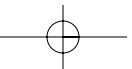
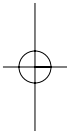
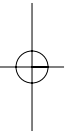


# TYNDALE OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES

VOLUME 8

TOTC

1 AND 2 SAMUEL



# TYNDALE OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES

VOLUME 8

GENERAL EDITOR: DONALD J. WISEMAN

---

## 1 AND 2 SAMUEL

AN INTRODUCTION AND COMMENTARY

JOYCE G. BALDWIN



Inter-Varsity Press

 IVP Academic  
*Evangelically Rooted. Critically Engaged.*

InterVarsity Press, USA  
P.O. Box 1400  
Downers Grove, IL 60515-1426, USA  
World Wide Web: [www.ivpress.com](http://www.ivpress.com)  
Email: [email@ivpress.com](mailto:email@ivpress.com)

Inter-Varsity Press, England  
Norton Street  
Nottingham NG7 3HR, England  
Website: [www.ivpbooks.com](http://www.ivpbooks.com)  
Email: [ivp@ivpbooks.com](mailto:ivp@ivpbooks.com)

©1988 by Joyce G. Baldwin

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of InterVarsity Press.

InterVarsity Press®, USA, is the book-publishing division of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA® <[www.intervarsity.org](http://www.intervarsity.org)> and a member movement of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students.

Inter-Varsity Press, England, is closely linked with the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship, a student movement connecting Christian Unions in universities and colleges throughout Great Britain, and a member movement of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. Website: [www.uccf.org.uk](http://www.uccf.org.uk).

First published 1988

Published in this format 2008

USA ISBN 978-0-8308-4208-7

UK ISBN 978-1-84474-263-9

Set in Garamond 11/13pt

Typeset in Great Britain by Avocet Typeset, Chilton, Aylesbury, Bucks

Printed in the United States of America



As a member of Green Press Initiative, InterVarsity Press is committed to protecting the environment and to the responsible use of natural resources. To learn more visit [www.greenpressinitiative.org](http://www.greenpressinitiative.org).

---

#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Baldwin, Joyce G.

*1 and 2 Samuel.*

(The Tyndale Old Testament commentaries; 8)

I. Bible. O.T. Samuel—Commentaries. I. Title.

II. Title: *1 and 2 Samuel*. III. *One and Two Samuel*.

IV. Series.

BS1325.3.B35 1988 222'.407 88-32895

ISBN 0-87784-258-2

---

#### British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

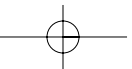
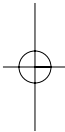
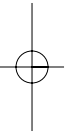
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

---

P	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4
Y	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14		

## CONTENTS

General preface	7
Author's preface	9
Chief abbreviations	11
<b>Introduction</b>	17
The books of Samuel and their place in the longer history	20
Composition and authorship	22
Theology	36
Text	42
<b>Analysis</b>	49
<b>Commentary</b>	53
<b>Additional notes</b>	
The temple of the Lord at Shiloh	70
Excavation of early Jerusalem	213
The Bathsheba incident	258
<b>Maps</b>	
Israel in the time of David	52
Wars during the reign of David	237



## GENERAL PREFACE

The aim of this series of Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, as it was in the companion volumes on the New Testament, is to provide the student of the Bible with a handy, up-to-date commentary on each book, with the primary emphasis on exegesis. Major critical questions are discussed in the introductions and additional notes, while undue technicalities have been avoided.

In this series individual authors are, of course, free to make their own distinct contributions and express their own point of view on all debated issues. Within the necessary limits of space they frequently draw attention to interpretations which they themselves do not hold but which represent the stated conclusions of sincere fellow Christians.

The books of Samuel carry the history of God's people Israel through from the period of the judges to their first experiments in monarchy. The tragedy of Saul (the first in the line of kings) and the triumphs of his successor David (in spite of his long struggle with Saul and later within his own family) hold many lessons for the modern reader. The other main character in the book, Samuel, was also an influential leader of the nation, as prophet, priest and judge. These books are rich in the frank stories of individuals – good and bad – and set the scene for the subsequent history of the divided kingdom. All of this Joyce Baldwin handles with keen appreciation both of their literary and spiritual value, showing that the books of Samuel still have power to speak to us in the late twentieth century.

In the Old Testament in particular no single English translation

is adequate to reflect the original text. Though this commentary is based on the Revised Standard Version, other translations are frequently referred to, and on occasion the author supplies her own. Where necessary, Hebrew words are transliterated in order to help the reader who is unfamiliar with the language to identify the precise word under discussion. It is assumed throughout that the reader will have ready access to one, or more, reliable rendering of the Bible in English.

Interest in the meaning and message of the Old Testament continues undiminished and it is hoped that this series will thus further the systematic study of the revelation of God and his will and ways as seen in these records. It is the prayer of the editor and publisher, as of the authors, that these books will help many to understand, and to respond to, the Word of God today.

D. J. Wiseman



## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

There is a sense in which everyone who writes a commentary on any book of the Bible climbs on the shoulders of previous commentators. The books of Samuel have been particularly well served in the last two or three decades, not only by commentaries but also by scholarly research on technical and detailed matters (some of which have been raised by manuscript finds), as well as on literary techniques and on theological interpretation. The resulting literature, in several languages, amounts to a mini-library. One recent bibliography consists of 259 entries, but that would certainly be incomplete now because contributions are being published all the time. Why then another commentary on 1 and 2 Samuel?

For many years I was engaged in teaching the Old Testament to men and women in training for the Christian ministry worldwide. Such students, as well as lay people in the churches, rarely have the time or opportunity to pursue the scholarly literature, and can be trenchant in their questioning of its relevance! My aim has been to 'set the scene' in the Introduction by indicating the present state of Samuel studies, and in the Commentary to include what seems to me most important for an understanding of the text. A high degree of selection was imposed by the length of book envisaged for the series, and those who need a more detailed and technical commentary will find great help, as I myself have done, in the outstanding books by Dr R. P. Gordon. I regret that his commentary was still unpublished when I needed to consult it in the writing of 1 Samuel. Many others to whom I am indebted will be obvious from

the footnotes, but even so the list would not be complete, if only because over the years the writings of others have become part and parcel of my own thinking.

There are several people to whom I wish to express my thanks. Dr Gordon McConville of Trinity College, Bristol, has been generously helpful with his comments and suggestions, and Trinity's librarian, Su Brown, has cheerfully taken trouble to obtain just what I needed for reference. Professor D. J. Wiseman and other readers of the manuscript have also provided stimulus and helpful ideas, for which I want to express my gratitude. Above all, thanks are due to God for the books of Samuel, which, though written at least two and a half millennia ago, continue to speak and to generate faith in Israel's Rock, who in Christ established David's kingdom for ever.

Joyce Baldwin

## CHIEF ABBREVIATIONS

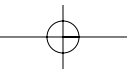
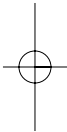
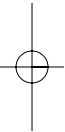
Alter	R. Alter, <i>The Art of Biblical Narrative</i> (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981).
<i>ANEP</i>	J. B. Pritchard, <i>The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament</i> (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1954; <sup>2</sup> 1969).
<i>ANET</i>	J. B. Pritchard (ed.), <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, <sup>2</sup> 1955; <sup>3</sup> 1969).
<i>AOTS</i>	D. Winton Thomas (ed.), <i>Archaeology and Old Testament Study</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).
AV	English Authorized (King James) Version, 1611.
<i>BA</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i> .
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i> .
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i> .
BDB	F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs, <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1906).
<i>BeO</i>	<i>Bibbia e Oriente</i> .
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i> .
Bright	J. Bright, <i>A History of Israel, The Old Testament Library</i> (London: SCM Press, <sup>2</sup> 1972).
<i>BT</i>	<i>The Bible Translator</i> .
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i> .

- DOTT* D. W. Thomas (ed.), *Documents of Old Testament Times* (London: T. Nelson & Sons, 1958).
- Driver 1909 S. R. Driver, *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1909).
- Driver 1913 S. R. Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Samuel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1913).
- EOPN* A. R. Millard and D. J. Wiseman (eds.), *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980).
- Eslinger L. M. Eslinger, *Kingship of God in Crisis, A Close Reading of I Samuel 1–12* (Sheffield: Almond/JSOT Press, 1985).
- ET English Translation.
- ExpT* *The Expository Times*.
- Fokkelman 1981 J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel, A full interpretation based on stylistic and structural analyses*, vol. 1 *King David (II Sam. 9–20 & I Kings 1–2)* (Assen: Van Gorcum & Co., 1981).
- Fokkelman 1986 J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel, A full interpretation based on stylistic and structural analyses*, vol. 2 *The Crossing Fates (I Sam. 13–31 & II Sam. 1)* (Assen: Van Gorcum & Co., 1986).
- GNB Good News Bible: Today's English Version, 1976.
- Gordon 1984 R. P. Gordon, *1 & 2 Samuel*, Old Testament Guides (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984).
- Gordon 1986 R. P. Gordon, *1 & 2 Samuel, A Commentary* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1986).
- Gottwald N. K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh, A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250–1050 B.C.E.* (London: SCM Press, 1980).
- Gunn 1980 D. M. Gunn, *The Fate of King Saul, An Interpretation of a Biblical Story* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980).

- Gunn 1982 D. M. Gunn, *The Story of King David, Genre and Interpretation* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982).
- Heb. Hebrew.
- Hertzberg H. W. Hertzberg, *1 & 2 Samuel, A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (London: SCM Press, 1964).
- HUCA *Hebrew Union College Annual*.
- IBD J. D. Douglas et al. (eds.), *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 3 vols. (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980).
- IDB G. A. Buttrick et al. (eds.), *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 4 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962).
- IDBS K. Crim et al. (eds.), *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplementary Volume* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976).
- JB The Jerusalem Bible, Standard Edition, 1966.
- JBL *Journal of Biblical Literature*.
- JCS *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*.
- Jobling D. Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Three Structural Analyses in the Old Testament (1 Samuel 13–31, Numbers 11–12, 1 Kings 17–18)* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1978).
- JSOT *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*.
- JSS *Journal of Semitic Studies*.
- JTS *Journal of Theological Studies*.
- JTVI *Journal of Transactions of the Victoria Institute*.
- Keil and Delitzsch C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Books of Samuel* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1866).
- Kirkpatrick 1880 A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The First Book of Samuel, with Map, Notes and Introduction*, The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1880).
- Kirkpatrick 1881 A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Second Book of Samuel, with Maps, Notes and Introduction*, The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1881).

- LXX The Septuagint (pre-Christian Greek version of the Old Testament).
- Mauchline J. Mauchline (ed.), *1 and 2 Samuel*, New Century Bible (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1971).
- McCarter 1980 P. Kyle McCarter, Jr, *I Samuel, A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible 8 (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1980).
- McCarter 1984 P. Kyle McCarter, Jr, *II Samuel, A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible 9 (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1984).
- McKane W. McKane, *I & II Samuel, Introduction and Commentary*, Torch Bible Commentaries (London: SCM Press, 1963).
- mg. margin.
- MS(s) manuscript(s).
- MT Massoretic Text.
- NAB New American Bible, 1970.
- NBA* J. J. Bimson, J. P. Kane, J. H. Paterson and D. J. Wiseman (eds.), *New Bible Atlas* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985).
- NBC* D. Guthrie, J. A. Motyer et al. (eds.), *New Bible Commentary* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 3 1970).
- NEB The New English Bible: Old Testament, 1970.
- NICOT The New International Commentary on the Old Testament.
- NIDNTT* C. Brown (ed.), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 3 vols. (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1975, 1976, 1978).
- NIV New International Version, 1978.
- Noth M. Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (1957; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981).
- OTA* *Old Testament Abstracts*.
- PEQ* *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*.

<i>POTT</i>	D. J. Wiseman (ed.), <i>Peoples of Old Testament Times</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).
RSV	American Revised Standard Version: Old Testament, 1952; New Testament, <sup>2</sup> 1971.
RV	English Revised Version, 1881.
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentary.
<i>TynB</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i> .
Watson	W. G. E. Watson, <i>Classical Hebrew Poetry, A Guide to its Techniques</i> (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984).
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i> .
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i> .





## INTRODUCTION

Three characters dominate the books of Samuel: the prophet Samuel; Saul, who became Israel's first king; and above all David, the greatest and best loved of all who reigned in Jerusalem. The very sequence points to one of the main themes of the book, which is the transition from theocracy to monarchy. Under the theocracy, God by his Spirit designated human leaders as and when they were needed, whereas after the establishment of a dynastic monarchy a successor to the throne was already designated from among the king's sons. To Israel, this development seemed altogether desirable: a king would regulate Israel's life according to some agreed policy in place of the piecemeal action of individual tribes, and having organized the machinery of state and trained a standing army he would enable Israel to defeat the aggressive neighbours who plundered their crops and threatened to occupy Israel's land. In the face of strong popular demand for a king opposition finally gave way, and the account of Israel's circumstances at the time, together with the interaction of conflicting opinions and the successes and failures of the three leaders, make up the subject matter of the books of Samuel.

Such a prosaic summary, however, fails to do justice to the ongoing fascination of these books. Simply as a source of stories to hold children spellbound they are incomparable, and moreover they provide an abundance of raw material from which to study the human condition, for they present real life with all its ambiguities but without the kind of analysis of character or motivation such as we have come to expect in modern writing. Instead, they invite the reader to reflect on the narrative in order to tease out the enigmas posed by the text, which often appears studiously to avoid reconciling apparently contradictory statements. Of course, it may be that what appear to the modern reader to be contradictions were part of an attempt to convey a two-dimensional presentation of a character or situation in as concise and straightforward a way as possible. In the absence of other literary works of a similar age with which to compare the biblical narrative, however, it is wise to be reticent in pronouncing upon its debt to its literary predecessors.

What can with confidence be said is that the books of Samuel are the product of highly developed literary art, purposively selective, often restrained, sometimes repetitive, sometimes silent, but by whatever means intending to engage the reader in an active relationship with the text.

What we need to understand better is that the religious vision of the Bible is given depth and subtlety precisely by being conveyed through the most sophisticated resources of prose fiction ... The biblical tale, through the most rigorous economy of means, leads us again and again to ponder complexities of motive and ambiguities of character because these are essential aspects of its vision of man, created by God, enjoying or suffering all the consequences of human freedom.<sup>1</sup>

The psychological complexities of Saul or David present enough

---

1. Alter, p. 22. Alter brings to his study of the Bible wide experience of literary appreciation, and to my mind succeeds in his aim 'to illuminate the distinctive principles of the Bible's narrative art' (p. ix). He concentrates on the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets, and so draws examples from the books of Samuel, among others.

food for thought to last a lifetime, as each interacts with the other and responds to circumstances. In the course of the Commentary it is intended that references should be made to some at least of the examples of outstanding artistry in these books.

An appreciation of literary qualities in the Bible in no way conflicts with a theological understanding of its message; indeed the two are inseparably linked. The very fact that the Bible has a message to proclaim which matters supremely because it relates to eternal issues means that only the best in literary art is good enough. When God has a revelation to make to the human race he will surely see to it that it is expressed in many different ways, using every literary device to ensure that what he is saying is both arresting and unambiguous, both earthed in human experience and therefore always relevant to every generation, but introducing all the same the external dimension as the only appropriate context because that is the true context of all human history. The books of Samuel form a significant part of Old Testament narrative. The unusual amount of detail related about the chief characters invites the reader to get to know them as individuals and to appreciate God's dealings with each one, both of which we shall be most likely to do if we enjoy reading about them.

'Enjoy' is not too strong a word for the deep delight to be had through a sustained effort to enter into the human situations depicted here: the hurts, ambitions, spiritual aspirations and above all the failures. To some extent both Samuel and David failed, and Saul obstinately pursued his own interpretation of his kingly office in such a way as to forfeit the divine favour. Here in these people is real life as we experience it. 'The biblical writers fashion their personages with a complicated, sometimes alluring, often fiercely insistent individuality because it is in the stubbornness of human individuality that each man and woman encounters God or ignores Him, responds to or resists Him.'<sup>2</sup> What grips the reader of these realistic life histories is God's verdict on each life, and the reason for David's acceptance over against Saul's rejection. Truth about God's dealings with men and women is to be discovered, vividly illustrated,

---

2. Alter, p. 189.

in the pages of the books of Samuel. In other words, the theology in these books is, in its dynamic form, revealed in human lives rather than in textbook definitions; momentous discoveries about both man and God are on offer to those who will respond to the invitation to read and ponder the lives of those depicted here.

### **The books of Samuel and their place in the longer history**

Originally one book in the Hebrew Bible, the text was first divided by the translators who framed the Greek version, where Samuel/Kings was known as ‘Basileiōn A, B, C, D’ (the four books of the kingdoms). This designation was modified by Jerome, when he translated the Vulgate, to ‘The Four Books of Kings’, and the AV retains as a secondary title to 1 and 2 Samuel, ‘The First (Second) Book of the Kings’; 1 and 2 Kings then become the third and fourth ‘Book of the Kings’. This way of referring to the books we know as 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings has the merit of drawing attention to the continuity between them, for the last days of David and his death are recorded not in 2 Samuel but in 1 Kings 1 – 2. The history goes on to cover the four centuries to the collapse of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC. Since after the death of Solomon the kingdom divided into the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, a parallel account of each kingdom necessitated a much abbreviated record, a remarkable exercise in selectivity. The small amount of space devoted to Saul and the forty chapters given to David by comparison is indicative of the different assessments with which these two kings were regarded.

The books of Joshua and Judges relate how the Israelite tribes entered Canaan, occupied it and settled in the land, but these books in turn look back to the dominant figure of Moses, whose life and work are recounted in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The book of Genesis not only tells the family history of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and how it came about that Jacob and his sons settled in Egypt, but also in its opening chapters traces the human race back to its very beginnings. Similarly, when the writer of the books of Chronicles presented his interpretation of the history, he began with genealogies which span the time from Adam to King Saul.

The resulting account sets all subsequent history from whatever part of the globe in perspective, broadening our otherwise restricted horizons, and putting us in touch with people who were very much like ourselves, and yet who had discovered some of life's secrets and so had become what C. H. Dodd called 'experts in life'. 'Here [in the Bible] also we trace the long history of a community which through good fortune and ill tested their belief in God.'<sup>3</sup> The distinctive characteristic of the people of this community was their firm conviction that they knew God. It is this reference to God which makes history in the Bible, and therefore in the books of Samuel, distinctive. These books are not meant merely as a source of information for people who have antiquarian interests, but rather as a divinely revealed commentary on human life, in which all who will may find wise guidance in the conduct of their own lives.

It is not easy to give dates to the events recorded in 1 and 2 Samuel, but Assyrian eponym lists (lists of those who gave their names to their year of office), king lists and historical texts have enabled historians to arrive at a fixed date for the battle of Qarqar, 853 BC, in which Israel's King Ahab took part. Dates for the united monarchy are arrived at by working back (or forward) from this fixed point, using the biblical data, and in this way the period c. 1050–970 BC is reckoned for the events of the books of Samuel. The accession of David may tentatively be dated between 1010 and 1000 BC.

At this period no great world power was seeking to dominate the Near East. Israel's battles were waged against near neighbours, whose territory bordered the land occupied by the twelve tribes, and in particular against the Philistines, a military aristocracy from Crete, small numbers of whom had settled in Canaan in patriarchal times. Soon after Israel's arrival in Canaan, however, they had arrived in force and had occupied the coastal plain of the south-west. There they set up five city-states, organized under *sērānīm*, 'lords', and demonstrated their mastery of iron technology and their military professionalism in their attacks against Israel. Inadvertently they played an important part in shaping

---

3. C. H. Dodd, *The Authority of the Bible* (London: Nisbet, 1928), p. 298.

developments within Israel, because it was almost certainly the persistent aggression of the Philistines that led to the repeated request for a king.<sup>4</sup> Throughout the reign of Saul, and initially during the reign of David also, they continued to be a thorn in Israel's side; both Saul and Jonathan died at their hands, and the Philistines penetrated eastwards to Bethshan, so dominating the Jordan valley. Yet the Philistines 'assist the narrative's movement towards David's takeover ... David's successes against the Philistines advance him at Saul's expense. Saul's attempt to use the Philistines to destroy David misfires (18:29–29). The Philistines recognize David's kingship early in the story (21:11). And they prevent his participation in the disastrous final battle (ch. 29).<sup>5</sup> Looked at in relation to the aim of the narrative, the Philistines can be shown to play a consistent role, and to be an indispensable part of the plot. Looked at theologically, these incidents illustrate God's control of history, though the Philistines were unaware that they were serving any other cause than their own.

By the end of David's reign the political scene had been transformed. Law and order were imposed on raiding neighbours; cordial relations were established with Phoenicia, and kingdoms to the east and north became part of David's empire, of which Jerusalem was the capital. The 'land' promised to Abraham now extended from the border of Egypt to the Euphrates (Gen. 15:18–21).

### Composition and authorship

Ancient libraries, made up of collections of scrolls, identified them and maybe classified them by reference to their opening words or to the person of note with whom the early columns were concerned. For that reason Samuel's name was used to identify the books that bear his name. The fact that he died before David became king is

---

4. For more detail on the Philistines, see *AOTS*, pp. 404–427; *POTT*, pp. 53–78; T. Dothan, *The Philistines and their Material Culture* (Newhaven and London: Yale University Press, 1982).

5. Jobling, p. 15.

sufficient evidence to forbid our attributing authorship to him. The same argument applies to ‘the Chronicles of Samuel the seer’, referred to in 1 Chronicles 29:29 as one of the sources for ‘the acts of King David, from first to last’. Clearly the name was not intended to imply authorship.

How then did these remarkable books come into being? This is the basic question which motivated Old Testament scholars, largely in Germany, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, though they did not address themselves particularly to the books of Samuel but rather to the Pentateuch. Their method was to submit the biblical text to analysis in accordance with the norms of scientific practice, and the movement became associated with the name of Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918), who gave classic expression to the theory of proposed documentary sources behind the Pentateuch.<sup>6</sup> His analysis of the Pentateuch was, however, closely bound up with an understanding of Samuel and of Israel’s history on its broadest plan.

### *The Documentary Hypothesis*

According to this hypothesis, four strata (J, E, D and P), each representing a different source, could be discerned in the early books of the Bible: J, the earliest, preferred the name Jahweh (or Yahweh) for God; E, a century or so later, preferred the name Elohim; D, the Deuteronomic document, was identified with the scroll found in the temple during the reign of Josiah in 621 BC; P consisted of cultic details, lists and genealogies attributed to priestly writers, and was dated in the sixth or fifth century. According to Wellhausen’s theory, the books of the Pentateuch were therefore composite documents, made up of extracts from these sources which were to be distinguished by differences of vocabulary, viewpoint and theological emphasis. Apparent discrepancies, duplications and repetitions in the biblical books were accounted for by attributing them to different sources which reflected the particular outlook of the period in which they were written.

---

6. J. Wellhausen, *Die Komposition des Hexateuchs* (1877), the Hexateuch being the Pentateuch together with the book of Joshua.

Wellhausen too had his special interest. He was a historian in search of reliable documents from which to construct a history of Israel, and for this purpose he published in 1883 his *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*,<sup>7</sup> a work in which he summarized his assessment of the documentary sources of the biblical books from Genesis to Chronicles, especially from the point of view of their historical reliability. In 1 Samuel 7–12, for example, he distinguished a later source in which Samuel is ‘a saint of the first degree’, acting as a theocratic leader should, urging repentance and experiencing God’s vindication (1 Sam. 7:2–17; 8; 10:17–12:25). But this he sees as contradicting the whole of the rest of the tradition, found in 1 Samuel 9:1–10:16.<sup>8</sup> When he compared the picture of David in Chronicles with that of the books of Samuel he found in Chronicles ‘a feeble holy picture, seen through a cloud of incense’, and remarked, ‘it is only the tradition of the older source that possesses historical value’.<sup>9</sup> Wellhausen’s analytical method of discerning the sources behind the historical books set a pattern which has dominated critical studies ever since, despite the influence of form criticism and, more recently, appreciation of the text as the testimony of a worshipping community, with a message that is important in its own right. Nevertheless, there have been many variations on the documentary theme over the years, so creating a complicated web of possibilities.

One early theory was that two sources lay behind the books of Samuel, and that the earlier was the continuation of the J document of the Pentateuch, while the later could be identified as E.<sup>10</sup> Although this theory was at first influential, it has not in the long term won wide support. A three-source theory, put forward by

7. ET, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (New York: Meridian Books, 1957).

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 248–249.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

10. K. Budde, writing in 1890, thought he identified the J document; C. H. Cornill argued in favour of an E source in the books of Samuel (1885, 1887, 1890); T. Klähn in 1914 claimed to have proved on linguistic grounds that the J source continued into the books of Samuel, a view taken up by O. Eissfeldt (1925, 1931).



Eissfeldt, who added a conjectured source L to J and E, did not find many followers.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, whether two or three strands of tradition are postulated, most scholars have concluded that diverse origin accounts for the apparent duplications and differences of viewpoint alleged to be found in 1 Samuel. In 2 Samuel the narrative has been judged to be more a continuous whole, especially chapters 9 – 20 (together with 1 Kgs 1 – 2), which have become known as ‘the Court History of David’, and have been described as ‘the supreme historical treasure of Samuel’.<sup>12</sup> These chapters win this accolade because they are judged to have been written by someone who was not only a contemporary of David, but who also knew at first hand life at David’s court.

A compilation of earlier accounts, which may have included a life of Samuel, a history of the ark, and accounts of the inauguration of the monarchy, as well as annals of David’s reign, would have been put together by an editor, probably during the exile. Both Joshua and Judges were thought to show signs of Deuteronomic editing, and, though in 1 and 2 Samuel Deuteronomic influence was less marked, a Deuteronomic redactor was credited with compiling these books also. Poetic passages such as Hannah’s song (1 Sam. 2:1–10) and David’s poems (2 Sam. 22:2 – 23:7), together with the extra information in the Appendix (2 Sam. 21 – 24), were thought to be late additions, added after the remainder of the book had taken shape.

Before moving on to consider more recent developments of critical scholarship, we pause at this point in order to assess the method behind the Documentary Hypothesis, which has dominated the field for well over a century. This consensus is in itself indicative of the degree to which the method suited the intellectual mood of the nineteenth century, and the continuing rationalism of the twentieth.

1. It was inevitable that questions concerning the composition of

11. O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament, An Introduction* (ET, Oxford; Basil Blackwell, 1965), p. 275.

12. G. W. Anderson, *A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament* (London: Duckworth, 1959), p. 80.

the books of the Bible should have been raised; the major problem was lack of hard evidence on which to base an answer. True, reference is made in the biblical books to documents which could be consulted at the time of writing (e.g. Josh. 10:13; 2 Sam. 1:18; 1 Kgs 11:41), which proves that there were 'books behind the Bible', but these are no longer extant. In the absence of factual checks, the weaknesses in the documentary theories were slow to emerge; eventually the proliferation of possibilities demonstrated how damaging to any theory was the total lack of proof.

2. Wellhausen and the others who shaped the documentary theories were thoroughly equipped scholars who brought to their task linguistic, literary and historical knowledge. They studied the text of the Bible in detail and encouraged rigorous scholarship. On the debit side, 'the text became controlled by scholars, whereas previously scholars had subjected themselves to the text. The text now was subject to their tools, methods, conclusions. The controlling factor was no longer any claim of Biblical authority but now was scientific method, which enjoyed enormous popularity and respect in this period.'<sup>13</sup> The ruling criterion was 'reasonableness'.

3. The outcome of the search for documents was a fragmented biblical text. The dissection process 'killed' the life-giving message inherent in the books of the Bible, yet they have never ceased to speak authoritatively, and their literary creativity, quite apart from their spiritual power, has often been noted; not least, in the books of Samuel the 'Court History of David' has been recognized as a literary gem. Thus the vitality of these books continues to reassert itself. Meanwhile modern studies of the Pentateuch are highly critical of the classical Documentary Hypothesis.<sup>14</sup>

---

13. W. Brueggemann, 'Questions addressed in study of the Pentateuch', in W. Brueggemann and H. W. Wolff, *The Vitality of Old Testament Traditions* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), pp. 13–14.

14. E.g. R. N. Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), esp. pp. 43–131. Whybray assesses philosophical, linguistic, literary and cultural aspects of the Documentary Hypothesis, and shows how the breaking of texts into separate documents 'often destroys

### *The Deuteronomistic History*

The claim that a Deuteronomistic editor left his mark, however lightly, on the books of Samuel has continued to find favour, especially under the influence of Martin Noth, whose significant work on the subject has been translated into English some forty years after its first publication in Germany in 1943.<sup>15</sup> This has proved to be one of the most enduring theories to be published during the first half of the twentieth century.

Whereas it had been usual to attribute to a Deuteronomistic hand the editing of the individual books from Joshua to 2 Kings, Noth went a stage further by postulating that Deuteronomy to 2 Kings was a continuous narrative, compiled by one writer. Though this Deuteronomistic writer had made use of existing documents, he freely added his own comments and thus, from diverse material, succeeded in compiling a history which reflected certain theological viewpoints and interests, and which was, to that extent, a unified whole. Noth denied that J, E and P extended beyond Numbers, and regarded the literary sources used by the editor/author of 1 and 2 Samuel as independent units or collections. The Deuteronomistic writer was looking for a meaning in the history of Israel. 'The meaning which he discovered was that God was recognisably at work in this history, continuously meeting the accelerating moral decline with warnings and punishments ...'<sup>16</sup> Thus there was a divine retribution at work in the history of the people of God, and the Deuteronomist made this the great unifying factor of his work as he commented on the course of events.

Noth's concept of a Deuteronomistic History continues to have

---

literary and aesthetic qualities which are themselves important data which ought not to be ignored' (p. 130).

15. M. Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), which consists of pp. 1–110 of *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 21957). The adjective 'Deuteronomistic' as opposed to 'Deuteronomic' is used to distinguish the hypothesis put forward by Noth.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

an influential part to play in any research on the composition of the books from Deuteronomy to 2 Kings. Indeed, as E. W. Nicholson comments in his foreword to the English edition,

This is a 'classic' work in the sense that it still remains the fundamental study of the corpus of literature with which it is concerned, and still provides, as far as the majority of scholars are concerned, the basis and framework for further investigation of the composition and nature of this corpus.<sup>17</sup>

Though this assertion may need some qualification in the light of the most recent trends, its estimate of the importance of Noth's book is not exaggerated.

Yet when the Deuteronomistic historian came to narrate the events of the reigns of Saul, David and Solomon, Noth believes that he found he was dealing with traditional accounts which 'absolved [him] from the need to organise and construct the narrative himself'.<sup>18</sup> Here the narratives themselves agreed with the emphases which he himself wished to make, and there was therefore little that he needed to add, whereas in 1 Kings 12 – 2 Kings 25, by contrast, he both supplied the chronology and related the reigns of the monarchs of the two kingdoms to each other, in addition to passing judgment on the individual kings and on the monarchy as an institution. According to Noth, the contribution of the Deuteronomistic historian is limited in the books of Samuel to the following passages:

- i. 1 Samuel 7:2b, the chronological note: 'a long time passed, some twenty years'.
- ii. 7:7–14, which Noth connects with Judges 13:1, where the Philistines are said to have dominated Israel for forty years.
- iii. 13:1, the chronological note concerning Saul's reign.
- iv. 2 Samuel 2:10–11, the chronology of the reign of Ishbosheth, and of David's reign in Hebron.
- v. 1 Samuel 8 – 12, where the Deuteronomistic historian

---

17. *Ibid.*, p. ix.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

reveals his disapproval of the establishment of the monarchy.

- vi. 2 Samuel 5:4–5, the chronology of David's whole reign, and 5:6–12, David's conquest of Jerusalem, which enabled him to house the ark in his own city.

Apart from these relatively few passages, Noth attributed to the Deuteronomistic historian only occasional rearrangement of the material he found in his sources to suit his purpose (e.g. 2 Sam. 8, which chronologically belongs earlier), and he emphatically denies that 2 Samuel 7, in which Nathan pronounces concerning the future of David's house, could belong to this historian, though he may have made some insertions, notably verse 13a and verses 22–24.<sup>19</sup>

Noth viewed the purpose of the Deuteronomistic historian as particularly pessimistic, seeing him as speaking of Israel's 'final rejection and therefore its downfall because of its repeated apostasy'.<sup>20</sup> Many scholars, on the other hand, have interpreted the fact that 2 Kings ends with the release of Jehoiachin from prison as an indication of qualified optimism. Similarly, the sin–repentance–renewal theme, characteristic of Deuteronomy and well illustrated in 1 Samuel 7:3–14 and in 2 Samuel 7, is thought by several scholars to point in the same direction.<sup>21</sup>

In the course of developing his thesis that Deuteronomy to Kings was originally one narrative, Noth drew attention to the overlap between books, which he thought went back to the time when the whole was divided.<sup>22</sup> The divisions accounted for the

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 54–55.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

21. E.g. G. von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy* (London: SCM Press, 1953), pp. 90–91; D. J. McCarthy, 'II Samuel 7 and the Structure of the Deuteronomistic History', *JBL* 84 (1965), pp. 131–138; Gordon 1984, who comments, 'Noth's omission probably has more than a little to do with the incompatibility of the dynastic oracle with his own conception of the purpose of the History!' (p. 20).

22. Cf. Deut. 34/Josh. 1; Josh. 24:29–31/Judg. 2:7–10; Judg. 13:1/1 Sam. 7:1–14.

failure of earlier scholars to identify the extent of the original work, especially as many had become absorbed in studies of the Pentateuch (or Hexateuch), and had become accustomed to think of Deuteronomy as part of that collection of books. Moreover, Noth thought that after the time of the Deuteronomistic writer, additions to Joshua/Judges (between Josh. 23 and Judg. 2:6), and at the end of Judges and 2 Samuel, obscured the issue. Noth conjectured that in the original work speeches of anticipation and retrospection summed up the judgments of the Deuteronomistic writer. Thus 1 Samuel 12 would have brought to an end the period of the judges, while 1 Kings 8:14–53, Solomon's prayer of dedication of the temple, would have concluded the section on the period of the early kings of Israel.

Noth's contention is that the skill of this Deuteronomistic writer is demonstrated in the unity he imposes on disparate sources, for he is wholly responsible for 'the coherence of this complex of material and hence the unity of the whole history in Joshua-Kings which is clearly *intentional*, as is shown by the form of these books as we have it'.<sup>23</sup> Since there is no trace of Deuteronomistic editing in Genesis to Numbers, Deuteronomy must belong with the books that follow it, and on this argument Noth based his rejection of the theory that Genesis to Joshua should be seen as an entity, a 'Hexateuch'.<sup>24</sup>

The central importance of Deuteronomy was inescapable either way; it dominated the judgment of the writers responsible for Joshua to Kings.

### *Sources in the books of Samuel*

Already it has become apparent that, according to Noth, Deuteronomistic editing in the books of Samuel is somewhat limited. Here the Deuteronomistic writer was able to take over extensive

23. Noth, p. 10.

24. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*: 'From a literary point of view ... it is more accurate to speak of the Hexateuch than of the Pentateuch' (p. 6). The suggestion was widely accepted, and continued to be employed by many scholars, including G. von Rad, into the 1950s.

collections of traditions, compiled long before his time. These are thought to have comprised the following sources:

- i. The Ark Narrative (1 Sam. 4:1b – 7:1), with the possible addition of 2 Samuel 6.
- ii. The Shiloh traditions (1 Sam. 1:1 – 4:1a), sometimes considered to be part of the Ark Narrative.
- iii. Traditions concerning Saul (1 Sam. 7 – 15), collected long before the time of the Deuteronomistic editor, who would have added passages recording his disapproval of the monarchy. The reign of Saul (1 Sam. 13 – 15) is sometimes considered a separate source, hence the division sometimes made at 1 Samuel 12.
- iv. The ‘History of David’s Rise’ (1 Sam. 16 – 2 Sam. 5:10 or 7:29).
- v. The ‘Succession Narrative’ (2 Sam. 9 – 20 and 1 Kgs 1 – 2).  
(The delineation of sources iv. and v. owes much to L. Rost.)<sup>25</sup>

It would be misleading to give the impression that this list of sources is universally accepted, for there are many variations in detail on the sources recognized by different scholars, even though i., iv. and v. are widely accepted. Similarly, a variety of theories characterizes the subject of the Deuteronomistic editing of the books of Samuel.<sup>26</sup> The absence of any means of verification tends to encourage the proliferation of theories, and inevitably leads to a certain scepticism regarding any possibility of ‘assured results’ in this field.

- 
25. L. Rost, *The Succession to the Throne of David* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982); originally published in German in 1926.
  26. Gordon 1984, pp. 14–22, provides a succinct account of recent trends, together with a bibliography. He notes ‘the imperialist tendencies of the phenomenon of Deuteronomism in current Old Testament study’, and points out that, apart from phraseological criteria, little that is regarded as characteristic of D ‘is peculiar to the Deuteronomistic History’ (p. 18).

### *Prophetic history*

Meanwhile preoccupation with Deuteronomistic theories had diverted scholarly attention from the part which the prophets may well have played in compiling collections of written documents that related to their times. At the end of the last century A. F. Kirkpatrick considered that 'contemporary prophetic histories' were probably the chief sources of the books of Samuel.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, he could support the supposition with evidence from 1 Chronicles 29:29, where the Chronicles of Samuel, Nathan and Gad are referred to as sources of information on the reign of David. The statement was meant to assure the reader that the resulting account rested on the most reliable authority. The idea of a prophetic history has been taken up recently by P. K. McCarter, who regards it as a middle stage in the growth of canonical books: 'Once the limited scope of the latter [the Deuteronomistic overlay] is recognized ... it becomes apparent that it was at some pre-Deuteronomistic stage that the stories were set in their basic order, and the middle stage takes on considerable importance.'<sup>28</sup> At this pre-Deuteronomistic stage, therefore, there was already a continuous prophetic history. McCarter envisages this as consisting of three sections in 1 Samuel – the story of Samuel (1 Sam. 1 – 7); the story of Saul (1 Sam. 8 – 15); the story of David's rise (1 Sam. 16 – 31) – and all three he regards as dominated by the figure of Samuel the prophet.

The prophetic viewpoint was negative with regard to the monarchy: it was a concession to a wanton demand of the people; but though the king would be head of the government, he would be subject to the word of the prophet as the spokesman of Yahweh. McCarter admits that there are affinities between this prophetic outlook and the Deuteronomic tradition, and describes it as 'proto-Deuteronomic'. He sees this as the reason why the Deuteronomistic writer needed to make only slight revision of the text before him, and then add to the continued history of David's rise in 2 Samuel 1 – 5 the 'Deuteronomistic capstone', as

---

27. Kirkpatrick 1880, p. 10.

28. McCarter 1980, p. 18.



McCarter describes 2 Samuel 7, the theological centre of the books of Samuel.

We have taken the briefest look at the approach of a few selected scholars to the question of the sources underlying the books of Samuel. In reality, the picture is far more complicated. Nevertheless, an attempt to follow the arguments of even a few contributors is important, if only to indicate how impossible is the task of arriving at any definitive answer to the questions, 'How did these books of Samuel come to be written?' and 'What sources did their authors use?' After two hundred years of biblical criticism in the West, the fact has to be faced that even such established concepts as the Pentateuch have been shaken by conflicting theories of composition. In the absence of objective criteria there is no way, apart from scholarly consensus which endures for a while but is open to new directives, of evaluating all the hard work that has gone into the search for sources, but which has come up with so many varying possibilities. According to one recent writer, 'It is no exaggeration to say that the truly assured results of historical critical scholarship concerning authorship, date and provenance would fill but a pamphlet.'<sup>29</sup> The fact is that scholarly interest has been moving away from historical-critical study, partly under the influence of the methods applied in the study of secular literature, and partly, one suspects, because of the felt need to find a more fruitful approach to the study of the biblical books.

### ***Recent trends***

Generations brought up to look for sources do not easily abandon the method which has dominated their research and shaped their whole approach to the text. Yet a shift away from historical criticism has been taking place.

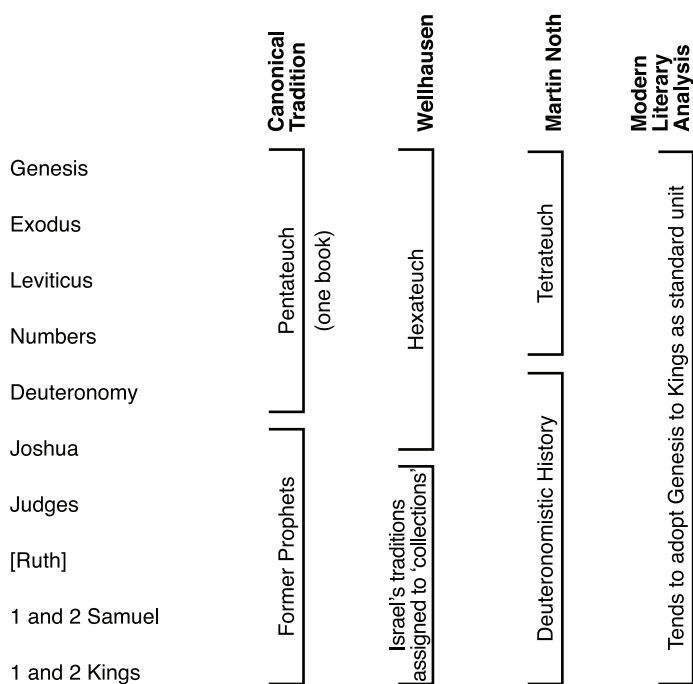
The work of Brevard Childs,<sup>30</sup> for example, has marked a

---

29. D. M. Gunn, 'New Directions in the Study of Hebrew Narrative', *JSOT* 39 (1987), p. 66.

30. E.g. B. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970); *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, and London: SCM Press, 1979).

### Diagrammatic summary of the main developments



significant change of perspective. Whereas for two hundred years theology has largely been subordinated to history – ‘The cake has been history, the icing theology’<sup>31</sup> – the aim of Childs has been to bring into a proper relation the claims of both theology and history. As Childs argues, the theological message was central to those who formulated the biblical books, which should be accepted in their traditional form as basic material for the construction of a theology, not least because the attempt to identify sources is necessarily hypothetical and subject to change. The task of interpreting Scripture today is then kept in line with that task as it has been understood through the ages. The interpreter must take into account not only the

31. R. W. L. Moberly, *The Church’s Use of the Bible: the Work of Brevard Childs*, *ExpT* 99/4 (1988), p. 106.

books as entities but also the books in relation to one another, for the total context 'is one of faith ... *not* the piety of the individual but the corporate life, witness and search for understanding of the Christian church, at the heart of which lies the use of the Bible as canonical scripture'.<sup>32</sup>

So far as the books of Samuel are concerned, passages which the older critics regarded as in some sense secondary, such as the song of Hannah (1 Sam. 2:1–10) may, according to Childs, be regarded as a key to the interpretation of the book. Similarly, 'the final four chapters [2 Sam. 21 – 24], far from being a clumsy appendix, offer a highly reflective, theological interpretation of David's whole career adumbrating the messianic hope, which provides a clear hermeneutical guide for its use as sacred scripture'.<sup>33</sup> For the historical source critic, as we have seen, theological viewpoint was one of the criteria used to distinguish between sources; it served as a pointer to the views which were important in the projected historical and cultural context of the writer. The result was to blunt the theological impact of the text by making the message serve a secondary purpose, and so keeping it at arm's length. Childs aimed to find the meaning of a book in its scriptural context, and restored to pride of place the theological content, so giving full weight to the internal coherence and unity of Scripture.

The importance of regarding a work of art, in this case a biblical book, as a unity with both form and meaning in its own right, has become axiomatic for an increasing number of scholars who associate themselves with the 'New Criticism', or with 'rhetorical criticism'. The text is all-important: it needs to be seen whole and yet at the same time to be read analytically, with special attention to choice of language, patterns of imagery, metaphor, irony; in short, what has become known as 'close reading'. Critics belonging to these schools 'emphasize the way the verbal interrelations within the text work together to produce an organic whole that is more than the addition of the parts'.<sup>34</sup> On the face of it, this method is the very

---

32. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

33. Childs, *Introduction to OT as Scripture*, p. 275.

34. D. Robertson, *Literature, the Bible as*, *IDBS*, p. 546.

antithesis of historical criticism, and a very practical difficulty faces the commentator who wishes to approach the text as a literary unit without at the same time bypassing completely the contribution of commentators who have worked in the historical-critical framework. To a large extent the two methods have to be allowed to work separately for the time being, and maybe for a long way ahead.<sup>35</sup> A further practical difficulty arises over the length of book(s) required to do justice to a 'close reading' of the fifty-five chapters of 1 and 2 Samuel. Moreover, the analysis requires a thorough knowledge of the Hebrew text, the only basis for such a study. The majority who have no such equipment have to be content to work from a translation and pick up the crumbs that fall from the scholar's table; but even so it is possible to see and appreciate the literary structure and artistic skill displayed in these books.

The question with which this section began, namely how these books came into being, has not been answered, but the attempt to find an answer has been more than worthwhile, because the outcome has been to prove the vitality of the books of the Old Testament. Though we cannot know the name of the author(s), nor what source books were available, the books themselves still have the power and authority to speak across the centuries and address today's church.

## Theology

Historical source criticism, with its concern for chronological order, has long been interested in tracing the development of theological understanding in the Old Testament on an assumed evolutionary model. In practice, however, conflicting theories as to the relative age of the ancient documents made any consensus very difficult, so much so that some have even questioned whether the enterprise is possible. Nevertheless, the attempt to formulate a theology of homogeneous sections of the Old Testament (e.g. Wisdom literature

---

35. Cf. Gunn, 'New Directions', p. 73. He also expects to see 'the demise of the Deuteronomistic History and the adoption of Genesis to 2 Kings as a standard unit' (p. 72).