

The Princeton Theological Review

JULY 1927

EVIDENCE IN HEBREW DICTION FOR THE DATES OF DOCUMENTS

This is the first of two articles in which I shall address myself not merely to the consideration of the changes in the Hebrew language which are affirmed by the critics to be characteristic of an age subsequent to Nehemiah, but rather to the whole question of the determination of the age of the documents of the Old Testament on the ground of evidence derived from language. This argument from language as determinative of the age of a document may be divided into two parts: (1) the argument derived from the Hebrew itself; and (2) the argument derived from the foreign words embedded in the Hebrew text.¹

In the present article I shall consider the first of these subjects namely the argument for the age of documents derived from a consideration of the vocabulary and grammar of the Hebrew in which the document is written; and especially that form of the argument which is based upon the

¹ That the evidence of lateness in the Hebrew documents of the Old Testament, derived from the presence in them of words derived from the Aramaic, is futile, has been discussed at length in this REVIEW for January, 1925. As to the evidence of date in the Hebrew documents from the presence in them of words derived from Babylonian, Persian and other languages, it is the intention of the writer to discuss the subject fully in the next issue of this REVIEW. Till then, let it suffice to say that it is contrary to analogy to suppose that these words should be an indication that the documents containing them were written long after the Babylonian and Persian dominion over the Jews had come to an end,—a hundred years or more after the time of Nehemiah. In the next article I shall endeavor to show that the influx of foreign words into the Hebrew literature was in all cases coincident with the subservience of the Israelites to the great world powers whose vocables they here and there adopted.

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT: THE ORACLE*

An expression used in the Bible to designate Jehovah's covenant with the House of David is interesting: "the sure mercies of David." St. Paul employs this phrase in the sermon preached by him at Antioch in Pisidia on his first missionary journey, where he is speaking of the resurrection of Jesus as a fulfilment of ancient divine promise. He quotes from the second and the sixteenth Psalms, and from the fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah. In this passage from Isaiah (ver. 3) we read: "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." St. Paul quotes it as follows: "He said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David."¹

The rendering of the verse in Acts in our Authorized Version is influenced by the passage in Isaiah of which it is a quotation. But St. Paul quoted the Greek translation of Isaiah with which his hearers were familiar, and in our Revised Version the attempt has been made to render the Greek more closely, without regard to its Hebrew original. Hence the R. V. translation: "I will give you the holy and sure *blessings* of David." As is indicated by the use of italics for the word *blessings*, there is no corresponding word in the Greek, which means, literally, "the sure holy things of David." But the effort has rightly been made to show to the English reader, by the addition of the word *blessings*, that these "holy things" refer not to any holy acts or qualities of the man David, but to certain sacred matters of which he was the recipient or beneficiary from God. In other words, God's covenant with David is what is alluded to, whether in the Hebrew by the word rendered "mercies" (literally, lovingkindnesses, acts of lovingkindness), or in the Greek by the word rendered (in the R. V. only) "holy *blessings*." And

* The substance of this article was delivered in Miller Chapel, October 12, 1921, as the third of five lectures on "The House of David," constituting the Stone Lectures for the year 1921-2.

¹ Acts xiii. 34.

this gracious, sacred covenant, as the prophet reminds us, was "sure," faithful, trustworthy.

St. Paul therefore does right to quote Isaiah lv. 3 alongside of Psalm ii. 7, for Psalm ii. 7 is one of many, many passages in the Old Testament that refer to that covenant with David, the historical narrative of which is contained in the seventh chapter of the Second Book of Samuel. Leaving for the present the discussion of all such references, whether in the Old Testament or in the New, we turn now directly to the account in 2 Samuel vii., where we are told what it was that God did for David—that act which later generations called God's "lovingkindness to David" *par excellence*.

The seventh chapter of Second Samuel purports to give a record of two facts closely connected. The first of these (verses 1-17) is a divine oracle, delivered to King David by the prophet Nathan, concerning David's purpose to "build a house" for Jehovah's habitation and concerning Jehovah's purpose to "build a house" for David in the sense that David's posterity should forever possess the right of dominion over Jehovah's people. And the second fact recorded is David's visit to the sanctuary to offer a prayer of thanksgiving and petition in view of this oracle (verses 18-29). With the latter half of the chapter we shall have comparatively little concern: here and there it serves to shed light on the way David understood the oracle. The former half, on the other hand, demands the closest examination, in view of its focal importance for the history of the Davidic House and thus also of all subsequent revelation and redemption.

The occasion when this oracle was given is noted in the first verse of the chapter, as a time when "Jehovah had given David rest from all his enemies round about," and when he himself was dwelling in that "house of cedar" which he had just erected in his new capital, Jerusalem.

Considerable discussion has arisen over the question of the relation of these descriptive phrases to the position the chapter occupies in the Books of Samuel. It immediately follows the narrative of the bringing up of the Ark by David into the

“city of David” and its installation in the tent he there erected to house it. That account, in its turn, follows the story of David’s capture of Jerusalem from its Canaanitish inhabitants, his removal of his residence thither from Hebron, his erection of the royal palace with the help of the King of Tyre, his enlargement of his family through many marriages and the birth of many more children, and his successful campaign against the Philistines. On the other hand this seventh chapter precedes the record of David’s vigorous wars with Moabites, Syrians, and Edomites, and ultimately with the Ammonites and their Syrian allies of Zobah. The eighth chapter in fact begins with the words, “After this it came to pass.” Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to press this phrase, stereotyped in the usage of Hebrew narrative style, in the endeavor to prove that everything recorded in the eighth chapter belongs chronologically after every event mentioned in the seventh chapter. The author, who has of course used written material in compiling his work, shows in other places as he does here that he is controlled by logical considerations as well as chronological, in the arrangement of his material.

The logical principle at work is actually quite plain. Jerusalem’s wonderful career as the political and religious center of the nation stands here at its inception. First the author tells how Jerusalem fell into the hands of Israel—an alien city captured with the express purpose of making it the new national center. Next he gives us a glimpse of David’s earliest building operations in making the city over for its new rôle: enlargement, fortification, a royal palace. Then he introduces to us the Jerusalem of Jehovah’s holy habitation, by telling how David set the Ark of Jehovah alongside his own palace and commenced before it those sacrifices which were destined to continue to be offered for ages on that spot.

Hereupon the author shows us how incongruous David at once felt it to be, that he himself should have passed from the tent-life of his years of wandering in the wilderness of

Judaea to his cedar-ceiled palace on Zion, and yet that Jehovah his God should still continue to have no other house than that same nomadic shelter which He had deigned to inhabit during Israel's wandering in the wilderness and the period of conquest and anarchy which followed. In Egypt, in Babylonia, in Phoenicia—everywhere that civilization flourished—kings' palaces and temples of deities stood side by side, and of the two the latter was uniformly the greater in size and the more splendid in appointment. Why then, in this new monarchy of Israel, should it not be the same? Without having recourse, therefore, to any other considerations, political or religious, which might be suggested as possible motives, we can easily content ourselves with these considerations, so thoroughly in harmony with the age depicted.

Only after the completion of this train of associations—itsself a natural unit—does the author resume his sources for the narration of that external history of warfare and international relations, which he had postponed (save for one exception) till this Jerusalem episode was ended. In view, then, of the assertion at the beginning of our chapter vii. about David's "rest" from his wars, and in view of the allusion (ver. 12) to Solomon's birth as still future, we may reasonably hold that this oracle is to be dated after the completion of the Syro-Ammonitish war,² and before the birth of Bath-sheba's second child who was destined to succeed David.³ This narrows the time to comparatively small limits. May it not be possible, indeed, that David gave to this son the name Solomon, "the peaceful," because he believed that now at length he had finished the military phase of his struggle to establish a permanent throne and dynasty? If so, this would reveal the same frame of mind as chapter vii. reflects, with its double interest: its concern for a substantial sanc-

² 2 Sam. xi. 19; xii. 29.

³ *Ibid.*, ver. 24. Note that here also the author completes the Bath-sheba episode, before concluding the narrative of the war with which it was vitally connected.

tuary for the nation, and its profound satisfaction in the divine promise to establish the reigning house.

When David opened to Nathan the prophet his sense of the incongruity between his own palace and the temporary tent for Jehovah's worship, the prophet certainly understood the king's meaning, whether David actually framed his whole thought in so many words or was as brief and allusive as he is in our record: "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains." Nathan promptly approved the king's evident purpose to remedy this unworthy inferiority of Jehovah's housing. "Go," says the prophet, "do all that is in thy heart; for Jehovah is with thee." At first blush, without seeking or receiving any special revelation, Nathan feels sure that this generous and pious purpose is consonant with the majesty of God and with the finality of His choice of Jerusalem.

However, like Samuel at the anointing of David, Nathan had to learn that not even a prophet can safely take it upon himself to announce the divine pleasure, unless he have a specific and definite "Thus saith the Lord" to quote for his authority. That night he received such an oracle. It completely reversed the judgment he had himself formed and voiced to David. The verses which follow—from the 5th to the 16th—purport to be what Jehovah that night told Nathan to tell David. And in the 17th verse we are informed that "according to all these words and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak to David." That is, the message as delivered was represented by Nathan, and was accepted by David, as an accurate reproduction of a fresh divine oracle from Jehovah to Nathan.

The oracle itself may be divided into two clearly marked halves. The first half, embracing 5 to 11a, begins with a clear-cut prohibition of David's building proposal, followed by a rehearsal of Jehovah's relation to Israel, both prior to His choice of David and since He had elevated David to be Israel's leader. The second half, verses 11b to 16, begins with just such another abrupt and pithy utterance as that in verse

5, and then passes on to the elaboration of Jehovah's relation to that future in which David was interested: God promises to build a house for David, who must not build a house for God. To this house of David God holds out the prospect of unlimited sovereignty over Israel—an unconditional promise, which even the individual unworthiness of members of that house cannot definitively annul; their sin can in fact only illustrate the unchangeable faithfulness of Jehovah, in chastising them like a father whilst holding fast the collective unit, "the house" or "the seed" of David.

Three attacks have been launched by modern criticism upon the integrity of this oracle of Nathan. And because certain underlying principles and presuppositions of those critical schools to which these challengers of its integrity belong are obviously the ultimate basis and motive of their challenge, we can conveniently use this question of integrity as the line of inquiry along which to pursue our entire critical examination of the oracle, including the problems of its date and credibility.

I. The first attack upon the integrity of the oracle of Nathan—both earliest in time and simplest in degree of complexity—is that made by Wellhausen in his "Text of the Books of Samuel," which appeared in 1871.⁴ He separated verse 13 from the rest of the passage, declaring it an interpolation by a later hand. It has since been the fashion for critics of his school to repeat (often *verbatim*) the arguments he there used for sundering this verse from its context.

Verse 13 reads thus: "He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever." This sentence, with its emphatic "he" for the subject of its first clause (not just the pronominal subject implied in the verb-form, but a personal pronoun laying stress on that subject), is clearly intended to point the contrast with verse 5: *thou* shalt *not* build me a house (5), but *thy seed* (12) shall build it (13). Now Wellhausen remarks, as his first

⁴ Pp. 171f.

argument (with a delightful mixed metaphor, which his followers have not hesitated to repeat), that this contrast "cuts the vein of the real point." By the "real point" he means the other contrast: *thou* shalt not build *me* a house (5), but *I* will build *thee* a house (11).

Now it is not too much to say that the essence of this oracle lies in the two sentences of verses 5 and 11, with which, as we have already seen, the two halves of the oracle begin: "Shalt thou build me a house for me to dwell in?" and, "Jehovah telleth thee that he will make thee a house." The latter is clearly intended to attach to, and contrast with, the former. Only, it must also be observed that in verse 5 the whole emphasis lies on the pronoun "thou": there is no stress whatever on the pronoun "me." The true force of the original calls for such an English dress as this: "Is it thou that shouldst build for me a house for my habitation?" The parallel passage in 1 Chronicles (xvii. 4), although it has recast the interrogative form of 2 Samuel into the declarative, is absolutely correct in its treatment of the pronoun: "It is not thou that shouldst build the house for habitation." Because of this emphasis on the subject in verse 5, precisely similar to the emphasis on the subject in verse 13, it is quite clear that the mere excision of the latter does not do away with all suggestion of a contrast between two possible builders of the future Temple. Already there lay in the mind of the person who spoke or penned verse 5 the thought of another who should do what the oracle was forbidding David from doing.⁵ Any other explanation of this emphasis breaks down because of the entire lack of emphasis on the other pronoun, the "me" which is the indirect object of the same sentence. There is not the slightest foreshadowing in verse 5 of the play on the phrase "build a house" which constitutes the point of verse 11. It is not till verse 13 that one

⁵ The effect on the reader of ver. 5 in the Hebrew is similar to that effect of suspense which the reader of a Greek sentence feels, when a *μέν* is introduced after a subject: it sets him to looking for the correlative *δέ* after a corresponding subject.

feels the satisfaction of having reached the true adversative implied in verse 5. And this adversative is introduced precisely where it should come in: if the thought boils down to a "not *thou*, but *he*," then we have first to know who that "he" is, namely, Solomon, David's "seed"—the first stage in the fulfilment of the promised "house" of David.

Thus we see that Wellhausen's caution is better justified than the confidence of his followers. For in spite of the considerations urged by Wellhausen for excising verse 13, he at first decided in favor of the integrity of the passage on account of the quotation in 1 Kings v. 5 (Heb. 19): "I purpose to build a house for the name of Jehovah my God, as Jehovah spake unto David, my father, saying, Thy son, whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build the house for my name." The reference here to our 13th verse is of course unmistakable. And yet, in his later book, "Composition of the Hexateuch,"⁶ Wellhausen has a footnote in which he expresses his regret that earlier he had been "restrained by 1 Kings v. 5 from drawing the conclusions from his reasoning."⁷ The fact is, that by making the allusions in the Book of Kings a "Deuteronomistic working over" of Solomonic traditions and therefore a product of the late seventh century, Wellhausen is free to date our passage as it now stands at the same late date. What he then does with the passage as originally written (minus verse 13) appears from the following sentences: "The author looks back on a long duration of the Davidic dynasty (ver. 19) and knows of

⁶ 3d German ed. (1899), pp. 254f.

⁷ The same passage appears also in Wellhausen's ed. of Bleek's *Einleitung* in its 4th ed. (1878), p. 223. In his 6th ed. of the same work, on the other hand, Bleek's original material is restored. Bleek uses 2 Sam. vii.—and precisely the declaration in ver. 13—as a proof that the Books of Samuel must originally have included an account of Solomon's building of the Temple. "For," says he, "the author who tells in 2 Sam. vii. how David was restrained from the erection of a costly Temple by the revelation given to Nathan, and how *it was shown him that this should be accomplished according to the divine purpose through his seed*, intended to tell how this was fulfilled by Solomon's building of the Temple and he also really told this later in his book." (Italics ours).

good and bad members of it; yet, in spite of the punishments necessary from time to time, still Jehovah does not change the object of His tuition, as in the Kingdom of Israel—He does in fact educate, not annihilate nor reject.” Then, after referring to the prophecy about the House of Zadok in 1 Sam. ii. 27-36, he decides that “probably the same person is to be assumed as having conceived both prophecies; he must have written while the Jewish monarchy still endured, but fairly late—perhaps under Josiah, when in spite of the evil past new hopes were cherished for the future.”

Budde, one of the most thorough-going exponents of the critical principles of the Wellhausen school, carries this identification of authorship and age still farther. He writes:⁸ “Outside of ver. 13 there is in the entire passage not the least reference to be found to the Solomonic Temple. This would be unthinkable for an author of the Deuteronomistic school, since to it the Temple is all-in-all. Herein lies the fundamental difference between our passage and the prayer of Solomon at the Dedication, 1 Kings viii., with which in other respects it shows so much resemblance. If then ver. 13 must come from the hand of a Deuteronomist, the passage itself must for that very reason belong to the pre-Deuteronomistic time—conjecturally therefore to the sphere of J or E; as between these two the choice is not difficult.” He decides for “E.”

After giving his reasons for believing that “E” is the literary type to which the passage (minus ver. 13) conforms, Budde next faces the question, In what circles known to us can such a prediction have arisen? He answers it as follows:⁹ “The complete silence about the Temple of Solomon in a passage before which in other respects the entire future lies open from afar; indeed, still more, the simple *I want no temple*—leads us to the conclusion that the author, with all his love for the Davidic dynasty, to which he is de-

⁸ *Die Bücher Samuel* in Marti's KURZER HANDKOMMENTAR ZUM ALTEN TESTAMENT, pp. 232ff.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

voted, nevertheless regards the Solomonic Temple by no means favorably. So far as we can tell, no point of attachment is to be found for such an attitude, save in that idealism of Amos and Hosea which wanted no sanctuaries whatever because they only lead to false worship. This again points us to E, of course to a late hand, which after the fall of the Northern Kingdom labored under the protection of the Davidic monarchy. This hand must have belonged to the 7th century—may in fact have set to work in conscious opposition to the tendency which gained the mastery in D. The passage, however, is positively pre-exilic, since the fall of the house of David does not lie within its purview."

It is of interest and importance to us at this point to observe (without anticipating what will be said later about the bearing of the genuineness of ver. 13 on the authorship and date of the entire oracle), that the more positive a critic is that this verse is interpolated, the more surely is he driven to the position that the oracle is not only pre-exilic but pre-Deuteronomic—that is to say, that it belongs to that earliest stratum of Hebrew historiography recognized by the Wellhausen school, namely, the "J-E" period. And, within the bounds of that period, there is no real reason to date this chapter in the 7th century, any more than in the 8th, or the 9th, or even the 10th century, apart from the alleged resemblance between its author's point of view on sanctuaries and that of the earliest writing prophets of Israel, Amos and Hosea, who wrote in the 8th century. Of the relative priority of these prophets and the author of 2 Sam. vii., we shall have more to say in another connection.

However there is this further observation called for by the above pronouncement of Budde, that it shows a singular narrowness and illiberality of interpretation, to charge the author of this chapter with a general opposition to sanctuaries. Budde summarizes his attitude in the four words (which he himself italicizes in his comment): "*I want no temple.*" How anyone, not predisposed to classify authors according to some artificial scheme of his own making, but

simply reading the chapter before us with an open mind to gain the impression it makes, can say that, even with ver. 13 left out, its attitude towards a public sanctuary for the Hebrew nation can be reduced to this bare sentence, *I want no temple*, —is a problem in psychology. And then, when Budde goes on to assert that this shows our author intended to offset the pro-sanctuary attitude of his contemporary Deuteronomists, it is only fair to ask him why the author took so odd a way to launch his polemic. Is there the slightest hint here of a correction or criticism of Nathan for having at first approved David's building project *as such*? Is there a hint of disapproval of that tent which David had erected alongside his palace to house the Ark? That act is recounted in the chapter immediately preceding, and is admittedly the determining reason for this chapter's position in the Books of Samuel just where it stands. Is it worthy of the divine honor to represent Jehovah as playing on the theme "build a house" by promising David to build him a house, if Jehovah Himself is in the author's opinion offended with all public worship in such a house? What Jehovah actually asks is this: "Did I ever demand a house of cedar during the long period while I was being worshipped by your fathers in a simple tent?" But is not that a singularly ineffective way of saying, "All these sanctuaries are an abomination to me"? The whole question, as asked and answered by this school of criticism, is an admirable illustration of its arid, mechanical fashion of dealing with these ancient documents.

So much for the argument that ver. 13 is not a part of the oracle, on the ground that it creates a false and disturbing contrast alien to the rest of the chapter, and thus points to an entirely different circle and age for its origin. A second argument, repeated by those who follow Wellhausen in this matter, consists in the assertion that verse 13, "which according to our feeling can only refer to Solomon, has a confusing effect on verses 14ff."¹⁰ In this, the succeeding context, as

¹⁰ *Loc. cit.*

in verse 12 which precedes, the word *seed* "is not equivalent to *son*, and the words if limited to Solomon lose the best part of their significance: they must under any condition be referred to the Davidic dynasty as a whole, in contrast to that of Saul, ver. 15."¹¹ Wellhausen himself takes care to add that "the Hebrew is given to treating personified collectives as individuals, and then making them even subjects of actions which *we* can attribute only to the concrete."¹² In Budde we read simply this magisterial utterance: "Solomon is of course meant (in ver. 13); but in ver. 12 and vs. 14ff *thy seed* unquestionably means David's entire posterity. The verse is therefore to be regarded with certainty as an interpolation."¹³

But let us look at the context a little more closely. With ver. 11b comes the abrupt announcement of God's intention: "I will build thee a house." This oracular sentence of course calls for elucidation. The first thing to be added to it by way of elucidation is naturally the promise of that posterity in which David's throne and kingdom shall continue beyond the limits of his own lifetime. "When thy days are fulfilled," says the prophet, "when thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, that shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom." But this cannot be all. There is bound to be some reference to that proposal which gave occasion to the oracle—the proposal to build a temple. Gressmann is perfectly right in saying¹⁴ that no explanation can be found in the whole context for uniting what (as we shall see later) he regards as the two separate parts of this chapter, unless there is present in this oracle *some* allusion to the building of the Temple. He, as well as the Wellhausen critics, deletes the 13th verse which contains that allusion. Yet not only is it in place where it stands, but Gressmann has taught the Wellhausen critics that the unity

¹¹ *Text der Bücher Samuelis*, p. 171.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 172.

¹³ Budde, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

¹⁴ See pp. 434 ff. *infra*.

of the chapter cannot be successfully defended without it. As soon as verse 12 has given to David the major truth of the oracle—the duration of his kingdom beyond his own death—verse 13 proceeds to give him the minor truth of the oracle—the erection of that Temple which he had himself been forbidden to build (ver. 5).

Klostermann has well exhibited the relation between verses 12 and 13 in these words:¹⁵ “The nerve of the thought is, that Jehovah denies to David the building of a house for the Ark only because David’s relation to Him as an enduring relation is to be transferred by God to David’s descendants, and the erection of a house for Jehovah will come to stand as a memorial and thanksgiving for the faithfulness with which Jehovah has built for David a house in his posterity.” And again:¹⁶ “The thought comes out clearly that the erection of the Temple, whereby Jehovah becomes the king’s Guest and the king God’s host, is a symbol and pledge of this king’s eternal continuance. And it is a natural step in advance when in ver. 14 there is more nearly described the personal connection and relation of life thereby instituted.”

Still a third consideration, which Wellhausen urged and his successors have echoed, is that “ver. 13b repeats the closing words of ver. 12b but little altered.”¹⁷ With Budde’s pen this becomes: “Ver. 13b contains simply what was in ver. 12b.”¹⁸ What are the facts? Ver. 12b reads, “And I will establish his kingdom.” Ver. 13b, in the Hebrew text of Samuel, reads, “And I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever.” But in the Septuagint of Samuel and in both the Hebrew and the Septuagint texts of the parallel passage, 1 Chr. xvii. 12, the true reading is preserved, “And I will establish his throne for ever.” As Klostermann remarks, the work *kingdom* probably crept into the Hebrew text of Samuel from ver. 12, even though the word *establish* which

¹⁵ In Strack und Zöckler’s KOMMENTAR, *ad loc.*, ver. 12.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, ver. 13.

¹⁷ *Text*, p. 172.

¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 232.

there precedes it is in a different conjugation from that of the same verb in ver. 13.¹⁹

"I will establish his kingdom." "I will establish his throne for ever." There are the two statements side by side. Do they sound identical? Would David's ear catch *nothing* in the second that is not in the first? We do not refer to the mere change from *kingdom* to *throne*: the two words refer essentially to a single idea. We do not refer to the change of conjugation in the verb, which is of little significance. We refer of course to the words "*for ever*." Do critics who assert that ver. 13 contains nothing save what was in ver. 12 realize that this is the first time that David's ear caught the music of those wonderful words, which are repeated twice in ver. 16 as the climax of the whole oracle, and which are echoed and re-echoed in David's prayer, and thereafter in poets' psalms and prophets' visions down the centuries, until at last in the "Hallelujah Chorus" of the Apocalypse they break in waves of glory, "And he shall reign for ever and ever, for ever and ever, Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" Here—here in this wretchedly misunderstood and maltreated verse 13 of 2 Sam. vii.—we hear for the first time the determination of Almighty God, that as long as He shall have a human people for His own possession (and that too is "for ever," see ver. 24), so long shall the seed of David be the covenanted bearer of a divinely conferred and divinely maintained sovereignty over it. Words like this may indeed have lost their meaning to some modern expositors. But we may be quite sure that they had not lost their keen edge in David's day. For from his first bewildered exclamation, "Who am I, and what is my house?" down to his climax, "Now therefore begin and bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee; for thou, O Lord Jehovah, hast spoken it: and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever," we can feel the awe of

¹⁹ Note also the analogy of ver. 16, where *throne* in the second member once more takes up the words *house* and *kingdom* in the first member.

this ancient king, as he heard from his God, through His accredited prophet, words which he could not have dared believe, coming from any other source—words too great for him fully to take in, yet which, down to his death (see 2 Sam. xxiii. 1-6), he amazedly cherished, rehearsed, and bequeathed to his line after him as his greatest treasure: "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant,²⁰ ordered in all things and sure."

II. That critic who has made the most thorough-going attempt to prove that all the "Messianic" passages in the pre-exilic prophets are interpolations, and that Ezekiel is really the first "Messianic prophet," is Paul Volz, whose book,²¹ published in 1897, is still the standard exposition of the subject from the standpoint of his own school. In a note in that work, appended to his discussion of the prophet Jeremiah, Volz points to 2 Sam. vii. as evidence for his assertion, that by Jeremiah's time there was already in the air a "tendency to cling to the historical soil, to the national organization, and to the system of secular government."²²

But when Volz speaks of our chapter, it means to him, not what it now is, but what he conceives it to have been originally. In that form, he holds, it had nothing whatever to say about the Temple. Quite without argument he declares²³ that that original form was as follows: "And it came to pass, when the king dwelt in his own house, that the word of Jehovah came unto Nathan, saying, Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith Jehovah, I took thee from the shepcote, from following the sheep, that thou shouldst be prince over my people Israel, and I have been with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies before thee; and I will make thee a great name, like unto the name of the

²⁰ Literally, "a covenant of eternity," using the same Hebrew word as in the phrase "for ever."

²¹ *Die vorexilische Jahweprophetie und der Messias, in ihrem Verhältniss dargestellt.* Göttingen, 1897.

²² *Op. cit.*, p. 75.

²³ *Ibid.*, footnote on pages 75 and 76.

great ones that are in the earth. And, behold, I am telling thee that Jehovah will make thee a house. When thy days are fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, that shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom." With the addition to this merely of verses 14-16, that is the whole story for Volz. Not a word about David's inquiry of Nathan; not a word in Nathan's answer about the earlier Tabernacle or about the future Temple; simply and solely an oracle about the Davidic dynasty as permanently established and blessed by Jehovah.

The presuppositions of such a passage are, according to this critic, first, a long history already passed over by the princely house of David; second, the previous fall of the Northern Kingdom with its government; and third, an acquaintance with the great monarchies. Yet, on the other hand, Volz argues, this "original" chapter vii. must be pre-exilic, because it dates from before the downfall of the dynasty, and also pre-Deuteronomic, or rather, pre-Deuteronomistic.²⁴ Ver. 14, he thinks, "may well refer to Manasseh," who sinned and suffered for it. And "the prosperous reign of that strong, beloved, devoted servant of Jehovah and son of David, King Josiah, can most easily account for the origin of the oracle."

What then, we may ask, led to the existence of the chapter as we now have it, with its confusion of the two *motifs*—dynasty and Temple? This, Volz holds, was due to an addition made to the original oracle during the Exile, by some one who wanted to provide a basis for 1 Kings viii. 14ff—that passage in Solomon's speech at the Dedication, in which he ascribes to his father David the inception of the Temple-idea and the commission of its accomplishment to himself. And this addition was made at the time when 2 Sam. vii. was placed where it now stands, following chapter vi. with its account of the erection of a tent for the Ark.

²⁴ That is, earlier than the Deuteronomized histories, not necessarily prior to the publication of Deuteronomy itself (622 B.C.).

Volz is thus at one with the Wellhausen school in regard to the date when the reference to the perpetuity of David's line must have originated, viz., towards the close of the 7th century. But he takes a more drastic course than the others, in order to avoid the difficulty of dating a supposed polemic against the Jerusalem Temple precisely at the time when that Temple meant more to the Hebrew than ever before—in the period of Josiah. He simply severs all of this chapter that could be so interpreted from the remainder, and then casts it into that favorite receptacle of modern criticism—the Exile. Those who, like Budde and Cornill, keep the chapter intact (save of course for ver. 13), are driven to the extreme recourse of supposing that the writer was a man of the Northern Kingdom (then defunct), living under the protection of the firm, steady hand of the Davidic dynasty—so different from his country's ephemeral dynasties—and therefore an enthusiastic admirer of it; yet at the same time a man under the influence of the old "Ephraimitic tradition" of Amos and Hosea, which on principle opposed all public cultus, sanctuaries, and the rest of the machinery of ceremonial religion. This unique combination, zeal for the House of David, and rejection of the Temple which that house had built and maintained, is responsible for the ingenious hypothesis of a Northerner living in the South after there is no longer any Northern Kingdom. This amazing Northerner sympathizes with that which had separated his old realm from the Southern Kingdom for centuries—the Davidic dynasty—yet opposes that which the two nations had always had in common—public sanctuaries for the worship of Jehovah!²⁵

It is astonishing to see the complacency with which this dictum of the new tradition is accepted by most of its adherents. Yet to others of them it has seemed, as it does to us,

²⁵ This hypothesis just reverses the relation of cause and effect as stated in 1 Kings xii. 27: Jeroboam fears that devotion to the Jerusalem sanctuary will lead his Northerners back to the Davidic dynasty.

more like a reduction to the absurd. Besides Volz, who, as we have seen, escapes this absurdity by his more drastic surgery, H. P. Smith attempts to escape it by a line of argument for which Budde takes him to task. Smith places the whole chapter in the Exile, arguing that the expectation which "pictured the perpetual rule of the House of David was not fully formulated until the time of the Exile, when the loss of their dynasty made the pious Israelites value it the more."²⁶ "But," says Budde, "Smith ought to have taken warning from this not to assign the passage itself to the Exile. It became later the firmest foundation for the Messianic hope, for the very reason that the cessation of the sovereignty of David's House appears in it as quite impossible."²⁷ To which Smith later replies: "It is a question whether the Exile was ever regarded by believing Israelites as a *destruction* of either people or dynasty."²⁸ He even holds that some expressions in the chapter "seem at least to hint at" the capture of Jerusalem.

III. We turn now to the third of the three attacks on the integrity of the oracle of Nathan, that of Hugo Gressmann. This gifted and popular Berlin professor, who has just passed away while on a lecture-tour in this country, is perhaps the leading exponent of the newest school of Old Testament criticism, the school which sets out from the data of the comparative study of religion. With the same naturalistic principles that lie at the basis of the Wellhausen school, the adherents of this younger school arrive often at quite different conclusions as to date and authorship of many Biblical documents, chiefly because they envisage the evolution of religion in Israel in the light of the entire ancient Orient which modern archaeological discovery has opened up.

Whereas one might think, in reading older works from adherents of all the schools, that the Hebrews lived an

²⁶ *Commentary on the Books of Samuel* in the INTERNATIONAL CRITICAL COMMENTARY, p. 297.

²⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 233.

²⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 298.

isolated life among their mountains and valleys, little touched by the thought of the contemporary world outside, the reader of Gressmann and his confreres is never allowed to forget that, throughout the centuries covered by the Old Testament, the same ideas were fermenting in Palestine as in the neighboring lands of Egypt, Babylonia, Arabia, and Syria. As a result of comparison of the data within Israel with the data outside of Israel they tell us that much of the evolution currently attributed to Israel in the last millennium B.C. had already been achieved in Western Asia in the two millenniums that preceded David's age. Of that evolution and all its products David and his successors, therefore, were the potential heirs. Much that according to the older, water-tight-compartment criticism simply *could* not be dated as early as the Biblical documents dated it, can thus be accepted by this later school at approximately its traditional date. This is not at all because of any devotion to tradition as such, but because this comparative method discovers a congruity between the Biblical data and the contemporary stage of general evolution.

These remarks will perhaps suffice to introduce Gressmann's criticism of 2 Sam. vii.,²⁹ by affording the necessary background for our estimate of it. His agreement with the Wellhausen critics is limited to the excision of ver. 13. He differs from them in dividing the chapter into two separate compositions, by sundering verses 1-7 from the rest of the chapter.

His first argument is based on literary style. The first of these two pieces, he says, is in style "a good, terse, almost laconic prose, in which one must read much between the lines;" the latter is a "half-poetic, loquacious, almost tiresome prose."

He confirms his right to divide thus, however, by other

²⁹ To be found in *Die älteste Geschichtsschreibung und Prophetie Israels*, pp. 142-145. This is the first section of the second division of *DIE SCHRIFTEN DES ALTEN TESTAMENTS*, edited by Gressmann, Gunkel and others.

considerations than style. The first section is a question which demands an immediate answer; the second is a prophecy, which Jehovah gives "of His own accord," that is, without special occasion.

Further, Gressmann asserts, the connection between the parts is loose. It is based on a paradox: "such connections do not occur elsewhere in the prose-literature of Israel." "More important," he writes, "is the observation that there is no inner basis for the divine promise. Why does Jehovah make His splendid promise when He has just rejected the plan to erect the Temple? Does He feel obliged to show gratitude for the king's good intention? Or will He reward David only on condition that he gives up his idea? This problem cannot be solved—a clear evidence that the two parts do not belong together. Since neither the divine promise (vs. 8-17) nor David's prayer (vs. 18-29) in their original form refers to the erection of the Temple, they are to be taken as an independent literary unit, which was later inserted artificially into this context."

Upon further examination he declares this whole later addition to be "an originally poetic psalm in prosaic paraphrase." It was at first a *Königslied*—a song in praise of the king—written by some court poet, similar to such psalms in the Psalter as Psalm ii., or xx., or cx., in which also, as here, "we meet the oracular style." So much, at least, for the first section of this prose-poem (vs. 8-17). The second section (vs. 18-29) was a psalm-prayer (comparable to Psalms xcii., cxvi., &c.), showing "deep humility, warm gratitude, and joyful confidence," but withal a naïve touch in its appeal to Deity to buy additional fame in all the world through the establishment of David's dynasty! The chapter as we have it now arose through an "ingenious redactor," who was tempted by the pun on the building of the king's house to join this psalm with the narrative of David's plan to build the House of God." He thus "produced a connection between two originally separate pieces, that in spite of the break seems smooth."

What now of the age which produced these separate compositions? We take first Gressmann's answer to this question concerning the prose-psalm—the promise to David's House and David's prayer about it. This, he says, must date from before the erection of Solomon's Temple, because it is of course earlier than ver. 13, which alludes to that Temple as still future, and because "after that time one would hardly have made so paradoxical a point as the chapter before us contains. Besides, the division of the kingdom is never mentioned,—to say nothing of the Exile." Ver. 15 shows that when he speaks of the seed of David going astray and being chastened, the writer had Saul in mind, "not any evil experiences of the later time." This composition, coming even from a court-poet, "pays eloquent tribute to the proud independence of the Israelites, who did not approach their rulers with slavish servility like the Canaanites, Egyptians, Assyrians, and other Orientals."

Second, the origin of the oracle of Nathan. This is the basis of all that tradition (so thoroughly exploited later in the Books of Chronicles) to the effect that David prepared for the Temple which Solomon erected. "This legend," says Gressmann, "wanting in the older historical books, must have had some point of attachment in tradition. It attaches itself to this historical narrative, which tells of David's suddenly conceived and soon abandoned idea of erecting a house of God, and cannot well be an invention. In spite of its pithy brevity it throws an interesting light upon the motives that made for and against the building of a Temple. The king felt it to be an insult to God that He must content Himself with a tent, while he (David) dwelt in a house. . . . Civilization had gradually conquered all spheres of life and aimed now to make its influence felt in the inward and outward manifestations of religion. Since for the Deity the best is always scarcely good enough, God also must receive His share of civilization's products. . . . So at least thought the friends of civilization. . . . The foes of civilization were of the opposite opinion, holding fast to the ideals of nomadic life

and of the Mosaic age. . . . These could not but hate every innovation in the cultus as an apostasy from the true religion. At the head of this reaction stood the prophets, who at that time still resembled the seers; for Nathan is here depicted as nothing more nor less than a *Traumvisionär*—a seer of dream visions—a trustworthy evidence of the high antiquity of this passage.”

Professor Gressmann then proceeds to compare Samuel and Nathan in their attitude toward the kings, and concludes that Nathan, like Samuel, dared here to oppose the king. To be sure, Nathan is represented as at first favoring the proposed innovation—the Temple—for the prophets “were not clear about this question, then broached for the first time.” Nathan arrives at his negative attitude only through an oracle. “It is simply incomprehensible,” says this critic of the newer school, “how this touch could be overlooked and this chapter assigned to the age of Josiah.” His argument is, that the Temple was all-in-all to the Hebrew of Josiah’s time, whereas for the prophets of Amos’ period the Deity wants no Temple nor any cultus, but simply demands love and righteousness from His people. “Here, on the contrary, there is no universal basis given for Nathan’s decision. Enough for him was the thing which the genuine conservative emphasized: Jehovah has always lived in a tent; why should He not continue to do so?” Of course it proved impossible for religion to stand against the advance of civilization. The Temple came in the very next reign. “At the same time,” Gressmann concedes, “the religious opposition of later prophets to Temple and cultus was prepared for by this attitude of Nathan.”

In other words, we have drawn for us here the sketch of an evolutionary process, which those evolutionists *par excellence* of the Wellhausen school have in some way overlooked. From the simple to the advanced is of course from the early to the late. From Nathan’s naïve conservatism to Hosea’s reasoned propaganda is a step from the simple to the advanced; why then is it not also a step from the early to the

late? Nathan's oracle therefore belongs to David's time. It is most interesting thus to observe how, from purely naturalistic principles and by the methods of literary criticism, this latest school of Old Testament critics arrives at the conclusion that 2 Sam. vii. belongs to the period to which it purports to belong—the brief period of the United Monarchy.

Among the sources for this era of the kings Gressmann includes "Temple-chronicles," which, he says, "may be imagined as resembling the court-journals, only with this difference, that they were confined to the Temple." To such a source he traces, for example, the story of Solomon's erection of the Temple, the priests' revolution under Joash, the introduction of the new altar by Ahaz, the discovery of the new Law-book in the Temple under Josiah. "For us," he writes, "the chapters mentioned are valuable to the extent that they represent more or less authentic documents." We are led to suggest that 2 Sam. vii. might well be included in this source, as probably constituting the very beginning of that Temple-history, and therefore as the natural starting-point of any such Temple-chronicle, unless indeed it began with the events narrated in the 6th chapter—the erection of the temporary tent on Zion and the entry of the Ark thereinto. If Psalm xxiv. has been preserved among the Temple-psalms, why may not such narratives as those in 2 Sam. vi. and vii. have been preserved among the historical archives of the Temple?

Further to support the view thus defended by Gressmann, that our chapter is practically contemporaneous with the events it records, yet without adhering to the particular literary theory which he has propounded, we take this opportunity to add certain simple considerations which seem to make for the credibility of the narrative as it stands.

First, we appeal to the customs of antiquity. It is no unparalleled thing which David is here said to have proposed. His purpose in the capture and fortification of Jerusalem is plain, and is admitted by all. His zeal for building, so far as it extended to his own housing, is not challenged: with the

help of Hiram of Tyre he built his own palace. But further, David's devotion to the religion of Jehovah, and his patronage of Jehovah's ministers, are conceded by criticism. When we look abroad at other kings in whom these facts can be duplicated under parallel circumstances, what do we find? They erected splendid temples to their gods. They made them as costly as they could afford, and regarded themselves as most honored in the additional honor which thus accrued to their deities. Why then should not David have purposed to do the like? Is it too much to say that the story in 2 Sam. vii. is *entirely in keeping* with what ancient history and archaeology have to tell us of monarchs in Israel's neighbor-states?

Again, the story here is the logical development of the purpose already revealed in the preceding chapter. David shows his mind by his bringing up of the Ark to Zion and his preparation of a tent there to house it temporarily. No one questions why the author or compiler of the Books of Samuel put the contents of this 7th chapter after the contents of the 6th chapter. But if it was a logical sequence in historiography, why was it not also a reasonable and probable sequence in history? If the historian thought that this interview of David with Nathan was the next thing for him to relate after the story which precedes it, why may not the king of whom he writes so sympathetically have thought that this interview with Nathan was his next step to take after having finished the measures described in chapter vi.? It is not essential to this argument that no events whatever (of a different character), and that no period of time, should have intervened between chapters vi. and vii.; but only that David's purpose to build the Temple should have been the next step, and not too long delayed a step, forward *along the same path*.

Finally, this entire chapter is couched in language entirely befitting the age which is supposed to have produced it and

the man who is the subject of its first half, the speaker of its second half. David's previous career in its broad outlines is here succinctly traced, down to the point in his life when the oracle is alleged to have been given him. From that point on, the future which is opened before his wondering gaze is painted indeed in the brightest colors, yet with no undue definiteness; for principles rather than persons, expectations rather than events, fill up the canvass of the prophet and the vision of the king. Admittedly, so far as most of the radical criticism is concerned to which it has been subjected, the piece belongs to the "J-E" group of writings. Though perhaps "worked over by the Deuteronomists," it has in its origin to be classed with that "pre-Deuteronomic stratum" which constitutes the earliest of the three great strata of Hebrew historical writings. The reasons that have led the modern critical tradition to assign it to the 7th century rather than to an earlier age, lie in fact entirely outside of literary criticism and are drawn from a hard-and-fast scheme of religious development within Israel. Even within this scheme, however, critics have, as we have seen, encountered the utmost difficulty in discovering any age, place, and person affording the essential "tendencies" which they profess to find in this chapter. No wonder, therefore, that Volz, the most thorough-going of these theorists, has been driven to divide the chapter, so as to find some reasonable provenience for each half separately.

How simple, on the other hand, does the problem become, when the whole chapter is kept a unit and is allowed to mean what it actually says and no more! Nathan was not polemizing against cult and sanctuary. He was in sympathy with both. The first thing he said was, "Do all that is in thine heart." If he brought the king an oracle the next morning which said, in effect, "No Temple now, any more than hitherto, because the suitable time has not yet come," why should the prophet on this account be charged with either

anti-priestly or anti-progressive sentiments, as he is,—the former by the Wellhausen school, the latter by the history-of-religion school? Only the forcible ejection of ver. 13 from the oracle (the one point on which they all are agreed), upon grounds wholly inadequate, as we have seen, can occasion such a complete misunderstanding of what is left after its excision. Solomon was soon to build what David was not encouraged to build. But David was at just this time—and when in his life was there a more suitable time?—granted those “mercies” which time was to prove as “sure” as the covenant-keeping God who gave them.

After all, the fundamental consideration in favor of keeping this chapter where it belongs, at the beginning and not at the end of the career of David's dynasty, lies in the sphere of prophetic development. It is admitted by all that this oracle of Nathan is the fountain-head of that broad stream of Messianic prophecy and psalmody, which forms the most significant feature of the Old Testament landscape. If it be true that all the course of that stream belongs to the reaches of the Exile and of post-exilic Judaism, as Volz and most Wellhausen critics would have us believe, then the end of the 7th century is not too late a date for the 7th chapter of 2 Samuel.³⁰ But if, as the newer school of Gunkel and Gressmann, no less than the older schools of Hengstenberg and Ewald maintain, that stream of Messianic prophecy flows through the pre-exilic period also, then the chapter we are discussing must have arisen prior to Isaiah and Micah, Hosea and Amos—to every writer, in fact, who shows dependence on the ideas here first formulated, ideas which center in the eternal duration of David's House as the divinely appointed ruler over a divinely chosen people of God. When one listens to these echoes of 2 Samuel vii. in the

³⁰ No wonder, however, that Budde calls it a melancholy passage, because so soon after it was penned the dynasty's days were ended!

prophets and psalmists of Israel, one not only may, but one must, locate the original voice of which these are the echoes just as far back of them as the facts demand. How numerous, how various, how co-ordinated, and how cumulative these facts of the Old Testament are, which bear witness to the priority of 2 Samuel vii., can only be realized by actually marshalling them, and this will be our next task in this study of the Davidic Covenant.

Princeton.

JAMES OSCAR BOYD.