

not necessarily the same as the techniques used in modern 'Western' narrative.

He argues, that the Bible is literature before it is anything else, and to read it as "literature" really means to read it again in its complex continuities. Although he mentions the name of Ricoeur only once it seems for me, that he inspired very much from his ideas. What Ricoeur formulated as 'hermeneutics', and philosophy, he is expanding and applying it to the Old Testament exegesis. He speaks of 'interpretation' or simply 'reading', and newer uses the term exegesis.

His process of 'reading' is full of challenges and discoveries, as he summarizes in another book: "The way a writer shapes a scene, reports details, bends language into dialogue, and builds the symmetries of a line of verse and the development of a poetic image tells you a great deal about how he conceives human and divine nature, history, causality, and destiny, and also something about his relation to the literary medium in which all this worked out."⁴ Speaking very less about the sociological context, devotes the bulk of his attention to issues of genre, convention, style, structure, diction, literary allusion and thematic organization. He is more interested in the referential qualities of the biblical texts as an interest in their internal

relationships, particularly as these relationships are controlled by language.

I could say much about Alter's relevancy, but I will restrict myself to those examples, which astonished (or surprised?) me. Maybe the most impressive was his explanation of "techniques of repetition". Most instances of repetition prove to be quite purposeful. He has the opinion that the books of the Hebrew Bible were written chiefly for oral presentation. As several indications in the Bible suggest, the narratives would typically have been read out from a scroll to some sort of assembled audience. The purpose of repetition in first instance could be one didactic. Alter wants the fullness of the narrative to have its own say. The repetitions of "Leitwort", of Motif, of Theme, of Sequence of actions, and of Type-scene comprise all types of repetition in certain narratives, and in the "Narrative". The art of allusions could be a second one. But the others, as parallelisms, inter-textual connection, flash back, foreshadowing follows, just to mention them.

Alter argues, that the Bible is literature before it is anything else. As interpreter he is before anything else a literary critic. He gives new ways of reading and interpreting Scripture, illuminating tools of literary criticism.

János Simon

The Chronicler as Historian,

edited by M. P. Graham, K. G. Hoglund and S. L. McKenzie,
JOTSUP 238; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997.

The present book is a collection of fourteen essays, and is dedicated to the memory of Raymond B. Dillard (1944-93). Its history goes back to the Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah Section meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in

1994. Dillard himself was involved in planning the meeting, but his unexpected death stopped him to participate.

The first three essays can be generally said, that deal with the "Framing an Approach", like comparative, historical and

⁴ Robert Alter, *The World of Biblical Literature*, SPCK, 1992. XI.

geographical and literary approaches. The diversity of their perspectives and answers to the question illustrates the rich ferment that characterizes the contemporary study of Chronicles. The second part of the book presents essays, that have a particular theme or genre from the material of Chronicles, while the last part consists of historical essays, that relate to the text of Chronicles. In those following I will give a short summary of some essays.

Kenneth G. Hoglund in the first essay of the book holding a “comparativist perspective” comes to the conclusion, that the Chronicler could be nothing else, but an accomplished historiographer of his time. While the Book of Chronicles presents us a narrative more or less chronologically arranged, the author of a ‘history’ should be judged on the basis of how well this narrative reflects the reality of what happened in Israel’s past. Scholars of earlier generations sought to qualify their use of the term “history” to designate the work of the Chronicler, while others characterized the book as ‘exposition’ or ‘midrash’. The subject of the present article is primarily the matter of how we regard historiography, the process of creating a narrative that possesses cohesion. For Hoglund a primary evidence that the Chronicler is historian, is nothing else, than the narrative itself. The narrative as a whole “treats events and the reigns of kings in a sequence, and since the narrative possesses cohesion both in writing style and in recurring thematic elements, we may begin by calling it a ‘history’.”

Chronicler has clearly made use of Deuteronomistic History (DtrH), and it is likely to presuppose that he is simply working with the same understanding of the historiographic task as employed by DtrH. Some extra elements suggest, that he was seeking to compose a history on the basis of models and methods derived from the Hellenic world. The genealogical

material of the book was regarded as a late redactional addition to the narrative, but Hoglund emphasizes, that the Greek genealogical literature was very considerable. The commonness of genealogical materials in fifth-fourth century Greek historiography indicates that the historical prologue is an intentional part of Chronicler’s historiography. The Hellenistic historiography rehabilitates the Chronicler, because he has done nothing else, but makes use of whatever suits his larger historiographical purpose. He is no “evil fictionalizer trying to mislead his audience,” but is rather an “accomplished historiographer writing in accord with the accepted practices of his time.”

In the following essay Anson F. Rainey investigates the sources of Chronicles. First the shared material with Kings comes under his magnifying glass. For passages not to be found in Kings, Chronicler may have had a tendentious reason for including them, and the Deuteronomist may also have tendentious reason for omitting them, while Chronicler usually incorporates these entries in a framework designed to stress his theological point of view. After a long investigation of several passages concerning relations with the Northern Kingdom, and military and geopolitical affairs, Rainey concluded, that Chronicler did not express his own historiographical predilections, but he has an understanding of geopolitical and geographical factors that were basic in the life of the ancient kingdom of Judah.

Isaac Kalimi in his essay holding the title, “Was the Chronicler a Historian?” answers the question, offering a short overview of scholarly evaluation. Wellhausen designated the book as being “midrash”. According to Kalimi his purpose, and of his school is clear: to destroy the credibility of Chronicles as a historical source for pre-exilic Israelite history. They followed the definition of Leopold Ranke, that the

task of the historian is to show 'how it really was'. T. Willi defines the literary nature of Chronicles as a commentary. His basic assumption is that Chronicler viewed the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets as canonical books. In Kalimi's view it is obvious, that Samuel-Kings were by no means canonical for Chronicler, because he did not treat them as "immutable sealed books," however, his main purpose was not to exegete earlier books.

The appearance of Chronicles in LXX shows that the Greek compilers of the canon considered the book as historiography. Chronicles collects material from earlier books and additional sources, but he makes the connection between these sources, and above all, his work as a whole is imprinted with a unique 'philosophy' of history. Chronicler is revealed as a creative artist with a variegated range of literary and historiographical talents, a skilled professional historian with sophisticated writing methods.

William H. Barnes ("Non-Synoptic Chronological References in the Books of Chronicles") engages to examine each of the approximately 30 examples of non-synoptic chronological material in the books of Chronicles in some depth, noting especially the like hood of their historical accuracy and then concluding with a brief summary concerning the use of such data for historical reconstruction. Recent literary studies of Chronicles and how the theological *Tendenz* of the writer has thoroughly shaped his work, leads Barnes to discount the results of earlier scholarship, indeed to doubt the independent historicity of nearly all of the 30 non-synoptic chronological notices. He is concluding his study with the conclusion, that the Chronicler "as a chronographer did not follow present-day standards. Modern biblical historians would do well

if they studied the ancient Chronicler's work not only as a theological statement based on history, but also as an example of historiographic writing which mirrors the canons of ancient Near Eastern literature."

Ehud Ben Zvi in his thematic article (The Chronicler as a Historian: Building Texts) address the question of how the reports about building activities outside Jerusalem illuminate both the historiographical work of Chronicler and the value of Chronicler's testimony for a critical reconstruction of the history of Judah in the monarchical period. To this purpose, he will first attempt to clarify basic methodological issues and premises underlying the study of these accounts. Then he addresses in particular the reports that have no parallel in Kings and will advance a proposal concerning the criterion that led to their inclusion in Chronicles. It also explores the implications of this criterion for the study of Chronicler's historiography and for the use of Chronicles in the reconstruction of monarchical Israelite and Judahite history.

The Chronicler invested much effort in shaping for the audience the image of blessing over Judah at relevant points in their view of past. This observation also serves to put the building reports in perspective: they are minor elements in a much larger characterization of particularly blessed times. Any proposal claiming that Chronicler sent a single message to the audience in a particular account or set of accounts is more than weak.

The book is a valuable instrument for the research of Chronicles, but also for those who are dealing with biblical historiography or literary study.

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