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MELODY D. KNOWLES (ED.), NEW STUDIES IN
CHRONICLES: A DISCUSSION OF TWO RECENTLY-
PUBLISHED COMMENTARIES

**NEW STUDIES IN CHRONICLES:
A DISCUSSION OF TWO RECENTLY-
PUBLISHED COMMENTARIES**

MELODY D. KNOWLES (ED.)

MCCORMICK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, CHICAGO IL

1. Melody D. Knowles, [New Studies in Chronicles: An Introduction to a Discussion of Two Recently-Published Commentaries](#)
2. Christine Mitchell, [A Review of G. N. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9* and idem, *I Chronicles 10-29*](#)
3. Klaus Baltzer, [Comments on McKenzie's and Knoppers' Commentaries on Chronicles](#)
4. Ehud Ben Zvi, [In Conversation and Appreciation of the Recent Commentaries by S. L. McKenzie and G. N. Knoppers](#)
5. Steven J. Schweitzer, [Response to Recent Chronicles Commentaries by G. N. Knoppers and S. L. McKenzie](#)
6. John W. Wright, [A Commentary on Commentaries on Chronicles](#)
7. Gary N. Knoppers, [Of Rewritten Bibles, Archaeology, Peace, Kings, and Chronicles](#)
8. Steven L. Mackenzie, [Recent Chronicles Commentaries: A Response](#)

INTRODUCTION

MELODY D. KNOWLES, GUEST EDITOR

MCCORMICK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, CHICAGO IL

These are high times for the book of Chronicles. Two major commentaries have just been published, and several more are in the works.¹ The book has also been the topic of two recent presidential addresses of the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies/La Société canadienne des études bibliques.² Such a state might not have been predicted even a short time ago. Long considered derivative and hopelessly ideological, Chronicles lingered on the edges of scholarly interest and engagement. Things looked even worse when, in 1968, Sara Japhet and later Hugh

¹ Steven L. McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles* (Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 2004); Gary N. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 1-9* (Anchor Bible 12; New York: Doubleday, 2004); idem, *1 Chronicles 10-29* (Anchor Bible 12A; New York: Doubleday, 2004); Ralph W. Klein, *1 and 2 Chronicles* (2 vols.; Heremeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, forthcoming); John Wright, *1 and 2 Chronicles* (Berit Olam; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, forthcoming).

² The addresses are published as Ehud Ben Zvi, "The Book of Chronicles: Another Look," *Bulletin of the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies/Le société canadienne des études bibliques* 62 (2002/2003): 5-26; idem, *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 31 (2002): 261-81; and Gary N. Knoppers, "What has Mt. Zion to do with Mt. Gerizim? A Study in the Early Relations between the Jews and the Samaritans in the Persian Period," *Bulletin of the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies/Le société canadienne des études bibliques* 64 (2004/2005): 5-32.

Williamson began to argue that the text's author did not also write the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.³

Ironically, it was only after being shorn of a substantial part of the traditionally-ascribed corpus that Chronicles and its author began to re-engage the scholarly community. The ongoing work of Japhet and Williamson, the changed textual situation after the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the growing realization that Chronicles was not the only biblical book to have an ideological bent – all of this and more set the groundwork for the session at the Society of Biblical Literature during which two recently published commentaries by Steven L. McKenzie and Gary N. Knoppers were discussed. Under the auspices of the Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah Section, the session brought together scholars with differing perspectives and interests to examine these quite different commentaries on November 20, 2005 in Philadelphia. On behalf of the Section, I would like to thank Steve McKenzie and Gary Knoppers for agreeing to submit their texts to such scrutiny, and Ehud Ben Zvi, John Wright, Steven James Schweitzer, and Klaus Baltzer for serving as panelists. My thanks are also due to Ben Zvi for the invitation to publish the session in *The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*, allowing a wider audience to consider this reflection on the two commentaries at greater leisure. The following articles reflect the oral and public nature of the presentations. In addition, I

³ Sara Japhet, "The Supposed Common Authorship of Chroniells and Ezra-Nehemiah Investigated Anew," *VT* 18 (1968): 332-73; H.G.M. Williamson, *Israel in the Book of Chronicles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 1-70.

am delighted to include with this section the review of Knoppers' commentary by Christine Mitchell, originally commissioned for this journal as a separate book review. Given the overlap of subject matter, it seemed most logical to include her work here with the other presentations.

**A REVIEW OF GARY N. KNOPPERS,
I CHRONICLES 1-9 AND *IDEM,
*I CHRONICLES 10-29****

CHRISTINE MITCHELL

ST. ANDREW'S COLLEGE, SASKATOON, SASKATCHEWAN

When I first read this splendid commentary by Gary Knoppers, I was thrown into a pit of existential despair for a couple of days: what more is there to say, what do I have to contribute as a scholar of Chronicles, what is my purpose in life anyway? Eventually, of course, I emerged from the pit, upon further reflection and a second reading of the commentary. As befitting any truly excellent commentary, there is a wealth of material that is meticulously detailed, but there are also many opportunities left open for further

work on this biblical text. All scholars and students of Chronicles will benefit from Prof. Knoppers' careful and thorough study of 1 Chronicles, and it will, I think, stimulate further work on the text.

The Anchor Bible has always aimed to provide a new translation; consistent with the format of the recent volumes in the series, this commentary begins with the new translation of the entire book of 1 Chronicles. This is followed by a 90-page introduction, a 100-page bibliography (which is alone worth the price of the first volume), and the commentary itself. First Chronicles 1-9 is covered in the first volume, and 1 Chronicles 10-29 is covered in the second volume (after a repetition of the translation of the entire book); the pagination is consecutive through the two volumes, which is very helpful. There is a collection of (the same) eight maps at the end of each volume. The 70-page collection of indices is found only at the end of the second volume. Unlike some other recent multi-volume commentaries in this series (e.g., J. Blenkinsopp on Isaiah), it is obvious that this is a one-volume commentary that has been split in two; there is some awkwardness in the format from this editorial decision (e.g., bibliography only in volume 1, indices only in volume 2). It means that both volumes of the commentary must be on hand when one of them is being read; they are not stand-alone volumes. But this should not be allowed to detract from the scholarship of the commentary itself.

For the past decade, the two standard English-language commentaries on Chronicles have been those written by Sara

Japhet and H.G.M. Williamson.⁴ However, they have become dated, especially with respect to the textual issues and the great increase in scholarship on the Persian period in the past decade. Knoppers' commentary thus provides a much-needed current commentary on a book that has received a great deal of recent attention.

The first of this commentary's great strengths is the discussion of textual criticism. Speaking generally, Knoppers says, "The categories of higher criticism and lower criticism have become blurred, if not obsolete."⁵ In the case of Chronicles, this fact has become most evident with the publication of the fragments of the Samuel scrolls from Qumran Cave 4. This commentary is the first to be able to make use of this insight about textual criticism. No longer is it possible (even if it was ever desirable) to place the MT of Samuel next to Chronicles and suggest that every difference is due to the Chronicler's tendentious alteration of material. The evidence from Qumran suggests that the text of Samuel circulated in several versions, only one of which was used by the Chronicler. As well, following the insights of Emanuel Tov and Eugene Ulrich (especially), Knoppers points out that a privileging of the MT of Chronicles when 1 Esdras or the LXX of Chronicles preserves

⁴ Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox / London: SCM, 1993); H.G.M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles* (NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans / London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1982).

⁵ Gary N. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9* (Anchor Bible 12; New York: Doubleday, 2004); idem, *I Chronicles 10-29* (Anchor Bible 12A; New York: Doubleday, 2004), 54.

alternate readings “skews the investigation.”⁶ Thus the versions of Chronicles also have to be taken into consideration. Throughout the introductory material as well as the commentary itself, Knoppers continually highlights the interrelationship of textual and literary concerns. By making these connections, and by having presented the groundwork here on the textual issues in a systematic way, Knoppers has opened up a whole new avenue of exploration for 1 Chronicles. There is now opportunity for sophisticated literary-textual work on Chronicles that does not have to begin from scratch each time a new passage is opened up.

It is in his discussion of the relationship between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah that Knoppers’ second great insight emerges. Like most recent commentators, Knoppers sees Chronicles as separate in authorship from Ezra-Nehemiah. However, he points out that the style and theme are not actually that different between the two works.⁷ What emerges in his argument is that the only really convincing evidence for separate authorship has to do with ideological/theological differences between the two works. By uncoupling message from form, Knoppers opens up the way for examining the two works as sharing certain formal conventions without getting bogged down in a discussion about common authorship.

Similarly, Knoppers rightly criticizes the various redactional hypotheses for Chronicles. For him, the Chronicler “mediate[d]

⁶ Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 64.

⁷ Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 88.

different perspectives” and was “heir to and interpreter of a variety of older texts.”⁸ In this way, the multiple voices heard within Chronicles are not because of a sloppy set of redactions, but because the Chronicler was consciously relating to a set of traditional texts. The question that comes out of this third insight is this: does Chronicles have an overriding ideology, or is it a pastiche of its sources’ or voices’ ideologies? Certainly Chronicles has certain themes that are important: Levites, Jerusalem temple, Davidic king, among others. But are the views presented in Chronicles consistent for each of these? And are these themes interrelated as to make up a consistent ideology (or theology)? Unlike in Japhet’s and Williamson’s commentaries, Knoppers does not outline what he sees as the main thematic elements of Chronicles; nor does he outline what the Chronicler’s ideology on each of the main themes might be. In fact, Knoppers defers his discussion of the Chronicler’s theology to the volume on 2 Chronicles.⁹ Given what else Knoppers has to say about the Chronicler’s compositional techniques, the question of “What is the ideology/theology of Chronicles?” (and its corollary, “Why was Chronicles written?”) is an important one, and it is left unanswered.

However, Knoppers does attempt to answer the question that we might call “*What* is this thing called Chronicles?” He describes Chronicles as a “rewritten Bible.” He laments that no generic definition of “rewritten Bible” is agreed-upon. Yet at the same

⁸ Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 92.

⁹ Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 137, n. 191.

time, he rightly notes that there was no canon at the time of the composition of Chronicles. So the label “rewritten Bible” is a misleading one. But other generic designations like exegesis or midrash Knoppers sees as “reductive”; he prefers “rewritten Bible” because it allows for other kinds of additions. He argues that Chronicles is not a commentary on Samuel-Kings; he seems to see it as an alternative to the earlier work.¹⁰ This entire discussion is interesting, because Knoppers here seems to be returning to an equation of form with message that he had seemingly dismissed in his discussion of the relationship of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. Yet, throughout the discussion here of Chronicles’ genre, he works first to describe Chronicles and then to draw inferences about it. The move to *impose* a generic label is a jarring one, one that is not consistent with Knoppers’ procedures in this section or elsewhere in the commentary.

Knoppers’ discussion of the date of Chronicles is excellent and thorough. However, it leads (or could lead) to a relative date for Chronicles more easily than to an absolute date, which he suggests is early Hellenistic.¹¹ Similarly, although the section is entitled “The Debate over Authorship and Date,” there is very little discussion about the authorship of Chronicles. The mention of the “writers” of Chronicles in the section on the rewritten Bible is the only place I noticed where Knoppers gives the authorship of Chronicles as plural; otherwise we are left to assume that the

¹⁰ Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 129-33.

¹¹ Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 116.

Chronicler was a single individual, but Knoppers does not spell this out.¹² It seems to me that Knoppers feels he has a handle on the text of Chronicles itself, textually and literarily. But in keeping with the historical-critical emphases of the Anchor Bible series, he is required to look behind the text at issues like authorship and date and intention. It is precisely on these points that he becomes more tentative, even deferring the whole question of intention (the theology of Chronicles/the Chronicler) to another book.

It is the first nine chapters of 1 Chronicles that most today find most daunting: the genealogies. Knoppers' 20-page excursus on the genealogies makes excellent use of the comparative material from throughout the ancient Mediterranean, focusing especially on the Persian and Hellenistic periods. In this excursus, he deftly summarizes and comments on the research on ancient genealogies, and then uses the Greek material especially in order to elucidate the purpose of the genealogies in Chronicles. This is an excellent and most helpful reference tool.

Throughout the commentary itself, Knoppers' work is balanced and thoughtful. Space does not permit me full engagement with the sections on each unit. As noted previously, there is particularly good and thorough work on the textual issues. The discussion of sources, composition and structure of each unit and the comment on each unit contains a full and thorough presentation of previous scholarship that is then judiciously

¹² Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 132.

weighed. His own opinions are also well presented and supported. The material is not just a recapitulation of previous scholarship on all things Chronistic but is also a significant original contribution to the field; this is true also for the introduction. I look forward to his volume on 2 Chronicles.

COMMENTS ON MCKENZIE'S AND KNOPPERS' COMMENTARIES ON CHRONICLES

KLAUS BALTZER
UNIVERSITY OF MUNICH

I shall begin with the best thing about both commentaries: they are both readable for anyone who is interested. They have not been written just for the author's colleagues in their own field.

The special achievement of Steven L. McKenzie's commentary is its brevity. We are told what is really important. Gary N. Knoppers' commentary is a *magnum opus*. It is a treasure trove of information, but nevertheless the main lines never get lost.

Both commentaries ask about the roots of our scholarly efforts – what we are enquiring about, and why; and we can see from them the development towards a better understanding of the historical works in the Bible, of which Chronicles is one.

Where did the question about the historical works first arise in the history of research? Steven L. McKenzie is the editor, together with M. Patrick Graham, of the compilation *The History of Israel's Traditions*, and this is appropriately sub-titled *The Heritage of Martin Noth*.¹³

Here I can pass on an oral tradition, an anecdote I heard from Gerhard von Rad. He and Martin Noth met Albrecht Alt on the railway station in Leipzig. It was 1933, the year when the National Socialists seized power in Germany. In 1930 the Nazi ideologist Alfred Rosenberg (1893-1946) had published his book *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts* (“The Twentieth Century Myth”).¹⁴ At this meeting in Leipzig, Albrecht Alt said: “We must do something.” And the result was the confrontation between “the twentieth century myth” and “the biblical understanding of history” – we might almost say: the confrontation between “myth” and “history.” That is the background to Martin Noth’s concern with “The History of Israel.”

¹³ Steven L. McKenzie and Patrick Graham, eds., *The History of Israel's Traditions: The Heritage of Martin Noth* (JSOTSup 182; Sheffield Academic Press 1994).

¹⁴ Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts: Eine Wertung der Seelisch-geistigen Gestaltenkämpfe unserer Zeit* (5th ed.; Munich: Hoheneichen-Verlag, 1933 5th ed. 1933).

Gerhard von Rad was not far removed from this concern either. We can see this from his book *Das Gottesvolk im Deuteronomium* (“The People of God in Deuteronomy”), which was published in 1929, down to his *Theologie des Alten Testament*, which was first published in 1957, volume one with the sub-title: “The Theology of Israel’s Historical Traditions.”¹⁵

There is a reciprocal hermeneutical process between historical experience and the understanding of the texts. The more exactly we can contribute our “anterior understanding,” the better we can understand the texts, and vice versa.

Knoppers’ commentary brings out the role played by the remembrance of David in the post-exilic period. It is the legitimation for Israel’s new constitution, down to the very details. The significance of the Temple and the Levites is made comprehensible. The plan of the Temple shows how the tradition of the tabernacle has been taken up.¹⁶ Where the Levites are concerned, there is a striking note on 1 Chr 25:2, for example:¹⁷ the

¹⁵ Gerhard von Rad, *Das Gottesvolk im Deuteronomium* (Stuttgart : W. Kohlhammer, 1929; repr. in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament II* [Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1973], 9-108); idem, *Theologie des Alten Testament* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1957); Eng. trans. *Old Testament Theology* (trans. D.M.G. Stalker; Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1962-65).

I was present when, in 1954, G. von Rad read part of the manuscript of his theology to H.-G. Gadamer and K. Löwith in his study and discussed it with them. Von Rad wanted his understanding of history to be comprehensible beyond the bounds of his own discipline as well, because it has a bearing on our understanding of reality as a whole.

¹⁶ Gary N. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 10-29* (Anchor Bible 12A; New York: Doubleday, 2004), 940.

¹⁷ Knoppers, *I Chronicles 10-29*, note on 844.

Levites belonging to the family of Asaph, who are responsible for the music, “prophesy” while they play (variant Qere, LXX*, Vulgate, Targum).

McKenzie’s commentary shows the significance of the conclusion of a historical work for the overall understanding. The mention of Cyrus (2 Chr 36:22-23) is not just by the way, but explains the political situation as well as the theological interpretation. McKenzie tracks down the way that quite small changes made in the texts compared with their Vorlagen have far-reaching consequences for the interpretation. Examples taken from his comments on 2 Chr 33:1-20, “The Reign of Manasseh,” show this clearly: “The Chronicler’s reliance on Deut 18:9-13 is evident in [2 Chr 33:6], where he inserts the term ‘sorcery’ (Deut 18:10) into the list of sins in Kings (2 Kings 21.6);” and “As is typical of the Chronicler’s style, [2 Chr 33:10] 10 begins the same way as its counterpart in 2 Kgs 21:20, but then the Chronicler makes changes in accord with his message and theology.”¹⁸

Both authors render a meticulous account of their methods. I should like to ask here how in a network of shared work questions about method could be further developed.

Perhaps I may add another anecdote here: I can remember a weekend seminar in Heidelberg at the beginning of the 1950’s at which the Assyriological seminar, with Adam Falkenstein, and the

¹⁸ Steven L. McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles* (Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 354 and 355, respectively.

Egyptological seminar, with Eberhard Otto, met together for the first time. Both Falkenstein and Otto were friends of Gerhard von Rad. Vessels were shown which had been found in Mesopotamia. The Assyriologists said: “Typically Egyptian!” Roars of laughter from the Egyptologists: the crowns were wrong, and so were some of the hieroglyphics. This was probably ware imported from Egypt, and deliberately altered for cultic reasons (or the vessels were copies made in the Egyptian style).

I should like to use this example to make clear desiderata for the co-operation between different disciplines. And that then brings me to the subject of literary criticism. Literary criticism is not just something confined to research into the Hebrew Bible. A comparison with the way scribes worked in the ancient Near East and in the Egyptian “House of Life” is necessary. What could the scribes do, and what were they permitted to do? Of course there were different ranks of scribes, with different degrees of responsibility. That being so, the matter-of-course use of the term “the Chronicler” or “the Deuteronomist” becomes questionable. Each of ancient Israel’s three institutions had its scribes: “the king” (and his court), “the Temple” (and its priesthood), but also “the prophets” (for Jeremiah, see Jer 36:4; 48).

In his essay “Order and Disorder: Some Mesopotamian Reflections,”¹⁹ Peter Machinist has shown how three mythical

¹⁹ Peter Machinist, “Order and Disorder: Some Mesopotamian Reflections,” in *Genesis and Regeneration. Essays on Conceptions of Origins* (ed.

traditions in Mesopotamia (*Enuma elish*, *Erra*, *Anzu*) have been linked together through the work of scribes. Here the preliminary work of Thorkild Jacobsen, Dietz Edzard and Claus Wilcke is helpful.

We can find Egyptian texts where it can also be shown that earlier and more recent texts – each of which has survived separately as well – have been fused together. Chronicles as well as Nehemiah/Ezra presuppose a library. They work with literary sources. One can ask: “How many scrolls were needed for the whole of Chronicles?”

It is at all events the work of several hands. The question therefore also arises about the cost of such an undertaking on the part of the “scriptoria” in Mesopotamia, the “House of Life” in Egypt, down to the Temple in Jerusalem. E. Tov has shown the importance of such questions in evaluating the possibilities and limitations of literary criticism.²⁰

The function of genre definition and tradition history has to be seen. Only then can the historical and theological significance be determined more exactly. Gunkel’s formula about the “Sitz im Leben” must be broken down into a description of the function in

Saul Shaked; Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2005), 31-61.

²⁰ E. Tov, “The Writing of Early Scrolls. Implications for the Literary Analysis of Hebrew Scripture,” in *L’Ecrit et l’Esprit: études d’histoire du texte et de théologie biblique en hommage à Adrian Schenker*, (ed. D. Böhler, J. Himbaza and P. Hugo; Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2005), 355-71.

the given social and political situation. There is not just an isolated “historical work;” for example, the psalms and parts of the prophetic books show that historical recollection is a form that has been taken up in different contexts. In my book on the covenant formulary I tried to show that a historical reminiscence as a “pre” or “antecedent” history was the legal presupposition for establishing the relationship to God in the covenant.²¹ The goal and purpose of the reminiscence was the present. In this light, it is necessary to formulate what is relevant for the present in ever new ways.

For the American situation the different understanding of law where the Supreme Court is concerned presents a difficulty. The Supreme Court decides the way in which a law is to be read and understood. The “antecedent history” has practically no legal significance.

In ancient Israel the “antecedent history” is part of the cult.²² It is publicly recalled, for example at the festivals. That does not exclude its private use, but the public proclamation makes its legitimating character evident.

Both these commentaries adhere to the sequence of Ezra-Nehemiah. That accords with the statement in the Talmud tractate

²¹ Klaus Baltzer, *Das Bundesformular* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1960); Eng. trans, *The Covenant Formulary* (trans. D.E. Green; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

²² See Josh 24; cf. among other times, at a renewal of the covenant: Neh 9-10; Ezra 9-10; Dan. 9.4b-19; at a confirmation of the covenant: 1 Sam 12 and elsewhere.

*Baba Bathra 15a.*²³ There is no question but that the two books in their present form have been linked. The question is only whether Nehemiah has been interpolated into the book of Ezra, or, vice versa, Ezra into the book of Nehemiah. I myself believe that the latter is more probable. In form and structure the book of Nehemiah adheres most closely to the form and structure of the “ideal biography.” Gerhard von Rad already pointed this out. This form begins with an installation and is otherwise orientated towards the individual *topoi* of the person’s activity, more closely than towards the course of the biography itself.²⁴ Ezra is mentioned in the present text of Neh 8, on the occasion of the feast of booths. According to this account, Ezra is responsible for the reading of the law. In Neh 8:1, 4 he is referred to as a scribe, in Neh 8:2 explicitly as a priest. Nehemiah is described in his double function as Persian state official and as “representative” of the whole people. He expressly rejects his legitimation through descent from the royal family. That accords well with the development in the Persian period, when the hereditary city-kingdoms were replaced by a new order (compare the development in Athens). As a priest, Ezra is a representative of the theocracy, and is hence associated with the Temple as the location of the cult. This is the order which proved stable in Jerusalem. Stress is laid on the fact that the priest Ezra acts in the framework of the festal cult – it is he

²³ McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 21.

²⁴ See Klaus Baltzer, *Die Biographie der Propheten* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1975). See also now Jacob L. Wright, *Rebuilding Identity: The Nehemiah-Memoir and its Earliest Readers* (BZAW 348; Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004).

who reads the Scripture and not Nehemiah, the “layman” – as was then the practice in the synagogues. The institutional tensions of the time can be characterized through the following catchwords: in respect to the Temple, it is the relationship between the Zadokian and the Levitic priesthood; in respect to Jerusalem, is this “the city of the sanctuary” or “the Holy City”? What is the relationship between town and country? Is the relationship to the “Gentiles” exclusive or inclusive? The texts of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Deutero-Isaiah reflect these questions in different ways. Could it not perhaps be that the sequence Ezra-Nehemiah – quite apart from their sequence in time – was supposed to be retrospectively legitimated? The question about the relationship to Chronicles must initially be discussed independently of this. The book of Nehemiah does not necessarily have to have the same “author” as Chronicles.

My own particular interest is Deutero-Isaiah (Isa 40-55). McKenzie rightly cites Deutero-Isaiah in the case of the Cyrus edict.²⁵ Deutero-Isaiah has a number of points in common with Nehemiah and Chronicles. I believe that the subject here is not the historical Cyrus but Cyrus as later tradition saw him (cf., for example, Aeschylus, *The Persians*, 768-72). That means a positive view, which implies a critical attitude to the Persian administration in Deutero-Isaiah’s own time. But it is also clear that the person who views Cyrus as “his anointed” (Isa 45:1) probably no longer expects an anointed one from the house of David. In this respect

²⁵ McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 371.

Deutero-Isaiah's standpoint is not far from that of Chronicles, and differs from that of the deuteronomistic history. There it is assumed that if Jehoiachin is the last legitimate king, his grandson can again become a king according to law (see 2 Kgs 25:27-30). It must then be asked how and when the prophetic tradition and monarchic tradition were again linked.

HISTORICAL ASPECT

With regard to the historical aspect, we must also read the texts with Persian eyes. Along with the coinage system, the Persian secret service was one of the instruments with which to rule this first global empire. That is for me one reason for concluding Deuteronomy, and thus the Pentateuch, with Deut 32-34. The "Torah of Moses" includes history and commandments. It is also the "biography of Moses," following the antecedent history in Genesis. In this way the "Torah" can be accepted by the Persians, quite apart from the way one judges the "imperial authorization." But the book of Joshua, with the distribution of the land, is impossible as an official document belonging to the Persian period. Land claims based on history, for example in the region of Ammon and Moab, bring unrest into the province of Aram-Nacharajim. With this the question of a "Pentateuch" (M. Noth) or "Hexateuch" (G. von Rad) arises in a new way.

When we read in Chronicles "For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the entire earth" (2 Chr 16:9), or in Zech 4:10 "These seven are the eyes of the Lord, which range through the whole

earth,” this acknowledgment of God as Lord of the whole world can very well be understood as having a political sting, over against Persian claims to domination such as are made clear, for example, in the titles conferred on the kings and which were also experienced in their secret services.

As far as Deutero-Isaiah is concerned, this historical background is in my view *one* reason for the anonymity of the Servant of God. The four Servant texts take up the prophetic Moses tradition. But the Servant remains a “servant without a name.”²⁶ To laud “Moses” as liberator would have been problematical. Even in the ancient world, it was already clear that Moses is an Egyptian name. For the Persian empire, Egypt was *the* unruly province. Revolts in Egypt were supported especially by the Greek-speaking cities (see, e.g., the Inaro revolt of 460-454 BCE). Again and again the issue was the supply of grain in the Mediterranean region. And Egypt, with the Nile, was the granary.

Deutero-Isaiah is part of the Book of Isaiah. In its present form this book is a history in the prophetic Moses tradition. It is a rival account to that of the Deuteronomistic history and Chronicles. It is divided into four epochs: the Assyrian period (Isa 1-35), the Babylonian period (Isa 36-39), the Persian period (Isa 40-

²⁶ See Klaus Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40-55* (ed. Peter Machinist; trans. Margaret Kohl; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001). For the historical aspect, see Gerold Walser, “Hellas und Iran“ in *Erträge der Forschung*, vol. 209 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984), esp. 16-19; Josef Wiesehöfer, *Das frühe Persien, Geschichte eines antiken Weltreichs* (Beck’sche Reihe Wissen 2107; Munich: C.H. Beck, 1999), esp. 43-40.

55) and, with Trito-Isaiah, the future expectation (Isa 56-66). It is a four-kingdoms pattern such as we are also familiar with the outline of history in the book of Daniel (Dan 2 and 7).

My presentation has been designed as a whole to show how important the two new commentaries on Chronicles are. These are no “*paralipomena*,” “what is left over,”²⁷ even though this is the title given to Chronicles in LXX, a title which was then taken over into the Latin Bible by Jerome.

**IN CONVERSATION AND APPRECIATION
OF THE RECENT COMMENTARIES BY
STEVEN L. MCKENZIE AND GARY N.
KNOPPERS**

**EHUD BEN ZVI
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA, EDMONTON ALBERTA**

²⁷ See McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 19-20.

INTRODUCTION

It is a pleasure to talk about these very different, though in some matters very much alike, commentaries on Chronicles. One (McKenzie's)²⁸ is a compact, critical commentary aimed at a more or less general public, the other (Knoppers')²⁹ is a comprehensive, detailed commentary that will be read mainly by scholars, and which will serve as a central reference for anyone involved in Chronicles research for many, many years. Both serve valid purposes and each has to be evaluated in terms of its own goals and target readership.

As evaluated from the perspectives of style, readability and the like, McKenzie's commentary is a prominent case of an introductory, teaching/instructional commentary at its finest. The volume is easy to understand and still provides a critical analysis of the text. Moreover, it entices the reader to learn more about Chronicles.

As evaluated from the perspective of comprehensiveness, attention to detail, and depth of discussion, Knoppers' work is one of the finest commentaries ever written. It will serve as a standard reference commentary on Chronicles for many years to come. In fact, I doubt very much that there will be many serious scholars in

²⁸ Steven L. McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles* (Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 2004).

²⁹ Gary N. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9* (Anchor Bible 12; New York: Doubleday, 2004); idem, *I Chronicles 10-29* (Anchor Bible 12A; New York: Doubleday, 2004).

twenty years from now who will not consult this commentary as they study a particular verse or unit in Chronicles.

As different as these two commentaries are in terms of goals and target readership, they share a quite close outlook in many areas. In fact, it might be interesting to hear how Knoppers and McKenzie formulate the ways in which their works differ.

I will turn first to McKenzie's commentary, address a few issues, and then move to Knoppers' and do the same. Some overlapping issues will be discussed only once.

MCKENZIE'S COMMENTARY

McKenzie's volume is important because it will likely have a strong impact in the way many people will understand or conceive the book of Chronicles, particularly outside the academic world and among those who would not read multiple commentaries, articles, and the usual forms of academic output. For them, McKenzie's book will be the main, and for many, the only lens through which they will approach Chronicles. As such, it deserves serious engagement, and, notwithstanding some of the comments I advance below, much praise.

The commentary begins with a short introduction of about 40 pages that brings forward basic information about the book and most of the central issues in the historical critical study of Chronicles. It deals with matters such as the name/s of the book, its outline, place in canon (significantly, not place in "the canon"),

date, authorship, genre and purpose, sources, historicity and theological emphases—the latter divided into main theological emphases and supporting themes. This introduction continues with a unit-by-unit discussion that opens with a few introductory lines, and then follows the headings of “literary analysis,” “exegetical analysis,” and “theological analysis.” “Literary analysis” here does not mean “literary analysis” in the now usual sense (there is very little of that in this volume) but actually provides a brief explanatory note about the structure of the unit, its outer boundaries or inner subdivisions; in other words, the kind of matters that are often covered in form critical volumes under STRUCTURE. “Theological analysis” deals in the main with the ideology or theology conveyed or reflected in the text of the unit under discussion. Its focus is not the potential use of Chronicles to advance contemporary theological or ideological agendas. It is obvious, however, that at certain points, readers may find the text inspirational or of pastoral relevance, and that it is probably intended to be so. Two examples suffice:

[t]he goal of human beings before God, as David articulates it, is the knowledge of God ... Such a knowledge is not a merely intellectual assent or memorization but a personal acquaintance fostered by prayer and contemplation of the divine law and will... It is, in other words, spiritual perfection.³⁰

...Perhaps there is a tacit recognition in this equation [music as revelation] that music can be profoundly moving to the human spirit and can also express the deepest human feelings—

³⁰ McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 224.

especially when it occurs in a religious setting or conveys a religious message... On such occasions, music can be felt to 'speak' to people and perhaps in that sense to be revelatory or prophetic.³¹

The exegetical analysis is the catch-all category that includes everything else. Matters that tend to appear in this section are comparisons between the texts of Samuel or Kings and Chronicles, explanations about the meaning of terms and subunits, and brief, though critical, references to previous scholarship.

Of course, there are a few misprints. For instance, the outline on pp. 17-18 is not consistent with the following text because the required indentation of the accounts of the reigns of David, Solomon and the transition between the two is missing. But all in all, the volume reflects careful editing, with a good eye on readability.

I agree with many of the points made by McKenzie, just as with many of those made by Knoppers. Certainly, I agree with McKenzie that the Chronicler "was a sophisticated theologian who used Israel's past to convey powerful, if sometimes, subtle, religious messages to his contemporaries."³² I think, however, that McKenzie's Chronicler is the actual author of the original version of the book, (whereas for me the Chronicler is the implied author of the volume, as constructed by its primary and intended

³¹ McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 198.

³² McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 29.

readerships). In fact, I think that McKenzie, as many other scholars, is more interested in what “his” Chronicler thought or did with his sources than on the message of the book of Chronicles as a whole. It is for this reason, for instance, that he allocates a substantive amount of his limited exegetical space to the differences between Chronicles and its sources (mainly Samuel and Kings). The exercise seems helpful to understand the mind, craft, and actions of a human author who decides to change here and there from his sources, but less helpful to understand the didactic narrative that the book of Chronicles tells to its intended and primary readers. The focus on the actual author responsible for the first version of the book explains also his use of the loaded term “integrity” for his summary of the discussion on the redactional history of the book and the stress on the *ipsissima verba* of the (/McKenzie’s) author as in

If the mention of the exile in v. 1b [“And Judah was taken into exile in Babylon because of their unfaithfulness,” 1 Chr 9:1b] is original, it makes the point that the postexilic community is continuous with preexilic Israel.³³

What if it is not “original”? Would it not make the very same point? To be sure, there is nothing intrinsically wrong in McKenzie’s attempt to reconstruct *his* Chronicler, or in McKenzie’s focus on *him*, and on the book McKenzie thinks that *his* Chronicler wrote. But to be sure, *his* Chronicler is not the implied author of the book of Chronicles, and he is not commenting or focusing on

³³ McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 60.

the (present) book of Chronicles, but on the reconstructed book that *his* Chronicler wrote.

McKenzie's thrust regarding the main theological emphases in the book is shared by many. He ends up favoring the position that claims that the book conveys an eschatological hope for the restoration of Israel and claims that there is no question that Davidic kingship will continue after the exile because it is grounded in God.³⁴ He refers also to the centrality of the temple, the concept of all Israel, and the principle of retribution, reward, responsibility, and repentance. I would argue that all these matters are placed in proportion within the general frame of the book and its message,³⁵ but more importantly, within the setting of a review is that at points McKenzie seems not to develop the potential that his own insights have on the matter and unintentionally flattens the message of the text. For instance, he suggests that the building of the temple by Solomon was a divine gift in response to his

³⁴ McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 47-48.

³⁵ McKenzie explicitly writes about "[t]he Chronicler's belief that disaster does *not* occur arbitrarily but as the consequence of sin and that sin is *inevitably* punished" (McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 326; emphasis mine). Numerous examples, however, contradict the *categorical* character of this statement. Moreover, some examples even clearly suggest X's suffering may be the result not of X's sins, but those of Y, which is not what McKenzie intended. See, among others, the results of David's census (1 Chr 21:14), the execution of Zechariah son of the priest Jehoiada (2 Chr 24:20-21) which was certainly not a blessing for him, the disaster of being outside the land (2 Chr 36:21), Hezekiah's prayer (2 Chr 29:6-9) and possibly or by implication his failure (2 Chr 32:24-25); Josiah's words and Huldah's prophecy (2 Chr 34:20-28), the consistent motif of testing pious kings, which sometimes takes the form of invasions against a pious king (e.g., Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah), but may take other forms (e.g., David's census, Hezekiah's additional test, Josiah and Neco).

faithfulness.³⁶ This relevant statement is consistent with his discussion of retribution, reward, and responsibility.³⁷ But, of course, there is 1 Chr 22:9-10 (“See, a son shall be born to you; he shall be a man of peace. I will give him peace from all his enemies on every side; for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel in his days. He shall build a house for my name. He shall be a son to me, and I will be a father to him, and I will establish his royal throne in Israel forever”). McKenzie is, needless to say, well aware of this text. When he discusses this pericope, he correctly maintains that its message is that the construction of the Temple, as everything within the ideology of the book, depends on YHWH.³⁸ He also points out that YHWH gave Solomon his name because it represents the nature of his reign.³⁹ To be sure, within the world of the book this happened not only before the reign started, but even before Solomon was born. Do these matters have no implications for matters of personal reward and responsibility? Can the divine gifts represented by name of the unborn child and the divine assurance that he will build the temple be understood in terms of YHWH’s response to Solomon’s faithfulness at the time they were given, or before that? Of course this cannot be the case because Solomon was not even born. Do these matters have no implications on the issue of Chronicles’ views on the principle of personal reward, punishment and individual retribution in general?

³⁶ McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 48.

³⁷ McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 51-52.

³⁸ McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 184.

³⁹ McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 181.

As another example, McKenzie correctly remarks that “[n]either the Davidic dynasty nor the temple can be the ultimate object of Israel’s hope and trust ... The Chronicler knows that both will be destroyed.”⁴⁰ How does this awareness, along with the corresponding awareness that Israel can survive without David and without the Temple, impact the reconstruction of the message of the book regarding the Davidic dynasty, eschatology, and the temple advanced in the introduction?⁴¹

The volume contains many interesting and important observations but I wish their implications for understanding of Chronicles would have been developed, or developed more fully. I would include among them observations as diverse as those about

⁴⁰ McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 224.

⁴¹ Incidentally, McKenzie continues the text quoted above with “Israel’s hope resided, in the final analysis, entirely with Yahweh, and that hope is well placed, for Yahweh faithfully keeps his promises to his people (1 Chr 29:14-16).” The mentioned verses read:

וְכִי מִי אֲנִי וּמִי עַמִּי כִּי־נִעְצָר כָּח לְהַתְנַדֵּב בְּזֹאת כִּי־מִמֶּנּוּ הַכֹּל
וּמִי־דָדָה נִתְּנוּ לָדָד:
כִּי־גֵרִים אֲנַחְנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ וְתוֹשָׁבִים בְּכָל־אֲבוֹתֵינוּ כְּצֵל | יָמֵינוּ
עַל־הָאָרֶץ וְאֵין מִקְוֵה:
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ כֹּל הַהֶמְזוֹן הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר הֵכִינֵנוּ לְבָנוֹת־לָךְ בַּיִת לְשֵׁם
קִדְשֶׁךָ מִי־דָדָה (הִיא) הוּא וְלָךְ הַכֹּל:

“But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to make this freewill offering? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. 15 For we are aliens and transients before you, as were all our ancestors [cf. Ps. 39:13]; our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no hope. 16 O LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own.” (NRSV)

This is an important text, but I fail to see it as one that clearly communicates to its readers “that hope is well placed, *for* Yahweh faithfully keeps his promises to his people” (emphasis mine).

(a) the shift to the written word or scripture as the locus of authority and the related association of the Levitical singers as prophets, (b) the Chronicler's arrangement of the structures of at least some sections "in different ways and at different levels,"⁴² or in other words, that multiple and overlapping structures are at work in the book,⁴³ (c) the kind of envelope of the history of the divided kingdom between the reigns (and speeches) of Abijah and Hezekiah⁴⁴ or (d) the social setting of the Chronicler and that "his primary interest was in the other members of the elite, the political and religious readership of Jerusalem's society."⁴⁵

KNOPPERS' COMMENTARY

Knoppers' work is one of the finest comprehensive commentaries on any biblical book. It is a commentary that excels in the detail of the discussion. It clearly shows Knoppers' interest in textual variants and his mastery of a very large body of secondary literature. As mentioned above, this commentary will remain a constant reference for further studies. I find much to agree with Knoppers, and there is no end to what we may talk about concerning these two volumes. I would therefore raise only two issues related to his introduction that I consider deserve further, and perhaps substantial, discussion and then observations concerning two particular discussions in his commentary (one from

⁴² McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 18.

⁴³ What does this mean in terms of the expected mode of reading of the intended readership?

⁴⁴ Cf. McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 45.

⁴⁵ McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 33.

each volume), that I think that are of wide importance. Since no conversation advances too far if the participants talk only about matters they fully agree, my choices for this particular exercise are biased towards issues in which, from my own corner, things may look a bit different.

The Matter of the Rewritten Bible

Knoppers toys with the idea of Chronicles as a “Rewritten Bible.” McKenzie refers to this with more than a hint of approval in his commentary for the general public, and in a recent essay Segal already refers to Chronicles as an example of “rewritten Bible.”⁴⁶ To be sure, I am *not* accusing Knoppers of being the first to use the term, or more importantly, the approach the term embodies. Moreover he only *toys* with the term/approach rather than supporting it as others have done. But given what I expect to be the status of Knoppers’ commentary in the discipline for many years to come, his toying with, instead of advancing a clear cut rebuttal of this term/approach is, in my opinion, a bit dangerous. In fact, I worry on the basis of my reading that before too long the field will be flooded with references to Chronicles as “rewritten Bible” and this will become a cherished piece of our “widely shared knowledge.” I suggest that we stop for a moment and reflect on the matter before it is too late.

⁴⁶ M. Segal, “Between Bible and Rewritten Bible,” in *Biblical Interpretation at Qumran* (ed. M. Henze; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005), 10-28.

Of course, we all know that Chronicles carries selections, paraphrases, comments, elaborations and the like of other texts. We all also know that Chronicles is more than an elaboration of other texts. Knoppers is certainly correct when he writes that Chronicles is a “second national epic,” “more than a paraphrase of literary elaboration of the primary history,” and “needs to be understood as its own work.”⁴⁷ Moreover, Knoppers himself states that the term is fully anachronistic, and claims that it is doubtful that this category will “explain all of Chronicles’ distinctive literary features,”⁴⁸ but still toys with it. It is a dangerous game because it is liable to develop a life of its own.

The term Rewritten Bible is more than a bit misleading and muddles matters far more than clarifies them. Therefore its potential problems far outweigh its potential limited contribution. To begin with, Chronicles cannot be a Rewritten Bible because there was no Bible by the time the book was written and first read. Of course, one may argue for a more generic term, such as “Rewritten Scripture” and understand Scripture as pointing to a corpus of authoritative texts within the repertoire of the community within which and for which Chronicles was written, or to its core. Yet, to call Chronicles “Rewritten Scripture” obfuscates matters and conceals important differences. From the perspective of Chronicles—and likely among its authorship and intended and primary readerships—there seem to be a substantial difference

⁴⁷ Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 133-34.

⁴⁸ Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 132.

between pentateuchal and Samuel-Kings material. If the former, or, probably better, its legal traditions, were considered Scripture by the Chronicler, the same cannot be said of the latter without losing much of the meaning of the term Scripture and of the role of Scripture at the center of the community. After all, there is a very substantial difference between the way in which the matter of the passover offering and the texts of Samuel-Kings are treated. In the first case, 2 Chr 35:13, in a way somewhat similar to that of later rabbinic literature, develops a new conceptual category so as to allow the readers to understand that by roasting the passover offering they also fulfill the commandment to boil it and such is the actual meaning of both Exod 12:9 and Deut 16:7 when properly understood. Exod 12:9 and Deut 16:7 were certainly considered Scripture by the authorship and readership of Chronicles. But when matters come to Samuel and Kings, the sources for the lion's share of the book, Chronicles has a quite free hand, limited only by core facts agreed upon in its community.

Second, there is no generally agreed definition of what counts as "Rewritten Bible" even in relation to the late Second Temple period or its immediate aftermath. Knoppers, who is well aware of this situation, raises a number of generalizations including: "such works take a point of departure an earlier biblical book or collection of books," that "select from, interpret, comment on, expand portions of a particular book (or group of books), addressing obscurities, contradictions, and other perceived

problems with the source text” and that “normally emulate the form of the source text and follow it sequentially.”

To be sure, Chronicles uses sources that eventually became biblical texts (notably Samuel and Kings, but also Genesis, Psalms, and prophetic books) including some that were authoritative at the time of composition. But Chronicles is conceptually so different from each of the sources that it is misleading to say that as any of these can be considered the point of departure for the *book* of Chronicles.

Although Chronicles, as Knoppers stresses, shows similarities with the Primary History, this fact is to a large extent a basic content (and genre) requirement of any “national” sequential history of Israel anchored in the original beginning of humanity. Moreover, the differences between the Primary History and Chronicles are also very obvious. Furthermore, whereas Chronicles partially emulates the narrative in Samuel and Kings in the relevant sections, it also balances this emulation with salient textually inscribed markers that signal to its readers a sense of sharp difference, such as the fact that it is written in LBH.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Chronicles presents itself to its readers as a text written in a different sociolect than “classical” texts. By doing so, the book rhetorically positions its own voice within the repertoire of authoritative texts accepted by the intended community. These issues as well as the *debatable* position about the Babylonian roots of LBH are among the topics I tend to think that could have been (more) substantially addressed in the commentary. Still, one has to keep in mind that even the most comprehensive commentary cannot cover all possible topics, and

Of course Chronicles addresses obscurities, contradictions, and other perceived problems with the source texts. This is, in fact, a quite common way of dealing with sources. The Chronicler was certainly an exegete of written texts, and, as such, his voice is presented as one who communicates the true meaning of existing sources. Yet from this observation it does not follow that Chronicles is a Rewritten Bible.

Finally, the value of using “Rewritten Bible” as a genre marker is doubtful for the period in which it is normally used (late Second Temple and its aftermath), because unless it is clearly narrowed beyond generalities it places in one genre category books as diverse as Josephus’ *Antiquities*, Jubilees, Joseph and Aseneth, and Genesis Apocryphon. I think that rather than talking about a generally envisioned concept of Rewritten Bible in the Persian period, it is better to focus on the historical and sociological reality of a *textually centered society* in which different kinds and levels of authority were given to texts within a general repertoire.

Incidentally, some aspects of the relation of the book of Chronicles to Samuel-Kings or the Primary History in Persian Yehud may be heuristically approached by using an analogy of the relation between Deuteronomy and other legal pentateuchal material (especially what we call the Covenant Code) in the same Persian Yehud. In both cases, we are talking of co-existing texts, each with its own linguistic voice, and above all of a textually

Knoppers is not and should not be bound to discuss every imaginable thing in which a scholar of Chronicles might be interested.

centered community of literati in which different ideological voices are seen as, and are meant to be seen as, complementary rather than exclusive of each other. Instead of Rewritten Bible, perhaps it is better to refer to texts as products of an ever evolving scripting community.

Coherence with Archaeological Data as Criteria for Historicity

I applaud Knoppers' call to distance Chronicles' source criticism from historical reconstruction.⁵⁰ He makes an important point when he states "Chronicler's writing tells us first of all about the writer's own compositional technique, style and ideology."⁵¹ A bit more debatable is the statement "[w]hat we primarily derive from Chronicles, or for that matter from any writing, is what the author(s) thought about a certain subject at a particular time." I am not sure Knoppers, or any of us, can know what the author/s of Chronicles thought about any topic, but only what the implied author wanted the target readership of the book to read about a certain topic, within the interpretative frame of the book as a whole, and for particular didactic and socializing purposes. The difference is not necessarily minor. But my focus is on the secondary pieces of knowledge that Knoppers wishes to derive from Chronicles. He, as most of us, would like to derive as much knowledge as possible from the book for the reconstruction of the time of the composition of the book and for monarchic Judah. He

⁵⁰ Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 126.

⁵¹ Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 127.

suggests that a key criterion that may help to evaluate the testimony of Chronicles for the latter rests on the coherence or lack thereof between the archaeological (and epigraphic) evidence and the related narrative in Chronicles. Coherence, however, may result from accurate knowledge of the situation in monarchic Judah, however transmitted, and also from arbitrary convergences between literary and ideological features and archaeological data. The difficult trick is to know which is which.

Perhaps the most famous case concerns Hezekiah. It is as certain as it can be that Hezekiah strengthened Jerusalem (2 Chr 32:5-6) and Judah before rebelling against Sennacherib until the Assyrian king came to Judah. Any king would have done so under the same circumstances. Archaeological evidence points to concerns about the defense of the kingdom. But how far can we go in using Chronicles as a source for information about Sennacherib's campaign and its result? Can we learn from this case of coherence that when the text refers to other kings fortifying Jerusalem or other cities (e.g., Rehoboam, Uzziah) we should accept this information as an accurate representation of historical actions by these kings?

Even when we turn to the famous reference in 2 Chr 32:30 to Hezekiah's diversion of the water of the Gihon to Jerusalem, this may well be a popular tradition assigning a great engineering feat to Hezekiah and used by the author for the purpose of rhetorically enhancing the ideological claim that Hezekiah prospered in all his

works. But significantly, in Chronicles such an action is associated with preparations for the war.

Certainly some towers in the wilderness were built and some cisterns were hewed out in the approximate half-century assigned to the reign of Uzziah (see 2 Chr 27:10). Of course the same holds true for many other regnal periods in Judah and elsewhere in the ancient Near East. But archaeological evidence pointing to towers and cisterns in Judah dating to the first half of the eighth century BCE does not and cannot contribute significantly to our understanding of the historicity (in its present meaning) of the relevant narratives in Chronicles, or even of the relevant verses unless one assumes *beforehand* that the Chronicler could not have told the readers of Chronicles about the building of cisterns by Uzziah (and fortresses by Jehoshaphat and the like), unless these activities were described in a historically reliable source available to the author. But certainly Chronicles did assign building activities to kings in response to ideological and literary concerns or constraints (e.g., the list of Rehoboam's fortified cities). Conversely, should we use the lack of references in Chronicles to building activities during the thirty-one years of Josiah's reign in Chronicles as a case of a lack of coherence between the testimony of Chronicles and the archaeological evidence (after all, something was built in thirty-one years)?

Perhaps we are asking some mistaken questions, and perhaps we are a bit overzealous in our desire to reconstruct the history of monarchic Judah and a bit too excited when a particular piece of

information in Chronicles may seem “authentic” or “accurate.” Granting that there are some nuggets of correct historical information, from our perspective, in Chronicles that appear nowhere else, the basic question is how to know which ones qualify. The principle of coherence, even if refined to an art and used in a very carefully manner, can only tell us that a minor, narrowly construed piece of information that can be abstracted out of its context in the book of Chronicles is historically correct because we *already* know that piece of information. As such it contributes nothing to the reconstruction of the history of monarchic Judah and only very marginal knowledge about Chronicles at best.

Davidic Genealogy

Knoppers writes very extensively about the genealogies. I have learnt much, and I will keep learning from his work on them. One of the most important genealogies is that of David in 1 Chr 3, and, of course, Knoppers deals with the matter extensively. One of the main and highly debated questions is how to understand the significance of the list in the book. Knoppers explicitly notes that there is no “explicit statement about a Davidic restoration in 1 Chr 3” but “von Rad ... may be close to the mark in intimating that the whole point of abiding interest in David is to keep the Davidic tradition alive in hope of such a restoration at a later time.”⁵² He maintains that the list traces “continuity through the United Kingdom, the Judahite monarchy, the Exile and the Persian

⁵² Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 333.

periods,” shows that the line survived “the ravages of history” and “their supporters ... [were] always free to hope for a restoration to power,” and concludes with “the vitality evinced by the Davidic genealogy speaks for itself.”⁵³ So although Knoppers recognizes the problems with messianic interpretations of the genealogy, his own reconstruction is to some extent a variant of them. Moreover, he argues against the position that the genealogy leads to an anti-climax or seemingly nowhere on the grounds that, given the structure and composition of the lineage, no titles or special signs of status are given to most figures and therefore there is no slight against those near the end of the list.⁵⁴ Yet one may easily argue that the readership of the book certainly knows the difference between the status of figures such as David and Hezekiah and those of the last members of the list. Already the language of future restoration to power, used by Knoppers and many others, presupposes a readership that is well aware that the figures at the end of the list do not commensurate with those at the beginning. In this sense, it is clear that the list conveys to the readership a sense of continuity, but also of drastic and negative discontinuity, with the glorious past. In this sense, it is not really anti-climatic; it is climactic in its pragmatic sense of decline. Yet a number of qualifications or added levels of meaning cannot be disregarded. For instance, one may ask: Was the past so glorious from the perspective shaped and reflected by Chronicles? If the readership of Chronicles was supposed to understand the book as informing

⁵³ Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 335-36.

⁵⁴ Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 333.

them that monarchic Judah led to disaster and that there was a slow but consistent tendency towards decline in its blessings (a point on which I tend to think Knoppers would agree, but this goes beyond the matter discussed here), then one may doubt if the genealogy was read by the intended readership, *in the main*, as a fountain of hope for the restoration of a Davidic king, since after all, these kings failed. Is it for the coming of a new David or Solomon? After all, was not the temple already built and David alive and well as it were through the ordinances for the cult and the temple? In other words, the lineage of David may also be read as reflecting a status quo in which Davides need not play their “traditional” role in the present for the community to be pious and lead its life in accordance with YHWH’s will. In other words, it seems to me that the significance of the Davidic genealogy within Chronicles depends much on how the book as a whole is understood. Those who find in it a strong royalist or a messianic or quasi-messianic trend would understand the list in a way different from those who find in it more of a tendency towards acceptance of the provincial status quo, and for which Chronicles’ “utopian” hopes focus on proper education, correct worship, and attitudes within its readership and larger community, as grounded in what the authorship and intended readership understand to be the true meaning of YHWH’s teachings, many of which were textually based or could be abstracted from texts.

Latent, dormant messianic or quasi-messianic aspirations as those expressed in some prophetic books are a very different

matter because they focus on hopes for a distant, utopian future that will be brought by YHWH at the time of the deity's choosing and may co-exist, and in some cases even facilitate, the trends just described in Chronicles. They may well have been part of the discourse of the authorship and readership of Chronicles, but the case for reading them *to the exclusion* of other levels of meaning in the genealogy in 1 Chr 3 seems to me very problematic. I may note in passing that Knoppers himself suggests that we do not know how various Judaeans in Yehud viewed the Davides of their times.⁵⁵ Not incidentally, another issue arises, in which sense were they Davides? Knoppers seems to take at face value that Zerubbabel was a Davide, even if only here is he explicitly described as such. Given that Zerubbabel filled in the memory of Yehudites a kind of kingly role by the building of the Temple⁵⁶ one may expect the development of some form of kingly imagery in their characterization in the texts of the community (as actually shown in Hag 2:20-23 and Zech 3-4), even if in these pre-Chronicles texts, Zerubbabel is clearly not a king but a governor.

⁵⁵ Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 329.

⁵⁶ Ideologically, temples are built by kings, not governors. The relevant aspect of the conceptual construction of the building of the Temple in Yehud's discourses carried, at least, four layers of interrelated meanings. It was carried out (a) ultimately in accordance with and as a fulfillment of YHWH's will (YHWH is of course the King), (b) by the order of the highest worldly (Persian) king of the time, (c) to re-establish a temple envisaged by David and built by Solomon – i.e., the most glorious kings of Israel – and to be operated according to the instructions of Moses and David instructions – the highest possible leaders of Israel – as written and interpreted by the proper interpreters, and also (d) by Israel's leader/s in Yehud/Jerusalem, among whom Zerubbabel takes as it were the structural slot of the local king.

From that perspective one may see Chronicles as representing and/or reflecting the obvious next step in the royalization of the figure of Zerubbabel within Yehudite discourses, namely to attach him to the only legitimate kingly lineage. In other words, the lineage may not only point at some hope in a restoration of the Davidic line to power, but to the legitimization of the present temple and the lack of need for a new David to build it anew. Significantly, in Chronicles even a relatively elaborate list of descendents of a kingly figure need not necessarily point to hope for restoration to power but to the importance of an ancestor or his deed, in this case both David and Zerubbabel (now intertwined through temple building⁵⁷) and cf. the lineage of Saul in 1 Chr 8. All in all, Knoppers' conclusions regarding the message of the lineage of David in 1 Chr 3 are not necessarily wrong, but they may reflect some basic assumptions about Chronicles and perhaps be a bit too limited and limiting in scope. In any case, this is certainly an important topic for further discussion.

Characterization of Personages

Knoppers writes "if the superscription [of LXX Psalm 95 'When the House was being rebuilt following the exile. An Ode relating to David;' (LXX Ps 95 corresponds to MT Ps 96)] had been part of the Chronicler's source, it is unlikely that he would have quoted this psalm in the context of the presentation of David's life."⁵⁸ I plainly disagree with this statement. From my perspective, the

⁵⁷ According to the MT, Chronicles enlists six generations after Zerubbabel; according to the LXX, eleven.

⁵⁸ Knoppers, *I Chronicles 10-29*, 648.

communities of readers of Chronicles certainly were able to construe the authorial voice of the book as one that has no problems in portraying characters as aware of later events and texts, and in fact, as one who uses such double understandings (such as in this case in the LXX) to advance rhetorical and ideological aims. This voice could and did cross boundaries of narrowly understood historicity – in the present sense of the term – at the service of didactic goals. The matter is of major importance, for it concerns our understanding/construction of ancient Israelite historiography and its genre constraints as well as the expectations that the genre raised among its intended readers. It opens some and tends to close other interpretative paths in the study of Chronicles.

In addition, although I may be wrong, I tend to think that Knoppers today would agree with me on this particular matter though he would phrase it in reference to the actual author of Chronicles. But if this is the case, is the stated comment a remnant of a previous position held by Knoppers? To be sure, his commentary represents the fruit of many years of work and although I am sure he read the entire manuscript before submitting it and thereafter the proofs, many comments here and there may still represent the thoughts of Knoppers at some point in the past but not necessarily now.⁵⁹ Since I know Knoppers, I can advance

⁵⁹ This is a natural, unavoidable feature present in comprehensive studies which by necessity were written piece by piece through many years.

an educated guess that he may agree with me on this matter.⁶⁰ But by doing so, I am in fact interpreting the intention of the author of the book, that is, Knoppers, according to a kind of (redactional) history of his thought on the matter. I assume, however, that most present-day readers and certainly those readers thirty years hence who will still be using the volume most profitably will not be able to make the guess I am making now. Does any of this say anything about a book meant to be read and reread for generations after the death of its author/s such as Chronicles? Does any of this say anything about the importance of distinction between implied and real author?

CONCLUSION

I would like to conclude my comments and my invitation for further conversation by stressing my personal appreciation to both authors. One has contributed much to general literacy on Chronicles; the other, from whom I learned much, has meticulously worked through 1 Chronicles and its secondary literature and provided us all with a commentary whose vitality will endure for many years to come. I am glad of standing here today commenting on their works. I am glad of expressing in public my thanks to both of them. Thank you Gary Knoppers and Steve McKenzie.

⁶⁰ To be sure, I may be wrong regarding this example, but I am quite sure that there are instances in which the point I am making is still valid.

**RESPONSE TO RECENT CHRONICLES
COMMENTARIES BY GARY N. KNOPPERS
AND STEVEN L. MCKENZIE⁶¹**

**STEVEN J. SCHWEITZER
ASSOCIATED MENNONITE BIBLICAL SEMINARY,
ELKHART, IN**

Steven McKenzie begins his recent commentary on Chronicles with two sentences with which virtually all of us gathered here this morning would heartedly agree: “There has never been a better time to embark on a study of Chronicles. Nor is there a better example of the vitality of biblical scholarship than that on Chronicles.”⁶² His commentary and the two volumes on 1 Chronicles by Gary Knoppers certainly provide ample evidence for such a hyperbolic claim.⁶³ As someone who defended a dissertation

⁶¹ These comments were originally presented as part of a panel discussion in a special session of the Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah Section at the national annual meeting of the SBL, Philadelphia, Pa., November 20, 2005. I wish to thank the session organizer Melody Knowles for her kind invitation to participate.

⁶² Steven L. McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles* (Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 17.

⁶³ Gary N. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9* (Anchor Bible 12; New York: Doubleday, 2004); idem, *I Chronicles 10-29* (Anchor Bible 12A; New York: Doubleday, 2004).

on Chronicles earlier this year,⁶⁴ I concur with McKenzie's generally positive assessment of the present state of affairs in Chronicles' scholarship. This area of our field has been undergoing a transformation (and sometimes a radical one) for several decades now. Indeed, in the last few years in particular, numerous works have appeared that are moving discussions about Chronicles in new directions. This present reassessment of and dynamic growth in Chronicles scholarship will result undoubtedly in more extensive research and further probing into the meanings of Chronicles and the repercussions of the book in the history and literature of its own time and throughout the subsequent centuries. It is in the context of this renewed interest in and rethinking the consensus opinion concerning what scholars have repeatedly called an "often-neglected book," that I am honored to make a small contribution to this discussion. I will begin my comments by focusing on McKenzie's treatment of Chronicles and then turn to that by Knoppers.

McKenzie's 42-page "Introduction" concisely surveys with great clarity many of the standard issues covered in such commentary sections: outline and titles of the book, its canonical positions, authorship, theories of redactional developments and the literary of the work as a whole, date and setting, genre and purpose, the ancient textual witnesses, sources and issues of historicity, constituent genres, primary theological concerns and what

⁶⁴ Steven J. Schweitzer, "Reading Utopia in Chronicles" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 2005), now under contract for publication with T&T Clark.

McKenzie terms “Supporting Themes.” McKenzie correctly notes the trend, especially in North American scholarship, to shift away from redactional schemes to explain the development of the book of Chronicles toward a greater emphasis on the integrity of the work as a coherent unit with less editorial insertions than previously asserted.⁶⁵ This new approach corresponds to a similar shift in appreciating the sophistication of the book, and to a substantial reevaluation of the Chronicler as an author and editor. As a result, the Chronicler should be viewed as the creator of a work that has no identifiable or known parallel in terms of genre in the ancient world, at least according to McKenzie, which is also in agreement with the assessment by Knoppers.⁶⁶

First, McKenzie notes that the Chronicler’s “unique work” is not sufficiently explained by recourse to labels such as “rewritten Bible” or “history writing.” Instead, McKenzie concludes his comments on genre and purpose with the suggestion that Chronicles could be understood as “a theological rewriting of Bible history for instructional purposes.”⁶⁷ I would like to press McKenzie on this point to explain further what his description means, as it appears to me to be a statement of *content and function* rather than literary *form*. What *is* the *genre* of Chronicles? McKenzie seems to state that Chronicles cannot be classified into any generic category, a point that seems correct to me as well. If Chronicles indeed stands alone in terms of genre, does this not suggest that

⁶⁵ McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 28.

⁶⁶ Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 34, 134.

⁶⁷ McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 34.

the Chronicler is not only a sophisticated writer, but also a *literary innovator* not bound by the conventions of the past or present for communicating his message to his audience?

Second, in describing the Chronicler, McKenzie states that this persona was most likely a single author, likely a scribe who was connected with the temple, and perhaps even with the Levites in particular,⁶⁸ and was a “skillful editor and exegete. Above all, he was a sophisticated theologian who used Israel’s past to convey powerful, if sometimes subtle, religious messages to his contemporaries.”⁶⁹ McKenzie discusses at some length in his introduction many of these religious messages. Of course, I agree with many of his assessments and conclusions, but disagree with or would like further clarification on others. For example, in my opinion, his pointed discussions of date, authorship, and sources succinctly articulate a balanced approach to several complex issues. I certainly agree with his contention that the Chronicler was not a rigid legalist,⁷⁰ as a scholar such as Wellhausen may have portrayed him. Rather, as with McKenzie, I understand the Chronicler to be concerned about the broader spiritual condition of the community and *not only* as it is reflected in the cult’s organizational system, but as it is also expressed in four emphases throughout Chronicles that are noted by McKenzie: joyful celebrations of worship, prayer,

⁶⁸ Ibid., 33.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 29.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 49, 55.

humility, and the multivalent phrase “setting the heart to seek God.”⁷¹

However, while I agree that the Chronicler *is* concerned to provide an authoritative heritage for his organizational scheme, I question McKenzie’s *assumption* that the Chronicler reflects the conditions of his present in describing details of the cult. And, of course, McKenzie is not alone in this presumption about the relationship between the content of Chronicles and whatever historical situation it may reflect. Most scholars working through its complicated relationships of the descriptions of temple personnel have concluded that Chronicles either reflects conditions from the preexilic period or, more commonly, that they are retrojections into the past from the Chronicler’s own day during the Second Temple period. McKenzie does note that the systems for the temple personnel are “in flux” both before and apparently after the composition of Chronicles,⁷² but he continues to assume that its depiction in Chronicles serves to legitimate the present program. Thus, in this view, Chronicles functions as propaganda to reinforce the *status quo* of the cult.

Instead, I would ask of McKenzie, who invokes this legitimacy explanation for the portrayal of the cult on several occasions,⁷³ what is the *evidence* that the Chronicler is indeed attempting to legitimate the present organization of the cult,

⁷¹ Ibid., 55-58.

⁷² Ibid., 54.

⁷³ Ibid., 34, 53-55.

especially since (1) none of the various descriptions of its structure that are contained throughout the book of Chronicles are in complete agreement (that is, no *coherent* organization of the cult is actually authorized by the overall presentation in Chronicles), and (2) that many of the cultic innovations in Chronicles are unique to the book and appear without external data for comparison? In other words, what confirms the *hypothesis or theory* that the details in Chronicles reflect the historical circumstances of *any* period, instead of this being one hypothesis that is based on other hypotheses that also lack supporting evidence? Instead, I see a recurring pattern depicted throughout the book, namely, that variation and adaptation of the cultic system in new historical circumstances, with the probability of continued renewal and change in the *future*, characterizes the Chronicler's view of cultic organizational schemes. If the Chronicler is a *masterful innovator from a literary perspective*, why not also see in his depiction of the cult a *historical innovation* that will reorganize the temple personnel into a different operational program than what currently exists in the Chronicler's present?

In my opinion, another option besides the common view of the "Chronicler as legitimist" deserves consideration: the possible institutions of a utopian *future* are presented as if they were past realities. Thus, Chronicles does not present the cult as it is, but as it might be. Or, as McKenzie puts it "The past is idealized—history as it should have been,"⁷⁴ but I would add, not to reinforce the

⁷⁴ Ibid., 34.

present but to *change* it into something better than what it currently is—a *Better Alternative Reality*, or, what is otherwise known as a Utopia. This assumption about the nature of the Chronicler’s relationship to his contemporary situation would thus be changed from the construction of propaganda literature to the promotion of *continuing* cultic reforms in the present and the future. As I find myself in substantial agreement with McKenzie on the majority of the issues discussed in the introduction, my concluding question is, honestly, why do you think that the Chronicler writes to legitimate the present and thus maintain the *status quo*?

I would now like to turn to the two volumes on 1 Chronicles by Knoppers. In the light of my previous comments, I begin with three statements by Knoppers: (1) that “the methodology of source criticism needs to be distanced from the discipline of historical reconstruction,” (2) that “one cannot merely assume that Chronicles primarily tells us about either the preexilic period or the postexilic period,” and (3) that “Writers are not only shaped by their circumstances, they can also seek to shape those circumstances.”⁷⁵ Knoppers even explicitly allows in a footnote for the possibility which I am suggesting, namely, that Chronicles does not reflect the present, but rather “the writer’s preferred configuration of priestly polity” before Knoppers quickly states that the justification of postexilic institutions in Chronicles seems “more likely.”⁷⁶ As with McKenzie’s similar assertions, I would ask,

⁷⁵ Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 126, 127, 105, respectively.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 115 n. 152.

why—could you please expand on your comment and clarify for me your reasons for this judgment concerning the Chronicler's portrayal of the cult and its accompanying society?

Shifting away from this topic that is obviously of great importance for my own reading of Chronicles, I applaud the research and detailed analyses undertaken in these volumes by Knoppers. The thorough, systematic, and logical discussions of topics, debates, and problematic issues provide a wealth of resources for those readers who venture into the deep with the Chronicler. With the same meticulous procedure that is evident in his previously published essays and articles, Knoppers engages critical scholarship and ancient primary sources with exacting precision and, at least in my opinion, cautiously responsible conclusions. His discussion of comparisons of Chronicles with Hellenistic works, especially the 20-page Excursus on the Genealogies,⁷⁷ is especially illuminating. I agree with his contention that it is the Hellenistic material rather than the typically addressed ancient Near East literature which provides the better parallel data for comparisons and contrasts to Chronicles. Knoppers' analysis of this material is, I believe, in many ways paradigmatic for additional comparative studies that could and should be undertaken between the Hellenistic literary corpora and the books of the Hebrew Bible, including Chronicles.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 245-65.

It would be rather easy for me to say that by-and-large I find Knoppers' presentation of the material fairly convincing. However, a few points are worth further consideration: in his well-written section on the possibility of interpreting Chronicles as a form of rewritten Bible, Knoppers takes the position that Chronicles is neither a commentary on the Deuteronomistic History, nor does it treat the Pentateuch in some special way that would indicate "authoritative" or "sacred" status of the Torah, nor should "exegesis" or "theological reflection" on earlier texts or traditions be the explanation for all of the content of Chronicles.⁷⁸ While these judgments seem accurate to my mind, his subsequent conclusion that therefore Chronicles is not a replacement for the primary history but an "alternative" presentation of the past raises some questions.⁷⁹ Foremost, is the apparent contradiction in the language that Knoppers uses earlier on this same page: In correctly asserting that Chronicles is not a commentary on Samuel-Kings, Knoppers affirms the view that the Chronicler "substitutes" his new writing for the old one, namely the Deuteronomistic History. Substitute, at least to me, suggests replacement, not only an additional option. While we cannot know the mind of the Chronicler, I would like to see Knoppers unpack this view a bit more than the few sentences at this point in his commentary. The Chronicler certainly expected his readers to be familiar with the earlier literary (and presumably oral) traditions, but what did he

⁷⁸ Ibid., 131-33.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 133.

think was the character of his own independent (and lengthy) composition?

Secondly, moving out of his introductory section to the commentary proper, Knoppers addresses at some length the highly-debated issue of the Chronicler's reasoning for David's disqualification as temple builder in 1 Chr 22:8, 28:3.⁸⁰ Knoppers concludes his clear rehearsal of the options and his own preference with the assertion that this language should not be used in a misleading and generalized manner to argue for a theology of pacifism in Chronicles.⁸¹ His conclusion is substantially based on what he calls the "ad hoc" nature of this judgment against David. However, it is worth emphasizing that apart from the actual construction of the temple, this is one of, if not *the*, major distinction between the reign of David and the reign of Solomon. That is, I would be hesitant in affirming the unified nature of their individual reigns as they are presented in Chronicles. While there is absolutely consistency between their separate eras, Solomon's reign not only continues what David had begun but adjusts, adapts, and *exceeds* the conditions associated with his illustrious father. Thus, in my view, it is not the Davidic-Solomonic era that portrays Israel's utopian Golden Age, but it is the *Solomonic kingdom* that most fully typifies the hope for a *better alternative reality* in Chronicles. Also, I would be among those scholars who find a nuanced view of war and peace in Chronicles, and believe that the depiction of a

⁸⁰ Knoppers, *I Chronicles 10-29*, 772-75.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 775.

quietistic and pacifistic Chronicler *is* consistent with the evidence from the book as a whole. While Knoppers may well address this point at length in his subsequent volume on 2 Chronicles—or at least I hope that he will—I would enjoy hearing his *further reflections and arguments* only alluded to in this brief remark that the Chronicler does not advocate such a position given the context of the late Persian or early Hellenistic period in which he was writing.

Third, a structural question: the sections in Knoppers' 91-page introduction labeled Roman numerals IV, V, and VI, which total almost exactly half of its length at 45 pages, are obviously interrelated and concern issues of authorship, the unity and extent of the work, evidence for redactional activity, the relationship to Ezra-Nehemiah, and the complexities of dating the book.⁸² While Section IV is titled "The State of the Field: Recent Studies on Chronicles," its contents *only* concern what Knoppers labels "The Unity and Extent of the Chronicler's Work." In this section, I expected to find discussion of the redactional strata and its connection to Ezra-Nehemiah, among other concerns. However, these topics are the subject of the separate Section V. Further, while the title of Section IV would suggest multiple issues in Chronicles to be a part of a survey of the state of the question, there is strangely only one subheading (Letter A without a Letter B). Finally, in Section VI, the title indicates a discussion of the debate over authorship and date, while the content focuses almost entirely on the issue of dating the text. While it could be argued

⁸² Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 72-117.

that authorship was covered in or at least alluded to in Sections IV and V, these sections are mostly about redactional issues without ever addressing the issue of authorship *per se* or an identification of the Chronicler's social location. I guess my question is: as I read these sections the structural logic and flow of the arguments from one section to the next are not readily apparent, at least to me, and would you please clarify how you see them functioning in this form and structural scheme?

In his final footnote in the introduction of the volume covering 1 Chronicles 1-9, Knoppers suggestively states that a section in volume 2—by which I believe him to mean the next one on 2 Chronicles—will cover the theology of the Chronicler,⁸³ and perhaps this location will be the place to address more fully the identity of the author of Chronicles. I, for one, eagerly await the completion and publication of this volume on 2 Chronicles, which will apparently contain additional substantive introductory material that will supplement the extensive concerns already included in the first volume.

In conclusion, these helpful, thorough, and well-reasoned commentaries by two leading scholars such as Steven McKenzie and Gary Knoppers ensure that those of us working on the book of Chronicles have much to ruminate over and to keep us busy for decades to come. Thank you both for your substantial

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 137 n. 191.

contributions to the continued vitality of Chronicles scholarship and the field of biblical studies.

A COMMENTARY ON COMMENTARIES ON CHRONICLES

JOHN W. WRIGHT

POINT LOMA NAZARENE UNIVERSITY, SAN DIEGO, CA

The Book of Chronicles is a writing of history, a textual remnant within the history of writing. The Book of Chronicles imposes a name upon a text from history that transforms this text to what it earlier was not, an authoritative Hebrew Scroll for formative Judaism and, simultaneously, a large Greek pamphlet within a massive codex for the gathering of a largely Gentile group that looked back to one they saw as the Jewish Messiah. Within the context of these polities, the text did not function to refract history, but to pre-form history, to call these different but same groups to a common past that was not historical but textual.

To comment on the recent commentaries of Gary Knoppers and Steven McKenzie is to enter into a complex web of textual and political relationships that this text, what we have come

to call the Book of Chronicles, has elicited. We are here to comment on commentaries, then to allow the commentators to comment on our comments, only to provoke more comments from later commentators who follow in our wake – not merely a wake as that which follows immediately after a boat, but also as that place where people gather after death. I mention this only so that we might here take pleasure in the texts, both of Chronicles and the commentaries, the achievement of the commentators, real human beings who sit here as part of us.

Wakes are celebrations, but celebrations after death, after the disappearance of life that recalls the dead to life. A commentary marks the absence of the text, the trace of a text in a new text, a new text that keeps present that which has already disappeared to prevent its annihilation through repetition. As Michel de Certeau writes concerning Western historiography, a contemporary biblical commentary “tends to prove that the site of its production can encompass the past; it is an odd procedure that posits death, a breakage everywhere reiterated in discourse, and that yet denies loss by appropriating to the present the privilege of recapitulating the past as a form of knowledge. A labor of death and a labor against death.”⁸⁴ In other words, a wake, a celebration of the dead who nonetheless still live.

How then might we celebrate the learned web of relationships that Professors Knoppers and McKenzie employ to resurrect the

⁸⁴ Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (trans. Tom Conley; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 5.

dead? Let us begin with Professor Knoppers' irenic and extensive labor.⁸⁵ We should not underestimate the achievement of this repetition of the text of Chronicles. First, Knoppers' work de-centers the BHS as 'natural' for reading Chronicles. For Knoppers, the MT of Chronicles no longer reigns supreme as the basis for any correction, but must compete on the open market for readings within wider textual traditions of Chronicles from antiquity.

Knoppers constructs a completely novel text, an eclectic *Urtext*, to translate and upon which to comment. Every word of the text undergoes his disciplinary gaze. His text-critical work culminates over forty years of scholarly efforts to absorb the data and implications of the Qumran biblical texts into Chronicles scholarship. The attention to detail is staggering. Knoppers artfully alternates between observing and neglecting text critical "laws" to construct a text to translate and upon which to comment. All future academic commentaries on Chronicles will have to take Knoppers' work into account.

Yet the significance of these ancient textual networks goes far beyond the construction of a Chronicles text. The engagement of the textual flux of Samuel shifts the interpretation of the Chronicler from previous 20th century readings. Knoppers does not deny the intentional alteration of previously known scrolls to produce a new work; nonetheless Chronicles participates fully in

⁸⁵ Gary N. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9* (Anchor Bible 12; New York: Doubleday, 2004); idem, *I Chronicles 10-29* (Anchor Bible 12A; New York: Doubleday, 2004).

the textual flux of the history of Judean scrolls and Christian codices. Knoppers utilizes the textual variation of Chronicles to construct textual histories and preferred readings of other Judean scrolls as well – particularly the complex Samuel textual traditions. Most delightfully, he creatively inverts direction of earlier commentaries from the texts of Joshua to Chronicles in order to reconstruct a primitive version of the Book of Joshua from Chronicles.⁸⁶

A second network of texts whereby Knoppers re-creates Chronicles is ancient Hellenistic genealogies and historiography. If Knoppers uses the textual networks to deconstruct an opposition between the MT and other textual traditions, here he subtly deconstructs an opposition between the Hellenistic and the Jewish, the Greek and the Hebrew. The emergence of the Jewish in Chronicles becomes itself a Hellenistic phenomenon. Knoppers pushes beyond ahistorical anthropological approaches to read the genealogies of 1 Chronicles in relationship to a similarly attested genre in Greek writings at the time. This historicist reading enriches the earlier anthropological readings, as well as consistently re-enrolls major parts of the genealogies of Chronicles from previous scholarly relegations as secondary or tertiary additions.

The genealogies emerge as much more significant than earlier modernist readings. According to Knoppers, the ‘classical genealogies’ depicted and created power:

⁸⁶ See Knoppers’ discussion, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 442-48.

...prestige, status, even moral character might be derived from the original progenitor, preferably legendary, heroic, or divine (van Groningen 1953: 47-61). One's identity was intimately tied to one's roots and social context. Whether one had the credentials to serve in certain public offices was determined to no small extent by one's pedigree.⁸⁷

Chronicles emerges as a text deeply embedded in the contested social and political struggles of 4th century BCE Judeans. As Knoppers states in an important footnote, "the Chronicler's genealogies were written not so much to present an alternative history to that presented in the Hexateuch as they were to situate Israel in the context of other nations and to make assertions about Israel's tribal heritage, its identity, its internal configuration, and its relationship to the land."⁸⁸

Knoppers extends this political reading of Chronicles through a third network of texts: texts concerning kings, temples, and temple personnel within the ancient Near East. Whereas the first two networks relate to Chronicles by particular types of textual traditions, Knoppers branches far and wide to enliven Chronicles through this third network of texts. Knoppers draws upon, to sample merely a few, neo-Babylonian temple contracts, Ugaritic mythological texts, Aramean inscriptions, Assyrian Kings Lists,

⁸⁷ Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 250-51.

⁸⁸ Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 260, fn. 29.

Hittite documents, Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, Hebrew inscriptions and Judean letters from Elephatine, all in order to explicate relationships of king, temple, and temple personnel within Chronicles. As a result, Knoppers animates the relationships of characters, buildings, and offices in Chronicles to re-present social and political contests in antiquity within which later Judean history and texts emerged.

Knoppers' Chronicles seems remarkably at home within antiquity. His text presents Chronicles as a performance of Hellenistic Jewish historiography within the late Persian, early Hellenistic eras. It presents a pluralistic "all Israel" within the land with David as a "founding father" for the socio-political institution of the temple within a poor, small province of Yehud. Knoppers' genteel rhetoric masks the strength, the creativity, the corrective of previous scholarship, and quiet persuasiveness of his text as he enfold the reader into the web of textual relations that he spins. Never seeming to disagree completely with any previous reading, he nonetheless subtly shifts the ground in reading Chronicles within twentieth-century readings. He conquers by infiltration, a velvet revolution within and against the scholarly status quo, even as he entombs the text within that past by which he resuscitates it. Confining the text as dead in the past, Knoppers' commentary allows Chronicles to live. His commentary is simultaneously a necrophilia and a necrophobia of Chronicles.

Professor McKenzie has an even more difficult rhetorical task.⁸⁹ He addresses a specific audience – beginning theological students and pastors – whose office presupposes that the Book of Chronicles is alive and always has been, even if that life is not very important. Despite a blurb that Chronicles represents “one of the most important, but often neglected, books of the Old Testament,” this sentiment might not be obvious to a novice audience of academic readings of biblical texts. McKenzie undertakes the important task of burying the Chronicles of professional biblical scholars alive within the sociological context of those who, unlike us academics who understand that Chronicles is a relic of the past, do not naturally know that the text is dead.

Writing without the benefit of footnotes and bibliography so as not to scare away the novice, McKenzie implicitly presupposes many of the same twentieth century academic texts that inform Knoppers’ comments. Knoppers’ comments themselves occasionally directly inform McKenzie’s comments, extending the life of the Knoppers’ text. McKenzie summarizes and briefly adjudicates textual relationships of Chronicles to ancient Hebrew scrolls and Greek codices, and relates the text to a discourse called the history of Israel, particularly in a chronological era before the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem. A miscellanea of comments thus grant a “depth dimension,” to use the editors’ language, to

⁸⁹ Steven L. McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles* (Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 2004).

enliven Chronicles for the reader.⁹⁰ Professor McKenzie relates Chronicles masterfully to a network of textual discussions on the compositional history of its text, as well as clarifications of language and imagery as it relates to the discourse of historical critical scholarship of Chronicles. He effectively comments on the text of Chronicles to initiate the novice into a type of textual discourse found within academic readings of this text of the past forty years.

Yet his comments differ from Professor Knoppers' through the assignment to generate theological and ethical comments "with which the unit deals or to which it points" in order to "provide readers a basis for reflection" on "contemporary issues of faith and life."⁹¹ The dead text must live. McKenzie's text must unfold into future texts meant to inform the life of certain contemporary ecclesial groups.

At the same time, McKenzie's comments create a text of Chronicles deeply formed by contemporary Western academic scholarship – a text long dead. The commentary becomes the site of moving the life of the church into the life of the guild, though a guild itself modified by this move. Two different polities, histories, and rationalities merge in a Hegelian-like synthesis.

⁹⁰ For the important editorial constraints placed upon the McKenzie text, see Patrick D. Miller, "Foreward" in McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 11-13.

⁹¹ Miller in McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 13.

This synthesis opens Chronicles to become a different text than that constructed by Professor Knoppers. McKenzie's Chronicles is, "above all, a theological work."⁹² Like Hegel, history becomes theology: "the essence of Chronicles in a single phrase is to call it a theological rewriting of Bible history for instructional purposes."⁹³ "The Chronicler's account of Solomon is really about the temple,"⁹⁴ but "it is not the temple as a building that is important but the temple as a conduit to God. . . . David's interest in preparing for the temple exemplifies his concern for the sacred and also for the communion with God that the temple represents."⁹⁵ The building of the temple, therefore, "is much more than a building project; it is a spiritual exercise."⁹⁶

Yet in 2 Chronicles 10-36, the theological emphases of Professor McKenzie's comments, that is, the theology of Chronicles, change: "the distinctively Chronistic doctrine that surfaces in 2 Chronicles is that of individual responsibility and immediate retribution/reward."⁹⁷ For instance, "the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah in Chronicles together illustrate the principle that each person bears responsibility for his/her own behavior and that it is possible to choose the path of righteousness despite what one's forebears have done."⁹⁸ The personal spirituality

⁹² McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 47.

⁹³ McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 34.

⁹⁴ McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 227.

⁹⁵ McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 177.

⁹⁶ McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 224.

⁹⁷ McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 260.

⁹⁸ McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles*, 333.

expressed through the temple in 1 Chronicles must be lived out by the individual moral responsibility expressed in 2 Chronicles.

What has happened in this web of relations, the casting of the lasso around the academy and theological students and pastors? Professor McKenzie's Chronicles, dead or alive, seems remarkably at home within what the sociologist Christian Smith describes as the conventional religiosity of the contemporary United States,⁹⁹ a "moralistic therapeutic deism", "a 'softer,' more inclusive, ecumenical, multireligious direction."¹⁰⁰

Such a theology appropriates, abstracts, and revises doctrinal elements [and texts] from mostly Christianity and Judaism for its own purpose. But it does so in a downward, apolitical direction. Its social function is not to unify and give purpose . . . at the level of civil affairs. Rather, it functions to foster subjective well-being in its believers and to lubricate interpersonal relationships in the local public sphere.¹⁰¹

"It teaches that central to living a good and happy life is being a good, moral person;"¹⁰² it is "about feeling good, happy, secure, at peace. It is about attaining subjective well-being, being able to resolve problems, and getting along amiably with other

⁹⁹ See Christian Smith with Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹⁰⁰ Smith, *Soul Searching*, 170.

¹⁰¹ Smith, *Soul Searching*, 169.

¹⁰² Smith, *Soul Searching*, 163.

people;”¹⁰³ it is “about belief in a particular kind of God: one who exists, created the world, and defines our general moral order, but not one who is particularly personally involved in one’s affairs.”¹⁰⁴ It combines a personal spirituality with a moral responsibility through theological convictions supposedly made apolitical.

Professor McKenzie’s *Chronicles*, now alive and well, though dead, vibrantly addresses the contemporary theological student and pastor to form them into academically informed leaders to serve apolitically in guiding their congregations within the wider status quo of the United States. The commentary keeps *Chronicles* alive amidst a population who would not miss the text if it were dead.

A wake is a celebration, a new celebration of mourning that opens into hope. The wake celebrates the eclipse of the one who is absent in her presence, that nonetheless opens and looks to the future presence of the one now past. A wake is the trace of the boat that speeds in front of us that calls us to follow before it dissipates. We follow onward into future commentaries so that additional comments might be made, elicited by, even as they create, the Book of *Chronicles*.

¹⁰³ Smith, *Soul Searching*, 164.

¹⁰⁴ Smith, *Soul Searching*, 164.

**OF REWRITTEN BIBLES, ARCHAEOLOGY,
PEACE, KINGS, AND CHRONICLES¹⁰⁵**

GARY N. KNOPPERS

**THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY,
UNIVERSITY PARK, PA**

I would like to begin my presentation by thanking the organizers of this special session of the Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah section, especially the chair – Melody Knowles – for devoting this focused attention to the recently published Chronicles commentaries authored by yours truly and Steven McKenzie.¹⁰⁶ I am truly honored by the careful, nuanced, gracious, and insightful readings of my work by the four critics participating in this special session.¹⁰⁷ As will become clear in what follows, I have learned

¹⁰⁵ This paper was originally delivered in the Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah Section of the Society of Biblical Literature on 20 November 2005. I have added footnotes for the convenience of readers. I wish to thank the editor of *The Journal of Hebrew Studies*, Professor Ehud Ben Zvi, for his kind generosity in publishing these proceedings of the SBL Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah Section.

¹⁰⁶ Gary N. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9* (Anchor Bible 12; New York: Doubleday, 2004); idem, *I Chronicles 10-29* (Anchor Bible 12A; New York: Doubleday, 2004); Steven L. McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles* (Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 2004).

¹⁰⁷ I also owe a debt of gratitude both to the editor of the Anchor Bible, David Noel Freedman, and to the staff of Doubleday, especially Andrew Corbin, for their meticulous work in editing my two volumes.

much from their well-considered reflections and judicious comments.

More broadly speaking, I would like to add that the participants in the Society of Biblical Literature's Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah section have been a real source of support to me as I developed the research for this commentary. Their criticisms have been helpful, wonderfully diverse, and consistently constructive. Over the ten years or so that it took to develop this commentary, we have agreed, disagreed, and even on occasion felt resigned to agree to disagree. But throughout this period of many changes in the field of biblical studies, the Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah section has remained a constant – a supportive and congenial context within which to carry out basic research. I am truly grateful for such constructive criticism.

In what follows, I have found it useful to organize my responses to the observations, comments, and questions raised by Ehud Ben Zvi, John Wright, Klaus Baltzer, and Steven Schweitzer by topic, rather than by individual. I would give three reasons for this. First, some points were raised by more than one person. It is therefore convenient to respond to the observations in a single context. Second, some of the responses were rather detailed and involved. If I began my discussion, for instance, with the twenty-page response of Ehud Ben Zvi, a kind of *magnum opus* in its own right, I might never finish in the time allotted to me. Third, proceeding topically allows me to begin by talking about some general issues raised by the respondents before proceeding to more

specific issues of interpretation. Given the substantive and detailed comments by our four panelists, I have tried to organize my response around five topics:

- 1) The Relationship of Chronicles to Ezra-Nehemiah
- 2) Chronicles: a “Rewritten Bible” or a New National Epic?
- 3) Archaeology, History, and Historicity
- 4) War and Peace, Chronicles Style
- 5) Active Genes: the Disputed Functions of the Davidic Genealogy

1. THE RELATIONSHIP OF CHRONICLES TO EZRA-NEHEMIAH

Both Baltzer and Schweitzer raise the issue of the relationship between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah, albeit in somewhat different ways. Baltzer asks about the process whereby the book of Ezra-Nehemiah was created out of essentially two different works: the narratives dealing with Ezra and the narratives dealing with Nehemiah. He asks: was Ezra inserted into a book about Nehemiah or was Nehemiah inserted into a book about Ezra? Schweitzer even inquires as to how precisely I view the development of Ezra-Nehemiah and its relationship to the editing of Chronicles.

Looking at the testimony of 1 Esdras, the styles and characteristic language of the two books, the doublet in 2 Chr 36:22-23 and Ezra 1:1-3a, the issue of ideology, and the factor of compositional technique, I argue in my commentary for a fundamental separation between the two works: Chronicles on the one hand and Ezra-Nehemiah on the other hand. Although I think that Chronicles has some points of connection with Ezra and Nehemiah, I very much doubt that one individual is responsible for both works. It seems unlikely that the author(s) of the narrative portions of Ezra and Nehemiah was somehow also responsible for Chronicles. In this, I agree with the basic positions espoused by Sara Japhet, Hugh Williamson, and other recent commentators.

Nevertheless, given the overlap between the ending of Chronicles and the beginning of Ezra, one is obliged to investigate the relationship between the two books. That is, we seem to be dealing with more than two literary complexes that have somehow been arbitrarily thrown together. My position is that certain elements in the description of the construction of the Second Temple, as portrayed in the early chapters of Ezra, have been modeled after the building of the First Temple as portrayed in Chronicles.¹⁰⁸ The editor responsible for the reshaping of the materials in Ezra depicting the early Persian period developed a series of ties between the two works by underscoring the restorative nature of the building activities pursued by the early leaders Zerubbabel and Jeshua. The editor alludes to a number of

¹⁰⁸ Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 75-80.

earlier writings to substantiate his case, but especially to certain texts in the Pentateuch and certain texts in Chronicles.¹⁰⁹ Perhaps this scribe lightly edited certain other parts of Ezra-Nehemiah, but the evidence for his activity can be most clearly be seen in the opening chapters of Ezra.

This leaves open the question as to how the materials in Ezra-Nehemiah were all brought together. The compositional history of the book of Ezra-Nehemiah is a complex, difficult, and extraordinarily fascinating issue. It is also an issue to which I would like to devote more attention in the years to come than I have been able to do in the past. As of yet, I have not settled on one particular theory of composition. In any case, if Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah are essentially two separate works written by different authors, it does not seem incumbent upon writers of commentaries on Chronicles to work out all of the compositional riddles in a work that they view as distinct from the Chronicler's original work.

¹⁰⁹ In this context, I am in broad agreement with the position espoused by Williamson that the early chapters of Ezra (in my view Ezra 1-3; in his view Ezra 1-6) were edited with a view to certain interests evident in the compositional history of Chronicles (H. G. M. Williamson, "The Composition of Ezra i-vi," *JTS* 34 [1983] 1-30; idem, *Ezra, Nehemiah* [WBC 16; Waco: Word, 1985], xxi-xxiv). I hesitate, however, to label this editor simply as "pro-Priestly," as Williamson does, because the editor's interests seem to be broader than the "pro-Priestly" rubric might suggest.

2. CHRONICLES: A REWRITTEN BIBLE OR A NEW NATIONAL EPIC?

In his response to my work, Ben Zvi revisits the issue of whether Chronicles belongs to the category of rewritten Bible. He seems more than a little troubled that I even “toy” with the theory and thus play a “dangerous game.” He writes, “Before too long, we will be flooded with references to Chronicles as ‘rewritten Bible’ and this will become a cherished piece of our ‘widely shared knowledge.’” I want to assure him that I did not invent the rewritten Bible theory out of whole cloth. I would love to be able to say that I was the first to entertain speaking of Chronicles in this connection, but many others beat me to it. Hence, in my introduction I was responding to a growing chorus of modern interpreters who had already found the rewritten Bible rubric a convenient one with which to categorize the Chronicler’s work.

As I wrote in the introduction, I do not think that Chronicles belongs to the genre of rewritten Bible. In fact, I think that the very category of rewritten Bible is both anachronistic and problematic when applied to a Persian period literary work. To be sure, examining Chronicles in the larger context of earlier writings, such as Deuteronomy, and later writings, such as the Genesis Apocryphon, the Temple Scroll, the Reworked Pentateuch, the book of Jubilees, Josephus’ *Jewish Antiquities*, and Pseudo-Philo’s *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (“Book of Biblical Antiquities”), serves some very useful purposes, because each of these writings reworks and rewrites older literary works. Nevertheless, the application of

the rubric “rewritten Bible” to Chronicles is anachronistic because there was no Bible as such in the time of the Chronicler. The use of the rubric is problematic, in part because scholars cannot agree on a precise definition of what a rewritten Bible is and in part because Chronicles, by virtue of its structure and unique content, does not fit the definitions of rewritten Bible that do exist. Chronicles is much more than an exegesis, paraphrase, and elaboration of earlier writings. I think that Ben Zvi and I are in essential agreement on this larger issue so I do not want to belabour this point any further.

I do think, however, that I should clarify a few things that I said about viewing Chronicles as a kind of new national epic. Both Wright and Schweitzer helpfully spoke to this issue in their responses. In my view, Chronicles was composed not necessarily as a replacement of, but as an alternative to the Primary History (Genesis through Kings). In all likelihood, the Chronicler could not have replaced the Primary History even if he had wanted to do so. But he could create his own alternative to it. Allow me to provide one brief example. The very way in which the Chronicler’s work is structured, focusing on the era of the Davidic monarchy means that his work is distinctively centred around Jerusalem.¹¹⁰ Jerusalem

¹¹⁰ See further P. C. Beentjes, “Jerusalem in the Book of Chronicles,” in *The Centrality of Jerusalem* (ed. M. Poorthuis and C. Safrai; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996), 15-28; N. Donnerlin, *Die Bedeutung Jerusalems in den Chronikbüchern* (BEATAJ 46; New York: Lang, 1999); M. J. Selman, “Jerusalem in Chronicles,” in *Zion, City of Our God* (ed. R. S. Hess and G. J. Wenham; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 43-56; Isaac Kalimi, *An Ancient Israelite Historian: Studies in the Chronicler, His Time, Place, and Writing*

already appears a number of times in the genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1-9. All told, Jerusalem appears more often in Chronicles than it does in any other biblical book. By contrast, Jerusalem never appears explicitly by name in the entire Pentateuch.¹¹¹ Even in the Deuteronomistic History, Jerusalem appears as a relative latecomer in the long story of Israel's emergence in the land.¹¹² The city is captured for good only after David has consolidated his rule over all of the tribes. But Chronicles is Jerusalem-centred practically from start to finish.

In the international setting within which the author laboured in the late Persian or early Hellenistic era – a period in which Yahwists could be found residing in many lands – his depiction of the past redefines the very nature of Israelite identity to focus special attention on the important function of this site for all who affiliated themselves with the name of Israel. In this manner, the writer actively reacts to his own literary tradition and shapes his readers' sense(s) of ethnic, religious, and national identity. One should not assume the course of later events in the Hasmonean and early Roman periods in which Jerusalem blossomed and

(*Studia Semitica Neerlandica* 46; Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2005), 83-160.

¹¹¹ Many think that the reference to Salem in Gen 14 is an allusion to Jerusalem. This may well be, but Jerusalem itself not explicitly mentioned.

¹¹² The fact that Chronicles lacks systematic coverage of the period in which Israel emerged in the land (Joshua) and the period in which Israel struggled with its neighbours and with itself (Judges) plays an important role in shaping the focus of the larger work. That is, the narrative portions of the Chronicler's work help to focus readers' attention on what the ancient author deems to be the critical events and institutions that affected Israel's development within the land.

became the destination of many pilgrimages from Judaeans residing in the diapora as inevitable or necessary phenomena. To explain such developments in later times, it seems likely that there had to be those literati in earlier times, such as the writers of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah, who forcefully argued for the centrality of Jerusalem to the very character of Israelite identity.

In my judgment, some commentators have been so interested in the extent to which the Chronicler was indebted to earlier writings that they have underestimated his literary and theological creativity. The Chronicler's selective employment of *mimesis* suggests the value that he saw in a variety of older writings, yet his imaginative recontextualization, reinterpretation, rearrangement, and massive supplementation of select passages from within the Pentateuch, the Deuteronomistic History, the Prophets, and the Psalms all work together to create a distinctive new work.¹¹³ One should not conclude that, because the Chronicler was indebted to a variety of antecedent writings, his work was essentially passive and derivative. The creation of a new national history is itself an active contribution to the author's immediate community and to the larger world of Judaism of which the writer was a part.

¹¹³ In this context, examining the Chronicler's historical work would affect, if not change, the way people understood the Primary History. Known characters from the first work, such as David, Solomon, and Hezekiah, are presented in a new light. Such readings might lead interpreters to approach the way they understood the Primary History differently. By the same token, having reread Samuel-Kings, they might, in turn, also read Chronicles differently. See C. Mitchell, "The Dialogism of Chronicles," in *The Chronicler as Author: Studies in Text and Texture* (ed. M. P. Graham and S. L. McKenzie; JSOTSup 263; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 311-26.

When I also spoke of the Chronicler justifying contemporary institutions, I may have inadvertently introduced some confusion into my discussion by not explaining my meaning clearly in context. When Chronicles describes certain kinds of temple staffing, such as the Priestly and Levitical courses, I think that the writer is describing Second Temple institutions, not necessarily First Temple institutions. In this respect, I see him as giving warrant to the existence of contemporary arrangements. Yet I would want to add that his particular configuration of these institutions may not have matched the realities of temple life in his own circumstances.

In his response, Schweitzer raises the topic of utopian visions. In my judgment, the depiction of how King David implemented an elaborate system of Priestly and Levitical divisions may reflect an ideal of what such arrangements should be or should have been, rather than what those arrangements were in the author's own times. Indeed, there may have been quite a gap between his ideal and the reality of temple hierarchies and rota as he knew them. In this respect, he was expressing his own views and perhaps attempting to influence the social and religious circumstances of his own age. Nevertheless, by positing the creation of these basic institutions in the last years of King David's rule, the author justifies Second Temple institutions by recourse to their formation in a past classical age (the united monarchy). Rather than composing a work that would simply reflect the status quo, the Chronicler's writing seeks to reflect upon and affect the status quo.

Shaped by both the past and the present, the writer attempts to shape the future.

3. ARCHAEOLOGY, HISTORY, AND HISTORICITY

In his response to my commentary, Ben Zvi raises the issue of “coherence with archaeological data as criteria for historicity.”¹¹⁴ He correctly notes that I wish to distance Chronicles’ source criticism from the task of historical reconstruction. He also correctly observes that I see one of my tasks as a commentator to glean as “much knowledge as possible from the book for the reconstruction of the time of the composition of the book and for monarchic Judah” and that the witnesses of archaeology and epigraphy may help in this task. In their responses, Wright and Baltzer also noted this historical interest in my work. I should observe, however, that I do not view coherence with archaeological data as a criterion for historicity (at least in a narrow sense). In describing the Chronicler’s work as an example of ancient history writing, however theologically-loaded and complex from a literary vantage point, I am trying to make a form-critical assessment rather than a modern historical assessment. Hence, the literary categorization of the Chronicler’s work as a historical writing does

¹¹⁴ In making these remarks, Ben Zvi is also referring to my earlier treatment, “Historiography and History: The Royal Reforms,” in *The Chronicler as Historian* (ed. M. P. Graham *et al.*; JSOTSup 238; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1997), 178-203 [Repr. in *Israel’s Past in Present Research*, ed. V. Philips Long (SBTS 7; Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 1999) 557-78]. Readers will also want to look at Ehud Ben Zvi’s article, “The Chronicler as Historian: Building Texts,” *The Chronicler as Historian*, 132-49.

not rise or fall depending on whether a particular king actually did (or did not) institute a public works campaign.

In any case, since we are all in agreement that Chronicles can tell us something indirectly about the time in which this work was written, let me move on to the thornier issue of the possible relationship between the Chronicler's portraits of the Judahite kings and the history of the southern Levant during the late Iron Age. I think that it is fair to say, in this context, that Ben Zvi is much more skeptical than I am about both the wisdom of and the profit to be gained from even entertaining such a question! He is especially suspicious of employing archaeology to evaluate the testimony of Chronicles about monarchic times. I think that this is an issue about which Ben Zvi and I will have to agree to disagree. I would concede that this is a very difficult area, especially since there is at best only a partial overlap between the matters with which archaeology and epigraphy deal and the matters with which our ancient texts deal.

Yet the Chronicler's work contains many claims about construction activities, building fortifications, wall fortifications, and military ventures during the course of the Judahite monarchy. In exhibiting such a keen interest in geopolitical and structural reforms, Chronicles is broadly consistent with the interests of many ancient Near Eastern royal inscriptions and dedicatory texts. By contrast, the Deuteronomistic History contains little information about non-cultic activities for many Judahite monarchs until its depiction of the latter part of the eighth century. Much of the

Deuteronomistic interest during the period of the dual monarchies is focused on the area of cult and on the story of the northern kingdom.¹¹⁵ After portraying the fall of northern Israel, the authors of Kings start to devote more extensive attention to some of the later Judahite monarchs, especially Hezekiah and Josiah, than they had to earlier Judahite monarchs.

We are left, then, with the unique testimony of Chronicles. Much of this information, one might argue, is typological. For example, good kings are usually builders, whereas bad kings are not.¹¹⁶ But it still seems to me that at least some of us (by no means all of us) have an obligation to seek out how many of these claims, if any, cohere with the information available about the past gained through modern archaeology and epigraphy.¹¹⁷ Admittedly, the latter methods also have their limitations, biases, and problems. As with literary studies, these disciplines are not static entities but are always subject to revision and change. But given the broader claims made by Chronicles about the past, I believe that it is helpful

¹¹⁵ In this respect, it is the text of Kings, and not the text of Chronicles, that occasions surprise. The broad geo-political and military interests exhibited by the Chronicler in narrating the performance of Judahite monarchs overlap with the scribal interests evident in a variety of ancient Near Eastern royal texts. See Knoppers, "Historiography and History," 178-203. Indeed, one could argue that this perceived *lacuna* in the narratives of the Deuteronomistic work was one of the many incentives for the Chronicler to write a new national epic.

¹¹⁶ P. Welten, *Geschichte und Geschichtsdarstellung in den Chronikbüchern* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973), 42-78.

¹¹⁷ I am thinking, in this context, of commentators with historical interests. Clearly, scholars with other interests, who employ other approaches (e.g., text-critical, literary, theological), do not necessarily have to be concerned with matters of a historical, epigraphic, or archaeological nature.

to potential readers to inquire how some of the stories about public works, building expansions, and wars correlate, if at all, with the literary and material remains that are relevant to the period in question. Even if such a basic correspondence proves to be accidental, the issue is still worth exploring.

Incidentally, the other positions also have their problems. The position that no such correlations are possible, given the biased, late, or didactic nature of the Chronicler's writing, the variant position that no such correlations exist, and the milder position that whatever correlations that do exist are insignificant, are all profoundly historical claims. In many respects, such generalizations are more sweeping and more positivistic than the approach which struggles with the issues on a case-by-case basis. The *via negativa* is, after all, still a *via*.

4. WAR AND PEACE, CHRONICLES STYLE

Having touched upon, however briefly, the large issues of literary genre, archaeology, history, and historicity, it is now time to tackle relatively minor issues, such as the issues of war and peace. In his response, Schweitzer calls attention to the Chronicler's reasoning for David's disqualification as a temple builder (1 Chr 22:8, 28:3). He rightly observes that I conclude my discussion with the assertion that this *ad hoc* prohibition, based on David's shedding of blood, should not be generalized to argue for a theology of pacifism in Chronicles. Schweitzer points out that "this is one of, if not *the*, major distinction[s] between the reign of David and the

reign of Solomon.” By this, I take it that he means that even though both monarchs are esteemed highly in Chronicles, David is a man of war and Solomon is a man of peace. If this is so, which king is thought of more highly? In Schweitzer’s view, Solomon’s reign continues “what David had begun but adjusts, adapts, and *exceeds* the conditions associated with his illustrious father.” Thus, it is “the Solomonic kingdom that most fully typifies the hope for a *better alternative reality* in Chronicles,” not the Davidic-Solomonic kingdom as some sort of unified golden age.

The complicated series of issues that Schweitzer raises would require an extensive, sustained treatment perhaps in a book-length monograph to do them all justice. As readers of my commentary on 1 Chronicles may be aware, I decided to delay any systematic attempt to deal with the Chronicler’s theology until after I had written the commentary to 2 Chronicles. Given the number of times I adjusted my positions and changed my views while working on 1 Chronicles, I thought and still do think that this was a sensible course to take.

In brief, allow me to sketch my thoughts at the present time.¹¹⁸ Schweitzer and I agree that the reign of Solomon is even more glorious than that of David and thus represents a highpoint in the Chronicler’s narration of the monarchy (1 Chr 29:25; 2 Chr

¹¹⁸ Provisionally, see Knoppers, “Jerusalem at War in Chronicles,” in *Zion, City of Our God* (ed. R.S. Hess and G.J. Wenham; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 57-76.

1:12).¹¹⁹ The reign of שלמה is pre-eminently a time of שלום (1 Chr 22:9, 18). In the story of Israel, as portrayed in Chronicles, this era of peace, rest, and divine blessing offers a stark contrast to the times of upheaval, unrest, and war that punctuate the reigns of many later Judahite kings and, for that matter, other eras in Israel's past, as alluded to in the book (2 Chr 15:5-6).¹²⁰ Thus the text upholds a time of *shalom* as an ideal, rather than any time of conflict or war. That the text of Chronicles presents select portions of later reigns as times of peace, rest, and quiet in a very positive light confirms, in my view, that the book generally views such times as periods of divine blessing (e.g., 2 Chr 14:5-6; 20:30).

So in sum, Chronicles upholds *shalom* as an ideal in the history of the Israelite people. However, whether one can go on from this observation to embrace the much stronger claim that Chronicles advocates a theology of pacificism or of quietism seems doubtful to me. One does not necessarily follow from the other. The reasons are numerous. Although there are some fascinating cases in which the divine plays a most prominent or even exclusive role in battle, as in the battle of Jehoshaphat against the eastern invaders (2 Chr 20:1-28) and the divine messenger's massacre of Sennacherib's forces (2 Chr 32:1-21), there are other cases in which the text seems to present Israelite involvement in wars as necessary, helpful, or inevitable.

¹¹⁹ What the work depicts as the particular accomplishments of each king represents a related but distinct issue.

¹²⁰ Yet even the reign of this peaceable king includes at least one royal campaign (2 Chr 8:3)! Curiously, this foray finds no parallel in Kings.

David's reign may serve as one example. The Chronicler presents some of David's campaigns and those of his generals as self-generated (e.g., 1 Chr 18:1-8, 12-13; 20:1-3), others as defensive (e.g., 14:8-17; 19:1-15), and yet others as simple facts (with no direct cause attributed; 20:5-8). In the case of the conquest of Jerusalem, both David and Joab play major roles and lead the offensive (1 Chr 11:4-9). Note in the latter case, the concluding editorial comment, "Yhwh Sebaoth was with him" (11:9//2 Sam 5:10). In short, the text seems to assume that conflicts and Israelite involvement in such conflicts are, at least in many cases, a fact of life.

Looking at the reigns of David and Solomon in sequence, one might even come to the conclusion that it is David's campaigns which make Solomon's unusual time of peace possible. Indeed, David's own speeches speak of his sacrifice, his shedding of blood, his many battles, and his self-denial as working together to pave the way for the building of the temple in the era of unprecedented peace that is to characterize the reign of his divinely-chosen heir (1 Chr 22:14; 29:3-5, 17). This is one of David's contributions to Israel's legacy. Even though his shedding of blood prohibits David from building the promised sanctuary himself, his repeated successes in battle place his successor in a most enviable position to take on the task with which God entrusted him.

The concern with military matters is, of course, not a concern that is solely associated with the reign of David.¹²¹ There are many cases in which Judahite monarchs construct fortresses, accumulate armaments, muster armies, repair defensive walls, and enjoy success against the enemy (e.g., 2 Chr 13:2-19; 14:7-14; 17:14-19; 26:9-15; 27:4; 32:5-6). Such activities almost always occur in the context of periods of divine blessing.¹²² If the writer was a pacifist or a quietist, I am not sure whether he would uphold such public investments in military affairs as acts of piety or as indications of blessing from above.

Finally, the Chronicler develops aspects of Solomon's dedicatory prayer dealing with the prospect of military conflict in his depiction of the Judahite monarchy. One of Solomon's seven petitions openly engages the prospect of military conflicts by beginning with the words: "When your people go forth into battle against their enemies along the way by which you sent them" (2 Chr 6:34//1 Kgs 8:44). In such a scenario, the people are to pray to Yhwh in the direction of Yhwh's chosen city and the temple built by Solomon in the hope that Yhwh would uphold their cause (2 Chr 6:35//1 Kgs 8:45).

¹²¹ My focus in this brief discussion is the story of the monarchy, but it is relevant that Chronicles also evinces interests in military matters in the anecdotes it provides about individual tribes (e.g., 1 Chr 4:40-42; 5:18-22; 7:4, 11).

¹²² By the same token, military defeat can signal divine involvement in the life of Israel in a negative way (e.g., 2 Chr 12:2-9; 15:6; 16:9). Such military divine action against the people, involving other nations and their armies, can even take the form of deportations from the land (1 Chr 5:25-26; 9:1; 2 Chr 6:36-39; 36:12-21).

Chronicles, much more so than Kings, develops the positive implications of Solomon's seven petitions in its portrayal of the Judahite monarchy (2 Chr 7:12-16; cf. 1 Kgs 9:1-3). When some of Judah's later kings (and their followers), such as Rehoboam (12:6-8), Abijah (2 Chr 13:4-12), Asa (2 Chr 14:10), and Jehoshaphat (2 Chr 20:5-13), humble themselves and cry out to God along the lines of Solomon's prayer, he heeds their petitions and offers them some respite, if not outright victory.

My point is that the writer of Chronicles, working perhaps in the context of the late Persian or early Hellenistic period, does not passively reproduce older ideas about divine involvement in sacral war. Far from it, he transforms older traditions and creates new ones. The Chronicler accords a new (or greater) importance to the divine promises made to Jerusalem and the house of God in Jerusalem when dealing with the prospect of military conflicts. The questions entertained in Chronistic texts do not seem to center on whether Israelites should engage in or be involved in military conflagrations, but rather how they are to comport themselves in the case of such conflagrations. International conflicts are generally acknowledged as a fact of life. Divine activity in military theatres involves not only Yhwh fighting through his people, by himself, or through members of his divine council, but also acting in defense of the very temple and town that the text elsewhere affirms as central to the people's identity.

5. ACTIVE GENES: THE DISPUTED FUNCTIONS OF THE DAVIDIC GENEALOGY

The status of the Davidic descendants and the hopes that may or may not have been attached to them during the Persian and Hellenistic periods have been recurring interests among many scholars over the past few decades. The issues are complex and do not admit of any kind of easy resolution. In his comments, Ben Zvi revisits the long Davidic lineage in 1 Chronicles 3 and raises some questions about my interpretation of this material. He states that although I recognize the problems with messianic interpretations of the genealogy, my “own reconstruction is to some extent a variant of them.” Over against my claims about the Davidides’ continuing importance, Ben Zvi wonders whether the genealogy leads to an anti-climax or to seemingly nowhere. Or, to be more precise, he wonders whether the lineage is actually climactic in the sense of conveying a pragmatic sense of decline. If “the readership of Chronicles was supposed to understand the book as informing them that monarchic Judah led to disaster and that there was a slow but consistent tendency towards decline in its blessings . . . , then one may doubt if the genealogy was read by the intended readership, *in the main*, as a fountain of hope for the restoration of a Davidic king, since after all, these kings failed.”

Perhaps it would be best if I respond to Ben Zvi’s point by discussing my treatment of the Davidic genealogy in the larger context of my treatment of the genealogies in 1 Chronicles 1-9. For many modern readers, these lineages are a sure-fire cure for

insomnia. But I think that Wright, Baltzer, and Schweitzer all saw what I was attempting to do with the cross-cultural comparisons I pursued. In examining the great assemblage of linear and segmented lineages in the first nine chapters of the book, I pointed to ancient Near Eastern and Classical analogues to the kinds of intense genealogical speculation one finds in Chronicles. The high regard of ancient Mediterranean elites for lineage was connected to the significance they attributed to pedigree and to the original ancestor in shaping the course of future generations. As I wrote, “In ancient Greece, prestige, status, even moral character might be derived from the original progenitor, preferably legendary, heroic, or divine.”¹²³ One’s identity was intimately tied to one’s roots, kinship ties, and social location. To have a genealogy was itself a mark of status, but most lineages attested from the ancient Mediterranean world are just a few generations in length.

When one comes across the Davidic genealogy in Chronicles (1 Chr 3:1-24), one is immediately struck by its extensive nature and by its complexity in exhibiting both linear and segmented forms. Structurally, the Davidic lineage forms the centre-piece of the extensive lineages of Judah’s seed (1 Chr 2:3-4:23). Compared to the shallow depth of most ancient Near Eastern lineages, the great depth of the Davidic lineage is remarkable. Whether one counts David’s generations as twenty-six (MT) or thirty (LXX), the genealogy is the longest in the Hebrew Bible. If one were to count the earlier line of Hezron (2:10-17), which culminates in David and

¹²³ Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 250-51.

his sisters, one would have to add another eight generations to the total.

Given the great care taken to compose such a lengthy and complex set of lineages, I hesitate to describe their function as conveying a pragmatic sense of decline. To be sure, such a reading is not impossible, but I find it difficult to believe that the great effort to put together such a literary work served primarily a negative purpose. It is true that the record of some of the later Judahite kings was not particularly glorious, Hezekiah and Josiah excepted, but one of the interesting aspects of the Davidic genealogies is that they continue for many generations beyond the Babylonian exile. In this, they may be distinguished from the important priestly lineage in 1 Chr 5:27-41, which ends with the Neo-Babylonian age. In any case, it is helpful to keep in mind that Chronicles democratizes the blame both for Judah's decline and for northern Israel's earlier decline (2 Chr 30:6-9; cf. 1 Chr 5:25-26). If the Deuteronomistic work places great blame on the sins of Manasseh, the Chronistic work blames priests, people, and royalty alike for the Judahite exile (2 Chr 36:12-16; cf. 1 Chr 9:1). Hence, I think that it is too strong a claim to say that readers of the Davidic genealogy in the late Persian or early Hellenistic period would read the names of the latter Judahite kings and inevitably think both of continuity and of drastic discontinuity with a glorious past.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ As I note in my commentary, the genealogy's structure belies a preoccupation with the events and crises identified by many interpreters as the most significant in Jerusalem's history: the conquest of the city by David and his forces, the division (ca. 931 BCE), the invasion of

Given the ancient Near Eastern and Classical analogues to the genealogical interests evident in 1 Chronicles 3, I gave credence in my commentary to a variety of explanations for the great length and depth of the Davidic interest in Chronicles: royalism, dynastic continuity, the ongoing concern with the Davidic line in the postexilic period, messianism, and the need to document pedigree.¹²⁵ In examining the possible functions of this long history of generations, I was thus attempting to do justice to what Ben Zvi has elsewhere aptly called the “sense of proportion” in the Chronic writing.¹²⁶

When I spoke of von Rad perhaps being close to the mark “in intimating that the whole point of abiding interest in David is to keep the Davidic tradition alive in hope of such a restoration at a later time,” I was thinking of three features of this genealogy.¹²⁷ The first is its sheer length into the fifth (MI) or fourth century (LXX). Such continuity established the vitality of the Davidic line. The second is that this genealogy traces an ongoing succession within the Davidic family throughout the generations. This is remarkable, because the concern to trace a succession continues even after the Babylonian deportations when (presumably) the

Sennacherib (701 BCE), the Babylonian invasion (598 BCE), the Babylonian exile (586 BCE), and the first return (538 BCE). The Davidic lineage “underscores an unbroken succession in spite of the vicissitudes of history” (Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 334).

¹²⁵ “My purpose in what follows is not to refute all of these particular views. Quite the contrary, each contains a measure of truth” (Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 333).

¹²⁶ E. Ben Zvi, “A Sense of Proportion: An Aspect of the Theology of the Chronicler,” *SJOT* 9 (1995): 37-51.

¹²⁷ Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 333.

Davidic line was out of power.¹²⁸ The third feature was the effect the very creation of such a text might have had on some ancient elite readers, who had an interest in the Davidic line.¹²⁹ Looking at such a case of documented continuity in the present back into the ancient past, the supporters of the Davidic family were “always free to hope for a restoration to power.”¹³⁰

Ben Zvi makes an insightful observation when he writes that “the lineage of David may also be read as reflecting a status quo in which Davidides need not play their ‘traditional’ role in the present for the community to be pious and lead its life in accordance to YHWH’s will.” This point is well-taken, because the community in Yehud did not need a Davidic king simply to be obedient to God. One of the things the Chronicler’s work shows is the resiliency of the Israelite people and its relationship to God in all sorts of different circumstances.

Nevertheless, I would want to counter one aspect of Ben Zvi’s observations by stating that the temple itself may well have

¹²⁸ During the early Persian period, it is quite possible that some of the early Judean governors attested in the biblical sources (e.g., Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel) had connections to the Davidic line. That does not seem to be the case with the later Persian period governors of Yehud. Given this historical reality, it becomes all the more significant that the genealogist traces continuity in the Davidic line for a succession of later generations.

¹²⁹ Absent a state governmental apparatus to support the Davidides directly, the supporters of the Davidic line may have found it necessary to bolster their claims and interests by other means. To put matters somewhat differently, one incentive to compose a genealogy and maintain a succession within this lineage may have been the absence of political authority, rather than the possession of it.

¹³⁰ Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, 335.

been understood differently by different Judaeans. For some people in Yehud, the Jerusalem sanctuary may have represented not so much the fulfillment of the Davidic promises as one important aspect of their present embodiment. In other words, while some Judaeans may have regarded the Second Temple as representing in some way the culmination of the Davidic hopes, others may have regarded the Second Temple as the present carrier of the Davidic hopes. For the Judaeans within the second group, the temple was the major institution which, aside from the Davidic family itself, sustained restoration hopes into the future. Both groups in Yehud may have shared concerns for education and proper worship, but differed on political issues. One group may have been satisfied with maintaining the provincial status quo, while others may have aspired to a more independent political status, one that hearkened back to the Davidic monarchy of old.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

I would like to thank the four scholars again for their insightful observations and many useful suggestions. Their work has inspired me to begin work on the 2 Chronicles commentary in earnest.

RECENT CHRONICLES COMMENTARIES: A RESPONSE

STEVEN L. MCKENZIE

RHODES COLLEGE, MEMPHIS TN

It is indeed an honor to have my work chosen for recognition in this special session and to appear with this distinguished panel. I am grateful to my colleagues on the panel for their insightful critiques. Most of all, I would like to thank them for the positive and constructive spirit of their reviews. It has been my privilege for many years to be associated with the Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah program unit in its various incarnations at the Society of Biblical Literature. I have always found it to be a particularly cordial group of scholars, and I am pleased to be a part of it and to have a leading role in this session.

I would also like to mention a special word of thanks to my fellow commentator, Gary Knoppers. One of the reviewers wondered how long Gary must have worked to produce the extremely high quality work that his 1 Chronicles commentary in the Anchor Bible series represents. I can attest to the fact that Gary spent at least the better part of a decade on this commentary. He had completed the manuscript of his commentary and submitted it

to the publisher before I began writing mine. Aware of the quality of Gary's work in general, I wanted to be sure to consult it when it came out. Through no fault of his, however, production of the manuscript was delayed in press. Yet Gary was gracious and generous enough to send me his entire manuscript, which was very helpful to me in my own project.

When the chair of the Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah section, Melody Knowles, invited me to participate in this session, she suggested that I focus my remarks on the experience of writing a commentary. Since my commentary is on both 1-2 Chronicles and therefore, unlike Gary's 1 Chronicles volume, is beyond revision or, borrowing John Wright's analogy, *post mortem*, I am happy to reflect on my experience rather than reconsider positions I have taken with an eye toward future improvement. It happens that doing so will also address in some fashion most of the comments about the book made by my fellow panelists. There are, however, a few matters which they have raised that I would like to address more directly first.

Ehud Ben Zvi has raised the question of whether the building of the temple in Chronicles is Solomon's "destiny" according to Yahweh's plan or whether it is a reward for Solomon's faithfulness. He is quite right that logically it cannot be both. But I would suggest that Chronicles in fact presents both perspectives and that each is an important dimension of its theology. Yahweh is in control and has a plan for his people. At the same time, Yahweh rewards righteous behavior. The tension Ben Zvi observes between

these two ideas in Solomon's case is a logical tension not a theological one. Such a tension is no less troublesome than the ideas of divine transcendence and imminence or divine omniscience and human free will balanced by modern faith communities and their members.

Prof. Baltzer, if I understand him, has suggested that the Chronicler stands closer to 2nd Isaiah than to the Deuteronomistic Historian in democratizing the Davidic promise rather than placing hope in a restoration of the Davidic monarchy. I am not convinced that this is the case but am open to hearing his further thoughts on the matter and the reasons that he has come to this conclusion.

Dr. Schweitzer has raised the question of the genre of Chronicles, and the other panelists have highlighted this same question less directly. Dr. Schweitzer observes that the conclusion I reached in my discussion of genre ("a theological rewriting of Bible history for instructional purposes," p. 34) is a description of function and purpose rather than a genre category. He is quite correct in this criticism. In fact, I am uncertain how to classify Chronicles generically. If pressed, I would probably want to call it history writing. However, I am not entirely comfortable with that designation because it seems to me that Chronicles evinces a much more didactic interest than the Deuteronomistic History. At the same time, while I agree with Dr. Schweitzer that the Chronicler is an innovative author, I might return the question to him, pointing out that "innovation" is not a genre designation. Moreover, there is such precedent in the Pentateuch and Deuteronomistic History for

works very much like Chronicles in certain respects that I would be most hesitant to regard the latter as *sui generis*.

Dr. Schweitzer also asks what evidence I would adduce for the view that the Chronicler wrote to legitimate the present and maintain the status quo rather than constructing a utopian future. The principal evidence to which I would point lies in the genealogies in 1 Chronicles 1-9 and the lists of Levites and gatekeepers in 1 Chronicles 22-29. In both cases, it seems clear that the Chronicler is working primarily with materials available to him that bring the names down to his day. It is difficult to believe that the rotations the Chronicler describes are the result of a utopian imagination. A particularly good example is the assignment of the singers in 1 Chr 25:8-31. The artificial nature of the list has long been noted; its regularity makes it extremely unlikely that it was generated by lot, as Chronicles claims. Rather, the list reflects a duty roster, the configuration of which the Chronicler explains and legitimates by means of a contrived lottery. That having been said, I see no reason why this process of legitimation necessarily precludes the possibility that the Chronicler also attempts to construct a utopian future. The orders and rotation of Levitical personnel may well be a component of the Chronicler's vision of the ideal future.

I would now like to turn to the topic that Melody Knowles initially asked me to discuss—my experience in writing a commentary. I should say, first of all, that this was the first commentary I had ever written. I was drawn to the project and

ultimately agreed to accept the invitation to write because of the opportunity it afforded me to become more familiar with the “big picture” of Chronicles studies—both the biblical literature itself and the critical issues raised by scholars. My previous work with Chronicles had tended to focus on specific texts, and I was pleased to be able to consider the work *in toto*.

When I received Knowles’ invitation, I dug up the prospectus of the series to which I was invited to contribute, the Abingdon Old Testament Commentary. I share portions of that prospectus with you now as a way of explaining certain features of my volume noted by the panelists. First and foremost, the AOTC was described as “a commentary that knows it is a textbook.” This point was emphasized in a letter sent to me by one of the series editors after I accepted the invitation to write. While the prospectus did state that the commentary should be useful for upper-level college students, pastors, and other local church leaders, it stressed that the primary audience of the series was seminary students. Thus, the first paragraph of the prospectus contains the following sentences:

In addition to providing fundamental information and insights into the Old Testament writings, these commentaries will exemplify the tasks and procedures of careful, critical exegesis, so as to assist students of the Old Testament in coming to an informed and critical engagement with the biblical texts themselves. These commentaries are written with special attention to the needs and interests of theological students ...

The structure of the commentary was fairly rigid, and I was admonished that it was imperative for contributors to adhere to the guidelines in the prospectus. Each volume was to consist of four parts: (1) an introduction with subdivisions dealing with key issues raised by the biblical writing, its literary genre, structure, and character, and its social and historical context; (2) the commentary on the text, organized by literary units rather than verse-by-verse; (3) an annotated bibliography; and (4) a subject index.

The meat of the work, the commentary on each literary unit, was to be further subdivided into three sections: (a) “literary analysis,” discussing the genre of each unit, its most important stylistic features, and its overall structure; (b) “exegetical analysis,” considering the aim of the unit, its leading concepts, and its problematic words and phrases, in the light of the background of the historical, social, and cultural context of the book’s author and audience; and (c) “theological and ethical analysis,” clarifying the theological and ethical matters with which the unit deals or to which it points; this section, “though not aimed primarily at contemporary issues of faith and life, should provide readers with a basis for reflection on them.”

This review of the series prospectus may help to account for some of the peculiarities of the approach and terminology (e.g., what is meant by “literary analysis”) noted especially by Prof. Ben Zvi. It may also help to explain why I refer to the Chronicler as the “actual” author of the work. Ben Zvi’s preference for the idea of an “implied author” may be useful on a theoretical level, but is less

practical in a commentary of this nature, which is geared toward a broad audience and focused on the original context of a biblical book.

The advantage that I found to such a structured program is that it helped me to organize my analysis and to make my approach to and aims in analyzing the text clear and direct. The disadvantage was the limitation that it imposed on analysis, and, even more problematic for me, the assignment to find something in each of the three categories in each unit. To be more specific, while I found the guidelines for the literary and exegetical analyses to be helpful and easy to implement, I often struggled to find something of a theological or ethical nature in a given unit that would provide a basis for reflection by a modern reader.

I recognize that my difficulties with the “theological analysis” stemmed at least in part from my own setting—my training in and preference for historical criticism (though I hasten to point out that the guidelines in the prospectus specified an approach that was basically historical-critical in orientation) and the fact that I teach in a liberal arts college rather than a seminary. My experience in this regard, however, left me with some misgivings about the audience for whom I was writing and the value of the project as envisioned by the series editors. There was one incident in particular that raised these misgivings.

About a year after I agreed to write the commentary, I received a letter from one of the series editors asking for a sample

of the work in progress. I sent a draft of the section on 1 Chronicles 10-21. Several months later I received the editors' response. While they were happy with the level of writing and overall discussion in the work, there were two complaints. The first was that I had transliterated Hebrew, thinking that I could presuppose some rudimentary acquaintance with the language on the part of seminary students. I was told that this was not the case and that the audience was broader than seminary students. Second, the editors thought that I spent too much time discussing Chronicles' relationship to its Deuteronomistic *Vorlage* and not enough time fleshing out its theological points. I was told that I should treat Chronicles as though Samuel-Kings did not exist, just as I would treat Samuel-Kings as though Chronicles did not exist.

This response left me wondering about the quality of seminary training if students are interested only in being told the modern theological relevance of the Bible's contents but not in acquiring the tools to ferret out its message on their own. I was also bewildered by the instructions to treat Chronicles in complete isolation from its *Vorlage*. I responded to the editors that I could not in good conscience treat Chronicles without taking its *Vorlage* into consideration, that indeed, the fact Chronicles exists along with Samuel-Kings offers, in my view, a unique insight into how a biblical writer made use of sources. I argued that the existence of Samuel-Kings furnishes a control that actually affords a more precise understanding of the Chronicler's theological perspective. I therefore informed the editors that I was willing to step aside if

they wished to appoint another author for Chronicles—one who could ignore the source question. They assured me that they had overstated the case and that they merely wanted greater sensitivity to Chronicles' integrity as an independent work. Obviously, the project continued to publication. I do not wish to leave the impression that the experience was a negative one. Quite the contrary, I learned a great deal as a result of it—about Chronicles and a good deal more—and all things considered, I am glad to have had the experience, despite the bumps along the way.

I wish to reiterate my thanks to Melody Knowles and the Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah Section steering committee for the invitation to participate in this session and for the honor so bestowed on my work, and to my colleagues on the panel for their thoughtful critiques.