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## ARCHAEOLOGY

"The Birth and Death of Biblical Minimalism" by Yosef Garfinkel — begins by explaining that the biblical minimalism movement (which initially claimed that the Bible "had been written only in the Hellenistic period, nearly 700 years after the time of David and Solomon, and that the Biblical descriptions were therefore purely literary") originated about 30 years ago.

The article summary reports: "For more than three decades, Biblical Minimalists have cast doubt on the historicity of David and Solomon. Now, the excavator of Khirbet Qeiyafa, the site that recently produced the earliest known Hebrew inscription, presents new evidence that David and Solomon ruled over a well-organized and fully urbanized Judahite state in the tenth century B.C.E. Only a hundred years later did the northern kingdom of Israel develop into an urbanized state, just as the Bible describes." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, May/June 2011, pp46-53, <[www.bit.ly/iMETfT](http://www.bit.ly/iMETfT)>

## BIBLICAL RELIABILITY

*The Word of God? The Bible After Modern Scholarship*, by Keith Ward<sup>1</sup> — in this review, Mark Harris reports that "This book is closely related to Keith Ward's 2004 book, *What the Bible Really Teaches: A Challenge for Fundamentalists*.<sup>2</sup> There, Ward took on the conservative evangelical approach to the Bible and disputed its interpretation of key passages and Christian doctrines. In the present volume, Ward presents a wider perspective. While the conservative approach is still in his sights, his aim is to put forward the findings of modern biblical scholarship and then to reconstruct his own views of some of the main Christian doctrines. Along the way, Ward discusses issues such as biblical inspiration, the historicity of biblical miracles, and how Christians should approach the Old Testament and its moral guidance. A large part of the book is devoted to the role of metaphor in the Bible, and how that might affect our understanding of the classic themes of creation, incarnation, atonement and salvation. Finally, Ward finishes with an extensive discussion of the theme of devel-

opment in the Bible, especially development in ideas of God's being, of divine justice and of the afterlife. This reinforces his key point, that the Bible is not so much a single, unified document but a diverse anthology which witnesses to evolving revelations of God, and which culminates in the story of Jesus. Jesus therefore becomes the definitive divine revelation, the yardstick against which all other ethical and doctrinal claims of the Bible can be tested, and even rejected if necessary.

"Despite his title, Ward's actual engagement with modern biblical scholarship is rather minimal. [He] gives little sense of [its] subtleties and debates.... One gets the impression that, despite Ward's insistence that the opinions of biblical scholars must be taken seriously, they are not so very important in the scheme of things." *Expository Times*, 122:7 - 2011, p363.<sup>5</sup>

*Who Wrote the Gospels? Probing the Great Gospel Conspiracy*, by Charles E. Hill<sup>3</sup> — reviewer Paul Foster explains: "Hill challenges the popular view that the four gospels found in the New Testament reflect a relatively late selection from among a plethora of gospel texts. Such a view is often linked to the conspiracy theory that this choice was made by a coterie of orthodox bishops in the fourth century attempting to shore up their own version of Christianity while suppressing other expressions of the faith, and in the process those ecclesial figures radically distorted the true message of Jesus. [Hill argues] that the four canonical gospels had a temporal priority and natural prominence over other gospel texts and that there was no organized conspiracy to 'suppress' other texts."

Within the known catalog of "possible second-century papyri of gospel type texts [Hill] observes that canonical texts occur with about three or four times the frequency of non-canonical texts. ...

"According to Hill, Irenaeus [bishop of Lyons, who was active around the year 180] is not presenting an innovative new idea when he speaks of the four gospels, but is simply transmitting an established position. (continued on next page)

## BIBLICAL RELIABILITY (continued)

... Hill rejects the views of McDonald and Pagels who view Irenaeus as an isolated harbinger of a much later position. He also cites from the early third century the testimony of Hippolytus, Tertullian, and Origen who all attest the four gospels used by the church. Another interesting statistic employed by Hill is that of Clement of Alexandria's citations of gospel-like texts.... Hill is certainly correct that Clement of Alexandria valued the canonical gospels above their non-canonical counterparts. ...

"In chapter five, the discussion again returns to the physical evidence of manuscripts and forms of text they contain. ... The early papyrus codices ... are seen as 'significant literary-technological "packaging" projects which presuppose the primacy of the four.' Next, Hill delves earlier into Christian history by considering the evidence from the writings of Justin Martyr who wrote around the middle of the second century. [S]ince no traditions in Justin's writings appear to be drawn from other known gospel type texts, it is inferred that Justin was also a witness to a fourfold gospel collection. ...

"Hill's book draws upon a great deal of primary evidence. Furthermore, he handles

this evidence in a careful and judicious manner. Yet, in addition, he manages all this with a light touch." *Expository Times*, 122:6 - 2011, pp280-282.<sup>5</sup>

## SECULARISM

*Saving Leonardo: A Call to Resist the Secular Assault on Mind, Morals, and Meaning*, by Nancy Pearcey<sup>4</sup> — Richard Weikart, professor of history at California State University — Stanislaus, explains in this review that "The way to resist much of the malaise in our society ... is to understand the powerful lies [of the secular worldview] that control its intellectual and cultural currents. Much of Pearcey's book is dedicated to exploring the ways in which secular thought has influenced high culture, especially painting and literature. However, in the first three chapters she shows how secularism has permeated politics and the media, and in the last chapter she discusses its influence on

modern movies." *Touchstone*, May/June '11, pp42-43.<sup>6</sup>

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- 1 - *The Word of God? The Bible After Modern Scholarship*, by Keith Ward (SPCK, 2010, paperback, 160 pages) <[www.amazon.com/dp/B004T4TKUG](http://www.amazon.com/dp/B004T4TKUG)>
- 2 - *What the Bible Really Teaches: A Challenge for Fundamentalists*, by Keith Ward (Crossroad, 2005, paperback, 224 pages) <[www.tinyurl.com/3trxpjn](http://www.tinyurl.com/3trxpjn)>
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- 5 - *Expository Times*, <[www.j.mp/hRKAoy](http://www.j.mp/hRKAoy)>
- 6 - *Touchstone*, <[www.touchstonemag.com](http://www.touchstonemag.com)>

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