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Review of II Samuel: with introduction and commentary, by P. Kyle McCarter, Jr.

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II Samuel: with introduction and commentary, by P. Kyle McCarter, Jr.
THE ANCHOR BIBLE, VOL. 9. Doubleday & Co., Garden City, 1984.
553 pp. \$18.00.

MCCARTER HAS ADDED a valuable and useful volume to the ANCHOR BIBLE series, continuing his discussion of Samuel (cf. *I Samuel*, 1980). The volume employs the standard series format with an introductory section, followed of a translation, textual notes, notes, and comment for each passage. There are also indices of biblical passages and authors and an excellent bibliography

Although the series has not been uniform in emphasis or consistent in strength, this study is certainly one of the stronger offerings. However, it is also one that contributes to the variety of emphases. McCarter chose to do a full-scale textual analysis of Samuel, and thus a major portion of his commentary is spent discussing textual variants. This makes for laborious reading if one works straight through - the volume; however, it provides a valuable resource for textual analysis of a particular passage in the process of exegesis. McCarter has done an excellent job of consulting and analyzing the variety of textual sources (MT, LXX, Syr., OL, OG, Q) in preparation of his translation. Nevertheless, the textual analysis has its problems. A minor concern is McCarter's emphasis on the construction of an "urtext" over the analysis of the *textus receptus*. Granted that these two poles reflect an argument among textual critics, still McCarter provides no discussion of the pitfalls or strengths of either perspective. The more significant concern is that the book lacks a clear, consistent rationale for why one textual reading is preferred over another. Again the author's assumptions are not made explicit.

A few examples will illustrate this problem. On the one hand, McCarter rejects emendations of II Samuel 12:26—27 because "there is no basis for a challenge to the received text" (p. 311). On the other hand he emends II Samuel 7:11 even though the "change is without textual support" (p. 193). A final example is one in which the meaning of the text is skewed by McCarter's emendation. In II Samuel 15:2 he "arbitrarily" (p. 354) emends the text contrary to most textual witnesses and omits any reference to "gate," reading Absalom "stood beside the .road." Thus, he completely misses the significance of "sitting in the gate" as an indication of Absalom's dispensing of justice (cf. Duet. 22:15,19; Amos 5:15) which is clearly a king's responsibility (II Sam. 19:8) and which would thus reinforce the story of Absalom's attempt to supplant David as king.

A second problem relates to McCarter's interpretation of Second Samuel. To his credit, he displays a good knowledge of various scholarly positions and explicates many of the arguments very well. However, a disturbing pattern in his analysis is his reticence to consider or accept external or syncretistic influences on the Yahweh cult. This appears when he interprets references to Baal and Asherah as local manifestations of Yahweh rather than as independent deities

worshipped among the Israelites (e.g., pp. 154, 156, 494). A similar perspective emerges when he discusses the capture of Jerusalem, kingship, the origin of Zadok or of Nathan, and the role of fertility in the cult. As an example, in discussing the capture of Jerusalem (II Sam. 5:6—10), McCarter argues that any reference to going "up the watershaft" or to "the blind and the lame" as defending the city is "meaningless" (p. 139), in part because he ignores the possibility that a Jebusite theological concept (the inviolability of the city in which the god resides) is at the base of the account (cf. Isa. 31:4—6; Pss. 46, 48).

Finally, there are a few minor irritants. The volume is relatively free from "typos," although it is E. Tov not Tob (p. 49) and Map 5 not Map 4 (p. 247). The only real annoyance is that the maps themselves are neither numbered nor paginated, which makes references to them in the text difficult to pursue.

While the above comments have been critical of aspects of the contents of the commentary or of certain perspectives of the author, they should not be seen as questioning the fundamental soundness of the volume or its value to the scholarly community. It is a good and welcome addition.

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