

THE DYNASTIC ORACLE: II SAMUEL 7

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DR. ROBERT H. PFEIFFER of Harvard has secured himself a permanent place in Old Testament scholarship by his very learned and very thorough *Introduction to the Old Testament*.¹ His critical views represent the more radical wing of modern opinion; but those who read his book with a saving caution will find it extremely useful. It is not surprising that in a book of such scope there should be a certain unevenness of composition; and some weaknesses of the book have been pointed out by reviewers since its appearance. If in the present article, which contains a study of three related passages of Scripture, I draw conclusions which are unfavorable to Dr. Pfeiffer's interpretation of these passages, I do not wish to be considered as attacking Dr. Pfeiffer, but as differing from him with all due respect to the importance of his work.

The passage which has attracted my attention is II Samuel 7, the "Dynastic Oracle" or the "Temple Oracle."² This chapter, Dr. Pfeiffer remarks, has "a strange fascination for biblical students." Dr. Pfeiffer's treatment of the chapter, which is, as far as I have been able to ascertain, quite singular among critics, is not calculated to diminish this fascination. The reader may legitimately ask why he speaks of this passage as "obscure, involved, and badly written"; how he has assured himself that "the chaos in the oracle is due to the muddled mind of its author"; where he has found so many examples of "miserable diction," "bad grammar and dreary style," and "repetition ad nauseam." All readers have noticed and commentators have discussed certain inconcinnities in the passage itself and its relations to its parallels; but they have not been conscious of a muddle or a chaos. And if the reader should reach for Driver's work on the Books of Samuel³ to find some confirmation of Dr. Pfeiffer's strictures, he will find that Driver, who must be acknowledged as one who possessed

¹ Harpers, N. Y., 1941.

² Dr. Pfeiffer treats this passage, together with II Sam. 27-36, in his *Introduction*, pp. 368-73.

³ *Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel* (Oxford, 1913).

a mastery of the Hebrew tongue which few have equalled, has nothing which can be construed in Dr. Pfeiffer's favor. Nor will he find other commentaries any help.⁴

This onslaught against the "monkish drivell" of this chapter is not made gratuitously; it is part of Dr. Pfeiffer's argument for a date of this chapter which is lower than that date which critical opinion in general would place as a limit. Dr. Pfeiffer will not admit a date before the late fourth century. The opinions which he quotes are all opposed to this: Wellhausen, the time of Josias; Kuenen, Cornill, Budde, and Bewer, the seventh century; Steuernagel, oddly enough, places it in the time of David; Stade and H. P. Smith, exilic or post-exilic. To these may be added Sellin,⁵ about 800; Driver,⁶ pre-Deuteronomic; Stenning,⁷ who agrees with Budde; Kautzsch,⁸ who attributes it to a Deuteronomic redactor who may have employed an exemplar furnished by J; Hänel's analysis of the corresponding passage in I Chronicles results in a combination of sources, but the oracle itself he attributes to a common source used by both Samuel and Chronicles, which is in substance ancient;⁹ Klostermann apparently regarded the source as contemporary;¹⁰ Eissfeldt classifies the chapter as Elohistic, which would give 750 as an upper limit.¹¹ There is a substantial agreement for the relatively early date of this passage which is surprising; I find no critic, and Dr. Pfeiffer finds none, who places the passage as low as the late fourth century.

The question of date is fairly important here, and has been neatly put by Cornill: "Its content is penetrated through and through with a prophetic-messianic character, so that the question is whether the chapter is the root of messianic prophecy, or one of the latter's offshoots."¹² This is precisely the question, although we cannot accept

⁴ Budde's description, "Das schöne und erhabene Stück" (*Richter und Samuel*, Giessen, 1890, p. 244), can be duplicated in other commentaries.

⁵ *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Eng. tr., London, 1923), p. 112.

⁶ *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*⁹ (New York, 1913) p. 183.

⁷ *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*, IV, 389.

⁸ *Literature of the Old Testament* (Eng. tr., London, 1898), p. 239.

⁹ Rothstein-Hänel, *Das erste Buch der Chronik* (Leipzig, 1927), pp. 332 ff.

¹⁰ *Die Bücher Samuelis und der Könige* (Nordlingen, 1887).

¹¹ *Einleitung in das alte Testament* (Tübingen, 1934), p. 307.

¹² *Introduction to the Canonical Books of the Old Testament* (Eng. tr., N. Y., 1907), p. 197.

Cornill's choice of the latter alternative. The eternal dynasty of the House of David is a cornerstone of the messianic conception. If this passage is contemporary, then the messianic conception appears, at least in germ, in the tenth century, with results which threaten disaster to the prevailing critical views on the eighth-century prophets; if these critical views are correct, then the passage can be neither contemporary nor historical; it must be a retrojection of post-exilic messianic conceptions into the time of David. Dr. Pfeiffer has attempted to clarify the issue by bringing the date of this passage into harmony with prophetic criticism; no doubt he has noticed that the seventh-century date on which critics agree is a straddle.

THREE FORMS OF THE ORACLE

The dynastic oracle of Nathan is preserved in three forms in the Scriptures: II Samuel 7:8-16, I Chronicles 17:7-14, and Psalm 89: 21-38. The literary connection of these passages is so generally admitted that it seems unnecessary to argue the point here. The synoptic table which appears below exhibits the parallel passages. In some respects this table anticipates some of the conclusions of this examination, so I am obliged to explain it. In drawing up the table it was necessary to choose one of the three passages as a point of reference, since there is a divergence in the order of the passage in the Psalm and in Samuel-Chronicles. I chose the Psalm for reasons which will appear in the course of the study, and which I give here in summary form. Antecedently there is some probability that the Psalm represents the order of the original oracle more exactly than Samuel-Chronicles. The Psalm is free of certain inconcinnities, fairly obvious and noticed by almost all commentators, which are found in Samuel-Chronicles, and which I shall discuss below. The Psalm proceeds from the election of David to protection from enemies, covenant fidelity, and divine adoption, to royal supremacy and an eternal covenant (v. 29). Here, almost at the exact half-way point, the Psalm passes from David to his seed, to whom these promises are extended. The Psalm proceeds from the hypothesis of the sin of David's descendants and their punishment to the eternal covenant with David, which his descendants cannot frustrate. This order, compared to that of Samuel-Chronicles, is clear and straightforward; and, without

excluding the possibility that the Psalm is the effect of harmonizing, gives us at least a working hypothesis.

II Samuel 7

5ab Thus says Yahweh: Shall you build me a house to dwell in? 6 For I have not dwelt in a house from the time when I brought the sons of Israel out of Egypt until this day; but I have been moving about in a tent-dwelling 7 Wherever I journeyed among the sons of Israel have I ever spoken to one of the judges¹⁵ whom I set as rulers over my people Israel, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?' 8aa And now you shall speak thus to my servant David: Thus speaks Yahweh of hosts:

8ab I took you from the folds, from after the sheep, to be prince over my people Israel

Psalm 89

20a Then you spoke in vision to your faithful one¹⁸ and said:

20b I have placed a diadem¹⁶ upon a warrior, I have raised up a chosen one from the people

21 I have found David my servant, with my holy oil I have anointed him
22 Whom my right hand holds firmly, and my arm sustains

I Chronicles 17

4ab Thus says Yahweh: You shall not build me a house to dwell in 5 For I have not dwelt in a house from the time when I brought up the sons of Israel until this day; but I have been (*)¹⁴ from tent to tent-dwelling 6 Wherever I journeyed with all Israel, have I ever spoken a word with any of the judges of Israel whom I appointed to rule over my people, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?' 7aa And now you shall speak thus to my servant David: Thus says Yahweh of hosts:

7ab I took you from the folds, from after the sheep, to be prince over my people Israel

¹³ The correction of plural to singular is based on several MSS. and is generally accepted.

¹⁴ The word "moving about" should probably be supplied here from Sam.

¹⁵ The correction of "tribes" to "judges" on the basis of Chron. is very generally accepted.

¹⁶ This conjectural correction, while not universally received, is superior to the certainly corrupted MT.

II Samuel 7

10a And I shall set a place for my people Israel, and I shall plant it and it shall dwell there, and it shall not be disturbed any more

10b The sons of wickedness shall no more afflict it, as at first 11aa From the day when I appointed judges over my people Israel

11ab I shall give you rest from your enemies

9a I was with you wherever you went, and I cut off your enemies before you

14a I shall be a father to him, and he a son to me

9b I shall make you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth

Psalms 89

23 An enemy shall not overcome him, nor the son of wickedness afflict him

24 I shall crush his foes before him
And those who hate him I shall smite

25 My faithfulness and my covenant-love are with him, and in my name his horn shall be exalted

28 I shall place his hand upon the sea, and his right hand upon the rivers

27 He shall call me, 'My Father art thou, my God and my rock of salvation

28 And I, even I, have set him as my first-born, supreme over the kings of the earth

29 Forever I shall preserve my covenant-love for him, and my covenant is set firm with him

I Chronicles 17

9a And I shall set a place for my people Israel, and I shall plant it and it shall dwell there, and it shall not be disturbed any more

9b The sons of wickedness shall no more trouble it, as at first 10aa And from the days when I appointed judges over my people Israel

10ab I shall humble all your enemies

8a I was with you wherever you went, and I cut off your enemies before you

13a I shall be a father to him, and he a son to me

8b And I shall make you a name like the name of the great ones of the earth

II Samuel 7

11*b* Yahweh also declares that he will make you a house 12*aa* When your days are filled, and you sleep with your fathers

13*a* He shall build a house for my name

12*ab* I shall raise up your seed after you, the issue of your body, and I shall make firm his kingdom 13*b* And I shall establish the throne of his kingdom forever

14*b* If he acts wickedly

14*b* I shall chastise him with the rod of men, and with the strokes of the sons of men

15*a* But my covenant-love shall not depart from him

15*b* As I removed it from him who was before you

Psalms 89

30 I shall establish his seed forever, and his throne as the days of the heavens

31 If his sons forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments

32 If they profane my statutes, and my commandments they do not keep

33 I shall visit their offence with a rod, and their guilt with strokes

34 But my covenant-love I shall not remove¹⁷ from him

And I shall not lie against my faithfulness

35 I shall not profane my covenant, and the utterance of my lips I shall not change

36 One thing I have

I Chronicles 17

10*b* And I tell you that Yahweh will build you a house 11*aa* It shall be, when your days are filled, to go with your fathers

12*a* He shall build me a house

11*ab* I shall raise up your seed after you, one of your sons, and I shall make firm his kingdom

12*a* And I shall establish his throne forever

13*ba* I shall not remove my covenant-love from him

13*bb* As I removed it from him who was before you

¹⁷ This correction of the Ps. on the basis of Chron. is generally received. Many commentators make the same change in the text of Sam., which reading is there supported by the Gk. and Vulg. also.

*II Samuel 7**Psalm 89**I Chronicles 17*

sworn by my holiness: To
David I shall not be false
37 His seed shall endure
forever, and his throne as
the sun before me

16 Your house and your
kingdom are established
before me; your throne is
set firm unto the ages

38 Like the moon it shall
be established, and stand
as long as¹⁸ the skies

14 I shall set him in my
house and my kingdom
forever, and his throne
shall be established unto
the ages

ORIGINAL SOURCE

This conspectus sets all the problems of the passage before us. Now if our juxtaposition of parallel passages is correct—and to a large extent it must be held as certain, for the rest as at least probable—one question forces itself upon us: how are we to explain the alterations both in order and in sense which appear between Psalm and Samuel-Chronicles? In the hypothesis of literary dependence, whether of the Psalm and Chronicles on Samuel, as most critics believe, or of Samuel and Chronicles on the Psalm, as Dr. Pfeiffer maintains, these are the effect of editorial interpretation, alteration, and expansion within the limits of this dependence; that is, within the limits of the material which lies before us. Such a view does not recommend itself here; the problem is not so much the parallelism as the lack of parallelism. This has been noticed by Buttenwieser, who rejects the ordinary view of dependence of the Psalm on Samuel as insufficient to explain the differences between the two.¹⁹ On the other hand, the

¹⁸ This conjectural correction is not generally received, but MT appears to demand some such change.

¹⁹ I reproduce here almost the entire passage because Buttenwieser is the only critic who has given any attention to these differences between Sam. and Ps. While I agree with him on the importance of these differences, the exposition will show that we diverge on the conclusions to be drawn from them. "The prevailing view to the contrary, II Sam. 7 cannot be considered as the source of God's promise to David in Ps. 89 In these verses God is described as speaking to David directly in a vision and not through the medium of a prophet as in Samuel. Further, in the psalm God's promises are made at the time of David's election as king, while in Samuel they are made late in his reign Still more important is the fact that, in Samuel, Nathan's message to him from God is primarily concerned with David's plan to build the Temple, which is disapproved by God, and that the assurance that God will build him a house to last forever is given only inci-

similarities, even verbal, are too numerous and too close to admit of mutual independence. Hence the view of Hänel has special importance.²⁰ He suggests that Chronicles did not, as most critics have said, employ Samuel as a unique source, but that Chronicles made independent use of the same source which Samuel used for this passage. This view opens up possibilities, and it is strange that Hänel himself did not follow them out. If the differences between Samuel and Chronicles are too great to be explained by simple dependence, what is to be said of the differences between the Psalm and Samuel-Chronicles, which are still greater? If there has been independent use of a single source, why may we not examine the passages on the hypothesis that Psalms had access to the original source independently of Samuel?

Hänel's failure to work out these possible conclusions of his own theory is all the more remarkable when we notice that in his reconstruction of the original oracle he makes more use than other commentators of Psalm 89. He is, of course, not the first to say that there is a common source behind this passage; Klostermann speaks in terms which at least suggest this.²¹ But Hänel seems to be the first to suppose an independent use of this source in Samuel and Chronicles. In reconstructing the original oracle Hänel limits himself to Chronicles, vv. 11-14 (Sam., vv. 12-16). But a comparison of the passage shows that the parallelism extends beyond these verses, and the same principles should be applied to the whole discourse of Nathan. Certainly

dentally, as it were, to this disapproval of David's plan. Another equally important difference is that in Samuel there is no mention of world-dominion. As to the supposed similarity of the two in details, note (1) 'neither shall the sons of wickedness subdue them any more' is in Samuel said with reference to Israel, and not to David . . . (2) that verses 27-28 of the psalm and verse 14a of Samuel arrest our attention far more by their contrast than by the phrase 'father' which they have in common; (3) that this holds good also of verses 31-36 of the psalm and verses 14b and 15 of Samuel" (*The Psalms*, Chicago, 1938, pp. 250-51). In the discussion I have passed over two of Buttenwieser's points: the direct address of Ps. and the prophetic mediation of Sam., because I see no mutual exclusion; and the variation in the time of David's life, since I see no evidence whatever for this variation as defined by Buttenwieser.

²⁰ *1 Chronik*, p. 334.

²¹ *Samuel und Könige*, p. 159: "So redet in der hebr. Erz. nur ein Mann, der den ihm bekannten Wortlaut der Rede Nathans mitzuteilen sich ersparen will."

Hänel is the only critic who has taken the correct approach to the problem; others are content to cite parallel passages, without remarking that the most significant feature of the three passages is not parallelism, but parallelism combined with divergence. Not all of this can be dismissed as merely editorial, or the work of expanders, or other such cant of the higher criticism. Editors and expanders as well as authors are human, and we should be able to discover some reasons behind their work. The question has not been properly proposed by critics. It is not, which came first, Samuel or the Psalm? I submit that an examination of the passages will show that neither came first; that the original oracle was first; that the divergences of the three recensions can only be explained by some kind of reconstruction of the original oracle; that Hänel is right in saying that a common source has been used, but that he should have added Psalm 89 as a third and independent witness of the original. In a passage of such significance for the messianic conceptions of the Old Testament, I believe an effort to go behind these texts is not a waste of time.

At the very outset we face the question whether the original oracle was in prose or in verse. This is distinct from the question whether Samuel is in verse or in prose. Almost all critics take it as prose; Dr. Pfeiffer himself is one exception, and Waterman in *The Bible: An American Translation*²² sets off Samuel, vv. 11-16 and Chronicles, vv. 13-14 as verse. But all agree that it is rhythmical, elevated prose (and thus are entirely out of accord with Dr. Pfeiffer's harsh judgment of the passage). Samuel-Chronicles as it stands is prose, and only by critical surgery can one make it into verse. H. P. Smith, who himself attempts a metrical reconstruction which is not too successful, says: "The oracle shows traces of the metrical structure so frequent in prophetic composition, though it cannot be made strictly metrical without emending the text in many places."²³ Now it is not a necessary presumption that oracular pronouncements must be in verse; but there is some antecedent probability. If, as here, an oracular passage is in prose which is truly rhythmical and elevated, and if it is paralleled by a metrical recension, it is very likely that it is a prose paraphrase of the original; and furthermore—a point of some importance—it is very

²² Chicago, 1939.

²³ *Samuel* (ICC, N. Y., 1902), p. 299.

likely that the metrical recension approaches more closely to the expression of the original. Hänel's reconstruction of the original I reproduce here as an example of critical ingenuity:

And it shall be, when your days are filled,
I will raise up your seed after you;
I will be a father to him,
And he will be a son to me;
My covenant-love I will not withdraw from him—
In my faithfulness I do not lie—
Your house is established before me,
And your throne is confirmed forever.²⁴

In this reconstruction Hänel has gone to Psalm 89; there, among other things, he has obtained a 3:3 meter. In the course of the argument I shall give reasons why I think Hänel has not made sufficient use of Psalm 89.

Here, then, are the possibilities: the literary connection between Samuel, Chronicles, and Psalm 89, admitted as a fact without further dispute (except from Bittenwieser, who stands alone), may be explained by the priority of Samuel, from which the Psalm and Chronicles are derived (so most critics), or by the priority of Psalm 89, from which Samuel and Chronicles are derived (so Dr. Pfeiffer), or by the hypothesis of a common source independently used (suggested by Hänel for Samuel and Chronicles, and here applied to the Psalm and to Samuel-Chronicles). In the latter hypothesis the relative priority of the three recensions is of lesser importance; the real problem, as it is in any hypothesis, is the parallels and divergences which are exhibited in the synoptic table. And these we must now attack.

PARALLELS AND DIVERGENCES

The first of these is the occasion of the oracle, which in both Samuel and Chronicles is David's temple project, left unmentioned in the Psalm. This should really cause no difficulty; the Psalmist has no reason to mention the occasion of the oracle, which has no point for his application of the oracle to the distressing situation of Israel. And in omitting the occasion, he has also omitted everything which would not be readily understood without the preliminary narrative;

²⁴ *1 Chronik*, p. 332.

the "house" has been excised from the Psalm altogether. If, on the other hand, the preliminary narrative of the temple project has been added to Samuel, as Dr. Pfeiffer proposes, then it is pure invention, and this creates serious difficulties; but these, I think, will be better treated after an analysis of the passage, when we shall be in a better position to discuss the historical character of the narrative.

Postponing this question, we next arrive at the problem of the plus which the Psalm, vv. 21-26 exhibits over Samuel, vv. 8-10 (Chron., vv. 7-10), as well as one variation in Samuel, v. 10*b* (Chron., v. 9*b*) from Psalm, v. 23. The point of Samuel, v. 8 is that David owes all he has to Yahweh. From a shepherd boy he has become king by Yahweh's election. Such a pronouncement can be given only with the purpose of putting David in his place, and looks back to David's temple project—his desire, we may say, to "do something" for Yahweh. On the contrary, he should recall that Yahweh has done everything for him. But the rebuke, if it is a rebuke, is only playful. Yahweh has not only done everything for David, but he is going to do much more; David never dreamed, when he was following the sheep, that he would become king, nor does he, now king, dream of what Yahweh is promising him: an eternal dynasty. Psalm 89 in its recension, possibly expanded, entirely omits the undercurrents which we detect (not too fancifully, I hope) in Samuel, but dwells through repetition upon that idea which, in its recension, is dominant: the choice of David as king is a choice of Yahweh Himself. It is hard to believe that Samuel's juxtaposition of the sheepfold and the princely dignity, a frank allusion to David's "rags to riches" career, is not closer to the original than is Psalm 89, which refers to David entirely in those terms of idealized grandeur in which his memory was enshrined. But this is entirely a matter of taste, and Dr. Pfeiffer's view of the passage is different. He has no difficulty in supposing that a fourth-century writer, living in the time when the idealization of David and his dynasty was a settled tradition, could, in rewriting Psalm 89, reduce its majestic measures to the homely tone of a man who knew David when he was a nobody, and was familiar enough with him to remind him of his antecedents.²⁵ I find it impossible to accept this supposition. We have here, then

²⁵ Klostermann and Schulz (*Die Bücher Samuel*, Münster, 1920) have pointed out the antithesis between the poor shepherd and the ruler of God's people (*ad loc.*).

an original feature of the oracle, preserved in Samuel–Chronicles, but omitted from the Psalm. This does not necessarily mean that the Psalm recension of these verses is all expansion; we cannot exclude the possibility that the verses which it does preserve represent the original more exactly than the prose summary of Samuel–Chronicles.

Samuel, v. 9*a* (Chron., v. 8*a*) finds, I think, a sufficient parallel in Psalm, v. 24; the differences are not so striking as to require special attention. But in Samuel, v. 10*b* (Chron., v. 9*b*) we find a striking variation, a part of the larger variation by which Samuel, vv. 10–11*aa* (Chron., vv. 9–10*aa*), containing promises made not to David, but to the people as a whole, is without parallel in the Psalm, except Samuel, v. 10*b* (Chron., v. 9*b*) and Psalm, v. 23*b*. For the verbal parallelism (בְּגִי־עוֹלָה, עֲנוֹת)²⁶ is too obvious to miss; but in the Psalm the phrase is referred to David. The verse must certainly have appeared in the original oracle. If the Psalm represents the original, then we shall have to omit from the original oracle all reference to the people. If Samuel and Chronicles represent the original, then we shall have to find a reason why the Psalm omitted all reference to the people except this one line, which it kept and applied in a different sense. Between the two the probability is all in favor of the first. The editorial expansion of Samuel–Chronicles may be more easily explained. The identification of king and people, especially where enemies are spoken of, was so close in ancient political conceptions that Samuel and Chronicles are justified in extending this oracle to include the people with David in this promise. I find, in the alternative, no explanation of the Psalm; and therefore I omit Samuel, vv. 10*a*, 11*aa* (Chron., vv. 9*a*, 10*aa*) from the original oracle. The commentators have sensed this difficulty. Chronicles, v. 10*ab* exhibits a variation from Samuel, v. 11*ab* in which Chronicles is doubtless closer to the original.²⁷ Chronicles “I will humble all your enemies” finds a closer parallel in the Psalm than Samuel’s “I will give you rest from your enemies.” This additional parallel of Chronicles suggests that the text of the Psalm is not to be regarded as expansion just because it is in general a fuller text than Samuel–Chronicles. Now many of the commentators,²⁸

²⁶ Chron. for עֲנוֹת has בְּלוֹת, a late word. ²⁷ Cf. also Hanel, *ad loc.*

²⁸ This includes at least Dhorme, Schulz, Driver, and Budde; H. P. Smith accepts the change somewhat doubtfully.

offended by the words addressed to David immediately after the pericope about the people, meet the difficulty by adopting Ewald's conjecture, "I will give *it* (the people) rest from *its* enemies." But in adopting this conjecture the critics give no reason for what must obviously be an editorial alteration and not a mere error in transmission; they give no weight to the support of Chronicles; and they ignore the reading of Psalm 89, which offers the only key to the problem. It appears that, by treating Samuel as the original oracle, they have, in attempting to restore the original text, come up with exactly the wrong answer. In view of these phenomena I think I am justified in pointing out the necessity of observing the freedom with which the source is handled in Samuel-Chronicles.

There is no parallel in Samuel to Psalm, vv. 25-26 which mentions the faithful covenant-love of Yahweh and the growth of David's kingdom from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates. We have no reason to suppose that this latter verse is a *vaticinium ex eventu* and therefore not a part of the original oracle. Briggs, on the contrary, finds in this limitation of the Davidic kingdom an indication of the relatively early origin of the passage; a later writer would have spoken of a world-dominion.²⁹ The argument is not altogether cogent, but the point has some pertinence; a rule "from the sea to the river" is an ideal which in David's time would have been quite intelligible. Psalm, v. 25 is parallel to v. 29, and thus either of these verses may be suspected as poetic expansion; but v. 26, unless good reasons are proposed against it, should be regarded as a part of the original oracle.

Psalm, vv. 27-28 finds a partial parallel in Samuel, v. 14*a* (Chron., v. 13*a*), but at the same time a striking divergence. The father-son relationship between Yahweh and David which appears in the Psalm is in Samuel-Chronicles transferred to the seed of David. It is remarkable that so few commentators have adverted to this.³⁰ I have treated this divergence elsewhere, and maintained that the Psalm text should not be quoted as strictly parallel to Samuel. I have seen no reason to change this view, so I repeat here the argument as I formerly proposed it:

²⁹ *The Psalms* (ICC, N. Y., 1907), *ad loc.* But cf. Buttenwieser, as cited in note 19, who says that the Ps. does speak of a world-dominion.

³⁰ Cf. again Buttenwieser as cited in note 19.

It seems that in these passages Solomon is not called the son of Yahweh because he is a divinely appointed king (the sense proposed in the preceding text [Psa. 89:27-28]), the representative of Yahweh, but because of the special affection which Yahweh holds for him because of David his father; not his royal prerogatives, but his descent from David is envisaged. . . . The reason for postulating this distinction is the great difference between the position of David and Solomon in the religious history of Israel. David is not called the son of God simply as king, but as the divinely appointed king, the founder of the royal house and the depository of the promises. He stands in a special covenant relation with Yahweh; and while the covenant is made with the whole line, it is communicated to its members through David its head. Neither is Solomon called the son of God simply as king, nor does his religious position approach that of David. His principal claim to divine affection is that he is the son of David; the divine promises come to him through the divine covenant with David, his throne is the throne of David, and Yahweh accepts him as son because he is the son of David.³¹

If I were rewriting this passage at the present time, I would substitute everywhere "David's seed" for "Solomon," since, as I shall explain below, I am almost convinced that the "seed" in Samuel and the Psalm refers always to the line of David as a whole and to no individual member.³² Samuel, by applying this oracle of sonship to the line of David as a whole has altered the sense. This leaves no doubt in my mind which of the two recensions reproduces the original. It is impossible that David's sons should be called sons of Yahweh first, and that the title should be communicated to David from them. The sense of the title in Samuel must, consequently, be derived from the sense of the title in the Psalm, which here reproduces the original oracle. It is, however, a legitimate extension; the covenant of kingship with David is transmitted to his line. This is the very point of the whole oracle.

I have listed Samuel, v. 9b (Chron., v. 8b) as parallel to Psalm, v. 28b, although there is no verbal parallel. We may be permitted to see here another example of the freedom with which the writers handled

³¹ *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, VII (1945), 335. In addition to the references given in this article cf. also Kessler, *Die Psalmen* (Munich, 1899), p. 193, on Ps. 89:34: "David . . . ist der eigentl. Gegenstand der Huld; sein Same ist es nur um seinetwillen (wie das Volk Israel um Abrahams willen)."

³² This sense of seed also harmonizes better with the use of this verse in a messianic sense in Hebr. 1:5. Budde (*Samuel*, in *KHC*, Tübingen, 1902), followed by Dhorme (*Les livres de Samuel*, Paris, 1910) remarks that Chron. "one of your sons" restricts the seed to a determined individual, while Sam. "the issue of your body" does not.

their source; it seems to me essential for an understanding of this passage, as I have already remarked, that we recognize this freedom. This verse is cited by Dr. Pfeiffer as an example of the miserable diction of Samuel. Driver's only remark on the passage is a quotation from Wellhausen calling attention to the absence of לִדְוִל after שׁוּם in the Greek and in II Chronicles as the true reading.³³ Notice of such critical data will deter one from affirming too hastily that a passage is "consistently wretched" in style. The parallel is not strict; the Psalm goes beyond Samuel, indeed beyond its own idea of David's dominion in v. 26, and so Samuel-Chronicles seems to have preserved here more exactly the original oracle.

Psalm, v. 29 is almost a duplicate of v. 25a, as already noticed. It is impossible to determine whether one of these verses is pure expansion until we have determined, if possible, whether the original oracle was redundant or parsimonious in style. And while I do not think that we can reconstruct the original oracle exactly, we should not plump for one or the other on any *a priori* reasoning. Both the Psalm and Samuel-Chronicles exhibit a certain degree of fullness, and so suggest a reasonable probability that the original oracle had the same feature; but this evidence is not enough to settle the question.

Psalm, v. 30 is paralleled by Samuel, v. 12b (Chron., v. 11b) and should be considered together with Psalm, vv. 37-38 and Samuel, vv. 13b, 16 (Chron., vv. 12b, 14). These verses offer another example of the fullness of both the Psalm and Samuel-Chronicles. Both Psalm, v. 30 and 37-38 may with good reason be regarded as part of the original oracle. The Psalm is divided in vv. 20-38 into two almost exactly equal parts, the first speaking of David, the second of his seed. With 30 begins the mention of his seed; with 37-38 the second part ends with the same idea and the same phrases with which it began in 30—an *inclusio*. One wonders whether the first part of the original did not exhibit the same literary device; but if it did, none of the three recensions exhibit it. Samuel, v. 11b (Chron., v. 10b), however, offers something very near the desired line; and since the original, according to our arguments, began with "Shall you build me a house?" the suggestion is attractive that the first half of the oracle closed with the same phrase turned, as in 11b, to "I shall build you a house."

³³ Notes on the Hebrew Text of Samuel, *ad loc.*

This verse is an obvious and easy transition to the second half, the oracle proper, which begins, "I shall raise up your seed after you." One further wonders whether the same phrase may not lurk in Samuel, v. 13*a* in duplicated form; but the discussion of this difficult verse I defer for the moment.

We have here, then, another omission of the "house" in the Psalm, preserved in Samuel-Chronicles, and which must be judged a part of the original oracle; but it is doubtful that the colorless prose of Samuel-Chronicles represents the actual expression of the original. In particular, the metaphor of the heavens for the permanence of David's dynasty, found in Psalm, vv. 30 and 37-38, which is usually regarded by critics as mere poetic expansion, seems necessary; surely these verses were uttered with all possible solemnity. Samuel, v. 12*aa* (Chron., v. 11*aa*) has no parallel in the Psalm. Nor does it seem that it should have. In Samuel-Chronicles it stands as a transition, an introduction to the second part of the oracle. If our reconstruction of the oracle is correct, there is no room for such a transition, and no need for it. In the altered form of the oracle in Samuel-Chronicles such a transition, while not strictly demanded, is in place.

Samuel, v. 12*ab-b* becomes for Dr. Pfeiffer an occasion to leap upon the author and trample him in the dust. Here, he says, the author has bungled by using "seed," the word which occurs in the Psalm, his exemplar; elsewhere he has substituted "house" for "seed." Furthermore, in adopting this word, "by ineptly giving a double meaning to 'David's seed,' first Solomon (7:12f.), then David's 'house' or 'dynasty' (7:14-16), he sank into a mire of unintelligible verbiage" (p. 372). Dr. Pfeiffer thinks that the commentators have wasted their time trying to define the meaning of "seed" in these verses. "This confusion is hopeless because it existed in the author's mind." This attack appears to be unduly severe. Dr. Pfeiffer, and many commentators, speak as if the difference between Solomon and the line of David were contradictory. Surely Solomon belongs to the line of David. To use the word "seed" both of the dynasty and of one member of the dynasty is not, perhaps, to speak with exactness, but neither is it confusing.³⁴

³⁴ Schulz (*Die Bücher Samuel*, II, 80-81) shows that "seed," although its original sense is that of an individual descendant, is used in the O. T. with great freedom to indicate either an individual or a line of descent. Schulz himself accepts it as individual in sense in Sam. 7:12.

When we say that England expelled the Stuarts, we should not think that *we* were confusing our listener if he concluded that James I accompanied his grandson into exile. Nor is it confusing when, as here, something is predicated of a group collectively without distinguishing precisely whether the predication is verified in one or several members of the group. The occasion calls for no such precision.

Dr. Pfeiffer's criticism of the use of "seed" and "house" is even more unfounded. Apart from the fact that the metaphors of "seed" and "house" for dynasty are not so violently discordant that it would be utter confusion to use them in the same passage, Dr. Pfeiffer has no reason to refuse the writer permission to use the word "seed" except his own theory that Samuel is copying from the Psalm. The original oracle in the recension of Samuel reaches its high point exactly where Dr. Pfeiffer finds confusion. Beginning from David's project to build a house, the oracle turns the phrase into the dynastic promise: "*I* will build *you* a house; I will raise up your seed after you." Dr. Pfeiffer cannot accept this, because he thinks that the author of Samuel invented the story of the house. Any confusion which is thus introduced into the text on this score is due to Dr. Pfeiffer's theory, and not to the mind of the author of Samuel.

We come now to the discussion of Samuel, v. 13*a* (Chron., v. 12*a*), in some ways the most difficult line of the whole passage. I believe that most honest readers will confess to themselves a feeling that 13*a* has no business being there; it is a violent interruption of the trend of thought, and is the only line of the passage which can be used in support of Dr. Pfeiffer's criticisms. Most commentators (including Dhorme and Schulz) have not hesitated to label it an interpolation; they have not thought it worth their trouble to seek a plausible emendation. But this is to overlook the fact that its presence in both Samuel and Chronicles is a strong indication that it represents something in the original; nor have we any reason to think that there is an essential corruption in the text. We shall not reach a satisfactory emendation by making the text say what we want it to say.

Nor does there seem to be any necessity for such violent measures. We have already seen ample evidence to show that in none of the three recensions have we the exact words of the original oracle. Furthermore, we have seen that in each of the three recensions the source is

handled with great freedom. We do well here to bear in mind Klostermann's remark on Samuel, v. 17: "Here we have the words of a man who refrains from quoting the exact words of Nathan, which he knows." We cannot omit this verse from the original oracle just because it is missing in the Psalm, since the Psalm has omitted all reference to the house; but, if other arguments can be brought to bear, we may with good probability see in this verse the same type of editorial expansion and alteration which we have already noticed in Samuel-Chronicles. In this connection a similar alteration in Chronicles, v. 14, which reads "I shall set him in my house and my kingdom forever," for Samuel, v. 16 "Your house and your kingdom are established forever," throws some light on the present line. "My house" in Chronicles signifies the Temple beyond all practical doubt. This variation admits of no other explanation except as an editorial alteration to create an allusion to a well known fact of previous history: the royal patronage of the Temple. The use of the word "house" permits the Chronicler to turn the verse so as to suggest the intimate connection which existed between the house of David and the house of Yahweh. It is certainly possible, and I think that the intrusive character of Samuel, v. 13*a* makes it quite probable, that we have a similar allusion in this line. The "building of the house" occurs in Samuel, v. 11*b*, which we have observed is the central point of the oracle. When the writer of Samuel included his summary of the oracle in his narrative, he had behind him the historical fact that the temple which David had desired to build was actually built by Solomon. Hence in 13*a* he has turned 11*b* so as to allude to this: David did not himself accomplish his desire, but it was fulfilled through his seed, which is conceived in the oracle as the heir of the promises made to David. I believe we may go a step further and suggest that the presence of the phrase, "the issue of your body," in Samuel, v. 12*b*, which seems to define the seed in this verse as Solomon, and "one of your sons" in Chronicles, v. 11*b* (another editorial alteration!), which certainly so defines it, is consequent to the alteration of 13*a*. This explanation of the verse, I submit, is entirely in accord with the character of the recensions which Samuel and Chronicles give of the original oracle as we here conceive them, and thus offers a more satisfying reason for the presence of this line than the ordinary critical "interpolation."

Samuel, v. 14*b* and Psalm, vv. 31-33 are obviously parallel. The pericope is missing in Chronicles. I find no better explanation for this than that of Hänel, that the purpose of the Chronicler is not to write a complete history, but an idealized history.³⁵ The fuller text of the Psalm is almost universally tagged as a Deuteronomic expansion, either original or the work of the omnipresent "Deuteronomic redactor," because of the well known enumeration of "laws, judgments, statutes, and commandments." This differs slightly from the order usually found in Deuteronomy where "statutes and judgments" is a set phrase. Such an inversion, if the author were familiar with the Deuteronomic formula, can be nothing but deliberate. This enumeration is a weak reason for calling the verse Deuteronomic. Deuteronomy neither created these words nor staked out a monopoly on their collocation. And if our previous observations on the prevailing fullness of the text of the original oracle are correct, it is probable that the oracle here went beyond the very brief phrase of Samuel, particularly since the apodosis of the sentence both in Samuel, v. 14*b* and in Psalm, v. 33 has two members to one in the protasis of Samuel's formula. With this reservation, we may admit that the phrase as it now stands in the Psalm may be partly due to the influence of Deuteronomy.

More puzzling is the brief but significant expansion in Samuel, v. 14*b*, "the rod of men" and "the strokes of the sons of men." Waterman's translation, "the sons of Adam," appears to me less preferable. The absence of the article with מַדְּבָרִים is outweighed by its parallelism with מַשְׁפָּטִים (also anarthrous). No satisfactory meaning can be found except "the rod of all men"; Yahweh will punish the descendants of David like other men. The privileged position of the dynasty does not exempt its individual members from the general law of retributive justice. But, Psalm, v. 34 goes on, "I will not remove my covenant-love from them." The antithesis is obvious. But what is there to determine whether the expansion of Samuel is original? If we follow here the presumption, for which we have already noticed some probability, that the original oracle exhibited some fullness of expression, then we shall have to explain why it is omitted in the Psalm. I can find no satisfactory reason for the omission; whereas a satisfactory reason for the expansion is suggested by the character of the recension of Samuel-

³⁵ *1 Chronik*, p. 326.

Chronicles as we have hitherto conceived it. We may explain Samuel's text as an exegetical addition of the type already discussed in preceding verses; it reflects a time when the sins and punishments of the descendants of David were a matter of common experience—punishments which fell upon the hapless subjects of the monarch—and made them sometimes wonder whether this were the proper treatment for the chosen people under a chosen dynasty.

Samuel, v. 15*a* (Chron., v. 13*b*) and Psalm, v. 34 point the antithesis to the threat of punishment in the preceding lines. The descendants of David, while subject to the universal law of justice, are privileged just because they are the line of David and heirs of his covenant with Yahweh. Even their sins cannot annul this covenant, which was made with the head of the line, and is beyond the reach of any individual member of the line. The promise of an eternal dynasty made to David is absolute, and cannot be frustrated by his descendants.³⁶ This again illustrates the pre-eminence of David. Those who sin are themselves punished, while the promise remains. We notice that in this verse only Chronicles has preserved the correct reading, "I will not remove."

Psalm, v. 15*b* (Chron., v. 13*b*) refers to the deposition of Saul, and has no parallel in the Psalm. It is difficult to find anything by which to determine its originality. As the Psalm now stands, there is simply no room for it. On the other hand, what reason can we assign for its omission? As an expansion of the original oracle by a historical allusion of the type which by now we may almost judge characteristic of Samuel–Chronicles it may be more easily understood; consequently, I judge it no part of the original.

Psalm, v. 35, an expansion of 34, has no parallel in Samuel–Chronicles; and since it adds practically nothing to the oath of 36–38, it may be regarded as pure poetic expansion. The oath, as I have already indicated, can hardly be omitted in the same way, since it is paralleled

³⁶ This has been well remarked by Klostermann (*Samuel und Könige, ad loc.*), whose note in substance is this: Though David's sons are punished like other men, the paternal love of Yahweh persists, and punishment is inflicted according to the end which Yahweh has in view, so that the punishment will never become a catastrophe which would deprive Yahweh's love of its object and thus show that Yahweh's love had turned to hatred or indifference.

³⁷ *1 Chronik*, p. 338.

by Samuel, v. 16 (Chron., v. 14) and ends the second part of the oracle with an *inclusio*. The contents of these verses I have already treated in speaking of Psalm, v. 30.

An analysis of the prayer of David, Samuel, vv. 18–28 (Chron., vv. 16–27), lies, I think, outside the scope of this study. It is, however, necessary to refer to a remark of Hänel.³⁷ He sums up his conclusions as showing that the original oracle included only Chronicles, vv. 1–4, 10*b*, 11–14, 15, and indicates as the best reason for this limitation the prayer of David, which adverts only to these portions of the preceding narrative. This is too simple. It supposes that the prayer of David has to refer to all the elements of the preceding narrative. The dynastic promise is the heart of the narrative, that to which all features of the account are pointed and in which it culminates. Neither from a psychological nor from a literary point of view is it improbable that this great promise should blot everything else out of sight.³⁸ And this exclusive attention to the dominant feature of the oracle is itself an obstacle to thinking that the oracle or the prayer is pure invention. Pure invention, unless it is far more artistic than Dr. Pfeiffer admits, would have drawn out the parallel between the prayer of thanksgiving and that which occasioned the prayer.

DATE AND HISTORICAL CHARACTER OF PASSAGES

After this analysis of the passages in question we are now in a better position to deal with Dr. Pfeiffer's arguments about their date and their historical character. His theory is, to repeat, that II Samuel 7 is a fourth-century composition; that it is borrowed from Psalm 89 as its source; and that the preliminary narrative of David's plan to build a temple is pure invention. Once we have discussed this theory and the arguments Dr. Pfeiffer adduces in its favor, we shall be able to draw whatever conclusions may offer themselves from these considerations. We may distinguish Dr. Pfeiffer's fourth-century date from his denial of the historical character of the passage. Even if it were written in the fourth century, it would still be possible that the passage might

³⁸ Kirkpatrick puts it thus: ". . . the marvels of the choice of Israel and the promise of eternal dominion to the house of David are so overwhelming that they quite naturally form the subject of David's thanksgiving, even to the exclusion of any reference to the Temple" (*Second Book of Samuel*, Cambridge, 1930, p. 301).

contain older historical material. Recent criticism has been extremely cautious in calling a passage unhistorical just because its present literary form is relatively late.³⁹ The preceding examination, as I have frequently indicated, leads to the conclusion that II Samuel 7, as it now stands, is not a contemporary work and does not reproduce exactly the original source, at least as far as the dynastic oracle is concerned; but this conclusion casts no doubt on the historical character of the passage. Now the only argument Dr. Pfeiffer presents for a fourth-century date is contained in a single sentence: "The character of the language places it closer to the later than to the early period, probably in the late fourth century." Happily Driver's excellent *Notes* spare me the necessity of giving any more space to meeting this argument than Dr. Pfeiffer gives to proposing it. Driver indicates no evidence that the character of the language is closer to the later than to the earlier period.⁴⁰ If Dr. Pfeiffer has found some evidence, he would have done well to indicate it. Hence we may confine ourselves to his Achilles, by which he attacks both the pre-exilic date and the historical character of the passage. This argument runs somewhat as follows: "The chief argument for a pre-exilic date is the eternity of the Davidic dynasty"; but certain additions to the prophetic books and some late psalms show us that this is a post-exilic idea, and consequently "the only argument adduced for the early date . . . is wholly irrelevant." Any argument which might be adduced from the priority of Samuel to Psalm 89 is also irrelevant, since Dr. Pfeiffer places the Psalm as prior because of the "wretched style" of Samuel.⁴¹

Now I do not believe that "the eternity of the Davidic dynasty" is the only argument for the early date of the passage—at least of its source; there is also the pertinent fact that this chapter appears in a book whose antiquity and historical reliability as a whole have been well established. But since Dr. Pfeiffer has chosen to put the argu-

³⁹ Cf. Olmstead, "History, the Ancient World, and the Bible," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 2 (1943), 1 ff., and Albright's excellent discussion of method, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (Baltimore, 1940), pp. 33-47.

⁴⁰ Cf. also Budde, *Richter und Samuel*, p. 244: "Im allgemeinen hat das an sich schöne und erhabene Stück volleren und älteren Klang als D."

⁴¹ It is unbecoming for me to tax Dr. Pfeiffer on a question of method; but is that procedure entirely valid which places a passage in the late fourth century because the only argument for its pre-exilic date is irrelevant?

ment entirely on the basis of historical probability, let us follow it on his terms and see where it leads us. The argument which he rejects as irrelevant would run in substance thus: "The eternity of David's dynasty can have been conceived only when that dynasty was in existence. But after the Exile it was disestablished beyond all hope of restoration." Now history offers numerous instances of the idea of an eternal dynasty, or at least of a dynasty of indefinite permanence. The idea may be found in the inscriptions of Babylonian and Assyrian monarchs, in the poetry of Augustan Rome, and in the literature of Elizabethan and Victorian England. I should like to hear of a single instance when the idea did not arise under the circumstances which appear in all the periods I have just mentioned: a birth or a resurgence of national strength, an outburst of confident patriotism, a wave of success and prosperity in war, politics, commerce. I say "arise," for it is possible for this idea, once conceived, to persevere into a period of decadence. I should like to hear of a single instance when such an idea arose when a nation had just been beaten prostrate; much more when, like the Hebrews, its national life had literally been extinguished. Dr. Pfeiffer has committed himself to the proposition that the oracle was invented; very well, let him show us the historical forces which would invent it. Merely from the point of historical analogy nothing is more improbable. Nor can we strain the unique religious genius of the Hebrews too far—particularly when their own literature describes them as void of unique genius in religion or in anything else, and testifies that any religious excellence possessed by the Hebrews is due entirely to the teaching and the inspiration of God. If the oracle were invented, then by historical analogy David's reign, before the tension under Solomon which resulted in the schism of Jeroboam, is the one period in Hebrew history when it would have been invented.

But there is no reason why it should have been *invented* in the fourth century or at any other time. Dr. Pfeiffer says that the writer felt himself under the necessity of explaining why David did not build a temple. Dr. Pfeiffer may well wonder whether he himself is not under the same necessity. It is a datum of history that David did not build a temple. It is also a datum of history, although Dr. Pfeiffer does not accept it, that he wanted to build a temple. Such a desire is in itself quite consonant with his character as our only sources describe it.

That he constructed a palace, however unpretentious, and repaired and enlarged the city wall is affirmed (II Samuel 5:9, 11). He established relations with Hiram of Tyre (*ibid.*), which would give him both the model and the means of building a temple, the same model and means which Solomon employed. He transferred the Ark to the City of David, and could have had nothing else in mind but the establishment of a sanctuary to replace that of Shiloh, probably destroyed by the Philistines, to make the royal capital the religious capital as well. David's resources were in all probability equal to the task; if they were not, David was the kind of man who would have found the resources. To deny that he conceived the plan of a temple is to play with history; to admit it is to lay oneself immediately under the necessity of explaining why he did not build it. The only reason which the sources offer is a divine oracle; again, to deny the truth of this is to play with history. David never let any man stand between himself and his ambitions; nothing but a divine oracle would have stopped him. There can be no reason why the sources offer this explanation of his failure to build a temple except that this *was* the explanation.

Steuernagel offers some reasons, of unequal weight, why this narrative could not have been invented in the seventh century.⁴² The only one which I consider here is the alleged anti-Temple character of the narrative. This is an exaggeration; it is not anti-Temple, although it is hardly enthusiastic about the Temple. But any seventh-century writer (or better, early sixth) who was acquainted with Jeremiah's Temple Discourse would, it seems to me, have no difficulty in composing this comparatively mild deprecation. Hänel thinks Chronicles 5-6 (Sam. 6-7) were intruded from some such conservative circle as the Rechabites or the Hemanites of Gibeon.⁴³ He does not, however, remove all reference to the Temple as an intrusion. Nor is there any contradiction, as Hänel asserts, between Chronicles 5-6 (Sam. 6-7) and Chronicles 12 (Sam. 13). But there is an inconcinnity (for which I have proposed above a hypothetical solution), which makes it difficult to see how any one can refer to this as a Temple oracle. The Temple is the occasion of the oracle and no more; and Hummelauer's statement that the *summa argumenti* is: "Non tu aedificabis mihi domum, sed

⁴² *Einleitung in das alte Testament* (Tübingen, 1912), pp. 324-5.

⁴³ *1 Chronik*, p. 340.

Salomo filius tuus," is incomprehensible.⁴⁴ The sum of the argument is, if anything: You shall not build me a house, but I shall build you a house. So it is summed up by Dhorme, Schulz, and most commentators. Hummelauer was fascinated by the Temple. It is of much less importance than he thought. The text squares exactly with Jeremias' Temple Discourse (and I do not mean thereby to imply literary dependence). To a God who dwells in temples not made with hands it makes very little difference whether his earthly dwelling is under goatskins or cedar.

But to place this passage, with Dr. Pfeiffer, as an invention of the fourth century also approaches the incomprehensible. As far as our fragmentary records allow us to reconstruct Jewish thought of the fourth century, it appears that the indifference which Aggeus and Zacharias attacked over a century earlier had been replaced by the intense devotion to the Temple exhibited in the writings of the Chronicler and in the Judaism of Maccabean and New Testament times. This devotion is repugnant to such an offhand attitude towards the Temple. Even the rationalist should find it easier to imagine God revealing this passage in the fourth century than to imagine a Jew of that period thinking it up by himself. Or if the remote possibility that some rare soul, perhaps a student of Jeremiah, composed this cannot be excluded, it is even more difficult to imagine him intruding it into the national history. The fourth century would have preserved this passage as a traditional part of the history of the nation, and not otherwise. As a matter of simple historical probability, the passage is best understood as antedating the existence of the Temple itself. Why should we reject a coherent explanation which accords with all the data of our sources, and strain the probabilities to the breaking point? There is only one reason, and that is the reason implicit in Dr. Pfeiffer's entire argument: the critical theory that there was no messianic conception before the Exile.

I say implicit, because Dr. Pfeiffer does not invoke this as a critical postulate directly; nevertheless, it is in the background of every line of his treatment of the passage. The critical theory to which I refer, defended by a great number of scholars past and present, asserts that

⁴⁴ *Comm. in libros Samuelis* (Paris, 1886), p. 318. Substantially the same idea is voiced by Buttenwieser, as cited in note 19.

the pre-exilic literature contains no messianic hope; that the messianic expectation arose as a spiritual solace for the Jews after the collapse of their nation; that the pre-exilic prophets spoke exclusively in a threatening tone, and that any messianic promises found in pre-exilic literature are "additions."⁴⁵ This question is too large for me to enter into here, too closely connected with this discussion to be ignored. This much may be said: if this theory were established, it would certainly invalidate any such line of examination as I have attempted here. But every scholar knows that it is not established, and that it is not only so-called "conservative" critics who reject it. This passage simply refuses to be assimilated to any such theory. Whether it can be assimilated is not my problem, because I regard that theory as false; and in discussing the passages now in question I am under no obligation to set forth my reasons for so regarding it.⁴⁶

Dr. Pfeiffer's reference, then, to a "widespread hope among the Jews during the Persian and Greek periods for a restoration of David's throne" has no meaning except in the context of this critical theory. The formidable array of citations of "additions to the prophetic books" and of four psalms which Dr. Pfeiffer gives (p. 371) somewhat resembles a charge of birdshot; but apart from this theory it does no real damage. It is unnecessary to be trapped into a discussion of each one of these passages. What they amount to is a removal, in accordance with the critical theory, of all expectation of the eternity of David's dynasty from the pre-exilic prophets. I have examined Dr. Pfeiffer's treatment of these passages to see whether his arguments need any special attention, and they do not. It is odd that Duhm defended Isaiah 9:5ff. as authentic; generally speaking, if Duhm admits that a passage is authentic, it *is* authentic.⁴⁷ Perhaps he slipped here. Consequently, there is nothing to do but fire the charge of birdshot right back; let us have these texts of Samuel, Chronicles, and Psalm 89

⁴⁵ A recent statement of this view in brief and popular language appears in Smith-Irwin, *The Prophets and Their Times* (Chicago, 1941), pp. 127-30.

⁴⁶ I may refer to Dr. Pfeiffer's *Introduction*, p. 438: "Numerous modern scholars, however, are certain that Isaiah not only proclaimed the imminence of the Day of the Lord . . . but also the coming of a Messianic king . . ."

⁴⁷ *Jesaja* (HKAT, Göttingen, 1902), *ad loc.* I have nothing available later than the second edition, so I do not know whether this was Duhm's final judgment on the passage, except that I have not seen him quoted in the opposite sense; but it is remarkable that he ever published the opinion at all.

discussed on a purely inductive basis, with no reference, implicit or explicit, to the antecedent impossibility of such an expectation before the Exile—which is precisely the point at issue. For we have in this passage, as I have already remarked, a datum which stubbornly refuses to fit into that critical theory; and this is the reason, if Dr. Pfeiffer will permit me, why this passage has always exercised, and will exercise, such “a strange fascination for biblical students.”

If, therefore, we have an original oracle reported here, there is no escape from the conclusion that this is, as Cornill puts it, “the root of messianic prophecy”—in so far, that is, as the messianic idea includes a kingdom under the eternal dynasty of David. Here it may be worth notice that almost all of Dr. Pfeiffer’s “additions” to the prophetic books speak of a past or an impending *fall* of the kingdom followed by a *restoration* of the line of David. One striking exception is Isaias 9:5ff., which, like the present passage, does not include such a collapse and restoration in its purview. Duhm could have done more than allude to this as an argument for the authenticity of the passage. When we meet such a combination of texts, does it not appear to be more in harmony with whatever laws of development there are to see in the promise of restoration an application of the original absolute promise to a new situation, than to find in the absolute promise a development of the promise of restoration, which itself is alleged to be invented at a time when not even restoration was humanly possible? Again, perhaps it is a question of taste. Dr. Pfeiffer writes:

Belief in the eternity of something that has ceased to exist is characteristic of Judaism in its early stages, and furnishes one of the secrets of its extraordinary vitality. In general, the vigor of a religion seems to be proportionate to its disregard of reason and logic. When a faith ceases to cry out defiantly *Credo quia absurdum* and becomes rational, its days as a vital, inspiring force in the lives of men are numbered (p. 371).

Very interesting; but I believe Dr. Pfeiffer has here ventured on a statement which the biblical evidence will not support. I am sure he does not mean to say that his theory is right because it makes the writer of II Samuel 7 act in the silliest possible manner, since, in religion, unlike other fields of human activity, the sillier a man is, the more vital and inspiring is his force in the lives of men. I am sure Dr. Pfeiffer does not mean to imply that the much greater religious vigor

which he finds, with all readers, in Isaias, Amos, and Osee is due to a proportionate disregard of reason and logic, or that they were even sillier than the writer of II Samuel 7. Dr. Pfeiffer, in his own treatment of these men, uses such phrases as "great religious thinker," "creative thought," "clear, straightforward," etc. I suggest, in view of his estimate of these men, that he omit the paragraph just quoted.

Klostermann's note on II Samuel 7:19 is extremely important, and no study of this passage, to my mind, can afford to ignore it. In substance it is this: As God made the first man and rested, regarding him as perfect and communicating to him power over creatures, so He has given, finally, the kingship of Israel to David and his house. As the sin of man does not remove him from the lordship of creation or degrade him beneath some new creature, so the sins of the dynasty bring no new dynasty. This certainty that David's kingdom is the irrevocable beginning of an eternal development, a movement towards a universal goal, since Yahweh, who will extend His kingdom over all nations, has united Himself in David with the kings of Israel in an eternal community of interest as a father with his sons, is the source of Psalms 2, 110, and all the prophecies concerning the house of David. Thus far Klostermann; and, while the interpretation of v. 19 which gives occasion for these remarks may be regarded as an unfortunate venture, I have seen no summary of the passage which so coherently and comprehensively exhibits its meaning. The passage thus summed up recommends itself, as Klostermann says, as the root of all subsequent prophecies about the house of David. Psalm 89 expresses the difficulty of one who could not reconcile the impending fall of the kingdom with the promise of an eternal dynasty; Amos, Osee, Isaias, Jeremias foresee the impending fall and predict a future restoration of the house of David—because it has been promised an eternal dynasty. The passage offers the only satisfying explanation of this recurring expectation, this "widespread hope"²—an original divine oracle.

Dr. Pfeiffer's next step is to show that II Samuel 7 is really dependent on Psalm 89, and not, as the more common view proposes, the source of the Psalm. Practically all his arguments here rest on the wretched style and confused thinking of the author of Samuel, and I have touched upon these in the course of the examination. And I have been at pains to propose evidence which supports a hypothesis opposed

both to that of Dr. Pfeiffer and to that of the majority of commentators, that the parallels and divergences are best understood if we suppose that we have three recensions of an original oracle reproduced exactly in none of the three.

The question of the relative priority of Psalm 89, II Samuel 7, and I Chronicles 17 in their present form has not been decided in this examination, nor do I think it can be. The opinion which dates the Psalm in the last years of the monarchy of Juda appears to me to have the preponderance of evidence in its favor.⁴⁸ The large number of exilic and post-exilic texts which speak with the utmost frankness of the disaster of 587-586 are sufficient to establish the presumption that the present text and others like it, which speak of national troubles with no reference to the fall of the kingdom, antedate that disaster. Now there is no reason why II Samuel 7, if the chapter were put into its present form after the fall of Jerusalem, should of necessity introduce a reference to it into its own edition of the oracle; nevertheless, the freedom with which, as we have seen, Samuel handles its source would permit such an allusion, just as it permitted the allusion to Solomon's Temple in v. 13*a*. I must go counter to Dr. Pfeiffer's opinion and state that the language, as far as it shows anything, is more in accord with a pre-exilic date; and in this I find myself in agreement with the majority of commentators. It is therefore at least provisionally acceptable that the present edition of this passage in Samuel was prepared between the time of the source itself, the tenth century, and the time of the composition of the Psalm, probably the late seventh or early sixth century. Whether we can be more precise than this I do not know; neither does it seem necessary.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

We are now in a position to sum up whatever conclusions are possible from this study. From a preliminary glance at the parallels and divergences of Samuel, the Psalm, and Chronicles I have chosen as a working hypothesis the assumption that these cannot be explained merely by literary dependence, but only as the result of three recensions of an original source; that all three must be considered as possibly including material from the original source; and that the Psalm, as written in

⁴⁸ Cf. the arguments in Kessler, *Die Psalmen*, and Briggs, *The Psalms, ad loc.*

metrical form and as free from the obvious inconcinnities of Samuel and Chronicles, may be taken as the basis of operations. By an analysis and comparison of the three recensions I propose that the oracle probably included the elements shown in the table below. In this table parallel passages are indicated by juxtaposition. No juxtaposition indicates that the element is missing in the recension where nothing is shown. Verses set off in parentheses represent elements of the oracle which by editorial application and extension differ in some sense from the original form. Question marks indicate possible expansions.

<i>Samuel</i>	<i>Psalms</i>	<i>Chronicles</i>
5-7?		4-6?
8b	21-22?	7b
(10b, 11ab)	23	10ab (9b)
9a	24	8a
	25? 26	
(14a)	27-28a	(13a)
9b	28b	8b
	29	
11ab		11a
12ab, b	30	11ab, b
14b	31-32?	
14b	33	
15a	34	13ba
13b? 16	36-38?	12b (14)

One obvious conclusion is that I cannot agree entirely with Hänel's hypothesis that Chronicles used the original source independently. Ironically enough, it was this very hypothesis which led me on this chase. If both Samuel and Chronicles have introduced such notable alterations into the original oracle, not only in its order but even in the sense in which the oracle was extended by application and allusion, it is altogether impossible that they should independently exhibit such harmony in the nature and extent of these alterations. But the evidence, I believe supports Hänel's theory to this degree, that Chronicles had access to and used the original source as well as Samuel's recension of it. Why he did not reproduce it exactly needs no more answer than why Samuel or the Psalm did not; at least one of them failed to do so.

The evidence suggests that the problem of their literary relationship is best solved by supposing that all of them have handled the source freely; and I see no more of a problem, theologically speaking, in their treatment of the source than exists in the Synoptic narratives of the discourses of the Savior.

Another conclusion which I draw from this examination is that Psalm 89, for those parts of the original oracle which it has preserved, represents the original source more exactly than Samuel or Chronicles. What characterizes the Psalm is the omission of all reference to the Temple. I have given reasons why this Temple narrative cannot be regarded as pure invention, and must consequently be included in the original oracle. It has not seemed necessary to argue that the direct address of Samuel and Chronicles represents the original rather than the indirect address of the Psalm, as this appears evident.

A third conclusion is the absolute priority of the original oracle, and its historical validity as a contemporary report. The dynastic oracle must be placed exactly where the literary tradition places it, in the time of David himself, and be understood as the root of the prophecies of the messianic kingdom. The relationship of this oracle to the prophetic descriptions of the messianic kingdom lies outside the scope of the present paper.

One more conclusion which might be expected is a metrical reconstruction of the original oracle. This I omit, since such reconstructions are usually without any plausibility. Here, in particular, where the source has been handled with such freedom, it would seem to be an effort of desperation. A prose paraphrase of the elements listed in the preceding table, omitting all possible expansions, would read as follows:

Thus speaks Yahweh: Should you build me a house to dwell in? For I have never dwelt in a house, nor have I ever said, Why have you not built me a house? Now therefore thus speak to my servant David: Thus speaks Yahweh of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, and I raised you up a warrior, a chosen one from the people, and anointed you with my holy oil. An enemy shall not overcome you, nor the son of wickedness afflict you. I crush your foes before you, and smite those who hate you. You shall call me, My Father, my God, my rock of salvation, and I set you as my first-born, great among the kings of the earth. I shall preserve my covenant-love with you forever. Shall you build me a house? Rather I shall build you a house. I shall raise up

your seed after you, and I shall establish his kingdom forever. If he acts wickedly and profanes my law, I shall punish him with the rod and stripes; but my covenant-love I shall never remove from him. I shall not profane my covenant, nor be false to the oath I swear to David by my holiness: Your house is established before me as the sun, and your seed like the moon shall endure forever.

While it is not possible to anticipate all possible objections, one obvious difficulty is that this reconstruction is too long. It is, however, no longer than the form in which Psalm 89 reproduces it; and it seems to me an invalid literary assumption that prophetic oracles must be limited to one or two verses. If the evidence indicates that a prophetic oracle was not brief, the wisest course is to follow the evidence.

Most of the arguments here adduced depend for their strength on their plausibility. In much literary criticism this is all one can seek; and if a hypothesis succeeds in making better sense of a passage, that is a point in its favor, although it is no demonstration. Hence I present this for what it is, and no more: a plausible hypothesis.