

MINI THESIS FOR MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

Allan Ferguson

Student Number 3693291

Supervisor: Professor D Lawrie

Department of Religion and Theology UWC

TITLE:

The Reign of King Manasseh in the Deuteronomist History and the Chronicler's History: A Study in Reception

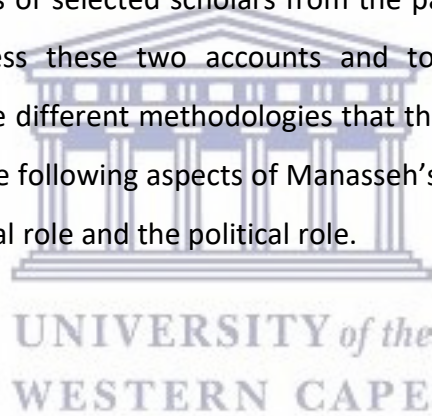


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ABSTRACT

One of the most marked differences between the Deuteronomistic History and that of the Chronicler concerns the assessment of King Manasseh's reign. The Deuteronomist portrays Manasseh as the most evil of all Judah's kings (2 Kings 21:1–18) and the main cause for the doom of Judah. Even the pious Josiah, the paragon of the Deuteronomist (2 Kings 23:25), could no longer avert this doom (2 Kings 23:26). The Chronicler initially echoes the view of the Deuteronomist History, repeating some sentences from Kings verbatim (2 Chronicles 33:1–10). But 2 Chronicles 33:11–20 introduces some information not found in 2 Kings. Here we are told that Manasseh after he had been taken captive by the Assyrians, repented of his sins and concluded his reign in an aura of sanctity. In this respect, the two accounts differ fundamentally.

I intend to examine the views of selected scholars from the past roughly fifty years on this discrepancy. How they assess these two accounts and to what extent their diverse assessments are based on the different methodologies that they used. I intend to examine, particularly, their views on the following aspects of Manasseh's reign: religious customs, the administrative role, the judicial role and the political role.



KEYWORDS

Kingship

Ideology

Discrepancy

Law

Vassal

Social structure

Deuteronomy

Chronicles

Eighth Century

Weakness

Assyria

Building

Priests

Guilt

Fall



DECLARATION

I claim ownership of this paper and declare that all material used has been correctly acknowledged and credit given to the original author.

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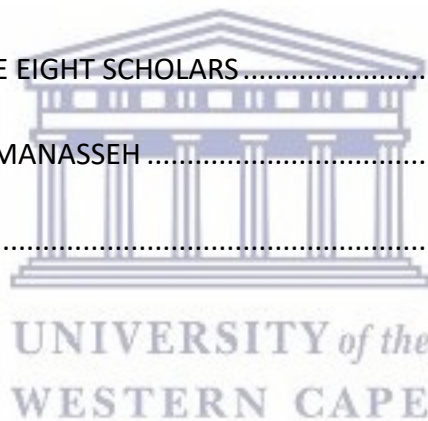
Allan Ferguson



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CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

SUMMARY

In this chapter, I will deal with the following sections:

Statement of the research problem;

The hypothesis;

Methodology;

The rationale for the research; and

A summary of the Deuteronomistic History and Chronicler's History pointing out the similarities and differences.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

In this thesis, I will examine how the eight selected scholars assessed the differing accounts of the reign of King Manasseh found in Kings and Chronicles. The differences in the two biblical accounts are not only quite significant in scope, but also have implications for the different views of the Deuteronomist¹ and the Chronicler about the cause of the exile.

I have used 2 Kings 21:1–18 and 2 Chronicles 32:33–33:20 extensively as the basis for this thesis. These texts mention Manasseh specifically, and in the case of Kings apportion the blame solely to the King for the exile. Chronicles, on the other hand, while acknowledging the exile does not apportion all the blame to Manasseh and in fact, gives him some rehabilitation.

¹ I use the terms “Deuteronomist” and “Deuteronomistic History” throughout although the terms are disputed. Some deny the existence of a Deuteronomistic History spanning the books from Joshua to 2 Kings. Instead, they would mention Books 1 and 2 Kings and the author(s) of these books. Most of those who regard these books as a unitary history hold that different authors had a hand in its compilation in its present form. Similarly, I refer to “the Chronicler”, although several authors may have contributed to it. However, these questions lie outside the scope of this thesis.

1.2 THE HYPOTHESIS

In assessing the differences between the two biblical accounts, the eight selected scholars make use of different methods, arguments and types of evidence. They are probably also influenced by different presuppositions about the Deuteronomic history and the Chronicler's history. The choices they make in this regard influence their assessment of the reign of King Manasseh.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

I will make use of the qualitative methodology. Based on a literature survey directed primarily at the views of the eight selected scholars, along with other literature on Manasseh, I compare these views, noting marked similarities and differences among them. Also, I shall try to determine precisely how they reached their views, and what methods, arguments, evidence and presuppositions informed their different assessments.

In this thesis, I seek to give my idea of what my "Study in Reception" means. This concept means that the text on Manasseh in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles was written not only for passive acceptance by the reader but also that the meaning be interpreted to decide whether Manasseh was an evil king in this case. Then I look at what the eight selected scholars have to say about this.

1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH

The most marked difference between the Deuteronomic History and that of the Chronicler concerns the assessment of King Manasseh's reign. The Deuteronomist portrays Manasseh as totally evil (2 Kings 21:1–18) and the leading cause for the doom of Judah. Manasseh was so bad that even Josiah, (2 Kings 23:25) could no longer avert this doom (2 Kings 23:26). The Chronicler initially echoes the view of the Deuteronomist History, repeating some sentences from Kings verbatim (2 Chronicles 33:1–10). But in 2 Chronicles 33:11–20 some material not

found in 2 Kings is introduced. Here we are told that Manasseh after he had been taken captive by the Assyrians, repented of his sins and concluded his reign in an aura of sanctity. There is a big difference between these two accounts.

Currently, there are over 23 000 references concerning Manasseh in the literature, but most of these are comments on why he is considered either a good or bad king. Only a relatively small group of scholars discuss Manasseh's reign in detail and try to account for the discrepancies between the two biblical accounts. I intend looking closely at eight of these scholars' views, focusing not primarily on the differences between the two biblical accounts, but also on those among the different scholarly views. The scholars can be said to follow the position of Chronicles in suggesting that the Manasseh history is one of a repentant king who ended his reign successfully. The scholars examine the position of Kings that proclaims Manasseh was indeed a failure and is the worst of Judah's kings. I will attempt to explain how these scholars assessed the two accounts and to what extent their assessments are based on the methodologies that they used.

For the Deuteronomist, Manasseh played a crucial, albeit negative, role in Israel's history. His apostasy was the main reason for the destruction and exile of Judah. Also, it is suggested that he oppressed his people, perhaps particularly those who resisted his syncretistic religious policy. He "shed much innocent blood" (2 Kings 21:16). The notion that the wickedness of a king could lead to the punishment of his people, even when they did not necessarily support him, is derived from the ancient Near Eastern Kingship ideology. According to this ideology, the king acted as a representative of his people, particularly in the religious sphere. Kings, rather than the people as a group or individually, were responsible for the well-being of the whole kingdom. Thus, the Deuteronomist can conclude that Manasseh's sins tainted the entire Kingdom of Judah and that this taint had its effect even long after his death.

The additions to the account of Manasseh's reign in the Chronicler's History portray him as a repentant sinner, thus making it impossible for the Chronicler to place the blame for the exile on his shoulders. Indeed, it seems as if the Chronicler does not lay the sole blame for the destruction of Judah on evil kings. The people of Judah themselves had turned away

from Yahweh and thus shared the responsibility for the disaster. The old kingship ideology does not seem to function as strongly here.

In general, scholars are very sceptical about the value of the Chronicler's History as a historical account. Whenever information offered in the Chronicler's History, which is not found in the Deuteronomistic History, this is usually dismissed as pure fabrication. Whether or not this approach is warranted, an account has to be given for these underlying discrepancies. In the case of Manasseh's reign, this surely holds where the Chronicler's account undermines a fundamental tenet of Deuteronomistic theology. The question, why the Chronicler, who knew the assessment of Manasseh's reign in 2 Kings, chose to modify it significantly, cannot be avoided.

1.5 A SUMMARY OF THE DEUTERONOMIST AND CHRONICLER'S HISTORY, POINTING OUT REASONS FOR WRITING THE BOOKS, THE MESSAGE CONTAINED IN THE BOOKS AND THE THEOLOGY OF THE BOOKS

THE BOOK OF KINGS

In 2 Kings 21, there are four sections on Manasseh. First, there is the opening statement which gives an introduction to the king, his age, his length of reign, and his mother's name. Second, from verse 2, there is an evaluation of his religious character listing the crimes he committed (Stavropoulou, 2004:16). Then from verses 10 to 16, there is the prophetic judgement against Judah, and finally, from verse 17 onward, his reign is concluded.

In 2 Kings 21, Manasseh is described clearly as the most wicked ruler in Judah's history. He is presented as cancelling the reforms of his father, Hezekiah, and the passage states he committed more cult crimes than any other king.

He is further set apart from the other Judean kings in verse 2 when he is compared with the foreign nations, who used to inhabit Judah (Stavropoulou, 2004:22). From verse 3, Manasseh's cultic policy is described, which is the longest description of those policies of any king of Judah. Manasseh is presented as deliberately encouraging the worship at the

Bamoth by rebuilding those “high places” destroyed by his father, Hezekiah. Also, in verse 3, Manasseh is accused of worshipping the host of heaven and making an Asherah pole. The host of heaven are gods associated with the sun, moon, and the stars. Manasseh went back to the cultic practices of the Canaanite population, and so undid God’s work (Hooker, 2001:271).

In verses 4 to 6, the passages imply that Manasseh acted in a deliberate way to completely reject God. In verse 6, the passage details making his son pass through fire and of personally participating in certain divinatory practices. In verse 7, Manasseh is accused of putting up an image of the Asherah in the temple. Similar to Stavrakopoulou (2004:23), this may be explained by saying that it may be a Biblical euphemism for a particular form of child sacrifice. Only Ahaz (2 Kings 16:3) is accused of the same sin. The point is that no other King of Judah is accused to such an extent of participating in child sacrifice, although, there are examples in Israel of the people participating in this sin (2 Kings 17:16).

Smelik (1992:145) suggested that the writer of Kings was emphasizing the sacrilegious nature of this act to portray Manasseh as entirely evil. By shedding blood, Manasseh is portrayed as making the land lose its holiness and become defiled, which then causes it to reject the people of Judah (McConville, 1984:250). Thus, linking it to the statement in Deuteronomy 18:9–12, which states that the land will reject the people. The list of Manasseh’s crimes in Kings is carefully written; each is described in detail, and each one is also specifically prohibited in the law codes of Deuteronomy 18:9–14 (Japhet, 1993:1006). Manasseh is shown as being involved in the written prohibitions and is the only king to be accused of such.

Cogan (1993:412) asserted that Manasseh’s cultic practices did not consist of Assyrian religious deities but were old Canaanite gods such as the fertility god Asherah. Lásine (1993:163) commented that Manasseh is not only the worst of Judean kings but is also the exact opposite of the good kings (2 Kings 21:3) such as Hezekiah. The redactor is making the point that Manasseh is evil and drawing upon facts and his own opinion to sell this idea. Van Keulen (quoted in Stavrakopoulou 2004: 89–90) commented that the formula, “He did evil

in the eyes of Yhwh”, is not only applied to Manasseh but also occurs in the evaluation of kings Jehoram and Ahaziah.

THE BOOK OF CHRONICLES

The section in Chronicles, which describes Manasseh, provides a different picture to that of Kings. The redactor of Chronicles makes no direct reference to the idea that Manasseh’s capture by the Assyrians is a punishment for his sins, nor does the writer comment on Manasseh’s long reign which may be interpreted as a reward for his repentance. In 2 Chronicles, the information on Manasseh is composed of a discussion on faith, sin and repentance. If God’s reward for repentance was a long reign, and the writer blaming Manasseh, the length of his reign could just have been left out (Williamson, 1994:393).

The divergence between the two books is seen explicitly in 2 Kings 21:10–14 where the exile is forecast because of the sin on Manasseh. In Chronicles, it is a result also of the people and other kings doing what was evil. In Kings, in contrast, Manasseh is not rehabilitated; he is described as rebuilding the high places, erecting altars to Baal, and making Ashtoreth poles and above all, he is described as spilling blood. None of this is mentioned in Chronicles. Also, in Chronicles, there is no mention of the punishment of exile in Manasseh’s time.

Japhet (1993:1008–9) commented that the omission of the sins was prompted by the writer of Chronicles not agreeing with the content in Kings. She stated that the destruction of the temple and exile was not caused by Manasseh nor by cumulative sin of other kings but was explicitly caused by the sin of one king (Zedekiah). Endres (2007:4) worked from a historical perspective and postulated that the history of Manasseh in Chronicles is one of religiosity and piety; in fact, a sermon to be read by later generations. When discussing Manasseh, the Book of Chronicles emphasizes that he, though a sinner, became redeemed.

Looking at the prophetess Huldah, Chronicles enlarges on Huldah’s prophecy in Kings which repeats 2 Chronicles 34:27. Chronicles introduces the idea of the reason for exile as the sin of Manasseh, yet from 2:33, the idea of collective guilt is also mentioned. The fate of Judah must have exercised the mind of the writer of Chronicles as he is searching for an explanation as to why the exile happened. On the other hand, Kings (2 Kings 21:1–18)

apportions the blame solely to Manasseh and does not offer any hope of redemption (Glatt-Gilad, 2002:257). However, von Rad (2001) disagrees with this finding as a passage in 2 Kings 25:24 offers the possibility of redemption. I quote:

Gedaliah took an oath to reassure them and their men. Do not be afraid of the Babylonian Officials, he said Settle down in the land and serve the King of Babylon and it will go well with you.

1.6 SUMMARY OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN KINGS AND CHRONICLES

The Chronicler's presentation of Manasseh in 2 Chronicles 33 is built on the narrative in 2 Kings 21, but the final image presented is significantly different. Manasseh's image in Chronicles appears like the total reverse of the material produced by the narrative in Kings.

As to the differences between Kings and Chronicles, Girard (quoted in Smelik, 1992:150) suggested that both biblical accounts of Manasseh use this King as a vehicle for their ideological purposes. The King's redactor portrays Manasseh as the evilest of Judean kings because he was a threat to God-centred worship. The Chronicles redactor uses the Manasseh history not only to show the sins but also to present an idea of hope and redemption. Girard (1977) explained his idea by suggesting that communities (in this case, Judah) often regain stability and coherence during a crisis by choosing a scapegoat whom all can blame. The redactor of Kings may be doing precisely this, using Manasseh as a scapegoat. The redactor of Chronicles, having a different motive, presents the story with the twist of repentance to serve as a model for future generations. Interestingly, this idea of a model for repentance depends on Kings portraying Manasseh as evil, so the story of repentance becomes more powerful.

The Book of Kings was written (or completed) shortly after the exile, while the memory of the exile was still fresh in people's minds. The Book of Kings attempts to explain why the disaster happened. In 2 Kings 21:1–10, The idea of Manasseh creating a shrine at Bethel made it possible for Josiah to undo the sins of the previous king, as it clearly states that Josiah destroyed the shrine. However, a bit further in 2 Kings 21:11–13, it is stated that Josiah's work was a failure. Despite his reforms, King Josiah still died early, and early death

(in battle in this case) is seen as a sign of Yahweh's displeasure. Was the attempt at restoring the relationship with God therefore pointless, or is the redactor using the event as a means of blaming the kings for the destruction of Judah?

In the Book of 2 Kings, there may be an attempt to justify the building of a new community after the exile. However, this begs the question, from what circles did the writer of Kings come. If the writer was a member of the old scribal or priestly class which had been replaced by Manasseh that would explain his wanting to blame Manasseh for the exile. If the writer came from the scribal class appointed by Manasseh, then his motive might be to rebuild the community after the exile. If the writer came from a new scribal class after the exile, then that would explain why he would want to justify the building of a new community.

Manasseh, in Kings, is portrayed as being awful. Is this assumption based on the premise that he committed child sacrifice, for there is mention of that? But in Israel there were instances of child sacrifice (Genesis 22:1–9, for example) so, why are the other leaders not tarred with the same brush? Was Manasseh as awful as he is made out to be? The biblical texts may show a “reality” which the redactor produced to reflect his views. The Bible shows God as demanding monotheistic worship and as the one who created a relationship with Judah. Then, how does the practice of child sacrifice fit into this? Is the redactor deviating from the idea that God created a relationship purely to show how evil Manasseh was? But then why is Manasseh rehabilitated in Chronicles? Is the writer of Kings portraying Manasseh as a boundary marker of what is seen to be good and acceptable and what is sinful and evil? The writer uses Manasseh as a vehicle for this purpose. Scholars like Lasine (1993:164–165) make the point that Manasseh does not make any speeches; there are also no descriptions of his responses or emotions, and he also does not interact with any other characters. Perhaps Manasseh is being portrayed in this way to emphasize the writer's views.

Are the authors of Kings and Chronicles actual redactors or simply editors of existing material? For purposes of this thesis, I use “Redactor” to mean someone who puts text into an appropriate form so that it becomes readable. The text is prepared for reading. An

“Editor” is someone who enlarges or shortens the text to clarify the meaning. In the Books of Kings and Chronicles, was any new material added after the exile or was it only rewritten? If parts of the Books date from before the exile, was the material obtained during the Deuteronomic reform? If the Books were redacted during the exile, then one has to ask who wrote it. To what pre-exilic group did they belong? Finally, looking at the Book of Lamentations and the time that Kings and Chronicles were written, their writing style differs because the genre used, is an old one as well as that of the pre-exilic texts. But there is also no indication that evil kings bore the blame for the disaster. Thus, further evidence is given that Kings (and Chronicles) was written after the exile had taken place (Japhet, 1993:42–50). If one looks at the timeframe of history, Kings was written a lot closer to the disaster of 587 BC than Chronicles. In Kings, there is an urgency to explain and record the event because the “hurt” is still palpable among people. Chronicles, written during the Persian era, has no such urgency and is far more distant. Instead of trying to assuage the “hurt”, it provides a message to be assimilated and from which can be learnt. There is a possibility that the Book of Kings was redacted after their exile because if one looks at 2 Kings 8:42 and 44 it states:

... for men will hear of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm when he comes and pray towards this Temple (v:42)

When your people go to war against their enemies ,wherever you send them: and when they pray to the Lord towards the city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your name (v:44).

The word, *towards*, stands out – why pray towards the Temple? Before the exile, people were praying in the Temple. However, after the exile, all that they could do was to pray towards the building.

The question of who wrote Kings and Chronicles is interesting. The Babylonians did not send all of the people into exile; a large proportion remained in Judah. Only the leadership class was sent away (Jeremiah 29:2). Thus, this meant that the priests and writers (scribes) went off to Babylon. Could the books have been written in Babylon, and did they have the means to write the books? It is doubtful if they were allowed to take any manuscripts with them so they would have had to rely on their memory. Were parts of Kings written during the reign

of King Josiah in about 630 B.C. because of his religious reformation and because the king centralized worship in Jerusalem? There is editorial disunity within the Deuteronomist history, perhaps Kings was written in two stages, a first edition (based on earlier source material) was produced during the reign of Josiah which was later redacted during the Babylonian exile. Though in contrast to this idea, Griffiths (1911:314) pointed out that only about three of the twenty-five laws regarded being special to the Deuteronomic laws had any valid significance concerning the issues existing in the days of Josiah.

Going further back in time, Bishop John Colenso from Natal, wrote a series of treatises between 1862 and 1879. He claimed that the very detailed organisation of the Books of Leviticus and Numbers could only be explained because they were written by writers from a much later period than the Mosaic age. He further claimed that Deuteronomy was the book discovered during the reign of King Josiah, and came to the conclusion that the Book of Chronicles was written with the deliberate intention of praising the priestly and Levitical classes. (Colenso, 1894:20–32, 802). In other words, there has been much debate around the dates of writing the books without any definite conclusion. What is apparent in Kings is that what happens to the nation is dependent on the actions of the king.

Another reason for the Book of Kings being written (apart from providing a reason for the exile) is that it is a great confession of guilt. The Book of Kings in its final version came into existence during the era of exile in Babylon or a little later. In the Book of Kings, the writer uses his assessment of the application of the Torah by the kings to assess the success of these kings (von Rad 1953:35–40). The writer of the Book of Kings looks at God's covenant with Israel and how the kings applied this covenant. The exile is thus caused by this failure.

Factors such as King Josiah's reform (622 BC) also have a bearing on the writing of Deuteronomy. If Deuteronomy was redacted in the 7th century, was it produced as a reforming law and was it written as a warning to Manasseh? Was his repentance not only a reaction to what happened to him in Babylon but also to his reading the text in Deuteronomy which contained threats about his bad behaviour? There is also a connection between Deuteronomy 28 and Huldah's threats (2 Kings 22:11, 13, 16–17). As Deuteronomy was written during the same timeframe as Manasseh, he could have been influenced by this

edition of the Book. Looking at 2 Kings 23:4–14, the passage reflects the interests of the priestly class, as it describes the removal of the non-Yahwist priests. If Manasseh read this passage, would it not have given him a shock prompting him to reform? In 2 Chronicles 33, the passage clearly states that Manasseh reformed and did away with the altars.

I quote the passage in 2 Chronicles 33 from the New International Version Holy Bible:

He got rid of the foreign gods and removed the image from the temple of the Lord, as well as all the altars he had built on the temple hill and in Jerusalem; and he threw them out of the city (v:15)

Then he restored the altar of the Lord and sacrificed fellowship offerings and thank offerings on it and told Judah to serve the Lord, the God of Israel (v:16).

Now, this is pretty heavy stuff, to undo previous policies and to start with a completely different approach to ruling Judah. He took away all the foreign gods and idols that he had put in Jerusalem and removed them from the house of the Lord. All the altars were removed and were unceremoniously disposed of outside the city. To dump the Assyrian overlord's gods is a bold step. Did he sense Assyrian weakness, or did he realize that Assyria needed him as a loyal vassal and would let him almost be quasi-independent?

In the late pre-exile period, perhaps during the reign of Josiah in the 700s, Kings was written. The redactor at the time of the Babylonian exile was living in a situation different from that of the first redactor. In Kings there is the injunction to worship only at the Temple in Jerusalem. The writer of Kings measures the success of all the kings on whether this happened during their reign. The writer's judgement of the kings is based on this high standard, who finds that apart from Hezekiah and Josiah, they ignored the laws and committed acts of evil. Which group of people in Judah influenced the writing of these books? Was it the Levitical priesthood who was reflected in the thoughts of the Deuteronomist or was it the aristocratic landowners who were upset by Manasseh for replacing them with a new class of leader only loyal to the king?

The writer of Kings states that the deserved punishment for ignoring God (especially in the case of Manasseh who broke all bonds) was delayed because of God's grace, even Josiah

could no longer avert the doom. The idea being presented is that Yahweh gave Judah chance after chance to turn away from sin but after Manasseh Yahweh had had enough. The conclusion in Kings was that the exile was not Yahweh's fault; it was the fault of Israel led by her kings. In summary, the disaster of 587 was God's just retribution for the sins of Israel (von Rad 1953:45–47).

There are suggestions that there were different motives for the divergence between 2 Kings and Chronicles. Kings apportions the blame for the exile solely to Manasseh. In contrast, Chronicles offers hope to the exiled reader that they could be restored. Scholars such as McKay and Cogan (1993:403) had read the accounts in Kings and Chronicles and made conclusions based purely on what the redactors said about Manasseh without looking at the divergence between these Books. McKay (1973:26–27) suggested that Manasseh “positively encouraged the revival of heathenism,” while Cogan (1974:113) proposed that Manasseh’s reign was an “unprecedented abandonment of Israelite tradition”. He does not comment on Manasseh’s removal of the high places and groves, the removal of which supported Israelite traditions. Both these views are valued judgements but have influenced the those of other scholars.

Von Rad (2001:23–29) also enters the debate on when the Book of Kings was written; according to him, it sits on the shoulders of the book of Judges. Though, the Books of Kings and Judges are not joined together. In Kings and the Book of Judges, the information is presented in a similar format; the facts are connected, and a picture of the various Kings’ reigns is portrayed within the same framework. However, there is a difference between Judges and Kings in that there was more information from the monarchical period to be used in Kings (von Rad 2001:48–50), which is evidenced by the many references that were available.

In Kings, the framework flows as follows, “... in the [n] year of the [name of king of Israel] became king of Judah, he was [n] years old when he became king, and he reigned [n] years in Jerusalem; and his mother’s name was [...] the daughter of [name].” The script continues by giving an account of the king doing what was pleasing or evil “in the sight of Yahweh.” At the end of the king’s reign the script is as follows, “... the rest of the history of [king’s name]

is written in the Book of the [Book's name] of the Kings of Judah." This is followed by, "[King's name] slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David, and [name] his son became king in his place."

The book of Kings has a high value historically as it presents the facts and then gives an opinion as to the exile. Interestingly, when one looks at Deuteronomy, the issue of when it was written comes up, as does the question of why it was written. Many scholars believe that Deuteronomy (at least the basic document) was written somewhere in the first 75 years of the 7th century. Possibly because its language is heavily influenced by the ideas from the Assyrian loyalty oath (the vassal treaties of Esarhaddon 672 BC) which would have been applied to the Judah of Manasseh (von Rad 1953:47–49).

Terence Fretheim (1999:6) put the Book of Kings within the Deuteronomic History and stated that its writing occurred in two stages, as there are two redactions. He made the point that the authors of Kings may perhaps have been editors working on earlier information (Fretheim, 1999:6). Fretheim (1999:14) stated that the Book constitutes theological literature as opposed to historical literature. He identified three themes of Kings, i.e. the themes of apostasy, judgement and promise (Fretheim, 1999:10). He commented on why the prophetic judgement was delayed and why this influenced the writing of information mentioning that the Davidic covenant, which developed from the Mosaic covenant, was ignored by kings such as Manasseh.

Fretheim (1999) noted the role of the prophets but did not go into detail about how the prophecies were fulfilled. There may be a problem here in that he does not separate the pre-exilic writing from the post-exilic; in Deuteronomy, the foundation of pre-exilic history has a different emphasis. For example, he commented on 1 Kings, seeing Ahab and Manasseh being typecast as evil to emphasize the writers' views (Fretheim, 1999). However, he did not discuss the lack of proof about the king of Israel being responsible for the kingdom's fall (Fretheim, 1999). Did Manasseh genuinely repent, did he indeed engage in child sacrifice, or is he being typecast to make a point by the editor of Kings? Schniedewind (1991:451–461) also commented on the idea of Manasseh being typologically cast, stating

that Manasseh is seen as being recorded as a warning to other leaders. Fretheim (1999) may have been thinking that all the evil kings embodied a similar type of personality.

An interesting point Fretheim (1999: 365–375) made is about trans-generational sin, as he explored this notion by relating it to scripture, which no one else has done. He noted that the agents of divine judgement are often described metaphorically as weapons in the hand of God. Assyria is described as “the rod of my anger” in Isaiah 10 where there is a reference to the weapons of Yahweh’s wrath. In 2 Kings 17, there is an interpretation of Samaria’s fall, “So the Lord spurned all the offspring of Israel and he afflicted them and delivered them into the hands of plunderers and finally, he cast them out from his presence.” In Jeremiah 27, the Babylonians are depicted as God’s divine weapons. This description relates to that in Chronicles indicating sin was cumulative and Manasseh merely part of the process. Also, the Chronicler had access to the writings of Jeremiah and Isaiah. Therefore, including the history of Manasseh’s exile to Babylon could have supported the theory of cumulative sin, and also legitimized Chronicles reflecting what other books are saying about God using other nations as his weapons.

Similarly, all of the scholars chosen may have the thought that Manasseh was an embodiment of a type of personality. Writers like Mowinckel and Wheeler Robinson (1980) formulated an idea regarding corporate personality, which may also have influenced the thinking of scholars. The political and cultural conditions existing at the time of the scholars’ writing also may have influenced their ideas, for example, Torrey (1909) wrote in an era that influenced people such as Julius Wellhausen (1957) who was anti-Semitic. (Wellhausen received a prize for anti-Semitism by the German Government in 1909).

Should the scholars have read each other’s books, they might well have been influenced by other ideas and ideologies. One such idea that has influenced scholars is that of “corporate personality” as provided by Wheeler Robinson (1980), who stated that the individual and the society could identify with each other so closely that their ideas merge. When using the phrase “corporate personality” he defined it in the first place in terms of the unity of a group which “might function as a single individual through any one of those members conceived as representative of it” (Robinson 1980:14–16). This definition is explained by

describing four distinctive characteristics. First, the group remains a unity in its extension through time to include both its ancestors and its descendants: burial in the family grave, for example, is “the realistic act which unites a man with his ancestors” (Robinson 1980:25–26). Second, “corporate personality constitutes a thoroughly realistic and, in the end, psychologically grounded conception of the unity of the group and cannot be reduced to literary or idealistic categories.” Third, “corporate personality is characterised by a fluidity of reference, facilitating rapid and unmarked transitions from the one to the many and from the many to the one” (Robinson 1980:30). Finally, he argues “the group conception remained dominant even after the development of a new individualistic emphasis in Jewish religion under Jeremiah and Ezekiel” (Robinson 1980:51–55).

Porter (1965), on the other hand, does not accept this concept of corporate personality and uses the example in Joshua 7. In the story of Achan, he said it's not correct for Robinson to assign the punishment meted out to Achan's family as an example of corporate personality in action. (Marttila 2006:51–55). Furthermore, Porter (1965:357-360) stated that corporate personality is about nations having ideas of what is right or wrong or what is holy or sinful. These concepts work in a group structure but are they separate from the actions of a king or does the king merely reflect on them? Based on this idea of Porter, Manasseh may not have been influenced by the concepts prevalent at the time, but have acted on his own assumptions. Rogerson (1970) on the idea of “corporate personality” (Porter, 1956:123), suggested that Wheeler Robinson is ambiguous, as he could be referring to the idea that a King might be liable for the actions of his community because he was not seen as an individual with individual rights. Rogerson (1970) went on to say that Wheeler Robinson may also have suggested that a King, though not directly involved with the decisions made, might suffer the consequences generated by the sins of his community. In Manasseh's case, he could have been a scapegoat for the sins of the community.

Mowinckel, (Martilla 2006:67) had a view similar to the notion of corporate personality, so when assessing the Psalms, his opinion was that the Psalms had a cultic background. This background created collectivism which dominated society and religious views. Mowinckel stated that the individual was remarkable only in society and only as a member of such. The

individual as a king was able to act in society as a representative of that society when making decisions (Marttila 2006:60).

In the case of Manasseh, he was the embodiment of the corporate personality, although he made the decisions, and the group accepted them. Each member of the group shared in the philosophy and ideas of the leader, and as a result, was also subject to God's punishment. In King Manasseh's case, the king did not have the support of all the people, but because of the prevailing ideology existing, they were still held responsible for all the decisions made.

In Chronicles 36:11, King Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, is described as doing evil in the eyes of the Lord, much the same as did Manasseh. Zedekiah thus followed the group philosophy and ideas of Manasseh and, as it were, became another Manasseh. Stavrakapoulou (2005:128–132), on this point, assigned the direct cause of the fall of Judah to Zedekiah's actions. She did, however, look in detail at the actions of the previous kings and noted that the fall of Judah was the result of cumulative sin. She can be said to have given credence to the notion of corporate personality being in play as the kings followed the philosophy and ideas of the time. Regarding Manasseh, it may be said that all of the decisions made were promulgated by him, yet the population also owned the decisions, and thus the consequences for these. Again this points to collective guilt instead of it being Manasseh's sins only.

Was there a change in Manasseh? Did he genuinely repent as Chronicles suggests, or was the account of his repentance an attempt to prove that the reason for the exile was cumulative? Was he truly as bad as Kings portrays him, or was there a political agenda to giving him all the blame? Historically Manasseh was seen by the Assyrians as successful, and he also uplifted the people of Judah. From this political perspective, he can be seen as a successful King. If the history of Judah is based on performance, then from Judah's doing well in the 7th century, it may be inferred that Manasseh also did well.

Chronicles initially uses 2 Kings extensively in describing the events of Manasseh's reign, but then a different application is used to provide a message for the reader. The Chronicler, probably writing 200 years after the exile, had time to think about what happened and was trying to provide a solution of how to get out of the catastrophe. The writer of Kings was

reacting to the catastrophe, trying to explain why the exile happened and also offering a glimpse of hope to the post-exilic readers that the event was not entirely their fault. Manasseh became a useful scapegoat for this to be achieved. The main concern of the Book of Chronicles is not only to explain the reason for the exile but also offer the reader a kind of redemptive hope (von Rad 1953:70).

The Book of Chronicles was almost certainly written in the Persian era. The Book is part of the process of reinterpreting Israel and written in a completely different environment than that of Kings, as the nation-state of Judah had been destroyed. Though, for the writer of Chronicles, there existed a period of stability under the Persians. The writer's purpose is to understand the guilt for the exile. The entire process is explored, outlining the reasons for the exile; the sin is described, then the exile itself as Yahweh's punishment (von Rad 1953; 85–90). The reason for Manasseh's long reign is explained by the fact that he repented and reformed the cult in which he was involved.

The question may be asked here as to why Manasseh had this change of heart, and why he started a completely different policy. The answer could be that he may have had genuine repentance. Chronicles describes it as turning back to Yahweh, perhaps to obtain the loyalty of the Jews. The specific detail in 2 Chronicles 29:25–30 describes how Manasseh reformed by restoring the temple to its original state. Manasseh was a survivor and needed support, so the easiest way to get this was to develop a policy which suited the people.

The message of hope and redemption of Chronicles perhaps becomes more important than the actual event of the catastrophe. Starting with King David, the writer is legitimising the religious structures that he created. Then the writer of Chronicles portrays the law formally (see 1 Chronicles 16:40). He shows a spiritual understanding of the law, which later became a ritual to be undertaken without any relationship with God involved (Schniedewind 1993:649–654). In Manasseh's case, how far did the turning to Yahweh go? Did it include an act of avowal to Yahweh?

Chronicles does not describe the civil war between David and Ishbaal. In Deuteronomy, there is an authorial fluctuation in the evaluation formula of kings, i.e. the evaluation of being either a good or bad king, with the formula of doing evil or good in Yahweh's eyes.

According to Knauf (2007:207–209), Chronicles identifies the main reason for the collapse of Judah as cumulative, and the collective guilt of the people of Judah's sin. Solomon is identified as the main cause for the division and ultimate collapse of the kingdom (Judah) because of creating high places. Initially, these high places were seen as places where God could be worshipped as there was no Temple at the time. Later they became seen as places of apostasy. The implication is that Manasseh was not the sole reason for the exile. On the issue of who was to blame for the exile, the Chronicler never recognised the legitimacy of the kings of Israel, by implication blaming Solomon for the split of the kingdom and later for the demise of Israel as he was the first to stray from God. Knauf (2007) further argues that a reason for the fall of Judah in Chronicles cannot be given because this Book used information towards the end of Josiah's reign, predating the exile. Knauf (2007:207–209) suggested that Kings presents a picture of a people being punished for various monarchs' faults and the dereliction of their responsibility to God. Chronicles, in contrast, presents the idea that the reason for the collapse of Judah was the cumulative guilt of generations and not just the actions of one particular bad king (Knauf 2007:207–209).

In 2 Chronicles 33:12–13, a description is given of how Manasseh's religious practices led to his captivity to Babylon (as a punishment from God), and only his deep submission to God caused his restoration. Knauf suggested that this Chronicle highlights the process of submission bringing an end to the exile and is also a formula for attaining deliverance from the exile. Another point is that long life, as in the case of Manasseh, may be seen as a gift from God, conditional on obedience.

The motive of the redactor can be analysed as trying to give a lesson in how the nation can recover from.

The Book of Chronicles throughout presents an opinion of Manasseh emphasizing that although a sinner, he was redeemed. The motive of the redactor can be analysed as trying to give a lesson in how the nation can recover from catastrophe. Looking at the prophetess Huldah in Kings, Chronicles enlarges on her prophecy, which is repeated in 2 Chronicles 34:27. The reason for the exile and the notion of collective guilt is introduced in 2 Chronicles:33. The fate of Judah must have exercised the mind of the writer of Chronicles as

he is searching for an explanation as to why the exile happened. Kings (2 Kings 21:1–18), on the other hand, apportions the blame solely to Manasseh and does not offer any hope of redemption.

In assessing who was to blame for the exile, Schniedewind (2003:378–390) stated that Chronicles, in contrast to 1 Kings:11, edits the accounts of King Solomon’s reign by removing information blaming him for the secession of the northern tribes. Though in 2 Chronicles 10:15, there is a reference to God’s oracle to Jeroboam which is given as the reason for the split. This split leaves the question of whether Manasseh caused the kingdom to fall unresolved. At this point, the writer of Kings suggests that God ran out of forbearance, and then the doom of Judah was sealed. Of course, this begs the question, why did the exile take so long to happen after Manasseh, and why did it happen at all if Manasseh repented? If there was a change in Manasseh, i.e. because of his repentance, then why ascribe guilt to him? If there was no change in Manasseh, was his repentance only included for the reader to see that the sin was cumulative. Then why are his repentance and good works such as building programmes described at all? The sum of all of this is that there must be a decision made about Manasseh being either good or bad. The evidence points to Manasseh being evil though he was not quite as bad after repentance. His reforms and repentance might have been too little, too late, despite the writer’s efforts to portray the repentance as genuine. Also, despite the reforms of Josiah why did the exile occur? Was the work of Josiah also too little, too late? Another point is that Josiah was not effective because of the cumulative sins of the past and because God’s forbearance had run out.

In summation, 2 Kings and Chronicles provide differing views on Manasseh. The motives for writing the books may be that the writer of the Book of Kings was stressing the point explaining why the exile happened. The writer was seeking a scapegoat to explain the event of the exile. In Chronicles, the writer was not only trying to explain why the exile occurred but also attempted to provide a message of hope for future restoration of the exiled people’s return to Judah.

CHAPTER 2

2. A SURVEY OF KINGSHIP IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

SUMMARY

Reasons why kingship ideology in the Near East played a role in Judean kingship

Kingship ideology in the ancient Near East

Reasons for the selection of the eight scholars.

Summary Statement of Kings and Chronicles

2.1 REASONS WHY KINGSHIP IDEOLOGY IN THE NEAR EAST PLAYED A ROLE IN JUDEAN KINGSHIP

I need to explain why the Kingship ideology of the surrounding nations and Judah is an important factor in understanding Manasseh. To obtain an understanding of Manasseh, one needs to look at how kingship was viewed in the various nations. A definition of kingship needs to be achieved. I suggest that kingship can be defined as the sovereignty or authority of a state vested in a single person (Trigger, 2003:71). The attainment of royal authority and the exercise of supreme power by a person were nearly universal in the ancient Near East.

The concepts of power and authority must be used to understand kingship in the ancient Near East. Kings wielded great personal power and are entrusted with the supreme authority of the State. The king must have the ability to achieve the goals of getting the desired responses needed by the state (Parker, 2011:259). The models of kingship existing at the time influenced the Judean Monarchy. Judah was at the centre of the trade routes between Assyria and Egypt (the Royal Highway), and there was contact between the various kingdoms. For example, Solomon had contact with Hiram King of Tyre to supply wood. Most importantly, Assyria had made Judah into a vassal state.

In describing kingship ideology, I will only briefly outline Egyptian and Mesopotamian ideology as these nations were (at that stage) considered the enemies of Judah. Assyria was

the Judean overlord; hence, Assyria played a much more vital role in Judah than did Egypt and Mesopotamia. I will thus provide an in-depth overview of Assyrian kingship ideology.

Judah existed in a world dominated by two great powers, i.e. Assyria and Egypt. Assyria at the time of Manasseh was the controlling power in Judah, and this fact had a fundamental influence on him. King Manasseh needed an understanding of how the Assyrian system worked to be able to function successfully. I will give a clear understanding of Manasseh in the political situation operating at the time. Judah in the 7th Century B.C. was a tiny part of the Assyrian Empire, but it was a buffer against Egypt.

Also, there is the idea that Manasseh probably realized that he was too weak to stand on his own against the two superpowers of the day. There was a communal benefit in keeping Judah part of the Assyrian empire and for Judah becoming prosperous under Assyrian hegemony. The Assyrians needed a quiet, loyal Judah; they were facing threats from a resurgent Babylon and a powerful Egypt. The last thing they needed was an unreliable Judah. Manasseh needed to have Assyrian protection to stop being taken over by Egypt or Babylon. This resulted in Judah being subservient to Assyria and even adopting Assyrian religious practices (hence Manasseh adopting Assyrian gods). The Assyrians, on the other hand, found it wise to let Judah prosper and develop into a quasi-independent state with its own administration and military. Judah was thus heavily influenced by Assyrian kingship ideology.

2.2 EGYPTIAN KINGSHIP IDEOLOGY

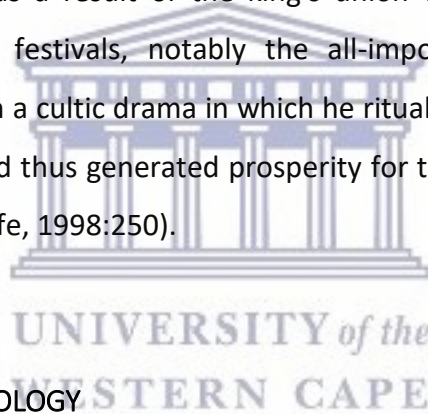
In describing Egyptian Kingship ideology, I quote an Egyptian treatise on kingship, first attested in the New Kingdom (roughly 1550-1069 B.C.). This includes a passage explaining the principal functions of kingship in Egyptian terms (Assmann, 2001:4) I quote the relevant passage:

*Ra has placed the king on the earth of the living forever and eternity
to judge between men
to make the gods content,*

*to make what is Right happen,
to annihilate what is Wrong,
to offer divine offerings to the gods
and voice offerings to the blessed dead.*

In all three ideologies, i.e. Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Israel, the king was the representative of the deity on earth. Therefore, it is important to determine the nature of this association to understand better the concept of kingship in the respective states.

The fundamental concept of Egyptian kingship was that the Pharaoh was a god from birth, begotten by the sun god and first King. In his different ministerial capacities, he incarnated the gods Horus, Seth, and Osiris (Dodson, 2015:6). As the personification of the gods, he ruled by divine decree and meted out justice by divine wisdom. The beneficial relations between heaven and earth as a result of the king's union with the gods were annually reactivated at the principal festivals, notably the all-important Sed festival. On that occasion, the king took part in a cultic drama in which he ritually overcame death and chaos by resurrecting in triumph and thus generated prosperity for the land and its people during the coming year (Baines & Joffe, 1998:250).



2.3 THE MESOPOTAMIAN IDEOLOGY

In ancient Mesopotamia, the king was the earthly viceroy of the national god, but he was not considered as divine as the pharaohs. The Mesopotamian king is said to be holy by virtue of his familiarity with the gods. He was a mortal, made to perform the charge placed upon him by the gods as his Sumerian title *1u-gal* signifies (for example king Lugal-lezi who unsuccessfully fought a civil war against Sargon, who, as a result of winning became Sargon the Great).

The king took on characteristics of a deity, but only intermittently, for instance at the New Year festival. It was then that he substituted for the national god in the enacted ritual drama and renewed his superhuman endowments, while also restoring harmony and fruitfulness.

In Mesopotamia, there is an emphasis upon the king's representation of his people before the gods. For example, at the New Year festival, the king as the representative of the congregation had an effect on the revival of the "dead god" (Frankfort, 1948:215-220). The people also through their king, "descended to the dead god," being temporarily placed in the world of the dead, and by a further ritual, the king effected a reversal of mood that brought the god back to the world of the living (Frankfort, 1948: 238). Thus joined to their king, the people would be given a new period of fertility for the coming year. However, the king was never a god. He was temporarily aligned with the god, given a sense of the god's destiny, experience, and life-giving powers, which he then gave to the people

2.4 THE JUDEAN IDEOLOGY

Although Judah's monarchical structure was in some ways influenced by the "kingship ideology" of neighbouring nations, Yahweh's kingship (based on one supreme God) remained a basic tenet of Israel's religion. Thus, Judah's kingship took on properties quite distinct from the ideologies of Egypt and Mesopotamia.

Kingship in Israel was integrated into a theocratic system in which Yahweh alone was considered king and absolute ruler of the universe. Passages in the Old Testament such as Exodus 15:18 and 19:6; Numbers 23:21; 1 Samuel 8:7 and 12:12; and Judges 8:23 attest to this. The human king was God's earthly representative. Why did Israel choose a king as a ruler when previously they had patriarchs and judges? The reason might be that the Israelites had encountered steady opposition from hostile neighbours in Canaan (especially the Philistines) and it became clear there was a need for an effective centralized form of government (Ahlström, 1982:10-51). The idea of Kingship was attractive as all the surrounding nations possessed Kings. The Israelite tribes decided they needed a leader (1 Samuel, 8:20). The king was Yahweh's representative, and in contrast to Yahweh, Israel's king had demarked powers.

He was instead described as "the Lord's anointed" (1 Samuel,16:6 and 2 Samuel,1:14) and "prince" over Israel (1 Samuel 9:16; 10:1 and 13:14); he was changed into "another man" (1 Samuel 10:6 and 10:9), and as such he was endowed with the "spirit" of Yahweh (1 Samuel 10:6 and 10:11) and treated as inviolable (1 Samuel 24:7). He became Yahweh's adopted

son, "This day I have begotten thee" (Psalm 2:7). All of this shows the close association that was supposed to exist between God and the king.

The concept of the King being human and merely God's representative explains why the prophets reprimanded the Kings for their failures and for neglecting to fulfil their obligations as servants of God and the people. The following biblical verses attest to this, Deuteronomy 17:14–20; 1 Samuel 13:8–15; 1 Samuel 5:12; 1 Kings 11:31–39; Jeremiah 22:15–17.

As God's representative, the king became a distributor of divine blessings for the people and their land. He was their source of strength (Psalm 90:18), their breath of life (Lamentations 4:20), and therefore had to be protected in the interests of the nation (2 Samuel 18:3). His position as such entitled him to universal sovereignty over the people (Psalm 2:8–9; and very importantly, to perform justice in the world (Psalm 44:4–8; and to protect the nation (Psalm 2:9).

Interestingly, when one looks at Deuteronomy, there is a pattern presented. The great King (Assyria in this case) offered the vassal king (Judah) protection. The vassal kingdom in its turn had to pay tribute. Within this scenario, look at how Deuteronomy defines kingship in Israel. The powers of the King are circumscribed in Deuteronomy 17:14-20. The King must not be foreign; he must not strive to amass many horses or wives or much gold and silver (this could be an explanation of why Solomon was considered to be the start of the reason for the exile). The king must study the law and remain subordinate to it. The result is that the king is seen as one of the brothers of Israel. He is not considered sacred or elevated; he is just a person with a special function. In Deuteronomy, kings appear beside the judges (Deuteronomy 16:18-20. Power was decentralized so that no single person or group wielded absolute power. In Deuteronomy, there is the pattern of the historical prologue (Chapters 1–3), then there are the stipulations of the laws of love and obedience, followed by the requirements of the obligations of Israel to Yahweh. This pattern closely reflects the relationship between Judah and Assyria and later Babylon. The later Chapters of Deuteronomy describe where the document is to be kept and the blessings and curses to befall Judah if it did not follow the requirements described earlier. In the Book of Kings, because of the failure of the kings to follow the Babylonian rules, the repercussions were

the exile. There is thus a correlation between the failure of Judah and the warnings issued in Deuteronomy about the failure to follow the terms dictated by the suzerain power. The Book of Kings follows this pattern.

2.5 ASSYRIAN KINGSHIP IDEOLOGY

The definition of power in the Assyrian context is that the subordinate groups obey those wielding power. Therefore, to be a king, a person must be given the authority to wield power by the ruling elite who are willing and able to enforce his decisions. Thus, the ruling elite is the recipient and the instrument of royal power. Religion was also used as a means of giving the king authority, even though the Assyrians never saw their kings as divine. Rather they were thought to have a unique relationship with the Assyrian gods which no other person had. (Baines & Yoffe, 1998:255–260).

In the Assyrian context, the state extended its control over other populations via conquest, coercion (making the coerced nation pay tribute to avoid conquest) and diplomacy. Judah fits into the category of those paying tribute. The state of Judah thus acquired by the Assyrian Empire was incorporated into the Assyrian structure. To integrate the subject peoples fully into the Empire, the Assyrians established intricate administrative systems which transcended local, political, social, and ethnic boundaries aiming at creating a loyal subservient population. At the same time, the Assyrians also exploited the subservient populations, taking taxes, utilizing resources and people to maintain the Empire and ruling elite based in Nineveh (Parker, 1997:381–386). The Assyrian exploitation of populations brought large numbers of deported peoples under Assyrian control. In essence, they were used to populate other areas and make a productive contribution to taxes in underperforming areas (Röllig, 1981:325–343). The Assyrian kingship thus had two policies, one of integrating peoples into the Empire, and two of exploiting them.

Larsen (1979:52–68) stated that Assyria used a system of organising the dominance of the ruling elite by creating a revenue through taxation and tribute and by conscripting the subject populations to be soldiers and administrators. Underproductive areas were brought into production through a system of agricultural colonization in which large numbers of people were deployed and settled in newly conquered areas. Wilkinson (2005:177–180)

asserted that to ensure the loyalty of the subject populations the Assyrians had a system of deploying low-ranking officials to the towns. These officials kept the next tier of officials (the provincial administrators) aware of all that was going on in the area. The officers kept a record of the labour used for production and of the produce being grown; they reported to the king's officials or governors who then reported to the king. The system was efficient as it let the Assyrian government know at all times what was happening. Another advantage was that as the Empire grew and new areas were incorporated, more non-Assyrian soldiers, scribes, and administrators who were not Assyrian were recruited. This system worked well in Judah under Manasseh as he was deemed loyal, Therefore, he was allowed to appoint his own non-Assyrian officials to oversee the towns and villages.

As the Assyrian Empire expanded, the Assyrians' knowledge of their newly conquered areas thought of as "outer" (i.e. having a different culture) changed to a specific knowledge where the culture and society of that area were assimilated into the Empire (Liverani 1988:81–98). It became a process of assimilating the "outer" culture into that of the Assyrian's. This assimilation is evidenced in the case of Judah where King Manasseh erected a statue to the Assyrian Goddess Ashur as a sign of accepting Assyrian domination. Interestingly, the priesthood of Judah, particularly Jerusalem, did not voice a complaint – perhaps the realities of Assyrian control had been accepted along with the realization of what would happen if there was an outburst of rejection of the Assyrian deity.

In Judah's case, the Assyrian system worked with the cooperation of the two groups. The first group was the Assyrian overlords who created the system, and the second group included the subservient king Manasseh and his administration. They were perceived to be loyal to Assyria and were allowed to function as part of the Assyrian policy. (Baines & Joffe, 1998:260).

Further evidence is that Assyrian ideology was applied to Judah, for example in Assyrian records, the king's delegates responsible for Judah reported to him using phrases such as, "The forts and the Land of the King my Lord are well" (Parker 1997:357). This evidence alludes to the idea that Manasseh was a loyal vassal who could be trusted and who was deemed to be a valuable asset in constructing forts to garrison the Egyptian frontier. The

problem of distance also comes into play here, Judah was far from Ninevah, and there was always a delay in getting the instructions from Nineveh to Judah. Without the aid of the Judahites, it was impossible to run Judah. Thus, it suited Assyria to have a loyal and submissive king, who would do the day-to-day running of Judah. That meant the frontier was reasonably secure, and the population was docile (Cogan, 1974:113).

2.6 REASONS FOR THE SELECTION OF THE EIGHT SCHOLARS

I will comment on the opinions of William Schniedewind, Sarah Japhet, Ernst A. Knauf, H.G. Williamson, Ian Provan, Francesca Stavrakopoulou, Eduard Nielsen, and John Endres regarding the reign of Manasseh based on their reading of Kings and Chronicles. I shall discuss their opinions of why the writers of Chronicles and Kings have two different accounts of Manasseh's reign, how these selected scholars reached their assessments, and how these assessments are based on different methodologies. I have chosen these scholars because they have produced work on Manasseh in some depth, whereas most other authors briefly provide comments on Manasseh's reign. They represent a fair overview of major positions taken by scholars on the matter. Where necessary, I shall refer to the opinions of other scholars, noting to what extent they agree or disagree with the views of those selected.

The selected scholars, Schniedewind, Knauf, Endres, and Provan, focus on the historical circumstances in assessing Manasseh and try to show how he may have reacted to political changes of his time. Japhet, Nielson, and Savrakapoulou focus on the theological and ideological factors that motivated the Deuteronomist and Chronicler to write about Manasseh as they did. Schniedewind reaches his decision about Manasseh by examining the history of Manasseh's time and the times of the writings on Manasseh. Williamson can be grouped with Schniedewind by using a historical approach, while Endres, Knauf and Nielson take a similar approach. Japhet focuses on different religious views and uses these to explain the differences in the texts. Provan looks at the religious aspects of Manasseh's reign and offers a solution for the question of who was to blame for the exile. Stavrakopoulou view that Manasseh is historically rehabilitated takes the debate a stage

further by asking the question whether the exile was as a result of sins. She asks why, after Manasseh's rehabilitation and repentance, the punishment should be inflicted at all.

2.7 SUMMARY STATEMENT ON KINGS AND CHRONICLES ON MANASSEH

The Book of Kings has its own particular style. In 2 Kings, the editorial framework parallels the framework in Joshua, Judges, and both Books of Samuel (von Rad, 1953:39). However, the purpose of writing Kings is that the writer wanted to explain clearly the reason for the demise of Judah. The Books of Kings were written close to the destruction of the state of Judah and try to present the reasons for what happened from a historical perspective. The reader, at this time, was in exile and needed to have the cause of the catastrophe explained. The writer traces the fall of Judah from the time of Solomon, explicitly blaming Manasseh as the prime cause. There is an attempt to acquit the population of Judah from being a reason for the exile, so it may be suggested that the writer is trying to give a message of hope to the reader.

The writer of Kings (2 Kings 22:13–17) has a close connection with Deuteronomy 27. The script in Kings here is very similar to that used in Deuteronomy. The methods that King Josiah used to get rid of syncretism and foreign gods parallels closely the laws laid down in Deuteronomy. In Deuteronomy 16, the Passover is discussed as a pilgrimage festival and declared to be celebrated in the central sanctuary, and King Josiah celebrated Passover in Jerusalem (2 Kings 23:21–23). It may safely be assumed that Kings used Deuteronomy as a source and also appropriated phrases. Deuteronomy may be seen as a platform on which both 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles build. Manasseh, perhaps, was then used as an example of a genre to illustrate the pitfalls of being evil.

The writer of Kings may also be mentioned to have used Deuteronomy as basis for his interpretation of King Josiah's reforms. In Deuteronomy, all Levites were to be seen as priests (Deuteronomy 18:1) but in 2 Kings 23:9 there is a difference as Josiah did not allow the priests from the local sanctuaries full equality with those from Jerusalem. This may be attributed to the fact that Jerusalem was seen as the training ground for the priesthood, the

trained priests then being sent to the outlying areas. This means that the priests in Jerusalem were thoroughly trained whereas those in the other areas were, perhaps, only scribes (with limited scribal ability) and limited priestly knowledge. To back this up, in 2 Chronicles 35 there is the suggestion that Josiah improved the lot of the Levitical priesthood who remained subordinate to the Jerusalem priests. Von Rad (1953:60) proposed that the deuteronomistic ideas stem from the rural Levites of the northern Kingdom. The Levites were the preservers of the ancient traditions, and after the fall of Samaria, they moved to Judah where their ideas spread and were assimilated in Kings. Von Rad (1953:70) further proposed that certain of the passages in Deuteronomy go back to pre-monarchic times (Deuteronomy 26:5–6) as there are old confessions of faith that were part of the covenant festival celebrated at Gilgal and Shechem.

Kings presents Manasseh as a king who introduced false gods into Judah and is the reason for the fall of Judah. Chronicles presents the idea that Manasseh is a sinner who later repents, which differs from the account in Kings. This distinction casts doubt about the accuracy of Kings and of the work of Josiah, as Manasseh had already dismantled some of his shrines, which means that King Josiah had less work to do (see 2 Chronicles 34). Strangely, on the issue of who removed the shrines where both Chronicles and Kings appear to differ, Chronicles says it was Manasseh who removed them, while Kings says it was Josiah. If one looks at the actual history, Chronicles describes Manasseh as removing them which might be accurate. Then his son Amon reigned and reinstated the idols and altars which were later removed again by King Josiah. Both accounts are historically accurate (Keil, 1985:483).

CHAPTER 3

3. THE VIEWS OF THE SELECTED SCHOLARS ON MANASSEH

SUMMARY

The views of selected scholars on Manasseh and the differences and opinions the scholars have on Manasseh.

3.1 THE SCHOLARS' ASSESSMENTS OF HIS REIGN

William Schniedewind

Schniedewind is based in California and has written a plethora of books on Israel and its monarchy and has made many comments on the effectiveness of Manasseh's reign. Schniedewind (1993:656–658) when looking at the discrepancies between Kings and Chronicles on Manasseh, commented that in Chronicles, Manasseh is depicted as a paradigm of a repented contrite sinner. In Kings, he is only depicted as being evil and a sinner. Schniedewind suggested that in Kings there is a connection between Manasseh and Ahab for example in 2 Kings 2:3, there is a description of the fall of Samaria and the fall of Jerusalem, and 2 Kings 21:13 there is a connection shown between Ahab and Manasseh.

Schniedewind commented on the exile, stating that the Chronicler echoes the views of the Deuteronomist by repeating some sentences from 2 Kings comparing 2 Chronicles 33:1–10 and 2 Kings 11–15. In both Books, there is a simple confirmation of impending doom. However, Schniedewind points out that there is a difference between Kings and Chronicles. In 2 Chronicles 33:11–20 material is introduced, not seen in Kings where the reader is told that Manasseh repented of his sins and ended his reign successfully.

Schniedewind stated that Chronicles emphasises the theme of Manasseh's exile, repentance and restoration, which is similar to the foreshadowing of the exile, eventual repentance and return under Cyrus. In 2 Chronicles and 1 Kings, the story of the distress caused by exile, repentance to Yahweh and submission to Yahweh is followed as a theme. The question of why this was written may need to be examined here. Schniedewind (1991:453) stated that Chronicles was written in the post-exilic period, and it may have been edited that of

repentance and forgiveness, offering hope of eventual restoration to the people living in exile. He emphasised that the Chronicler has a concern for the post-exilic community, which the writing of Chronicles reflects. (2 Chronicles 33:12–13).

Schniedewind stated the history of Manasseh in Chronicles is an interpretation of the event. Hence, the prayer of Manasseh may have been based on an earlier version. He particularly commented on Manasseh's prayer and stated that there were ambiguities in it since there was no obvious indication for its religious importance that one would expect if it were related to the Chronicler's compositional idea (Schniedewind, 1991:650). Notably, there is no prayer in Chronicles of Manasseh as it just says, "He prayed." In 2 Chronicles 33, the prayer begins "and his prayer to Elohaw ..." which can be translated to "his gods" or "his god" or "His God" who is Yahweh. El-Elowaw may refer to gods other than Yahweh as it does in Jonah 1:5. There is also an internal contrast in 2 Chronicles 33:3 between Manasseh's prayer to his Elohim and the prophets who spoke in the name of Elohim. In 2 Chronicles 2:33, the normal expression referring to Yahweh is Yahwh ELOHAW not simply ELOHAW, so the meaning of El Elohaw is ambiguous in verse 18 and could have originally referred to other gods. Only in the context of verse 19, Elowaw is understood to refer to Yahweh.

In verse 18b of 2 Chronicles 33, the seers are described, but it is not known what their function was. Were they rebuking Manasseh for his idolatry, or were they reassuring him for his repentance (Schniedewind 1993:649–661)? In 2 Chronicles 33, there is an indication of the seers speaking directly to Manasseh, yet in 2 Kings 21:10, the verse explicitly states that God spoke directly to Manasseh through his servants. If the narrative composition of 2 Chronicles 33:18 were from the same source, it would not be expected that the Chronicler would omit to mention the seers. Long (1987:390–399) commented on this stating that verse 18 of 2 Chronicles 33 "his prayer" is a framing repetition which is lacking in 2 Kings. Framing repetitions are used to emphasize the authorial nature of the repetitions in historical works. Schniedewind (1991:445–450) stated that the Chronicler inherited the tradition of the prayer of Manasseh, which became the basis for the homiletical reworking of the Deuteronomistic History.

Schniedewind believes that the Chronicler's rewriting of Kings is to present a discourse with history serving as an illustrator for the sermon. The idea of the worship of foreign gods as a cause for the exile is characteristic of an exilic redaction of the Book of Kings. Schniedewind believes that there are two redactions of Kings. When looking at 1 Kings, the Bamot shrines (which were provincial Yahwistic shrines) were seen as places of idolatrous worship (1 Kings 11:1–8). The use of the term, Bamot, comes from an exilic redaction of Kings according to Schniedewind, thus, leading him to the conclusion that an exilic redactor reinterpreted the story of Ahab. Thereby the sins of Manasseh are brought into line so that the northern and southern kingdoms' demise could be explained by the worshipping of foreign gods. Using 2 Kings 21:11, Schniedewind (1993:654) said that Judah would be exiled for idolatry, with the following quotation:

... because Manasseh the king of Judah has done these abominations, even eviler than the Amoritesand has caused Judah to sin with the idols.

Schniedewind pointed out that Manasseh's sin is similar to Ahab's sin in 1 Kings 21:26, "he caused them to do abominable deeds following foreign idols, according to all that the Amorites did." Both of these descriptions use the term "foreign idols" and the root "abominations" and in both, there is a comparison between the sins of Israel and the sins of the Amorites. 2 Kings 26:10:

Now Yahweh spoke through His servants the prophets saying, because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations having done more than all the Amorites did who were before him and has also made Judah sin with his idols, therefore thus says Yahweh God of Israel, behold I am bringing calamity on Jerusalem and Judah that whoever hears of it both his ears will tingle and I will stretch over Jerusalem

Schniedewind (1993:659) stated the redactor connects the fall of Samaria with the sins of Ahab just as he connects the fall of Judah with the sins of Manasseh. The redactor further states that Manasseh made an Ashtaroth just like the one Ahab made, showing that this Ashtaroth was part of the abomination of the nation. This description of the role of the Ashtaroth contrasts with Ashtaroth worship in pre-exile Israel, where the Ashtaroth was worshipped alongside Yahweh even though Deuteronomy forbade the practice. The history

of Manasseh shows the Ashteroth being connected to the altar, which he made to Baal and the host of heaven. The comparison of Israel and the Amorites occurs only in these two passages. There is the suggestion that the condemnation of Ahab and Manasseh was written by the same person who applied the same accusation to both kings. One might ask what the motives are of the authors of Kings and Chronicles were and what they indeed were trying to say. There is also the thought that the personal context of the exilic redactor shaped the reinterpretation of Israelite religious history, and in fact, the Book of Kings might have been written by two redactors. The pre-exilic redactor was concerned with cultic centralization and cultic purity, while the post-exilic redactor was concerned with worshipping foreign gods.

The actual term “foreign gods” refers exclusively to the idols of foreign gods and occurs six times in Kings, five of which are concerned with the sins of Ahab and Manasseh. Schniedewind stated the redactor here is concerned with showing that the reason for the fall of Judah is related to the sins of both Kings. In 2 Kings 21:11–13, this destruction of Judah is clearly linked to that of the house of Ahab. In 2 Kings 9:7 the fall of Judah is attributed to the blood that was shed, which parallels the statement that Manasseh shed innocent blood in 2 Kings 6:16. The term used for foreign idols in the description of Ahab and Manasseh refers exclusively to those of foreign gods. In 2 Kings 26:11 and 13, the destruction of Judah is likened to the destruction of the house of Ahab. Both Ahab and Manasseh are accused of worshipping foreign idols.

In summary, Schniedewind observed the Chronicler on Manasseh as not so much an originator or an inventor but rather an interpreter of the events. Hence, the prayer of Manasseh may have been based on an earlier version. The Chronicler’s message has sprung from a received tradition where the typological use of Manasseh is a paradigm in a sermon to post-exile Jews. Chronicles is a creative theological interpretation of historical events where the events are forced into the mould of the Chronicler’s ideology, which is a sermon on exile and restoration. From this history, the Chronicler creates a message, but this message has coloured his interpretation of the historical events.

The Chronicler's message has sprung from a received tradition where the typological use of Manasseh is a paradigm in a sermon to post-exilic Jews. Chronicles is a creative theological interpretation of historical events where the events are forced into a mould of the chronicler's ideology to form a sermon on exile and restoration. Schniedewind believes that Manasseh was a bad King but repented. He writes from a historical perspective and judges Manasseh as such, hence, concluding that Manasseh was not the sole reason for the exile. Chronicles does not restrict the evil to a single king; rather Schniedewind asserted that Manasseh, as portrayed in Chronicles, is not the sole reason for the fall of Judah. Schniedewind (1991:451) finally elaborated on Chronicles stating that the Manasseh account should be viewed within an exile and restoration paradigm and that Manasseh's own exile and restoration reflects that of the people's.

Sarah Japhet

Sarah Japhet (1993:996–1010) had the following approach regarding differences and similarities between Kings and Chronicles. In Chronicles, the introduction follows that of 2 Kings 21:1. Chapter 33 of 2 Chronicles has two sections on Manasseh, in verses 1–20, which parallels 2 Kings 21:1–18. Each of these two passages contains themes and phrases which are common to both. Japhet (1989) stated that the Chronicler's view could perhaps be explained in that the writer was seeking to explain the long reign of Manasseh as a reward from God. In Kings, there is no mention at all of any rehabilitation of Manasseh, so the Chronicler could either have ignored the facts of long life or instead the Chronicler lists Manasseh's repentance as the reason for long life and God's blessing. As Japhet stated, this raises the question of how accurate Chronicles is. Is it merely a sermon demonstrating the value of repentance, or is it historically based? There are references throughout Chronicles and Kings relating to Manasseh's exile, notes on his building projects and notes on his religious policy. There is much detail on Manasseh building forts, and there is archaeological evidence of a building programme throughout Judah during his reign.

Japhet (1993:1004–1020) also discussed the question of the name of Manasseh's; the designation of this particular queen is different from the other queens mentioned. All the queen mothers mentioned in Kings are identified by their descent or ethnic origin (see 2

Kings 21.9:22.1 and 23.1). Manasseh's mother is the only one mentioned by her proper name. Japhet stated that after this, the Chronicler omits the names of the queen mothers, and she presents the idea that there is a new understanding here in Kings of ignoring the origins of the queens: and there is also no discrimination between good and bad kings. Japhet disagrees with Williamson (1994:390) who perceived this omission in isolation from the general historical phenomenon. Manasseh is portrayed as evil in Kings and Chronicles, why then is there no further evidence about him on this issue? Was the material on him censored to give an anti-Manasseh view to support the idea of his being evil, thereby ignoring the good things he may have done?

The name issue also has a bearing on an anti-Manasseh sentiment. The two territories of Judah and Israel were distinct from each other despite originally being joined together with a common monarchy. There was a period of almost continuous warfare between the two kingdoms which made the relationship between them tense. After the fall of Israel to the Assyrians in 721 B.C., the Bible presents a hostile view of Israel and a pro-Judah view. Manasseh's name having northern origins may have helped this process of being anti-Israel, and his name may have brought to people's minds the period of hostility between the two states. Thus, with Manasseh as a scapegoat, the problems and fall of Israel could be explained by the evil of the northern kingdom, which was continued by him because of his name connection.

Japhet (1993:1005) stated that verses 2–8 of 2 Chronicles 33 encompasses a religious evaluation of Manasseh following that of 2 Kings, and these verses follow the language and concepts of Kings. There are references to Manasseh reintroducing altars, making Ashtoreths and worshipping the host of heaven. The depth of this worship of cults is made clear when Josiah's reforms are described (2 Kings 23:4–7 and 2 Kings 23:4–5). Verses 4 and 5 of 2 Chronicles 33 deal with the building of altars and the removal of these altars is attributed to Josiah in 2 Kings 23:12. However, according to the information in Chronicles, it was Manasseh who was responsible for their removal (verse 15) "all the altars he had built ... he threw them outside the city." Is this part of the Chronicler's desire to rehabilitate Manasseh, or is it the Chronicler just stating the facts?

Japhet (1993:1006) stated that verse 6 of Chapter 33 in 2 Chronicles reflects 1 Kings 14:22–24 and 2 Kings 16:3–4. The verses refer to human sacrifice and sorcery. The Chronicler writes the verse with a change of the singular son into plural sons and adds a place, valley of Hinnom (taken from 2 Kings 23:10). Perhaps by doing this, the Chronicler is trying to add authenticity to his writing by making it appear factual.

Japhet (1993:1007) believes that verses 7–8 are about the installation of the Ashtoreth in the temple, which is also cited in 2 Kings 21:7–8. The differences between the two sources are that the Chronicler changes the “graven image Asherah” to “the image of the idol.” In verse 8, the Chronicler uses “your fathers” whereas in Kings, “their fathers” is used. Japhet (1993:1008) considered this change to mean a strong attachment to the land which the Lord appointed for “your fathers.”

Looking at verse 10 of Chapter 33 of 2 Chronicles, it does not copy what is said in 2 Kings 21:10–15, but is summarized in one verse. Chronicles initially uses the same words as Kings, then adapts to its own presentation, so in 2 Kings 21:10 it states “And the Lord spoke by his servants.” In comparison, 2 Chronicles 33:10 says, “And the Lord spoke to Manasseh.” An explanation is made by Japhet (1993:156–165) who said that the destruction of the temple was not only caused by Manasseh, nor by the cumulative sin of many generations but is the result of the mistakes of Zedekiah. The existence of this prophetic speech was a warning to Manasseh and reflected God’s view that He is ordering his world (Japhet 1993:176–191). The Chronicler thus shows that the warning was not heeded by Judah and so is different from that of Kings.

In Chronicles, the sin is ascribed to the people, yet there is no punishment inflicted on them. The Chronicler, rather than inventing a punishment, which is proportionate to the vast sin, uses the facts (Japhet 1993:1008). Chronicles describes Manasseh being dragged off to Babylon to appear before the Assyrian King. Then follows his repentance as a result of this meeting, after which he spends the rest of his reign fortifying Judah and removing the shrines that were built earlier. The question that arises in the two Assyrian documents is whether Manasseh is described as being a loyal servant. If he was being punished, why was he regarded as loyal? Manasseh’s exile and return was also an exceptional event, so could it

have been invented? If the story was invented, it is out of character with the Chronicler's style. Why would the Chronicler have invented this? One possible explanation is that the Chronicler was trying to explain the extent the Manasseh's sin and then God's punishment leading to his repentance and forgiveness, which fits in with the idea that Chronicles is a story about sin and repentance.

There is also the example of Pharaoh Necho who was brought to Ashur by Ashurbanipal and then restored to his kingdom so it's possible that this happened to Manasseh. The story about Pharaoh Necho may have been used for the one about Manasseh to prove a point about repentance. However, this means that the Chronicler must have had access to the Assyrian records to develop his story. Did the trip to Babylon prompt Manasseh's repentance, is the chronology of exile and then repentance correct? Or, has the event been used simply as an explanation for the repentance? Another point is that in the Assyrian records, there is no mention of Manasseh being seen as rebellious towards Assyria. On the contrary, he is described as a loyal vassal (Kelly, 2002:137). The description maintains that Manasseh among the loyal kings brought his heavy tribute and kissed the feet of Ashurbanipal. So why was he brought to Babylon? Manasseh's building projects also fitted into Assyrian policy, a series of new forts being built is useful so that Judah could be a buffer against Egypt. Manasseh also was allowed to increase the Judean military; which is hardly the response of a nation unsure of the loyalty of its vassal state. He also appointed new priests in these areas, he broke with the old priesthood to create a new priestly class which would be loyal to him, and so increase his authority over Judah. An intriguing idea is that by the date of Manasseh's reign, Assyria's star was beginning to wane, and he might have sensed Assyrian weakness and thus took advantage of increasing his power.

The history of Manasseh's sins differs fundamentally from that of the other kings. Are the charges brought against Manasseh just a presentation of the corruption that existed in Judah at the time? As a loyal servant of Assyria did the Assyrians impose their God on Judah as is suggested by Cogan and McKay (Cogan, 1974:109–115 and 120–122). Surely, it was better for Assyria to keep Judah as a loyal vassal state without upsetting the religious apple cart. Without the means to trace the corruption of the entire Davidic Monarchy as it did for the northern Kings, the writer of Kings points to Manasseh as the cause of the exile. This

explanation of Kings using Manasseh confirms the exile as being caused by the house of Omri of whom Manasseh was a descendant. In other words, a political motive has been entered here, i.e., to blame the house of Omri. The writer of Kings may be an opponent of the House of Omri and may have been determined at all costs to blame this ruling house for the exile. There is a flaw in this argument postulated in Kings; why should a later generation suffer for the sins of a previous generation? The Chronicler sees this and may reject the idea by describing Manasseh as repentant.

Verses 18–20 of 2 Chronicles 33 (Japhet,1993:1010) are a reworking of the verses in Kings. In 2 Kings 21:17 it states “Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and all that he did, and the sin that he committed, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?” 2 Chronicles 33:18 states, “Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer to his God, behold they are written in the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.” In place of “the sin he committed” there is a reference to Manasseh’s prayer and the words of the seers who spoke to him.

Japhet further compares Kings and Chronicles by showing the difference in 2 Kings 21:18 “And Manasseh slept with his fathers, and was buried in the garden of his house, in the garden of Uzza; and Amon his son reigned in his stead.” Whereas, in 2 Chronicles 33:20 it states “So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the garden of his house, and Amon his son reigned in his stead.”

In 2 Kings 21:18, Japhet suggests there is a double emphasis, i.e., he was buried in the garden of his house and in the garden of Uzza. This second part is omitted in Chronicles. Of interest in Kings, is that Manasseh’s funeral introduced a new burial practice, as he was not buried in the “city of David” (Japhet, 1993:1012).

Finally, Japhet (1993:1015–1018) showed that in 2 Kings 21 an evaluation of Amon’s reign starts, but the detailed description is changed by the Chronicler so that the statement that Amon walked in the way of his father Manasseh is left out implying the passage is less critical of Manasseh.

Ernst A. Knauf

Like Schiedewind, Knauf postulated the idea that Chronicles is a message for instruction. He suggested that Manasseh was a penitent king who successfully built up Judah. As proof, he stated that the Assyrians confirmed that Manasseh was a faithful servant and thus under Assyrian rule, Judah and Jerusalem boomed (it grew to a size of 55 hectares; Knauf, 2005). Excavations (since 2007) on the south-western and south-eastern sides of Jerusalem show that it expanded greatly as a result of the destruction of Samaria. In an article, Grabbe (2008:722) stated that the Assyrian annals confirm that Manasseh was faithful and there is no evidence that he ever was disloyal. Archaeological evidence corroborates such an image of this king, as he kept the Assyrian-style architecture. Knauf (2005) argued among other things that it was Manasseh, not Hezekiah, who constructed the Siloam tunnel, which is properly understood, as not being for any military purpose but waterworks for the population. This fits in with the idea that Manasseh was a political success, as he was part of the process of building up Jerusalem (Peltonen, 1996:460).

Biale's view in Castelnovo (1991:36), is that the most successful policy of survival was undertaken by King Manasseh, who preserved Judean autonomy for almost fifty years. He did this using a series of accommodations vis-a-vis the Assyrians, including adopting some of the Assyrian gods into the Temple ritual. For this, he was reviled by the editors of Book 2 of Kings. Knauf (2007:220) suggested that we cannot uncritically read Biblical literature as a witness to history or dismiss it just because it presents the events according to its own perspective. Scholars like Knauf suggested there is an attempt to absolve the people and rather blame individual kings of the demise of Judah, On the other hand, in Chronicles, there is an attempt to put the blame for the exile on a cumulative process of collective sin. This difference is further exacerbated where authors suggested that, when the Books were edited after the exile, they were adjusted to portray the editors' perspectives. Knauf also commented that 2 Kings 21: 1–10 presents the idea that the events at Bethel made it possible for Josiah to undo the sins of previous kings. However, a bit further on in 2 Kings 21: 11–13, it is stated that this work of Josiah was pointless because, despite his reforms, King Josiah still died early. Knauf (2005:170) suggested that biblically, long life is seen as a sign of Yahweh's blessing, so, would this mean that Josiah's death is a sign of Yahweh's rejection of

the reforms? But then, why are the reforms listed in detail if they were rejected by Yahweh? Is the exile inevitable because of the sin of Manasseh, as suggested in 2 Kings 21:1–18? Knauf's view is that Chronicles identifies the main reason for the collapse of Judah as cumulative the collective guilt of the people of Judah's sin.

Because Solomon created the high places, he is identified as the main cause for the division and ultimate collapse of Judea. In the Book of Kings, these high places are identified as shrines to foreign God's and are seen as a focus of apostasy. What are the "high places?" They are a place of worship, however, this may also have taken place at other venues. For example, Jeroboam is condemned by the Deuteronomist redactor for creating the shrines at Dan and Bethel. The high places may have started out as Yahwist, and then over time may have degenerated into places of idolatry. After building the Temple in the first edition of Kings, worship was only to take place in the Temple. Solomon thus, before he built the Temple, may have worshipped at a high place using it as a Yahwist place, or he may have worshipped there as an idolator. Knauf on the issue of who was to blame for the exile suggested that the Chronicler never recognised the legitimacy of the Kings of Israel. Therefore, by implication blaming Solomon for the split of the kingdom and, later, for the demise of Israel as he was the first to stray from God. He further questioned that if Chronicles was working with texts ending with the reign of Josiah, the Book could not have given a reason for the fall of Judah as it predates the fall. Knauf suggested that Kings presents a picture of a people being punished for various monarchs' mistakes. He suggested that Chronicles presents the idea that the reason for the collapse of Judah is the cumulative guilt of generations and not just the actions of one particular bad king. Knauf did address the question that if Manasseh repented, then why did Judah fall, and also asked, if the reforms were doomed, why are they listed in detail.

Knauf pointed out that there is specific detail in 2 Chronicles 29:25–30 describing how Manasseh reformed by restoring the temple to its original state. He perceived the description in 2 Chronicles 33:12–13 as highlighting how Manasseh's religious practices led to his being taken captive to Babylon and only his deep submission to God caused his restoration. This account highlights the process of submission as a means of stopping the

exile and is also a formula for attaining deliverance from sin. Here is an attempt to give a reason for the exile but also a solution.

The divergence between the two Books occurs explicitly in 2 Kings 21:10–21 where the exile is forecast because of Manasseh’s sin. The Book, 2 Kings, has a controversial report on Manasseh, that he rebuilt the local shrines and was devoted to witchcraft and enchantments. In Chronicles, it is a result also of the people doing what was evil. In Kings, Manasseh is not rehabilitated, he is described as rebuilding the high places, erecting altars to Baal and making Ashtoreth poles and above all, he is described as spilling blood the major reason for the exile. This is not mentioned in Chronicles. Also, in Chronicles, there is no mention of the punishment of exile in Manasseh’s time. On the other hand, 2 Chronicles, describes his repentance after being taken away by the Assyrians.

Knauf described the history in 2 Chronicles 33, (not mentioned in Kings) of Manasseh fortifying the west side of Jerusalem and reorganising the military bases outside the capital by installing captains in these bases, as an indication of his political success. Also, Knauf noticed another difference between Kings and Chronicles in that Chronicles does not describe the civil war between David and Ishbaal.

In 2 Chronicles 33:12–13, a detailed description is given of Manasseh in deep distress where he asks God for help and humbles himself. In this prayer of repentance, the verb “taken from” occurs, which describes real repentance and response to God. Only in 2 Chronicles 7:14 and 2 Chronicles 33:13 is the verb not used as “taken from.” A move from sin to repentance, a spiritual pattern is described, which is a model for post-exile Jews.

Knauf like Schniedewind perceived Chronicles as developing on from Kings. He also realised Chronicles as a Book providing a sermon of hope for the people living in exile, and Manasseh’s submission to God as a formula for deliverance. Knauf sees Manasseh’s long reign as a sign of Blessing from God as a response to his submission.

Hugh G. Williamson

The next scholar to be discussed is Williamson, who like Schniedewind argued, for a penitent Manasseh and also believed that Chronicles was written as a message to be given to later readers. He stated the Book of Chronicles is a message about redemption.

Williamson argued for a Chronicler of 2 Chronicles who shows Manasseh as repentant and rehabilitated and takes the view that Chronicles shows the way for later readers of how to achieve forgiveness and restoration. Williamson pointed out that any decision on the probability of Manasseh's guilt ought to be influenced by the general stance adapted to Chronicles and its procedures as presented by the scholars. In other words, Chronicles has the motive of explaining why the exile occurred and by assuming that Manasseh repented, offering hope of redemption to the people.

Hence, the history of the exile has been woven into supporting this idea. Williamson perceived the exile in Chronicles as a paradigm (like Schniedewind) relating it to Manasseh being taken to Babylon. He saw this as a warning of what was to happen if repentance did not occur. The question of the failure to repent is answered, as the exile did occur after the repentance of Manasseh. Schniedewind and Williamson had the idea that the sin was the cumulative guilt of all the kings, and so despite the reform of Manasseh and Josiah, it was inevitable. Williamson (1977:23–25) also took a historical view; he stated that in 2 Kings 21:10–14, the exile is foretold because of the sin of Manasseh. That said, he produced evidence that it was not solely Manasseh's fault and used Chronicles, which states that the exile is a result also of the people doing what was evil. Williamson commented that in Kings, Manasseh is not rehabilitated but described as rebuilding the high places, erecting altars to Baal and making Ashteroth poles. Most of all, he is described as spilling innocent blood, which is given as the main reason for the exile. He also pointed out this discrepancy between Chronicles and Kings, i.e., that this spilling of blood is not mentioned in Chronicles. Williamson, on this point added that "A decision of Manasseh's guilt must inevitably be influenced by the general stance adopted towards Chronicles and its procedures of the composition."

Williamson perceived Manasseh as a topological paradigm regarding the exile, as it illustrates his exile to Babylon which mirrors the later one of Nebuchadnezzar (2 Chronicles 33:11). In Kings, the exile is characteristic of an exilic redaction as to the balance of probability blaming Manasseh for the event. Williamson (1977:128) stated that in 2 Kings 21:10–14, the exile is foretold because of the sin on Manasseh.

In 2 Chronicles 10:15, Williamson perceived that there is a reference to the oracle given to Jeroboam, which outlined why the kingdom split. This revelation begs the question as to whether Solomon also played a role in the downfall of Judah, or going back further in time, to David as the start of the reasons for the collapse. Chronicles also omits completely, the civil war between David and Ishbaal where blood was spilt. Perhaps this omission is there because the writer wanted to focus on Manasseh only.

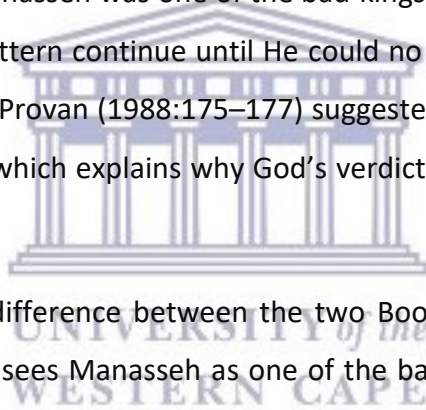
The Manasseh history is written in a way to be a warning and a message of hope. Whether Manasseh was as bad as he is made out to be in Kings (recall other Judean kings who also were awful) might not be the issue, Manasseh is possibly being used by the writers to make a point.

Ian Provan

Ian Provan said much the same as Knauf, Schniedewind and Williamson; that the Chronicler takes the history of Manasseh further than Kings. Ian Provan (1988:172) suggested that Kings underwent its first revision during the exile, which too was later edited. He argued that Kings is a pre-exile book which ended with the version of the account of Hezekiah's reign. Chronicles provides clues for the guilt (either of Manasseh or cumulatively of the nation) and offers a solution of redemption. Kings, on the other hand, assigns all the guilt for the exile to Manasseh and does not offer any solution of how to be extricated from the disaster. An explanation may be that in Kings information ending with the reign of King Josiah is used.

Ian Provan (1988:133) had a religious perspective on Manasseh, suggesting that it is God's verdict that Josiah's death was the start of God's judgement on Israel.

Another difference between the two Books posited by Ian Provan (1988:172), is that he also pointed out that Chronicles does not describe the civil war between David and Ishbaal. In Deuteronomy, there is an authorial fluctuation in the evaluation formula of kings, i.e. the evaluation of being either a good or bad king (he did evil or good in Yahweh's eyes). This reporting is similar to that of Schniedewind, Knauf and Williamson. There is a further dissimilarity regarding the high places in Kings; the writer saw them as Yahwist, while in later editions of Deuteronomy, they are seen as idolatrous. Ian Provan also looked at the status of David; there is a theme running through Chronicles of Yahweh's forbearance towards the evil actions done by kings (starting with David) until the reign of Hezekiah. Then there is a marked difference because after that reign, there is no more latitude, and the divine punishment is certain it is irreversible. Then there is a marked difference because after that reign, there is no more latitude, and divine punishment is sure it is irreversible. The implication being that Manasseh was one of the bad kings, who was part of the process of Judah's fall. God let this pattern continue until He could no longer bear it, which is when the forbearance stopped. Ian Provan (1988:175–177) suggested that the cumulative sin was deemed irreversible by God, which explains why God's verdict was that Josiah's early death occurred.



Provan perceived a marked difference between the two Books, by implication suggesting the exile was irreversible. He sees Manasseh as one of the bad Kings, who was part of the process of Judah's fall. Provan operated from a historical perspective along with a religious view.

Francesca Stavrakopoulou

Francesca Stavrakopoulou assessed Manasseh from a religious and a historical perspective and also questioned why the information in Chronicles is written as is. Stavrakopoulou, (2005:130) on the issue of who is to blame suggested that the collective guilt of offences mentioned in 2 Chronicles 12:2 are a reaction to Hezekiah undertaking reforms. She asked the question, whether this is a reaction to the offences of all the previous kings? Is the guilt, therefore collective and as the result of all the evil kings? But then, after Manasseh's rehabilitation, why should this punishment be inflicted? Francesca Stavrakopoulou

(2005:248) took a different approach from Schniedewind, Knauf, Williamson and Provan regarding Manasseh. She highlighted that two versions explain the fall of Judah. First, the fall that is attributed to the cumulative guilt of all the kings and second, that it is solely the fault of Manasseh.

Stavarakopoulou introduced a religious perspective to explain the difference between Kings and Chronicles. Kings says nothing about the repentance of Manasseh and the doctrine of accountability, and there was no divine punishment inflicted. It is assumed that he was not solely accountable for the exile. Thus, the Book of Kings does not subscribe to the view of Manasseh repenting as it does not mention any repentance on his part at all. She is in the group of assigning collective guilt for the exile taking the idea a stage further in providing reasons Manasseh's unpopularity, which she gives as a reason for the discrepancy between Chronicles and Kings. The writer of Kings had difficulty in dealing with the repentance of Manasseh because of the doctrine of repentance. If he was forgiven because of repentance, then he cannot be blamed for the exile. She differed from Schniedewind, Williamson and Nielsen by thinking that if Manasseh repented and God had heard his repentance and forgave him, there would be no punishment. She contrasted this with Kings which unequivocally blames Manasseh as he practised all the cults of Canaan so that in spite of Josiah's piety the destruction was inevitable. This thought, she contrasted observing that the writer of Kings had difficulty with the idea of repentance and accountability, so for political reasons merely left it out.

Provan, Williamson and Knauf asked the same question. In 2 Chronicles 33:12–13, the description of how Manasseh's religious practices led to him being taken captive to Babylon is given, and only his deep submission to God caused his restoration. This account highlights the process of submission as a means of stopping the exile and is also a formula for attaining deliverance from the exile. This view is identical to that of Knauf and Schniedewind. Another point is that long life, as evidenced by Manasseh, may be seen as a gift from God conditional on obedience. The same view was held by Provan, Knauf and Schniedewind. Despite repentance, the spilling of blood is the real reason for the exile.

Stavrakopoulou (2005) suggested that Manasseh is the only king to share his name with the northern kingdom (1 Kings 4:13). This association may have provoked a sentiment that was virulently anti-Manasseh, which resulted in a bad press (Stavrakopoulou, 2005). David Glatt-Gilad (2002:248–258) suggested that Chronicles adopts Huldah's prophecy, which repeats 2 Chronicles 34:27. This prophecy introduces the spectre of the reason for exile, i.e. the sins of the king are the prime cause. However, from verse 33, collective guilt is mentioned. The writer, though, states that despite the cleansing of the temple, there was still the patronage of the high places. So, regarding guilt, Manasseh's sins played a role but were not the only reason for the downfall of Judah. According to Stavrakopoulou, there are two versions of Judah's fall. In 2 Chronicles 29:25–30, the detail of Manasseh's reform of restoring the temple to its original condition is in contrast to what Chronicles stated earlier about him having part of the guilt of Judah's demise. Stavrakopoulou posed the question of why Manasseh was not punished after his restoration, and then answered that because of the act of repentance, he obtained divine forgiveness. Stavrakopoulou stated that Kings sees Manasseh as the worst of all Judah's kings and that he is totally to blame for the later exile. He represents all of the universal cultic practices, and in spite of Josiah's piety, Manasseh's guilt still brought the state to destruction. Stavrakopoulou said that throughout Chronicles, there is the theme of repentance as the fate of Judah exercised an influence on the mind of the writer of Chronicles. She declared that the writer of Kings had difficulties with this in view of the doctrine of accountability, i.e. of not being punished while he was still king after having repented. There is a theme here of repentance being used to deal with the theodical problem of transforming Manasseh into a repentant Israelite. Stavrakopoulou mentioned that historically, Manasseh is seen as successful since he built Judah into a prosperous state with his judicious policies. She then discussed the cardinal sin of Manasseh as described in 2 Kings 21:16, i.e., the shedding of innocent blood and the practice of child sacrifice. However, she posed the question of whether child sacrifice was normal and suggested that it was common, as Molech is mentioned eight times in the Old Testament (Molech is the god to whom child sacrifice was attributed). Did Canaanite religion, which had child sacrifice as an integral part, influence Manasseh who was following a culturally accepted practice to increase his power over Judah? This idea of Stavrakopoulou reflected that of corporate responsibility mentioned earlier, which states that Manasseh followed the cultural norms of

the society to which he belonged. Was there an ideological agenda, or was it a cult decision (there are references to child sacrifice in Exodus, Leviticus, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel)?

David Biale (2010:6–7) took this point further by suggesting Manasseh was an accommodationist; to survive, he adopted foreign practices to appease. For example, the Assyrians and priests who did not support him could have indulged in the practice of child sacrifice. (Manasseh set up altars to foreign gods and even made an altar to Istar the Assyrian Goddess in the Temple). Biale (2010) suggested that the writer of Kings hated him for this, hence the very bad report on Manasseh. Canaanite religion was seen as an inversion of Canaanite myth by the Israelite poets who wanted to demonize the Canaanite gods to portray Yahweh as good and just (Peltonen, 1996:442–477). The reference to child sacrifice might be an attempt to link the evil of Manasseh to Canaanite religion.

Stavropoulou, like the other scholars, came up with the view that Manasseh was an abhorrent king but in Chronicles, the Book has been edited to portray a view of hope, because of his repentance. The divergence between the two Books occurs explicitly in 2 Kings 21:10–14 where the exile is forecast because of the sin of Manasseh. In Chronicles, it is a result also of the people doing what was evil.

In summary, Kings blames Manasseh for the exile, whereas Chronicles blames the collection of cumulative sins committed by the people. All the scholars agree there is the main theme in Chronicles that Manasseh was a bad king but then repented and achieved success. Kings diverges with this in only describing Manasseh as a bad king. A question may be asked, has the desire for historicity been fixed by sources that we, the readers, do not now have, or did the sources come from a religious or literary tradition such as the poets. The fact that child sacrifice is mentioned only twice in the Old Testament (one of which refers to Manasseh) may point to the poets influencing history. Schniedewind weighs in with the accuracy of Chronicles by asking, if Chronicles is an interpreter of scripture, and whether the interpretation came from an individual or the community as a whole “an interpreter within the community.” Thus, it means that Chronicles has been subject to previous interpretations, and the purpose of the Book is to further the tradition of interpretation as seen in the Bible (Schniedewind, 2005:179).

Eduard Nielsen

Nielsen (1967), like Endres, also comes from a historical and political perspective. Nielsen focused on Manasseh's political ability to ensure Judah's survival. His relationship with Assyria is explored, and Nielsen commented on the lack of priestly opposition to Manasseh's worshipping of foreign gods. He formed the conclusion that Manasseh was acting out of political necessity, which resulted in a successful foreign policy. Worshipping foreign gods was accepted and was a common form of worship existing in Judah. Manasseh's wife also not being Jewish could have influenced this decision, and after his return needed a support base. Therefore, he replaced the old Jewish priestly class with his supporters and also built new fortifications on new sites to completely break any connection with the old ruling class.

Nielsen (1967:190–200) suggested that the historical tradition of Manasseh must have been censored by the writers before these traditions were handed down to later generations. He picked up that there are two reports of Manasseh, i.e. in 2 Kings 21:1–18 and in 2 Chronicles 33:1–20. In 2 Kings, a controversial report is given on Manasseh, specifically because he rebuilt the local shrines and was devoted to witchcraft and enchantments. On the other hand, 2 Chronicles describes his repentance after being taken away by the Assyrians. Nielsen (1967:180) proposed that Manasseh was a highly competent king and like Knauf focused on Manasseh's political ability to ensure Judah's survival. His relationship with Assyria is discussed, and Nielsen comments on the lack of priestly opposition to Manasseh's worshipping of foreign gods.

Nielsen, from a political perspective, assessed Manasseh's relationship with Assyria and looked at why he behaved as he did. In 2 Chronicles 33, there is mention (not mentioned in Kings) of Manasseh fortifying the west side of Jerusalem and reorganising the military bases outside the capital by installing captains in these bases. For this to happen, the Assyrians had to regard Manasseh as a loyal servant, and there is no mention anywhere, biblically, of Manasseh revolting against the Assyrians; but there is indirect evidence of his loyalty (erecting shrines and placing an image of the Assyrian fertility goddess Ishtar in Jerusalem). Oden (1976:31–36) stated that in Assurbanipal's lists of rebellious Kings, there is no mention of Manasseh regarding the revolt by Shamash-Sham-Uhim (Assurbanipal's brother who was

governor of Babylon) in 648 B.C. Perhaps the reason could be that he was not part of the rebellion. Perhaps, his later release was because of his complete repentance for earlier sins to God and is described in Chronicles to encourage the people of Israel that there was the hope of restoration providing they repented. If this is so, why would the Deuteronomists not mention this in their history? Even short captivity of the Judean king would have merited a mention. Therefore, the question is raised as to why the Assyrians would have taken Manasseh away and also, why he was allowed to fortify Jerusalem and the military bases if he was considered untrustworthy. Perhaps because Egypt was an enemy of Assyria, it makes sense that Judah could be built up to be a buffer between the two countries. In other words, because of his loyalty, it suited Assyrian foreign policy for Manasseh to build the fortifications. The point, however, is that he was regarded as loyal to Assyria.

Another issue which Nielsen raised, is the question of priestly opposition, or lack thereof, regarding Manasseh's apostasy. Regarding prophetic opposition to Manasseh, Nielsen (1967:230) also outlined the case. In 2 Kings 22:16, it says that he shed innocent blood, however, the Hebrew phrase "shapkakh dam naqi" according to Jeremiah 7:6 and 23:6 means anyone who steals from widows or children. The bloodshed is perhaps the culmination of a list of sins which was an attempt to gain and use power by the rich. Looking at the prophets before Manasseh we have Isaiah and Micah then during his 55-year reign, there is a gap, and only after his death do we have Zephaniah, Nahum and Habakkuk. This lack of prophets in Judah during the reign of Manasseh can perhaps be explained by the fact that Judah was a loyal vassal of Assyria. Also, as Manasseh rebuilt the shrines and was involved in enchantments, there should have been priestly opposition, but there is no information in either Kings or Chronicles regarding this. Could it be that the sins of Manasseh were merely the traditional syncretistic religion of Canaan being applied to Judah that was in place when Deuteronomy was written? Interestingly, Manasseh's wife was not a Judean, her name was Meshullemeth, and she might have influenced the king to reintroduce the practice of worshipping foreign gods. In the book of Jeremiah, it says "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my heart would not turn towards this people ...and I will make them a horror to all kingdoms because of what Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, king of Judah did in Jerusalem." In 2 Kings:11–16, this is echoed.

Looking at 2 Kings 31:3, the priests in Jerusalem had no reason to be discontented with Manasseh as he had built the shrines in places outside Jerusalem, so they were not directly affected. When he erected an altar for the Assyrian goddess Ishtar in the temple court as a political necessity, this might have been seen as a direct affront to the Jerusalem priests. However, there is no mention of any priestly opposition. Why was there no opposition to idolatrous cultic worship? Possibly this could have been because of the lack of prophets leading any opposition, or a lack of priests. Also, Manasseh had appointed the priests after his return; he had replaced the previous leadership with people who were loyal to him, and hence, these new priests might have gone along with his policies. Taking this a step further, in the latter part of his reign, Manasseh was successful. Judah prospered and grew, so people, especially the political and religious leadership, perhaps ignored the religious excesses to keep their prosperity. Manasseh might merely have followed Canaanite religion to fit in with the morals of the time. He can be seen as an accommodationist whose primary goal was survival.

The kingdom of Israel conquered by Assyria was divided into four areas, i.e. Duru, Makidu, Samerina (ancient Samaria) and Gal'azy. In three of these, the Levitical priesthood was quite numerous, yet there is no record of them objecting to the shrines. An explanation could be the fact that Manasseh was in full control. He had increased royal authority, and it would have been imprudent to oppose him, especially as he had the backing of the Assyrians. More importantly, Manasseh had appointed the priests who owed their jobs to him. Only in Samerina were there a few of the original Levitical priests. In 2 Kings 23:19–20, the priesthood in Samerina is described as being destroyed, but this happened later under Josiah. Samerina, the central highlands of Judah, only had a few priests (2 Kings 23:8) because King Josiah had all but destroyed the local Judean shrines.

John Endres

John Endres argued that the Chronicler of 2 Chronicles creates a Manasseh who is rehabilitated and perceived that the Book indicates the way of achieving forgiveness and restoration. Williamson had a similar view. Endres reacted to 19th Century opinions such as those of Julius Wellhausen (1957:90-110) and tried to portray Manasseh as a successful

king. Endres countered the negative assessment of Manasseh presented by Wellhausen. Wellhausen's methodological choice was heavily influenced by trying to please the anti-Semitic stance of the German government of the day. Peltonen (1996:490) also argued against Wellhausen by using information gathered archaeologically since Wellhausen's death but failed to see that Wellhausen was working in the context of an anti-Semitic imperial Germany where it was acceptable to be anti-Semitic. Endres (1988b:200), in his book "Temple Monarchy and Word of God" stated that Chronicles is not a source of historical knowledge of the conditions existing in ancient Israel.

Endres uses a historical argument to substantiate his idea of Manasseh. He uses the ideas of others as well as available source material to develop an opinion. He assumes that Chronicles has a message of Israel from the perspective of a relationship with God centred on the temple. It highlights Israel's kings as leaders of both the religious and political spheres. It does not describe the realities of a divided kingdom, as does Kings. Working from a historical perspective, Endres stated that Chronicles presents a worshipful lens of Israel, portraying the history with a focus on important public figures who serve as models of religiosity and piety, Manasseh being one of them. Chronicles works with a received tradition of charting a spiritual vision for the life of Israel. Endres (2007:140) referred to a collection of six statues in the Escorial Palace in Madrid, all of which are kings of Israel, and one of these is a statue of Manasseh. On the plinth of Manasseh's statue, is the inscription "Having repented he built the altar of the Lord." This direct quote is from 2 Chronicles 33:11–17. In the 16th Century, the statue sculptor followed a line of thought expressing deep appreciation of Chronicles, which included the rehabilitation of Manasseh. His repentance is thus seen as a major event which transforms him from being evil to being good, and Chronicles offers a view of Manasseh's life as a paradigm of the possibilities of repentance, forgiveness and grace. Thus, the conclusion the post-exilic readers make is that Chronicles was written to urge them to accept the possibilities of restoration. There is a detailed description in 2 Chronicles 33:12–13 of Manasseh in deep distress where he asks God for help. He humbles himself and in this prayer, the verb "taken from" occurs, describing genuine repentance and response to God. According to Endres, there is a move from sin to repentance, a spiritual pattern, which is a model for post-exile Jews.

The history of Manasseh, as suggested by Endres, focussed on a unique aspect of the Chronicler's view, which is different from that in Kings. To form this opinion, he is influenced by the ideas of other scholars. Endres worked from a historical perspective, and in fact like Schniedewind, postulated that the story of Manasseh in Chronicles is one of religiosity and piety, in fact, a sermon to be read by later generations.

Nielsen, Endres and Fishbane (Fishbane, 1985:385-403) acknowledged that Chronicles uses the idea of exile and restoration accounts of Manasseh as a form of sermon based on the pattern of sin, God's warning, the resultant exile, repentance and eventual restoration. The story was written for the post-exilic community instead of the pre-exilic Jews.



CHAPTER 4

4. FINDINGS OF THE SELECTED SCHOLARS AND MY OWN VIEWS ON MANASSEH

SUMMARY

Discussion of the findings of the scholars

The main points of the selected scholars

My own views on Manasseh

4.1 THE FINDINGS OF THE EIGHT SCHOLARS

Manasseh is presented differently in 2 Kings and Chronicles.

When the accounts about Manasseh are compared, what emerges are two different accounts of the king, which may be explained by the motives of the authors of these Books. The writer of Kings shows Manasseh as a rogue and provides a lot of evidence about his sins. The motive for this vilification as suggested earlier may be to shift the blame for the exile onto Manasseh, and even to compare him to his grandson Josiah, to show Josiah, as the paramount follower of God. Chronicles, however, judges him differently and comes up with the idea that Manasseh is a success. Looking at his fortress building programme, one questions, why all these fortresses were built in the south of the country? Was Egypt then seen as a very strong military power? Two ideas are; first, Manasseh did not need to defend Judah against Assyrian invasion, and second, by strengthening defences against Egypt, he gained the Assyrians' favour. However, to counter this, Assyria had conquered Egypt, so why build fortresses at all? Looking at history, Egypt was conquered in 660 B.C., but then the Assyrian king had to go back in 620 B.C. to suppress Egyptian revival. Subsequently, Assyria was never sure of full control of Egypt as the Babylonians had become a major threat and within 30 years Babylon actually defeated the Assyrians.

Could this mean that Manasseh sensed Assyrian weakness against Egypt and was asserting his dominance over the region without realizing that a far greater threat lay to the west in the shape of Babylon? The answer may be that Judah, after the destruction of Assyria in 612, was, for a time, regarded as a state loyal to Babylonia. So, the question remains, why

build the fortifications in the south and not the west? Did Manasseh see only Egypt as a threat or did he not realize the power of a rising Babylon?

The question may be asked, was Manasseh really taken to Babylon, although Nineveh was the capital? Why would the Assyrian king take a loyal vassal king to a city that was not the capital? The answer proposed earlier that that might explain the error, was perhaps because the Book was written later when Babylon was the capital of the Babylonian Empire that might explain the error. However, surely if the Book was rewritten during the Babylonian era, the redactor would have followed the original text. Assuming that the original texts were either lost or destroyed during the Babylonian sacking of Jerusalem, surely the surviving priests and scribes would have remembered that Nineveh was the capital when Manasseh was king.

Stavropoulou provides an in-depth view of Manasseh and the causes for the exile. She focuses on his name and suggests that the destruction of his reputation was because of his northern name. The northern kingdom was repeatedly denigrated by the Judeans and because Manasseh is the only king to have a northern name (1 Kings 4:13) may have made him the scapegoat of the exile. Stavropoulou uses a religious and historical methodology to assess King Manasseh and puts forward her views with clarity. Her idea is that Manasseh has been written from a political perspective as a “biblical euphemism.” The reader is thus provided with the reasons for the fall in which there is also a lesson.

Stavropoulou also suggested that Hezekiah’s reforms are a reaction to the sins of the previous kings and that Manasseh can be seen as part of the cumulative sin process. She asks, are these reforms God ordained or human ordained? If the reforms were God ordained, then why did the exile happen, and if there was true repentance on Manasseh’s part then again why the exile happened? She also looks at the motives of the writer in writing Kings and suggests that he might have had difficulty in accepting the notion of repentance and forgiveness and thus ignored the event. He would, therefore, have had a political motive in explaining the event and wanted to blame Manasseh, thus giving an opening to the general population to feel that it was not their fault.

Stavrakopoulou compares Manasseh with King Ahaz and sees him being connected with Ahaz to show how evil he was. Schniedewind also sees a connection but between Manasseh and King Ahab; he observes a relationship between the sins of Manasseh and those of Ahab and believes the redactor uses this connection to emphasize how to be a contrite sinner. Schniedewind noted there were two redactors in Kings; the version of Ahab's sin by the second one could have been reworked to fit into the Manasseh story for emphasizing the sin of worshipping foreign gods. On the other hand, the first redactor (pre-exile) was more concerned with maintaining the cultic purity of the nation. According to Schniedewind, the main topic of the second redactor is to focus on what the root cause of the exile was, i.e. the worship of foreign Gods. There is a shift in emphasis between the two redactors as circumstances had changed between writing the two versions. In the first version, the main issue was to maintain the cultic purity of the nation, while in the second version, the issue to explain why the exile happened was the main reason. Regarding the issue of child sacrifice, Stavrakopoulou questions whether it indeed occurred or if Manasseh was being used as an example of being a bad ruler. Her methodology is factual and precise as she researches Chronicles on a line-by-line basis.

Williamson approaches the issue of Manasseh using a factual approach. Like the other scholars, he uses the information in Chronicles to conclude that the account is presented of Manasseh being rehabilitated. Williamson believes that the explanation of Manasseh's repentance describes how to achieve forgiveness and how this act leads to restoration. He observes Chronicles as a sermon on which the reader can meditate. Williamson follows the Schniedewind pattern of cumulative sin and subscribes to the view that the history of Manasseh is written as a topological one to be read as a warning and also a message offering hope of redemption.

Williamson differs from the other scholars in that he points out there is no direct evidence of Manasseh's capture and him being taken to Babylon as punishment. In discussing the Book of Kings, Williamson (like Schniedewind) arrives at the evidence of two writers producing the information at different times in history. The other scholars also discuss this idea and agree that there are two writers. Williamson, in agreement with Stavrakopoulou, sees Manasseh as being presented as a particular type of personality by the writers to prove

and emphasise the point they were making. All of the scholars, who were studied, indicated that the view of Manasseh is either a truthful accurate one or a type of personality being presented.

Schniedewind reaches his decisions about Manasseh by examining the history of Manasseh's time. When discussing this aspect of Manasseh being an archetype, Schniedewind focuses on the issue of Manasseh's repentance and questions whether this repentance was genuine or merely a reaction to being taken to Babylon. Schniedewind (1991:450–461), regarding Manasseh's trip to Babylon, comments that it may be a paradigm, a typological story reflecting the later exile and restoration. He suggests that the story is factual but an interpretation of the event; the repentance may have been based on an earlier version. Regarding the question of who was to blame and the motives for the authors writing the Books, Schniedewind suggests that the Chronicler edits Solomon's reign by removing the information blaming him for the split. Schniedewind sees that in contrast, 2 Chronicles 10 refers to Jeroboam's oracle, which points to Solomon as the start of the reasons for the exile. He does not particularly comment on this discrepancy. In sum, Schniedewind sees the story of Manasseh as a topological paradigm of the repentant sinner. He ties this to the historical facts by implication, suggesting that the history of Manasseh is meant to be read as a warning.

According to Schniedewind, the idea in Chronicles is that the message is more important than the actual event of the exile. He suggests that the Chronicler is saying that the Manasseh story shows an understanding of the law, hence his repentance, but perhaps it was a ritual event to circumvent an unpleasant situation.

All of the scholars look at the event of the trip to Babylon as either genuine repentance or a contrived incident by the writers of Chronicles to illustrate the idea of repentance and hope of forgiveness as a result.

In his assessment of Manasseh, Endres works purely from a historical perspective, looking at what Manasseh accomplished as a builder and subsequently his repentance and actions. Endres perceives that Manasseh was successful and Chronicles is portraying his history as one of religiosity and of hope for the reader who was in exile.

Schniedewind and the other scholars all use a historical methodology in assessing Manasseh then add a religious method in deciding whether the history is accurate. All agree that Manasseh was a success in Judah (there is nothing in the Assyrian records to show otherwise) and that his repentance led to a long reign. I note that most of the scholars comment on Manasseh's exile to Babylon and suggest this history is a kind of paradigm explaining the reason for the exile, be it Manasseh's only or the result of cumulative sins. The scholar who indisputably does not find cumulative sin as the reason for the exile is Japhet who blames Zedekiah as the *prima facie* cause.

Provan perceives that Chronicles takes the Manasseh story further than Kings and offers ideas as to what the reasons are for the exile (either individually or cumulatively). He realizes the differences between Chronicles and Kings and observes different writers for the Books. He perceives the formula of either good or bad kings as the decision of the writer based on the text of Deuteronomy, which dictates how a King should perform. The exile is viewed by Provan as being inevitable, and that punishment started with the early demise of King Josiah. Provan looks at the facts as presented and accepts them. He sees the entire fall of the Judean Kingdom as being unavoidable as a result of the cumulative sins.

Knauf, like Japhet, looks at Manasseh through a political lens. He assumes that Manasseh was a success, and like Japhet, sees Manasseh as a faithful servant of Assyria. Knauf mentions that the biblical presentation of Manasseh cannot be ignored just because it reflects the redactor's views; the redactor was making a point for the reader to contemplate. When discussing the issue of worshipping in high places, Knauf comments that perhaps these places started off as Yahwist ones (where Solomon used to worship) but during the reign of later kings they fell into places of idolatry. Knauf, like the other scholars, believes that the reason for the exile is cumulative. Similar to Schniedewind, he assumes that Chronicles never recognised the legitimacy of the kings and that Chronicles is suggesting that the exile happened because of this failure. Knauf, when discussing the history of Manasseh being taken to Babylon, as the other scholars, sees this as a formula of how to obtain forgiveness and restoration.

Sarah Japhet perceives the Book of Chronicles as paralleling Kings, with the major difference that Chronicles uses Manasseh's repentance as the reason for his long reign. She believes that Chronicles portrays Manasseh sympathetically as a message of what the benefits of repentance can be. She looks at Manasseh from a historical perspective and concludes that Chronicles is accurate as there are many references to Manasseh's building works. She believes that Manasseh was regarded as a success by his overlords as there is no mention anywhere in their records of him being considered disloyal. Japhet also looks in some detail at the name of Manasseh's mother and notices there is a different format used in describing her. She disagrees with Williamson, who sees this change in the description as a once-off omission. After the change in the description of the name of Manasseh's mother, Japhet notices there is a break with the past. When describing Manasseh, she takes a systematic historical approach and, like the other scholars, observes that Manasseh is portrayed with an editorial point being made.

Sarah Japhet sees Manasseh being portrayed as the "bad guy" because of his religious sins, which in Kings is seen as the reason for the fall of Judah. Perhaps the redactor changed the location of Manasseh's trip to suit his own agenda, i.e. that Babylon was regarded as the vilest of cities. Thus, Babylon was used as a dire warning of what would happen if one sinned. In other words, the sin of Manasseh was being equated to Babylon. In Chronicles, Japhet, (1993:1002–1003) says that the description of the event in Chronicles contains historically reliable information that is different from Kings. Perhaps a different writer edited the information stopping with the names after Hezekiah. Japhet suggests that the Chronicler is just stating the facts or is providing a template of a repentant sinner and how to obtain forgiveness. Especially, Japhet sees the fall of Judah as the fault of Zedekiah ignoring the previous causes which were a build up to the fall of Judah. Could the fall have been avoided until Zedekiah, i.e. avoidable until the last moment as Japhet might be suggesting? That is much the same as saying the only reason for World War I was the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand.

This idea of Japhet's differs from the other scholars, who see the exile as being caused by cumulative reasons. Japhet suggests that the history of Manasseh's exile reflects that of Pharaoh Necho also being captured and taken to see an Assyrian King. This event may have

occurred in the living memory of the Chronicler, so he may have used it as a template to explain Manasseh.

The version of the event in Chronicles, along with the inclusion of the divine warning leading to punishment, is in line with the Chronicler's view of how divine retribution works. The writer based this view on the Deuteronomist text, which judged the kings according to the Mosaic Law. Knauf follows the same line as Schniedewind, focussing on collective guilt as the reason for the fall. Starting with Solomon, he shows that the authorial formula changes in Kings, suggesting that there might have been two editors for the version of this Book. Following von Rad's idea, Knauf agrees that reasons for the exile are historical and, from Manasseh's sins onwards all of the evil kings suffered punishment.

4.2 MY OWN VIEWS ON MANASSEH

Interestingly, going forward in time by about 2400 years to when Otto von Bismarck was Chancellor of Germany, is that he and Wellhausen were contemporaries. Bismarck was a Prussian pragmatist and Christian, and Wellhausen was the major Theologian of Germany in the 1880s. Wellhausen admired Bismarck for his energy and actions which created the Second Reich. Perhaps Wellhausen was influenced by the power politics of the Bismarck era in his appraisal of Judean history. Julius Wellhausen also had an opinion of the dating of the Bible Books; he tried to prove that a connection between the legal codes and the development of religious practices was only possible if done at a later stage. Wellhausen regarded the Pentateuch as a composite document comprising a Yahwist source dating to the 900s B.C., an independent Elohist document from the 800s B.C., which has the basic structure of Deuteronomy until the time of King Josiah, and a priestly source dating from 500 B.C. Wellhausen felt that the entire set of the laws of Moses was the law code of post-exilic Jewry. Wellhausen also may have been influenced by living in the age of Hegel and Darwin (Hahn & Hummel, 1966:11). Wellhausen (1957, 269–275) stated that history does not take into account either goodwill or even persons but only facts, which is a very Hegelian observation. The redactor may, in fact, have changed the picture of the king to suit his own agenda. In the modern era, Julius Wellhausen is an example of this. He wrote from a

position of anti-Semitism and may have given an interpretation of Israel and Judaism which only reflects his perspective.

Wellhausen, when writing about the kingdom of Judah, favoured the idea of an adventurous leadership who conquered and subjugated territory. These adventurers coexisted with the priestly class who were continuously trying to get the ruling class to observe the Mosaic Law. Perhaps the writer of Chronicles also liked what Manasseh did and in Chronicles tried to redeem him. Bismarck, like Manasseh, was a survivor, saw his opportunities, and also developed the military power. As a game player in power politics, Bismarck realized that in a world of five powers, it was good to have allies, hence the Dreikaiserbund, with two others (i.e. Austria and Russia). Influenced by Bismarck, one might guess that Wellhausen perhaps adopted some of Bismarck's methods.

Manasseh was also a power player in his era, and may I suggest, also decided that it would be good to be friends with the major political player in the area and so built up relations with Assyria. To do so, he used Egypt as a bogeyman to build up his military. To increase his political power, he may also have used the Egyptian bogey to appoint his own supporters to positions of authority in Judah. So, a new priestly class and a new scribal class was created, which served to shore up his authority. A modern-day example of this is the late King Hussein of Jordan who, sandwiched between Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Iraq, still managed to maintain Jordan's independence and was seen as an influential power player in the region. King Hussein's advantage was that his family was influential in the region and had political connections. The Hussein family was heavily involved in the first World War in the liberation of the region from the Ottomans, which gave them credibility and influence. Bismarck followed a similar idea, i.e. to begin, he used the Danish bogey of a superior Denmark and lured Austria into an alliance with this ploy. Then Bismarck used the French bogey of threatening German territory (Napoleon III had laid claims to German ground west of the Rhine). Thus, I suggest, there is a lot of commonality between Manasseh and Bismarck.

Manasseh may be seen as a pragmatist, a survivor. He appeased the Assyrians by initially supporting their God and always paid his tithes on time. Even after his repentance he still managed to retain Assyrian support. In the eyes of political contemporaries, Manasseh was

seen and lauded as a success. The Assyrian records do not show him as rebellious but rather as a loyal vassal. Thus, raising the question of having hooks put into his nose and being taken captive to Babylon. Were hooks genuinely put into his nose, and if so, why was he regarded as loyal by Assyria? Perhaps the answer to this is that literary licence was employed by an anti-Manasseh redactor who was just out to prove a point about Manasseh being evil and failure.

There are a lot of similarities between Chronicles and Kings both agree that Manasseh sinned and support each other on this issue. However, there is a significant difference between the two Books regarding his repentance. I would suggest that the motives of the writers of the two Books can be called into question; both had different agendas. In blunt terms, one was merely allotting blame for the fall of Judah and absolving the populace. The other was writing a sermon outlining the dreadful sins of Manasseh and explaining God's divine punishment, but then offering a redemptive message to the reader.

In summary of Manasseh, there are two issues addressed by the scholars. One, the redactors may just have been telling a story. Are their political and religious motives revealed by the way the information is presented? Manasseh, as shown in Kings and Chronicles, may I suggest is shown in a historical account. The accounts in Kings and Chronicles may certainly be confirmatory of the events. The history of the removal of shrines, for example, has been explained by Keil as complimentary. In Chronicles, Manasseh is not completely rehabilitated though initially he is described as evil and then as repentant. Kings also, may I suggest, does not deliberately destroy Manasseh. What emerges is a sequence of events being used to show Manasseh at different stages of his life which are then used to portray the writer's point of view. Chronicles focuses on the repentance as part of his message to the reader, while Kings focuses on the earlier part of Manasseh's life to prove the point that he was evil.

The second issue is defining why the exile happened and who was to blame. Both Books were edited post-exile, so the motive may have been to provide an understanding of the event. The writer of Kings lays the blame solely on Manasseh as a means of explaining the event and let the people off the hook for them to feel better. The Chronicler, on the other

hand, takes a different approach by not only describing the event but also offering hope through his interpretation thereof. The idea being presented is that Manasseh had committed various sins, but after thorough repentance was forgiven. So the blanket statement that he is evil in Chronicles becomes one of hope and future redemption.



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