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## **Report on the doctoral dissertation**

by Jan Rückl

***A Sure House:***

***Studies on the Dynastic Promise to David in the Books of Samuel,***

supervisors: Martin Prudký, Thomas Römer; Prague 2012, 365 p.

Dear Candidate,

I regret very much that I cannot congratulate you personally with your achievement. You probably know that I suffered a bad accident in “the Holy Land”, with serious consequences: seven ribs fractured and a pneumothorax. Fortunately my brain remained undamaged so that I was able to study your dissertation and enjoy the fruits of your labour. Although I have to admit that the constant use of painkillers, especially morphine, was no help for this work. I hope that this wordings used in this report will not suffer from the influence of this drug.

You did not choose the easiest text of the Old Testament as your topic. Nathan’s oracle is a difficult text and many studies were already devoted to this chapter: the differences in opinion about its origin and meaning demonstrate the difficulties in its interpretation. However, you have studied the text first of all text-critically, which is necessary because the text of Samuel is text-critically very difficult. Then you made a thorough exegesis of the oracle and finally you studied the other texts in Samuel that parallel with the dynastic oracle. In your conclusions you briefly touch the “dynastic texts” in Kings and you sum up with an all-embracing theory of the origin of the deuteronomistic history or at least of the portion Samuel-Kings.

Your theory that the Nathan oracle and the related dynastic oracles were written in the 5<sup>th</sup> century is challenging. I will of course return to this further on in my report. First let me congratulate you also with your well-written work. The material is very complex and sometimes the argumentation is very complicated but it is always comprehensible and written in good English. That the author is not a native speaker is not indiscernible but it does not disturb the clarity of the argument. Here and then, however, I found some traces of influence of the Czech

language. Since in your language there is no article in a few instances in your English text the (in)definite article in English is missing or on the contrary is superfluous. Your promoter dr. Prudky who will read my report at your defence may skip this list below and hand it over to you after the ceremony: reading this list is not very entertaining. It is only intended to be useful for you as help when you revise your work for the final publication:

p. 13 "A somewhat extended..."

p. 21 "David did not enjoy ~~the~~ rest (1Kgs..."

p. 33 "preserves **the** MT ..."

p. 41 "In **the** Chronicles view..."

p. 53 "notes **a** possible..."

p. 62 "a more reading" -> "another reading"

p. 63 n. 132 "on **the** Peshitta's..."

p. 103 "Taking **the** context..."

p. 144 "in **the** Babylonian exile."

p. 200 "on **the** king"

p. 206 "the relation of ~~the~~ kingship..."

p. 208 "from ~~the~~ God side ..."

p. 211 "Within ~~the~~ Deuteronomy..."

p. 255 "the context of ~~the~~ post-exilic Judah..."

p. 298 "would be **a** strong ..."

p. 303 "to the ~~the~~ interpretation..."

There are also some sentences that are not or hardly comprehensible at all: on p. 22 "A part of the Dtr History would not then be mentions of rest after the conquest ..." What does this mean?

p. 51 "the Chroniclers text of Samuel" I think this should be: "the text of Samuel used by Chronicles".

p. 62 "a more reading" should be "another reading".

p. 204 "was doubt legitimized" What so you mean?

I want to start with your first chapter where you review the different textual witnesses of the text in Samuel and the parallel in Chronicles.

First a general comment: I admire your devotion in studying all the witnesses and to compare the text of Samuel and Chronicles. Your classification of the

causes of variations “intentional”, “non-intentional” and “tendency” is very helpful. Although it could have been used more thoroughly. E.g. on p. 19 you mention *hamelek LXX<sup>l</sup> ho basileus dauid*. You explain this deviation of the Lucianic text as *intentional*. But when you had read my article on “variant readings in 2Kings 23” in the Wüppertal-volume, published on the occasion of the publication of *Septuaginta Deutsch*, you would have learned that the Lucianic version (I quote my own article) “has the tendency to insert interpolations (proper names instead of the corresponding pronoun, possessive pronouns, articles, conjunctions, making the subject or the object explicit, etc) which tend to clarify the sense” (end quote). In other words this is a clear example of a tendency by the Lucianic redactor to make explicit what is implicit in the source text. I will refrain here from giving further examples but some more refinement along these lines could be done.

p. 50 regarding the reading with *'et* or without *'et*. There are in Hebrew two particles *'et*. One is the nota accusativi, the other is the preposition meaning “with” = *'im*. The discussion is not a reading with *'et* (= lectio difficilior) or without *'et*. But a (possible) confusion between *'et* nota accusativi or the preposition *'et* meaning “with” = *'im*

Unintelligible is to me how on p. 79 the Vorlage of 2 Sam 7,23LXX is closer to the MT *l'arts<sup>e</sup>ka* ?

p. 85 your conclusion of the discussion of *hal<sup>e</sup>ku* as “the original was probably the singular *h<sup>l</sup>k* (attested in 1 Chr 17), understood as qal; the final *waw* originally appeared in the word as a pronominal reflex of the antecedent”. Can you explain what you exactly mean: “a pronominal reflex of the antecedent”?

p. 86 (top): *h'lh<sup>m</sup>* should be *h'h<sup>l</sup>m* (LXX, 4QSam<sup>a</sup>).

p. 97: you write “the understanding of 2Sam 7,26a<sup>b-g</sup> as an address would of course invite to omit the preceding *l'mr*”. This is unintelligible to me because *l'mr* is exactly introducing the direct speech! Therefore if 2Sam 7,26a<sup>b-g</sup> is an address *l'mr* is appropriate.

p. 98 n. 304: you say that you don't understand what Knoppers says. Knoppers means to say that the specific reading is in both MT and LXX!

p. 155: 1Kgs 9,5b is indeed dir. Speech to David and therefore it is a reminder to Solomon of the promise to David.

As a closing remark of my discussion of your text-critical analysis: Why did you not make a reconstruction of the hypothetical “original” text? You do this on p. 276 for 2 Sam 23,6-7 “The following verse that expands on this should be read:” and then you give a reconstruction of the Hebrew. Why did you not do this for

the entire reconstructed text of 2Sam 7? In your exegesis you do analyse the text with the small conjectures that you retrieved from the text-critical analysis.

I know that some scholars are very vigilantly combating this kind of reconstructions because then one is studying a text that is purely reconstruction and not present in any single manuscript. But on the other hand, in Bible translations and in our exegesis we do it all the time. Ronald Hendel who is preparing an eclectic edition of the Hebrew Bible on the basis of text critical evaluation of all the witnesses, is an ardent defender of this and I think we should take this approach very seriously.

The following remarks and comments concern your exegesis:

p. 145 “slow reading” should that not rather be “close reading”?

p. 147: At the bottom you speak of “the implied readers”. The implied reader is “a term used by Wolfgang Iser and some other theorists of reader - response criticism to denote the hypothetical figure of the reader to whom a given work is designed to address itself. Any text may be said to presuppose an ‘ideal’ reader who has the particular attitudes (moral, cultural, etc.) appropriate to that text in order for it to achieve its full effect” (Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms). How can you speak then of implied readers (plural). Can you explain this?

The following remark is, in my opinion, very important because it has implications for the whole thesis. On p. 180 you decide that you incline to interpret the perfects in vv. 9-11a as copulative perfects. Your decisive argument is that a future-oriented understanding of the verb *wahanichotiy* in v. 11 is problematic. This implies that you let your decision depend, not on formal linguistic criteria but on criteria of content. Schneider and Talstra have stressed firmly in their publications on the Biblical Hebrew verb system that the formal linguistic criteria should be decisive. Now when we look at the passage in question it is obvious that these verses belong to the *discourse language* and not to the narrative language. In discourse the *yiqtol* / imperative are the main tenses (called “foreground” by Schneider). The secondary tenses are *x-qatal* used for past tense, *qatal* that is neutral and *weqatal* that is used for the **future**. Therefore on linguistic grounds it is difficult to interpret these verb forms as past tense as you do. This has of course consequences for your further interpretation on p. 188 of these verses as “Yhwh’s past deeds” in the “contrasting motive” of the oracle of judgement. You write on this page (quote): “Many biblical oracles of judgement are introduced by a list of Yhwh’s past deeds in favour of the addressee. Westermann calls this reminder of Yhwh’s doing as a “contrasting motive”, since its function is to create a contrast with the sins of the addressee. This feature appears in the Former Prophets exclusively in the oracles of judgement addressed to individuals (1 Sam 2,27-36; 15,16-23; 2Sam 12,7-12; 1 Kgs 14,7-17; 16,1-4) and Nathan’s oracle in 2 Sam 7 is the only passage where this type of summary of Yhwh’s deeds appears outside its usual context”. (end quote). Your last establishment should have alarmed you that there is maybe a fundamental difference between Nathan’s oracle and these oracles of judgement.

Moreover, when you study the verb forms that are used in these oracles of judgement addressed to individuals, you see another difference. In these oracles the usual verb forms of the *narrative aspect* (or relief, as Schneider calls it) are used: i.e. *qatal* and *wayyiqtol* (ipf. cons.). In other words in these oracles of judgement addressed to individuals –although they belong to discourse- the speaker (the prophet) switches to the narrative aspect in his retrospective view. It is not unusual that when a speaker refers to the past, he uses in his direct speech the narrative aspect; Schneider calls this “Sprosserzählung”. This is not the case in Nathan’s oracle and I therefore would plead for translating the verses in question as future. This can –of course- have serious consequences for your global interpretation of the oracle!

On pages 248-249 you make a case for the common authorship of 2 Sam 2,27-36 and 3,11-14. But the fact that the announcement of the judgement of Eli and his family is done twice could have warned you that we are dealing with a *doublet*. And that is exactly what it is. There are indeed similarities in theme and vocabulary between the two prophecies of judgement, which is to be expected since they both concern the same individuals. But there are also differences, of which the most important is that in 1 Sam 3 there is no announcement of the replacement of the Eli family by another priestly family. I would be interested to see how you explain these differences. This is important because on p. 250 you link both 2 Sam 2,27-36 and 3,11-14 with Ezek 44. You say on this page that there may be a literary relationship between these texts. In what direction? If it is from Sam towards Ezekiel? In that the Samuel texts don’t need to be from the same hand. They may have existed at the time of Ezek 44, and both used by Ezek 44.

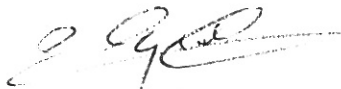
With regard of your general theory: I am not yet convinced that you can date the oracle of David so late: your attempt to link it with the revival of the Davidides in the post-exilic time is not so convincing: the Judean governors were no kings. Your interpretation of 2 Sam 7,14 (the punishment of a sinful king) in order to understand the dynasty’s loss of power in the Neo-Babylonian (or Persian?) period as an episode encompassed in the eternal validity of the unconditional promise, seems farfetched to me. This interpretation looks to me much like a “metaphorical” or “allegorical” reading. You rightly criticised Vermeylen on p. 292 n. 829 who interprets David and his house in 2 Sam 23,1-7 as “a symbol of the post-exilic temple community”. Vermeylen’s interpretation is also an example of “allegorisation”. But are you not doing the same?

Is a date for the “eternal” promise of David’s dynasty not more likely somewhere during the reign of a Judean king (e.g. Josiah) when the dynasty was still alive and kicking than –as you date it- after the exile? Especially when we see that in the post-exilic literature theology was strongly dominated by the idea of retribution. Is an unconditional oracle of salvation perceivable in such a rigid theological climate?

With regard to your concluding remarks concerning the dynastic oracle in Samuel and Kings you rightly observe that the unconditional promise to David of a firm dynasty differs from the conditional “reformulation” of the dynastic

promise to David in Kings (1 Kgs 2,4; 8,25; 9,4-5). You rightly accept that these texts cannot be understood as a part of the same authorial/redactional level as 2 Sam 7 (p. 303). But your conclusion is –different from mine- that this is not an argument for a separate origin of the basic text of Samuel and the first edition of Kings, but that it is the result of a “separate treatment of the books Samuel and Kings” (p. 305). Is this however perceivable? Is the other way around not more logic: i.e. separate blocs (= pre-dtr version of Samuel and first-dtr version of Kings) were joined or moulded together by a redactor (the exilic dtr redactor) who added on crucial points his deuteronomistic comments?

A lot of questions. I feel very sorry that I cannot exchange opinions with you face to face but I hope that you will enjoy reflecting upon them!



Erik Eynikel

September 6, 2012