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Peter R. Ackroyd
Kings College, London

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History and Theology in the Writings of the Chronicler

PETER R. ACKROYD

It would seem as if the Greek title of the two books of Chronicles, *Ta Paraleipomena* ("The things omitted") has left a certain legacy of doubt about the value of the work of the Chronicler. In liturgical use¹ as well as in reconstructions of the history, particularly those of a more conservative kind, the tendency has often been

¹ See, for example, the current lectionary of the Church of England.

The Reverend Peter R. Ackroyd is Samuel Davidson Professor of Old Testament Studies, King's College, the University of London. He is widely known both for his commentaries and articles in the field of Old Testament studies as well as for his English translations of important German works of Old Testament scholarship, including the 1965 translation of Otto Eissfeldt's The Old Testament: An Introduction.

While on a lecture tour in April of this year, Dr. Ackroyd spent several days in Saint Louis as a guest on the campus of Concordia Seminary. As an expression of his gratitude for the hospitality shown him, he submitted the accompanying article for publication in this journal. We are pleased to share with our readers Prof. Ackroyd's essay in which he suggests an approach to some of the literary and historical problems of the Chronicler's writings and offers significant suggestions toward an appreciation of the theology of grace, which is here seen as a major theme of the Chronicler's work. It is hoped that this article will stimulate further thought and discussion on the questions and problems here treated, particularly the question of the relationship between history and theology in the Chronicler's writings.

for passages from 1 and 2 Chronicles to be inserted or utilized at what appear to be appropriate places when Samuel and Kings are being read or the history of that period is being surveyed, by way of supplementing the material covered in those books. As a result, the Chronicler is relatively rarely read for himself, and his particular kind of presentation is not seen for what it is. Only when we go on into the postexilic period and consider the content of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, which form the final parts of the work as we now have it, is there a clearer recognition of the contribution which the Chronicler made, though inevitably to read only the last chapters of a work gives a somewhat curious impression of its meaning. And added to this is the problem that reconstruction of the postexilic history on the basis of the books of Ezra-Nehemiah is fraught with so many difficulties, and the differences in presentation between 1 and 2 Chronicles and the books of Samuel and Kings suggest such doubts, that even here, bogged down in historical and literary uncertainties, we may feel something of impatience.

Now perhaps we must acknowledge that it is partly the Chronicler's own fault. (For the moment I am treating the whole work as one, whether or not some parts of it were added at a later stage or at later stages to an originally smaller compilation.) The work begins in a manner which is not immediately calculated to inspire excitement

at either his historical contribution or his theological penetration. "Adam, Seth, Enosh," he begins in his opening verse, and with little interruption the series proceeds through nine whole chapters, at least a tenth of the whole work. It was chapters like these which so puzzled the Scottish child whose father religiously read the Bible aloud day by day, chapter by chapter from cover to cover; for the child could not but wonder at so large a family as that of the "Begats." And unless we are to emulate the woman who, so it is said, learned the names by heart, because, as she explained, she hoped one day to meet all these people in heaven, we are unlikely to be much moved by the monotonous and repetitious style. Yet this part of the work, dull though it may be and certainly not directly edifying, has its place in our proper appreciation of the whole.

The negative attitude persists.² In an otherwise most illuminating recent treatment of the development in the understanding of Old Testament material in the post exilic period entitled *Wisdom and Canon*, H. H. Guthrie describes as "unrealistically ecclesiastical" the Chronicler's "attempt at claiming for Nehemiah's and Ezra's accomplishments the status of a present once again coterminous with God's activity."³ To this study, I shall make further reference, as I believe it provides an important insight into postexilic

thought, an insight which in fact helps us to see the Chronicler's place more clearly when once his work is brought into focus. We have moved beyond the negative approach of C. C. Torrey, though not always appreciating the understanding and insight that accompanied his erroneous estimate of the exilic age. But much of the discussion is still in danger of turning on the wrong issues, though there have been notable moves towards a more adequate appraisal of the Chronicler as a theologian. This can be seen already in Martin Noth⁴ and Wilhelm Rudolph⁵, as well as more recently in the studies in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* by W. F. Stinespring⁶ and Robert North.⁷ The purpose of the present study is to attempt to carry further the investigation of the Chronicler's contribution as a theologian of high significance for our understanding of the development of the thought of the postexilic age.

I

It may be convenient if, before we go on to look at the theological issues, we attempt to resolve, though without fully solving, the literary problems which confront us in this now very substantial work. It is useless to deny that there is still great uncertainty and disagreement about the

⁴ *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* (Königsberg, 1943; Tübingen, 1957), pp. 110 to 180.

⁵ In his commentaries, *Esra und Nehemia* (H. A. T. 20, Tübingen, 1949) and *Chronikbücher* (H. A. T. 21, Tübingen, 1955), as also in his article "Problems of the Books of Chronicles," *VT* 4 (1954), 401—409.

⁶ "Eschatology in Chronicles," *JBL*, 80 (1961), 209—19.

⁷ "The Theology of the Chronicler," *JBL*, 82 (1963), 369—81.

² G. von Rad, *Theology of the Old Testament*, I (Engl. trans., Edinburgh, 1962), 348, takes a negative view, still in this closely dependent on Wellhausen. At the end of the section (p. 354) he makes a curiously thin concession to the merits of the Chronicler's concern with the praise of God.

³ *Wisdom and Canon. Meanings of the Law and the Prophets* (Evanston, 1966), p. 9.

processes by which the work came into being; and to refer to "The Chronicler" as if he were a single, almost identifiable, author, begs many questions that have to be answered.

In many ways the use of the term "school of the Chronicler" would be more appropriate, and although it is probably right to believe that within any such school there is likely to have been one great influential personality — perhaps more than one — yet the complexities in the formation of such a work as this may well suggest that we are dealing with the gradual shaping, over a relatively long period, of the traditions out of which the work is formed. To say this specifically at every point is to become unnecessarily pedantic; references to the Chronicler in what follows, therefore, presuppose an awareness that we are more likely to be dealing with a particular type of theological tradition to which various men have contributed over a period of time but with a community of thought linking them together. If there are inconsistencies within the work — and such may well be observed in all Old Testament traditions — this may be explained by such a process of composition, though I believe in fact that such inconsistencies are less evident in this work than in other Old Testament works comparable with it, except in so far as the use of sources not totally rewritten for their present context sometimes leaves unresolved roughnesses.

It is now clear⁸ that the text of Sam-

⁸ Cf. F. M. Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran* (rev. ed. 1961), pp. 188—91; "The History of the Biblical Text in the Light of Discoveries in the Judean Desert," *HTR*, 57 (1964), 281—99, see pp. 292—97; W. E. Lemke, "The Synoptic Problem in the Chronicler's History," *HTR*, 58 (1965), 349—63.

uel/Kings underlying the Chronicler's work is closer in many respects to that of the LXX/Qumran — an old Palestinian text — than to that of the Massoretic tradition.⁹ We may legitimately claim that the first stage towards the work of the Chronicler as we have it rests in the existence of this particular type of text of Samuel/Kings (and of other material utilized by the compilers alongside the text eventually destined to become the Massoretic text, and that the existence of such alternatives, natural enough when each copy of a work may be regarded, in at least a limited sense, as a new edition, reveals already a measure of differentiation in the appraisal of the past. At whatever point we place the textual deviation, it may still shed light on the richness and diversity of the theological handling of the traditions.

The present text of the Chronicler's work represents a development from this. Recently D. N. Freedman¹⁰ has revived the view, earlier to be found in a similar form, for example, in A. C. Welch,¹¹ that the first "edition" belongs to about 515 B.C. and was designed to cover only that aspect of the survey which represents an explanation of the true nature of Davidic monarchy. That the Chronicler has something to say about the Davidic monarchy is evident, but I shall comment on this

⁹ Cf. also G. Gerleman, *Synoptic Studies in the Old Testament* (Lund, 1948), pp. 9—12, for similar evidence concerning 1 Chron. 1—9, shown to be closer to the Samaritan than to the Massoretic tradition. F. M. Cross, *HTR*, 57 (1964), 297, regards this too as evidence of a Palestinian text, and indeed as providing the oldest witness to such a text's existence.

¹⁰ "The Chronicler's Purpose," *CBQ*, 23 (1961), 436—42.

¹¹ *The Work of the Chronicler* (London, 1939).

point later. I am not persuaded that it is demonstrable that such an earlier form of the material as Freedman proposes may properly be termed the "work of the Chronicler"; but it is conceivable that a first stage toward the evolution of the material as we now have it was a selection from the previously existing Deuteronomic History, a selection which omitted all the earlier stages and concentrated simply on the period from David to Jehoiachin, or perhaps, by way of indicating the revival of Davidic hope, from David to Zerubbabel. We might compare with this the suggestion that I Esdras is a selection from the Chronicler's work, picking out from that work simply the three great moments of religious reform and revival—Josiah, Jeshua, and Ezra.¹² What we understand by the Chronicler's particular emphasis in regard to the history may have been due to his work being built upon a partial survey only in which already some at least of the notable omissions had been made which so characterize the whole over against its predecessors.¹³ But such a stage is hypothetical only—a perhaps quite useful working hypothesis, but no more. The acceptance of such a selection from the material and its use in the larger work which we now have implies at least some measure of continuity with this kind of thinking.

It is, I think, reasonable to view the central moment of the Chronicler's activity as

coming after that of Ezra, so that the whole of the previous history is summed up in the most recent and, to the Chronicler's theology, in many ways most significant moment. Freedman believes that this represents a substantial shift in emphasis, but this too, as I shall hope to show, seems not as clear as he supposes. It would seem proper to associate with this period too the main genealogical introduction, and the whole survey to Ezra, while we may allow the probability that there has been some subsequent expansion at certain points in the genealogies and some in the David section of 1 Chron. But these additions are so much in the spirit of the work that there seems to be no need to make sharp distinctions, as, for example, is done by Galling,¹⁴ between a first and second Chronicler, but rather to regard these as linked stages in the development of the present more elaborate text.¹⁵

Galling would appear to be right in regarding the Nehemiah material as a later insertion,¹⁶ worked into its present position as a result of a natural misunderstanding of the chronology that allowed Nehemiah and Ezra to overlap because both were erroneously associated with the same Persian ruler. (Such a chronological error can be paralleled in the rather confused accounts of the Persian period in Josephus'

¹⁴ *Chronikbücher, Ezra, Nehemia* (A. T. D. 12, Göttingen, 1954).

¹⁵ There are reasons for thinking that some of the genealogical material may have been modified in the second century B. C. Cf. P. R. Ackroyd, "Criteria for the Maccabean Dating of Old Testament Literature," *VT* 3 (1953), 113—32, see pp. 126 f.

¹⁶ Pp. 9 f. Cf. also S. Mowinckel, *Studien zu dem Buche Ezra-Nehemia II. Die Nehemia-Denkschrift* (Oslo, 1964).

¹² Cf. W. Rudolph, *Ezra und Nehemia*, pp. xivf. S. Mowinckel, *Studien zu dem Buche Ezra-Nehemia I Die nachchronische Redaktion des Buches. Die Listen* (Oslo, 1964), pp. 12—18, argues against this view. But its separate preservation still needs to be explained.

¹³ Cf. the suggestion of J. Lewy, cited by R. North: "a history not of the *people* Israel but of the *city* Jerusalem" (p. 378n.).

Antiquities,¹⁷ and we may compare also the identifying of Micah the prophet and Micaiah [1 Kings 22:28] and the possible use in 1 Kings 13 of an Amos legend from the period of Jeroboam II in the form of an anonymous prophetic legend set in the reign of Jeroboam I.¹⁸) On the assumption that the Nehemiah material was later inserted, the problems of the lack of real relationship between Ezra and Nehemiah are resolved. Nehemiah, as is now virtually proved, worked in the reign of Artaxerxes I, and Ezra most probably in the reign of Artaxerxes II, a position recently carefully reargued by J. A. Emerton.¹⁹ No textual emendation has then to be undertaken in Ezra 7, for the date of Ezra can stand. The apparent misunderstanding of history by the Chronicler no longer exists, and the literary problems are reduced largely to the recognition that the conflation of the Nehemiah and Ezra material has resulted from

¹⁷ *Ant.* xi, 297—312. The confusion is, as we now know, in part at least the result of there having been three governors named Sanballat. Cf. the evidence of the Samaria papyri, F. M. Cross, *BA* 26 (1963), pp. 109—121. Cf. also on the whole question, H. H. Rowley, *BJRL*, 38 (1955/56), 166—198 = *Men of God* (London, 1963), pp. 246—76, and "The Samaritan Schism in Legend and History" in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage*, ed. B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson (London, 1962), pp. 208 to 222.

¹⁸ This is, of course, only a hypothesis. Cf. O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (Oxford, 1965), pp. 46, 290. The contacts between the opening part of 1 Kings 13 and the book of Amos are quite striking—attack on the altar (cf. Amos 9:1 ff.), earthquake (cf. Amos 1:1; 9:1), confrontation with the prophet (by Jeroboam in 1 Kings, by Amaziah on Jeroboam's behalf in Amos 7:10 ff.). The 1 Kings legend is of course now intricately bound up with other elements.

¹⁹ "Did Ezra go to Jerusalem in 428 B. C.?" *JTS*, 17 (1966), 1—19.

the placing of the Nehemiah sections as seemed most appropriate—partly before and partly after the narrative of Ezra's reform, the reading of the Law and its sequels—and a measure of harmonization has then subsequently followed in much the same way as harmonization can be observed in the smoothing of rough edges in the combined Pentateuchal traditions, both in the Massoretic text and in some measure even more clearly in the Samaritan. This view is also in some measure confirmed by 1 Esdras, in which the Nehemiah material is absent, and also by the clear independence of the figure of Nehemiah in the traditions used by both Jesus ben Sira and in 2 Maccabees.²⁰

It is not the intention of this study to enter in detail into the literary problems, but only to suggest this as a possible series of stages in the evolution of the material as a background to the study of the theological viewpoint of the Chronicler. It is a work with a complex history, and yet it presents a largely coherent and significant theological interpretation of the whole period with which it deals.

II

In his recent commentary on the two books of Chronicles and on Ezra/Nehemiah,²¹ J. M. Myers has presented a full-scale coverage of the work with a very definitely positive appraisal. Yet in spite of all its merits in points of detail, Myer's treatment begins with a statement that provides a good example of the way in which the discussion can easily turn on the wrong issues. Commenting on earlier ten-

²⁰ *Eccles.* 49:13; 2 *Macc.* 2:13.

²¹ *Anchor Bible* 12—14 (New York, 1965).

dencies to disregard the Chronicler he writes: "When it had to be dealt with, it was done grudgingly, often with misunderstanding, misgiving, or downright hostility. . . . Archaeological and historical studies have now rendered it more respectable and have shown it to be at times more accurate than some of its parallel sources" (p. xv). (Reference could be made here to studies that stress the good historical information available in the Chronicler's version of the history. Many of these, particularly by Israeli scholars and by W. F. Albright and others sharing his general approach,²² have developed this by tracing the relationships between material found only in Chronicles and in ancient monuments and documents.)

Exaggerated claims have probably been made for this historical value of the Chronicler's material, yet we may certainly recognize the probability that the source text of Chronicles in a deviant version of Samuel/Kings was subsequently modified by the inclusion in it of additional information, traditional or annalistic, from various sources, and that some of this is of independent historical value. It must, however, be admitted there are other narratives which have little or no historical probability, for example the curiously presented story in 2 Chron. 28 concerning the strife between Israel and Judah during the reign of Ahaz; whatever of historicity may underlie this, namely, the reality of such strife, is now totally overlaid with improbabilities. For the sections covering the

postexilic period, we have no precise means of checking the reliability of the account, and it seems clear that there are many points at which it is difficult to reconcile what we do know with what is here related; but here too there is little doubt that older material was being used and that at least some of the source material has good historical value.

But immediately we are back at the point of using the historical or supposedly historical data in the Chronicler's work to fill gaps, and immediately too we are in danger of making the assumption that the importance of the work lies in its historical information and that by implication the respectability of the Chronicler as a contributor to the Old Testament canon is relative to his historical reliability. The recent trend towards rehabilitation in these terms is in danger of creating a false image of his contribution by allowing considerations of historical accuracy to outweigh considerations of theological acumen. However good his sources, it is the way he uses them which ultimately counts. It is not a fair judgment of his work to single out what is historically verifiable without also considering very carefully how he shapes this material into a coherent work. Thus his treatment of the restoration period in Ezra 1—6 shows a fair disregard of chronology—as the work now stands—and a considerable element of confusion in his virtual conflation of Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel material. In handling Ezra, it seems most probable—judging both by the dates provided and by the nature of Ezra's work as we may discover it—that he has ordered it for theological reasons, so that the ending of foreign marriages

²² References are given to many such studies by Myers both in his bibliographies and frequently in the notes. Cf. also W. F. Albright, *BASOR*, 87 (1942), 27, and references in H. N. Richardson, "The Historical Reliability of Chronicles," *JBR*, 26 (1958), 9—12.

should precede rather than follow the reading and acceptance of the Law.²³ His significance as a theologian is not dependent on the historical reliability of his sources; even if it were demonstrated that at every point his account was historically speaking inferior — as used often to be affirmed — we should still have to ask what kind of theological judgment he makes and how far we may assess this judgment as valid.

The danger, here as elsewhere in handling Old Testament material, is of confusing historical verification with theological validation; and then, particularly among scholars with a more conservative inclination who tend to welcome points of confirmation of the Old Testament record from archaeological evidence or Near Eastern comparative material, of failing to realize that this is not so very far from the older but still not altogether defunct view that to assail the accuracy of the Biblical record at any single point is to bring down the whole edifice of faith like a house of cards. Biblical faith is rooted in historic experience. Certainly. But its relationship to verifiable historical events is more subtle than to be supported by mere historicity or undermined by recognition of historical inaccuracy.²⁴

III

It is clear that when we approach the question of the Chronicler's theology, we cannot satisfactorily do so by means of the detail of his work. This may be seen from the recent studies of the textual problems, which reveal that we cannot now state with

confidence that at any given point the Chronicler has rewritten his source from a particular theological viewpoint, for it is conceivable, and may indeed be very probable, that many of the small points of difference between Samuel/Kings etc. on the one hand and Chronicles on the other are due to a stage in textual history that antedates the Chronicler. Many of these differences may in fact merely reflect stylistic changes or modifications in linguistic usage and have no further significance at all. The argument should not, however, be overstated²⁵; and in particular it must be said that if we can get an adequate overall picture of the Chronicler's theology, it may well be that some of the small points may be reasonably explicable on this basis, in

²⁵ When Lemke rightly criticizes those who have sought theological motivation in every change (e.g., A. M. Brunet, "Le Chroniste et ses Sources," *RB*, 60 [1953], 483—508; 61 [1954], 349—386), it must at the same time be said that his final comment to the effect that we must concentrate on "nonsynoptic parts of his history in which he seems to be composing independently of any canonical sources" (p. 363, n. 44) seems somewhat naive. For one thing it is by no means clear when the Chronicler is independent of his sources; he certainly is not entirely so in Ezra/Nehemiah, and many recent studies suggest that other apparently original sections may be based on earlier material. For another, while argument from small detail will not do, argument from larger differences is less subject to uncertainty. And as has already been indicated, even if the change had already been made in an earlier form of the material, it is still part of what we now have to interpret. Thus the Chronicler may not be responsible for identifying the threshing floor with the temple site, and this in turn with Mount Moriah (1 Chron. 22:1; 2 Chron. 3:1); in fact, it is improbable that he invented these two identifications, the first possible but totally unproven, the second highly improbable. But his utilization of them is not without significance in his handling of the David traditions.

²³ Cf. Eissfeldt, *Introduction*, pp. 547 ff.

²⁴ Cf. B. S. Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis* (London, 1967), for a recent contribution to this problem.

default of evidence to the contrary. We have also here, however, to beware of over-tidiness in the estimating of theological viewpoint. It is well known that total self-consistency is rarely achieved by any writer. (One of the fascinations of reading detective stories is watching to see whether you can catch the author out!) In so far as the Chronicler's work represents a school rather than an individual, differences may be due to stages in its development. The preservation within the work of older source material, even if rewritten, may result in inconsistency, an inconsistency which is resolved in part by the new context providing a new motivation and thus contributing to the neutralizing of the older matter. The use of liturgical and other such material may give at times the impression of a difference of outlook that is not in fact present. (The significance of this last point will become clear in a moment.²⁶)

IV

The Chronicler was not the first to survey the history of his people, nor was he to be the last. Something may be learned about him by the extent and nature of his survey in comparison with others. At a much earlier period, such theological expositions of the past are to be found in the work of the Yahwist, itself quite possibly a reworking of earlier forms still; and the same is true of the Elohist presentation, which is in large measure a reworking of the same and similar themes. Their coverage is different. J begins at Creation and extends possibly to David; E from Abraham and continuing perhaps to the

²⁶ Cf. below the comments on D. N. Freedman.

divided monarchy. The finishing point is so difficult to establish with certainty that inevitably the assessment of these works remains in some measure in doubt; and it is also at many points not altogether clear how far they can be separated from each other and from the larger works in which they are now embedded.

More complete and therefore more satisfactory for our understanding of their theological viewpoint are the two great surveys of the Deuteronomic History and the Priestly Work, both incorporating much earlier material (including parts of J and E), but now to be understood as final presentations, offering a total interpretation of the past, covering different areas, and concerned in some measure with different problems. The Deuteronomic History belongs in its final form to the mid-sixth century, surveying from the Exodus to the contemporary situation; it is not improbable that the Priestly Work comes from very much the same period, still anticipating and therefore uncertain about the outcome of the problematic exilic period. The latter's presentation runs from Creation to the threshold of the conquest, so far as can be judged from its present form, though some dislocation of its conclusion may be postulated. This much less historical treatment points forward to an important feature of the Chronicler's work.

The Chronicler offers a different and in some respects a more comprehensive survey. Like the Priestly writers, he goes back to the very beginnings, to the first man; like the Deuteronomists, he covers the whole period of the monarchy but extends the narrative further to include other material down nearly to his own time. His

survey is, however, in other respects more limited in the abbreviated coverage of the whole period before Saul, in the selection of material for the period of the monarchy and after, in which many substantial gaps are left, in the virtual ignoring of the north, and in the very limited selection of postexilic events.

After the Chronicler, a further such survey may be found, for example, in Josephus' *Antiquities*, evidently composed with a strongly apologetic motive.

What has already been said about not treating the Chronicler's work merely as a historical source is again important here. If we say, quite correctly, that the Chronicler covers the period from Creation to Ezra, we immediately suggest a comparison with the area of coverage of the earlier surveys *in historical terms*. It is quite evident that the Chronicler is dependent on material found in a different form in our versions of these earlier works. He uses in particular the Deuteronomic presentation of the history as an essential basis for his own work. But at the same time, he is really closer to the Priestly Work, not so much (as used to be said) because of his interest in priestly things, but rather because he is less concerned with the presentation and interpretation of history and more concerned with the theologizing of past and present experience.

We may properly ask by what process it comes about that the Priestly Work offers a theological study solely in terms of the early period; and part of the answer to this must be that this period is seen as normative. It is not just past history; it is meaningful history, relevant to contemporary experience. H. H. Guthrie in his *Wisdom*

and Canon stresses the important point that increasingly in the postexilic period the older narratives come to be used as vehicles for exhibiting wisdom, as edifying stories. So he says of the first part of the material that "the narrative from Adam to Moses came to be seen as a wisdom tale certifying the validity of the Mosaic instruction set down in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy,"²⁷ and similarly (and this provides a further comment on the separation of Deuteronomy into the Torah and the Former Prophets, the remainder of the Deuteronomic History, as placed side by side with the Latter): "the narrative from Joshua to Jehoiachin became the tale preceding the instruction to be found in the corpus of the latter prophets from Isaiah to Malachi."²⁸ What is here insufficiently seen is that this dehistoricizing of the narratives is already in substantial measure present in the Priestly Work and perhaps less obviously in the Deuteronomic History. Neither work (nor even their earlier predecessors) is to be regarded simply in terms of historical narrative, but both are rather to be thought of in terms of theological interpretation of a contemporary situation in the light of the recounting of already familiar material. The Chronicler is not, as Guthrie thinks,

²⁷ P. 27.

²⁸ *Ibid.* It must be pointed out that Guthrie rejects the hypothesis of a Deuteronomic History (cf. p. 34, n. 7), though the point is not argued in his short study. The comment made here is my own deduction from what seem to me to be his illuminating suggestions. I am less inclined to see his next point as sound, namely, that the whole of the first two parts of the canon provide an introduction to the instruction of the third. Strangely, he does not mention the Book of Job as offering an excellent example of the kind of wisdom-tale he is using as basis.

making an unrealistic attempt at providing a new historical presentation, a new updating of the *Heilsgeschichte*; he offers a further and more far-reaching dehistoricizing of what he sees as the essential elements in the community's previous history.

V

This can be made clear from two main features of the Chronicler's presentation and theology: the absence of the Exodus and the interpretation of the Davidic theme.

The first — an apparently negative feature — is of considerable importance when we set the Chronicler's work over against the earlier surveys. The significance given to the Exodus in the historical books, and in psalmody and prophecy — the latter in both preexilic material and in such exilic prophecy as that of Deutero-Isaiah — has been highlighted by the whole trend of the *Heilsgeschichte* approach to Old Testament theology in recent years. This motif is clearly of very great significance especially where it is central to a particular body of material. But increasingly it has been observed that the emphasis given to this as *the* central motif inevitably distorts the total picture. It is not only that Wisdom falls outside this pattern, but in fact much more than Wisdom; and not least among works which either play down or virtually ignore the Exodus theme is the contribution of the Chronicler.²⁹ Yet it is clear that he is not alone in this. For such bypassing of Sinai or subordinating of the

²⁹ North, p. 378, comments on the omission of the Exodus references in 1 Chron. 17 (cf. 2 Sam. 7) and in 2 Chron. 6:11 (cf. 1 Kings 8:21), though inconsistently the reference remains in verse 5.

Exodus motifs is also to be found in large measure in the Jerusalem traditions. We may note that the Isaiah prophecies contain less of Exodus allusion than do those of Amos, Hosea, and Micah. Subsequent prophetic developments, particularly in Deutero-Isaiah (and rather less and differently in Ezekiel), represent a fusion of the different elements and show the variegated pattern that could be produced. It has also been observed that the Priestly Work, concentrated though it is on the normative period and laying much stress on the ordering of people and cult in the wilderness, does not really concern itself with the Sinai covenant in the way that the earlier works had done and as the Deuteronomic History does. The real foundation of God's relationship with His people is rooted much further back, in the Abrahamic covenant, and this itself is the context of the primeval history. God's purpose for His people begins in Creation, not at the Exodus. The Chronicler is the inheritor of this richness and variety, but he makes his own particular stress. He adopts a device already much used by the Priestly writer to bridge gaps between material, that of the genealogy. The list of names, so easily read as a mere catalog, is in fact an assurance of the ultimate origin of the relationship. "Adam, Seth, Enosh" — that is where Israel, the true Israel, begins.³⁰ There is a certain solemnity about it, a sonorousness, an evocation of what goes back to the remotest antiquity, that which has always been. Divine grace does not begin in history; it is always at work. So the Chronicler

³⁰ G. von Rad, *Theology* I, pp. 352 f. points to the frequent use of the root *bhr*, but he offers a very forced view of the theology underlying this.

—and in this respect he in a measure resembles the Deuteronomic Historian who also assumes knowledge of traditions he does not relate—passes over the period of the Exodus, not because he is unaware of it, and he knows that his readers are also familiar with its narratives (how could they not be?), but because the real moment of his theological interpretation lies elsewhere.³¹

D. N. Freedman in his recent study³² has assumed that because the central moment lies in the Davidic tradition, the Ezra material must be a later addition to the original work: it not only represents a recall to the Exodus legal tradition but also includes a prayer in Neh. 9 (attributed in the LXX to Ezra) which devotes not a little attention to the Exodus theme as central theologically. But if we are to make the Chronicler consistent in this, we shall also

³¹ North, p. 377 f., lists possible lines of approach to this silence on the Exodus. He refers to Freedman's view, which is discussed in the next paragraph here. He cites Noth as indicating that the Pentateuch had just been published and that silence means assent; this is not impossible, though for the understanding of the Chronicler we must stress what he actually says. Rudolph views it as part of the polemic against the Samaritans; the Exodus, which they too could claim, was less sure as a foundation for his argument than the Davidic monarchy. Certainly legitimacy of Jerusalem is an important theme. Brunet thinks he regards Sinai as a provisional step towards David, but this is nowhere made explicit. North himself stresses that for the Chronicler the basic vehicle of Israel's chosenness is not Moses on Sinai but David on Zion and that he is also endeavoring to correct P and explain the cultus more realistically. These views are not mutually exclusive, and it may be wondered whether in fact there are various contributory factors to the Chronicler's attitude. My own views are developed subsequently.

³² *CBQ*, 23 (1961), 436—42.

have to say that some if not all of the Levitical sermons of Chronicles are insertions and that the use of Exodus motifs, for example in Ezra 1, which Freedman must allow to be either part of or related to his 515 B.C. Chronicler's work, must also be due to a later attempt to make the Chronicler conform. It is much more natural to suppose³³ that in such passages the Chronicler is making use of liturgical and homiletical material familiar to him; in this, Exodus themes and allusions were frequently to be found. He is not thereby contradicting his main emphasis, but he reveals familiarity with other theological motifs. Indeed there is much to be said in favor of modifying the old view that the Chronicler was a Levitical singer,³⁴ because of his predilection for music and worship generally and because he seems at times to be arguing for the status of Levitical singers, and rank him rather with the Levitical preachers, from whose store of homiletical material he draws so frequently and so appropriately.³⁵ With his concern for law and particularly ritual law and the purity of the community—themes which recur repeatedly—the Chronicler is developing further the tradition of both the Priestly and the Deuteronomic schools in seeing that the whole life of the community and its suitability and acceptability as the people of God depend upon a law ultimately associated with Sinai, though ratified and

³³ Freedman (p. 437) does in fact allow for what he terms "stereotyped references."

³⁴ So recently again Stinespring, p. 210.

³⁵ Cf. G. von Rad, "The Levitical Sermon in I and II Chronicles" (Engl. trans.), in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (London, 1966), pp. 267—80 (originally in the *Festschrift für Otto Procksch* [Leipzig, 1934], pp. 113—24).

applied in a series of decisive moments of which the Davidic is the first and that of Ezra the most recent.

VI

On the more positive side we have the Chronicler's stress on David and Jerusalem. The emphasis on the unity of all Israel under David probably has an element of anti-Samaritan polemic.³⁶ But although we may rightly believe the contemporary situation to have influenced the Chronicler, the polemical element is perhaps less than the need for reinterpretation of the Davidic-Jerusalem tradition which faced the postexilic community. If there were those who saw in Zerubbabel the revival of a Davidic hope in extreme nationalist terms, by the time at which the Chronicler was active, Davidic hope had clearly receded. While, as Stinespring has stressed, much interest centers on Davidic descent, for 1 Chron. 3 gives a substantial list of Zerubbabel descendants,³⁷ the prospect of a restored Davidic monarchy was minimal by the fourth century. No doubt some circles still cherished it, and later centuries were to see recrudescence of the hope in political Messianic terms. But at this point it was hardly viable.

Why then the stress? By contrast with the Deuteronomistic Historian who, preserving both promonarchical and antimonarchical material, depicts the monarchy as a divine blessing but also as a historically and theologically questionable institution, the Chronicler has given us an idealized

³⁶ Cf. W. Rudolph, *VT*, 4 (1954), 404; *Bücher der Chronik* (1955), p. IX; G. von Rad, *Theology I*, p. 348.

³⁷ P. 210. Some of the Davidic material may belong to the later strata of the work.

picture. As both Stinespring and North have emphasized, there is here an eschatological element in the Chronicler's work—but it is not in terms of the future of the Davidic monarchy and hence a hope for the future,³⁸ nor is it, as North maintains, "a deliberately archaizing treatment of a genuine eschatological messianic hope."³⁹ It is rather the embodiment of the David/Jerusalem theme no longer in political but in theological terms, in relation to the life and worship of the little Judean community of his own time. In stressing this, I find myself closely in sympathy with Rudolph's emphasis on a "realized eschatology," but I think it needs to be differently expressed in terms of a reembodyment of the Davidic ideal in terms of what temple and cultus now mean.

The Chronicler sees David as the ideal. To the Davidic period is traced the unity of the people; the loyalty of all the tribes is expressed again and again, and David's appointment as king at Hebron is described as by representatives of all, "all of one mind" (1 Chron. 12:38). To David is traced both the intention to build the temple and the preparation of all that is needed for its construction according to the divine plan (1 Chron. 28:19; cf. v. 11). Its whole organization and worship were prepared; its officials designated and their duties made precise. The temple site was divinely

³⁸ North, p. 378, cites A. Noordtjij, "Les intentions du Chroniste," *RB*, 49 (1940), 161 to 168, and J. Swart, *De Theologie van Kronieken* (Groningen, 1911), pp. 3, 97, for the view that the failure of David's house points to the future, and hence to the Messianism of inter-testamental and New Testament times. It is noted that the genealogy of Zerubbabel is virtually that of Jesus in Matt. 1.

³⁹ North, pp. 378 ff.

chosen as an act of grace in a moment of David's own failure and repentance (1 Chron. 21—22:1). The choice of Solomon as builder and successor is confirmed, the man of peace in contrast to David's involvement in war (1 Chron. 22:8 ff.). The Chronicler has thus paid respect to the tradition of Solomon's building, but he has given it a new and richer context. David, Jerusalem, the temple, the priesthood—motifs which appear already linked together in the intricate version of the material in Samuel, but still not fully coordinated—are here shown to be all part of one unified theological structure. In this the themes North separates out and analyzes⁴⁰ as those of legitimacy and cultus are seen really to be only aspects of the one theme of David. His fourth theme—retribution—is in part a development of the already existing stress in the Deuteronomistic History, and indeed also in other Old Testament writings; but in the Chronicler it is in fact overshadowed by the emphasis laid upon divine grace.⁴¹ For while at certain points the Chronicler elaborates the theme of retribution and makes history where necessary fit a scheme, he also makes it clear that the eventual outcome is due not to retributive action but to repeated and continuing acts of grace tied to the central theme.

For David is but the type of the divine grace revealed to the true Israel.⁴² The theme is repeated in faithful kings who

⁴⁰ Pp. 369 f. Cf. also Freedman, p. 436.

⁴¹ Cf. W. Rudolph, *Chronikbücher*, p. xx. This aspect is missed by von Rad, *Theology I*, pp. 348 f.

⁴² Cf. the unqualified promise to David—e. g., in 1 Chron. 17:12-14 (contrast 2 Sam. 7). Freedman, p. 438, North, p. 378.

show themselves to be on the side of faith over against apostasy—the wars in which the true Israel is engaged (that is, Judah etc.) are wars of faith against apostasy, holy wars taken out of the merely historical context into the theological.⁴³ Without faith no army avails; with faith the enemy goes to disaster at the recognition of the presence of God (cf. Abijah's speech in 2 Chron. 13, and the examples of Asa in 2 Chron. 14—15 and of Jehoshaphat in 2 Chron. 19—20). A new David arises in Hezekiah,⁴⁴ when with the fall of the Northern Kingdom there is once again only one kingdom, and opportunity is found for the faithful to join (2 Chron. 30); the vision appears of a united Israel, celebrating its first united feast since the kingdom's disruption.⁴⁵ Even Manasseh provides an example of repentance and grace; disaster is delayed by Josiah's obedience, but in the end the failure to heed the warnings brings about the inevitable judgment.

VII

This sounds like historical survey, and it is, of course, linked with the order of events, the succession of kings. But it is already in process of being dehistoricized; the events are only partly real, the battles are no longer actually fought. And with the exile this becomes clear in that to the

⁴³ On this theme cf. also R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (Eng. trans.; London, 1961), pp. 258 ff., and esp. pp. 266 f. on Qumran. W. F. Stinespring, p. 217. Cf. also J. A. Soggin, *VT*, 10 (1960), p. 81.

⁴⁴ Cf. F. L. Moriarity, "The Chronicler's Account of Hezekiah's Reign" *CBQ* 27 (1965), 399—406, see p. 401.

⁴⁵ Cf. 2 Chron. 30:26 and the summary in vv. 20-21.

Chronicler the exile is both an event which took place but also, and this is more important, a symbol of the reality of divine judgment and grace. In spite of repeated prophetic warnings (2 Chron. 36:15-16), the people would not hear; the last king, Zedekiah, refused to heed Jeremiah (2 Chron. 36:12). The exile overtook them. But it was not just deserved disaster, not just another example of retributive justice; it was also a respite for the land which could now become acceptable after 70 years of sabbath rest (2 Chron. 36:21), and the promised act of grace was to be seen in Cyrus.⁴⁶

From now on, hope lies with the exiles; not because they are exiles but because they have undergone judgment. The Chronicler builds upon prophetic words which showed that the hope for the future lay only with them; the exile as symbol of judgment is to be experienced or to be accepted. Rebuilding, when it comes, is by those who have been through the judgment—whether in person or in their forefathers (and hence the importance of genealogy)—or by those who have separated themselves, acknowledging judgment.⁴⁷

And what has been lost can be recovered, but not in the same form. The Davidic line is cut off—Jehoiachin's release from prison finds no place in the Chronicler's narrative to suggest a line of hope.⁴⁸ If

⁴⁶ I have discussed this point more fully in an article on "The Interpretation of Exile and Restoration" to appear shortly in *The Canadian Journal of Theology*. It is important to see here the value of the stress laid by Torrey, though this does not require our acceptance of his views of the sixth century.

⁴⁷ Cf. Ezra 6:21.

⁴⁸ It is of course possible that the text of Kings available to the Chronicler did not in-

clude this item, but it is even so not improbable that he was aware of the incident. Cf. Baltzer, "Das Ende des Staates Juda und die Messiasfrage" in *Studien zur Theologie der alttestamentlichen Überlieferungen*, ed. R. Rendtorff and K. Koch (Neukirchen, 1961), pp. 33—43, see pp. 30 f.

Sheshbazzar was a Davidide, which is uncertain,⁴⁹ no stress is laid on this; nor even on the certain Davidide status of Zerubbabel. It is the rebuilding of the temple, closely parallel with the building by Solomon,⁵⁰ which marks the real revival of the Davidic hope, and this fits precisely with the Chronicler's emphasis in his narrative of David himself. Jerusalem with its shrine is again the focal point, the center of a purified people. The Davidic hope, taken out of history, is embodied in temple and cultus, ordained by David and now renewed, which represent its true value, an enduring witness to divine grace and power to purify.⁵¹ The old institutions are recovered—continuity is preserved by temple vessels and a legitimate priestly line (cf. Ezra 2:61-62). All Israel, the true Israel, rejoiced to celebrate the dedication feast. And with Ezra's reform and the purifying of the community from foreign contaminating elements, there is once again a true people of God, the recipient of divine promise, obedient to the Law, the sign of the continuing grace and blessing of God.

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⁴⁹ Freedman, p. 439, follows the line that it is an alternative for Shenazzar, both being corruptions of Sin-ab-usur. But if so, why is he described as "prince (*nāsi'*) of Judah," whereas Zerubbabel is given his father's name?

⁵⁰ Cf. Freedman, p. 439.

⁵¹ A different application of the David theme may be seen in Deutero-Isaiah, cf. O. Eissfeldt, "The Promises of Grace to David in Isaiah 55:1-5," in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage*, ed. B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson, (New York, 1962), pp. 196—207.

H. H. Guthrie⁵² points to the process by which the ancient faith is repeatedly shown to be still meaningful. He goes on to demonstrate how in later years the historical material became the vehicle of teaching, the setting in story for an example of life.⁵³ And thereby it is dehistoricized, and so we meet with it again in the New Testament, where Paul, for example, uses Old Testament narratives as a basis for edification (cf. 1 Cor. 10).

But this process of dehistoricization is older. It is the great contribution of the Chronicler that he takes up on the one hand the themes of the Deuteronomic Historian and traces their further development in the later period; and at the same time he takes up the Priestly concern with purity

and legitimacy and right organization.⁵⁴ He links these, not in a simple re-presentation of history but in a demonstration of the way in which historical experience has become theological experience. The community is shown that the real values of the past are enshrined in the present, that Davidic monarchy and all that it betokens of divine grace is exemplified in temple and cultus, that a community joined in the joyous worship of God, a community purified and renewed, is the recipient of divine promise. This may be seen to be related to later, both Jewish and Christian ways of understanding Old Testament events as of more than historical significance.

London, England

⁵² Pp. 3 ff.

⁵³ Pp. 21 ff.

⁵⁴ Cf. North, pp. 369, 374 ff., on the reconciling of different elements. Freedman, p. 441, in effect sees this only in the Ezra/Nehemiah material which he regards as later addition.