of West Semitic material iconism operating on the level of cult and ritual rather than theological reflection or religiopolitical ideas. The latter may have played a role in the explicitly legislated ban of images, which Metzinger sees as a later and uniquely Israelite development. Christoph Uehlinger draws upon ancient Near Eastern artifacts and architecture to trace the influence of ancient Near Eastern propaganda, which, he argues, was mediated not only through texts but also through art and architecture. This medium, which he calls "figurative policy," is as important as literary remains are for the understanding of biblical texts. Numerous illustrations illustrate and undergird his argument.

In the concluding essay, Ina Willi-Plein traces the prominent role that Saul's daughter Michal plays in the "House of David" narrative (W's preferred designation for the more traditional "Throne Succession" narrative). Michal, according to Willi-Plein, symbolizes political transition from a genuinely limited Israelite monarchy to that of a more centralized city-state monarchy under David. Michal's disdain of David signals the biblical author's disdain for this political development.

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This book contains the papers and part of the discussion at a conference held at Lausanne on questions of historical methodology. The papers are Lester L. Grabbe, "Introduction" (pp. 11-19); Rainer Albertz, "Die Exilszeit als Ernstfall für eine historische Rekonstruktion ohne biblische Texte: Die Neubabylonischen Königsinschriften als 'Primärquelle'" (pp. 22-39); Bob Becking, "Ezra's Re-enactment of the Exile" (pp. 40-61); Robert P. Carroll, "Exile! What Exile? Deportation and the Discourses of Diaspora" (pp. 62-79); Lester L. Grabbe, "The Exile under the Theodolite: Histo-riography as Triangulation" (pp. 80-100); Thomas L. Thompson, "The Exile in History and Myth: A Response to Hans Barstad" (pp. 101-18), a response to Hans M. Barstad, The Myth of the Empty Land: A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah during the "Exilic" Period [SO, Fasciculi Suppletorii 28; Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996]). There are three responses: Hans M. Barstad, "The Strange Fear of the Bible: Some Reflections on the 'Bibliophobia' in Recent Ancient Israelite Historiography" (pp. 120-27); Philip R. Davies, "Exile? What Exile? Whose Exile?" (pp. 128-38); Knud Jeppesen, "Exile a Period—Exile a Myth" (pp. 139-44). Finally, Grabbe offers "Reflections on the Discussion" (pp. 146-56).

All the authors are agreed that the bulk of the population of Judah stayed in the land during the exile, that archaeology in sixth-century Palestine shows no significant break in settlement or culture, and that the return was not nearly as large as it is depicted in Ezra-Nehemiah. There is almost no direct evidence for the history of the
exiles in Babylon (the authors downplay what can be inferred from Deutero-Isaiah and Ezekiel) or of those who stayed behind in the land, and the story of the restoration is told almost exclusively from the viewpoint of the priestly elite who ran the temple.

The editor does not explain why the essay by Albertz was left in German. The lack of translation is a pity, since Albertz argues forcefully that the theological and even tendentious character of the inscriptions of Nabonidus does not mean that the information contained therein is nonhistorical. One can subtract the tendential elements and come up with plausible historical experiences.

Becking reads Ezra as a composition on its own (not as part of the Chronicler’s history, and not as a text dependent on its relationship to Nehemiah). The mission of Ezra is dated to the time of Artaxerxes II, and the Book of Ezra is an attempt to legitimate one form of Judaism among the “multitude of Judaisms” in the Persian period. Becking isolates three narratives within Ezra, 1–2; 3–6; 7–10—all designed to convince the reader that the belief system of the Ezra group is the only acceptable, divinely willed continuation of preexilic Yahwism. Becking believes that processes like exile and return took place, probably on a relatively small scale, but that the Book of Ezra does not give details classifiable either as trustworthy or untrustworthy. We know too little.

Carroll protests against the notion in the scholarly guild that majority opinion passes as knowledge. He cites the widespread criticism of C. C. Torrey as a case in point. He believes that the dominant notion of the exile in biblical scholarship is “a thoroughly mistaken theory” (citing Torrey), and that the writers in Jerusalem have contaminated all the other writings in the canon with their ideological holdings and values.

Grabbe asks whether other ancient exiled communities returned to their land and seeks extrabiblical evidence for the events described in the biblical text. His conclusion may be summarized briefly. A return of the Jewish exiles would not be unprecedented in the ancient Near East. The list in Ezra 2 || Nehemiah 7 suggests a settlement pattern of returns. The letter of Tattenai in Ezra 5:7-17 is probably authentic, but it contradicts the information about Zerubbabel and Joshua in chaps. 3–6 and the account of Sheshbazzar in chap. 1. Deutero-Isaiah, whether it is dated to the sixth century or to the fifth century, provides considerable support for some kind of return. The myth created by the biblical writer is that of the empty land during the “exile,” not of a return of a small portion of the exiles. Grabbe believes that there was some kind of return (though all the details about it are moot), but that most of the exiled community remained in Babylon.

Thompson’s argument is built on unannotated assertions (p. 103), a series of rhetorical questions that really ought to be answered one by one (pp. 110, 177), some inaccuracies in citing the biblical evidence (2 Kings does not say that all the people were carried off in two successive deportations [see 24:14 and 25:12]), precritical claims about the authorship of Lamentations, and a very problematic use of the word “supersessionist” about biblical Israel. Thompson does not deny that there was an exile, but he claims that there were many exiles and that we can know nothing about the exile of the sixth century. His radical conclusion is this: “Jeremiah, in his Lamentations over Jerusalem in the exile, and Hosea in his poems about Israel as a prostitute-wife with her bastard children, have Nehemiah’s return as their point of departure” (p. 115).
Barstad argues that since so many kings in the Deuteronomistic History are referred to in sources outside the Hebrew Bible, the names of other kings mentioned in Dtr may be historically correct. This is part of a larger argument that the Hebrew Bible as a historical source is of the same nature and quality as other ancient Near Eastern literary texts. The Hebrew Bible is the most important source for our knowledge of the history of Iron Age Palestine (contra Thompson).

Between Barstad and in some senses Grabbe on one side, and Carroll, Thompson, and Davies on the other, a great gulf is fixed.

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This is a collection of Wolfram Herrmann's essays, most of which were published elsewhere, several of them originally in other languages. They represent H.'s work at Stuttgart in the last forty-five years on a wide range of topics having to do with the Hebrew Bible and its religious and sociological world.


This is a wonderful collection. The short essay on Baal-zebub is a classic piece of textual criticism on 2 Kgs 1:2 in which H. emends the text to read "Baal-zebul," or "Baal, the Prince," which is in keeping with a number of parallels in the Ugaritic literature, as W. F. Albright noted. This article was first published in English in Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (ed. K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, and P. W. van der Horst; Leiden/New York: Brill, 1995). It illustrates one of H.'s greatest interests, the connection between the Hebrew Bible and Canaanite literature.

In the lengthy article on 'Atzt, first published in 1969, H. reviews much of the relevant literature and ideas concerning 'Atzt's development from the Late Bronze Age at Ugarit to the Iron Age in Phoenicia and Canaan. This article is copiously documented, but it lacks some of the most recent information on sites like Sarepta, with its small temple dedicated to Tannit'a'atzt, initially published by J. B. Pritchard (see "The Phoenician City of Sarepta," Archaeology 24 [1971] 61). In an early article