I am glad to have read this collection, which has offered plenty of new insights. At the same time I have to confess to a certain feeling of frustration. Earlier Congress Volumes were often something of a bran-tub, containing treasures mingled with a certain amount of chaff. It was surely right to aim for greater coherence. The trouble is that this volume seems to have two aims in mind, neither of which is quite achieved. On the one hand the main themes of intertextuality and the understanding of Israel’s history are major contemporary concerns of scholarship, and there is much here that addresses them. In that sense the more general surveys provided in the last part of the book will be something of an irrelevance. On the other hand, if a broad-ranging survey volume was envisaged, then many of the briefer essays, on details of the main themes, will scarcely command much attention. But it is much easier to cavil at the existing structure of a collection like this than to come up with a better one, so one must be grateful for a lot of very thought-provoking material.

R. J. COGGINS


‘What did the biblical writers know and when did they know it?’ are important questions, but somewhat inadequate as a title. The author is really asking about the ancient Israelite writers’ knowledge of Israel’s history, and his answer is brief: ‘they knew a lot and they knew it early’ (p. 273). The context of Dever’s questions is the debate of the last decade about the reliability of the biblical writers as historians; in particular Dever opposes those who in recent years have argued that Israel’s early history is largely a ‘social construct’, an ideological invention of later Judaism. Dever singles out P. R. Davies, N. P. Lemche, K. W. Whitelam and T. L. Thompson for his most trenchant criticism; his bête-noire is a ‘new revisionist school’, with its headquarters at the University of Sheffield (p. 255).

Against this school, Dever argues that the reality of ancient Israel may be demonstrated from the convergence of archaeological and biblical evidence. Though Dever has no time for the ‘Biblical Archaeology’ of the 1950s which tried to demonstrate
the essential truth of the biblical version of Israel’s history with
the aid of archaeological findings, he has even less time for those
who would now demolish Israel’s historical existence. Dever
begins his attack with an examination of the nature of the biblical
texts (chapter 1), continues with an unsympathetic account of
‘the current school of revisionism’ (‘an ideological movement with
revolutionary aspirations’, p. 51) and a critique of its methods
(chapter 2), and comes to the point with a useful essay on what
archaeology is and what it can contribute to biblical studies
(chapter 3). Basically, Dever’s message is that texts and artefacts
are to be studied separately and similarly; a dialogue between the
specialists on both sides should follow; both texts and artefacts
equally need interpretation. Hitherto the biblical accounts have
been made the basis for the interpretation of the artefacts; Dever
would reverse this, though in the next breath presents rules
for dialogue on equal terms (p. 90). He ends his essay with an
instructive example of the amount of information about eighth-
century Lachish that can be obtained from examination of two
sources, artefactual (an eighth-century store-jar) and biblical
(2 Chr. 32:1–8), side by side (pp. 91–5); this is an answer to the
revisionists’ negativism (p. 94f.).

The questions raised by Dever’s title are important, and
chapters 4 and 5 provide the substance of the answer. Dever
focuses on two periods: (a) the period of Israelite origins and the
rise of the Israelite state (chapter 4), and (b) the period of the
divided monarchy (chapter 5). He argues that the historical
books of the Old Testament— which he basically limits to the
Deuteronomistic History, though he allows that 1 and 2
Chronicles ‘may have ... some independent traditions of occa-
sional historical value’ (p. 90)— cannot be dismissed as of no
historical value. His theme is, not that the Old Testament tells
the historical story as fully or accurately as a modern historian
might wish, but that the biblical writers, probably using older
sources, reflect accurately the material culture of the period they
are describing and are unlikely to be freely inventing their
accounts several centuries later. Thus Dever quotes with approval
L. Stager’s 1985 article, ‘The archaeology of the family in Ancient
Israel’ (BASOR 260, pp. 1–35), which argued a convergence
between archaeological data and the descriptions of daily life
and socio-economic conditions and social structures visible in
the book of Judges. The obvious problem here is that such daily
life, such socio-economic conditions, and such social structures
did not change much for the ordinary small farmer throughout the
Iron Age; Dever even notes that similar buildings have been built
up to modern times. The author/editor of the book of Judges may be giving an accurate picture of Israelite society in the eleventh century without giving any accurate information on eleventh-century events. Dever is on stronger (though admittedly much disputed) ground when on the evidence of the hand-burnished pottery he urges a tenth-century date for the pre-destruction levels of the Gezer gate; this he sees as confirming the possibility from biblical evidence of its destruction by Shishak (2 Chron. 12:2–4; cf. 1 Kgs 11:40). Dever finds ‘the most instructive convergence’ of archaeological and biblical evidence in the case of the Samaria ivories; the fragments found in the 722/721 BC destruction levels of the palace illustrate the references of 1 Kgs 10:18; 22:39; Amos 3:15; 6:4. Since such distinctive ivories and ivory-inlaid wooden furniture had passed out of use by the seventh–sixth centuries BC, ‘it would be incredible to suggest that the biblical references were “invented” by writers living in the Hellenistic or Roman period. They must have had ancient sources, in this case records going back at least to the 8th century, if not earlier’ (p. 230). Dever uses a similar argument of the biblical and archaeological evidence for the ‘winter palaces’ at Jezreel and Ramat Rahel (pp. 237–43) and for the pim weight of 1 Sam. 13:21 (p. 227). Similarly, ‘the ceramic repertoire with which the original writers of the J, E, and D traditions were familiar is that of the Iron Age or Monarchy—and no other period’ (p. 234).

These chapters of the book are basically a re-presentation for the present purpose of the material in Dever’s earlier book, Recent Archaeological Discoveries and Biblical Research (1990). Dever makes his point, but the accuracy or reliability of the Deuteronomistic Historian on any particular historical point remains at issue. For example, while much theoretical literature on the process of state formation exists (p. 126), and ‘today nearly all archaeologists recognize a small-scale but authentic “state” in central Palestine in the mid-late 10th century, or the beginning of Iron II, on archaeological grounds alone’ (p. 128), we still have to apply the usual critical judgment to the details of the description of Solomon’s kingdom in 1 Kings; we cannot assume that the Deuteronomistic Historian has them right because he knows the underlying material culture. Although Dever asks, ‘when did they know it?’, the precise dating of the various biblical sources remains vague in his account. There is no serious attempt to argue for any particular date for J or E. On the Deuteronomistic History, Dever is content to give a brief resumé (p.100f.) of mainstream biblical scholarship’s views
(for an up-date see *Israel construit son histoire*, ed. de Pury, Römer and Macchi, Le Monde de La Bible 34, Geneva, 1996, ET 2000); but to settle for a sixth-century date and speak generally of sources does not get us very much further forward. Dever takes no notice at all of other evidence in the Old Testament—such as the legal material and its development—which might contribute to the overall picture.

The final chapter reveals the root of Dever’s obvious animus. The revisionists are post-modernists, a threat to the intellectual virtues of the Enlightenment. Honest enquiry, for Dever, has been replaced by the ideology of grievance politics; all texts, including biblical texts, and with them our supposed knowledge of ancient Israel, have become social constructs. This leads to a fierce attack on T. L. Thompson (pp. 257–61), with a list of the hallmarks of a postmodernist ideologue (p. 260) and Dever’s critique of post-modernism (pp. 262–7). Dever gives a very positive picture of the historical core in the Hebrew Bible, firmly rejects the proposed Hellenistic dating for the composition of the Hebrew Bible (though admits that the date of the writing of the source materials has yet to be worked out, p. 273), and urges that ‘oral traditions can easily be shown to have survived almost intact for centuries in ancient Israel’ (clearly he has not read Whybray’s attack on this proposition in *The Making of the Pentateuch*, Sheffield 1987). Dever finally launches on a discussion of faith and history (pp. 282ff.). He wishes to separate historical from theological questions, speaking of ‘the necessary separation of enquiries’, and seems to have some difficulty (alien to this reviewer) with the idea that a scholar could be committed to historical-critical methods and be committed to a believing community as well (pp. 286–90). Dever, however, ends by claiming a central place for the Bible within the western cultural tradition, and denouncing the revisionists as demagogues, the harbingers of anarchy, chaos and ultimately Fascism (p. 291). Surely this is a little over the top?

This book is clearly a construction from several separate pieces converted for a crusade. The essay on archaeology (chapter 3) and the archaeological evidence for the pre-monarchic and monarchic Israel (chapters 4 and 5) have been framed by the fierce attack on the revisionists in chapters 2 and 6, and prefaced by the opening chapter on the nature of the Bible. The direct critique of the revisionists’ position is valuable; the over-polemical and often personal tone of the book jars. However, it is fascinating to see Dever continuing the journey he started thirty years ago; the problem of the relationship between the Bible and archaeology
and their relative importance for the reconstruction of the history of ancient Israel will not go away.

J. R. Bartlett

Die Musikkultur Altisraels/Palästinas. Studien zu archäologischen, schriftlichen und vergleichenden Quellen.

This book must rank as one of the most important modern studies of musical culture in the Ancient Israelite and Palestinian geographical area. On the basis of carefully established methods and definitions, and using archaeology as a primary point of reference, Braun re-writes substantially key features of the musical history in this geographical area from the Stone Age to the late Roman period. He reinstates the claims of Philistine and Samaritan musical culture and the value of Phoenician, Nabatean, Idumean, and Dionysian sources, and demonstrates the unreliability of the wealth of musical information in the work of the biblical Chronicler in so far as historical research into actual musical practice is concerned; he establishes that the main musical instrument of the socio-clerical elite in much of this period was the lyre and not the harp, and provides a generally convincing picture of a movement from an autochthonous and generally homogenous Near-Eastern musical culture to the sub-systems of numerous heterogenous styles. One of the remarkable features of this research is not merely the thoroughness with which the relevant recent archaeological work is collated but, even more important, the re-reading of well-known archaeological material through attention to details in the evidence which have escaped previous commentators. The hundred or more pages of illustrations with a quality of reproduction which enables the reader to observe and confirm these details add considerably to the value of the book.

This is not a book about music in the biblical material, but it does provide historical, comparative, social, and ethnic perspectives on that material which frequently throw light on disputed questions. It includes a survey of musical instruments in sources which may be termed biblical (the term is understood in its wide sense, although not all biblical material is included because of the geographical reference point of the study). The meaning of