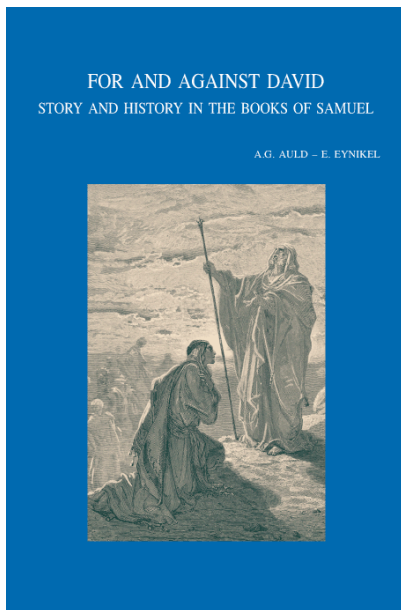


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For and against David: Story and History in the Books of Samuel

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The present volume of essays, in English, German, and French, includes, in addition to Eynikel's introduction, nineteen essays that grew out of two conferences, one held in Nijmegen in 2006 under the title "Story and History in the Books of Samuel" and the other in the same year in Edinburgh, "The Books of Samuel: For and Against David?" Some of these studies treat literary structure and thematics, and some of them center on redaction criticism, sometimes with a more literary focus, sometimes concentrating on genetic stratification. In many cases the discussion of the story suggests historical implications as well. Notably, a number of discussions focus on the specific stratification of the Saul-David tales rather than on the generalities inherent to the hypothesis of the Deuteronomistic redaction. Due attention to the literary aspects of the story is guaranteed by the opening essays by Fokkelman and Bar Efrat that review narrative aspects of the book(s) of Samuel as a whole and thus set the tone for the entire volume.

Jan P. Fokkelman, whose study reads as a concluding chapter of his *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel* (4 vols.; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981–1993) describes "The Samuel Composition as a Book of Life and Death" and discusses "Structural, generic and numerical forms of perfection." At first he discusses the time sequence in the tales of

Saul's death and the preparation for this dramatic high point (1 Sam 27–2 Sam 1) and deftly connects this section to the tale of the ban on the Amalekites (1 Sam 15). A thoughtful consideration of the poems in the opening of 1 Samuel (Hannah's psalm), the closure of 2 Samuel (David's song of thanksgiving and his "last words") and the pivot, David's song of mourning over Saul and Jonathan presents them as the three pillars on which the composition of the book of Samuel stands and lays a connection with the song of Deborah in Judg 5. A study of the keyword *š'l*, "to ask, to desire," links the tale of Hannah and Samuel's birth at the opening of 1 Samuel to the Saul narratives and the tale of Adonijah's death in the closing chapter of this work, 1 Kgs 2. These and additional insights enable Fokkelman to construct a macroplot (or rather, with Ricoeur, an emplotment) that centers on an evolving opposition of life and death, as witnessed by the use of these terms in Hannah's psalm, David's lament over Saul and Jonathan, and Solomon's decision to have Adonijah killed. Using the principles of Aristotle's *Poetica*, Fokkelman discerns a double *peripeteia* leading to disaster, in 1 Sam 13//15 and in 2 Sam 11–12.¹ Thus the meaning of the books of Samuel is not defined by political considerations but laudably by a view of human activity, morality, and destiny. In spite of this insight, Fokkelman also recognizes a pro-Davidic thrust. I find it difficult to combine the latter insight with the great recognition of human frailty. The themes discussed by Fokkelman are taken up in many of the studies in this volume, including the two closing essays.

Shimon Bar-Efrat discusses the development of the figure of David in biblical and postbiblical literature. Finding the "real, historical David" in the Tel Dan stela and the account of the establishment of the dynasty, he recognizes that the accounts of his activities belong to the realm of narrative rather than to history. The picture drawn seems realistic in the sense that it represents the king as a many-faceted, "real" person with faults and weaknesses. In the ensuing biblical and postbiblical tradition, the weaknesses are eliminated. Bar-Efrat follows this processes from Kings through Psalms, Chronicles, the New Testament, and the Talmud until the Kabbalah.

Erik Eynikel returns to the theme of "Das Lied der Hanna (I Sam 2,1–11) und das Lied Davids (2 Sam 22)," in the opening of 1 Samuel and the close of 2 Samuel. His detailed discussion highlights equivalences pertaining to discourse structure (as embedded texts, as poetry, and as spoken discourse) and centers on numerous striking similarities and differences in vocabulary and thematics. Hannah's prayer is interpreted as a general and fundamental statement concerning different classes of humanity and the divine attitude

1. I proposed a similar view of the structure of the Saul-David narratives: Frank H. Polak, "David's Kingship—A Precarious Equilibrium," in *Politics and Theopolitics in the Bible and Postbiblical Literature* (ed. Y Hoffman and H. Graf Reventlow; JSOTSup 171; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 119–47.

to them and connected to the contextual theme of peripety. In the song of David, which centers on God's favors to the king, Eynikel recognizes rather an ironical or even critical dimension as expressed by the narratives in chapters 21–24, a reflection of David on his life avowing his innocence and trust in God.

Christa Schäfer-Lichtenberger follows a synchronic-diachronic model in her treatment of the composition of the chapters concerning Eli, the ark, and the account of Samuel as judge. She describes the Samuel-Saul-David sequence as a genealogical development paralleling the “grandfather-father-grandson” succession, which serves the redactional integration as an overarching device. Within the tales of the first block in this history she recognizes a small complex of tales concerning Eli and the ark, integrated with a second complex, the Samuel tales, by the “author-redactor” of 1 Sam 1–7, for instance, by means of the clauses that contrast Samuel with Eli and his sons. The recognition of an “author-redactor” is an important adjustment of the synchronic model, but nevertheless I wonder whether this analysis does not underestimate the stylistic subtlety and power of the circumstantial and contrastive clauses that permeate the tales of Eli and Samuel, in particular in view of the contrastive structures in chapter 3.

A different kind of synchrony-diachrony synthesis is attempted by Johannes Klein's discussion of the interaction and integration of antimonarchic and promonarchic, pro-Saulide and anti-Saulide “tendencies” in 1 Sam 8–15. Klein is guided by the insight that lack of uniformity of political tendency does not necessarily imply multiple authorship, since texts can assign different positions to different characters, and therefore the opinion expressed in a given context is not necessarily the view advanced by the text. What sets Klein's analysis apart from the synchronic method is the weight attached to the historical background, which, in his view, should be taken into account in respect of the order of the various elements of the text. In his view, throughout chapters 8–15 the position of Samuel, God, and the narrator develops in several directions until the final say on Saul in the tale about the ban on Amalek. The narrator serves as mediator between Saul, Samuel, David, Jonathan, and the people. With regard to the historical background, Klein assumes that some basic facts must be accepted as true, for no one would have been interested in this book if it would not have had a basis in historical factuality. Klein also assumes that the questions regarding the status of kingship must have made sense at the time of the composition of these chapters. Accordingly, he views this section as an early seventh-century composition, following the collapse of the northern kingdom.

The section of 1 Sam 8–15 serves Baruch Halpern as a point of departure for a study of 1 and 2 Samuel as a historiographic composition. He discerns a small redactional layer and two sources. The A source (from 1 Sam 9 on) focuses on Saul as a tragic figure and the exculpation of David but takes the Saul traditions seriously as the tales concerning David.

Halpern characterizes this source as an amalgam of Saul reminiscences and Davidic apologetic. The B source (starting at 1 Sam 8 and including, for example, 1 Sam 25; 29–30) is urgently apologetic about David but, though propagated by the administration, does not omit embarrassing episodes altogether. Halpern rejects a late dating of this version of the narrative, since it admits David's subservience to the Philistines and contains such data as David's stay at Ziklag. Both versions, then, can be considered historiography with "spin." I wonder whether the principal position assigned to 1 Sam 8–9 should not have consequences for 1 Sam 1 and the ensuing tales of Samuel and the Elides.

Klaus-Peter Adam presents the figure of Saul as a tragic figure in the Greek sense of the word. Focusing on the episode of Saul's oath that unwittingly put Jonathan's life at stake, Adam notes a series of narrative features that fit the analysis of tragic poetry in Aristotle's *Poetics*. Adam points to Greek influence in Syria-Palestine since the fifth century B.C.E., in particular to material remains of Greek culture, such as iconographic borrowings. Hence he concludes that in the early third century Palestinian Judeans would have been acquainted with the products of Greek dramaturgy. However, what is not considered in this analysis is the daunting language of Greek tragedy, which demands a high level of proficiency in Greek, expected in Alexandria (Ezekiel the Dramaturg) but not in Samaria or Judea. In addition, Adam fails to give due weight to the fact that the subject matter of Greek tragedy, including the basic plot, belongs to traditional Greek mythology and thus to general narrative repertoire. Features such as the vow that inadvertently leads to human sacrifice or the execution of someone close to the person who uttered the vow seems to belong to this repertoire than to the specific influence of Greek dramaturgy.

Redaction-historical concerns stand out in the studies by Walter Dietrich and Ina Willi-Plein. Willi-Plein, who discusses the story of the nonconquest of Jerusalem (2 Sam 5) envisions a tale of David's house (Davidshausgeschichte) that embodies both the stories attributed to the tale of David's rise (1 Sam 14:47–2 Sam 6) and the succession tale. This overarching narrative is not thought to include preceding compositions in writing, though the possibility of inspiration by oral sources is admitted. Walter Dietrich's study of 2 Sam 6 recognizes an early source in the tales of the Uzza and the procession of the ark, later combined by the narrator of the ark tale, and rounded off by the narrator of the encompassing "court narrative," who introduces Michal with an eye to scenes from the Saul-David narrative and the theme of the royal succession.

Other subjects discussed in this volume include Saul's murder of the priests at Nob (Georg Hentschel and Calum Carmichael), the transfer of the ark (Robert Rezetko), David's culpability in the matter of Uriah's death (Alexander Rudnig, Siegfried Kreuzer, and Steve McQueen), and its lasting consequences in the continuous problems besetting the Davidic dynasty until its very end (David Lamb). Jacques Vermeulen offers a critical

discussion of the narrative of Absalom's rebellion and its aftermath and concludes that the tale was written as an indictment of the northern tribes, while concealing the involvement and discontent of the Judean magnates. The "not-so-innocent reading" of 2 Sam 21–24 is proposed by Anthony Campbell, while Graeme Auld defends its character as an early discarded source.

This volume of essays "for *and* against" David is an important contribution to the study of the narrative and historiography in the book(s) of Samuel. Many of the studies advance our understanding of this book considerably.