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The Masoretic Text of the Books of Samuel is not in good shape. That is why the Books of Samuel are not so suitable as a reading book for a beginner in Hebrew as some of the other historical books are. For though they contain classical examples of a beautiful Hebrew prose style, they have unusually suffered from transcriptional corruption, and hence raise frequently textual questions, with which a beginner is evidently not in a position to deal. But for one who has made further progress in the language, they afford an admirable field for study: they familiarize him with many of the most characteristic idioms of the language, and at the same time introduce him to the fundamentals and principles of the textual criticism of the Old Testament. So, the Hebrew text of the Books of Samuel has come down to us in a rather unsatisfactory condition, by reason of the numerous errors due to transcribers. The numbers especially have suffered, probably because in the oldest manuscripts they were not written out in full. In particular many letters and words have been accidentally omitted, often because of the phenomenon of homoioteleuton. For many years commentators have attempted to emend the text on the basis of the LXX, and this tradition continues. Many of these mistakes can readily be corrected by a comparison with the Septuagint and other ancient versions. Others antedate all translations, and are therefore found in the versions as well as in the Massoretic Text. In spite of the work of correction done by modern commentators and textual critics, a perfectly satisfactory critical text is still a desideratum. The Septuagint differs considerably from the Massoretic Text in many instances; in others the case is not so clear. The Vulgate was translated from a Hebrew text closely resembling the Massoretic, but the original text has been interpolated with additions and duplicate translations, which have crept in from the Itala.

This unfortunate situation was recognized centuries ago, but the first systematic attempt to correct it came only in Otto Thenius' commentary (1842). Thenius believed the text of the Greek Bible (LXX), which is much fuller than that of the MT and often widely divergent from it, could be used to recover original readings at many points where MT was corrupt, and he set out to do this on a grand scale. But Thenius' textual proposals often seemed arbitrary and subjective, and for this reason he was severely criticized. So it was not Thenius who put the study of the text of the Books of Samuel on a fully scientific footing. This task was accomplished by Julius Wellhausen, whose monograph *Der Text der Bücher Samuelis untersucht*, published in 1871, is generally acknowledged to be a major landmark in the development of the textual criticism of the Bible. By expert and judicious comparison of the evidence of the MT, the LXX, and the other versions, Wellhausen established the outline of an eclectic text of Samuel which better than any other reconstruction has withstood the influx of new data brought about by subsequent research and discovery. The work of this scholar was highly influential, and the major subsequent studies of Samuel show its impact. Of these the most important from the standpoint of textual criticism was Driver's *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Samuel* (1890). To critics like Wellhausen, Driver, and their followers, the comparative use of the LXX and the other ancient versions seemed to go a long way toward clearing up the problems in the MT of Samuel. The recovery, beginning in 1952, of ancient Hebrew Manuscripts of Samuel from Cave IV at Qumran began a revolution in the study of the text. In ancient documents 4QSam^{a-b-c}, older by a millennium than any extant exemplar of the Masoretic tradition, Cross recognized a textual type widely at variance with that of the MT but consistently close to the one reflected by the LXX. When ancient Hebrew MSS closely aligned with the reconstructed Vorlage of the LXX had appeared, it was no longer possible to suppose that the peculiarities of the LXX were translational in origin. Further work on the scrolls showed that the situation was somewhat more complex. There are several ancient witnesses that compete for the attention of the modern text critic, each with a claim to originality at any given point in Samuel. It is no longer possible to defend a textual reconstruction that relies exclusively on the MT or turns to the versions only when the MT is unintelligible. Wherever alternative readings exist, the critic must weigh the merits of each reading according to the accepted rules of textual analysis. None of the ancient witnesses to the text of Samuel has a monopoly on primitive reading.

Due to the complexity of their textual witnesses, the Books of Samuel appear to be a key link in the history of the Hebrew Bible. The textual

difficulties of the Masoretic Text, the specificities and the textual multiplicity of the Septuagint, which contains a literal translation of the Hebrew but at the same time also differs from Masoretic Text, and the fragmentary witness of three manuscripts found at Qumran (4QSam^{a-b-c}) invite the commentators to go into textual multiplicity of the Books of Samuel deeply in order to discover their complex history of transmission. Scholars have for a long time considered that differences between the witnesses were of a strictly textual nature. Recent research tends however to consider that the textual criticism has to take into account the literary aspects which characterize the most ancient transmission of the text. This assessment asks a variety of new exegetical questions considered in volume edited by Philippe Hugo and Adrian Schenker: *Archaeology of the Books of Samuel. The entangling of the Textual and Literary History*. In this valuable volume scholars ask the very important and fundamental questions: does the comparative analysis of the textual witnesses (Masoretic Text, 4QSam, putative Hebrew source of the Septuagint) permit proving the existence of distinct literary editions? Which are the criteria to deem the literary nature of the variants? Which ideological and theological motives governed the modifications of a previous text? Is it possible to establish a relative chronology between the putative editions? Is it possible to recognize the editorial, ideological or theological specificities of these editions and date them?

These are the questions that scholars intend to raise in present volume. In their papers they show how the study of the most ancient history of the text opens an archeology of the monument that are the books of Samuel. The search for their ancient foundations and the bringing to light of later modifications, the consideration both of the restorations and of the ruins of the textual edifice all throw new light on the final construct and its theological significance. The volume *Archaeology of the Books of Samuel. The Entangling of the Textual and Literary History* is an important contribution to the philology and textual criticism of the Old Testament, and will give rise to new and promising research and debate. All the papers in this volume show that only an eclectic reconstruction can bypass the haplographic defectiveness of the received Hebrew text on the one hand and the expansionistic tendency towards conflation of the Old Palestinian tradition on the other, and arrive at an approximation, however rough, of the primitive text of Samuel.