

Kjell Hognesius, *The Text of 2 Chronicles 1–16, A Critical Edition with Textual Commentary* (Coniectanea Biblica, Old Testament Series 51; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2003).¹

When summarizing this work, I shall try to give a little background information. The book presents a new approach to textual criticism, for which 2 Chronicles is the battlefield.

The area covered by Hognesius's monograph is textual criticism, dealing with texts, ancient, medieval, and modern. Textual critics compare texts and analyze the differences between them, and when doing so they reach certain conclusions regarding the individual manuscripts and the relation between them, and try to understand how these differences came into existence. After all, behind each manuscript was a human being who wrote or copied that text; a human being who occasionally erred, such as the scribe of the large Isaiah scroll from Qumran who made many mistakes. I should hope that when Jesus picked up his Isaiah scroll in the synagogue (Luke 4:20), he had a better copy. Textual critics try to understand these scribes, enter into their minds, and learn about their character, linguistic habits and scribal peculiarities. All this is a necessary part of the discipline of textual criticism of all texts, ancient, medieval, and modern. There is a branch of textual criticism focusing on the printed editions of Shakespeare. There is another branch dealing with modern authors whose handwriting complicated its decipherment, such as that of the Israeli Nobel prize-winning author Agnon. To date, there is no branch dealing with transmission in the computer age, but even that may be contemplated. While textual criticism of written texts focuses on similar-looking letters, in the case of computers our enemy is adjacent letters on the keyboard. Another enemy is that of "global corrections" whereby we may correct more than we intended. Yet another enemy is different fonts. It is also possible to delete more than needed or we may inadvertently duplicate elements.

Textual criticism pertains to all *written* documents, not to oral traditions. In the case of written documents, it is sufficient to open your daily newspaper and see how the same news item may occur on both the front page and an internal page, with some editorial differences, how lines are repeated, how typographical errors entered the text, etc.

Textual criticism pertains also to religious writings, since also the Scriptures were transmitted by humans.

¹ Abridged version of an 'opposition' oration presented to the University of Uppsala. The author defended his dissertation, upon which it was pronounced as 'accepted' by the committee.

The monograph contains 16 pages of front matter, a 20-page Introduction, the so-called critical text in Hebrew of 2 Chronicles 1–16 (21 pp.), a Textual Commentary (108 pp.), and a bibliography, altogether totaling 177 pages. I found no printing errors.

The major contribution of this monograph is the so-called critical text of 2 Chronicles 1–16, in 21 printed pages, while all other sections either lead up to this segment or are commentaries on it. The core of the book is a mere 21 pages, also a common occurrence in other fields of research. The biblical scholar de Wette likewise wrote his famous dissertation on the origin of the book of Deuteronomy in a mere twenty pages.² In the case of Hognesius, the introduction to the critical text provides his operating principles, while the textual commentary shows how he reached his conclusions. The critical text itself cannot be much longer or shorter than the chapters themselves.

The author should be complimented for presenting his case in a very lucid and logical way.

Even before the introduction, in his preface, Hognesius states that this opus grew out of his work on the Swedish translation of Scripture, in the course of which he set himself the task of establishing a Hebrew text which lay at the base of the translation: “A basic task when translating an ancient text is to establish the ‘original’ text, using the principles of textual criticism” (from the Preface).

The author presents us with a precise comparison of the details in all the witnesses of the biblical text of 2 Chronicles 1–16, and in this regard his book can be used as a textual and general commentary. At the center of this study is an examination of the meaning and correctness of the Masoretic Text (MT). This study also presents a comparison of MT with the other ancient witnesses, the LXX, Peshitta, Targumim, and the Vulgate, as well as medieval manuscripts of MT.

The end product of this comparison is the creation of a critical edition of 2 Chronicles. The author uses MT as the framework for his edition changing that text when MT is considered to be incorrect. In those cases, MT is relegated to the apparatus, and the text itself contains another reading. That may be a detail reconstructed into Hebrew from the LXX or Peshitta, a detail from the MT in the parallel text in Kings, etc. In some cases, when according to Hognesius no correct reading has been transmitted either in MT or any other ancient or medieval source, he reverts to conjecture (‘cj’), ‘inventing’ a Hebrew reading presumably once contained in the original text but subsequently corrupted. In his detailed commentary, Hognesius gives the reasons for such suggestions.

² W. M. L. de Wette, *Dissertatio critico-exegetica, qua Deuteronomium a prioribus Pentateuchi libris diversum, alius cuiusdam recentioris auctoris opus esse demonstratur*, 1805.

The purpose of the introduction is to explain the principles guiding the making of the critical edition, and the even more basic decision to prepare such an edition. The author carefully guides us through a web of his and others' opinions regarding the aims of textual criticism in general, that of Hebrew Scripture in particular, and the special challenges encountered in the preparation of the critical text of Chronicles. "The goal is the recovery of an earlier, more authentic—and therefore superior—form of the text," the author says on p. 17, quoting from P. K. McCarter, *Textual Criticism* (1986). This principle guides Hognesius all along. In his view, only once a critical text has been established can exegetes perform their exegetical tasks, and translators do their job.

The following twelve questions were presented to the author:

1. You refer to the text you created as 'the original text', see for example your words in the Preface:

"A basic task when translating an ancient text is to establish the "original" text, using the principles of textual criticism. The translation of the Swedish Bible is based on such a text, and the divergences from the traditional (Masoretic) text are listed in an appendix. I was responsible for preparing the first draft of 2 Chronicles to the Commission, and I present here my text-critical work in the form of a critical edition of the Hebrew text of 2 Chr 1–16."

The implication of these words is quite clear, and later you return to these definitions. I understand these remarks to mean that you established an "original" text of 2 Chronicles, in whatever way we take the word "original" to mean. The critical edition embodies the original text, and in your summary you follow a similar line, although you stop short of spelling out your intentions. You also say on pp. 28-29 that you are equating your work with that of Borbone and Hendel, each of whom reconstructed the original text of a biblical book.³

However, it seems to me that you also convey another message in your dissertation. The purpose of the edition is phrased much more modestly in the middle of the introduction. There you are not calling your edition a reconstruction of the original text. You say that your work is to be understood like that of Borbone and Hendel, but

"It is not the intention of the present author to claim that this edition presents *the* text of 2 Chronicles 1–16, but, rather, that it attempts to make a contribution to

³ P. G. Borbone, *Il libro del profeta Osea, Edizione critica del testo ebraico* (Quaderni di Henoch 2; Torino [1990]); R. S. Hendel, *The Text of Genesis 1–11—Textual Studies and Critical Edition* (New York/Oxford 1998).

serious scholarly discussion on text-critical matters. If eventually, such serious discussion would lead to the publishing of critical editions of the text of the Old Testament, this would be for the benefit of all Old Testament scholars.”

I do not understand this statement of purpose. I can only take the edition as an attempt to reconstruct an original text, while in the second statement you speak about something less than such an attempt. There you say that others could create a critical edition on the basis of your work.

2. The well-written commentary is described in the title as a ‘textual commentary’ accompanying the critical edition. Its nature is not defined, leaving the reader with the impression that this commentary is what the title says, namely a textual commentary. But then, you remark on p. 31

“The intention is that this kind of critical edition should serve most exegetes, not only those specially interested in textual criticism, as well as translators not particularly skilled in textual criticism.”

Indeed, it is not a textual commentary as announced everywhere, but is rather a little bit of everything. For example, regarding 2 Chron 3:17 you state “This verse does not pose any real problems.” Are you calling this a textual commentary for the sake of modesty? I sometimes feel that the notes often serve as background to the translation in which you were involved, and that they are not always relevant to the textual edition you provide. It also is a commentary on details not included in the critical apparatus, as expected under the circumstances. It even provides linguistic notes that have no relevance to textual criticism (p. 62 on 1:2), and speaks about the exegesis of the Chronicler vis-à-vis his Hebrew *Vorlage* (p. 63). It refers to the theology and abridgement of the Chronicler (p. 66 on 1:7). In short, is it truly a textual commentary?

3. You have not explained what constitutes the basis of your investigations. Do you express a view on the textual notes given in the critical apparatus of *BHS*, or notes given in some or all commentaries? Or does the edition and commentary reflect an independent investigation of all the details in the major versions, the LXX, Vulgate, Peshitta, Targumim, also when they are not commented upon in *BHS* and/or the commentaries? I might add that while *BHS* presents a more careful edition than *BH*, the latter provides more information on details.

I am not sure how to understand your reference to the coverage of your work on p 31:

“The textual evidence has in most cases been checked regarding Hebrew manuscripts in the collection of Kennicott and for the ancient versions in scholarly editions. However, in some cases the collation already done by the

editors of BHS or BHK has been judged to suffice for the present edition, as has in a few instances the work of Rudolph with regard to L.”

I ask my question against the background of these remarks.

4. In your theoretical discussion of the purpose of textual criticism, you stress that in the course of the textual transmission mistakes have entered into manuscripts (p. 24):

“...the reconstructed text—having been purged of (most of) the errors that had crept into it during the transmission process—is at least closer to the form of the text intended by the author”

I wonder whether you created your “original” text only by purging these errors from the text. Or are there possibly other types of details that were inserted in the manuscripts such as exegetical additions or changes, glosses, and linguistic innovations of the Chronicler? Is it possible that you also removed these elements from one of the manuscripts or from MT in order to reach out to an earlier text-form? If textual criticism involves more than the removal of errors, you did not say so.

5. In the introduction and commentary, you sometimes hesitate as to whether or not you are providing the reader with the original text of 2 Chronicles 1–16, but you do not show these doubts in the edition itself. However, there will be those who will take your edition as it stands without any question marks in the apparatus. All reconstructions are hypothetical, but you yourself consider certain elements more hypothetical than others. Would it have been wise to indicate doubtful reconstructions in a special way, possibly in a different font, or with question marks in the text or in the apparatus?

6. I would like to know about the amount of deviation in your own edition from MT or the LXX. Do you consider this edition slightly or very different from MT? And how does this edition relate to the systems used in other critical editions, such as those by Hendel and Borbone? Do they deviate more from MT than your edition?

7. How do you see the relation between the text of Kings and Chronicles? You often/sometimes correct the text of Chronicles to that of Kings. Thus, in 2 Chr 9:10 MT, *algummim* has been corrected to *almuggim* on the basis of 1 Kgs 10:11 ff. On p 137, you call this word in the Chronicler’s text an error, but I wonder whether we cannot accept two different forms, one in Kings and one in Chronicles. The form *almuggim* occurs three times in Chronicles, and the dictionaries mention both forms as bi-forms (e.g. BDB⁴ has two separate entries). The relation between these two forms would be one of linguistic metathesis, just as in the case of *kivśah* and *kisbah*, the latter occurring once.

⁴ S. R. Driver, F. Brown, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1955).

In other cases also you correct the MT of Chronicles according to Kings. In 2 Chr 10:18, you correct the name of king Hadoram to Adoram with 1 Kgs 12:18. It would indeed be useful were the king always given the same name, but there are other examples in Hebrew Scripture in which a person's name appears with different spellings. It is only appropriate that I mention that in your note 443 you refer to the possibility of a different pronunciation, but all the same, you do correct the text. (Besides, I don't consider this only a matter of a different pronunciation, but of a phonetic variant). On p. 92, you correct the text of 2 Chron 4:16 *hamizlagot* to a completely different word, *hamizraqot*, as in Kings. I see the same tendency in 4:17, etc. etc. I agree that textual errors in Chronicles should occasionally be corrected according to Kings, but how many? Would it not be better to limit such textual corrections to cases of proven corruption, while continuing to allow for the independence of Kings and Chronicles in vocabulary and grammar?

8. At a more general level, while reading the commentary I often felt the need to ask what the basis is for your linguistic preferences. On p 137 and in the critical text, you suggest that in 2 Chr 9:11 *mesillot* of MT should be replaced with *mis'adot* (cf. *mis'ad* in 1 Kgs 10:12). You quote BDB that considers *mesillot* to be a corruption of *mis'adot*. But both words seem to be possible in their contexts and besides they are very remote graphically from each other. In general, was the linguistic reality of the Chronicler not different from that of the author of Kings?

9. In your terminology, as in that of others, a conjecture or emendation is a detail invented by scholars against all the evidence, but you often use the term 'emending' to mean 'correcting' in general, including cases in which the emendation *does* have manuscript support. For example, on p. 163 you say on 15:9 "Both BHS a and BHQ propose an emendation, reading *umimenashe* with the *support* of some manuscripts" (my italics, E. T.). On p. 64, you say about 1:5 "*sam* is often emended to *sham* (with [my italics, E. T.] many MSS, G, V, and L)." You often talk about emendations or corrections when stating that you actually *prefer* some medieval manuscripts of MT to the others, or when you prefer the LXX to the MT. Is this really a form of emending or correcting? In actuality, these are not corrections. You do correct MT, but MT is not the biblical text. You simply prefer a reading found in an ancient source to that of MT. To talk in terms of correcting gives preference to MT over all the other sources.

10. In 2 Chron 8:18, you prefer the defective *Qere* spelling *oniyot* without a *waw* to the *plene Ketiv* spelling with a *waw*. But how can we make any decisions on matters of spelling? How do we know how the Chronicler has written? After all, this is a late book, and possibly he had a *plene* spelling as often appears at Qumran? Do we *have* to decide

on matters of spelling? And with regard to closely related morphological forms, why should we correct *wa-yechela* with an *aleph* to *wa-yachal* in 2 Chron 16:12? In your commentary you say “perhaps the form in MT should be altered...”, but in the text itself the form *is* altered, described as “cj”.

11. The question of the *Vorlage* of the Chronicler has often been raised in modern research, especially in the discussions of Cross, Lemke and Ulrich⁵ on the comparative evidence of the witnesses of Samuel (including 4QSam^a) and Chronicles. These scholars suggested that we should not always assume that the Chronicler used the MT text of Samuel, but that he often had a text like 4QSam^a in front of him. This implies that in those cases the Chronicler did not “change” the MT of Samuel, but left the 4QSam^a text unchanged. In such cases, the MT of Chronicles ought not to be changed. Now, we have no such Qumran evidence for Kings parallel to 2 Chronicles 1–16, but should not evidence of this type be influencing your thinking also in these chapters?

12. In the preface, you say that the present dissertation lay at the base of the modern Swedish translation, even though you’re not directly responsible for that translation. Also, you say on p. 31 that the commentary is written partly for translators into modern languages. So I wonder what your view is regarding the textual background of these modern translations. In question 1, I quoted from your preface, and I now continue to ask: Is the original text created as the basis for modern translations identical to that created in scholarly editions such as the present one? Chronicles is a relatively uncomplicated book and your critical text is fairly close to MT, but when reaching Samuel, would you create a completely different text from MT as the basis for a translation? And would your reconstructed critical text involve a much shorter edition of the book of Jeremiah? Or do you favor two types of critical editions, one very different from MT for scholarly editions and another one closer to MT as the basis for modern translations?

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⁵ F. M. Cross, “The History of the Biblical Text in the Light of Discoveries in the Judaean Desert”, *HTR* 57 (1964) 281–99; W. E. Lemke, “The Synoptic Problem in the Chronicler’s History”, *HTR* 58 (1965) 349–63; E. C. Ulrich, *The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus* (HSM 19; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars, 1978) chapter V.