



Reading Utopia in Chronicles (The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies)

Steven Schweitzer

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The book of Chronicles is examined using the methodology of utopian literary theory. From this innovative perspective, Chronicles is interpreted as a utopian work that critiques present society and its status quo by presenting a 'better alternative reality.' The author's analysis contends that Chronicles does not reflect the historical situation of a particular time during the Second Temple period in its portrayal of the past, but rather conveys hope for a different future. While some scholars have also affirmed that Chronicles is concerned with the future, the majority of scholars believe that the content of Chronicles largely reflects the present situation of the author and in doing so reinforces or legitimizes the status quo.

Also, this assessment argues that utopianism is an underlying ideological matrix that contributes to the coherence of the book of Chronicles as a whole. Three commonly addressed concerns of the Chronicler (genealogy, politics, and the temple cult) are understood from this methodological perspective as vehicles for conveying the Chronicler's vision for a utopian future. Thus, the scope of this analysis is broader than many recent studies on Chronicles that have focused on isolated themes, individuals, or discrete sections in the book. Many of the conclusions challenge the dominant scholarly views about Chronicles and the assumptions that lie behind them.

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