The survey under consideration was originally written as a dissertation under the supervision of Stefan Timm at the department of Protestant Theology at the University of Hamburg. The work is organized into three main sections: the first and largest (7–162) analyzes 2 Sam 7 and sections in the Old Testament reminiscent of it; the second section (163–256) pertains to reception of the Nathan prophecy in texts of the Hellenistic-Jewish world, and the third (257–364) is dedicated to the same in the New Testament. The book ends with a thirty-page bibliography and nearly ten-page summary and index.

The starting point and basis for the rest of the work is a careful exegesis of the central text, 2 Sam 7. In line with present practice, the author first gives a synchronic analysis followed by a diachronic one. Given that the synchronic analysis covers only a single chapter, it does not deal with very much except that, as the term נְבוֹ ק appears throughout, 7:1–16 does not seem to be divided into a temple-construction section and a dynasty section. The diachronic analysis is much more intensive and claims a textual formation of three strata: (1) a dynastic promise to the Davidic royal house (vv 11b,*12, 14a, 15a, 16),

1. This review was first published in German in Orientalistische Literaturzeitung 2 (2006). RBL thanks Akademie Verlag for permission to publish this translation of the review, which was provided by Michael Lesley.
which is dated to the ninth century at the latest and which probably did not originate in
the coronation ritual but from a written collection of originally separate royal oracles,
similar to those known from the Neo-Assyrian kingdom; (2) a historicizing stratum (vv.
1a, 2–5, 8aβb, 9a, *12 [“who shall come forth from your body”], 13, 14b, 15b, 18–21, 25–
27) that presumably comes from Josiah’s time and through which the older dynastic
promise was adapted to fit it into the context of the David and Solomon narratives; (3)
three reworkings of Deuteronomistic and later provenance: (a) verses 9b–11a, 22–24, a
reinterpretation from the theological perspective of Israel that simultaneously modified
the promise through the call for obedience to Torah; (b) verses 1b, 6a–8aα, a
reinterpretation with a focus on temple building; and (c) verses 28–29, a reinterpretation
from the standpoint of royal restorative ideology.

This hypothesis makes sense in principle but is more problematical when it comes to the
details. Stratum 2, for instance, might be sketched out too broadly and as a result is dated
too late. Indeed, inside stratum 2 (late-)Deuteronomistic passages (such as the temple
building section [vv. 5b–8aα] and the entire prayer of David [17–29]) are distinguishable
from a (pre-)Josianic redaction that historicizes the dynastic promise, that is, integrates it
into the present narrative context. The differentiation between Israel, temple, and royal
reworkings in stratum 3, which might be based more on content than on literary
observations, are exactly the same categories into which the author divides all subsequent
receptions of 2 Sam 7 (see the summary on 365ff. and especially the table on 369).

Following this the thematically relevant texts are selected, translated, contextualized, and
analyzed until they can be assigned to one of the reception types: “collective-national”;
(royal-)”restorative”; “parenetic-restrictive”; temple-theological.” (This categorization, as
with others of its type, must occasionally be forced on the actual texts; nevertheless, it does
have a somewhat restricted ability to clarify.) The results, as well as the most important
arguments that lead to them, are summarized at the end of the larger sections, simplifying
orientation for the reader.

Already in the prophetic allusions to the Nathan prophecy we encounter every one of the
aforementioned reception types, in interesting mixed forms at that. Thus the “original
salvation oracle” [ursprüngliches Heilswort] 7:4–9*, which makes positive reference to
the dynastic promise, is inserted “into the redactional textual unit of Isa 7:1–17” with a
“dynasty-critical bias,” so that the whole text belongs to the “parenetic-restrictive”
reception type, just as “it is encountered in redactional sections of the books of Kings”
(61). (Is not, however, the tone in Kings a different, much more clearly [Deutero]nomistic
one?) Isaiah 16:1–5, on the other hand, is “influenced” by a “restorative David-theology”
(62), while Isa 55:1–5 should be “considered part of the collective-national interpretative
model” (75). In Isa 33:14–26 the “restorative” type is once again encountered, although
because there is “a cultic parity of Levites with the Zadokite priesthood,” it crosses over to the temple-centered reception model (90–91). In contrast to newer theories, the re-erection of “David’s booth” [trans.: הַסְדָּל] in Amos 9:11–12 aims for the restitution not of Jerusalem but of the kingship, in which the term “booth” alludes to the הַסְדָּל of 2 Sam 7 (95–96). A temple-theological reinterpretation is depicted again in Zech 6:12–13 (99–100).

Before the analysis and even before the translation of a text central to the theme, Ps 89, the author states that its “compositional unity” and “continuous theological conception” advise against “any literary or source-critical decomposition” (103). Is there not an isolatable “source-critical” element in verses 20–38 alluding to the Davidic promise in the middle of the (post)exilic community lament? And is it really certain that the figure of David is substituted entirely by the people of Israel, or are there not in fact overtones of the hope of a restitution of the Davidic monarchy?

The author believes that Ps 132, too, is unified and comes from the postexilic period (128). If this is the case, why does it focus so intently on the ark (v. 8: “Rise up, O LORD … you and the ark”)? Does not verse 10, in which “your [YHWH’s] anointed one” is asking for God’s care “for David’s sake,” also indicate that the psalm is handing down traditions from the time of the kings, even if it was adapted to a postexilic situation? The author argues the opposite and to some extent circularly: “The anointed can … in light of the postexilic origin of this psalm” not be a “reigning Davidide, but only the people, that is, their cultic representative” (133). If this were the case, why would the psalm be categorized in the “restorative Davidic theology” type (128, 138)?

The passage 1 Chr 17 incorporates 2 Sam 7 almost entirely, except for a few seemingly peripheral differences: the peace formula is missing, the prohibition on temple building is restricted to David alone, and the “promise of continued existence for the house of David” changes to “a promise of rulership for Solomon” (155). It is apparent that in Chronicles’ opinion “the idea of Yahweh’s universal kingship was realized during the era of national independence of the Davidic kingship, which, after the destruction of the nation of Judah, found its legitimate continuation in the Achaemenid world domination” (161). As regards content, the Nathan prophecy is “adopted primarily as a cultic-political omen” in Chronicles and secondarily connected to a “parenetic-restrictive Davidic theology” (162).

For the book of Sirach, the author profiles the Hebrew, Greek, and Syriac versions of the text next to one another and then considers the various versions in the context of the contemporary history of the second century B.C.E., in an attempt to explain each one’s special profile as it pertains to the Davidic covenant. After this a more precise analysis of
Sir 47 is undertaken; it concludes: “Ben Sira speaks of the Davidic covenant only as a salvation-historical formulation of the past…. The book of Sirach is in the tradition of the parenetic-restrictive Davidic theology, similar to how it is found in the Dtr reworking of the books of Kings and Chronicles” (174) (However, did not each textual version have its own special profile?)

The Septuagint version of 2 Sam 7 is assigned to the temple-theological reception type, supported by the research of A. Aejmeleus, M. Rösel, E. Tov, and W. M. Schniedewind. Decisive factors are the change of the promise of the house of David to the promise of a house of God in 7:1 (177) and the steadfast pledge to Solomon in 7:16 (183–84). The Greek text of 2 Sam 7 makes it clear that “the Jerusalem temple had evolved into the central religious institution … of the Jewish Hellenistic Diaspora” (185).

Following this come references to 2 Sam 7 in Tob 13:4–5; Jub. 1:24–5; 1 Macc 2:57; Test. Jud. 21–22; 24:1-4, Pss. Sol. 17, Targum, 4Q174, and 4Q252. The latter, incidentally, is where the title of the book comes from: “‘David’s branch’ [Sproß Davids] is a title in the writings of Qumran for an individual eschatological figure who has royal traits” (215) and who has a relationship to the “Interpreter of Torah” that is difficult to determine. Whatever the case, a “double(d) messianic hope of the Qumran community” can be seen (217–18), an example that messianism, in contrast to the views of the author mentioned earlier, cannot be kept entirely at bay.

The author uses the same procedure in all the texts he considers: first he explains source-critical matters (textual tradition, periodization, basic intention), then within this framework presents their respective references to 2 Sam 7. This book is therefore a treasure trove for those who want to gain some insight into literature that lies partly in the realm of neighboring disciplines and that has by and large has been relegated to a secondary place in biblical scholarship. Moreover, in the introduction to the various allusions to 2 Sam 7, the author gives an exemplary look into the thought and intentions of the texts, that is, their authors and addressees. The alternation between general and specific information leads to both an instructive as well as a thoroughly varied read.

The exposition of Psalms of Solomon, however, shows the drawbacks of this method: Psalms of Solomon is first classified (225–28), then the relevant chapter is translated (228–30), the translation is annotated (231–35), and, finally, the text is interpreted in its historical background (Pharisaic criticism of Hasmonean kingship [236–48]). Only a few verses from this book are relevant to his theme, however, and are discussed in a relatively small space (esp. 238–39, 242–43). In the summary (249–50) Pietsch writes that 2 Sam 7 is “king-critical” and is the “jumping-off point for the messianic expectations for the author” of Psalms of Solomon (another example that messianism cannot be entirely
ignored); as a whole the text displays “a modification and intensification of the kingly restorative model.” Was it necessary to write twenty-five dense pages overflowing with erudition to come to this conclusion? The same question can also be asked about the treatment of the New Testament texts. Certainly the state of research in New Testament scholarship is especially complex, but the work the author does in order to come to his assessment of Acts 2:29–31 and 2 Cor 6:17, for instance, is immense (278–96 and 333–48). Besides this there is a markedly dry and dispassionate method of presentation that occasionally makes for exhausting reading. In spite of this, the author offers the most up-to-date research, which is seen not only in the footnotes and bibliography but also in occasional analyses of other recent scholarly positions in the body of the text itself. Moreover, the assessments of the various references to 2 Sam 7 are done time after time with meticulous care and great caution.

This book is meticulously worked out not only in its content but also formally. This reviewer found only a very few problems that distort the meaning of the text (114 n. 370: an incorrect number; 162: “Die Chronik appliziert die Chronik“; [“the Chronicle applies the Chronicle“]; 352, about Heb 1:9: “dienen“ instead of “deinen“ [trans.: “serve” rather than “yours”]).

According to 2 Sam 7 Nathan the prophet promised in the name of God to King David a dynasty that would never end. This provoked a highly charged and multifaceted discussion in early Judaism and Christianity as to what this meant after the downfall of the Davidic state. It is thanks to this work that all the texts from the biblical period that reflect on the prophecy of Nathan are presented and analyzed. The author did immensely painstaking source and literary work and studied and analyzed texts in Hebrew, Greek, Syriac, and Coptic as well as an enormous amount of secondary literature. He has succeeded in demonstrating how many ways the ancient promise was refashioned and updated according to political and spiritual backgrounds. He knows that this reception history did not end in the biblical period but continued to expose new facets afterward: in the church fathers, for instance, in the self-perception of Jewish messiahs, or in the ideology of Christian monarchs, not to mention nontextual forms of reception, such as pictorial art. A scholar cannot accomplish everything in one work, however. Inasmuch as this book does so much so carefully from so many different disciplines, we can only be grateful to the author.