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CHAPTER 20

THE SO-CALLED DEUTERONOMISTIC HISTORY AND ITS THEORIES OF COMPOSITION

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THE term and the theory of the "Deuteronomistic History" has existed since the publication of a book written by the German scholar Martin Noth and published in 1943 under the title *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*, which can be roughly translated by "Studies in the Transmission of Traditions." The first part of the book was devoted to the composition and redaction of the book of Deuteronomy and the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings), and the second part to an analysis of the books of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. In the first part of the book (which was later translated into English in 1981), Noth considered the book of Deuteronomy as having been conceived as the introduction to the Former Prophets. These books betray a style and a theology that can be found in the book of Deuteronomy. Therefore Noth speaks—in parallel to the books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, which scholars called the "chronistisches Geschichtswerk" (the "Chronicler's History")—of a "deuteronomistisches Geschichtswerk" ("Deuteronomistic History"). Before presenting Noth's theory, its modification, as well as the current debate, let us briefly recall the observations that led to the idea of a "Deuteronomistic History."

20.1 THE PREHISTORY OF THE THEORY OF THE DEUTERONOMISTIC HISTORY

In the context of the establishment of the documentary hypothesis in the nineteenth century, as advocated by Abraham Kuenen (1886) and Julius Wellhausen (1899), the book of Deuteronomy did always present a special case. Deuteronomy was the only book

of the Pentateuch in which the Pentateuchal documents (Yahwist, Elohist, and Priestly Code) did not occur or only in an extremely sparse way (especially in the account of Moses's death in Deut. 34). The so-called "D" source was therefore considered to be limited to the book of Deuteronomy. Contrary to the other documents, D could not be found in the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers except in a very limited way that did not allow the reconstruction of a coherent source. There were advocates of a "deuteronomistic" redaction in the other books, especially the Anglican bishop John William Colenso (1862–79), who tried to demonstrate the presence of redactional inserts into the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Joshua. These inserts were due to an exilic "Deuteronomist," who revised the older documents of the Hexateuch. Since the end of the eighteenth century, critical scholarship had indeed very broadly adopted the idea of an original Hexateuch, since—so the argument went—the documents of the Pentateuch needed a fulfillment of the promises made to the patriarchs by telling the story of the conquest of the land. Therefore J, E, and P were also sought and found in the book of Joshua. In the discussion about the formation of the Hexateuch, the book of Deuteronomy was however largely neglected and sometimes even considered as a late insertion into the Hexateuchal narrative shared by the documents or sources of the other books. The fact that Deuteronomy is closely related to the book of Joshua did not attract much attention. The crossing of the Jordan and the conquest of the land are indeed very often mentioned in Deuteronomy and these passages clearly create a link between the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century Wilhelm M. L. de Wette explained this link by the fact that Joshua is a late "deuteronomistic" book in style and theology that depends on the book of Deuteronomy (1806: 137). Heinrich Ewald, in his *History of Israel* (German original: 1843–59, English translation: 1867–86), adopted a similar view by attributing the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua to a deuteronomistic reworking of the Hexateuch, which occurred in two stages. Ewald also realized that the books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings equally underwent deuteronomistic revisions. However, because of the idea of the existence of a Hexateuch, Ewald postulated that these redactors should be distinguished from those that wrote major parts of the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua. Ewald distinguished two main deuteronomistic redactions of the books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings (to which he added the book of Ruth, according to the Greek canon): a deuteronomistic edition during the reign of king Josiah in the seventh century BCE and a Deuteronomist, writing during the exilic (Babylonian) time, whose aim was to explain the reasons for the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile. This idea of multiple deuteronomistic revisions was then adopted by Kuenen and Wellhausen. In his *Composition of the Hexateuch and the Historical Books of the Ancient Testament* (1963), Wellhausen admits deuteronomistic editions of the books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings, but he is not much interested to resolve the questions whether these books have been revised by the same deuteronomistic redactors or whether one should postulate different redactors for each book. For the book of Kings he finds two major deuteronomistic revisions: the first occurred under the reign of Josiah, and the second during the time of the Babylonian exile.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the existence of deuteronomistic redactions in the Former Prophets was thus widely acknowledged. But there was not much interest in explaining and analyzing more precisely the aim of those revisions. The theory of an "old" Hexateuch also prevented many scholars from investigating the stylistic and theological links between the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua on the one hand, and the books of

Judges, Samuel, and Kings on the other. One of the first to challenge the idea that the Pentateuchal sources ended in the book of Joshua was Noth's teacher Albrecht Alt, who demonstrated in several publications (1925; 1927; 1936) that the conquest narratives in Joshua 1–12 are based on an independent Benjaminite collection and cannot be attributed to J and E. The boundaries list in Joshua 13–19, which was often considered to be part of P, was according to Alt from the time of the monarchy and had nothing to do with the Priestly document. Noth adopted this position; first in his commentary on the book of Joshua published in 1938 and then five years later in his *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*.

20.2 The Invention of the Deuteronomistic History

Noth opens his investigation with the statement that all the historical traditions of the Hebrew Bible are contained in three large compilations: "These great compilations are the Pentateuch and the historical works of the Deuteronomist and of the Chronicler" (1991: 8).[1] Interestingly, Noth does not explain the term "Deuteronomistic History." He underlines the significance of the Deuteronomist's work as Israel's first history, and compares the Deuteronomist to "those Hellenistic and Roman historians who use older accounts, mostly unacknowledged, to write a history not of their own time but the more or less distant past" (p. 26). Contrary to the Chronicler's history, the work of the Deuteronomist must however "be 'discovered' as a literary entity and unity" (p. 15). Noth does not wish to investigate which passages inside the books of Deuteronomy to Kings are "deuteronomistic." Those texts have been identified, so he claims, for a long time. The real question for Noth is to understand the purpose of those deuteronomistic texts. Former generations were not much interested in describing the aim of the deuteronomistic (Dtr.) redactor or redactors, and this is exactly the task that Noth wants to undertake. He is convinced that the Deuteronomist composed through his own texts, by which he framed and interpreted older traditions, a literary unit.

There is indeed much evidence that the Deuteronomistic History is a coherent literary unit. First of all, Noth observes that "at all the important points in the course of the history, Dtr. brings forward the leading personages with a speech . . . , which looks forward and backward in an attempt to interpret the course of events" (p. 18). "Elsewhere the summarizing reflections upon history . . . are presented by Dtr. himself . . . because there were not suitable historical figures to make the speeches" (p. 19). Noth identifies the following speeches: Joshua 1, 12, and 23 delimit the time of the conquest; Judg. 2:11–3:6 introduces the deuteronomistic interpretation of the time of the Judges, which is concluded by Samuel's farewell speech in 1 Samuel 12; Solomon's speech after the construction of the Jerusalem temple (1 King 8) concludes the account of the origins of the monarchy and introduces the parallel histories of the Northern (Israel) and Southern (Judah) kingdoms; and 2 Kings 17 concludes this period by explaining the reasons for the fall of Samaria. These speeches strongly support the idea that the Deuteronomistic History "was conceived as a unified and self contained whole" (p. 20). Noth certainly admits that after the Deuteronomist had finished his work, later redactors added texts like Joshua 24 and Judg. 2:1–5 that interrupt the deuteronomistic transition from Joshua 23 to the introduction of the time of

Judges in Judg. 2:6–3:6*. But he is not interested in exploring the reasons for those additions. His aim is to explore the reasons that pushed the Deuteronomist to write his history. The *terminus a quo* for his composition is 562 BCE because the Babylonian king Amel-Marduk, who released the Judean king Jehoiachin from his Babylonian prison (an event that is mentioned in the last chapter of Kings), only reigned during this year. The Deuteronomist framed also the book of Deuteronomy in order to transform it into the opening of his historical account. Deuteronomy is constructed as a long farewell speech in which Moses recapitulates earlier events from the time of the sojourn in the wilderness and also foresees the coming events, especially the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Exile. Therefore, one can understand Moses's speech in Deuteronomy as the prototype of all the following speeches that structure the Deuteronomistic History (p. 31). Noth then investigates the deuteronomistic presentation of the different periods: the Mosaic period, the time of the conquest, the period of the Judges, the first three kings (Saul, David, Solomon), and the period of the two kingdoms until the destruction of Samaria and Jerusalem.

In constructing his history, the Deuteronomist acted like an "honest broker" (p. 128) and did not alter the older traditions he incorporated, even if their ideology did not fit his own ideas. Through this respect towards the older traditions, the Deuteronomistic History also constitutes a source for the history of Israel and Judah in the first half of the first millennium BCE (p. 121). But above all, the aim of the Deuteronomist is to explain the reasons for the destruction of the Israelite and Judean monarchies. These reasons are the disobedience of the people and most of its kings who did not respect the divine law concealed in the book of Deuteronomy and to which Israel was bound by a covenant. For the Deuteronomist, this law required the exclusive worship of Yhwh in the temple of Jerusalem, the only legitimate cultic place. However, the Deuteronomist is not interested in cultic matters (p. 138) but in the observance of the divine law. The curses that conclude the deuteronomic law (destruction, deportation; Deut. 28) have become a reality at the time the Deuteronomist writes his history. His goal was to explain the catastrophe, and he had no hope for a better future. The few texts in Deuteronomy and Kings that envisage a return and a restoration are later additions to the original work (p. 144).

The Deuteronomist was, according to Noth, an independent author, who was not commissioned by any particular individual or group (p. 145). He possibly wrote in Palestine, perhaps in Mizpah, the place where the Babylonians established the governor of the land. He was therefore "one of those who stayed in the land" (p. 145, n. 1).

20.3 The Initial Reception of Noth's Theory

The first edition of Noth's work was not widely known, and his work gained notoriety only after the second edition that appeared in 1957. Many scholars then agreed with Noth's hypothesis and the term "Deuteronomistic History" found its entry into many textbooks. Noth's ideas also found a confirmation in the work of Alfred Jepsen on the sources of the books of Kings. This work had been written already in 1939 but its publication had been delayed until 1953 because of the Second World War (see Jepsen 1956). Jepsen distinguished

three major redactional layers in the books of Kings: (1) a Synchronic Chronicle from the beginning of the sixth century BCE that synchronized the reigns of the Israelite and Judean kings until the reign of Hezekiah and that a redactor combined with a Judean annalistic source; (2) a redaction in Palestine around 550 BCE that integrated many prophetic traditions into the books of kings, and (3) a last revision in the early postexilic time defending Levitical interests. In his foreword to the first edition of his book, Jepsen emphasized the compatibility of his results with Noth's hypothesis and the proximity of his second "prophetic" redactor with Noth's Deuteronomist. Like Noth, Jepsen underscored the idea that this second redactor wanted to show that the fall of Judah and Jerusalem was due to the people's apostasy. But differently than Noth, he focused on the importance of the prophetic text and traditions in the books of Kings, a topic that became important in one of the later modifications of Noth's hypothesis.

In Europe, and especially in German scholarship, the reactions to Noth's idea were generally positive, although many of his followers introduced some different views on the Deuteronomistic History. Noth had portrayed his Deuteronomist as an author who expressed a very pessimistic view of Israel's history and who had no hope for any future. Consequently, he did not pay attention to texts that could be read in a different way. Gerhard von Rad (1958) pointed out that the oracle to David in 2 Samuel 7 and the release of Jehoiachin from prison in Babylonia (2 Kgs. 25:27–30) should be understood as an indication that the Davidic dynasty did not come to an end in 587 BCE. According to von Rad, the Deuteronomist had almost messianic expectations. Hans Walter Wolff disagreed on this point, and pointed out that the main concern of the Deuteronomistic History was not the idea of an unconditional restoration of the Judean monarchy, but much more an appeal to return (*šwb*), which according to Wolff is one of the main foci of the "kerygma" of the Deuteronomist (1975: 90–98). But Wolff also observed that in some texts, especially in Deuteronomy, this return is announced in unconditional language, with a terminology that one finds also in the salvation oracles in the book of Jeremiah (see especially Deut. 4:29–31; 28:45–68; 30:1–10). Wolff saw here the possibility of a later redactor who tried to combine the theology of the first Deuteronomist with ideas of return and salvation from the book of Jeremiah (1975: 96). Contrary to Noth, who saw the Deuteronomist as a single and independent author, Wolff speaks of a deuteronomistic "circle" and prepares the way for the idea of a deuteronomistic "school," or of a multi-layered deuteronomistic edition, a theory that will be the base of the two major modifications that Noth's theory underwent.

20.4 The Two Major Modifications of Noth's Theory

20.4.1 Josianic and Exilic Editions of the Deuteronomistic History

In 1968 Frank M. Cross published an article, "The Structure of the Deuteronomic History," which was reprinted five years later under the title, "The Themes of the Book of Kings and the

Structure of the Deuteronomistic History." He pointed out that the book of Kings is characterized by two major themes. The first is the "sin of Jeroboam," that is, the building of Yahwistic sanctuaries in Dan and Bethel outside of Yhwh's chosen place Jerusalem. Consequently, all northern kings are accused of having continued the sin of the founder of the northern kingdom. Because of this sin, Yhwh finally destroyed Samaria, as stated in the deuteronomistic comment in 2 Kings 17. The second theme starts with Yhwh's oracle to David in 2 Samuel 7, where he promises him an eternal dynasty. Both themes are set in contrast: "David in Kings is the symbol of fidelity, Jeroboam is the symbol of infidelity" (1973: 282). Both themes converge in the account of Josiah's reform in 2 Kgs. 22:1–23:25. Josiah destroys the sanctuary at Bethel and brings the sin of Jeroboam to a definitive end; he is also presented as a new David, restoring the kingdom of his ancestor and centralizing the cult in Jerusalem according to the law of the sanctuary in Deuteronomy 12. Accordingly, the Deuteronomistic History "may be described as a propaganda work of the Josianic reformation" (p. 284).

Consequently, for Cross, the first edition of the Deuteronomistic History was written during the lifetime of Josiah and ended with Josiah's praise in 2 Kgs. 23:25. Cross's first edition of the Deuteronomistic History reveals a very different ideology from the one that Noth attributed to his Deuteronomist. The explanation of the exile is, according to Cross, the work of a second, exilic edition of the Deuteronomistic History. A second Deuteronomist (Dtr^2) updated the Josianic edition after the fall of Judah by adding 2 Kgs. 22:36–25:30 and "retouched or overwrote the Deuteronomistic work . . . to reshape the history, with a minimum of reworking, into a document relevant to exiles for whom the bright expectations of the Josianic era were hopelessly past" (p. 285). Dtr^2 added especially the theme of the sin of Manasseh in 2 Kgs. 21:1–15, which parallels for Judah the theme of Jeroboam's sin and provides an explanation for the downfall of Jerusalem. He also inserted other short passages, which clearly presuppose the events of 587 BCE, such as Deut. 28:3–7, 63–68; Josh. 23:11–13,15–16; 1 Kgs. 6:11–13; 8:46–53; 9:4–9, and others. This theory of a twofold edition is a revival of ideas of Kuenen and Wellhausen (although Cross does not quote them) combined with Noth's idea of a comprehensive historiographical work running from Deuteronomy to Kings. However, Cross confined his demonstration of a Josianic edition of the Deuteronomistic History to the books of Samuel-Kings. Several students of Cross developed the idea of a two-fold edition of the Deuteronomistic History, attributing more texts to Dtr^2 than Cross had done. Richard Nelson added in his doctoral dissertation (published 1981a) several idiomatic expressions that were typical for the second, exilic Deuteronomist, and considered texts such as Judg. 2:1–5; 6:7–10, 2 Kgs. 17:7–20, 24–28, 34b–40, and others as stemming from Dtr^2. Richard E. Friedman (1981), Andrew D. H. Mayes (1983), Gary Knoppers (1993), and many others came to similar conclusions. Cross's model became dominant in Anglo-Saxon scholarship and still is the most popular model on the Deuteronomistic History used by scholars and teachers.

20.4.2 Multiple, Exilic, and Postexilic Strata of the Deuteronomistic History

Noth himself had been aware of later additions to the Deuteronomistic History, but he did not pay attention to them. One of Noth's first critics Otto Eissfeldt, who called Noth

"the father of the Deuteronomistic History" (1965: 265) insisted on the diversity of the "Deuteronomistic" texts, which manifest too many differences to be ascribed to a single author or redactor (e.g., the various and contradictory attempts in Judg. 2:11–3:6 to explain why some of the autochthonous people remained in the land, whereas other deuteronomistic texts such as Josh. 21:34–45 insist on the total expulsion of the former inhabitants of the land).

Rudolf Smend, a former research assistant of Martin Noth, took up this observation but tried to reconcile it with Noth's idea of a Deuteronomistic History. Smend's article (German 1971; English 2000) started with an analysis of the divine speech to Joshua in Josh. 1:1–9. Smend observed that the first part of this speech resembles a divine oracle to a military chief who is about to start his campaign. This speech seems to end in verse 6. Verse 7 contains a repetition of the foregoing exhortation ("be strong and do not fear"), but the perspective changes: now Joshua is admonished to keep and remember the Law of Moses day and night. Apparently, verses 7–9 are an addition in deuteronomistic style in order to transform the military speech into a discourse about the observance of the Law. Similar deuteronomistic additions can be found in Josh. 13:1–6; 23, Judg. 2:20–21, 23, and elsewhere, starting in Deut. 1:5 until the last chapter of Kings. Smend invented the siglum DtrN (Deuteronomistic Nomist) for the redactor or redactors (he tended toward a plurality of nomistic redactors) in contrast to the first edition of the Deuteronomistic History (DtrH), which he, like Noth, considered as having been composed during the Babylonian period. A student of Smend, Walter Dietrich added to DtrH and DtrN a "DtrP," a prophetic Deuteronomist (1972), who only intervened in the books of Samuel and Kings. This redactor inserted into the Deuteronomistic History prophetic stories and oracles and provided each one with a note about its accomplishment (1 Kgs. 14:7–13; 1 Kgs. 15:19; 2 Kgs. 21:10–14; 2 Kgs. 24:2, etc.). Timo Veijola developed the idea of a threefold edition of the Deuteronomistic History in the Babylonian and early Persian period in two monographs (1975 and 1977). This model allowed for an explanation of the contradictory statements about kingship in the books of Samuel and Kings. According to Veijola, DtrH (the first Deuteronomist) regarded the monarchy still in a positive way (see 1 Sam. 9–10), DtrP had a very critical position towards monarchy (see 1 Sam. 12), whereas DtrN, while still hostile against the institution of monarchy, tried to whitewash David and Solomon, the founders of the Israelite monarchy (1 Sam. 8:6–22; 1 Kgs. 1:35–37; 2:3–4a). The so-called "Göttingen school" hypothesis was quickly adopted by many European scholars and also some North American scholars (e.g., Ralph Klein 1979).

20.5 Noth's Single Redaction Model Maintained

Some scholars maintained Noth's model of a single Deuteronomist who wrote his history shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem. For example, John Van Seters presented the Deuteronomist as a historian comparable the the Greek historians Herodotus and Thucydides. Contrary to Noth, who thought that the Deuteronomist had integrated older texts into his work, which he sometimes did not revise at all, Van Seters considered the

Deuteronomist above all as an author, who certainly knew some older traditions but used and rewrote them in a very free manner (1983). The ideological contradictions, especially in the books of Samuel and Kings, should not be explained by the integration of older sources, but by later post-deuteronomistic additions. This is, according to Van Seters, the case for the so-called "Court History" in 2 Samuel 2–4, 9–20 and 1 Kings 1–2, which depicts a very weak and dubious David, a picture that does not fit at all with the story of David's rise in the first book of Samuel (2000). The Court History is therefore a late addition from the end of the Babylonian period, a purely fictional, anti-Davidic addition to the work of the Deuteronomist, written in order to counter expectations about the restoration of the Davidic dynasty.

Steven McKenzie (French 1996, English 2000) likewise considers the Deuteronomistic History to be the work of one author (see also Blum 1990; Krause 2015) who wrote shortly after the events of 587 in Mizpah[2] (as also argued by Noth). Contrary to Noth, McKenzie assumes that the Deuteronomist expected a continuation of the Davidic dynasty after the Exile and the destruction of the palace and the temple of Jerusalem.[3] As for the prophetic material of the book of Kings, McKenzie holds (with others) that these stories have been added later into the Deuteronomistic History, an idea which can be compared to the later "prophetic Deuteronomist" of the Göttingen school.

20.6 The Question of Deuteronomistic Texts in the Books of Genesis to Numbers and Their Relation to the Deuteronomistic History

In Noth's theory, the book of Deuteronomy was originally the introduction of the Deuteronomistic History *via negationis*. He stated: "there is no sign of 'Deuteronomistic editing' in Genesis-Numbers" (1991: 28). This view has become less obvious, however, especially in European scholarship in which the Documentary Hypothesis is no longer considered a fitting model to describe the formation of the Pentateuch. Scholars such as Erhard Blum (1990) and Rainer Albertz (1992) consider the Pentateuch to be the result of a compromise between a deuteronomistic group and a priestly group, whose compositions had been combined (together with other texts) during the Persian period in order to form the Pentateuch. The most deuteronomistic texts can be found in the Moses and Exodus story.[4] The question then arises about the relation between the deuteronomistic texts in the first books of the Pentateuch and those of the so-called Deuteronomistic History. Most scholars advocating the idea of a larger deuteronomistic composition would argue that the deuteronomistic texts in the Tetrateuch (a designation for the first four books of the Torah) would have been composed after the Deuteronomistic History in Deuteronomy-Kings in order to create a new prologue to this history.[5]

20.7 The Dissolution of the Coherence of the Deuteronomistic History

Contrary to the positions of Noth, Van Seters, McKenzie, and others, there is a trend to focus on the many layers that are detectable inside the books of Deuteronomy to Kings. Already Smend (German 1971, English 2000) indicated that his early postexilic DtrN should be understood as a symbol for a complex redactional process in many stages ($DtrN^1$, $DtrN^2$, $DtrN^3$, etc.). Other followers of the Göttingen model added new sigla and increased the strata inside the Deuteronomistic History. Lohfink (1991) invented a "DtrL" (Deuteronomistische Landeroberungserzählung), a deuteronomistic editor of the conquest stories in Joshua 2–12, who, in the time of Josiah, was the first to combine on a literary level the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua. He also postulated a "DtrÜ" (a "Überarbeiter"), a late Deuteronomist who revised the whole Deuteronomistic History after "DtrN." Lohfink's "DtrÜ" comes close to Kaiser's "DtrS" ("S" standing for "spät," late), covering several late additions and redactions of the Deuteronomistic History (1992: 85). Veijola (1996) found in his commentary on the book of Deuteronomy a "DtrB" (a "bundestheologischer Deuteronomist," a Deuteronomist who introduced in the early Persian period the texts that understand the relation between Yhwh and Israel in terms of a covenant). This inflation of new sigla and layers challenges the idea of a coherent deuteronomistic composition, since it is no longer clear how these numerous layers can be reconstructed in a comprehensive way and how they can be related to each other. It is therefore not astonishing that there is a trend in recent European but also North American scholarship to deny the existence of a Deuteronomistic History.

20.8 The Rejection of the Theory of a Deuteronomistic History

Over the last three decades, several scholars, especially in Europe, have rejected Noth's theory on the basis of several observations and arguments. The opponents of Noth's idea insist on the old observation of Eissfeldt (1964) and others that the deuteronomistic texts in the books of the Former Prophets are extremely different from one to another and cannot be assigned to one or two coherent deuteronomistic editions. The deuteronomistic texts in Judges (especially Judg. 2:5–3:6) suggest a cyclic conception of history, while Samuel and Kings clearly present a linear story. The presence of deuteronomistic texts in Judges and Samuel is much more discrete than in the books of Joshua or Kings. Therefore Westermann, who already in 1994 challenged the idea of a Deuteronomistic History, argued that each book of the Former Prophet has a very different history of transmission and composition. It has also been observed that the idea of cult centralization plays a major role in Deuteronomy and Kings but does not appear in Joshua, Judges, and Samuel, where other Yahwistic sanctuaries seem acceptable. Therefore Knauf (French 1996, English 2000), Noll

(2007), and others consider Noth's theory as a major error in biblical scholarship. Auld (1999), Aurelius (2003), and others have adapted an idea of Ernst Würthwein from 1994 who claimed that the so-called Deuteronomistic History should be limited to the books of Kings or Samuel-Kings. They also underline the fact that the importance of the Davidic dynasty in the book of Kings is incompatible with the book of Deuteronomy, which is not interested in kingship at all. The only text in that book that mentions the king, Deut. 17:14–20, limits his power and shows a theology that contradicts the importance of David and his dynasty in the book of Kings.[6] Should one therefore consider Noth's theory as another error of critical biblical scholarship and go back to the position of Ewald, Wellhausen, and others, who noted an important number of deuteronomistic additions and revisions in the Former Prophets but did not recognize any coherence or comprehensive theology in those additions?

20.9 A Deuteronomistic Library instead of a Deuteronomistic History

The present state of research about the theory of the Deuteronomistic History reveals at least four scholarly positions: (1) the theory of one single Deuteronomist; (2) the theory of a Josianic and an exilic edition of the Deuteronomistic History (the "Cross school"); (3) the theory of three major strata of the Deuteronomistic History that originated in the Babylonian period and were completed in the early Persian period (the "Smend school"); and (4) the rejection of the the theory of a comprehensive deuteronomistic work encompassing the books of Deuteronomy to Kings. The positions (2) and (3) are followed by a majority of scholars. Anglo-Saxon scholars largely follow the model of Cross, whereas most Europeans use the model of Smend. There has been little debate between both schools, and few have asked the question whether the insights of both theories could be combined.

Some attempts have been made in this direction. Mark O'Brien (1989) thinks that the Deuteronomistic History originated in the seventh century BCE, but was then edited by three major redactions during the time of the Babylonian exile. Iain W. Provan (1988) analyzes the theme of the "high places" (*bamôt*) in Kings and concludes that there was in fact a first deuteronomistic edition of the books of Samuel and Kings in the Josianic period, which ended with the abolition of the high places by Hezekiah. The authors of this deuteronomistic edition knew a preexilic version of Deuteronomy but did not include the book in their history: "the first DH, although influenced by Dtn laws, . . . was simply a history of the monarchy from Saul to Hezekiah, with its necessary prologue in 1 Samuel 1–8 . . . . Noth's DH seems best understood as an exilic expansion of an early work as to include an account of giving of the law, the conquest of the land, the period of the judges and the exile" (Provan 1988: 169–70). These approaches, which tend to combine different insights from different "schools," are promising. We should therefore try to take into account the arguments of each of the four positions presented above. In the humanities, hypotheses are rarely completely wrong or completely right. In elaborating a theory about the formation of the books of Deuteronomy to Kings one should therefore try to integrate as many of the above observations as possible.

We may agree with the opponents of Noth's theory that the deuteronomistic passages in the books of Deuteronomy to Kings present themselves in terms of frequency, use of language, and theological themes often in different manners. The supporters of a three-layer-model take this observation into account, by insisting on the necessity of literary and ideological differentiation inside the Deuteronomistic History. Contrary to those who claim that there are no deuteronomistic themes and expressions that bind together the books of Deuteronomy to Kings it can be shown that those themes do indeed exist. The warning against following "other gods" (*'ĕlōhîm 'ăḥērîm*) is a standard expression occurring in all books of the Deuteronomistic History, but is almost lacking in the Tetrateuch.[7] Direct allusions to the exile occur in the Tetrateuch only in Lev. 26:27–33. In the books of Deuteronomy to Kings, Israel's loss of the land and deportation are clearly addressed and appear in almost all of the structuring discourses of the Deuteronomistic History. In regard to these speeches, it can also be observed that the book of Deuteronomy is composed as a lengthy discourse of Moses, providing the pattern for the major comments and farewell speeches in the Former Prophets (see especially Josh. 23 and 1 Sam. 12, which are equally speeches at the end of the life of their protagonists).

The advocates of a Josianic Deuteronomistic History have to be approved as far as certain texts and ideas are better understood in the seventh century BCE than in the exilic period. The parallels between the original edition of Deuteronomy and the loyalty oath of Esarhaddon from 672 BCE make it quite plausible that Deuteronomy was written by scribes who knew this treaty, probably under the reign of Josiah (Otto 1999; Steymans 2003).[8] There are also indications that the conquest accounts in the first part of the book of Joshua may have been composed in reaction to Assyrian military propaganda with which they show many parallels (Younger 1990). It has even been argued that Joshua is constructed as a forerunner of Josiah (Nelson 1981b). There is also much evidence for a seventh-century BCE edition of the books of Samuel and Kings. The frequent use of the formula "until this day" (Childs 1963) refers in some cases clearly to a preexilic situation (Geoghegan 2006), as for instance the remark about the Ark of the Covenant that is placed in the temple of Jerusalem "until this day," which clearly presupposes the existence of the First temple, because there was no such an Ark in the Second temple. The presentation of Josiah as a "new David" also makes better sense in a seventh-century edition. The idea of Cross that 2 Kgs. 23:25 was the ending of the Josianic edition can be bolstered by the observation (not made by Cross) that this concluding verse has a literary parallel in Deut. 6:5:

> 2 Kgs. 23:25: "Before him (= Josiah) there was no king like him, who turned to Yhwh with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might (*mĕ'ōd*)."
>
> Deut. 6:5 "You shall love Yhwh your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might (*mĕ'ōd*)."

In the whole Hebrew Bible, it is only in these two passages that the adverb *mĕ'ōd* is used as a substantive. In regard to this intertextuality, Josiah was the only one who accomplished the exhortation of Deut. 6:5 literally. And if Deut. 6:4–5 was the original opening of Deuteronomy, as often assumed, we would have a very nice frame holding together a Josianic edition of a collection comprising the scrolls of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Samuel, and Kings. There is little evidence that the book of Judges was already part of this edition, so that we

should think more of several scrolls that were kept on the same shelf of a library (Römer 2005): Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Samuel-Kings. It is very possible that this seventh-century BCE library also contained a scroll with the story of Moses and the Exodus in which there are elements that support a date in the neo-Assyrian period (Otto 2000). It has often been observed that the story of Moses's birth and exposition (Exod. 2) contains close parallels to Sargon's birth story, copies of which circulated under Sargon II at the end of the eighth century BCE (Gerhards 2006). The first compilation gathered in the deuteronomistic library in the palace or temple of Jerusalem can indeed be understood, as suggested by Cross, as propaganda literature, in order to legitimate the Judean dynasty and Jerusalem, which after the fall of Samaria considered themselves as chosen by Yhwh. It became crisis literature only after the fall of Jerusalem and the deportation of the upper class to Babylon.

Noth's idea that the Deuteronomistic History was the work of one individual writer who had no link to any religious or political institutions is certainly anachronistic because almost all writings of the Hebrew Bible are to be considered as literature of tradition and have passed through the hands of many copyists and editors who stored the writings in temple or sanctuary "libraries." In this perspective, the deuteronomistic collection was edited and elaborated for at least a century, and there is evidence that enables us to distinguish three major strata of redaction: a first edition under Josiah, a new edition during the Babylonian period (when the book of Judges and probably also the book of Jeremiah were added into the deuteronomistic library), and finally a last revision in the early Persian period before the Deuteronomistic History was broken up and the book of Deuteronomy became the final book of the Pentateuch.

20.9.1 Arguments for a Three-fold Edition of the Deuteronomistic Library

In many of the major deuteronomistic speeches or discourses in the books of Deuteronomy to Kings one can quite easily distinguish three layers that correspond to the three historical periods mentioned above.

20.9.1.1 Deuteronomy 12

Let us start with the centralization law in Deut. 12:2–18. This text admonishes the addressees several times to sacrifice only at the place (*maqôm*) that Yhwh has chosen (vv. 4–7, 11–12, 13–14). This commandment is always preceded by a negative statement: vv. 2–4: not to imitate the way of the nations; vv. 8–10: not to act as "today"; v. 13: not to offer holocausts in other sanctuaries. Furthermore, each sequence ends with a call to rejoice (vv. 7, 12, and 18). These observations allow us to distinguish three units: vv. 2–7; 8–12; 13–18. The oldest text can be found in 12:13–18,[9] later enlarged first by vv. 8–12 (with v. 28) and finally by vv. 2–7 (with 29–31). Each of these units reflects one of the three historical contexts of the editing of the so-called Deuteronomistic History.

20.9.1.2 Deuteronomy 12:13–18

The original centralization law presumes the existence of the temple of Jerusalem. Those verses were part of the first edition of Deuteronomy and followed perhaps directly the

introduction in Deut. 6:4–5. This passage does not seem to presuppose the fiction of Deuteronomy as a speech of Moses, and it assumes the addressees live in the land. The *maqôm* points to the temple of Jerusalem and the unique tribe, which Yhwh will choose, refers to Judah (see similarly 1 Kgs. 8:16; Ps. 78:67–68). This theology of election is perfectly conceivable in the context of the so-called Josianic reform.

20.9.1.3 Deuteronomy 12:8–12

These verses presume the historical fiction of Deuteronomy as a Mosaic speech and the identification of the addressees as the generation of the conquest (12:9–10). After describing in v. 8 the present as a time of disorder, v. 9 states that the addressees have not yet come to the "rest" that Yhwh will provide. This verse points forward to Solomon's speech in 1 Kgs. 8:56: "Blessed be Yhwh, who has given rest (*menuḥâ*) to the people Israel." The theme of "rest" appears in several deuteronomistic texts (see, among others, Josh. 23:1; 2 Sam. 7:1, 11; 1 Kgs. 5:18). For the exilic edition of the Deuteronomistic History, the construction of the temple appears as the fulfillment of the promise of rest given in Deut. 12:10, whereas the exile appears as a time of restlessness and despair (Deut. 28:65: "And among these nations you shall find no rest").

20.9.1.4 Deuteronomy 12:2–7

This last development of Deuteronomy 12, to which belong also verses 29–31, is marked by a segregationist attitude towards the "other nations," comparable to Deut. 7:1–6, 22–26, and 9:1–6. This aggressive attitude suggests ideological and temporal proximity to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The order to destroy the altars of the nations (Deut. 12:3) foreshadows 2 Kgs. 23:15, where this expression occurs for the last time in the deuteronomistic corpus (see also Exod. 34:13; Deut. 7:5; Judg. 2:2; 6:30–31; 2 Kgs. 23:12). The relation between Deut. 12:3 and 2 Kgs. 23:15 could indicate, in the context of the early Persian period, a polemical attitude against Samaritan and diaspora sanctuaries.

20.9.1.5 Joshua 11:23; 21:42–45; and 23

These passages contain three different endings of the book of Joshua. Joshua 11:23 sounds very much like a conclusion; it refers to Yhwh's initial speech to Joshua in Josh. 1:1–9* with respect to the conquest of the land (1:2) and the distribution of the land as a *naḥalāh*. This verse suggests that the distribution of the land has already taken place. It is therefore possible that the concluding remark in 11:23 reflects a stage of the formation of Joshua in which the list material in chs. 13–19 did not yet exist (Nelson 1997: 164). If Josh. 11:23 was the original deuteronomistic conclusion of the book (Kratz 2000: 207; Becker 2006: 151), it was probably followed by the report of Joshua's death in Judg. 2:8–9 (or Josh. 24:29–30).

Joshua 21:42–45 insists on the fact that all divine promises have been fulfilled. Yhwh has given the whole land to Israel, which has defeated all the former inhabitants. In some verses of Joshua 23 however, Joshua states that there are still people remaining in the land with which Israel should not interact, whereas other verses (v. 9) insist also on the fact that Yhwh has expelled all nations. This indicates that the exilic deuteronomistic ending of Joshua (Josh.

21:43–45; Josh. 23:1–2*, 3, 9, 11, 14b–16a) was reworked by an early Persian-period redaction with a similar segregationist ideology as in Deut. 12:2–7 (23:4–8, 10, 14b–15).[10]

20.9.1.6 1 Kings 8

Solomon's speech(es) for the dedication of the Jerusalem temple also betray traces of a triple editing during the Josianic, Babylonian, and Persian periods. The oldest part of Solomon's speech can be detected in 1 Kgs. 8:14–21, which refers back to 2 Samuel 7 and links Yhwh's choice of David and the choice of the temple in Jerusalem. The quite triumphant tone of 1 Kgs. 8:14–21* makes perfect sense in the context of the Josianic period. This tone changes with regard to the king and temple in the central prayer that follows.

The exilic deuteronomistic redactor added 1 Kgs. 8:22–40, 46–51, 54–57. First, one can observe that in this exilic edition the deportation is foreseen and the temple has become a *qibla*, a direction toward which the exiles should pray (1 Kgs. 8:48, see also Dan. 6:11). The prayer occasions in vv. 33–40 and 46–51[11] also correspond to the curses of Deuteronomy 28:[12] defeat (1 Kgs. 8:33; Deut. 28:25), no rain (1 Kgs. 8:35; Deut. 28:25), famine, plague, blight, mildew, locusts or caterpillars, enemies (1 Kgs. 8:37; Deut. 28:21–22, 38, 55), deportation and exile (1 Kgs. 8:46; Deut. 28:64–65). In this exilic revision, Solomon insists on the fact that Yhwh fulfilled all his promises. The deportation and the exile are entirely Israel's fault.

The last revision of Solomon's prayer occurs in 8:52–53 and 57–61. In this revision, the temple disappears and is replaced by Yhwh's commandments. This passage also insists on the opposition between Israel, chosen by Yhwh, and the other people (vv. 59–60). These verses relate to the last deuteronomistic layer of Deut. 12:2–7.

20.9.1.7 2 Kings 17:1–23

In the deuteronomistic comment on the fall of Samaria, one can also distinguish three strata. In 2 Kgs. 17:1–6*, 18, 21–23aα.b, the decline of the northern kingdom is explained as the consequence of the failure of the kings of Israel to conform to the deuteronomistic idea of centralization and their worship of other gods. The affirmation of 2 Kgs. 17:18 that now only the tribe of Judah is left fits well with the time of Josiah, and with the affirmation of Deut. 12:14, that there is only one tribe which is chosen by Yhwh. The comment on the fall of Israel in 2 Kgs. 17 was revised during the Babylonian period and new passages were added: 17:7–8a and 19, which parallel the misdeeds of the Israelites with the misdeeds of the Judeans (cf. 1 Kgs. 14:23–24) and announce the coming destruction of Judah.

Verses 12–17 and 20 belong to deuteronomistic revisions from the Persian period. One of the main accusations is now, again, that Israel did not segregate from the surrounding nations. Second Kgs. 17:15b ("they followed the nations that were around them, concerning whom Yhwh had commanded them that they should not do as they did") presents itself as a quotation from Deut. 12:4 and 31 and can therefore be attributed to the same redactional level.

20.9.1.8 The Endings of the Three Editions of the Deuteronomistic History

The different perspectives of the successive editions of Deuteronomistic History are also reflected in their respective endings. First, 2 Kgs. 23:25a is the conclusion of the Josianic

edition of the deuteronomistic work. As noted above, Josiah is here celebrated as the new David and the only king who totally accomplished the theological program of Deut. 6:4–5. Second, 2 Kgs. 25:21, "So Judah was exiled away from their land," is constructed in parallel to 2 Kgs. 17:23b and was probably the closing remark of the exilic Deuteronomistic History. The exile appears as the conclusion of the whole history, creating at the same time the myth of an "empty land," suggesting that "all Israel" had been deported, which is in contradiction to the historical facts and other biblical accounts (Barstad 1996). This exilic perspective suggests that the Deuteronomists writing in the Babylonian period found themselves among the exiles. The present conclusion of the book of Kings in 2 Kgs. 25:27–30 has been understood by von Rad and others as a text that expresses hope for the restoration of the Davidic dynasty. It should be noted, however, that King Jehoiachin stays in Babylon "all the days of his life." His coming out of prison, changing of clothes, and receiving a place "second to the king" reminds readers of the fate of the diaspora heroes Joseph, Mordecai, and Daniel. The stories in Genesis 37–50, the book of Esther, and Daniel 1–6 insist on the fact that the land of deportation has become a land where Jews can live and manage interesting careers. As the conclusion of the Persian period edition of the Deuteronomistic History, the destiny of Jehoiachin symbolizes the transformation of exile into diaspora (Clements 2007).

20.10 The "End" of the Deuteronomistic History

Around 400–350 BCE when the Pentateuch was compiled, the pentateuchal editors decided to construct the Pentateuch as a biography of Moses, covering his whole life from his birth (Exod. 2) to his death (Deut. 34). In this context, the book of Deuteronomy was transformed to become the conclusion to the Pentateuch. This redaction added the epitaph in 34:10–12: "never again a prophet like Moses arose in Israel, a prophet whom Yhwh knew face to face...." These verses indicate that the following history contained in Joshua to Kings is not to be understood on the same level. In a way, the books of Joshua to Kings became "deutero-canonical books" in regard to the Torah. They were gathered together with prophetic scrolls and their prophetic character strengthened by the integration of prophetic stories (Elijah and Elisha) in the book of Kings. The Deuteronomistic History had disappeared—until it was rediscovered by Martin Noth.

Notes

1. All quotations are from the second edition of the English translation (Noth 1991).
2. In his 1991 book, *The Trouble with Kingship*, McKenzie still defended a Josianic Deuteronomist.
3. A similar position has recently been advocated in Rückl 2016.
4. According to Blum (2006), his "D-composition" started in Exodus 1.

5. Van Seters (1992) adopts a similar view because he considers his "Yahwist" in Genesis through Joshua as later than the Deuteronomist. The aim of the Yahwist was to write a "Prologue to History." Schmitt (1997) defends the idea of a "late Deuteronomistic History" covering the Enneateuch.
6. In recent scholarship, this passage is often considered as a post-deuteronomistic insert (Achenbach 2009; Römer 2013; Rückl 2016).
7. Only in Exod. 20:3 (Deut. 5:7); 22:13; 34:14 (singular).
8. These parallels are acknowledged by most scholars. There is, however, a trend taking up an old idea of Hölscher (1922), who argued that the first edition of Deuteronomy was written during the Babylonain exile. Cf. for instance, Pakkala 2009. Their main argument is that Deuteronomy is not interested in the question of kingship. One may respond to this that the structure of Deuteronomy may indeed reflect the importance of the high state officers, who according to 2 Kings 22 were at the origin of the "Josianic reform." The copy of Esarhaddon's vassal treaty found recently in the temple of Tell Tayinat (see Lauinger 2012) makes it very plausible that there was also a copy of this treaty in the temple of Jerusalem (Steymans 2013).
9. This section is mainly formulated in the second person singular, contrary to the two other sections.
10. For more details see Römer 2009a.
11. Verses 41–45 are probably an isolated later edition.
12. Burney 1920: 112–15.

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CHAPTER 21

READING THE HISTORICAL BOOKS AS PART OF THE PRIMARY HISTORY

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21.1 Prologue: Echoes of Scripture across the Primary History

Gearing up for the narration of the story of Abram/Abraham and the nation that will come from him, Genesis 11 tells the story of Yhwh scattering the builders of a heaven-assailing tower. "Therefore it was called Babel (*bābel*)," says v. 9. This word that occurs well over two hundred times in the Old Testament is almost always translated "Babylon" in English translations, apart from here (and Gen. 10:10), and once it starts reappearing in 2 Kings 17–25, Babylon (*bābel*) forms the climactic context for the whole primary narrative, ending with the victory of the Babylonians—at least from the perspective of 2 Kings—and a dispiriting end to the story of Abraham's descendants. They, like their tower-building forebears, are scattered across the earth, with the verb for "scattering" from Genesis 11 (*pûṣ*; Gen. 11:4, 8, 9) reoccurring, for example, in 2 Kgs. 25:5. English translations of *bābel* notwithstanding, readers are unlikely to miss the link. How the link was crafted and what its effects may be are two different questions, but one way or the other (or both), Genesis 11 and 2 Kings 25 connect across the canon.

The Genesis prologue (chs. 1–11) has notoriously little uptake in the rest of the Old Testament, and especially in Genesis–2 Kings. What about other, perhaps more embedded, links across the law and the prophets? At the moment of the giving of the law, with Moses on Mount Sinai, Aaron finds himself presiding over the creation of a golden calf as a focal point of the worship of other "gods" (Exodus 32). It is an archetypal incident of the people rejecting God, as Aaron pronounces: "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt" (Exod. 32:4). It also results in a certain *déjà vu* for the reader arriving at 1 Kings 12, who reads that Jeroboam, the newly installed king of the seceding