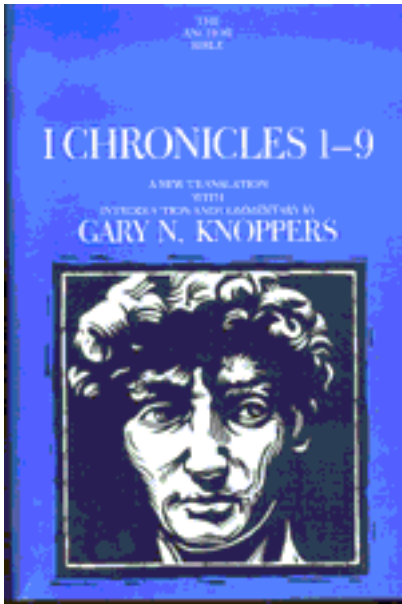


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Knoppers, Gary N.

1 Chronicles 1–9

Anchor Bible 12

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Gary Knoppers is one of the doyens of ancient Israelite historiography. His writings on both the Deuteronomist and Chronicler are some of the most respected in the field of the Hebrew Bible. His Harvard dissertation, “‘What Share Have We in David?’: The Division of the Kingdom in Kings and Chronicles,” uniquely qualifies him to write a commentary of the caliber that he has prepared. From the preface we are told that the creation of this commentary was nine years in the making. Judging from the quality of research and the breadth of material covered, nine years seems too short for such an impressive undertaking. Those who follow the writings of Knoppers should not be surprised that his commentary on Chronicles consists of a two-volume work. He has similarly dealt with the Deuteronomistic History in two volumes entitled *Two Nations Under God* in the Harvard Semitic Monographs series.

The commentary is divided into three major principal sections. I gladly note that upon initial perusal one is greeted with a comprehensive translation of 1 Chr 1–9. Knoppers does an unstintingly impeccable job of rendering the pedantic genealogies into a very readable text. Likewise, the more lively narrative sections such as “The Davidic Prayer” (17:16–27) are rendered in exquisite English prose.

This commentary moves quickly from the translation to introduction. Knoppers alerts the reader to his methodological convictions via a ninety-page introduction. A cursory reading of the table of contents reveals that this portion of the commentary is divided into nine well-informed sections. Investigation begins with a fresh examination into the “title” of Chronicles. The author includes in his research both rabbinic as well as medieval authorities. As one would expect, Jerome receives a lion’s share of the research. A cursory glance at the first fifty pages into the commentary and the reader is struck with how quickly Knoppers moves into both the LXX and Qumran materials. His scholarship demonstrates for the reader how at home he is in not just the MT but in all other relevant witnesses.

Knoppers’s plea for the relevance of textual criticism is very well received by readers of the Hebrew Bible. Regarding the differing witnesses he states, “Hence, the collation, comparison, and evaluation of extant manuscripts and textual traditions are foundational to writing a commentary” (52). Many scholars claim to do textual criticism, and some to a degree manage to carry out the task. However, Knoppers both calls for textual criticism and carries out the task with erudite skill.

Knoppers begins to make his case for the need of textual criticism by surveying the impact of LXX studies for textual reconstruction of Chronicles. In detailing the prevalent schools of thought, he summarizes the ideas of Khale and Lagarde. A terse comparison of both the LXX and Qumran materials reveals that firm and fixed boundaries between texts and are difficult to discern. Further clarification is given by an extensive summary of the various witnesses to the text of Chronicles. Knoppers takes pains to point out the intricacies of thought surrounding 1 Esdras. Briefly, he notes five key insights on critically using Esdras for reconstructing Chronicles. Given the complexity of the evidence adduced by Knoppers, one may conclude that 1 Esdras represents an older, less corrupt *Vorlage*. Likewise, Greek translation of Chronicles does not escape the sagacious attention of Knoppers. A masterful discussion of the various textual witnesses are deftly presented for the reader. Knoppers concludes (with Klein) that 1 Esdras is “typologically earlier (second century) work than are LXX Chronicles and Esdras β” (62). Knoppers further presents balanced assessments of the Old Latin, *Targum Chronicles*, Vulgate, Syriac, Peshitta, and Arabic translation of the Peshitta. The last witness to be examined is the Masoretic Text. It is concluded that the MT is the best witness for reconstructing the Chronicler’s original text, yet readers are told that the commentary is an eclectic text and that “in attempting to recover an older text of Chronicles in nonsynoptic texts, the witnesses of the MT, *Paraleipomena*, LXX Chronicles, 1 Esdras, and the rest of the versions will be considered” (65).

A surface reading of Chronicles reveals to the cognizant reader a dependence on or at the least an acquaintance with previous biblical books. In his third section Knoppers examines the Chronicler's use of earlier biblical books (especially limited portions of the Pentateuch, Joshua, Samuel-Kings). At issue is the question of what the Chronicler actually used to construct his history: a shared source or reused texts? Knoppers delineates his line of research by posing two further lines of inquiry. First, he details how the Chronicler dealt with quotation and reinterpretation in his work. Second, he examines the nature of the biblical texts employed in the writing of Chronicles. Wisely, Knoppers notes, "text-critical studies do not free us from speculation about the Chronicler's use of earlier biblical materials, but they do provide scholars with more precise tools with which to examine the respective textual traditions" (70).

One of the most helpful chapters in the introduction is a seventeen-page summary of recent studies on Chronicles. Knoppers begins with a casual reference to Noth's *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* and proceeds briefly to outline Noth's understanding of a single redactor for Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. Knoppers dismisses Noth's approach as "facile" but situates him squarely in the mainstream of twentieth-century scholarship. Significantly, critiques of single, separate, and multiple authorship of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah are nuanced for the reader. Knoppers organizes the question of unity and the extent of the Chronicler's work around four principal issues. He selects style and characteristic language, the doublet in 2 Chr 36:22–23 and Ezra 1:1–3a, ideology, and compositional technique as the foundational themes at the heart of present scholarly contention.

Commenting on style and characteristic language, Knoppers notes that earlier scholars such as Kropat, Driver, Curtis, and Masden all held that Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah exhibited a common linguistic style. This thought has been recently challenged by Japhet and Williamson, who contend that the similarities are evidences of commonalities of Late Hebrew. The author deftly surveys the criticisms that have been leveled against both Japhet and Williamson (see Cross, Croft, Polzin, Mosis, Blenkinsopp, and Mason). A careful reading of the scholarship reveals that investigation into this particular topic is at a standstill.

The author adroitly explores the interrelatedness of 2 Chr 36 and Ezra 1. He concludes that the question needing to be addressed is not whether Chronicles is related to Ezra-Nehemiah but how. I note with Knoppers that a defining question regarding interrelatedness is, Whence did Chronicles end? The author tersely addresses the prevailing views: 2 Chr 36:21 (Williamson, De Vries) 2 Chr 36:23 (Newsome, Japhet) Ezra 3:13 (Cross) Ezra 6:22 (Freedman, Becker, Gelston), and Neh 8:18 (Pohlmann, Mosis) (80).

Ideology, for Knoppers, is one of the enduring elements that helps define authorship. The author is quite mindful of prevalent themes (e.g. exodus, conquest, Moses and the law, David and the Davidic promises, prophecy, and Levitical sermons) that are used to support multiple authors. Likewise, he is equally aware of elements used (common interest in genealogies, lists, the primacy of Jerusalem, centrality of temple) to denote single authorship. After a masterful survey of both positions Knoppers notes, “the cumulative weight of these considerations would suggest that Chronicles has some points of connection with Ezra and Nehemiah, but that it is quite unlikely that one individual is responsible for both works” (89). Furthermore, he argues that the position of Albright—that Ezra was basically responsible for Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah—is now unsustainable.

Intertwined with the thorny question of authorship is the consideration of “multiple editions.” When one speaks of multiple editions with the Chronicles-Nehemiah block one must be very specific to delineate the parameters. Knoppers is meticulous in differentiating between editions within 1 and 2 Chronicles and Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah blocks. In seeking to clarify the edition(s) within 1 and 2 Chronicles, Knoppers differentiates the use of *Blockmodelle* and *Schichtenmodelle*. It is precisely at this point that his brilliance shines forth. He is home in both worlds of ancient Israelite historiography. Equally, he can and does work in both Deuteronomistic and Chronicler portions of the Hebrew Bible. Past giants of Israelite historiography (e.g., von Rad, Noth, Rothstein, Hänel, Kittel, and Galling) have argued for either/or Deuteronomistic, Priestly, and Levitical text in Chronicles. Likewise, more modern scholars (e.g., Williamson, De Vries, Dirksen, and Dörrfuß) have somewhat tried to break out of the mold set by older studies. Yet in spite of the arguments marshaled for earlier redaction(s) of Chronicles, Knoppers remains skeptical. He states, “I find myself among those scholars who are skeptical that Chronicles underwent one or more major Priestly, Levitical, or Deuteronomist redactions” (92). He is more inclined to see a pro-Priestly and pro-Levitical passages in Chronicles as “quotes, paraphrases, or allusions,” to earlier biblical traditions. He argues that one may indeed find divergent theories of “law” in Chronicles, yet he buttresses his argument by appealing to the divergent documents (e.g., Deuteronomy itself, Deuteronomistic History, and the Priestly law in Ezekiel) found within earlier portions of the Hebrew Bible. It is in these differing documents that Knoppers finds disparate hands. He states, “To complicate matters further, the Chronicler is also heir to both the reworking of Deuteronomic law in the Deuteronomistic History and the reworking of Priestly law in Ezekiel. One should not be surprised that some of the writer’s citations of earlier works do not mesh with each other” (93).

Regarding editions within Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah Knoppers notes that a majority of commentators employ the *Blockmodelle* to ascertain redactional activity. Knoppers quickly surveys the editorial history of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, noting, “First, in

contrast to the positions of separate authorship and unified authorship, the theories of multiple authorship account for both the similarities and dissimilarities between these books” (95). The connections between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah are explored with Knoppers positing no less than four thematic similarities. It is clear that all the approaches surveyed distance Chronicles from Ezra-Nehemiah. Separate authors but extensive connections between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah are further explored by Knoppers. It is his contention that the early chapters of Ezra were most likely edited by someone who wished to preserve the literary imagery of the Persian period. Similarly, the narrator of Ezra-Nehemiah selected Chronicles over Kings due to the extensive interest in the Jerusalem cult exhibited by the Chronicler. One sees this selectiveness exhibited by the author of Ezra-Nehemiah concerning the Davidic monarchy. Knoppers concludes that Chronicles also serves to “set the context” for Ezra-Nehemiah via the enigmatic ending.

In the sixth section Knoppers masterfully weaves complex issues relating to the date of Chronicles into a very manageable whole. At the heart of scholarly contention concerning the date of Chronicles is the wide range possible for the document. Knoppers notes that scholars have given plausible ranges spanning over a 350-year period (late sixth to mid-second century B.C.E.). In deference to the disparity in dating, Knoppers surveys a late and early date respectively. As a way of determining the *terminus ante quem* the author examines the three following areas: biblical and apocryphal works, pseudepigraphic works, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. A cursory review of the research reveals that not all three categories are of equal value for determining an end point for Chronicles. For instance, not all the evidence supplied by the pseudepigrapha is helpful because the various assigned dates of composition are disputed (111). Nevertheless, Knoppers assures readers that “in accounting for the reuse and citation of Chronicles in the second and first centuries B.C.E. one has to allow some time for the text to become established” (111).

The upper limit for the date of Chronicles is sometime in the fourth or early third century B.C.E. Knoppers cites at least three arguments to support his contention of a post-fifth century date. First, he argues that the Second Temple was already completed when the Chronicler wrote. He bases this on the substantially abbreviated Deuteronomistic narration of the temple that the Chronicler cites in his work. Second, Knoppers makes it clear that the Chronicler was indebted to a wide range of biblical texts. This fact persuades him to set an upper limit of 525–515 B.C.E. for the composition of Chronicles. In deference to the Yahwist, Deuteronomist, and the Priestly writer, Knoppers forcefully argues that time must be allowed for these schools to establish their works. Third, he argues that cultic institutions present in Chronicles are a principal reason for dating the book around the fourth century B.C.E. Additional elements such as technical terms, particular coins, and genealogies are discussed in order further to clarify the upper limit for Chronicles. Knoppers summarizes the position taken in the commentary by stating,

“Given the limited amount of evidence directly bearing on the composition of Chronicles, this commentary allows a range of dates from the late fifth century through the mid-third century. My own inclination is toward a date in the late fourth or early third century” (116).

The issue of source criticism is of paramount importance in determining the issue of extrabiblical sources. This eighth section of Knoppers’s introduction selectively explores the issue of extrabiblical sources available to the Chronicler. A plethora of modern theories regarding the Chronicler and his sources makes it impossible to cover all the positions in a commentary even this size. Yet once again Knoppers takes an enormous bit of scholarship and manages to make it digestible for his readers. He notes that in the nineteenth century scholars such as De Wette and Wellhausen doubted the Chronicler’s history as trustworthy. Likewise, other scholars (e.g., Eissfeldt) sought to posit the Chronicler’s dependence on an expanded version of Samuel-Kings. Yet a third group of scholars has argued that the Chronicler had access to both written and oral sources in the construction of his work. Knoppers notes that elements such as the “Chronicler’s source citation, the large portions of nonsynoptic text, historical details about the Judahite monarchy, historical anecdotes in the genealogies, references to scribes and writings, as well as the knowledge of historical geography” may be used to argue that the writer must have had access to some noncanonical materials (120).

Apparently, the author of Chronicles used the literary technique of μίμησις in an explicit conscious admiration for the older (e.g., Torah, Joshua-Kings) traditions. Additionally, one may detect a change in the tempo of the writer by careful attention to shifts in style, vocabulary, and theme. Knoppers clearly illustrates these types of citations by examining phrases such as “the book of the events of the days of the kings of Israel,” “the book of the events of the days of the kings of Judah,” and “the book of the kings of Israel.” One is also apprised of how the Chronicler treats the “prophetic” figures in his composition. Knoppers argues that references to prophets and prophetic figures almost always appear in a narrative that appraises characters positively. Elements such as “Israel,” “Judah,” “Benjamin,” and “Levi” shed light on the theology of the Chronicler. Knoppers states, “the Chronicler’s source citations are helpful in ascertaining relevant features of his theology, his historiographic method, and his interpretation of older biblical books, but they are not particularly helpful in determining what extrabiblical sources he may have had at his disposal” (126).

In the eighth section of his introduction, Knoppers explores the fascinating idea of Chronicles being “a rewritten bible.” He argues that, much like the *Genesis Apocryphon* (e.g. 1QapGen^{at}), the *Temple Scroll* (e.g. 11QT19), and the *Reworked Pentateuch* (e.g., 4Q158; 4Q364–367; 4QRP) both Deuteronomy and Chronicles prefigured the Qumran

type of interpretation. He argues convincingly that Chronicles could be viewed as a parallel to the primary history of Genesis through Kings. In short, both works are national epics with Chronicles being a viable “alternative” to the primary history: “the author’s skillful reuse, reinterpretation, rearrangement, and major supplementation of sections within the primary history all conspire to create a very different work” (133). Knoppers masterfully sums up the place of Chronicles in the canon in the last chapter of his introduction.

Modern history has not seen a commentary this in-depth and well researched on the book of Chronicles. In a commentary that covers only the first nine chapters of a biblical book, Knoppers packs a wealth of information into the first 137 pages. He has an outstanding bibliography that contains entries in English, German, and French. The reader should note that the text closes with eight well-done maps but no indices, though in second volume, on 1 Chr 10–29, contains indices for biblical references, ancient texts, modern authors, and subjects. I heartily recommend this commentary to any who are interested in a comprehensive study of 1 Chronicles.