perspective; archaeology has a scientific perspective. Yet when brought together in the service of a greater knowledge that informs both, a new discipline is created, joining

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[5] Chisholm Jr., *From Exegesis to Exposition*, 187–91.

archaeological research with biblical interpretation to the benefit of both the academy and the pulpit.[6]

Originally, the field of biblical archaeology sought to offer an apology for the historicity of the biblical witness during the onslaught of historical criticism.[7] Price notes that the Bible purports to be written, for the most part, by firsthand witnesses to the events described therein.[8] As such, the Bible is a historical document delivering a testimony about events, both natural and spiritual, which took place in a definite historical setting. Archaeology "is a study of ancient history or culture and the places from which they derive."[9] Though how this study is conducted may differ between archaeologists. Caroline Waerzeggers suggests in her article, "The Babylonian Chronicles: Classification and Provenance" that all types of archaeology have in common "the recovery and study of the material culture of past civilizations."[10] Since exegesis in the grammatico-historical method places a heavy emphasis on the consideration of the time and circumstances of the original author and audience, archaeology is of the utmost importance for determining these time frames and circumstances.

Time

How archaeology influences time is important, and it is typically found in issues of chronology. While the biblical writers were intentionally selective, leaving out certain things that modern readers would inquire of, the archaeological study allows for certain elements of the text to be understood through the scant amount of information that is available. For example, the book of 1 Kings and 1 Chronicles do not mention the precise year of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem. However, the Babylonian chronicles, of an unprovenanced discovery, have assisted in settling this debate to the year 586

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[6] Randall Price and H. Wayne House, *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 17.

[7] Price and House, *Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, 17.

[8] Price and House, *Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, 24.

[9] Price and House, *Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, 17.

[10] Caroline Waerzeggers, "The Babylonian Chronicles: Classification and Provenance," *JNES* 71.2 (2012): 289, https://doi.org/10.1086/666831.

BC.[11] Edwin Richard Thiele dates, with great success, the chronology of the kings by establishing their dates from archeological evidence such as the aforementioned, and the annals of Sargon.[12] From there, assuming one takes a literal reading of 1 Kings 6, one can work their way back to a date for the Exodus; a date that is unavailable from the biblical text alone.[13]

Circumstance

While dating is important for historical studies, these dates are relatively useless without additional information. This is why the historical circumstances also factor into the historical critical method of exegesis. If one is aware of the date of Cyrus' takeover of Babylon, but unaware of Cyrus' other political events, then one is likely to see something spectacular in Cyrus returning the Jews from the exile. However, after consulting the Cyrus Cylinder, it becomes apparent that the Jews received no special treatment. Moreover, this action was simply the shrewd political maneuvering of a phenomenal politician.[14] This archaeological finding also assists in describing how the Babylonian kingdom fell the night of Daniel's interpretation, which was of no special concern to Daniel. Other archaeological evidence has helped explain the identity of Belshazzar. Belshazzar's identity illuminates how he was operating a vice regent and helps make sense of the offer to make Daniel the third ruler in the kingdom instead of the second. (as Joseph before him).[15] Through these brief examples, one can see the benefit of archaeology for the interpretation of the biblical texts in the exegetical process. However, the archaeological evidence does not explain how one can apply and teach the text to today's audience. For modern day teaching

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[11] Joseph M. Holden and Norman L. Geisler, eds., *The Popular Handbook of Archaeology and the Bible* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 2013) Kindle Locations 3166 – 169.

[12] Edwin Richard Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, New rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004). MISSING PAGE NUMBER

[13] Iain W. Provan, V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015), 182.

[14] Holden and Geisler, *The Popular Handbook of Archaeology and the Bible,* Kindle Locations 3287 – 288.

[15] See 4Q242, "Prayer of Nabodinus;" For a review of the relationship to Daniel see Holden and Geisler, *The Popular Handbook of Archaeology and the Bible*, Kindle Location 844.

and application, one must leave the realm of exegesis and progress to the task of theology.

Literature

The Bible is a book, and therefore it is meant to be read. However, the Bible was written in languages (Biblical/Classical Hebrew, Imperial Aramaic, or Koine Greek) that are foreign to most of today's readers. Since these languages have undergone significant semantic shifts over the centuries, some of the vocabulary is difficult to determine. Furthermore, in the ancient context, there was no efficient means of propagating these popular and authoritative religious texts, so they had to be handwritten. As these texts multiplied, human error in manuscription multiplied, and variant readings arose. These variants have only been obtained through archaeological discovery. Lastly, every culture has literary forms that are particular to their cultural setting. For example, English poetry is determined through rhyme and meter. Ancient Near Eastern poetry, and even the haiku of the orient is not determined by such. Therefore, archaeology has been pivotal in establishing some literary criteria that greatly enhances the exegetical process.

Text Critical Decisions

As was mentioned above, the texts of the Bible were handwritten over centuries by diverse groups of people, and they were written for multiple uses. The original manuscripts are no longer extant, and the earliest manuscripts of the OT, that were accessible before the mid-20th century, were dated to the 10th century BCE (Aleppo Codex).[16] The NT had witnesses back to ca AD 125 – 175 (P52) until only recently.[17] Archaeology has been especially helpful in text-critical decisions. Through the work of archaeologists, numerous other biblical manuscripts, lectionaries, or sermons, which assist in determining the textual transmission of the Bible, have been found.[18] Perhaps nowhere was the role of

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[16] Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 17.

[17] Aaron Earls, "Earliest Fragment of Gospel of Mark Found in Garbage Dump," *Lifeway Research* (n.d.).

[18] Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). See chapter 2, *Passim*.

archaeology more important for the field of textual criticism than in the Dead Sea Scrolls of the Qumran Community. Through an evaluation of the manuscript findings, copies of every book of the canon, except for Esther, have been located and thus, they have established the faithfulness of the Masoretic text, as well as evidencing the textual forms of certain Septuagint texts.[19] Because of these findings, the earliest manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible can now be dated to ca 300 BC. Though these texts also offered much help in determining the circumstances of Israel during the time of the NT, this has been thoroughly detailed elsewhere. Archaeology has done a great service for the field of biblical studies and the exegetical process by establishing the text of the Bible via the practice of text criticism.

Vocabulary

The Old Testament was written in a cultural melting pot where the Canaanites continued to thrive in the land of Israel, and Assyrians, Egyptians, Edomites, and Moabite traders frequently passed through.[20] As such, linguistic borrowing was a frequent occurrence. Hebrew and Aramaic belong the Northwest Semitic group of languages. As semantic shifts occurred, certain words in the Hebrew text fell out of usage and their meanings became obscured. With the archaeological discoveries of Ra Shamra in 1928, an ancient library of cuneiform tablets from the ancient kingdom of Ugarit was excavated. This discovery was especially helpful for biblical studies. Ugaritic, the language encoded in those cuneiform tablets, also a Northwest Semitic language, is closely related to Hebrew. Ugaritic has been able to provide assistance in deciphering some more obscure vocabulary of the Hebrew Bible. For example, Michael Williams explains in his article "Why Learn Ugaritic" a dilemma with Psalm 73:21, where a knowledge of Ugaritic illuminates the meaning of a Hebrew verb. Williams purports,

> In Psalm 73:21, there is a verb that is very difficult to translate, because it occurs in this stem only once in the entire Hebrew Bible. Because the verb in another stem means something like "sharpen," that meaning is pressed into service in this verse, resulting in something like "pierced," or "felt

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[19] Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 93–109.

[20] Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography*, 2d ed., rev.enl. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), 45–62.

sharp pain," or "embittered." In the end, this verse is often translated as, "when my heart was grieved, and my spirit embittered."
The support for this translation is provided by an Ugaritic word that has the same three-consonant root as the Hebrew word. In Ugaritic, this word means "to weep," and this meaning makes sense in the context of Psalm 73:21.[21]

Again, while these findings at Ra Shamra were also able to provide multiple contextual points of contact that are useful for OT exegesis, particularly understanding the Ba'al cult, it also had literary significance that should not be underestimated. If every word of God is breathed out by him and profitable, then every word needs to be ascertained as precisely as possible. Archaeology aids in that process.

Genre Forms

Lastly, archaeology aids exegesis by providing the external evidence of other literature from the same time period. Extra-biblical literature, in its various forms and genres, discovered in the same geographical region, and dated to the same time period provides the tangible evidence that validates the context and literary forms within the Hebrew Bible. These literary forms are often referred to as genres, and they are critical for interpretation. Kevin J. Vanhoozer notes that, "A text is not simply a sequence of words and sentences but a 'composition,' a work with a particular genre and style, a verbal work. . . a text's structure imposes certain limits on interpretation."[22] It is the second part of the quote, where Vanhoozer is reliant upon Paul Ricoeur, that the exegete must pay special attention. A text's structure aids in interpretation because it is the structure that places limitations upon the interpretive process. This is critical for all interpretation, but archaeology has assisted in delineating these genre forms. For years, the book of Deuteronomy was considered nothing more than the second giving of the law.[23] However, the discoveries and translation of cuneiform documents by George E. Mendenhall, from multiple archaeological finds,

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[21] Michael William, "Why Learn Ugaritic?," Academic Blog, *Zondervan Academic*, 27 July 2016.

[22] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 107.

[23] Samuel R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 3rd ed., ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1978), i.

demonstrated that Deuteronomy was actually modeled on the ancient suzerain vassal treaties common in the ANE, and particularly among the Hittite kingdom which Israel was on the verge of displacing.[24] Since Mendenhall's work, this has become the standard view, espoused Eugene H. Merril, Peter C. Craige, Peter J. Gentry and others.[25] Through the diligence of archaeologists who preserved these texts, later translators were able to identify genre forms that were unknown to exegetes so that they might properly interpret the text in its historical and literary context. Through the above case study, it is sufficiently clear that archaeology offers great profit to the exegete. Now, one can ask: How can archaeology impact the task of theology?

The Role of Archaeology in Theology

Millard J. Erickson, in his foundational work *Christian Theology* states that, "theology in a Christian context is a discipline of study that seeks to understand the God revealed in the Bible and to provide a Christian understanding of reality."[26] The ultimate goal of the Christian interpreter is to understand the God of the Bible and come to a Christian understanding of reality. Underlying this task is the presupposition that the Christian understanding is to some degree obtainable, and that it is correct. Though these claims need defending in some contexts, this paper assumes that its audience is sympathetic to the Christian tradition of exclusivity and the inerrancy of the Bible. As such, when one moves from the exegetical task—which seeks to understand the reality of the world of the original audience and author—to the theological task, the interpreter is now seeking to view how the biblical texts and other sources of revelation inform their contemporary views of reality. Just archaeology can reveal contextual information about the cultures of the past, it also seeks to inform the worldview of the theologian.

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[24] George E. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," *BA* 17.3 (1954): 50–76, https://doi.org/10.2307/3209151.

[25] Eugene H. Merrill, Mark F. Rooker, and Michael A. Grisanti, *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011); P.C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976); Peter J. Gentry, "The Relationship of Deuteronomy to the Covenant at Sinai," *SBJT* 18.3 (2014).

[26] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 3.

Theological Method

Millard Erickson is perhaps the imminent theologian of recent history, and perhaps the one who has best described his own theological method. Erickson's theological method has nine distinct steps, with the first three dealing with the exegesis of passages, and the organization of those exegeted passages that are relevant to the topic. The fourth and fifth steps serve as quality control checks, as the exegete compares their findings with historical treatments and those of differing cultural perspectives. Erickson then explains, that after that the theologian may arrive at the "essence of the doctrine."[27] After the essence of the doctrine has been established, Erickson allows extra biblical sources to influence the theological task. Erickson gives guidance on why this step is necessary when he states:

> While the Bible is systematic theology's major source, it is not the only one. Although the use of other sources must be very carefully limited, it is a significant part of the process. Some Christians, noting the excesses to which natural theology has gone in constructing a theology quite apart from the Bible, have overreacted to the point of ignoring the general revelation. But if God has revealed himself in two complementary and harmonious revelations, then at least in theory something can be learned from the study of God's creation, especially in shedding light on the special revelation or filling it out at certain points where it does not speak. . .[28]

Erickson is to be commended for this holistic approach where he assumes a unity within God's revealed truth, whether revealed naturally, (observation, science, and for this study archaeology) or supernaturally (divine revelation as found in the scriptures alone). Since archaeology is considered a scientific field, it makes assertions which are either true, or false –if they are not hedged properly. Since these assertions have truth value, they are able to either verify or attempt to nullify the Bible.

The idea of verifying or nullifying the Bible is controversial and may be rejected by some theologians. However, the inescapable assessment of archaeology is that it does make assertions of truth value, and these assertions are either true or false. If these assertions are out of harmony with the Bible, then it logical to conclude that a set of data has been misinterpreted. This has been the

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[27] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 46.

[28] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 59.

basis of the minimalist–maximalist divide in archaeology. The minimalist is willing to give precedence to the archaeological data, while the maximalist will give precedence to the biblical witness.[29] The maximalist position alone is consistent with the evangelical position of inerrancy. The Evangelical Theological Society's doctrinal basis affirms inerrancy and qualifies that term stating that:

> For the purpose of advising members regarding the intent and meaning of the reference to biblical inerrancy in the ETS Doctrinal Basis, the Society refers members to the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978). The case for biblical inerrancy rests on the absolute trustworthiness of God and Scripture's testimony to itself. A proper understanding of inerrancy takes into account the language, genres, and intent of Scripture. We reject approaches to Scripture that deny that biblical truth claims are grounded in reality.[30]

Wayne Grudem, a former president of the ETS, discusses how the inerrancy of the Bible impacts the interpretation of competing truth claims when he says, "If any supposed 'fact' is ever discovered that is said to contradict Scripture, then (if we have understood Scripture rightly) that 'fact' must be false."[31] However, in contemporary circles, it has been common place for archaeologists to assert that the Bible is in error, and to give precedence to antithetical archaeological claims. This debate is in need of resolution if one is to determine how archaeology is to be employed in the theological task.

The Employment of Archaeology

Archaeology claims to offer scientifically verifiable data from its findings.[32] It uses tools and methods which are relatively new, such as carbon dating, geophysics, ground penetrating radar, and multiple other techniques to locate and interpret data. And yet, "archaeology is an art as well as a science and

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[29] Price and House, *Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, 20.

[30] Evangelical Theological Society, "Membership Requirements," Informational, *The Evangelical Theological Society*, 2021.

[31] Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 1994), 178.

[32] Price and House, *Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, 17.

therefore requires interpretation."[33] Randall Price notes William G. Dever's "'common sense' approach. . . by identifying convergences of the archaeological evidence, the extrabiblical textual record, and biblical texts to mark a specific 'event' or 'datum.' The archaeological data alone may not be 'self-interpreting,' but it may still speak for itself once it is heard in context with other comparative information."[34] Price then notes how archeology has contributed to biblical studies by confirming biblical assertions, clarifying text-critical matters, clarifying the context of the biblical narratives, and providing "complementary or supplemental historical, cultural, and religious information."[35] Though these contributions are helpful, the issue of how these benefits can be systematically derived needs further discussion.

       If one is going to integrate archaeological findings into their theologizing they will be operating at a higher level of the theological according to Erickson's theological method since they will be seeking illumination from extrabiblical sources, and for that reason, scrutiny is a virtue.[36] If there is any shortcoming in exegetical methodology, or within the previous steps of theological method, the interpretation will be detrimentally skewed via the law of compound probability. As such, there are a few considerations that should be taken into account when integrating archaeological findings within systematic method.

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[33] Price and House, *Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, 15.

[34] Price and House, *Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, 25.

[35] Price and House, *Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, 26–31.

[36] Erickson, *Christian Theology,* 59.

1. A Commitment to Inerrancy as the Fundamental Presupposition

Iain W. Provan, V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman explain in their work, *A Biblical History of Israel,* that "our trust in the word of others is fundamental to the very idea of serious cognitive activity . . . an extensive commitment to trust the reports of others [is] a precondition of understanding their speech at all."[37] As such, one should trust any archaeological text until there is sufficient reason not to. Upon performing such inquiries, theologians through the centuries have found the biblical text inerrant via self-attestation, and the validation of historical, archaeological, and scientific discoveries. For the evangelical, this should be considered a given. However, there are many, who consider themselves evangelical, who do not hold to such a view. A committed evangelical should be committed to inerrancy as the hallmark of evangelicalism, and thus they will use the text of Scripture as the lens through which they view the world.

Erickson has noted that presuppositions can also influence exegesis.[38] If one approaches the Bible with a hermeneutic of suspicion, they will leave skeptical. If one approaches the Bible as an inerrant and authoritative text, they will leave feeling fulfilled, convicted, or inquisitive, but never skeptical. Since exegesis is a precursor to theological method, and presuppositions are a necessary factor in interpretation, it is proper to note that the proper presupposition for the theological task, including archaeological interpretation, is the presupposition of biblical inerrancy.

2. Proficiency in Exegesis

As mentioned above, exegesis is a necessary step in theological method. If one is incompetent as an exegete, they will be incompetent as a theologian. However, proficiency in exegesis is also necessary for proper archaeological discovery. Price elaborates on this idea and explains that "it should be recognized that the Bible is both a literary and an archaeological document, and so it represents the best surviving testimony we possess in the archaeological record of biblical times, places, and events."[39] The Bible informs archaeology, and if one is incompetent as an exegete they will be hindered as an archaeologist. As was noted

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[37] Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 47.

[38] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 53–56.

[39] Price and House, *Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, 24.

above, the Bible is not only a literary document, but it is a theological document with a theological perspective. Therefore, if the Bible is to be used profitably for archaeology, both its literary and theological qualities must be correctly understood. This necessitates those who seek to integrate archaeological data into their theologizing to be competent theologians as well as exegetes. This can only be done through a proper theological method.

3. Adherence to a Sound Theological Method

Theology, whether biblical or systematic, comes with certain difficulties. Concerning biblical theology, the rightful precursor to systematic theology, D. A. Caron laments that, "In short, the history of 'biblical theology' is extraordinarily diverse. Everyone does that which is right in his or her own eyes, and calls it biblical theology."[40] There is no standard method by which one proceeds to perform the task, and this has resulted in the dismissal of the discipline. While systematics has fared better, due to the tenfold schema form medieval times, it also lacks consistent methodologies for arriving at the data which fills up those ten doctrinal headings. More attention to methodology must be given as Carson suggests:

> As its name suggests, systematic theology attempts to organize, to systematize, theological reflection. When the primary authoritative source for that theological synthesis and reflection is the Bible, systematic theology attempts to organize what the Bible says according to some system. The traditional tenfold division of topics is certainly not the only possibility. But even to choose topics, to hierarchialize them, is to impose a structure not transparently given in Scripture itself. In any case, such theological reflection inevitably emerges out of one epistemology or another, out of a particular cultural consciousness, and such matters will become correspondingly more influential in the system to the degree that the theologian is unaware of them or holds, naively, that they have little or no influence.[41]

Since systematic theology is an organizational task which seeks to systemize theological reflections, then there are also methodologies for conducting those theological reflections. Theological reflections must be derived from sound

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[40] D. A. Carson, "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 91.

[41] Carson, "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," 101.

exegetical methodology, and biblical theological methodology. However, these methodologies must also be systematized in a consistent and adequate way, which necessitates a systematic methodology. This compound probability of error has led to a variety of theological expressions that plague the weary interpreter today. If one is going to seek a way forward, they must give careful attention to methodology at every stage. For this task, the theological method of Millard J. Erickson is commended as exemplary. If Erickson's methodology is adhered to, then the employment of archaeological data would only be utilized to illumine, not determine the text.[42] Further, the archaeological data would only be consulted for theological purposes (excluding the contextual aid of archaeology noted above in exegesis) after the essence of the doctrine has been soundly established based on sound exegesis of the text.

4. Proper Limitations for the Employment of Archaeology

Erickson rightly warns that illumination from extrabiblical sources "must be very carefully limited."[43] Though archaeology is useful for theology and exegesis, it is still a tool in the hands of the theologian. Archaeology is not the master. The text of Scripture alone is the master to which the exegete bends their knee. The Bible describes itself as God's very words. God's words are endowed with some of His own attributes, including having ultimate authority of the divine will.[44] Since archaeology is a tool and not the master, the tool must be employed skillfully. Chisholm notes, concerning exegetical tools, that the "superficial use of tools makes one more dangerous than competent when interpreting the Old Testament. In the hands of the wrong person–one without adequate knowledge of how the tool operates, what it is designed to accomplish, and how the information it contains contributes to interpretation-a 'chainsaw massacre' of the text becomes a distinct and very real possibility!"[45] Archaeology must be given proper safeguards as to not allow the slave to inherit what was rightfully the sons. The question becomes: What safeguards should be placed on Archaeology? For the evangelical there must be one fundamental rule for the application of archaeological findings to exegetical and theological studies. This rule is that

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[42] Erickson, *Christian Theology,* 59.

[43] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 59.

[44] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 176.

[45] Chisholm Jr., *From Exegesis to Exposition*, 74–77.

archaeology may sometimes serve as a subordinate means of validation for assertions of fact, but it may never serve as a means of invalidation.

The Bible was not written as a scientific textbook, but it was written as an anthology of theological works that informed the worldview of specific recipients in a distinct time and place.[46] During the course of that revelation, certain assertions (statements of truth value) were made about the natural world and historical events. Assertions, by nature, are either true or false.[47] For the evangelical who asserts inerrancy, these assertions serve as an epistemic standard of truth. Often these truths have been found to be unattested in the secular historical record. Because the evangelical asserts inerrancy, they must believe the Bible even when external evidence is lacking.[48] This is warranted because the Bible is a historical document that was written predominantly by eyewitnesses, or their close associates upon credible testimony.[49] This type of provenance is why archaeologists treat ancient texts, including the Bible, as an archaeological document.

These texts must be given more weight than other archaeological evidence due to the process of interpretation. It is easier to interpret texts over natural evidence because the interpreters of natural evidence are separated by time, culture, and first-hand knowledge of the historical situation. However, the texts that are examined in archaeological study are written by individuals who lived in that culture and during that time frame. As a result of this, these texts can provide first-hand knowledge of the events to which they speak. As such, it is proper to limit archaeological evidence to a subordinate role in exegesis. The text is a primary witness, while other archaeological evidence is a secondary means of evidence. To allow secondary means of evidence, which are more difficult to interpret, precedence over the primary means of evidence is a faulty methodology.

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[46] Matthew Barrett and Ardel B Caneday, eds., *Four Views on the Historical Adam*, Counterpoints: Bible and Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 253–54.

[47] Normal L. Geisler suggests that "religious assertions need not be actually verified to be meaningful, but they must at least be somewhere, somehow, sometime verifiable in order to be meaningful or true" (*Christian Apologetics*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2013], 83–84).

[48] See comments on inerrancy by Geisler above. This is confirmed as the historical view of the Christian faith as noted by Price in his assertion that in "the post-apostolic period, whenever a question concerning the biblical past arose, Scripture was acknowledged as the final testimony to what had actually happened" (*Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*,24).

[49] Holden and Geisler, *The Popular Handbook of Archaeology and the Bible*, Kindle Location 1451.

In the legal realm, a case is decided on the weight of the evidence. For these types of inquiries, the text has a greater weight for establishing the claims of science and history. The absence of evidence is not to be considered evidence of absence.[50] Because of this, archaeological information can never supplant the assertions of the text in a way that invalidates the clear claims of Scripture.

Daniel 5 and the account of the reign of Belshazzar serves as an example that demonstrates these dangers. Until 1854, no archaeological evidence existed for the reign of Belshazzar, only his father Nabonidus.[51] However, in 1854, during the excavation of a ziggurat at Ur the Cylinder of Nabonidus, which established Belshazzar as co-regent of his father, was found.[52] It was during this time that the Persians sieged Babylon. This was occuring while Daniel revealed the writing on the wall that Belshazzar's time was up because he was found lacking (cf. Daniel 5). If exegetes esteemed a lack of archaeological evidence for Belshazzar as higher than Scripture, they would have had to nullify the biblical account, thus finding the guidance of critical scholarship, and their skeptical predisposition to be more credible than Daniel. However, archaeological evidence did eventually confirm the historical assertions of Scripture, and they prove that Belshazzar did indeed reign, and the account in Daniel 5 is historically accurate. Those who valued the text of Scripture above the lack of evidence from archaeologists were able to teach the Scriptures accurately, and in the end, they were vindicated. God, through archaeologists, judged their cause and lifted their head from being esteemed as uneducated fundamentalists.

Though the above example would be hard to dispute, the greatest danger to this thought process comes from statements which deal with the scientific methods employed by archaeologists concerning dating, the cosmos, and other natural scientific phenomena. For example, archaeological evidence has been interpreted in a way which seeks to undermine the biblical account of the flood in Genesis 6–9. This undermining has been done by casting doubt on the veracity of a worldwide flood, and plausibility of the account of the animals included in the ark. This offers an example of why limitation of archaeological– or any other scientific– findings must be limited in scope.

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[50] Price and House, *Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, 21.

[51] Holden and Geisler, *The Popular Handbook of Archaeology and the Bible*, Kindle Location 844.

[52] Holden and Geisler, *The Popular Handbook of Archaeology and the Bible*.

Many have argued for a "local flood" model to describe the flood of Genesis 6–9, while also alluding to the epic of Gilgamesh, as well as other ancient flood narratives. Some have also rejected the biblical flood narrative simply out of a rejection of the biblical text as they find the idea of a global flood to be unfathomable. Others have sought to explain the localized flood through archaeological evidence, derived from the similarities in the Epic of Gilgamesh, Atra-Hasis, and the Sumerian creation myth, assuming that this flood was part of Semitic cultural memories of a localized flood that grew to mythical proportions. These archaeologists span the theological perspective. Hugh Ross, an astro-physicist, has presented a model that attempts to explain the theory in recent times using scientific and archaeological data.[53] Ross is an evangelical, but he is not a theologian. Ross' exegetical method is lacking, and he seeks to explain the flood from 1 Peter, Job, Psalms, and Proverbs. Ross finds these to be more influential in his understanding than the Pentateuch. This is problematic for many reasons, because 1 Peter, Job, Psalms, and Proverbs are all reliant upon Genesis as antecedent theology.[54] Furthermore, Job, Psalms, and Proverbs are all part of the genre of Hebrew Poetry, where there is an emphasis on imagery and emotion, and a lack of emphasis on describing history. Genesis, on the other hand, is clearly portrayed as history. Walter C. Kaiser Jr. has shown convincingly. However, the explanation of this archaeological text, as well as the related texts of the Sumerian literature, are explainable through other scientific methods which are just as satisfactory. Furthermore, these methods are more in line with proper exegesis. Danny Faulkner critiqued Ross' model showing its deficiencies stating that:

> First, it was not possible to sustain Ross' proposed height of local flood water in Mesopotamia, because the water would have efficiently and rapidly drained through the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz into the Indian Ocean. Second, the current of this draining water would have carried the Ark far from Mesopotamia, making it impossible for the Ark to have landed in northern Mesopotamia as Ross maintains. Third, at its greatest extent, the water level in Ross' local flood model falls far lower than the elevation of the location that Ross says the Ark landed. These difficulties render Ross' local flood model physically impossible.[55]

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[53] Hugh Ross, *28:19 RTB 101: Overview of RTB Flood Model* (Reasons to Believe, 2019), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_UsY1cm8vw.

[54] Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, Kindle Location 1850.

[55] Danny R. Faulkner, "Physical Difficulties with Hugh Ross' Local Flood Model," *Answers Research Journal* 8 (2015): 195–98.

Though Ross is to be applauded for his attempts at exegesis, his ability to integrate archaeology and the sciences, which steer archaeological interpretation, is found wanting. If Ross is correct, then he has compounded the problem because he is unable to explain the flood accounts of China, South America, Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia, Ireland, Whales, or Polynesia.[56] These flood accounts are best explained by a global flood as found in the Bible, and all the above accounts, as history.

Though examples could be multiplied, such an endeavor would lead to an unruly endeavor worthy of a lifelong work. Such a task is outside the scope of this endeavor. The above work makes clear that the findings of archaeology, or any other scientific inquiry, must be subordinated to the biblical witness. This is an epistemic conviction that is shared by evangelicals. The text has the authoritative voice in all areas which it speaks to, and the biblical text should be understood in its plain sense. As archaeology continues to mature as a science, more and more of the text of Scripture is validated by archaeological discovery. Portions of the biblical text that have yet to be validated by archaeology should be considered authoritative based on the credibility of the biblical witness. This credibility has been established to date since the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

A Case Study in Improper Archaeological Integration

As mentioned above, archaeology is a tool in the hands of an exegete that can be useful for interpreting the text. A tool has great potential for good when used properly, and great potential for evil if used improperly. A saw can be used in the construction of magnificent buildings, as well as in their destruction. However, Chisholm rightly noted the dangers of using tools improperly in exegesis. What Chisholm suggests concerning grammatical tools applies no less, and no differently, to archaeological tools. Recently, William Lane Craig, a premier evangelical apologist, wrote a book *In Quest of the Historical Adam: A Biblical and Scientific Exploration* where he seeks to employ archaeological and other scientific evidence to the interpretation of Genesis' primordial history. Craig comes to some conclusions that are troublesome for the conventional, and this paper would argue, evangelical understanding of the historical Adam. Craig claims that Adam was a *Homo heidelbergensis* who lived more than 500,000

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[56] Jerry Bergman, "Do Creation and Flood Myths Found World Wide Have a Common Origin?," *The Proceedings of the International Conference on Creationism* 5.47 (2003): 519.

years ago.[57] As such, Craig's recent work will prove an adequate case study for the dangers of employing archaeological evidence outside of the proper restraints. Craig's works magnifys the need for proper integration of archaeology into ones exegetical and theological method.

Exegetical Method

The first entry, which archaeology makes to biblical studies, is in the exegetical process. In exegetical method, archaeology will influence the knowledge of the text (textual criticism is ultimately reliant upon archaeology unearthing manuscripts, tablets, inscriptions, etc.). However, archaeology is not restricted in usefulness to text-critical processes. Archaeology also influences the exegetical process through unearthing artifacts of all kinds which can assist in establishing important historical and literary contextual consideration. It is this second area which Craig has sought to utilize the ANE literature in biblical studies. By evaluating the text of the Bible, in light of ANE literature, Craig classifies the primeval history as "mytho-history." Though comparative Semitics and history of religions has a prominent role in the field of Old Testament interpretation since the 19th century, Craig's findings display a predisposition of distrust in not only the biblical texts, but all of the ANE texts in which he treats. This has a profound impact on the interpretation of the archaeological data and devolves into a vicious cycle that ultimately leads to skepticism concerning all of the texts.

Craig makes extensive use of ANE texts that have often been classified and referred to as myths. This leads Craig's synthetic classification of "mytho-history." The term "myth" is woefully inadequate as a genre classification when it pertains to this strand of literature. This is due to a semantic shift in the understanding of the term myth in contemporary society. Craig discusses this semantic change when he cites William Bascom whose literary work, in the 1960s "distinguished three types of prose narrative studied by folklorists: myths, folktales, and legends."[58] Bascom's classification demonstrated that the genre of myths were believed to be facts from a remote time describing a different or earlier world, and were evaluated as sacred texts describing non-human characters

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[57] William Lane Craig, *In Quest of the Historical Adam: A Biblical and Scientific Exploration* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021), 509.

[58] Craig, *In Quest of the Historical Adam*, 68.

(principally deity).[59] This understanding of "mythology" is quite faithful to the authorial intention and audience reception. *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* agrees with this initial assessment, but also notes the semantic shift, when it states that "A myth, in the original sense of the term, is a narrative with a supernatural element … The term 'myth' has been extended in recent times to designate something that is not true … or ideas and beliefs that need to be looked at critically."[60] The fact that literary theorists acknowledge that the truthfulness of myths was unquestioned by the original audience, and that it was only recently that the truth value was questioned in these myths, is evidence of the modernist bias against supernatural phenomena, the post-modernist bias against comprehensive worldviews or objective truth claims, and even some conglomeration of the two.

The contemporary understanding of myth, having undergone semantic shift, has deeply influenced Craig's work. Craig makes this clear when he begins to question Bascom, as noted above.[61] Craig goes on to further blur the classical genre distinctions when he says, "The lines between myth, folktale, and legend are apt to be blurry, so that it is probably impossible and unprofitable to lay down necessary and sufficient conditions for each of these narrative types. Instead, what we ought to be looking for is what Ludwig Wittgenstein called 'family resemblances' among stories regarded as myths."[62] Craig rightfully attempts to utilize Wittgenstein's "games" analogy for genre studies. However, Craig goes too far when he cites G. S. Kirk by adding a "distinguishing characteristic of myths is their 'free ranging and often paradoxical fantasy.' He even compares myths to dreams in this respect. Kirk makes the significant observation that 'this lack of ordinary logic operates quite apart from supernatural components.'"[63] Because of Kirk's description, Craig condemns the ancient societies for a lack of "ordinary logic". This condemnation seems to be based on Craig's own modern application of logic which justifies his assessment of the text having "fantastic

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[59] Craig, *In Quest of the Historical Adam*, 69.

[60] *ROUTLEDGE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF NARRATIVE THEORY*, s.v. "Myth: Theoretical Approaches."

[61] Craig, *In Quest of the Historical Adam*, 70.

[62] Craig, *In Quest of the Historical Adam*, 74.

[63] Craig, *In Quest of the Historical Adam*, 75.

elements and inconsistencies."[64] Craig defines these "fantastic elements" as elements "which, if taken literally, are so extraordinary as to be palpably false."[65] Craig's justifications for using the term "inconsistencies" are found in the ability of ancient civilizations to transfer the identities and attributes of certain gods to others without reserve.[66] Craig then applies a subtle form of illegitimate totality transfer, whereby the biblical accounts having similarities to the ANE myths, particularly exhibiting fantastic elements that seem paradoxical fantasy, are judged by him to be logically inconsistent and are classified likewise as "mytho-history." This limited totality transfer has been aptly refuted by John Oswalt.

John Oswalt, in his text *The Bible Among the Myths* shows literary reasons for rejecting the classification of the biblical material as myth stating:

> As the chapters now stand, the key elements of myth are all conspicuously absent. There are no gods; there is no continual creation on the primeval plane that this world only reflects; there is no conflict between good and evil (or between order and chaos) on the metaphysical level as the precursor to creation; sexuality plays no part at all in creation; there is a high view of humanity, not a low one; and so on. If these chapters were once written in the parlance of myth, then they have been so thoroughly rewritten as to obliterate the earlier form.[67]

Though the literary analysis should be sufficient to reject Craig's classification, Oswalt's work also operates from a faulty classification of the ANE "myths." The writers and readers of these texts seem to have taken these literary accounts as making assertions of truth claims which influenced their everyday life through cultic, governmental, ethical, and other cultural practices. However, Craig's initial question of "By whom are myths believed to be true?" and "whether belief in the truth of the accepted myths is somehow expected or intended" is still worthy of

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[64] Craig, *In Quest of the Historical Adam*, 288.

[65] Craig, *In Quest of the Historical Adam*, 138.

[66] Craig, *In Quest of the Historical Adam*, 244–88.

[67] John N. Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths: Unique Revelation or Just Ancient Literature?* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2009), 99.

evaluation, and this analysis must be performed through an assessment of archaeological data.[68]

Theological Method

Millard Erickson's work *Christian Theology* has become a standard text among late 20th and 21st century evangelicals. Erickson's steps to theology begin with prolegomena from a philosophical perspective which shows the inadequacy of both dominating schools of thought; modernism and post-modernism.[69] Erickson also defends an inerrant biblical text, and his theological methodology begins rightfully from the text. It is not until the fifth step, or perhaps the seventh step, that Erickson begins to integrate differing cultural perspectives or extra biblical sources.[70] It is at this step that Craig's work needs more clarification. Does Craig find the texts of the Sumerian literature to be differing cultural perspectives of a common thread of kerygma, or does he find them to be extra-biblical sources? Where Craig classifies these texts will have drastic ramifications on his interpretation of both the archaeological and the biblical data. Since Craig is a member of the ETS, and therefore has endorsed, and claims to adhere to, the doctrine of inerrancy, then a consistent hermeneutic and exegetical method would require him to classify the findings from science, philosophy, and archaeology as an extra-biblical source which can illuminate, but never contradict the biblical data. It remains to be seen whether Craig is consistent in this endeavor in his work on the historical Adam. However, as a starting point, the methodological *modus operandi* of this work agrees in large part with how Erickson allows extra biblical sources to influence theology. Erickson gives guidance on why this step is necessary when he states:

> While the Bible is systematic theology's major source, it is not the only one. Although the use of other sources must be very carefully limited, it is a significant part of the process. Some Christians, noting the excesses to which natural theology has gone in constructing a theology quite apart from the Bible, have overreacted to the point of ignoring the general revelation. But if God has revealed himself in two complementary and

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[68] Craig, *In Quest of the Historical Adam*, 237.

[69] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 231–41.

[70] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 58.

> harmonious revelations, then at least in theory something can be learned
> from the study of God's creation, especially in shedding light on the
> special revelation or filling it out at certain points where it does not speak
> … [71]

Craig is not wrong to utilize other sources in his theological method; in fact, he is
to be commended for this. The problem with Craig's work is that he has not
limited his utilization in a way which accords with sound hermeneutical,
archaeological, or epistemological procedures, if he still adheres to the doctrine of
inerrancy as an epistemological presupposition.[72] Erickson gives one final note of
warning when he states that, "we need to be careful in our correlation of theology
and other disciplines, however. While the special revelation (preserved for us in
the Bible) and the general revelation are ultimately in harmony with one another,
that harmony is apparent only as each is fully understood and correctly
interpreted."[73]

Helmer Ringgren notes that "we do not know where the Sumerians came
from but there is much to suggest that it was from east or north-east. Their
language cannot be assigned to any known family of languages."[74] Upon an
evaluation of the archaeological and literary evidence, it appears that these ANE
cosmogonies were taken as factual accounts of history, and the evidence for
similarities among these accounts are most easily explained through a common
genesis. Each of the above accounts are making assertions of truth. They were
accepted as truth by their own interpretive communities. They were assessed to be
historically accurate depictions of reality as is evidenced by their cultic,
governmental, ethical, and other cultural practices which have been revealed
through archaeology. If these claims are assertions of historical factuality, then
they can be evaluated as such, and in cases of dissimilarity, one account over the

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[71] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 59.

[72] It must be noted that Erickson is not totally consistent within his own methodology, which is clear as he states "It was not primarily exegetical considerations that moved theologians to observe that, of the various possible meanings of the Hebrew word יוֹם (*yom*), "a period of time" might, in the case of interpreting the creation account, be preferable to the more literal and common "twenty-four-hour day" (*Christian Theology,* 59). This problematic interpretation is shared by Craig and is addressed on exegetical grounds elsewhere by my forthcoming publication "An Exegetical Response to William Lane Craig."

[73] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 59.

[74] Helmer Ringgren, *Religions of the Ancient Near East*, trans. John Sturdy (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), 1.

other should be closer to the accurate depiction in certain specific elements, or even in generalities. The reason the alternative ANE religious texts have been deemed mythological in recent times is because parts of their historical depictions have been disproven by evidence. The biblical account of the primeval history, by contrast, has yet to be convincingly disproven. It is for this reason that one must be tentative in applying a qualitative descriptor of "myth", evaluated through modern advances, to a religious text. This is the case especially when the text never suggested itself, or was received, as mythological. However, because these religious texts make assertions with truth values, they can be evaluated and invite the reader to do so.

Craig is right to evaluate truth claims of the texts, whether by science or literary criticism, and he is within the spirit of academic freedom. However, Craig is practicing a faulty narrative methodology by placing the text in a literary genre which the text never attempted to present itself as based on faulty integration of archaeology in the exegetical and theological endeavors. Therefore, Craig is left with only two options: to interpret the religious texts as assertions of truth including the primeval history, or to reject it as false and a myth like any other. Postmodernism has shown that no interpreter is completely free from the influence of presuppositions, and the same can be said of this work and Craig's. Craig, as a member of the ETS, has signed an affirmation of inerrancy. Therefore, there is an epistemological presupposition found within the doctrine of inerrancy which limits the claims that Craig can make and still be considered an evangelical. Craig's views fall outside of these limits as he attributes recent scientific knowledge to show parts of the Scripture, which were written as historical assertions of truth, to be "palpably false."[75] To put it bluntly, the text of the Hebrew Bible claims to be asserting factual history. The Hebrew Bible's genre was culturally understood to be factual history and it was accepted as factual history by the original audience. To later dispute the historicity of the accounts of the Hebrew Bible is to leave the confines of evangelicalism.

Conclusion

Archaeology is a great and powerful tool in the hands of the exegete and theologian. It has assisted in exegesis by establishing context, chronology, grammar and syntax. For theology, archaeology validates the assertions of the Bible which some might find "palpably false." As such, archaeology has encouraged the faith of believers, and convinced some skeptics of the

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[75] Craig, *In Quest of the Historical Adam*, 138.

trustworthiness of the Scriptures. However, as Craig has evinced above, archaeology that has not been applied properly can lead to devious interpretations of the text that ultimately undermine the faith. Chisholm's warning can now be modified to account for the necessity of proper archaeological integration in exegetical and theological methods. In the hands of the wrong person, one without adequate knowledge of how archaeology operates, what it is designed to accomplish, what it cannot accomplish, and how the information it contains contributes to interpretation, "a 'chainsaw massacre' of the text becomes a distinct and very real possibility!"[76] Therefore, the exegete and theologian must develop an adequate methodology that skillfully applies and properly limits the use of archaeology in the practice of interpretation and application.

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[76] Chisholm Jr., *From Exegesis to Exposition*, 74–77.

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