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The Chronicler's Polemics towards the Samaritan YHWH-Worshippers: A Fresh Approach

1 Introduction

It was “out of a love for Judah and a hatred for Israel” that the Chronicler composed his entire post-exilic relecture of Israelite history in the time after exile. This viewpoint is to be found as early as 1806 in de Wette’s “A Critical and Historical Introduction to the Canonical Scriptures of the Old Testament”.¹ Here, the view is expressed that the Chronicles had indeed addressed, in the time after exile, the problematic dispute between Judah and Samaria, and had referred to the “Samaritans” in a polemical and derogatory way.² Whilst this view did not prevail in the strict sense formulated by de Wette, it did substantially dominate the vast majority of research conducted in the 20th century. This polemic was interpreted as being a *historical reflection* on the hostility which reigned between Judah and Samaria during the Chronicler’s life. In this vein, Pfeiffer noted: “In the days of the Chronicler the Samaritan Community was to Judaism a more serious adversary than heathenism.”³ This reading of the anti-Samaritan polemic in the Chronicles was underscored by the widespread majority belief in a literary context which also included the book of Ezra-Nehemiah, namely the so-called Chronistic History (ChrH).⁴ This was presumed to have been written at some point during the

1 De Wette 1806, 126 (on this subject: pp. 126–132).

2 A note on the disambiguation of terminology here and in the following: reference should strictly speaking only be made to “Samaritans” and “Samaritan” from the point at which, in the 2nd century BCE, the processes of separation and formation of Judaism and Samaritanism began. For the time prior to this, I suggest using the more neutral terms “Gerizim community,” Samaritan “YHWH cult” or similar terms. However, since the term “Samaritans” has become established among researchers, this term will be used here to include the group of YHWH worshippers in the entire region of the former Northern Kingdom for the entire exilic/post exilic period.

3 Pfeiffer 1961, 202. Especially Torrey 1909, 157–173, 188–217; Galling 1954, XVIII–XIX; Plöger 1959, 51f., 135; Rowley 1955–1956, 166–198; and Mosis 1973, esp. 169–171, 200f.; all stressed the Chronicler’s polemic which marked out the northern tribes as a pagan and/or morally derelict people, something which not only reflects the view of the Chronicler, but which simply emphasises the historical realities of the time.

4 The thesis regarding the cohesion between Chr and Ezr/Neh was first advanced by Zunz in 1832 and remained dominant in research for a considerable time (Zunz 1832). Noth’s classic explanation of the thesis (1943 = 1967) is based on the Chr and Ezr/Neh – which together