



**TRINITY COLLEGE OF THE BIBLE  
AND THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

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**SAMPLE LESSON**  
**AS A**  
**POSTAL SUBMISSION**

*Master's Level*

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Module Number: \_\_\_\_\_ 3 Audio Number: \_\_\_\_\_ N/A Project Number: \_\_\_\_\_ N/A

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Module Three: Write a 10 page paper comparing and contrasting Alfred Hoerth's book *Archaeology and the Old Testament* with one other book of your choice about Biblical Archaeology. Discuss how "liberal" or "conservative" each author seems to be. Discuss how the archaeological evidence in each book seems to have been interpreted in light of the author's theological position. Discuss especially areas where you may disagree with the content of each book. Include a bibliography and footnotes (or endnotes) written according to proper academic style (using Turabian, Manuel for Writers of Theses and Dissertations, 5th or 6th editions.)

My goal in this paper is to compare and contrast *Archaeology and the Old Testament* by Alfred J. Hoerth and *Archaeology of the Bible* by Mangus Magnusson. The most obvious comparison is in subject matter and arrangement of contents. Both books cover the archaeology that touches on the Old Testament Scriptures. Even though Mr. Magnusson's title is *Archaeology of the Bible*, he ends the book with a chapter entitled "The End of the Old" and he does not go into the New Testament books. On the other hand, Mr. Hoerth's book is called *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, and he does emphasize the Old Testament books, but his last chapter is "Into the New Testament" and he does cover some archaeological evidence from the New Testament books.

Both books are arranged from Genesis to the end of the Old Testament, but Mr. Hoerth's book is almost twice as long and is much more detailed than Mr. Magnusson's book. While Mr. Hoerth's book is meant to be a text book, Mr. Magnusson wrote his for the general public.

Another interesting comparison that I found was the fact that Mr. Hoerth quotes often from three works edited by James B. Pritchard while Mr. Magnusson dedicated his book to James B. Pritchard, Director of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania. James Pritchard also wrote the forward to *Archaeology of the Bible*.

The first contrast that I quickly became aware of was that Hoerth accepts Scripture as giving us factual information while Magnusson does not. For this reason, I

Module Three continued

would consider Mr. Magnusson much more liberal in his interpretation of events in the Bible than Mr. Hoerth. Early in both books, the story of Abraham is discussed. Hoerth says, “Abraham probably was born in Ur of the Chaldeans.”<sup>1</sup> He continues to speak of Abraham as an actual historical person, saying things like, “Abraham was born shortly after 2000,”<sup>2</sup> and “The typical house in Abraham's day was two stories tall,”<sup>3</sup> and “When Abraham was an adult, a king named Lipit-Ishtar came to the throne of Isin.”

On page 25 of *Archaeology of the Bible*, Magnusson says, “Abraham is presented in the Bible as the archetypal ancestor, the progenitor of the Children of Israel, the father of the people...and according to the received wisdom of Biblical scholarship until now, with Abraham we are supposed to enter the realm of actual history.” And again on page 39, “Was Abraham a historical figure at all?” He then proceeds to discuss two books that “take a hard scholarly look at the traditional view that Abraham represents or sums up a nomadic tradition that is reflected in documents of the Middle Bronze Age – and they both – independently of one another, come to the conclusion that he does not...(T)hey point out the innumerable inconsistencies in the Biblical account, and argue strongly against the “fundamentalist” view that the Biblical narratives can be used to reconstruct the history of the Middle East in a manner comparable to the archives of Mari or anywhere else and vice versa.”<sup>4</sup>

Although the account of the Creation has no archaeological evidence for or against, both books offer comments on the creation story in Genesis. The way each author deals with the topic of creation gives us insight into their handling of other topics in Scripture. Each man comes to the Bible with a preconceived assumption that is evident

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 59.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Magnus Magnusson, *Archaeology of the Bible* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977), 39-40.

in the words he chooses to use and the “tone” of voice that comes through to the reader from each author

Hoerth is at least willing to consider the Genesis account as factual. He discusses some of the other creation stories that we have from peoples contemporary with Moses and some who lived before Moses’ time. He quotes from a couple that were known in Egypt at the time and at length from the *Enuma Elish* from Mesopotamia. Hoerth admits that there are similarities, but says that “they can be explained as expected coincidences in two works on the same theme.”<sup>5</sup> Later in the same paragraph, he says, “Viewed only as a creation story, Genesis is not unique, but viewed in comparison with these other stories, Genesis is lucid and complete.”

On the other hand, Magnusson, in his comments, has as a decidedly skeptical tone. When he says, “So how does our growing recognition of how we began – man as child of the universe – match the image presented in the Bible,”<sup>6</sup> we get the impression that when “modern scientific” ideas disagree with the Bible, he will drop the Biblical account or regulate it to the realm of myth in preference to the more “modern” position.

Still speaking of the creation account, Magnusson says, “For the Sumerians recorded the oldest myths known to us – stories about the creation that would be echoed many centuries later in the creation myths of Genesis.”<sup>7</sup>

The next big Biblical event is Noah’s Flood. Again, a story with no archaeological finds either for or against, yet both men spend time discussing it. Here again, the men show differences in how they approach this controversial event.

Magnusson, speaking about Gilgamesh (the Sumerian Noah), “The story he told is so

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<sup>5</sup> Hoerth, 187.

<sup>6</sup> Magnusson, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 21.

clear in its details that the Biblical Flood story was obviously borrowed directly from that much earlier Sumerian original.”<sup>8</sup> A few pages later he says, “The quest for Noah’s ark is self-evidently futile because the Flood story in the Bible is obviously a legend, and a borrowed and garbled one at that.”<sup>9</sup> Notice his two usages of the word, “obviously.”

In *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, while Hoerth does not directly say that he believes the flood was an actual world-wide event, he certainly leaves that possibility open. In speaking of the Gilgamesh Epic and the theory that the Bible got its material from Gilgamesh, he says, “Equally plausible, if one accepts an inspired Bible, is that the similarities result from a common inheritance.”<sup>10</sup> “He also makes a comment about the abundance of flood stories from allover the world. He notes, “All sophisticated cultures would be expected to need a creation story – but not a flood story – in their “beginnings.” The popularity of the flood theme can be used to argue for the historicity of the event.”<sup>11</sup>

As can be seen from the above quotes, there is a definite difference in the “tone” of these two books. Hoerth speaks in a somewhat detached manner. His sentences are factual and to the point. The tone of the passages is scholarly. Magnusson is more emotional; his tone is sometimes sarcastic and arrogant and sometimes patronizing. He talks about people who “may find it unpalatable that the Old Testament text, ‘Holy Writ’ as it were, should be questioned at all.”<sup>12</sup> His attitude is definitely condescending when he elaborately tell why the cave at Hebron that is shown to pilgrims as Abraham and Sarah’s burial place cannot possible be the cave because it is a man-made cistern, and closes his remarks with the sentence: “But does that make the slightest difference to the religious convictions of those who believe in their god?”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>10</sup> Hoerth, 196.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Magnusson, 41.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 42.

Just one more quote to show the position on Scripture that Mr. Magnusson takes. When he speaks about the story of baby Moses, he says, “The story is quite obviously a folk-tale, for it echoes almost word for word the birth legend of King Sargon the Great, who founded the dynasty of Addad a thousand years earlier. The similarity is astonishing.”<sup>14</sup>

Since I am a Bible-believing “fundamentalist,” I find myself disagreeing with a lot of what Mr. Magnusson says. It seems to me that he would prefer to believe anything except what the Bible says which leads me to question why he does what he does. I am not angry or offended with his writings, but I do admit to being puzzled. I find Mr. Hoerth much easier to read.

Both books cover the major archaeological finds of the Old Testament. This paper will examine a few of the different accounts that the two men discuss and compare the way the two books interpret the artifacts and ruins found there. The first archaeological site we shall look at is Jericho. Mr. Magnusson begins from the position that the Israelite conquest of Canaan probably didn't happen at all. He offers several alternate theories: a gradual takeover of “peaceful infiltration” by groups from various locations or a “peasant's revolt” against the large Canaanite cities.<sup>15</sup> When discussing Jericho in particular, he gives the background of the early attempts to find the “walls of Jericho.” He talks about John Garstang who went to Jericho in the 1930's and found four successive building stages, the last of which had been “violently destroyed and burned, perhaps by a combination of earthquake and fire.”<sup>16</sup> Garstang dated this to around 1400 BC (which is about the date of the conquest according to the early exodus date). Dame Kathleen Kenyon in the 1950's excavated Jericho and decided that the walls that

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 95-96.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 92.

Garstang dated to the 1400's had actually been destroyed a thousand years earlier. She concluded that Jericho was already an abandoned ruin when Joshua and the Israelites entered Canaan.<sup>17</sup> Magnusson seems to find this position acceptable, although he does include the opinion of Dr. Yigael Yadin who disputes this and feels that there was a small occupation on the site at this time. Magnusson tells his readers that Yadin's argument is a "complex technical argument that involves a difference of interpretative method, and it shows how few certainties there can be in archaeology."<sup>18</sup>

Alfred Hoerth's book was published in 1998, over 20 years after Magnusson's book. Mr. Hoerth relates the same history of the Jericho site as Mr. Magnusson does, but goes on to say that Dame Kenyon's final publications were in the 1980's and these led Bryant Wood to conclude that the walls of City IV had been destroyed about 1400 just as Garstang had said. "If Wood is correct," wrote Hoerth, "then there is evidence at Jericho to support the early date of the exodus."<sup>19</sup>

The next archaeological site is Ai. Both Hoerth and Magnusson agree that Ai presents archaeologists with a problem. The problem being the fact that there doesn't seem to be any evidence of an occupied city on the site accepted by almost everyone as the Biblical city of Ai during the years of the Israelite conquest of Canaan. The difference in the two books is in the way the two authors convey this information to their readers. Mr. Hoerth presents the facts as they are known and concludes with, "The solution to the 'Ai problem' continues to be elusive."<sup>20</sup> Magnusson says, "It looks very much as if the Ai story is one that was created by later generations to explain the presence of formidable ruins at a site, in terms of a remembered folk hero."<sup>21</sup> The difference here seems to me to

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>19</sup> Hoerth, 210.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>21</sup> Magnusson, 91.



be that Mr. Hoerth recognizes a problem, but allows that an acceptable solution might well be found in the future while Mr. Magnuson's attitude is the problem is solved if we acknowledge that the Bible is wrong and the people saw some ruins and just made up a story to account for them.

The third area that we will look at is the period of the Judges. The way each author covers this time period is interesting. Mr. Hoerth devotes half of a chapter to the time of the Judges with several of the judges singled out for more in-depth recognition. He says at one point, "The history in the Book of Judges can be accepted as completely accurate."<sup>22</sup> The arrival of the Sea People is briefly discussed in this chapter also as the people of Israel interacted with them. When we turn to *Archaeology or the Bible*, we see that Mr. Magnusson ignores the judges altogether and focuses the whole chapter covering this time period on the Philistines. He does bring Samson into the picture, but not as a real human being. He is rather, "the legendary guerrilla leader, Samson."<sup>23</sup> He quotes from Judges 13:1-5 and then says, "And thus, suitable embellished with theological exhortations, Samson enters the Bible story. Samson is an archetypal saga figure."<sup>24</sup> Magnusson goes on to relate the Samson story with his typical attitude. He explains how it would have been impossible for Samson to pull down the small Philistine temple and kill so many Philistines. He also explains how the "story" came about. He says that a pottery cult vessel was found in the ruins of the Tel Qasile temple. "It is a cylindrical incense stand with two tiers; each tier has a series of 'windows' separating pillars. Between the pillars of the upper tier, in each of the four windows there stands the figure

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<sup>22</sup> Hoerth, 226.

<sup>23</sup> Magnusson, 108.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 109.

Module Three continued

of a man with his arms extended sideways against the pillars . . . it is not too fanciful, perhaps, to see in a cultic vessel like this the germ of a folktale.”<sup>25</sup>

So according to Mr. Magnusson, as the Israelites came across vessels like this, memories of the great Egyptian temples merged with the idea of a great hero, and so the legend was born.

When we move on in Biblical history to the time of King David and King Solomon, we see that once again, Mr. Magnusson has difficulty accepting as history anything that comes from Scripture. In telling how David came to Saul’s court he writes something truly strange. “Once again, the Bible gives three conflicting and irreconcilable versions of how David rose to a position of influence in Saul’s court. In one, David, the youngest son of Jesse of Bethlehem, is summoned to court as a skilled harpist to soothe Saul’s troubled spirits whenever an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. In another, David was secretly anointed by Samuel as king-to-be as part of his (and God’s) rejection of Saul. The third version is the most celebrated one: David the shepherd boy emerges as a folk hero by volunteering to take on the giant Philistine champion, Goliath, in single combat and killing him with a well-aimed sling-stone. This encounter, which is said to have taken place in the Valley of Elah some thirty kilometers west of Jerusalem, saved the Israelite army from annihilation, kindled the love of Saul’s son Jonathan for David, and sowed the first seeds of Saul’s jealousy. But it is a typical saga situation, folk-tale exalted into history.”<sup>26</sup> After describing the reigns of David and Solomon, Mr. Magnusson makes much of the fact that nothing has remained of any of the writings of that time. He says, “Unfortunately, not a scrap of all this presumed official literature has survived; indeed, the Gezer calendar is the only example of Hebrew writing from the time of Solomon that has yet been found. This possible objection to the theory is

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 122.

countered by the argument that all the court archives must have been written on papyrus, which is perishable, rather than clay tablets.”<sup>27</sup> He goes on to say, “Even more disconcerting is the fact that there is not a single contemporary reference to David or Solomon in the many neighboring countries which certainly were keeping written records in the tenth century. At a time when the Bible tells us that Solomon created a major empire in the Middle East, none of his contemporaries, not even the Phoenicians, apparently noticed the fact. Without the Biblical accounts, history would be totally unaware of the very existence of the twin founders of the tenth-century expansion of Israel/Judah into a major power, and archaeology would have been able to do a little to indicate that it had ever taken place.”<sup>28</sup> His own personal feeling is that the Jews of the exile, while in Babylon, wrote all of the stories of the Judges and the early kings. Because they needed a national history to look back to, and something to draw them together, they exaggerated and embellished the tales of their early history as a nation, and this is what we have in the Bible.

Mr. Hoerth, on the other hand, treats the Biblical accounts of the reigns of David and Solomon as historical, valid, kingships. He spends a whole chapter on David and another whole chapter on Solomon. Much of this is spent in telling the Biblical stories as he, too, tells us that there is little written verification of what we read in the Bible. He does give several drawings of the temple, Solomon’s gates at three different cities, “Solomon’s stables” at Meddigo, and maps of Jerusalem during the reign of each king.

I think that one more comparison is called for before we conclude this paper. I noticed on the end piece of the jacket on Magnus Magnusson’s book this quote by the author: “The Bible does not exist in a vacuum. It was written long after the early events it purports to record, and only by understanding the culture context in which it was written,

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 156.

Module Three continued

and the society for which it was written, can we gain a clearer understanding of the work as a whole.” Contrast that with a quote by Alfred Hoerth in the preface of his book: “For those who delve deeper, be aware that the majority of articles and publications relevant to Old Testament archaeology treat the Bible no differently than any other ancient document. Their authors will sometimes present their conclusions as “serious” and “scholarly” and label a more conservative position as “simplistic” and “unsophisticated.” At other times their critical orientation is more subtle. Such scholars consider themselves truly objective, seldom admitting that everyone brings his or her own bias to the biblical text. One should not reject such critical writings outright but should mine them for what is useful, while recognizing when their assertions are in tension with the biblical text.”

This assignment has been very enlightening to me. I thought it was difficult, but in the end very rewarding. I think Mr. Hoerth expressed my feelings as well. I will not throw Mr. Magnusson’s book away for there is much in it to admire. At the same time, I recognize that his view of Scripture is not my view of Scripture and will keep that in mind also.

## Bibliography

Hoerth, Alfred J. *Archaeology and the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998.

Magnusson, Magnus. *Archaeology of the Bible*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977.