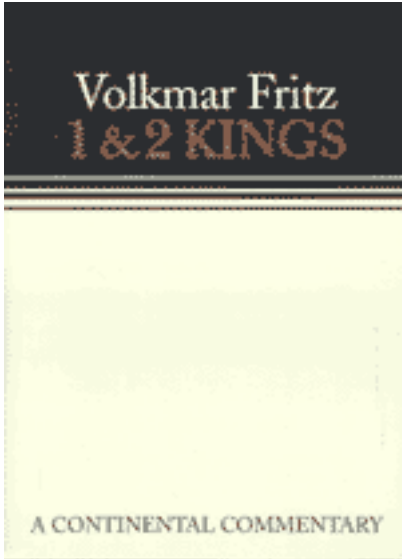


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**Fritz, Volkmar**

*1 and 2 Kings*

Translated by Anselm Hagedorn

A Continental Commentary

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A. Graeme Auld  
Edinburgh University  
Edinburgh, EH1 2LX, United Kingdom

For their continental commentary on the books of Kings, Fortress Press has turned, as earlier for the Song of Songs, to a translation (here by Anselm Hagedorn) from the Zürcher Bibelkommentar volumes published in 1996 and 1998. The result is a slighter approach to Kings than we find in the sister volumes on Genesis, Isa 1–39, Psalms, and some of the Book of the Twelve, where the more expansive resources of the *Biblischer Kommentar* were available to them. There is no substantial introduction (only little over two pages), no compendious bibliography, no thorough text-critical review, and no explicit attention to the theological thrust of the text. What we are offered is a medium-length reading of the Masoretic Text of Kings, with attention to a selection of historical perspectives: the history of the development of the books of Kings; and the contribution of archaeological, epigraphic, and topographical detail.

Fritz presents Kings as “part of a larger literary composition generally called the Deuteronomistic History.” In both his main text and footnotes, he pays regular attention to the two volumes of Ernst Würthwein (1977, 1984), the principal commentator in German since the work of Martin Noth for the *Biblischer Kommentar* was cut short at 1 Kgs 16 by his death. The principal author of the material is the “Deuteronomistic Historian,” and in some passages several different levels of authorial or editorial

contribution are detected. However, Fritz (perhaps wisely) offers no detailed plan of the history of the production of the entire text.

With many commentators and historians, Fritz routinely ascribes prophetic narratives and explicitly religious evaluation to later stages in the material, whose intrusive character can still be detected. He normally simply states rather than defends such judgments. At the same time he is properly cautious about ascribing to ancient archival sources many of the nonreligious elements: Solomon's maritime exploits with Hiram (1 Kgs 9:26–28) are “definitely not an excerpt from the royal annals”; “the text transmits only vague ideas.” Similarly, the note on the horse trade “seems to come from the later period of the monarchy”; it is “too sparse to come from any official document” (127). In fact, for Solomon's reign he allows as archival only the list of officers (4:1–6) and the twelve districts (4:7–19). Several details relating to the temple are “technologically impossible.” Mention of the “Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel” was “used to fake extensive source material for the depiction of the period of the monarchy” (157), and the repair of the temple according to 2 Kgs 12 “bears out conditions . . . that are credible only for the period after the end of the kingship” (304).

There are several puzzling tensions, whether in the original commentary or in its translation. For example, 1 Kgs 1–2 (with 2 Sam 9–20) is an “original literary unit” (10), yet events in 1 Kgs 2 “were hardly original parts of the succession narrative” (12). Adonijah is said to have mounted a “coup,” yet it is also noted (1) that he may well have been the eldest surviving son of David and (2) that some of the relevant report may have been mischievous reporting by Nathan. The story in 1 Kgs 17:17–24 of the raising of a dead person is said to be “the only one described in the Hebrew Bible,” and this single episode is contrasted with the activity of Jesus (185), though Elisha's restoration of the son of the Shunammite is properly compared with the earlier Elijah story (250–52).

However, the largest puzzles for this reader relate to historical moves that Fritz does not make, despite much that he does say in this commentary. As Director of the German Protestant Institute for the Ancient History of the Holy Land, he is thoroughly aware—but very coy—about the big archaeological debate over the tenth century B.C.E. in Jerusalem and other major centers. While agreeing with Yadin's critics that the substantial gates excavated at Gezer, Hazor, and Megiddo are later than that century, and hence post-Solomonic, he is prepared to ascribe evidence of more modest construction work at Beer-sheba and elsewhere to Solomon. Given that he ascribes notes on Solomon's horse trade to the later monarchy and on Jehoiada's temple repairs to the period after the monarchy, why should the list of twelve districts, even if preserved in an archive, be dated confidently to Solomon? Why claim the list of Manasseh's sins as “an

independent creation of the Deuteronomist,” rather than recognize Manasseh’s (pre-Josianic!) behavior reported in 2 Kgs 21:3–9 as the actual source of the polemic in the book of Deuteronomy?