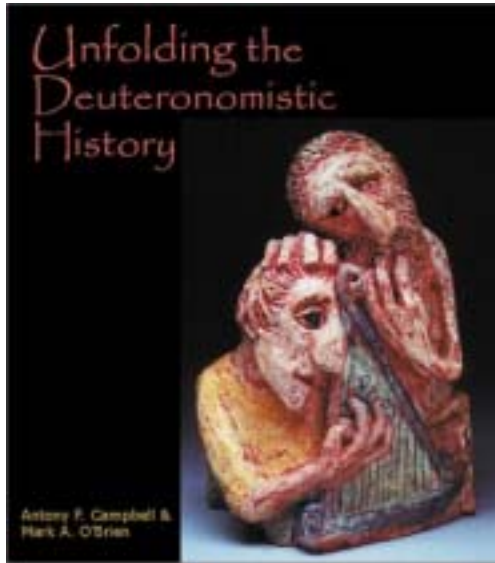


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**Campbell, Antony F., and Mark A. O'Brien**

*Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History: Origins, Upgrades, Present Text*

Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000.

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1. The book of Professors Campbell and O'Brien is welcome and will be helpful for anyone working on the Former Prophets. For the first time since the publication by M. Noth of his ground-breaking study on the Deuteronomistic History (DH) hypothesis, the student of the Hebrew Bible has the opportunity to see in every detail the reconstruction of the DH. The presentation is clear and practical, allowing the reader to grasp rapidly the analysis offered by Campbell and O'Brien. In the case of passages of great literary complexity, some may find the juxtaposition of the different layers somewhat complicated; however, the use of different fonts (with a legend at the bottom of the page) leaves no doubt regarding the attribution of each verse, and with little effort any student will find quick access to the information he or she wants.

2. The work of Campbell and O'Brien is also a good introduction to the literary criticism of the DH, which will benefit any student of the Hebrew Bible. Each book starts with a brief presentation indicating some of its major literary, historical, and theological problems. The general introduction to the DH as such offers a good review of the major trends in scholarship since Noth. Each of the main literary-critical divisions is briefly justified in the footnotes. The analysis of the numerous "signals" in the text of the DH

suggesting the conflation of various layers or the later reworking of a previous document allows the reader to understand how literary criticism works as well as its principles, methods, and goals. It also allows one, finally, to make one's own opinion on the conclusions reached by Campbell and O'Brien. The careful observations that are devoted to the "present-text potential" at the beginning of each chapter will also give food for thought to all those who believe that literary criticism is only interested in the decomposition of the text. Finally, the analysis offered by Campbell and O'Brien has the merit to elaborate an original position among the current scholarship on the DH by discussing the works of very different scholars, including foreign authors. Thus *Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History* offers a good overview of the main current positions, while suggesting appealing ways for new syntheses.

To sum up, *Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History* is a useful tool for students of the Hebrew Bible. While presenting with great clarity the results of critical scholarship since Noth, it will also introduce readers to some of the major current issues on the DH. Some aspects of the work of Campbell and O'Brien are, of course, matters for discussion. The following is a sample of the questions that I had when I read their work.

3. On the whole, the methodology Campbell and O'Brien used in order to reconstruct the process of formation of the DH is careful and coherent, even if, needless to say, one may always disagree with some of their conclusions. At a few places, however, the authors do not seem to have a very clear idea regarding the formation and growth of certain parts of the material. In the case of Deuteronomy, for instance, the various layers present in the framework (Deut 1–4; 5–11; 27–30; 31–34) are clearly identified, but no analysis is provided for the collection of laws in Deut 12–26 (except for the last chapter, Deut 26). The reader is simply referred to the results attained by three different commentaries, with some of the possible agreements between them being briefly mentioned. However, the numerous "signals" in the text of Deut 12–26 (25) suggesting successive literary activity are not pointed out, so that the reader simply does not know what is the basis of the proposed reconstructions. Moreover, two of the three commentaries used date back to the late 1970s or early 1980s (Mayes and Preuss), and significant aspects of later research on Deuteronomy are not taken in account. The presence of pre-Dtr material in Deut 12 or 18, for instance, is highly debatable. It would also have been interesting to discuss the position of those scholars who consider that the "law on the offices" in Deut 16:18–18:22 is, in its present form at least, a document stemming from late Dtr circles or that Deut 19–25 must be attributed to exilic and postexilic redactions<sup>1</sup>. Of course, Campbell and

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., N. Lohfink, "Die Sicherung der Wirksamkeit des Gotteswortes durch das Prinzip der Schriftlichkeit der Tora und durch das Prinzip der Gewaltenteilung nach den Ämtergesetzen des Buches Deuteronomium (Dt 16,18–18,22)," in *Studien zum Deuteronomium und zur deuteronomistischen Literatur*

O'Brien can put forward the absence of consensus concerning these chapters, but the passages in the DH where this observation would not apply as well are remarkably few today. Moreover, one is all the more surprised to find later in Samuel-Kings a very detailed reconstruction of the "Prophetic Record," whereas this hypothesis, however interesting and stimulating it is, cannot be said to have been the object of a broad consensus thus far. We touch here on one of the basic methodological issues raised by the work of Campbell and O'Brien. Whereas in their prior book, *Sources of the Pentateuch* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), they could rely on the general agreement reached by the Documentary Hypothesis regarding the source division of the Pentateuch, there is little consensus today as to the composition and the literary formation of the DH. In this respect, this new volume by Campbell and O'Brien rests on a weaker ground.

4. Second, a few comments could be made concerning the way Campbell and O'Brien deal with the text-critical problems of the DH. In a few cases, the presence of conflicting recensions in the various textual traditions is given careful attention, as in the case of the Hebrew and Greek texts of 1 Sam 16–18\*. However, most of the time the recensional differences are only noted in passing, as for instance in 1 Kgs 1–2 or 11–12, while others are simply omitted. On the whole, apart from a few exceptions, the student of the Hebrew Bible does not really get a clear view of how the disagreement between various textual traditions bears on the problem of the formation and composition of the DH.

5. I may also add a brief remark on the identification of Dtr layers in the DH. Although Campbell and O'Brien stress the importance of the literary, structural, and thematical coherence of the Dtr work in the elaboration of the DH hypothesis by Noth and the following scholars, they do not explicitly address the question of the Dtr style and language in their general introduction. The student will, of course, frequently find observations on the Dtr style in the course of the analysis, but students would benefit from a brief introduction to this style, which would allow them to become familiar with it. A sample of the most frequent expressions and formulations could have been offered, for instance. This point is all the more important since several passages attributed by Campbell and O'Brien to pre-Dtr layers contain elements that are, in fact, close to the Dtr language and style. Such is the case, for instance, in the introduction to the Deuteronomic law code in Deut 5–11 as well as in many passages of the "Prophetic Record" reconstructed by Campbell and O'Brien (see, e.g., 1 Sam 2:27–33; 9:15–17; 2 Sam 7\*; and some passages in 1 and 2 Kings).

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(SBAB 8; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1990), 1:305–23; G. Braulik, *Die deuteronomischen Gesetze und der Dekalog: Studien zum Aufbau von Deuteronomium 12–26* (SBS 145; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1991).

6. A further point of debate has to do with the relationship of the DH to other collections in the Hebrew Bible. Campbell and O'Brien do stress at several places the problem raised by the agreements or the disagreements of some texts of the DH with parallel passages in the Pentateuch (for the book of Deuteronomy) or in the books of Chronicles (for Samuel-Kings). However, they never expose a definite position regarding the way these relationships must be appreciated. Of course, a book such as *Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History* is not the place to solve all the questions raised by these complicated matters, but one might ask whether it is possible to propose an exhaustive analysis of the DH without deciding on the nature of the relationship between Deut 1–11 and the parallel texts in Exodus and Numbers or between Samuel-Kings and Chronicles.

7. A few words concerning the analysis of the pre-Dtr material is also in order. On the whole, Campbell and O'Brien are rather confident in the possibility to retrieve old documents, even if they are aware that the classical model of oral traditions carefully preserved and handed down over centuries by obscure storytellers is somewhat problematic. What I would mainly question is the necessity to postulate a pre-Dtr tradition behind most of the stories composing the present DH—especially when these stories are replete with Dtr terms and themes. In my opinion, even if one may not concur with all their conclusions, the works of scholars such as H.-D. Hoffmann, J. van Seters, and now S. L. McKenzie should invite us to pay more attention to the possibility that the Dtr writer simply created stories of his own at several places in order to fill the gaps between his various sources. Why, for instance, should there be a tradition behind the motif of the failure of Samuel's sons in 1 Sam 8:1ff., which contains several Dtr (or even post-Dtr) motifs, as O'Brien himself argued in his 1989 dissertation<sup>2</sup>, and which is obviously designed to bridge two eras: the period of the judges and the period of the monarchy? This takes us back, of course, to the problem of the analysis and identification of the Dtr style, a point on which I would personally allow for a little more freedom and creativity than Campbell and O'Brien do.

8. The model proposed by Campbell and O'Brien for the gradual formation of the DH is rather complex and would require a longer discussion. My main question would concern the description of the historical settings of the various layers reconstructed by Campbell and O'Brien. Except for the "Prophetic Record," very little is said about the origins and the function of the other pre-Dtr documents. If there was once a "Book of Saviours," and not only some loose traditions on the judges of Israel, as I also believe, by whom and why was it written? What purpose did it serve? As archives? Or for a political purpose? A student reading *Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History* and learning about the historical

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<sup>2</sup> M. A. O'Brien, *The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis: A Reassessment* (OBO 92; Freiburg [CH]: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht, 1989).

approach of the text might want to know a little more on these questions and on the possibility to correlate literary and historical observations.

The intention and the theological claims of the different Dtr layers are more accurately described, but the social and historical setting of the exilic “revision” also remains in limbo. Moreover, as far as I can see, the classical problems debated since Noth (e.g., Were the exilic Dtrs writing, or revising, the history in Jerusalem or in Babylon?) are not mentioned either. Only for the Josianic history is an actual setting provided, since Campbell and O’Brien briefly suggest that the work was probably meant to support the Josianic reform (22). However, this argument itself raises a further question. If the Dtr writing was to be a sort of work of literary propaganda for the “reform” movement under Josiah, *why write a complete history?* On this point at least, the original intuition of Noth seems to me to be more convincing. The attempt to reconstruct a coherent and complete history of “Israel” from the beginnings in Egypt to the last days of the Judean monarchy is better explained as a reaction to the disaster of the exile (which does not mean yet, of course, that the DH had to be written *during* the exile). If we are to situate the beginnings of Dtr literary activity under Josiah, as I would also argue, there is no need to assume that the Dtr writings were already inserted in a coherent narrative and chronological frame. We might rather think of various separate documents backing the political, economic, and religious reforms of Josiah’s court, which were only loosely linked to each other.

9. My last point concerns the attempt itself of Campbell and O’Brien to offer a reconstruction of the DH. On the whole, the model they advocate claims to account for some of the most important insights of each of the main theories in presence, combining, for instance, a Josianic history and one or more exilic Dtr layers revising and correcting the “optimism” of the Josianic work, as was already the case for O’Brien in his 1989 dissertation. The proposed synthesis certainly deserves consideration, but one has to realize that it still starts from the presupposition that Noth’s hypothesis, whatever its later refinements, remains undisputed. This is no longer the case, of course, and several scholars have raised important questions against the existence of a coherent and unified DH, emphasizing for instance the fact that the book of Judges seems to have been inserted at a late time between the two collections formed by Deuteronomy-Joshua and Samuel-Kings<sup>3</sup>. One might also add that the problem of the relationship and the interaction between parallel texts and layers in the Tetra- or Penta-teuch and the DH is probably more complex than is usually assumed. This does not necessarily mean, of

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<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., K. Schmid, *Erzväter und Exodus : Untersuchungen zur doppelten Begründung der Ursprünge Israels innerhalb der Geschichtsbücher des Alten Testaments* (WMANT 81; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1999); R. G. Kratz, *Die Komposition der erzählenden Bücher des Alten Testaments : Grundwissen der Bibelkritik* (UTB 2157; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 193–219.

course, that we should definitely give up the hypothesis advanced by Noth more than half a century ago. But it does mean that the student of the Hebrew Bible has to be aware that the next scholarly issue in the study of the Former Prophets will no longer simply be whether it is possible to conciliate conflicting theories on the formation of the DH but whether the DH hypothesis itself is still operative or not.