

Ralph W. Klein. *1 Chronicles. Hermeneia. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006. Pp. xxi + 561. ISBN: 0-8006-6085-4. \$55.00 USD, cloth.*

1. Ralph W. Klein, professor of Old Testament at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, is a recognized authority for scholars working on Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah, having focused for decades on the topic, starting with his doctoral dissertation on 1 Esdras. If we consider only the recent years, Klein has published a significant number of articles in journals and in volumes related to the topic (“Narrative Texts: Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah” in *The Blackwell Companion to the Bible*; “The Ironic End of Joash in Chronicles” in R.A. Argall, B. Bow, R.A. Werline, G.W.E. Nickelsburg (eds.); *For a Later Generation: The Transformation of Tradition in Israel, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity*; “The God of the Chronicler” in the Terence E. Fretheim FS; “The Last Words of David” in the Sara Japhet FS), commentary chapters, such as the commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah and on 1 Esdras in *The HarperCollins Bible Commentary*, as well as notes for Bible editions. Klein is also the founder of the Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah Group of the Society of Biblical Literature. All this makes him an influential voice in Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah scholarship. The Hermeneia commentary on 1 Chronicles is certainly Klein’s most substantial contribution to the field.

2. In an extensive and very useful general introduction the author reassesses the scholarly positions related to the issues of authorship, unity and dating. Following a critical evaluation of the arguments in favor of the unity of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah within the Chronicler’s History and especially the theory of a common authorship, Klein challenges the traditional view. He argues for the autonomy of the book, regarded as a “literary work in its own right” (p. 6). The most important discussion concerns the linguistic and theological arguments in favor of the unity of authorship between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. Klein summarizes the previous linguistic and stylistic analyses and clearly favors those positions that emphasize the dissimilarities, not without critically weighing the linguistic arguments for and against common authorship, however.

3. Klein regards the traditionally underscored overlap between 2 Chr 36,22-23 and Ezra 1,1-3a as a redactional continuation of the story by a different author. On the other hand, he considers 1 Esdras to be a secondary compilation of parts of the present form of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah and not a translation of an earlier *Vorlage* of the Chronicler’s History to which the Nehemiah Memoir had not been added yet. Nevertheless at this point Klein notes that this argument does not necessarily prevent scholars from associating Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah within a common historical frame (e.g., Z. Talshir).

4. Klein emphasizes the theological dissimilarities between the different books. For example, he highlights the lack of the concept of retribution in Ezra-Nehemiah, a major theme in Chronicles. While Klein’s remark is certainly correct, one wonders whether Chronicles does not emphasize the topic of retribution and judgment more than Ezra-Nehemiah because of its closer relationship with the Deuteronomistic History and because of the historical period to which it refers. A very careful analysis regards the diverging position of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah on other issues considered to be common, such as the (apparently similarly) critical attitude toward mixed marriages and toward the Northern tribes, in particular the Samaritans. In both cases Chronicles displays a much more positive position than Ezra-Nehemiah.

5. The judicious weighing of these and several other arguments leads Klein to assume the diverse authorship of these books, without denying however the ideological or theological similarities. At any rate the arguments in favor of different authorship are given somewhat more space. Yet, Klein's approach is particularly balanced and cautious. Based on a detailed discussion of the internal evidence Klein places 1 Chronicles in the Persian period, in the first half of the fourth century, and justly attributes authorship to a school that is hard to define more closely.

6. As to the redaction of the book, Klein argues for the originality of much of the material, such as the disputed genealogies in 1 Chr 1-9, where he finds several topics in common with the rest of the book. Although the author admits a lower interest in issues of redaction-history or literary criticism and expresses his preference for a synchronic approach, the introduction and each section of the exegetical part offer a thorough discussion of the unity or later elaboration of the composition. While probably several issues of redaction history are still open to debate, it is Klein's merit to propose a critical assessment of previous studies concerning the redaction of 1 Chronicles.

7. A meticulous discussion deals with the type of text of Samuel-Kings that 1 Chronicles could have used. Klein criticizes the assumption that the Chronicler has worked on a Samuel-Kings text close to the MT and points to the similarities with the Qumran texts of Samuel and the proto-Lucianic recensions of the LXX. Therefore, he concludes that Chronicles must have used a *Vorlage* of Samuel-Kings different from that of the MT.

8. Another issue of interest is the way Chronicles made use of its canonical sources. Here Klein offers a balanced analysis of the reasons which led the author to modify, for instance, the information offered by Samuel-Kings; it must not have always been the intention to idealize the Davidic era, but in certain cases modification of the sources could have stemmed from the assumption that the reader had previous knowledge of the events, or such changes might have served other purposes.

9. The very debated problem of the historical reliability of 1 Chronicles also deserves attention. Within this context Klein shows more optimism than previous critics, pointing to several instances when Chronicles preserves authentic information.

10. The exegetical analysis is based on a thorough text-critical analysis, which brings into discussion more questions than the critical apparatus of BH does.

11. The discussion of the genealogical material in connection with the underlying eponymic issues is most elaborate, highly informed and very useful. Explaining the genealogies, Klein makes use of various extra-biblical sources of information as well; for instance, this is the case of the Adam-genealogy in 1,1-4, illuminated by an inscription in the synagogue of En-Gedi. (The quoted inscription is interesting not only for the understanding of Chronicles, but also because the listing includes and closely associates the descendants of Adam—i.e., the ancestors of humanity—the zodiacal signs, the months of the Jewish calendar and some of the biblical laws.)

12. Each exegetical unit ends with a concluding section which reveals the theological message lying behind the text.

13. The reader is helped to grasp the literary devices, the historical information given by Chronicles in comparison with Samuel-Kings, and the connections within the genealogical material through a significant number of tables and schematic representations.

14. Besides being a work of high scholarly level and providing a large amount of carefully weighed information, Ralph Klein's commentary on 1 Chronicles is of much interest because it reveals the depths of a biblical book that is all but easily accessible.

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