The present article is intended as a contribution to the question what kind of hope is held out to Judah by the Deuteronomistic History (DtH). There is a large measure of agreement on the identification of the most important texts for such a discussion. Prominent among them are Deut. iv 25-31, xxx 1-10, and the part of Solomon’s prayer found in 1 Kgs viii 46-53. The agreement generally extends, furthermore, to the belief that these are in some way related to the main Deuteronomistic programme of the exilic period.¹

There is much less agreement, however, on the precise relationship of each of the texts to each other and to that programme. The diversity of opinion on this is related both to the complexity of the wider question of the nature of hope in the Deuteronomistic literature and to the fact that the texts in question manifest certain important differences from each other. Most notably, 1 Kgs viii 46-53 differs from Deut. xxx 1-10 at the crucial point of a hope of return to the historic promised land, which it refrains from offering (contrast Deut. xxx 3). In order to provide a context for the discussion of the texts in question, I shall consider briefly the main prevailing approaches to the question of hope in the Deuteronomistic literature.

Deuteronomic Hope in Contemporary Debate

Contemporary debate on Deuteronomistic hope stems from the thesis of M. Noth that Deuteronomy-Kings (DtH) was the work of

a single author who lived in the exilic period. However, that the finished work intended only to explain the downfall of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah was generally abandoned in favour of new attempts to account for those parts of the corpus which appeared to contain elements of hope for the future. Most influential in recent discussion have been the two contrasting approaches of F. M. Cross on the one hand, and R. Smend and his disciples on the other.

Cross, followed by R. D. Nelson, postulated a first, Josianic edition of DtH, which expressed hope for the future of Judah, focussed on the reforming king, whose righteousness engendered hope that the dynastic promise to David (2 Sam. vii 8-16) was now being fulfilled in a new and exciting way. This DtrI, however, was soon confounded by events, and was revised by an exilic author rather in the mould of Noth’s Dtr, whose intention was to explain the fall of the kingdom. Cross’s answer, therefore, to the elusive relationship between hope and judgement in DtH, is firmly in terms of separate redactions, which, though beginning from a fundamentally similar ideology, took different views on the matter in question because of their different standpoints.

A distinct development from Noth’s idea of a single Deuteronomist was that initiated by R. Smend, and taken further by W. Dietrich and T. Veijola among others. Smend identified two distinct redactional layers in DtH, both exilic, and differing in the manner of their expression of hope for the future. DtrG, the basic history, is optimistic and confident, characterized by a belief that the land is a given, the conquest an established fact; DtrN, on the other hand, is a legalistic (“nomistisch”) expansion, in which land is held only in consequence of scrupulous adherence to law.

Disciples, notably Dietrich, uncovered an intermediate, “prophetic” layer (DtrP), characterized by unalleviated threats of judgement. These threats were directed mainly against northern

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