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### Zeal, but Not According to Knowledge - Part 2: The Veracity of Bible Chronology

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series leading to a baptismal decision. This will be followed with a series designed to confirm the decisions already made.

During the summer months we are looking forward to a Voice of Hope youth effort, and in the fall we are planning a concentrated three-month series with a field training school for ministerial students from Japan Missionary College.

Adding to the effectiveness of our evangelistic program at the Osaka Center are weekly English conversation and Bible classes, film and stereophonic music programs, fellowship suppers, a welfare center, health and cooking demonstrations, a read-

ing room in the lobby, youth rallies, and a recreational fellowship program.

The entire second floor of the center is devoted to medical and dental clinic facilities, and as soon as a doctor is available this medical missionary unit will be able to contribute much to our evangelistic center work.

The Osaka Central church makes the center its church home. The members are not only actively cooperating with the center program, but attracting interest with the church and prayer meeting services, and Sabbath school and branch Sabbath school programs.

*Zeal Not According to Knowledge—2*

## The Veracity of Bible Chronology

EDWIN R. THIELE

Professor of Religion and Philosophy, Emmanuel Missionary College

**T**HROUGHOUT the ages, endless and bitter attacks against the reliability of the Biblical record have come from men who were moved more by zeal than by knowledge. These charges of inaccuracies in the Word of God have been due largely to an imperfect knowledge of the facts of ancient Biblical history, manners and customs rather than to actual errors in the Biblical record.

Particularly bitter and vitriolic have been the attacks directed against the chronological data in the books of Kings and Chronicles. Here scholars were certain that they were in possession of evidence of unquestionable error. Not being able to put the data together into a harmonious pattern, they were certain that the data were wrong and that they constituted incontrovertible evidence of the unreliability of the Biblical record.

As early as the fourth century A.D., Jerome expressed himself as follows concerning the chronological materials: "Read all the books of the Old and New Testament, and you will find such a discord as to the number of the years, such a confusion as to the duration of the reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel, that to attempt to clear up this question will rather appear the occupation of a man of leisure than of a scholar."<sup>1</sup>

Histories of Israel and Judah are replete with statements regarding the errors in the Biblical chronological data, as witness the following: "Of all the discrepancies between the books of Kings and Chronicles, as usual that of the dates is the most obstinately conflicting, I confess that I cannot see how any exact chronology can be framed."<sup>2</sup> "Wellhausen has shown, by convincing reasons, that the synchronisms within the Book of Kings cannot possibly rest on ancient tradition, but are on the contrary simply the products of artificial reckoning."<sup>3</sup> "Wellhausen is surely right in believing that the synchronisms in Kings are worthless, being merely a late compilation."<sup>4</sup>

Almost all encyclopedias, whether Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, or secular are in agreement concerning the supposed inaccuracies of the chronological data. Let us notice the following: "Almost along the whole line, the discrepancy between synchronisms and years of reign is incurable. . . . The individual numbers of years of reign, as well as the totals, are untrustworthy and useless for the purpose of a certain chronology."<sup>5</sup> "There is no fixed Bible chronology."<sup>6</sup> "Errors which have vitiated more or less the entire chronology have crept in. . . . Any attempt to base a chronological scheme on them may be disregarded."<sup>7</sup>

"Many of the numbers given, especially the synchronisms, are erroneous, as is proved by the fact that no attempt to harmonize the two series has been successful."<sup>8</sup>

Biblical commentaries likewise point to errors and contradictions in the chronological data, and claim that these data are irreconcilable: "The chronology of the history contained in the Books of the Kings presents difficulties which have never yet been conquered. There are data in the text which are contradictory. The only means of forming any chronology at all is to sacrifice some of the statements, and the text does not offer sufficient critical grounds upon which to decide which ones are correct. . . . It seems to be labor thrown away to pore over the data for the intervening details of the chronology."<sup>9</sup>

Learned treatises on the Old Testament repeatedly declare that the chronological data are erroneous, contradictory, and unreliable. Among these the following may be noticed: "The numbers, as they have come down to us in Kings, are untrustworthy, being in part self-contradictory, in part opposed to other scriptural notices, in part improbable, if not impossible."<sup>10</sup> "The chronology of the exilic editor in Judges and Kings is purely fictitious."<sup>11</sup> "We must acknowledge the artificial character of the Biblical chronological data."<sup>12</sup>

Certain scholars are bitter in their denunciations of the Old Testament writers, accusing them not merely of carelessness and incompetence, but of deliberate falsehood. Thus Jules Oppert in his article on "Chronology" in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. IV, uses such terms as "flagrant contradiction," "intentional mutilation," and "ruthlessly altered" in regard to the treatment of the chronological data in Kings.

So long has this problem been under discussion, and so many and varied have been the attempts at solution, that numerous scholars have come to the conclusion that the chronological problem is beyond solution, and that efforts in that direction are merely a waste of time. Among these are the following: "The causes of the difficulties and discrepancies occurring in Scriptural chronology are manifold. . . . Many attempts, it is true, have been made to reconcile them with each other but they seem to be utterly irreconcilable."<sup>13</sup> "The main difficulty against the chronology given in the Biblical record arises from the ap-

parently ascertained data supplied by the newer discoveries. . . . It is not necessary that we should enter here into the many intricacies of that difficult problem, the full solution of which will probably never be reached."<sup>14</sup> "The Chronology of the two Kingdoms after their separation is in many respects involved, and, from the want of sufficient data to guide us, sometimes so difficult as to baffle all efforts at certain solution."<sup>15</sup>

W. F. Albright, one of the most learned and noted Biblical scholars of our age, is of the opinion that "It is incredible that all these numbers can have been handed down through so many editors and copyists without often becoming corrupt."<sup>16</sup> Albright frankly admits the complexity of the problem, and enumerates the many details concerning which he believes nothing is known. "The data given in Kings and Chronicles are complicated by a great many factors. Nowhere are we explicitly told in the Bible how regnal years were computed in Israel. . . . We do not know directly whether the civil year began in the spring . . . or in the autumn. . . . We do not know to what extent coregencies were in vogue. . . . We do not know whether all the regnal years are based on the actual accession of a king or perhaps on some era. We do not know whether the numbers given for the length of reigns are based on more, or less reliable sources than the synchronisms. . . . We do not know the extent to which the synchronisms were drawn directly from analytical sources or were calculated by an ancient scribe. . . . And finally we do not know the sources from which the regnal totals were drawn, nor the method employed to select the numbers used when there were conflicts between oral and written sources. There has been great corruption of the text since the Deuteronomic History was finished in the early sixth century B.C."<sup>17</sup>

Professor Albright has here been extremely liberal and frank in his use of the term "We do not know." It is interesting however, that in regard to all these items we are today in a position to know the facts. They will be found in my study on Hebrew chronology, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, published in 1951 by the University of Chicago Press. (See also my study on "The Question of Coregencies Among the Hebrew Kings," in *A Stubborn*

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either in complete bound volumes or by weekly purchases of 15 separated sections and a durable binder. Harold Drimmer, president of J. J. Little & Ives Co. of New York, the publishers, said that "the use of shopping centers and supermarkets in the sale of books in this specialized field may seem like an almost radical departure from traditional publishing and book-selling practices. However, on closer examination it is plain to see that we simply are using the most advanced, up-to-the-minute and proven method of bringing the oldest and most inspirational books ever published to thousands of Americans who otherwise might never face the opportunity to have a Bible in the home."

¶ Earthquake victims of Agadir, Morocco, have been voted \$8,500 by the Disaster and Famine Relief Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The action was taken following receipt of a wire from B. J. Kohler, treasurer of the denomination's Southern European Division, who said his office has forwarded about \$17,500 from various Adventist sources for aid to the victims. Mr. Kohler and the division president, Marius Fridlin, plan to go to the scene of the disaster to ascertain what further measures can be taken to help ease the situation.

¶ Martyrdom of Gian Luigi Pascale, an evangelical preacher who was burned at the stake in Rome four centuries ago, was commemorated by Waldensians at ceremonies in Rome and in other parts of Italy. Pascale, who was particularly active in evangelizing the southern region of Calabria, was burned as a heretic in the Inquisition. The ceremony here took place at the scene of his death, on the small square of the old town, in the Tor di Nona section. Only near Frosinone, a small village, did local civil authorities refuse permission for the services.

## Twenty New Nations

(Continued from page 48)

have trained leadership, technical skills, social institutions. Clearly unforeseeable events await that large part of the world which is bound to become increasingly important in the political and economic world.

Add to all this the epochal changes consequent on World War II and we wonder if any previous generation has witnessed such tremendous upheavals as we have seen in our day.

How does all this fit into our picture of world evangelism? Are we doing all that might be done now? How long will doors remain open to Christian work? Are Christians working along wholly right lines to influence the rising tide of self-determination? Here is a large field for thought, prayer, and action.

H. W. L.

## The Veracity of Bible Chronology

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*Faith*, ed. Edward C. Hobbs, pp. 43-50.) There it is made clear that once the underlying principles of Hebrew chronology are understood, the many seeming contradictions between the Biblical data and the discrepancies with secular chronology disappear, and a pattern results which possesses internal harmony and is in perfect agreement with the contemporary chronology of Israel's neighbors.

- <sup>1</sup> Jerome, *Epistle LXXII ad Vitalem*; P. L., t. XXII, 439, col. 676.
- <sup>2</sup> Henry Hart Milman, *History of the Jews*, vol. 1, p. 377.
- <sup>3</sup> R. Kittel, *History of the Hebrews*, vol. 2, p. 234.
- <sup>4</sup> Theodore H. Robinson, *History of Israel*, vol. 1, p. 454.
- <sup>5</sup> Karl Marti, "Chronology," *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, Vol. I.
- <sup>6</sup> J. A. Howlett, "Chronology," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. III, p. 735.
- <sup>7</sup> S. R. and G. R. Driver, "Old Testament Chronology," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. III, p. 511.
- <sup>8</sup> J. Frederick McCurdy, "Chronology," *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. IV, p. 69.
- <sup>9</sup> W. G. Sumner, Appendix, "The Books of the Kings," *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, ed., John Peter Lange, trans. Philip Schaff.
- <sup>10</sup> George Rawlinson, *Introduction to the Books of Kings*, vol. 2, p. 475.
- <sup>11</sup> Robert Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 394.
- <sup>12</sup> Eberhard Schrader, *Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament*, vol. 2, p. 173.
- <sup>13</sup> John Augustine Zahm, "The Age of the Human Race According to Modern Science and Bible Chronology," *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, XIX (1894), p. 260.
- <sup>14</sup> Francis E. Gigot, *Special Introduction to the Study of the Old Testament*, p. 287.
- <sup>15</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *History of Judah and Israel*, Vol. V, chronological table footnote following p. 197.
- <sup>16</sup> W. F. Albright, "The Chronology of the Divided Monarchy of Israel," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 100 (Dec., 1945), p. 17.
- <sup>17</sup> ———, "Alternative Chronology," *Interpretation*, January, 1952, p. 10.

## Obtaining the Charter (C-Rating)

(Continued from page 33)

ican Medical Association granted the college a C-rating. All through the years from that time until his death in 1936, Dr. Colwell was a sympathetic friend and a wise counselor to the College of Medical Evangelists.

(Part II, on obtaining the B-rating, will follow in the next issue.)

- <sup>1</sup> General Conference Bulletin, June 2, 1909, p. 293.
  - <sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White MSS 71, 72, 1909. (Portions printed in Medical Evangelistic Library, No. 6, pp. 23-26, and *Story of Our Health Message*, by D. E. Robinson, pp. 381-383.)
  - <sup>3</sup> *Story of Our Health Message*, p. 382.
  - <sup>4</sup> Manuscript 72, 1909.
  - <sup>5</sup> *Story of Our Health Message*, pp. 382, 383.
  - <sup>6</sup> *A Divine Providence* (Unpublished manuscript, chap. 15), pp. 23, 23a, "Plans for a Medical College," J. A. Burden.
  - <sup>7</sup> Notes from Walter P. Elliott, chairman of the CME Board, 1949-1959.
  - <sup>8</sup> Letter from J. A. Burden to E. H. Risley, June 9, 1929.
- (All letters referred to are in the correspondence file of Historical Records Office, Vernier Radcliffe Memorial Library, Loma Linda, Calif.)