The two volumes of Knoppers on Chronicles are imposing for the scholar to read. They are packed with voluminous information on the historiographical techniques of ancient Israel. The author narrates a story in the grandest tradition of ancient Israel but is keen on providing details that appeal to the scholar. Quickly one notes the depth of Knoppers’s translation technique in the present volume. Narrative portions of the Hebrew text are translated with an eye to readability and understanding. Administrative texts are rendered with a prose that is not pedantic but rather draws the reader into communion with the text. The two volumes of Knoppers replace the dated Myers volumes on Chronicles in the Anchor Bible series.

In the interest of fair disclosure one should first read my review of Knoppers’s *I Chronicles 1–9* (www.bookreviews.org/pdf/4567_4650.pdf), where I set out in detail an overview of Knoppers’s critical methodology. Mention must be made concerning the use of text-critical apparatus in both volumes. Each volume is replete with all extant exemplars of divergent and cogent readings. No textual question is left unanswered by Knoppers in either of his two fine volumes.

Preliminary matters were taken care of in the first volume, *I Chronicles 1–9*, in a nine-part “Introduction.” Elements such as titles, relevance of textual criticism, the use of
earlier biblical books, recent studies on Chronicles, multiple editions, authorship and date, and extrabiblical sources were elucidated. Accordingly, the first twelve chapters are concerned with the genealogies of the people of Israel. The layout of both volumes consists of a pericope followed by textual notes, notes, sources, composition, and, finally, comments.

The second volume, *1 Chronicles 10–29*, takes up the narrative where the first volume ended (the return of the people to Jerusalem). Knoppers opens this volume with a scant sixteen pages detailing the fall of the Benjamite Saul (515–31). This handling of Saul should not surprise the astute reader, for it is in keeping with the terse mention of Israel’s first king in Chronicles. Knoppers masterfully surveys the nuances of Chronicles’ inclusion of this pericope at its present juncture. The subsequent three chapters elucidate the rise of Israel’s archetype king, David. Informed readers are cognizant of the Chronicler’s bias toward David and Solomon, Knoppers’s commentary is driven by the Hebrew text and thus reflects the disparity between Samuel and Chronicles. Chapters 17–19 nuance the coming of the ark into Jerusalem. “The Divine Promises to David” makes up chapter 20 and is pivotal in understanding the Chronicler’s theology. Chapters 22–26 detail the foreign geopolitical hegemony of David’s empire. Precisely, these chapters detail the military exploits that David used to build his kingdom. The last third of the commentary deals with the materials, officers, and servants of the temple.

Knoppers initiates his commentary by noting the disparity between the Samuel and Chronicles accounts of Saul’s downfall. As he will do extensively in this commentary, he surveys all relevant data on scholarship’s understanding of Saul’s final battle. Knoppers concludes that the “role and function of the Saul narrative” has to do with “the Chronicler’s historiography as well as the Chronicler’s circumstances in Persian period Judah.” (528). In analyzing the Chronicler’s treatment of Saul, Knoppers also notes a shift from the institution of the monarchy to the conduct of the kings. As is expected, Knoppers argues that the Chronicler uses the genealogy of Saul in order to downplay the role of the story in Samuel. Likewise, the Chronicler creates a “distinctively new portrait of Saul and his relationship to David.” (530).

The rise of David (material in chs. 14–15) is portrayed as distinct Israelite royal ideology. Knoppers, taking his cue from Postgate, argues that the Chronicler depicts the advent of David as both divine election as well as a result of popular demand. The downfall of Saul is characterized as a rejection by Yhwh. Similarly, David is assured divine dynastic promise in the later chapters of Chronicles. The populace is described as acting “deliberately to strengthen David’s position and eventually make him king.” (575). David’s rise to kingship is characterized in a manner quite at odds with the account in Samuel. In the Chronicles account, David’s rise to power and fame is one of a tour de
force. David is a product of the people, and it is the populace or, as Knoppers notes, “Israelite union,” that establishes the Davidic monarchy. Indeed, if one reads Chronicles closely, David’s rise to power is not nearly as bloody or divisive as it is in Samuel. Rather, “David’s rise is a picture of an orderly and ever expanding intertribal consensus.” (576). This tribal consensus is aptly illustrated by the list of warriors who follow David. The author takes pains to show how the Chronicler used even this list to promote David as king of all Israel.

In the subsequent four chapters (16–19) Knoppers comments on the rise of the ark of the covenant as a unique cultic instrument. Indeed, as Knoppers notes, it was the Jerusalem temple, not the ark or the tabernacle, that was the dominate cultic institution during the time of the Chronicler. The Deuteronomistic Historian and the Chronicler both give significant attention to the “ancient palladium,” and its incorporation into the temple appears to testify to its symbolic importance for these writers. (592). Reading Knoppers, one understands that by using the ark as imagery the Chronicler is able to fuse the Second Temple of his own day to the institutions (e.g., First Temple and Sinai) of Israel’s past. It may also be argued that the Yahwistic cultus is no longer inherently portable but rather tied to a central permanent sanctuary. Knoppers argues, “While the Chronicler does not deny the historical existence of other Yahwistic sanctuaries (e.g., 1 Chr 16:39–42; 21:29; 2 Chr 1:3, 13), he affirms centralization and the preeminence of the Jerusalem Temple” (593).

Hedged in between the narratives of the ark is the story of the nascent Davidic kingdom establishing its palace and defeating its first enemies (1 Chr 14). Knoppers argues that this chapter denotes the Chronicler’s use of royal ideology via divine blessing. Consequently, within the Chronicler’s ideology any commendation, tribute, or gifts given to the monarch constitute a type of divine blessing. When Huram of Tyre sends men to construct the Davidic palace, one cannot be in doubt as to David’s good standing with Yhwh. Once ensconced in his domicile, David is tested in battle. His response to foreign aggression is completely different from that of the deposed Saul. Knoppers argues that David acts “in conformity with the deity’s wishes,” thus ensuring victory.

While it is noted that McCarter sees ancient Near Eastern parallels (in Samuel) to the ensconcing of the ark into Jerusalem (1 Chr 15–16), Knoppers argues for a modification at least in relation to Chronicles. After an extensive comparison between Assyrian royal inscriptions (e.g., Ashurnasirpal II, Sargon II, and Esarhaddon), Knoppers notes the congruence between cultures. The Chronicler casts David as both an expositor of the Torah as well as a resourceful leader. In this manner the Chronicler recasts the figure of David and in essence reclaims the temple and cultus for the Davidides.
Prominent in the David story, and indeed a central point in the Chronicler’s theology, is the episodic Davidic promise mediated by Nathan (1 Chr 17). Knoppers briefly surveys the parallel passage in 2 Sam 7 and the scholarship with which it is associated. He notes, “However important the role that Nathan’s dynastic oracle plays in the Deuteronomistic construction of history, one can argue that the Chronicler has more systematically integrated this work into his account of the monarchy than the Deuteronomist has before him” (674). At issue in Chronicles is not so much the matter of building a house for Yhwh but rather the timing involved with the construction. The wordplays of bayit “house,” “palace,” “dynasty,” or “temple,” are all brought out in Knoppers’s presentation of this pericope.

In contrast to the 2 Sam 7 passage, David is not at all promised rest from all his enemies. Rather, Yhwh pledges that he will humble all of David’s enemies. As Knoppers notes, “The difference is important, because it signals that one of David’s major tasks in the remaining part of his reign will be to defeat Israel’s foes” (675). Knoppers also argues that the Chronicles passage focuses more on the divine promises to David’s son than the Samuel passage. We see in the Chronicles passage an intertwining between Yhwh’s house, kingship, throne, and David’s heir. All these ideas are interwoven in this extended pericope to form an eclectic tapestry.

The Davidic prayer also helps set the tone for the remainder of Chronicles. In this pericope (1 Chr 17:16–27) topics such as David’s reign and the tenure of Solomon are explored by the Chronicler. Knoppers approaches the significance of David’s prayer synchronically and diachronically. Synchronically, David looks to Yhwh for a fulfillment of the promises he has made to David’s heir. Knoppers argues that, although the promises are in the future, “the splendor of the Davidic dynasty was a thing of the past, [so] David’s petitions may well have taken on additional significance, functioning as a prayer for a new realization of the divine promises.” (687).

Israel’s foreign expansion is the subject of the subsequent four chapters in the commentary. Engagements with the Philistines, Edomites, Ammonites, and the Aramaeans are the rule rather than the exception in David’s geopolitical hegemony. The Chronicler betrays his dependence on the Deuteronomistic Historian in a number of instances in these chapters. In constructing his history of Israel, the Chronicler is adroit in selecting the material that he uses. Knoppers thus remarks, “It is, therefore, all the more amazing how much his presentation differs from that of his Vorlage” (739). One searches in vain for David’s dysfunctional Deuteronomic family portrayed in Chronicles. Rather than Bathsheba and judgment, one finds a series of military campaigns (1 Chr 18–20) and the victorious monarch. Contemporary scholarship has argued vociferously concerning the selectivity of the Chronicler. Knoppers reflects on this topic and how both Japhet and...
Steussy have pursued the matter. Yet Knoppers makes a convincing case concerning the selectivity of the Chronicler. He argues that Nathan’s oracle is best seen as a charter by which the Chronicler organizes the rest of David’s reign. Thus the divine pledge of victory would be taken as the rubric through which the rest of David’s life is viewed. The numerous military battles that follow the pledge flow naturally, if Nathan’s oracle is the motif for the rest of the Chronicler’s history. Building off the military victories of David, the Chronicler further constructs the Israelite historiography. The Chronicler employs these military victories as precursors for the remainder of David’s reign as well as justification for building the temple. A final word should be said concerning the nonuse of negative material found in the Deuteronomistic History. Knoppers forcefully (and rightly) builds his case of selective inclusion of the Chronicler based on the normative picture of Israel, David, and Solomon. It is Knoppers’s contention that the Chronicler has a “normative” understanding of who David is and what his kingdom should look like. Thus, any competing material that might compromise this paradigm is edited out of the narrative.

Knoppers labels the census passage of 1 Chr 21–22 a crux interpretum in the Chronicler’s depiction of David’s reign. This conundrum has long been a source of contention for students of the Hebrew Bible. Scholars have noted the parallel passage in 2 Sam 24 contains the phrase, “Yhwh was angry again against Israel and incited David” (Knoppers’s translation). At issue is, Who actually incited David to take the census of Israel? Briefly, Knoppers surveys the witnesses (MT, LXXABN, and LXXL) and notes that, instead of the proper name “Satan” (e.g., as LXXL reads), one should most likely translate the noun as an indefinite noun “adversary.”

Knoppers provides a brief survey on the conundrum of who incited David. While he does deal with this question briefly in this commentary, he states his opinion at length in an article entitled “Images of David in Early Judaism: David as Repentant Sinner in Chronicles” (Bib 76 [1995]: 449–70). Although some have suggested that this pericope be attributed to an interest in exegesis (e.g., Barnes and Willi) or proof of honest historiography (Japhet), the majority of scholarship attributes it to authorial concern to validate Ornan’s threshing floor as the future site of the temple (e.g., Noth, Galling, Rudolph, Ackroyd, and De Vries) (763). Yet Knoppers challenges the purpose of the story’s inclusion. Instead of understanding the story as a blemish on David’s character, Knoppers sees it as underscoring David’s ability to confront and manage his own failure. In this the Chronicler can portray David as the paradigmatic figure for a repentant sinner. If this pericope is interpreted in the fashion that Knoppers suggests, David becomes a multifaceted character at the hand of the Chronicler.
In the last chapter, “David’s Last Hurrah” (1 Chr 29), we have Knoppers’s summation of David’s life. A brief summary is given concerning the three principal contexts in which the Chronicler prepares for David’s departure. Reflecting, Knoppers notes, “The Chronicler’s version of David’s last years presents a striking contrast to the stories of adultery, rape, deception, chaos, betrayal, and murder found in Samuel-Kings” (961). He argues that the Chronicler does not simply try to contrast his David with that of the David found in Samuel-Kings. Rather, the David found in Chronicles is “a comprehensive alternative.” The end comes near, and David prepares his heir for the transition of the kingdom. Knoppers rightly argues that this transition is not at all like the one found in Samuel-Kings but rather like the movement from Moses to Joshua. This movement is propagated by David’s final prayer. It is noted that “The use of prayer to end David’s reign turns out to be an effective means through which the author communicates central concerns to his audience” (966). It is clear to Knoppers that this prayer is bifurcated in that it contains a blessing and a confession. At once, David can issue a blessing in recognition of Yhwh’s ability sovereignly to shepherd Israel throughout the coming generations. However, through David’s confession the old potentate reminds Israel that they must ultimately depend on Yhwh for their continued existence.

Eight informative maps are provided, each one in some way keyed to the text. The first map is general in nature and covers only the province of Yehud in the Persian Period. Subsequent maps consist of tribal residences, selected sites relating to the Judahite genealogies (1 Chr 2:3–4:23), the battle of Mount Gilboa, Jerusalem (during the time of David), David’s kingdom, the Philistine wars (1 Chr 14:8–17; 18:1), and the Ammonite-Aramaean campaigns. The indices include biblical references, ancient texts, modern authors, and subjects.

Knoppers’s two volumes are unquestionably well written and show that he is comfortable with international scholarship. The theses, postulates, and evidence marshaled to support his contentions are presented with ease. The greatness of Knoppers’s commentary stems from his previous works on the Deuteronomistic History. Historiography is his forte, and this strength illumines this commentary beyond measure. At each juncture in the text he gives the reader not only elements from Chronicles but also from the other sources that unquestionably influenced the Chronicler. Knoppers may have written what will be “the” authoritative commentary for the foreseeable future. It will take its place among the grand commentaries by Ackroyd, Benzinger, Gallinger, Japhet, and Kittle. I heartily recommend this work for all who are interested in a comprehensive study of 1 Chronicles.