

Preface

Since Walter Dietrich organized the first conference of the Samuel Seminar in Bern in 2003,¹ meetings and seminars centered on the Book of Samuel have regularly taken place at IOSOT congresses and other venues. Beginning with the first meeting in Bern, where synchronic and diachronic approaches were brought together for consideration, these events have tackled pressing issues in the study of the Book of Samuel. In 2006 A. Graeme Auld and Erik Eynikel organized a conference in Nijmegen, centered on the political *Tendenzen* of various sources, traditions, redactions, and pericopae in the book, asking whether these components demonstrated an ideology that stood “for or against David?”² One year later in 2007 the Samuel Seminar convened under the direction of Christa Schäfer-Lichtenberger at the 19th IOSOT congress (Ljubljana), exploring the connections between the sources of the Book of Samuel and the Deuteronomistic group that provided the book’s final structure.³ A group of Samuel scholars met again in Bern in 2009 at the invitation of Walter Dietrich. The papers from this conference were gathered along with those of another seminar that Dietrich organized the following year, which took place alongside the 20th IOSOT congress (Helsinki) in 2010.⁴ In 2014, Dietrich was honored as president of the Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense (Leuven), allowing him the opportunity to plan and host a conference on the narratives, history, and reception of the Book of Samuel. The colloquium drew scores of scholars from around the globe.⁵

On each occasion, the Seminar has drawn together many established voices alongside younger scholars through the superb leadership of Professor Walter Dietrich, the “founding father” of modern Samuel studies.⁶ The ongoing dialogue has proven to be extremely fruitful, and each meeting has carved out ample space for collegial discussion among the many scholars in attendance. Dietrich’s congeniality and commitment to friendly and constructive

¹ Dietrich, Walter, ed. *David und Saul im Widerstreit – Diachronie und Synchronie im Wettstreit. Beiträge zur Auslegung des ersten Samuelbuches*. OBO 206; Fribourg, Göttingen: Academic Press Fribourg, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2004.

² The papers are published in Auld, A. Graeme, and Eynikel, Erik, eds. *For and Against David. Story and History in the Books of Samuel*. BETL 232; Leuven, Paris, Dudley: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2010.

³ The papers and responses of the Seminar are published in: Schäfer-Lichtenberger, Christa, ed. *Die Samuelbücher und die Deuteronomisten*. BWANT 188; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 2010.

⁴ The papers are published in one volume in: Dietrich, Walter, ed. *Seitenblicke. Literarische und historische Studien zu Nebenfiguren im zweiten Samuelbuch*. OBO 249; Fribourg, Göttingen: Academic Press Fribourg, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2011.

⁵ The papers are published in: Dietrich, Walter, ed. *The Books of Samuel. Stories, History, Reception History*. BTL 284; Leuven, Paris, Bristol, Ct: Peeters, 2016.

⁶ See the preface in Auld, A. Graeme, and Eynikel, Erik, eds. *For and Against David. Story and History in the Books of Samuel*. BETL 232; Leuven, Paris, Dudley: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2010.

disagreement has served as a model for other seminars and colloquia over the years, often involving overlapping groups of scholars. These other colloquia include two meetings in Jena – the first organized by Uwe Becker and Hannes Bezzel (2012) and the second by Hannes Bezzel and Reinhard G. Kratz (2018).⁷ Other collections of critical essays on 1–2 Samuel testify to the ongoing scholarly interest in the book, and to the many knots awaiting untying.⁸

In homage to the tradition of scholarship and collegiality established by Professor Dietrich, Sara Kipfer approached Jeremy Hutton in Stellenbosch (IOSOT 2016) about the possibility of planning another iteration of the Samuel Seminar at the next (23rd) congress of IOSOT in Aberdeen (Aug. 4–9, 2019). At the same time, Regine Hunziker-Rodewald, Thomas Naumann, and Johannes Klein were also beginning to organize a seminar, knowing that Prof. Dietrich would be celebrating his 75th birthday in 2019. The two groups quickly learned of each other's plans and agreed to collaborate. As a result, the five editors of this volume organized a colloquium alongside the regular programming of the IOSOT Congress on the theme, "The Book of Samuel and Its Response to Monarchy." When we first selected this as the theme of our seminar between late 2016 and early 2017, we could predict that it would be timely and relevant. The political climate in the United States, Britain, the European Continent, and the Middle East had taken a distinctively authoritarian turn in the preceding year or two. Although many individual incidents manifesting this authoritarian turn could be listed, we list here only a few: the Polish Constitutional Court crisis (beginning in Dec., 2015), the Brexit referendum (June, 2016), Erdoğan's response to an attempted coup in Turkey (July, 2016), the Hungarian migrant quota referendum provided by Viktor Orbán (Oct., 2016), and the US presidential election (Nov., 2016). These few individual events seemed at the time to be representative of the gradual trend towards radical authoritarian extremism in societies around the world. In the intervening years, our sense of timeliness has, sadly, been confirmed by the increasing intertwining of populism, xenophobia, and authoritarianism on the world stage.

Biblical studies should not allow itself to shrink from responding to these developments: Historical and social-scientific approaches to the Book of Samuel may find ancient Near Eastern precedent for this trend and seek to describe the social conditions that are produced under authoritarian regimes. Redactional approaches might examine the diachronic development of Samuel's varying perceptions of monarchy as that institution became increasingly entrenched in Israelite and Judahite society and then underwent a sudden, cataclysmic failure.

⁷ The proceedings of these colloquia were published as: Becker, Uwe, and Bezzel, Hannes, eds. *Rereading the relecture?* FAT 2. Reihe 66, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2014; and Bezzel, Hannes, and Kratz, Reinhard G., eds. *David in the Desert Tradition and Redaction in the "History of David's Rise"*. BZAW 514, Berlin, New York: de Gruyter 2021.

⁸ See, for example: Edenburg, Cynthia, and Pakkala, Juha, eds. *Is Samuel among the Deuteronomists? Current Views on the Place of Samuel in a Deuteronomistic History*. SBL AIL 16; Atlanta: SBL, 2013.

Literary and theological approaches may advocate for contemporary reconsideration and application of the book's principles. In order to leverage these potential responses from biblicists specializing in Samuel, we invited scholars with a range of diverse methodological interests to speak in Aberdeen. Finally, we extended an invitation to Professor Dietrich to offer a response to the seminar and his concluding thoughts on Samuel's continuing relevance in biblical studies.

The editors would like to thank all the participants in the seminar, many of whom came long distances at considerable expense to be in attendance. One might say that the meeting was warm in part due to the unexpectedly sunny weather and high temperatures in Aberdeen, along with the south-facing windows of the venue. But, in the tradition of earlier seminars in Samuel, the warmth came equally from the cheer, collegiality, and sincerity of the participants. We would also like to thank the organizers of the IOSOT Congress in Aberdeen – especially the Congress President Joachim Schaper, Secretary Grant Macaskill, and administrator Diana Zee. Finally, we want to express our gratitude to the staff at Kohlhammer Verlag Stuttgart. Dr. Sebastian Weigert, Florian Specker, and Janina Schüle have shepherded this project from the beginning, and we are grateful for their knowledge and patience.

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