

Francesca Stavrakopoulou
King Manasseh and Child Sacrifice

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Francesca Stavrakopoulou

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Biblical Distortions of Historical Realities



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Dedicated to Gweneth Janet Marie Jones

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Abbreviations

AASOR	Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research
AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> (6 vols. Edited by D.N. Freedman. New York: Doubleday, 1992).
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
ADAJ	Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AJBA	<i>Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology</i>
AfR	<i>Archiv für Religionsgeschichte</i>
AfOB	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung: Beiheft</i>
AJSJL	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures</i>
ANEP	<i>The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament</i> (Edited by J.B. Pritchard. Second edn. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> (Edited by J.B. Pritchard. Third edn. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ArchOd	<i>Archaeology Odyssey</i>
ASOR	American Schools of Oriental Research
ASORMS	American Schools of Oriental Research Monograph Series
AulOr	Aula Orientalis
AP	<i>Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century BC</i> (Edited by A.E. Cowley. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923).
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BAIAS	<i>Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society</i>
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BDB	<i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (F. Brown, S.R. Driver and C.A. Briggs. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907).
BEAT	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium

<i>BHS</i>	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> (Edited by K. Elliger and W. Rudolph. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1983).
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BibB</i>	Biblische Beiträge
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
<i>BibOr</i>	Biblica et orientalia
<i>BN</i>	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
<i>BO</i>	<i>Bibliotheca orientalis</i>
<i>BR</i>	<i>Bible Review</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>BZAW</i>	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>CAT</i>	Commentaire de l'Ancien Testament
<i>CB</i>	Century Bible
<i>CBET</i>	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
<i>CB OTS</i>	Coniectanea biblica. Old Testament Series
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CIS</i>	<i>Corpus inscriptionum semiticarum</i>
<i>CIS</i>	Copenhagen International Seminar
<i>COS</i>	<i>The Context of Scripture</i> (3 vols. Edited by W.W. Hallo. Leiden: Brill, 1997-2002).
<i>CRAIBL</i>	<i>Comptes rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres</i>
<i>CR:BS</i>	<i>Currents in Research: Biblical Studies</i>
<i>CSA</i>	Copenhagen Studies in Assyriology
<i>CSF</i>	Collezione di studi fenici
<i>CTA</i>	<i>Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques découvertes à Ras Shamra-Ugarit de 1929 à 1939</i> (Edited by A. Herdner. Mission de Ras Shamra 10. Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1963).
<i>CTU</i>	<i>The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani, and Other Places</i> (Edited by M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartín. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995).
<i>DBSup</i>	<i>Dictionnaire de la Bible: Supplément</i> (Edited by L. Pirot and A. Robert. Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1928-).
<i>DCH</i>	<i>The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i> (5 vols. Edited by D.J.A. Clines. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993-2001).
<i>DDD</i>	<i>Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible</i> (Edited by K. van der Toorn, B. Becking and P. W. van der Horst. Second extensively revised edition. Leiden: Brill, 1999).
<i>DISO</i>	<i>Dictionnaire des inscriptions sémitiques de l'ouest</i> (Edited by Ch.F. Jean and J. Hoftijzer. Leiden: Brill, 1965).

<i>DNWSI</i>	<i>Dictionary of North-West Semitic Inscriptions</i> (2 vols. J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling. Leiden: Brill, 1995).
<i>DULAT</i>	<i>A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition</i> (2 vols. Edited by G. Olmo Lette and J. Sanmartín. Translated by W.G.E Watson. HdO 67. Leiden: Brill, 2003).
<i>EI</i>	<i>Eretz Israel</i>
ESHM	European Seminar in Historical Methodology
ET	English Translation
<i>ETL</i>	<i>Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GCT	Gender, Culture, Theory
<i>GKC</i>	<i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> (Edited by E. Kautsch. Translated by A.E. Cowley. Second edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910).
<i>HALOT</i>	<i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (4 vols. L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner and J.J. Stamm. Translated and edited under the supervision of M.E.J. Richardson. Leiden: Brill, 1994-1999).
<i>HAR</i>	<i>Hebrew Annual Review</i>
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HdO	Handbuch der Orientalistik
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
IES	Israel Exploration Society
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JA</i>	<i>Journal Asiatique</i>
<i>JANESCU</i>	<i>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBC</i>	<i>Jerome Biblical Commentary</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JCS</i>	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JNSL</i>	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
<i>JPOS</i>	<i>Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society</i>
JPSTCS	Jewish Publication Society Commentary Series

<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
K	Ketib
<i>KAI</i>	<i>Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften</i> (H. Donner and W. Röllig. Second edn. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1964-1966).
<i>KTU</i>	<i>Die keilalphabetischen Texte Ugarit</i> (Edited by M. Dietrich, O. Loretz and J. Sanmartin. AOAT 24/1. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1976).
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
MRS	Mission de Ras Shamra
<i>NEA</i>	<i>Near Eastern Archaeology</i>
<i>NEAEHL</i>	<i>The New Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land</i> (4 vols. Edited by E. Stern; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1993).
NCB	New Century Bible
NT	New Testament
<i>OBC</i>	<i>The Oxford Bible Commentary</i> (Edited by J. Barton and J. Muddiman. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
<i>Or</i>	<i>Orientalia</i> (Rome)
<i>OrAnt</i>	<i>Oriens antiques</i>
<i>OrEx</i>	<i>Orient Express</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
<i>OTP</i>	<i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> (2 vols. Edited by J.H. Charlesworth. New York: Doubleday, 1983).
OTS	Oudtestamentische Studiën
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
Q	Qere
<i>QDAP</i>	<i>Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine</i>
RB	Revue biblique
<i>RES</i>	<i>Répertoire d'épigraphie sémitique</i>
<i>RHR</i>	<i>Revue de l'histoire des religions</i>
<i>RivB</i>	<i>Rivista biblica</i>
<i>RPARA</i>	<i>Rendiconti della Pontifica Accademia Romana di Archeologia</i>

RS	Ras Shamra (tablet inventory number)
<i>RSO</i>	<i>Rivista degli studi orientali</i>
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Religious Studies Review</i>
<i>RSF</i>	<i>Rivista di studi fenici</i>
<i>SAAB</i>	<i>State Archives of Assyria Bulletin</i>
SBAB	Stuttgarter biblische Aufsatzbände
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
<i>SBLSP</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</i>
SHANE	Studies in the History of the Ancient Near East
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
SS	Studi semitici
SSEJC	Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity
SWBAS	Social World of Biblical Antiquity Series
<i>TA</i>	<i>Tel Aviv</i>
TBü	Theologische Bücherei
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> (8 vols. Edited by G.J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren. Translated by J.T. Willis, G.W. Bromiley and D.E. Green. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974-).
<i>ThLZ</i>	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
UCOP	University of Cambridge Oriental Publications
<i>UF</i>	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WZKM</i>	<i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes</i>
<i>ZA</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>
<i>ZDPV</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>

Introduction

The Hebrew Bible presents a religious history of a people called “Israel”. As such, much of this collection of ancient texts is concerned with people and practices, conveying to the ancient reader a simple but powerful message: who you are and what you do necessarily defines whether you are to be included within or excluded from this people called “Israel”. In seeking to explore the parameters of this biblical “Israel”, it is necessary to examine the people and practices within the Hebrew Bible that ostensibly function as boundary markers, qualifying and defining the behaviour that allows or prohibits access to “Israel”. In such a context, King Manasseh may be understood as the most reprehensible person in the biblical story of “Israel”, and child sacrifice the most reprehensible practice. Yet archaeological, inscriptional and socio-scientific data indicate that historically, neither Manasseh nor child sacrifice were as deviant as the Hebrew Bible appears to insist. Thus one of the aims of this study is to reconstruct the likely reality of the historical figure of Manasseh, and the likely reality of the historical practice of child sacrifice. It is anticipated that these historical realities will contrast considerably with their biblical portrayals. Consequently, the other aim of this study is to discern how and why both Manasseh and child sacrifice are distorted into the reprehensible within the Hebrew Bible.

Underlying this discussion is the continuing debate concerning the use of the Hebrew Bible within historical reconstructions of ancient Israelite and Judahite societies and their religious beliefs and practices. The perceived historical reliability of the Hebrew Bible remains in a state of flux: though the tension between historical memory and literary fiction within the biblical texts is widely acknowledged, a consensus concerning the extent to which the Hebrew Bible preserves reliable historical information about the people, practices and events it describes has not emerged—nor is it likely to. Indeed, the seemingly Janus-like character of the Hebrew Bible pulls and pushes scholarship between its twin poles of history and ideology. As a result, absolute certainty about the past remains elusive. In one sense, the past may be distinguished from history, for the latter is an account of the former. This notion is succinctly described by Brettler:

All history is created. Events transpire, but people tell and record, select and reshape them, creating historical texts.¹

The gradual permeation of this recognition throughout scholarship renders uncertain the extent to which the biblical texts are considered to offer reasonably reliable accounts of the past. Indeed, the biblical story of "Israel" is increasingly perceived to be just that: *story*, rather than history.

Yet there remains an unwillingness to call off the search for the people and practices of the past altogether, for the possibility exists that the biblical texts may unwittingly reveal glimpses of the historical reality they attempt to re-image by means of their ideologies. "Ideology" is a designation frequently employed within biblical scholarship, yet rarely defined with precision, for it usefully embraces a range of literary, theological, political and sociological issues generally acknowledged to shape biblical texts. Its fluidity of usage thus mirrors its ambiguity in meaning. Yet as the importance of the social location of biblical writers and their corresponding world-views is increasingly accepted as a primary influence within their texts, a more precise understanding of the term "ideology" is demanded. Whilst a carefully considered definition of "ideology" would fulfil this perceived need for precision, it could also harbour the risk of stagnation in its immovability. Among the myriad discussions within biblical scholarship of the forms and functions of ideology,² certain key observations have arisen, which combine

1 M.Z. Brettler, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel* (London: Routledge, 1995), 1.

2 See, for example, D. Jobling and T. Pippin (eds.), *Ideological Criticism of Biblical Texts* (Semeia 59; Atlanta: SBL, 1992); M. Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); T. Pippin, "Ideology, Ideological Criticism, and the Bible", *CR:BS* 4 (1996), 51-78; J.E. Dyck, "A Map of Ideology for Biblical Critics", in M. Daniel Carroll R. (ed.), *Rethinking Contexts, Rereading Texts: Contributions from the Social Sciences to Biblical Interpretation* (JSOTSup 299; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 108-128; S. Fowl, "Texts Don't Have Ideologies", *BibInt* 3 (1995), 15-34; J. Barr, *History and Ideology in the Old Testament: Biblical Studies at the End of a Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); The Bible and Culture Collective, *The Postmodern Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 272-308; G. Garbini, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel* (trans. J. Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1988); Y. Amit, *History and Ideology: An Introduction to Historiography in the Hebrew Bible* (trans. Y. Lotan; BS 60; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999). For non-biblical discussions, see particularly C. Hampton, *The Ideology of the Text* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1990); T. Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Theory* (London: Verso, 1976); *idem.*, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991); S. Žižek (ed.), *Mapping Ideology* (London: Verso, 1994).

to offer an alternative, and perhaps more expedient, approach to understanding the nature of ideology.

In his nuanced and persuasive discussion of the nature, function and impact of ideologies, Clines draws particular attention to ideology as a collection of “large-scale ideas that influence and determine the whole outlook of groups of people”.³ As the title of his book makes plain, ideology can, and indeed does, shape the outlooks of both biblical writers and their readers.⁴ In this context, the personal “ownership” of ideologies is occasionally articulated within modern scholarship: a biblical commentator, for example, may wish to acknowledge and to accept his or her potential biases and agendas in the presentation or interpretation of the ideas expressed.⁵ Yet as Clines points out, ideologies are often assumed, “even without their adherents even knowing quite what they are assuming”.⁶ This in itself can present a particular danger for the biblical scholar, for there is inherent in religious writings an “ideological impulse”⁷ which, if undetected or unacknowledged, can colour academic enquiry and cloud scholarly judgement.⁸

Mayes rightly emphasizes that an ideology exists within a dynamic context of opposition to other ideologies: it possesses an inherent polemic which simultaneously seeks to legitimize its own social context and perspectives, whilst discrediting the world-views of opposing ideologies.⁹ Yet this is not to encourage a misunderstanding of ideology as an expression of social dominance or significance; rather, ideology also plays a crucial role among comparatively insignificant or inferior groups and individuals.¹⁰ An important function of “ideology” is thus the delineation or construction of self-identity. In the Hebrew Bible, the contours of the self-identity of “Israel”

3 D.J.A. Clines, *Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup 205/GCT 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 11-12.

4 Clines, *Interested Parties*, 16-23.

5 Cf. Pippin, “Ideology”, 51; see also D. Penchansky, “Up For Grabs: A Tentative Proposal for Doing Ideological Criticism”, in Jobling and Pippin, *Ideological Criticism of Biblical Texts*, 35-41.

6 Clines, *Interested Parties*, 12.

7 Penchansky, “Up For Grabs”, 38.

8 See further, for example, K.W. Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History* (London: Routledge, 1996), esp. 11-36; N.P. Lemche, *The Israelites in History and Tradition* (Library of Ancient Israel; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), ch. 5.

9 A.D.H. Mayes, “Deuteronomistic Ideology and the Theology of the Old Testament”, *JSOT* 82 (1999), 57-82; cf. Eagleton, *Ideology*, 30.

10 Cf. Eagleton, *Ideology*, 6.

are primarily shaped by three important and related ideological concepts: nation, and its accompanying territorial concerns; ethnicity, with an emphasis upon genealogical continuity; and religion, and its strong tendency to denounce the beliefs and rituals it rejects. In this regard, ideology is often perceived most clearly in the form of conceptual boundaries, configuring the self-identity of "Israel". The following observations of Brett, though made with specific reference to ethnicity, are nevertheless illuminating in this broader context:

... the formulation of boundaries is crucial feature [*sic*] of self-definition. Who should be considered one of "us" and who should be considered "other"? ... But, as has frequently been observed, the most problematic social transactions occur precisely at the boundary, between "us" and those who are "like us".¹¹

Brett's comments are also helpful in that, like many others, he focuses attention upon the *social* context of ideology: regardless of its medium of expression—whether, for example, literary, iconographic, dramatic or musical—ideology is a social expression, and cannot be divorced from its social context. This is true of all forms of ideology, including those articulated within the Hebrew Bible. As Eagleton comments, "Ideology is ... a question of who is saying what to whom for what purposes."¹²

Born of literary and sociological theories,¹³ "ideological criticism" thus builds upon the widely-accepted premise that biases evident within the Hebrew Bible often reflect the biblical writers' self-definition, social contexts, and world-views. Locating and identifying the social and theological concerns of biblical writers offers a framework for discussion focused upon the ideological influences within biblical texts. But a cautionary note must be sounded, lest a complex issue is to be oversimplified: the recognition and acceptance of the ideological nature of the Hebrew Bible is not to overlook the biblical material as a varied and often contradictory collection of religious texts, texts with complex literary histories, which exhibit a dynamic range of themes and ideas. The Hebrew Bible is not an inherently coherent collection with a unified theological

11 M.G. Brett, "Interpreting Ethnicity: Method, Hermeneutics, Ethics", in M.G. Brett (ed.), *Ethnicity and the Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 3-22 (10).

12 Eagleton, *Ideology*, 9.

13 See further F. Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981); R.P. Carroll, "Poststructuralist Approaches; New Historicism and postmodernism", in J. Barton (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 50-66.

agenda. But nor is it so incoherent as to be simply a disparate group of texts, loosely held together by their central focus upon a specific deity. In spite of its varied concerns—and indeed its many ideologies—the Hebrew Bible, on the whole, does project an overarching, unified ideological system: that of a monotheistic world-view, in which a creator god forges an exclusive relationship with “Israel”, a relationship which is traceable through history and evidenced through the gift of land. This ideological theme pervades and unifies the texts of the Hebrew Bible, and in this sense, this discussion is justified in referring throughout to the “ideology of the Hebrew Bible”. Yet where does this leave history?

Without aligning this discussion with a particular scholar or group of scholars,¹⁴ the following observations are offered as a means of locating this study upon the figurative map of the debate concerning the historical reliability of the Hebrew Bible: firstly, and perhaps most importantly, the Hebrew Bible must be distinguished from the religious history it seeks to describe. To recognize the Hebrew Bible as a collection of religious and ideological literature is not to deny that information of an historical nature may be discerned in it. Yet in acknowledging that this sort of information may lie within the biblical texts, neither can the religious and ideological context of that information be disregarded. Nor can the possibility of historically-credible information verify the reliability of the Hebrew Bible as an historical source.

Secondly, given its nature as religious and ideological literature, the Hebrew Bible may reveal more about its writers than it can about the historical realities of the people, practices and events it seeks to describe. Therefore the perceived importance and role of the Hebrew Bible within historical reconstructions demands close delineation. Essentially, this entails the relative prioritization of biblical and non-biblical material employed within such reconstructions. For some scholars, the Hebrew Bible is

14 The volume of material discussing this issue is now vast. For a sampling of views, see for example, I.W. Provan, “Ideologies, Literary and Critical: Reflections on Recent Writing on the History of Israel”, *JBL* 114 (1995), 585-606; P.R. Davies, “Method and Madness: Some Remarks on Doing History with the Bible”, *JBL* 114 (1995), 699-705; E.A. Knauf, “From History to Interpretation”, in D.V. Edelman (ed.), *The Fabric of History: Text, Artifact and Israel's Past* (JSOTSup 127; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 26-64; L.L. Grabbe (ed.), *Can a “History of Israel” Be Written?* (JSOTSup 245/ESHM 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); W.G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did they Know It? What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

potentially a primary source able to provide, for example, a reasonably reliable insight into the religious character of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, which may be supplemented or interpreted in the light of non-biblical literature, inscriptions, and artefacts. In contrast, others would relegate the Hebrew Bible to the role of a secondary source, assigning precedence instead to the potential evidence of non-biblical material to provide a reasonably reliable foundation upon which the religious characters of the kingdoms may be constructed. The present discussion will generally tend to favour the latter option. However, it is important to acknowledge that this process of prioritization is not rigidly immovable. Thus although the Hebrew Bible may not function as a primary source in the historical reconstruction of ancient Israel and Judah, its potential value as a source for discerning the ideological stance and socio-historical location of the biblical writers is greatly increased. Consequently, the Hebrew Bible is perhaps best understood as offering its own versions of the histories of Israel and Judah, just as modern scholarship offers its own multiple versions of those histories.

A notable reflex of this relative prioritization of non-biblical material over the biblical is what Edelman describes as a “paradigm shift” in the conceptualization of the historical realities of Israelite and Judahite religions.¹⁵ A particular interest in the beliefs and practices of various social groups, such as families, women, priests, urban elites, and rural communities, has emphasized the internal diversity of Israelite and Judahite religious beliefs and practices.¹⁶ Coupled with a renewed focus upon the plurality of deities, and their varied and localized manifestations throughout the land,¹⁷ a picture has emerged of Israelite and Judahite religions as normatively polytheistic and internally pluralistic, and as such they are to be regarded as

15 D.V. Edelman, Review of J. Day, *Yahweh and the God and Goddesses of Canaan*, *BI* 10 (2002), 79-81.

16 See, for example, Z. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches* (London/New York: Continuum, 2001); K. van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria, and Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 1996); E.S. Gerstenberger, *Theologies in the Old Testament* (trans. J. Bowden; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002); R. Albertz, *Persönliche Frömmigkeit und offizielle Religion* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1978); *idem.*, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period* (2 vols; trans. J. Bowden; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994); G.W. Ahlström, *Royal Administration and National Religion in Ancient Palestine* (Leiden: Brill, 1982); L.G. Perdue, J. Blenkinsopp, J.J. Collins and C. Meyers, *Families in Ancient Israel* (FRC; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997).

17 Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 236-265.

inherently coherent with the religious climate of the ancient Near East.¹⁸ Closely related is the widespread recognition that Israelites and Judahites are best considered subsets of the native people of the land commonly designated “Canaan”, thereby dispelling the biblically-based distinction between “Israelite” and “Canaanite”.¹⁹ This in itself is informed by the shifting sands of archaeology, which has now clearly established that Israel and Judah emerged from the indigenous population of Palestine, and did not originate outside the land.²⁰

A further facet of this paradigm shift in the conceptualization of Israelite and Judahite religions reflects the gradual erosion of the sharp distinction frequently discerned between “official religion” and “popular religion”. In essence, this distinction perceives a difference between an institutionalized religious system, commonly endorsed by the state, practised in its accompanying established sanctuaries, and commonly termed “official” or “formal” religion, and those religious beliefs and practices which do not have a place in this institutionalized religion, which are instead associated with the people living and worshipping away from the established sanctuaries, and as

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- 18 See further K. van der Toorn, “Currents in the Study of Israelite Religion”, *CR:BS* 6 (1998), 9-30; M.S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990); O. Keel and C. Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel* (trans. T.H. Trapp; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998); L.K. Handy, “The Appearance of Pantheon in Judah”, in D.V. Edelman (ed.), *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaisms* (CBET 13; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995), 27-43; H. Niehr, “The Rise of YHWH in Judahite and Israelite Religion: Methodological and Religio-Historical Aspects”, in Edelman, *The Triumph of Elohim*, 45-72; F. Stolz, “Monotheismus in Israel”, in O. Keel (ed.), *Monotheismus im Alten Israel und seiner Umwelt* (BibB 14; Freiburg: Schweizerisches Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1980).
- 19 See further, for example, N.P. Lemche, *The Canaanites and Their Land: The Tradition of the Canaanites* (JSOTSup 110; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991); T.L. Thompson, *Early History of the Israelite People: From the Written and Archaeological Sources* (SHANE 4; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 310-316; G.W. Ahlström, *Who Were the Israelites?* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1986); cf. V. Fritz, “Israelites and Canaanites: You Can Tell Them Apart”, *BAR* 28 (2002), 28-31, 63; W.G. Dever, “How to Tell a Canaanite from an Israelite”, in H. Shanks (ed.), *The Rise of Ancient Israel* (Washington: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1992), 27-56; *idem.*, *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).
- 20 See further I. Finkelstein, *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1988); *idem.*, “The Emergence of Israel: A Phase in the Cyclic History of Canaan in the Third and Second Millennia BCE”, in I. Finkelstein and N. Na’aman (eds.), *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), 150-178.

such are often described as “village religion”, “folk religion”, or even “superstition”. It is not uncommon to find that discussions maintaining this distinction frequently slide into a further distinction, that of “legitimate” and “illegitimate” religious beliefs and practices, the former characterizing institutionalized religion, and the latter characterizing practices external to or rejected by the institutionalized religion. Yet in the light of compelling evidence for a normative and native plurality and variety of religions within the ancient Israelite and Judahite belief-systems, it is increasingly recognized that distinctions of this kind are frequently unhelpful, if not misleading and distorting.²¹ Accordingly, the terms “official religion” and “popular religion”, along with their synonyms, are best avoided.

The observations summarized here thus present a picture of the historical and religious realities of ancient Israel and Judah at odds with the biblical portrayal. In taking account of the strong ideological concerns of the biblical writers and the illuminating paradigm shift within the historical imaging of ancient Israelite and Judahite religions, it is essential to distinguish carefully between the Hebrew Bible and the probable historical realities of ancient Israel and Judah. In order to reaffirm this distinction, and secondarily as a trigger for the reader to recall these observations, this study will employ an appellative distinction between YHWH, the central character and god of the Hebrew Bible, and *Yhwh*, a deity worshipped in and around ancient Palestine.²²

One of the primary aims of this study is the identification and demonstration of an ideological strategy employed within the Hebrew Bible. This strategy is the construction of conceptual boundaries which identify

21 For further discussion, see J. Berlinerblau, *The Vow and the “Popular Religious Groups” of Ancient Israel: A Philological and Sociological Inquiry* (JSOTSup 210; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), ch. 1; *idem.*, “The ‘Popular Religion’ Paradigm in Old Testament Research: A Sociological Critique”, *JSOT* 60 (1993), 3-26; M. Daniel Carroll R., “Re-Examining ‘Popular Religion’: Issues of Definition and Sources. Insights from Interpretative Anthropology”, in M. Daniel Carroll R. (ed.), *Rethinking Contexts, Rereading Texts: Contributions from the Social Sciences to Biblical Interpretation* (JSOTSup 299; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 146-167; J. Gomes, “Popular Religion in Old Testament Research: Past, Present and Future”, *TynBul* 54 (2003), 31-50; P. Vrijhof and J. Waardenburg (eds.), *Official and Popular Religion: Analysis of a Theme for Religious Studies* (Religion and Society 19; The Hague: Mouton, 1979).

22 This terminology is a modification of that offered by C. Uehlinger, “Anthropomorphic Cult Statuary in Iron Age Palestine and the Search for Yahweh’s Cult Images”, in K. van der Toorn (ed.), *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 97-155.

“Israel” as the people of God. These boundaries qualify and define behaviour allowing or prohibiting access to the people “Israel”. As stated at the outset, the biblical portrayals of King Manasseh and child sacrifice as the embodiments of religious deviancy thus serve as ideological “boundary markers” in this biblical, ideological context. In the close examination of King Manasseh and child sacrifice, this study will fall into two parts. The first may be considered a defence of the historical King Manasseh. The portrait of Manasseh within the Hebrew Bible and later traditions differs greatly depending upon the portrait-painter. For the Book of Kings,²³ Manasseh plays the role of the ultimate villain within its story of “Israel”, for it is in direct response to his deliberate cultic mispractice that YHWH destroys Judah and Jerusalem and finally rejects his people. In contrast to this portrayal of Manasseh the “destructor”, the Book of Chronicles casts Manasseh as the “constructor”. He is the paradigmatic penitent, who returns to YHWH in prayer, purifies the cult, and fortifies his kingdom. Both perceptions of Manasseh are reflected within post-biblical traditions. Whereas the *Martyrdom of Isaiah* blames Manasseh for the gruesome execution of the prophet Isaiah, the Prayer of Manasseh presents Manasseh as the remorseful penitent. Rabbinic tradition also exhibits these conflicting impressions of Manasseh, presenting him both as an idolatrous prophet-slayer and as a repentant sinner and scriptural scholar.

Despite Manasseh’s rehabilitation within some of these traditions, his villainous characterization is shared by all portrayals of this king. Moreover, most modern reconstructions of the historical kingdoms of Israel and Judah also adopt this negative portrayal, thereby perpetuating the portrait of Manasseh as a villain. This may find partial explanation in the apparent lack of interest within modern scholarship in locating and assessing the historical Manasseh. Rather, scholarly enquiry into Judah’s kings tends to be dominated by those heroic characters the biblical writers wanted their audiences to remember, namely David, Hezekiah and Josiah.²⁴ This biblically-based bias is rarely—if ever—acknowledged within scholarship,

23 The label “Book of Kings”, as well as that of “Book of Chronicles”, should not be taken as indicative of a clumsy disregard of the traditional division of 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles each into two books; rather, this label reflects both the perceived unified, literary coherence of both Kings and Chronicles, and the necessary limitations of this study, preventing as they do any detailed discussion of the literary histories of these texts.

24 This bias is reflected in the fact that the modest number of studies concerning Manasseh is dwarfed by the huge volume of books, monographs and articles devoted to the subjects of David, Hezekiah and Josiah.

yet it must be recognized and rectified if the scholarly reconstruction of ancient Judahite societies and religious practices is to be even approximately representative of the probable historical reality.

In assessing biblical, post-biblical and scholarly presentations of King Manasseh, this discussion hopes to add to the small number of studies devoted to Manasseh, and to defend the Manasseh of history against the traditional and conventional charges of wickedness and apostasy. This may be achieved in three stages. Firstly, the biblical portrayals of Manasseh will be investigated in chapter 1. By this means, the role and function of Manasseh as a biblical character may be established, and the motivations for his villainous characterization discerned. Secondly, by examining archaeological, inscriptional and socio-scientific data, the discussion in chapter 2 will seek to construct a plausible profile of the historical Manasseh and his Judah, in which it will be argued that Manasseh was actually one of Judah's most successful monarchs. In chapter 3, this historical profile will be compared and contrasted with biblical, post-biblical and scholarly portraits of Manasseh, in order to clarify how and why the Manasseh of history has been distorted into the biblical epitome of the wicked, idolatrous apostate.

The second part of this study is essentially a reassessment of child sacrifice. The provocative nature of the subject of child sacrifice is clearly felt by both biblical writers and modern scholars. A cursory reading of the Hebrew Bible indicates not only that the practice was known, but also that the biblical writers felt that it was the particular practice of the "Canaanite" nations, and hence alien to YHWH-worship. However, the biblical writers concede that some idolatrous "Israelites" disobeyed YHWH's commands not to imitate the practices of the nations by causing their children "to pass over in the fire". Biblical scholarship has generally accepted—almost without question—the biblical picture in arguing that these texts refer or allude to a Canaanite deity named "Molek" to whom children were sacrificed, a practice adopted by idolatrous Israelites due to Canaanite influence. The advent of Eissfeldt's monograph in 1935 proclaiming the end of the god "Molek" in favour of Punic evidence for biblical מִלֵּךְ as a sacrificial term encouraged the academic abandonment of the concept of "Molek" as a deity.²⁵ However, Eissfeldt's theory has made less impact upon scholarship than is generally realised, for though he argued that children were sacrificed to *Yhwh*, the biblical insistence that such a practice was originally alien to Israel, imported by foreign nations, practised by idolatrous Israelites, and consistently

25 O. Eissfeldt, *Molk als Opferbegriff im Punischen und Hebräischen und das Ende des Gottes Moloch* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1935).

outlawed by YHWH, has persisted, not least in the wide-ranging consensus that foreign cultural influence upon Israel and Judah was to blame, a view recently rearticulated by Miller:

The practice of child sacrifice may have had some continuing place in heterodox Yahwism, but it seems to have been a genuinely syncretistic practice brought in from outside in the assimilation of cults of other deities to the worship of Yahweh.²⁶

This academic assertion has been made in spite of some highly ambiguous texts, such as the story of the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter in Judg. 11:30-40, and texts which claim explicitly that YHWH demanded child sacrifice, such as the tale of the binding of Isaac in Gen. 22:1-19. A further example occurs in the book of Ezekiel. Though in this text child sacrifice is generally condemned within the context of the worship of foreign gods, in 20:25-26 it is claimed that YHWH deliberately demanded that his people sacrifice their firstborn children to him in order to punish them. Indeed, a closer examination of the Hebrew Bible suggests that the offering of the firstborn to YHWH may well have included the sacrifice of human babies along with the offering of animals and crops. In spite of these texts, the debate appears to have come full circle within modern scholarship with the relatively recent defence of the biblical concept of "Molek" as a foreign god of child sacrifice.²⁷ However, contrary to this view, this study will argue that the identification of child sacrifice as a foreign element within Judahite religious practice is based upon the distortion of the historical reality of child sacrifice within the Hebrew Bible. Furthermore, it will be argued that the academic acceptance of this biblical distortion as historical probability reflects a persistent and unself-critical ideological bias within modern scholarship. Unlike most other areas of academic enquiry, the subject of child sacrifice is particularly susceptible to misrepresentation within modern scholarship because of its sensitive nature. The historical reality of child sacrifice in ancient (and indeed modern) civilisations is an unpleasant reality, particularly, as van der Horst comments, if such a practice is attested within a culture that has played some role in the formation of one's personal world-

26 P.D. Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel* (Library of Ancient Israel; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 59.

27 G.C. Heider, *The Cult of Molek: A Reassessment* (JSOTSup 43; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985); J. Day, *Molech: A god of human sacrifice in the Old Testament* (UCOP 41; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

view.²⁸ This may well account in part for the apparent reluctance within biblical scholarship to apply the perspectives of ideological criticism to the examination of the subject of child sacrifice and the Hebrew Bible. As Bergmann suggests:

We have a particular difficulty in understanding this phenomenon because the Judeo-Christian tradition has accustomed us to regard God as an ego-ideal. Therefore how could God tolerate human sacrifices?²⁹

As observed above, ideological criticism suggests that ideology generally exists within a dynamic context of opposition. In seeking to distinguish between the biblical portrayal of child sacrifice and the historical reality of this practice, this discussion will argue that the biblical material concerning child sacrifice is generally opposed to the historical reality that children were sacrificed to *Yhwh*, and that an “ideology of separateness”³⁰ governs the biblical insistence that child sacrifice was a Canaanite practice. Moreover, it will be argued that child sacrifice played an important role within the royal Judahite cult, and that “Molek” is best understood as a biblical character masking the historical reality of the sacrifice of children to *Yhwh*.

Accordingly, in discussing child sacrifice this study will follow a pattern parallel to that applied to the subject of Manasseh. Thus in chapter 4, the biblical portrayal of child sacrifice will be examined in order to identify the specific role this sacrifice plays within the ideology of the Hebrew Bible. This will be followed in chapter 5 by the construction of a plausible picture of the nature and function of child sacrifice in Judah, based upon the examination of archaeological, inscriptional and textual evidence. This reconstruction will argue that child sacrifice was a native and normative element of the historical reality of Judahite religious practice. In chapter 6, a selective overview of some of the “afterlives” of the practice of child sacrifice will be offered, demonstrating the enduring impact of this sacrifice

28 P.W. van der Horst, “‘Laws that were not Good’: Ezekiel 20:25 in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity”, in J.N. Bremmer and F. Garcia Martinez (eds.), *Sacred History and Sacred Texts in Early Judaism: A Symposium in Honour of A.S. van der Woude* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1992), 94-118.

29 M.S. Bergmann, *In the Shadow of Moloch: The Sacrifice of Children and Its Impact on Western Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 22.

30 Cf. P.M. Joyce, “Israelites and Canaanites, Christians and Jews: Studies in Self-Definition”, in J.M. Soskice, et al., *Knowing the Other: Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Association of Great Britain, Leeds, 1993*, *New Blackfriars*, Vol. 75, No. 878 (1994), 31-38; E.S. Gerstenberger, *Leviticus: A Commentary* (trans. D.W. Stott; OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 255-57.

as a religious motif within Jewish and Christian traditions. It will be argued that the biblical distortion of child sacrifice as a “foreign” practice is a deliberate and ideologically-motivated attempt to disguise the historically-probable reality that children were sacrificed to *Yhwh* in Judah. Moreover, the failure of many scholars to recognize this biblical distortion will be underscored.

Biblical writers and modern scholars share a common interest in describing the people and practices of the past. None is immune from the danger of bias. A key method of this study, as Clines encourages, is thus “to try to reach beneath the surface of the text of the Hebrew Bible and the texts of biblical scholars and to expose what it is I think is ‘really’ going on underneath the claims and commands and statements of the biblical and scholarly texts”.³¹ As such, it is hoped that with a keen, self-critical rigour, and a careful process of historical contextualization, the admittedly tentative presentations of King Manasseh and child sacrifice in this study will redress some of the ideological imbalances and biased assumptions evident within biblical and non-biblical portrayals of this ancient person and this ancient practice.

31 Clines, *Interested Parties*, 12.

1 The Biblical Manasseh

Given that King Manasseh of Judah is presented as the longest reigning monarch within the biblical story of “Israel”, it is remarkable that it takes less than two chapters and a few scattered verses within the biblical corpus to tell his story. Moreover, this story differs tremendously depending upon the storyteller. 2 Kgs 21:1-18 is the Kings account of Manasseh’s reign, in which the idolatrous monarch is held personally responsible for the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by misleading the people to do more evil than the nations, thereby provoking YHWH to bring punishment upon the people. This accusation is repeated in 2 Kgs 23:26-27 and 24:3-4, and also occurs in Jer. 15:4, in which YHWH claims, “I will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth because of what King Manasseh, son of Hezekiah of Judah, did in Jerusalem”. 2 Chr. 33:1-10 concurs almost exactly with Kings’ portrayal of Manasseh as the villainous monarch who leads the people astray, yet makes a radical break from the Kings account in verses 11-20, in which the Assyrian king carries Manasseh off to Babylon, where he repents before YHWH, who thus restores him to the Judahite throne. The reformed Manasseh then purges the cult, implements an extensive building project, and strengthens Judah’s military installations. Kings and Chronicles conflict so much in their presentation of Manasseh and his reign that scholars of what may be cautiously termed “the Judah of history” find themselves choosing between the two accounts based upon the supposed historical reliability of each. Consequently, though attempts have been made to demonstrate the historical plausibility of the Chronicler’s report of Manasseh’s captivity, the majority of scholars appear to dismiss the account in Chronicles as a fictitious theological vehicle, and favour instead Kings’ portrait of Manasseh. Making this simplistic choice between Kings and Chronicles would appear to satisfy the academic appetite for critical questioning, for as Evans observes, many scholars continue to accept uncritically the negative portrait of Manasseh in 2

Kgs 21.¹ This position was particularly popular in the 'seventies and 'eighties: McKay states that "Manasseh himself positively encouraged [the] revival of heathenism", and is thus "rightly condemned" by the biblical writers.² Cogan describes the reign of Manasseh as "an age of unprecedented abandonment of Israelite tradition".³ Though he acknowledges the theological bias of the Kings' account of Manasseh's reign, Jagersma claims that Assyrian influence upon Manasseh resulted in a syncretistic, religious decline during his reign.⁴ Such value judgments are hardly the stuff of objective, academic investigation.⁵ Yet despite the recent scholarly emphasis upon the polytheistic character of native and normative Judahite religion, Manasseh continues to be described as an idolatrous anti-monotheist. Day asserts that Manasseh allowed syncretism to run rampant,⁶ whilst Milgrom claims:

... the difference in the state-endorsed religion of Judah between the eighth and the seventh century is largely summarized by a single word—rather, by a single person: Manasseh. By force majeure (2 Kgs 21:16), he reintroduced idolatry into Jerusalem and Judah, completely undoing the reform of his father, Hezekiah (2 Kgs 21:3), and, even exceeding the previous status quo, he installed idols in the Temple courtyards and in the sanctuary itself (2 Kgs 21:5, 7; 23:4-7).⁷

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- 1 C.D. Evans, "Manasseh, King of Judah", *ABD*, vol. 4, 496-99 (497).
 - 2 J.W. McKay, *Religion in Judah under the Assyrians, 732-609 BC* (SBT 26; London: SCM Press, 1973), 26-27.
 - 3 M. Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Judah, and Israel in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries BCE* (SBLMS 19; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974), 113; though note Cogan's more circumspect stance in a recent article, "Into Exile: From the Assyrian Conquest of Israel to the Fall of Babylon", in M.D. Coogan (ed.), *The Oxford History of the Biblical World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 242-75, esp. 252-56.
 - 4 H. Jagersma, *A History of Israel in the Old Testament Period* (London: SCM Press, 1982), 165-66.
 - 5 Note R.P. Carroll's critique of such value judgements within modern scholarship, *Wolf in the Sheepfold: The Bible as a Problem for Christianity* (second edn; London: SCM Press, 1997).
 - 6 J. Day, "The Religion of Israel", in A.D.H. Mayes (ed.), *Text in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 428-53 (434); see also his comments in *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (JSOTSup 265; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 230.
 - 7 J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 3A; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 1386.

In adopting the opinions of the biblical writers, many scholars have thus aligned the Manasseh of history with the Manasseh of Kings, perpetuating the distortion of the biblical writers further.

1.1 The Manasseh of Kings

As is well known, blame for the destruction of Judah and the exile of her people is placed almost entirely upon the figure of Manasseh within Kings. Yet despite the great importance of his role within Kings, Manasseh is relatively neglected within scholarship, which instead tends to focus upon the heroes of Kings: David, Hezekiah and Josiah.⁸ The recent increase in publications dealing with the Manasseh account in Kings—though still disproportionate to those focusing upon other characters—appears to signal a growing interest in the figure of Manasseh. However, it is notable that many of these publications analyse the account of Manasseh's reign as a means of testing or demonstrating theories of Deuteronomistic composition and redaction, rather than focusing upon the characterization and function of Manasseh within Kings.⁹ Though the question of the hypothesis of the Deuteronomistic History and its various modifications remains pertinent, the objective of this study is not to peel back hypothetical, literary layers of Deuteronomistic composition, but to move beyond the domination of Deuteronomistic scholarship to examine the portrayal of Manasseh within

⁸ See further 2.3.

⁹ Eg. B. Halpern, "Why Manasseh is Blamed for the Babylonian Exile: The Evolution of a Biblical Tradition", *VT* 48 (1998), 473-514; E. Eynikel, "The Portrait of Manasseh and the Deuteronomistic History", in M. Vervenne and J. Lust (eds.), *Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic Literature: Festschrift C.H.W. Brekelmans* (BETL 133; Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 233-61; P.S.F. van Keulen, *Manasseh through the Eyes of the Deuteronomists: The Manasseh Account (2 Kings 21:1-18) and the Final Chapters of the Deuteronomistic History* (OTS 38; Leiden: Brill, 1996); W.M. Schniedewind, "History and Interpretation: The Religion of Ahab and Manasseh in the Book of Kings", *CBQ* 55 (1993), 649-61; E. Ben Zvi, "The Account of the Reign of Manasseh in II Reg 21, 1-18 and the Redactional History of the Book of Kings", *ZAW* 103 (1991), 355-74.

Kings in its present form.¹⁰ As such, the question of the Deuteronomistic History hypothesis merits only brief comment here.¹¹

In presenting his celebrated hypothesis that the books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings comprise a self-contained historiography, Noth was keen to emphasize the coherence and unity of the Deuteronomistic History. Accordingly, he argued that the Deuteronomistic History was produced in the period of the exile by a single author/editor, who drew on a variety of older literary traditions to compose his history of "Israel", a history beginning with the acquisition of the land, and ending with the loss of the land.¹² Yet the theory of the essential unity of the

10 Although it should be noted that the discussion of issues concerning the text's composition or redaction will be addressed as and when required.

11 For a detailed discussion of the Deuteronomistic History, see T. Römer and A. de Pury, "Deuteronomistic Historiography (DH): History of Research and Debated Issues", in A. de Pury, T. Römer and J.-D. Macchi (eds.), *Israel Constructs Its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research* (JSOTSup 306; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 9-120; see also H.N. Rösel, *Von Josua bis Jojachin: Untersuchungen zu den deuteronomistischen Geschichtsbüchern des Alten Testaments* (VTSup 75; Leiden: Brill, 1999). For discussions concerning Kings and the Deuteronomistic History, see J.R. Linville, *Israel in the Book of Kings: The Past as a Project of Social Identity* (JSOTSup 272; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 38-73; G.N. Knoppers, "Rethinking the Relationship between Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History: The Case of Kings", *CBQ* 63 (2001), 393-415; W.M. Schniedewind, "The Problem with Kings: Recent Study of the Deuteronomistic History", *RSR* 22 (1996), 22-27; S.L. McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings: The Composition of the Book of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History* (VTSup 42; Leiden: Brill, 1991); *idem.*, "The Book of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History", in S.L. McKenzie and M.P. Graham (eds.), *History of Israel's Traditions: The Heritage of Martin Noth* (JSOTSup 182; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 281-307; *idem.*, "Deuteronomistic History", *ABD*, vol. 2, 160-168; M. Cogan, *I Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 10; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 96-100.

12 M. Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien. I. Die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1943); *ET The Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup 15; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981) and *The Chronicler's History* (trans. H.G.M. Williamson; JSOTSup 50; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987); see also H.-D. Hoffmann, *Reform und Reformen: Untersuchungen zu einem Grundthema der deuteronomistischen Geschichtsschreibung* (ATANT 66; Zurich: Theologische, 1980), 315-318; G. Minette de Tillesse, "Martin Noth et la 'Redaktiongeschichte' des Livres Historiques", in C.H. Hauret (ed.), *Aux grands carrefours de la révélation et de l'exegese de l'Ancien Testament* (Recherches Bibliques

Deuteronomistic History, which remains popular, has been seriously challenged in the ensuing decades by considerable modifications of Noth's theory, which emphasize the authorial and/or editorial disunity of the Deuteronomistic History. Three positions may be discerned. The first argues with prominent reference to Kings that the Deuteronomistic History developed in two stages: a first edition was produced during the reign of Josiah, perhaps with reference to an older literary source,¹³ and was then extended and redacted to a greater or lesser extent after the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem.¹⁴ A second position supports Noth's exilic dating of the composition of the Deuteronomistic History, but argues for at least three distinct, successive and thorough-going layers of redaction during this period.¹⁵ Though a middle-ground between these two positions has been

8; Paris: Doornik, 1967), 51-75; J.G. McConville, "Narrative and Meaning in the Books of Kings", *Bib* 70 (1989), 50-73.

- 13 For a sampling of opinions on this issue, see for example, B. Halpern and D.S. Vanderhooft, "The Editions of Kings in the 7th-6th Centuries BCE", *HUCA* 62 (1991), 179-244; A.D.H. Mayes, *The Story of Israel between Settlement and Exile: A Redactional Study of the Deuteronomistic History* (London: SCM Press, 1983); I.W. Provan, *Hezekiah and the Books of Kings: A Contribution to the Debate about the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History* (BZAW 72; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988); E. Eynikel, *The Reform of King Josiah and the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History* (OTS 33; Leiden: Brill, 1996).
- 14 For example, F.M. Cross, "The Themes of the Book of Kings and the Structure of the Deuteronomistic History", in *idem.*, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 274-289; R.D. Nelson, *The Double-Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup 18; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981); R.E. Friedman, "From Egypt to Egypt: Dtr¹ and Dtr²", in B. Halpern and J.D. Levenson (eds.), *Traditions in Transformation: Turning Points in Biblical Faith* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 167-192; *idem.*, *The Exile and Biblical Narrative: The Formation of the Deuteronomistic and Priestly Codes* (HSM 22; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1981); Z. Zevit, "Deuteronomistic Historiography in 1 Kings 12-2 Kings 17 and the Reinvestiture of the Israelian Cult", *JSOT* 32 (1985), 57-73; J.D. Levenson, "Who Inserted the Book of the Torah?", *HTR* 68 (1975), 203-233.
- 15 R. Smend, "Das Gesetz und die Völker: Ein Beitrag zur deuteronomistischen Redaktionsgeschichte", in H.W. Wolff (ed.), *Probleme biblischer Theologie: G. von Rad zum 70. Geburtstag* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1971), 494-509; W. Dietrich, *Prophezie und Geschichte: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk* (FRLANT 108; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972); T. Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie: David und die Entstehung seiner Dynastie nach der deuteronomistischen Darstellung* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1975); *idem.*, *Das Königtum in der Beurteilung der deuteronomistischen Historiographie: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1977).

sought,¹⁶ a consensus of opinion remains elusive. Moreover, a potentially fatal challenge to Noth's hypothesis has arisen. This represents the third position, and it draws notable strength from the lack of consensus concerning the Deuteronomistic History. Its primary emphasis falls upon the distinctive and often contradictory characteristics of each biblical book held to comprise the History, and whilst pointing to the increased identification of "Deuteronomistic" material elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible,¹⁷ this position contests the very existence of a Deuteronomistic History.¹⁸

Given the range and variety of theories concerning the Deuteronomistic History and other supposedly Deuteronomistic material, it is increasingly difficult to employ the label "Deuteronomistic" with precision, as some scholars have observed.¹⁹ Indeed, the term "Deuteronomistic" is potentially

16 This approach is particularly associated with the work of N. Lohfink; see further the collection of articles reprinted in his volumes entitled *Studien zur Deuteronomium und zur deuteronomistischen Literatur* (SBAB 8, 12, 20; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1990, 1991, 1995).

17 See particularly the discussion in R.R. Wilson, "Who Was the Deuteronomist? (Who Was Not the Deuteronomist?): Reflections on Pan-Deuteronomism", in L.S. Shearing and S.L. McKenzie (eds.), *Those Elusive Deuteronomists: The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism* (JSOTSup 268; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1999), 67-82; see also T.C. Römer, "L'école deuteronomiste et la formation de la Bible hébraïque", in *idem.* (ed.), *The Future of the Deuteronomistic History* (BETL 147; Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 179-194, and the collection of essays in J.C. de Moor and H.F. van Rooy (eds.), *Past, Present, Future: The Deuteronomistic History and the Prophets* (OTS 44; Leiden: Brill, 2000).

18 E.A. Knauf, "Does 'Deuteronomistic Historiography' (DH) Exist?", in De Pury, Römer and Macchi, *Israel Constructs Its History*, 388-398; C. Westermann, *Die Geschichtsbücher des Alten Testaments: Gab es ein deuteronomistisches Geschichtswerk?* (TBü 87; Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1994); cf. Eynikel, *Reform*, 363; A.G. Auld, "The Deuteronomists and the Former Prophets, or What Makes the Former Prophets Deuteronomistic?", in Shearing and McKenzie, *Those Elusive Deuteronomists*, 116-126; see also J. Van Seters, "The Deuteronomistic History: Can it Avoid Death by Redaction?", in Römer, *The Future of the Deuteronomistic History*, 213-222; G.N. Knoppers, "Is There a Future for the Deuteronomistic History?", in Römer, *The Future of the Deuteronomistic History*, 119-134.

19 See also R. Coggins, "What Does 'Deuteronomistic' Mean?", in Shearing and McKenzie, *Those Elusive Deuteronomists*, 22-35; Wilson, "Who Was the Deuteronomist?", 78; W.B. Barrick, *The King and the Cemeteries: Toward a New Understanding of Josiah's Reform* (VTSup 88; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 13-14; Linville, *Israel in the Book of Kings*, 61-69. For a useful survey of opinions concerning the Manasseh account within the context of the Deuteronomistic History, see Van Keulen, *Manasseh*, ch. 1.

so slippery that it is rendered unhelpful within this study. Thus following Barrick's example,²⁰ the label "Deuteronomistic" will not be applied to the Books of Kings. Instead the Books of Kings will be treated as a single, unified work and called simply "Kings"; where appropriate, its writer shall be called the "Kings Writer".²¹ It will be assumed that Kings in its present form is a post-monarchic composition, addressed to a post-monarchic audience.²² It is important to acknowledge that whilst very similar ideologies pervade Deuteronomy and Kings, there are also considerable tensions between these texts. As such, the supposition of a generic relationship between them is not certain; nor is it central to the arguments of this discussion.²³ Consequently, it will be assumed that the Kings Writer and the author of Deuteronomy shared some similar world-views, and that Deuteronomy *in its present form* is also a post-monarchic composition addressed to a post-monarchic audience.²⁴

Having established the methodological parameters required to deal with Kings, the discussion can now turn to the portrayal of Manasseh in Kings.

20 Barrick, *King and the Cemeteries*, 14.

21 This is in deliberate distinction to Barrick's preferred designations for the books and their author, namely the "Kings History" and the "Kings Historian", respectively (*King and the Cemeteries*, 14-15). Barrick's designations are suggestive of an assumed degree of historical reliability, which may not be justified. Note too that the use of terminology in the singular, such as "writer" and "author", does not preclude the possibility that the text derives from more than one hand. However, for simplicity's sake, the singular is to be preferred.

22 See the discussions in T.C. Römer, "Transformations in Deuteronomistic and Biblical Historiography: On 'Book-Finding' and other Literary Strategies", *ZAW* 107 (1997), 1-11; J.R. Linville, "Rethinking the 'Exilic' Book of Kings", *JSOT* 75 (1997), 21-42; *idem.*, *Israel in the Book of Kings*, 69-73.

23 See further Knoppers, "Rethinking the Relationship", 393-415; *idem.*, "Solomon's Fall and Deuteronomy", in L.K. Handy (ed.), *The Age of Solomon: Scholarship at the Turn of the Millennium* (SHCANE 11; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 392-410, esp. 403 n. 49.

24 See also, for example, G. Hölscher, "Komposition und Ursprung des Deuteronomiums", *ZAW* 40 (1922), 161-255; E. Würthwein, "Die Josianische Reform und das Deuteronomium", *ZTK* 73 (1976), 365-423. An innovative position regarding the dating of both Deuteronomy and Kings is not crucial to this discussion. Whilst the majority of scholars assume that versions of both texts existed in some form or another within the monarchic period, it is reasonable to assert that this majority would also agree that both texts achieved their present form in the post-monarchic period. Given that it is the present forms of Deuteronomy and Kings which, in the main, will be dealt with here, it is thus assumed that these are post-monarchic texts. This is not to deny the possibility of the existence of monarchic material within these texts, but this possibility will be addressed on the basis of specific examples only where necessary.

The most striking feature of the Deuteronomists' portrait of Manasseh ... is that it is not the portrait of an individual at all.²⁵

Lasine's comment is well-founded. As he observes, the Manasseh of 2 Kgs 21:1-18 is unlike any other king within the regnal history presented by Kings. He makes no royal speeches, there are no descriptions of his responses or emotions, and most interestingly, he does not interact with any other characters: not a foreign nation, nor prophets, nor "the people", and certainly not YHWH, yet these characters all appear in the story.²⁶ Moreover, as Lasine comments further, the backdrop to the production is blank, complementing the "faceless king",²⁷ for there is no mention of any international event with which to anchor the period within the wider ancient Near Eastern context. This is particularly notable given that most modern interpretations of this account of Manasseh's reign are constructed upon the assumed Assyrian domination of Judah during this period.²⁸ Yet according to Kings, the Assyrians fled Judah after the miraculous deliverance of Zion during Hezekiah's reign, apparently never to return (2 Kgs 19:32-37).

Given the fact that Manasseh plays what is arguably the most crucial role within Kings in causing the destruction of Judah and the exile of her people, this brief and flimsy characterization is surprising, presenting Manasseh as little more than a man of straw. It is equally surprising that although most commentators agree that this chapter is a heavily-stylized account of Manasseh's reign, many remain convinced that it harbours, to a greater or a lesser extent, reliable information about the historical Manasseh.²⁹ A closer examination of the text demonstrates just how stylized this story is, and reveals far more about the Kings Writer than about the Manasseh of history.

25 S. Lasine, "Manasseh as Villain and Scapegoat", in J.C. Exum and D.J.A. Clines (eds.), *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup 143; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 163-183 (163).

26 Lasine, "Manasseh", 164-165.

27 Lasine, "Manasseh", 164.

28 See further below, 2.3.

29 See 2.3.

Translation: 2 Kgs 21:1-18

1 Manasseh was twelve³⁰ years old when he became king and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hephzibah. 2 He did evil in the eyes of YHWH just like the abhorrent practices of the nations whom YHWH had driven out before the Israelites.

3 He rebuilt the high places which his father Hezekiah had destroyed; he erected altars to Ba'al and he made an *asherah*³¹ just like Ahab King of Israel had done. He bowed down to all the Host of Heaven and worshipped them, 4 and he built altars in the House of YHWH of which YHWH had said, "I will establish my Name in Jerusalem". 5 And he built altars to all the Host of Heaven in the two courtyards of the House of YHWH. 6 He made his son³² pass over in the fire; he practised soothsaying³³ and divination³⁴ and he produced an ancestral ghost³⁵ and Knowers.³⁶ He did much evil in the eyes of YHWH to provoke (him) (to anger).³⁷

30 Some Lucianic mss (19, 82, 108) read ten years.

31 LXX and Vulg. read a plural (cf. 2 Chr. 33:3), but the singular of MT is supported by 1 Kgs 16:32, which is itself supported by LXX^B and Vulg.

32 LXX^B and LXX^L read a plural (cf. 2 Chr. 33:6).

33 The meaning of נִיחַ is uncertain. It may be a cultic term referring to divinatory cloud-watching (so J. Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary* [OTL; third edn.; London: SCM Press, 1977], 707), or it may describe the activity of causing something to appear (*HALOT*, vol. 2, 857). Given this uncertainty, the usual rendering "soothsaying" is employed here.

34 נִחַ appears to refer to the seeking or giving of omens (*HALOT*, vol. 2, 690), though as R.D. Nelson (*Deuteronomy* [OTL; Louisville/London: Westminster John Knox, 2002], 233) suggests, Gen. 44:5, 15 may indicate divination by means of reading liquid surfaces.

35 The meaning and etymology of אֲבוֹת is difficult to ascertain. Throughout the Hebrew Bible it occurs frequently in association with דְּעִנִי (on which see the note below). אֲבוֹת appears to refer to a ghost of the dead (e.g., Lev. 19:31; 20:26-27; Deut. 18:11; 1 Sam. 28:7-8; Isa. 8:19; 19:3; 29:1; 1 Chr. 10:13). This, along with the possibility that אֲבוֹת is related to אָב ("father" or "ancestor"), is thus reflected in the translation "ancestral ghost". Supporting this interpretation are those ancient Near Eastern expressions for deified ancestral ghosts which are composed of the words for "god" and "father", listed in J. Tropper, "Spirit of the Dead", *DDD*, 806-809. Ancient Near Eastern cults of the dead appear to have shared a divinatory function, whereby dead ancestors were summoned and consulted for information; see further K. Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (AOAT 219; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1986), 253-254; H. Rouillard and J. Tropper, "Vom kanaanäischen Ahnenkult zur Zauberei. Eine Auslegungsgeschichte zu den hebräischen Begriffen 'wb und yd hy", *UF* 19 (1987), 235-254. However, alternative interpretations abound. For example, H.A. Hoffner ("Second Millennium Antecedents to the Hebrew 'ōb", *JBL* 86 [1967], 385-401), argues that the biblical term אֲבוֹת denotes a ritual pit,

7 And he set the image of Asherah which he had made³⁸ in the House concerning which YHWH had said to David and to his son Solomon, "In this House and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will establish my Name forever. 8 And I will no more cause the feet of Israel to wander³⁹ from the land that I gave to their ancestors, if only they will be vigilant to do all that I commanded them, that is, according to all the Law which my servant Moses commanded them." 9 But they did not listen and Manasseh misled them so that they did more evil than the nations whom YHWH destroyed before the Israelites.

10 And YHWH spoke through his servants the prophets,⁴⁰ saying, 11 "Because Manasseh King of Judah has done these abhorrent practices, doing more evil than all which the Amorites did, who were before him, and has caused Judah also to sin by his dung-gods,⁴¹ 12 therefore, thus says YHWH the God of Israel: behold, I am bringing such disaster upon Jerusalem and Judah that both ears of whoever hears⁴² of it will tingle, 13 and I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria and the plummet of the House of Ahab and I will wipe out Jerusalem just as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it over on its face. 14 And I will reject the remnant of my

whereas B.B. Schmidt (*Israel's Beneficent Dead: Ancestor Cult and Necromancy in Ancient Israelite Religion and Tradition* [FAT 11; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1994; repr. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1996], 151-52) relates אָבָה to Arabic 'āba, "to return", thus rendering אָבָה as "the One-who-returns". For further discussion of these views, see J. Tropper, *Nekromantie: Totenbefragung im Alten Testament* (AOAT 223; Kevelaer & Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1989); *idem.*, "Wizard", *DDD*, 907-908; J. Bottéro, "Les morts et l'au-delà dans le rituels en accadien contre l'action des 'revenants'", *ZA* 73 (1983), 153-203; J. Lust, "On Wizards and Prophets", in D. Lys *et al.*, *Studies on Prophecy* (VTSup 26; Leiden: Brill, 1974), 133-142; P.S. Johnston, (*Shades of Sheol: Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament* (Leicester: Apollos, 2002), 161-166.

- 36 Many mss have the singular. The ambiguous יָדַעַן is probably derived from יָדַע, and is consequently rendered "Knowers" here (cf. Tropper, *Nekromantie*, 317-319), though it may refer to familiar spirits or known ancestors (Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 233). This term always occurs in parallelism with אָבָה in the Hebrew Bible (Lev. 19:31; 20:6, 26-27; Deut. 18:11; 1 Sam. 28:3, 9; 2 Kgs 23:24; Isa. 8:19-20; 19:3). Tropper ("Wizard", 907-908) suggests that though the precise semantic nuance of the adjectival formation of the word is difficult to establish given its rarity in the Hebrew Bible, the emphatic pronunciation of the word, reflected in writing in the doubling of the middle radical, indicates that this word had a more intensive signification than ordinary adjectives. Thus this term is best understood as "extremely knowledgeable, all-knowing". This is reflected in this translation by the capitalization of the label "Knowers".
- 37 Reading לְהַכְעִיסוּ, with Versional support (cf. 2 Chr. 33:6). As van Keulen observes (*Manasseh*, 57), the ו has probably been lost by haplography.
- 38 אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה, "which he had made" is not reflected in LXX.
- 39 Or, "to be removed"; see M. Cogan and H. Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 11; Garden City: Doubleday, 1988), 268; Eynikel, "Portrait of Manasseh", 247. This idiom occurs only here (cf. 2 Chr. 33:8).
- 40 מִבְּיַד עֲבָדָיו הַנְּבִיאִים MT, literally, "by the hand of his servants the prophets".
- 41 On the designation גִּלּוּלִים, see 4.1.2.
- 42 Reading, with Versional support, Q שְׂמַעְיוֹ (K שְׂמַעָה).

inheritance and I will deliver them into the hand of their enemies, and they will be plunder and spoil to all their enemies 15 because they have done evil in my eyes and they have been provoking me (to anger) from the day when their fathers came out of Egypt until this day.”

16 Moreover, Manasseh shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem from end to end, as well as the sin he committed in causing Judah to do what was evil in the eyes of YHWH.

17 The rest of the deeds of Manasseh, and all that he did and the sin that he committed, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? 18 And Manasseh slept with his ancestors and he was buried in the garden of his palace, in the Garden of Uzza, and Amon his son reigned after him.

The account of Manasseh's reign in 2 Kgs 21:1-18 falls into four distinct parts.⁴³ The first verse offers the standard introduction of a king, stating Manasseh's age upon his ascension to the throne, the duration of his reign, and reporting the name of his mother.⁴⁴ Verses 2-9 give a theological evaluation of the king's religious behaviour, listing the cult crimes Manasseh commits. Verses 10-16⁴⁵ form an anonymous prophetic judgement oracle against Judah and Jerusalem, and verses 17-18 conclude the Manasseh account in the standard way, citing the source from which the storyteller implies he has received his information, reporting the death and burial place

43 Cf. B.O. Long, *2 Kings* (FOTL 10; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 246-247. For alternative suggestions of subdivisions within 21:1-18, see for example K.A.D. Smelik, "The Portrayal of King Manasseh: A Literary Analysis of II Kings xxi and II Chronicles xxxiii", in *idem.*, *Converting the Past: Studies in Ancient Israelite and Moabite Historiography* (OTS 28; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 129-189, esp. 132-136; R.D. Nelson, *First and Second Kings* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1987), 248; M.A. Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah: The Lost Messiah of Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 54-57. There is no reason to doubt that 2 Kgs 21:1-18 was composed by a single author (cf. Hoffmann, *Reform und Reformen*, 155-167; T.R. Hobbs, *2 Kings* [WBC 13; Waco: Word, 1985], 300-301), though v. 16 appears almost as an afterthought. For various theories assuming a more complex compositional history of 2 Kgs 21:1-18, see for example Gray, *I & II Kings*, 705; Nelson, *Double Redaction*, 65-70; E. Würthwein, *Die Bücher der Könige: 1. Kön. 17—2. Kön. 25* (ATD 11, 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 440.

44 For the role and status of the queen mother within the royal cult and court, see E.K. Solvang, *A Woman's Place is in the House: Royal Women of Judah and their Involvement in the House of David* (JSOTSup 349; Sheffield/New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), and the literature cited there.

45 Verse 16 is a peculiar accusation levelled at Manasseh, sitting uncomfortably at the end of the judgement oracle. It is often taken as a secondary addition to the Kings account of Manasseh's reign. This verse is discussed further below.

of the monarch, and announcing the royal successor.⁴⁶ As Smelik comments, the account of Manasseh's reign initially appears rather dull, as the reader is presented with a list of evil deeds, rather than a narrative.⁴⁷ However, despite this initial impression, closer examination reveals that the regnal account is a complex, colourful construction that is far from dull.

Manasseh's prominent role within Kings is anticipated in the unique introduction to his reign. The opening accession formula introducing Manasseh's reign stands apart from those of other Judahite kings, for it includes only the name of his mother, and not her patronym nor place of origin.⁴⁸ This contrasts with the accession notices of Manasseh's successors, all of which offer these three pieces of information.⁴⁹ It also contrasts with the accession notices to his predecessors' reigns, which, with just two exceptions,⁵⁰ name either the queen mother's father or her place of origin.⁵¹ The potential significance of this peculiar feature will be addressed in the following chapter.⁵² A further curiosity of the introductory formula occurs in verse 2. Within the accession formula of every other Judahite monarch, the

46 R.H. Lowery, *The Reforming Kings: Cults and Society in First Temple Judah* (JSOTSup 120; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 171.

47 Smelik, "Portrayal", 132; cf. Nelson, *Kings*, 247.

48 Because the Kings Writer does not regard Athaliah as a legitimate monarch, the account of her reign does not contain any regnal formulae. On the regnal formulae employed throughout Kings, see S.R. Bin-Nun, "Formulas from the Royal Records of Israel and Judah", *VT* 18 (1968), 414-432; Cogan, *I Kings*, 89-90, 100-101; Eynikel, *Reform of King Josiah*, 122-135; W.H. Barnes, *Studies in the Chronology of the Divided Monarchy of Israel* (HSM 48; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 137-149; Halpern and Vanderhooft, "Editions of Kings", 179-24; cf. H. Weippert, "Die 'deuteronomistischen' Beurteilungen der Könige von Israel und Juda und das Problem der Redaktion der Königsbücher", *Bib* 53 (1972), 301-339.

49 2 Kgs 21:19; 22:1; 23:31, 36; 24:8, 18.

50 The mothers of neither Jehoram (2 Kgs 8:16-17) nor Ahaz (2 Kgs 16:1-2) are mentioned.

51 The father of the queen mother is named in the formulae introducing Abijam (1 Kgs 15:2), Asa (15:10), Jehoshaphat (22:42), Ahaziah (2 Kgs 8:26), Jotham (15:33), and Hezekiah (18:2). The queen mother's place of origin is included in the formulae introducing Rehoboam ("Naamah the Ammonite"; 1 Kgs 14:21), Jehoash (2 Kgs 12:1), Amaziah (14:2), and Azariah (15:2).

52 This fleeting yet precise focus upon the Judahite queen mothers stands in stark contrast to the accounts of the Israelite monarchs within Kings. Although preceded by a similar formulaic notice summarizing each reign, no reference is made to the mothers of the Israelite kings at all. This interesting contrast suggests that the naming of the mother of each Judahite king was of significance to the Kings Writer.

Kings Writer draws an explicit comparison between the newly-ascended king and one of his predecessors. The only exceptions are Jehoram, Ahaziah and Ahaz, all of whom are said to have behaved like the kings of Israel or the House of Ahab.⁵³ This in itself is an important observation, for in verse 3, Manasseh too is explicitly compared with Ahab, a point of comparison to which the discussion will return shortly. However, in verse 2, Manasseh is compared not with a previous king, but with the foreign nations who inhabited the land before the Israelites. This is striking, for it sets Manasseh apart from all his predecessors and successors, even the particularly sinful ones. Thus the accession formula deviates from the norm in two significant ways, each preparing the reader for a regnal account unlike any other within Kings.

The list of Manasseh's cult crimes (21:2-9) is the longest of any in Kings. Given that other Israelite and Judahite monarchs are accused of some of these cultic mispractices, the Kings Writer endeavours to present Manasseh as the worst of all royal cultic offenders by intensifying his crimes. Whereas previous Judahite monarchs had simply tolerated the *bamoth*,⁵⁴ Manasseh is portrayed as deliberately encouraging worship at the *bamoth* by rebuilding those Hezekiah had destroyed in his purge (v. 3; cf. 18:4).⁵⁵ According to Kings, Manasseh is the only Judahite king to erect altars to Ba'al and to make an *asherah* (v. 3). Though Ahab of Israel is also accused of these crimes (1 Kgs 16:32), he sets up only one altar, whereas Manasseh erects more than one. Similarly, whereas Ahab is accused of making an *asherah* (1 Kgs 16:33), Manasseh's crime surpasses that of Ahab as he not only makes an *asherah* (21:3), but sets⁵⁶ the image of Asherah in the temple (21:7-8).⁵⁷

53 2 Kgs 8:18, 27; 2 Kgs 16:3. A further exception is Jehoash, who is not compared to any other character in the story because he is supervised by the priest Jehoiada (12:2). See also Van Keulen, *Manasseh*, 89-90.

54 The only exceptions are Solomon, who makes offerings at the *bamoth* before building the temple (1 Kgs 3:3) and builds *bamoth* for his foreign wives (11:7-8), Ahaz, who is accused of making offerings at the *bamoth* (2 Kgs 16:4), and Abijam, Jehoram and Ahaziah, in whose regnal accounts there is no explicit mention of the *bamoth*. With the exception of Josiah's destruction of the *bamoth*, notices about the *bamoth* are not included within the regnal accounts of Manasseh's successors.

55 See further W.B. Barrick, "On the Removal of the High Places in 1-2 Kings", *Bib* 55 (1974), 257-259.

56 The repetition of the verb קָוַשׁ, "set", "establish", in v. 7 makes explicit Manasseh's reversal of YHWH's actions in establishing his "Name" in the temple; see also Smelik, "Portrayal of King Manasseh", 147; Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, 250.