

# TYNDALE OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES

VOLUME 8

GENERAL EDITOR: DONALD J. WISEMAN

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## 1 AND 2 SAMUEL

AN INTRODUCTION AND COMMENTARY

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Inter-Varsity Press

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## GENERAL PREFACE

The aim of this series of Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, as it was in the companion volumes on the New Testament, is to provide the student of the Bible with a handy, up-to-date commentary on each book, with the primary emphasis on exegesis. Major critical questions are discussed in the introductions and additional notes, while undue technicalities have been avoided.

In this series individual authors are, of course, free to make their own distinct contributions and express their own point of view on all debated issues. Within the necessary limits of space they frequently draw attention to interpretations which they themselves do not hold but which represent the stated conclusions of sincere fellow Christians.

The books of Samuel carry the history of God's people Israel through from the period of the judges to their first experiments in monarchy. The tragedy of Saul (the first in the line of kings) and the triumphs of his successor David (in spite of his long struggle with Saul and later within his own family) hold many lessons for the modern reader. The other main character in the book, Samuel, was also an influential leader of the nation, as prophet, priest and judge. These books are rich in the frank stories of individuals – good and bad – and set the scene for the subsequent history of the divided kingdom. All of this Joyce Baldwin handles with keen appreciation both of their literary and spiritual value, showing that the books of Samuel still have power to speak to us in the late twentieth century.

In the Old Testament in particular no single English translation

is adequate to reflect the original text. Though this commentary is based on the Revised Standard Version, other translations are frequently referred to, and on occasion the author supplies her own. Where necessary, Hebrew words are transliterated in order to help the reader who is unfamiliar with the language to identify the precise word under discussion. It is assumed throughout that the reader will have ready access to one, or more, reliable rendering of the Bible in English.

Interest in the meaning and message of the Old Testament continues undiminished and it is hoped that this series will thus further the systematic study of the revelation of God and his will and ways as seen in these records. It is the prayer of the editor and publisher, as of the authors, that these books will help many to understand, and to respond to, the Word of God today.

D. J. Wiseman

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

There is a sense in which everyone who writes a commentary on any book of the Bible climbs on the shoulders of previous commentators. The books of Samuel have been particularly well served in the last two or three decades, not only by commentaries but also by scholarly research on technical and detailed matters (some of which have been raised by manuscript finds), as well as on literary techniques and on theological interpretation. The resulting literature, in several languages, amounts to a mini-library. One recent bibliography consists of 259 entries, but that would certainly be incomplete now because contributions are being published all the time. Why then another commentary on 1 and 2 Samuel?

For many years I was engaged in teaching the Old Testament to men and women in training for the Christian ministry worldwide. Such students, as well as lay people in the churches, rarely have the time or opportunity to pursue the scholarly literature, and can be trenchant in their questioning of its relevance! My aim has been to 'set the scene' in the Introduction by indicating the present state of Samuel studies, and in the Commentary to include what seems to me most important for an understanding of the text. A high degree of selection was imposed by the length of book envisaged for the series, and those who need a more detailed and technical commentary will find great help, as I myself have done, in the outstanding books by Dr R. P. Gordon. I regret that his commentary was still unpublished when I needed to consult it in the writing of 1 Samuel. Many others to whom I am indebted will be obvious from

the footnotes, but even so the list would not be complete, if only because over the years the writings of others have become part and parcel of my own thinking.

There are several people to whom I wish to express my thanks. Dr Gordon McConville of Trinity College, Bristol, has been generously helpful with his comments and suggestions, and Trinity's librarian, Su Brown, has cheerfully taken trouble to obtain just what I needed for reference. Professor D. J. Wiseman and other readers of the manuscript have also provided stimulus and helpful ideas, for which I want to express my gratitude. Above all, thanks are due to God for the books of Samuel, which, though written at least two and a half millennia ago, continue to speak and to generate faith in Israel's Rock, who in Christ established David's kingdom for ever.

Joyce Baldwin