
In his revised doctoral dissertation (Asbury Theological Seminary, 2017), Jordan Guy sets out to investigate the “Chr’s perspective on the status of Israel’s restoration following Cyrus’s decree” (Introduction). In chapter one (pp. 1–39), “History of Interpretation,” Guy declares that he “will adopt a literary-rhetorical approach to reading the exile–restoration *topos* in the individual accounts and final form narrative shape of Chronicles” to discover its effect on its Second Temple target audience. After briefly sketching the research questions he intends to address, in the bulk of the chapter he offers a review of past scholarship (pp. 9–37) that focuses decade by decade on the research of significant contributors from Peter Ackroyd in the late 1960’s down to 2013. As the discussion proceeds around twenty post-2013 items are referenced elsewhere in the book, including three from 2018. The chapter closes with Guy’s contention that failure “to discern the meaning and significance of Chr’s exile–restoration *topos* at the book level of Chronicles” is the primary gap in research, a gap that he will address and rectify.

In chapter two, “Methodology” (pp. 40–78), Guy begins with definitions of exile, which he restricts to “geographical displacement or ‘forced migrations’ (movement) away from native land and towards non-native land,” and restoration, “a return of people to their native land.” Then, after ranging briefly from Aristotle’s definition down to Phyllis Trible and those scholars whose work influenced her, Guy sets out the five steps of his “literary-rhetorical” approach that has been “constructed from five categories described in Trible’s handbook on rhetorical criticism,” but also incorporates insights from historical, narrative, and rhetorical criticism. The second, and much larger, part of the chapter concerns “the extrinsic factors of Chronicles” and aspects of its external design. Guy accepts the independence of Chronicles from Ezra-Nehemiah, opts for a synchronic reading of its final form, accepts a fourth-century date of composition, and regards the book as Persian period historiography that included “a theologically, politically, and geographically diverse population of Israelites” among its “target audience.” Brief consideration is given to the book’s relationship with Israel’s literary traditions extant at the time, and to the “story world” of Chronicles.

In chapter three (pp. 79–109), Guy employs “current theories of literary analysis” as he explores the narrative arrangement of Chronicles. In his terms, Chronicles divides into “acts.” Act 1 (1 Chr 1–9) functions as exposition, introducing, in three scenes, the major themes of the narrative, “the Davidic monarchy”
(1 Chr 1:1–3:24), “the twelve tribes” (1 Chr 4:1–9.1a), and “the exile, restoration, and post-exilic Jerusalem worship of Israel” (9:1b–44). These themes are further developed in the six scenes of Act 2 (1 Chr 10–2 Chr 36) depicting “the rise and fall of the kingdom of Israel as an open-ended tragedy.” While the discussion of narrative arrangement in this chapter serves, at least to an extent, to integrate the exile–restoration topos within Chronicles as a whole, embedded to varying degrees in each of the major themes, one might hesitate to consider it wholly satisfactory. The portion of Chronicles occupied by the exile–restoration theme is small. Its relationship to other themes, individually and cumulatively, and to Chronicles as a whole seems to require further unpacking to fully substantiate Guy’s claim that it sets the Chronicler’s agenda.

For Guy, the exile–restoration topos consists of every reference to “exile” and/or “restoration” that can either be discerned or inferred throughout Chronicles. He discovers six such “episodes” within Act 1 (1 Chr 1–9) and discusses these in chapter four (pp. 110–145), while the seven “episodes” discovered in Act 2 (1 Chr 10–2 Chr 36) are examined in chapter five (pp. 146–195). In general, each episode is assessed according to an ideal pattern, beginning with an “intrinsic analysis,” which is followed by assessments of its bearing on exile, then on restoration, an extrinsic analysis, and (brief) conclusion. Yet from the outset it is clear that not all “episodes” are of the same quality or their contribution to the exile–restoration topos equally convincing. Some episodes occupy just a few verses and cumulatively the thirteen episodes account for only a small proportion of the 65 chapters that constitute Chronicles. This is already apparent in the first episode that is scrutinized, 1 Chr 3:17–24, in which only the expression “Jeconiah the captive” can be construed as a reference to exile, while the author considers a possible reference to restoration within these verses to be “inconclusive.” Having worked through the remaining episodes of Act 1, as he concludes his discussion of episode 6 (1 Chr 9:1b–44), Guy can declare that Act 1 “reaches its climax in the exile and partial restoration of all Israel.” However, that climax is considered negative since restoration remains incomplete.

The same pattern is followed as Guy addresses the seven episodes identified in Act 2. In the first of these (1 Chr 16:8–36), when the Ark is brought into the tent prepared for it in Jerusalem, David instructs the Levites to lead the people in a psalm of thanksgiving that, as it is ending, includes a petition that the petitioners should be gathered and rescued “from among the nations” and so from exile that has not yet occurred. Similarly, in the second episode (2 Chr 6:14–42), in his prayer at the dedication of the temple, Solomon petitions that, should God in anger at his people’s sin deliver them into exile, upon their sincere repentance he might also restore them. As the episodes move towards...
their conclusion, readers are offered the example of Manasseh’s sincere repen-
tance that sees him returned from exile (episode six), and Chronicles ends
with the climactic seventh episode (2 Chr 36:1–23) that sees Israel’s rebellion
escalating to involve all Jerusalem (vv. 11–20a). Yet, although restoration of the
exiled population is “inconclusive,” by ending the book with Cyrus’s decree
that leaves “the outcome of post-exilic Israel open-ended, Chronicles ends
with encouragement for all Israel to return to Jerusalem and in Jerusalem wor-
ship Yahweh.”

In the concluding chapter six, Guy comments briefly on the message and
appeal of the exile–restoration topos and on the contribution that his own work
has made. Two brief appendices follow chapter six, although it is difficult to
see what they clarify or add to the argument. There is a fairly large bibliography
and also indexes of biblical and related references and of authors. Published in
May 2019, only 20 or so months following its Fall 2017 submission, the mono-
graph appears to retain too many characteristics of its origin. The heavy foot-
noting found throughout can distract from the argument, which often appears
compressed and as a result has become more technical than it need be—the
first three pages of the book have only 13 lines of text, which are accompanied
by 105 lines of footnotes. A literary-rhetorical approach requires a more liter-
ary presentation to be seen at its best. One wonders whether, if more time had
been taken for reflection between submission and publication, it might have
resulted in a more readable and possibly more persuasive product.

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