

foundations

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Focus: Holy Scripture
Inerrancy and Interpretation

Human Rights

Inevitable Differences

Bible Chronology

Theological Journals, 1983-4 Part II

Review

Biblical Languages

foundations

Foundations is published by the **British Evangelical Council** in November and May; its aim is to cover contemporary theological issues by articles and reviews, taking in exegesis, Biblical theology, church history and apologetics — and to indicate their relevance to pastoral ministry; its policy gives particular attention to the theology of evangelical churches which are outside pluralist ecumenical bodies.

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Readers will be prayerfully interested to learn that the Editor, Dr. Eryl Davies MA BD PhD, at present minister of Ebenezer Evangelical Church, Bangor, has been appointed as Senior Tutor of the new Evangelical Theological College of Wales and will commence his new responsibilities at Bridgend in September 1985.

Editorial

We are encouraged by the positive comments of our readers concerning the new format and contents of the last issue of *Foundations*. It is a further encouragement for us to hear how the journal is eagerly awaited and read by many church leaders both in Britain and overseas. If you appreciate this journal, can you encourage us further by commending and selling copies of *Foundations* to your friends, church members and/or Ministers' Fraternals? Please write in to the BEC office if you are willing to help us in this practical way.

This present issue is different in emphasis from the previous one. In **Focus** this time, the Rev. Hywel Jones, an Associate Editor, up-dates us on recent developments and trends concerning the Doctrine of Holy Scripture. This is an article of major significance which deserves the careful attention of readers.

The Right Balance article by Dr. Ian Shaw is a general introduction to the contemporary issue of human rights. The author makes some careful distinctions before pin-pointing relevant biblical considerations which should direct our thinking on the subject as Christians. This issue also introduces the first in a series of brief expositions with application for today. The Rev. Alan Gibson considers what 1 Corinthians 11:19 has to say to us about **Why Differences in the Church are Inevitable**.

Our longest item this time is a helpful summary of underlying principles relating to **Bible Chronology**, an area of study where there is frequent conflict between the claims of the Bible and archaeologists. This is an area of study which Evangelicals have generally neglected so we are grateful to Dr. John Peet for the benefit of his research in this area.

We have been able to include the second part of the **Review of Theological Journals of 1983-4**, begun in Issue 13, with a look at material on Hermeneutics and the New Testament. The Rev. Stephen Dray draws our attention to **Recent Helps to the Study of the Old Testament** including a brief review of eleven books. A **Review** is provided by the Rev. Hywel Jones on the **Song of Solomon** (G. Lloyd Carr, IVP). The last article on **learning the Biblical languages** is written by a Scottish missionary working in Peru who is responding practically to two earlier articles on the subject in *Foundations*.

Our next issue will be largely devoted to the doctrine of the Church including summaries of papers and discussions on the subject in a recent BEC Study Conference. The following practical aspects of the doctrine will be covered: The Visibility of the Church Catholic, The Basis of Union, The Basis of Separation, Dealing with False Teaching, Biblical Principles and Freedom of Conscience, and finally, Contemporary Challenges. In addition, we intend to carry a major article by the Rev. Sidney Garland of Belfast on the influence of Liberation Theology in Ulster.

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Focus

*This article is the second in an important series entitled Focus in which we intend to draw attention to major biblical doctrines. The purpose of Focus is to elucidate Scriptural doctrines and, secondly, report on the way in which these doctrines are viewed in our contemporary situation. Thirdly, we want to challenge Christians to think more biblically and theologically about these doctrines and then to encourage preachers and church leaders to teach and contend for these truths in our generation. The first article by the Editor focussed on **Eternal Punishment**; in this second article the Rev. Hywel Jones focusses on the **Doctrine of Holy Scripture**. In our next issue, we intend to discuss some controversial aspects of the **Doctrine of the Church**.*

Focus : 2 Holy Scripture

Hywel Jones

The recent history of evangelical theological thought on this basic doctrine could be fairly accurately written up under the heading **From Inerrancy to Interpretation**. This caption should not, however, be understood as indicating a complete transference of scholarly attention from the first to the second of those subjects, but rather as a description of a movement of the thought around each, and between, those two poles. Inerrancy hit the headlines in the seventies; now, in the eighties, Interpretation holds the centre of the stage.

The aim of this article is to point out those areas where work has been recently done on this subject, highlighting matters which will doubtless continue to receive attention, but also to point up those issues where care needs to be taken. We shall concentrate on the evangelical constituency in the main and use the subjects of Inerrancy and Interpretation as divisions for our material.

In his recently published book entitled **Biblical Inspiration**¹ Dr. Howard Marshall summarises the last decade and a half or so in terms of five developments with regard to this doctrine (pp.9-12). The first of these is the re-assertion of the total trustworthiness of all the Bible by the International Council on Bible Inerrancy.² The second is a "resurgence of criticism of the whole evangelical position reminiscent of the 'fundamentalism' debate of the 1950's".³ The third is the realisation of the existence of "the wide cultural gap between the world of the biblical writers and the world of today".⁴ Fourthly, "various fresh attempts are being made from a middle-of-the-road position to approach constructively the problems raised by the Bible".⁵ (Dr. Marshall's book also fits into this category.) Finally, "a fifth development is perhaps more important. It has become increasingly obvious that the question of how

we are to interpret the Bible is of central significance in discussing its character as the Word of God".⁶ These five lines will form a map for the reading of contemporary literature on the Bible.

Inerrancy

In spite of the able and welcome work of the ICBI,⁷ debates about inerrancy still continue in the evangelical camp. These revolve around the infallibility/inerrancy disjunction, the nature of inspiration and the phenomena of the Bible. We shall comment on each in turn.

The Infallibility/Inerrancy Disjunction

Though these terms are, strictly speaking, synonymous, it has become the practice by some evangelical scholars to drive them apart by making them refer to different things. From a historical point of view (if a question may be begged for a while), "infallibility" was the term used to affirm the total trustworthiness of all the contents of the Bible. That is no more and no less than the term "inerrancy" is used to maintain. But of late and in our time, the scope of the term "infallibility" has been narrowed down to refer to what in the Bible relates to faith and conduct. This restriction is based on the declared purpose of the Scriptures in 2 Tim. 3:15,16. Therefore, in current evangelical usage, the terms are no longer synonymous. Hence the necessity arises for asserting and using the term "inerrancy" to serve the purpose today for which the older term "infallibility" used to be perfectly adequate.

This disjunction is the most basic point in contemporary evangelical study of the Bible. It is Schaeffer's watershed.⁸ It has consequences for one's view of the inspiration, the phenomena and the interpretation of the Bible. But there are two other matters associated with infallibility versus inerrancy which are receiving attention. These are the making of a sharp distinction between deductive and inductive reasoning on the one hand and the concept of an author's intention on the other. To each of these we now turn.

Deductive and Inductive Reasoning

By deduction is meant the viewing of a subject in terms of a conclusion drawn from premises. By induction is meant the building up of a case on the basis of data derived from the subject itself. Applied to Scripture it means that as God cannot lie and Scripture is His Word, q.e.d. Scripture is inerrant. Inductive reasoning is a working up to a conclusion on the basis of an examination of details. The claim has often been made that the latter is the scholarly approach; the former smacks of church dogma and party line.

The charge that is made on the basis of this distinction is that inerrancy rests only on deduction. Dr. Marshall takes this line, but in addition, grounds the validity of deductive reasoning about the Bible on the accuracy and acceptability of the theory of divine dictation being the mode of inspiration used in its production. This theory he rightly rejects as being inadequate to the various ways in which the writers of Scripture worked, but he also refers to Warfield's theory of concursive action⁹ which he approves. Given this alternative, does the objection to inerrancy stand?

It is not fair, however, to convey the impression that those who uphold inerrancy only engage in deduction. They engage in painstaking inductive, i.e. exegetical, work which confirms their deductive approach.¹⁰ In addition, it is often overlooked that those who favour induction begin their study with the most notorious difficulties. Dr. Marshall overlooks both these facts.

The Concept of the Author's Intention

All that is unique about Scripture has been predicated of it "as originally given", i.e. the actual autographs and not the first copies. Instead of that expression an alternative form of words has been mooted, namely "as originally intended". Once more we have to appreciate the distinction between these two expressions. Though they are both related to one and the same reality, i.e. what is written, they do not refer to it in the same way. "As originally given" refers to the text and, therefore, all that is predicated about Scripture's nature and status is predicated about that objective text. "As originally intended" goes behind that text to the mind of the author. It is that intention which is declared to be infallible. Though that distinction may seem very fine, it is of the utmost importance because it concerns the relation between intention and expression, meaning and words. Any idea that an author failed to express his intention clearly and fully must be prevented as a possibility. It can only be excluded by the strongest affirmation that inspiration is verbal.

There are two aspects to this matter of the author's intention, depending on which author, i.e. human or divine, is in view. The human author's viewpoint or perspective is frequently invoked, **irrespective of the nature of the language** which is used, e.g. in the accounts of Creation, Fall and Flood. Bernard Ramm writes "the universality of the flood simply means the universality of the experience of the man who reported it."¹¹ With regard to the intention or purpose of the divine author 2 Tim. 3:16,17 is appealed to. Dr. Marshall majors on God's intention. In the course of dealing with Inspiration, he writes: "The crucial point here is the concept of what God **wished** to be written. Our ideas of what we may have wished God to write may not be the same as what **he** may have wished to write." (emphasis original)

To the unphrased question "what did God wish to write?" the answer is taken from 2 Tim. 3:16,17 and Dr. Marshall writes: "The purpose of God in the composition of the Scriptures was to guide people to salvation and the associated way of life. From this statement we may surely conclude that God made the Bible all that it needs to be in order to achieve this purpose. It is in this sense that the word 'infallible' is properly applied to the Bible."¹²

The effect of this is, on Dr. Marshall's own confession, a move from accuracy to adequacy, i.e. from accuracy of presentation in all that is written to adequacy for the achievement of a stated purpose. This is proposed as a way forward. As Dr. Marshall realises, this stance raises the question of the truth of the Scriptures. This he discusses in terms of demonstrating how complex the idea of truth is, e.g. "True in what sense and on what level? True for whom? Still true?" Truth as accuracy is dismissed because it is only truth at a com-

paratively superficial level — but it is the basic and all important level. The question of truth is side-stepped and the possibility of error not excluded.

The Nature of Inspiration

Two books have recently appeared on this subject besides the one already referred to by Dr. Marshall. The first of these is by an American, Paul Achtemeier¹³ and the other by William J. Abraham who originates from Northern Ireland. Both want to speak about inspiration in relation to the Bible, but neither asserts the inspired-ness of the Bible as a literary product. It must always be remembered that to fail to say the latter is to fail also to speak accurately and adequately about the former because the New Testament asserts that literary records were breathed out by God. Dr. Marshall rightly criticises both these books on the single ground that they leave “something of a gap between the inspiration of the biblical writers and the inspiration of the writings themselves”.¹⁴

Achtemeier wants to locate the Spirit’s inspiration in the lengthy process of accumulating the traditions and their redaction which lay behind the actual finished product. Abraham wants to regard the Bible’s inspiration in a way analogous to that which a pupil gains from a teacher and expresses as a result. Inspiration is a stimulus to creativity and no check is supplied so mistakes can occur.

Inspiration has to be verbal to be biblical, i.e. it has to extend to the written words to be what the Bible means by the term. Dr. Marshall distances himself from both Achtemeier and Abraham and yet does not use the term “verbal” to describe his view of inspiration. To point this out may be pedantic because he does speak about inspiration being “the activity of God throughout the whole of the process so that the whole of the product ultimately comes from him.”¹⁵ Is not this enough? It probably is, but why the term “verbal” is not used is slightly mysterious because it is used in connection with the theory of dictation which is rejected. The adjective, therefore, needs re-introduction and re-habilitation because its meaning is essential and there is no better one.

The Phenomena of the Bible

Under this heading must be included all those difficulties which are encountered in the study of the Bible, e.g. textual ones (i.e. variations in the manuscripts, in quotations and in differing accounts of the same events), linguistic, historical and numerological references. These difficulties are regarded by some as making inerrancy untenable and by others as also ruling out infallibility. These are well known and the ground has been well trodden.

The ICBI has sought to come to terms with these matters and to show that inerrancy is not dependent on minute precision by modern standards. This does not mean that these details are overlooked. Where appropriate, the manuscripts are emended¹⁶ or other difficulties treated by patient exegesis. In its official statement, it speaks about the phenomena as follows: “We ... deny that inerrancy is negated by biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational

descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations.”¹⁷

Dr. Marshall focusses on this matter of precision, or rather imprecision, and his treatment deserves careful study (p.58ff). He makes a distinction between those who accept the Bible as a divine-human product on the one hand, i.e. those who favour inerrancy and those who favour infallibility, and on the other, those who see the Bible as a human, fallible document through which God may speak. Concentrating on the first two groups because of what they have in common, he attempts to close the gap between them by asking whether the only difference between them concerns the degree of imprecision which each allows. If this were the case, then the difference is one of interpretation only and should be approached by co-operative exegesis. But much as one would like to believe this, it is not really the case. The inerrantist is prepared to allow, is committed to allowing, as great a degree of imprecision as Scripture presents in its statements understood in their contexts. Inerrancy does not commit one to minimising that. The debate between the first two groups Dr. Marshall mentions is over whether Scripture’s soteriological-ethical purpose should determine the degree of imprecision allowed or not. We contend that it should not.

Interpretation

There are two areas to be noted here. The first relates to history and the second to Scripture.

The Interpretation of History

It used to be the case that defenders of infallibility in the old sense of that term could confidently claim that the position which they took with regard to the nature and status of the Bible was the position the Church had taken for fifteen hundred years and more. They were very rarely taken up on their assertion. Of late, however, and from within the evangelical camp, this position has come under attack. The names of Rogers and McKim¹⁸ are known in this regard. Professor Ernest Sandeen¹⁹ also figures in this revision of historiography. Rogers and McKim have argued that the Reformers, and Calvin and Luther in particular held to limited inerrancy and the Princeton theologians were those who foisted inerrancy on them. Hodge, Warfield and Alexander are the villains of the piece. Sandeen argues with the latter point. This has been replied to by a number of scholars²⁰ and one ICBI symposium is devoted to inerrancy from the standpoint of historical theology.

The Interpretation of Scripture

The ICBI assigns a place to interpretation in its Chicago Statement. Inerrancy is not seen as an end in itself, but is regarded as vital for the health of the Christian and the Church. For this goal to be achieved, interpretation is essential. J. Packer has written: “Now it really is important that we inerrantists move on to crystallize an a posteriori hermeneutic which does full justice to the character and content of the infallible written word as **communication**, life-embracing and divinely authoritative.”²¹

In doing this, a new problem has to be encountered. It is that of the hermeneutical circle. (This Journal has carried two articles on the subject of the New Hermeneutic. These are very relevant here.)²² Though this new method of interpretation did not originate in the evangelical camp, it has had an effect on it. If that has only been to shake one's confidence in the importance of the grammatico-historical method, i.e. viewing the text in its linguistic, historical and theological context then that is bad enough. But it has fed into a theology of contextualisation which not only emphasises the importance of reckoning with the cultural element in the application of Scripture, nor merely the same element in the culture of the student-interpreter, but also culture in the biblical material. Rene Padilla has written: "How can the chasm between the past and the present be bridged? An answer is found in the contextual approach which combines insights derived from classical hermeneutics with insights derived from the modern hermeneutical debate. In the contextual approach, both the context of the ancient text and the context of the modern reader are given due weight."²³

Our concern with this approach is its bearing on the doctrine of Scripture's nature and status. There are two aspects of this on which great caution needs to be exercised. The first is that items in Scripture can be regarded as cultural which are not cultural at all, e.g. male-female relationships. The second is that because of the desire to be relevant in our culture, the careful interpretation of Scripture becomes submerged in contextual application. J. Robertson McQuilkin has an important article on this whole area entitled "Limits of Cultural Interpretation".²⁴

Conclusion

At the beginning of his book, Dr. Marshall lists some problems which have to be faced in formulating a doctrine of Scripture. These are the subjects of Revelation,²⁵ Inspiration, and the questions of Epistemology (i.e. how can it be proved that the Bible is what we claim it to be), the Phenomena of Scripture and Interpretation. What these subjects do is to indicate that while every age has, because of its own problems, to grapple afresh with the doctrine of Scripture, it is basically the same issues that have to be faced.

The peculiar danger which has to be faced today is connected with the elevation of Scripture's purpose to a place of primary importance. There is a tendency to relate Revelation, Inspiration, Infallibility and Interpretation to it and to allow it to become the arbiter of what is revealed, inspired, infallible (and what is not?). These categories of truth, i.e. revelation, inspiration and infallibility can then be merged and almost collapsed. John J. Hughes points out the importance of clearly distinguishing these matters by way of criticism of the methodology of Rogers and Berkouwer, he writes:

"Both Rogers and Berkouwer fail adequately to distinguish **the mode of revelation** (dream, vision, dictation, etc.) from **the manner of inspiration** (the employment of various literary techniques and genus) from the **result of inspiration** (what Scripture says God says), and the **purpose of inspiration** (to make us wise unto salvation). Apparently they believe that to affirm

both the purpose and manner of inspiration precludes affirming the result of inspiration.”²⁶ (emphasis original)

Grudem comments on this aptly and forcefully, he says:

“The Old Testament and New Testament authors show great concern to affirm the result of inspiration, much less interest in specifying the purpose of inspiration and very little interest in discussing the manner of inspiration or the mode of revelation (to use Hughes’ phrases).”²⁷

The failure to affirm, for whatever reason, that the words of Scripture are the word of God to us, in their sense to be discovered by believing, careful exegesis leaves Christianity without a secure definable base, and can leave the Christian Church without a message and the Christian’s life without content and aim.

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In October he takes up a new post as Principal of the London Theological Seminary.

References

1. BIBLICAL INSPIRATION by I. Howard Marshall, Hodder 1982.
2. The ICBI was founded in 1977. Its purpose was “to counter the drift from this important doctrinal foundation by significant segments of evangelicalism and the outright denial of it by other church movements”. A list of its publications appears below in note.
3. See FUNDAMENTALISM by James Barr, London 1977.
4. The example of this which Marshall refers to is THE USE AND ABUSE OF THE BIBLE by D.E. Nineham, London 1976.
5. The volume referred to here is THE DIVINE INSPIRATION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE by William J. Abraham, O.U.P. 1982. This was reviewed in Issue No.10 of *Foundations* by Brian Edwards.
6. The reference Marshall gives is the essay by A.C. Thiselton “Understanding God’s Word Today” in OBEYING CHRIST IN A CHANGING WORLD, ed. J. Stott.
7. The ICBI has published:
GOD’S INERRANT WORD, ed. J.W. Montgomery, Bethany Fellowship 1974.
THE FOUNDATION OF BIBLICAL AUTHORITY, ed. J.M. Boice, Zondervan 1978.
INERRANCY, ed. N.L. Geisler, Zondervan 1979.
INERRANCY AND COMMON SENSE, ed. R.R. Nicole and J.R. Michaels, Baker 1980.
CHALLENGES TO INERRANCY, ed. G. Lewis and B. Demarest, Moody 1984.
INERRANCY AND THE CHURCH, ed. J.D. Hannah, Moody 1984.
HERMENEUTICS, INERRANCY AND THE BIBLE, ed. E. Radmacher and R. Peus, Zondervan 1984.
8. THE GREAT EVANGELICAL DISASTER, by F. Schaeffer, Crossway 1984.
9. Marshall, op.cit. p.53.
10. See for example “Scripture’s Self-Attestation” by Wayne Grudem in SCRIPTURE AND TRUTH, eds. D.A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, IVP 1983. A most important volume of essays.
11. THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF SCIENCE AND SCRIPTURE, p.164, Bernard Ramm, Paternoster 1964.
12. Marshall, op.cit., p.53.
13. THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE, Paul Achtemeier, Philadelphia 1980.
14. Marshall, op.cit., p.40.
15. Marshall, op.cit., p.42.

16. The debate over the Textus Receptus continues — sad to say.
See — THE IDENTITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXT, W.N. Pickering, Nelson 1977. (Reviewed in *Foundations* — Issues 4 and 5.)
 17. EXPLAINING INERRANCY, p.29, R.C. Sproul, ICBI 1980.
 18. THE AUTHORITY AND INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE: AN HISTORICAL APPROACH, J.B. Rogers and D.K. McKim, Harper and Row 1979.
 19. ROOTS OF FUNDAMENTALISM: BRITISH AND AMERICAN MILLENARIANISM 1800-1930, Ernest Sandeen, Baker 1978.
 20. "Biblical Authority in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries", W. Robert Godfrey in SCRIPTURE AND TRUTH, IVP 1983.
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 21. Review of Lindsell's THE BIBLE IN THE BALANCE in UNDER GOD'S WORD, Lakeland 1980.
 22. *Foundations* — Issues 9 and 12.
 23. R. Padilla, THEMELIOS Vol. 7, No. 1.
 24. See "Limits of Cultural Interpretation", J. Robertson McQuilkin, JOURNAL OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL STUDIES 1980.
and R.C. Sproul, "Controversy at Culture Gap", EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY, Issue 2.
For an example of Contextualisation, see "Interpreting in a Cultural Context", C.H. Kraft, JETS Vol. 21, No. 4.
 25. GOD, REVELATION AND AUTHORITY, C.F. Henry, Word Books
Also, THE PRIORITY OF DIVINE REVELATION, JETS, March 1984.
 26. Review of "Scripture, Tradition and Interpretation" in Westminster Theological Journal, Spring 1980, quoted in SCRIPTURE & TRUTH, p.40.
 27. SCRIPTURE AND TRUTH, p.363.
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In his last writing Dr. Francis Schaeffer asked, "Does inerrancy make a difference?" He responded with a positive declaration, "Overwhelmingly; the difference is that with the Bible being what it is, God's Word and so absolute, God's objective truth, we do not need to be, *and we should not be*, caught in the ever-changing fallen cultures which surround us. Those who do not hold the inerrancy of Scripture do not have this high privilege. To some extent, they are at the mercy of the fallen, changing culture. And Scripture is thus bent to conform to the changing world spirit of the day, and they therefore have no solid authority upon which to judge and to resist the views and values of that changing, shifting world spirit.

Does inerrancy really make a difference — in the way we live our lives across the whole spectrum of human existence? Sadly we must say that we evangelicals who truly hold to the full authority of Scripture have not always done well in this respect. I have said that inerrancy is the watershed of the evangelical world. But it is not just a theological debating point. *It is the obeying of the Scripture which is the watershed!* It is believing and applying it to our lives which demonstrate whether we in fact believe it."

From The Great Evangelical Disaster

The Right Balance

Ian Shaw

It is hard to find any field of human activity which is unaffected by talk of rights. The right to leisure, free education, work, liberty, life and equal pay jostle with rights of appeal, welfare rights, animal rights, women's rights and children's rights.

Evangelical Christians often feel a dilemma at this point. They are against tyranny and oppression, but for self denial and the laying aside of rights. "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped." (Phil 2:5,6)

Christians have not been alone in their misgivings about talk of human rights. Associated with the concept of natural law, 'rights of man' talk has been mistrusted by conservatives — from Edmund Burke onwards — for stimulating revolutionary sentiments, and by radicals for producing meaningless manifestos and declarations which take the place of effective legislation.

British Christians have not been helped by the fact that, despite a large literature, the solidly evangelical contribution is very thin and almost entirely American.

As a backcloth for Christian thinking about rights, we need to explore briefly secular ideas of legal and moral rights. This will enable us to see more clearly the common ground and points of contrast with a Christian approach, particularly as it is shaped by the doctrine of creation, and the connection of rights and duties.

Thinking About Human Rights

There is an important distinction between human (or natural) rights and rights which are actually enjoyed (positive rights). For example, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, drawn up in 1948, is not a legally enforceable document. By way of contrast, the Council of Europe has made more progress, producing the 1950 European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights, and the European Court of Human Rights, which has full judicial powers. A clearer understanding of the topic follows if we distinguish between different kinds of legal rights and moral rights.

Legal Rights

Some legal rights, e.g. the right to a fair trial, are enjoyed in principle by all people under a given constitution or jurisdiction. Similarly, there are traditional rights, the violation of which may lead, as in seventeenth century England, to civil war.

There is an important difference between generally enjoyed legal rights, and merely nominal legal rights. Nations may "guarantee" certain rights, but not enforce them. The actions of Christians and other minority groups in Russia have often been along the lines of campaigning for nominal rights to be made genuine, legally enforced rights. One reason for this problem is that there are two traditions in thinking about rights. There is the tradition going back to John Locke, associated with western individualism, and there is the tradition following from Rousseau's Social Contract, which stresses the sovereignty of the people, and the yielding of rights to the state. Countries with widely varying political and religious traditions are signatories of the Declaration of Human Rights, which includes a right to freedom of worship. Yet some Moslem countries, following the collective tradition, in which individual rights are yielded to the state, interpret the freedom of choice associated with religion as a **national** rather than an **individual** choice. Hence, however repugnant the result may be, such countries are not necessarily practising political hypocrisy by signing the Declaration of Human Rights and yet excluding Christians from freedom of worship.

Legal rights need not be universal rights. Some legal rights are limited to certain classes of persons or professional groups, for example the well known legal exemption from jury service enjoyed by clergymen.

Moral Rights

A parallel set of distinctions can be made about moral rights. Beginning with the most specific, there are moral rights enjoyed by one person only, which arise from doing certain deeds or paying money. The crucial question here is, "Have I a just claim?" Rather more generally, there are rights which persons have by being in particular situations, such as parents, or occupants of certain institutions. Take, for example, elderly residents in a Christian home for the elderly. It is a clear violation of an elderly person's right to respect, if a young Christian staff member presumes to address residents by their Christian names.

Finally, there are moral rights which are enjoyed by everyone, at all times and places, such as the rights to life and liberty. These are highly general and likely to be understood in different ways.

The dictionary defines a right as "a justifiable claim on legal or moral grounds, to have or obtain something, or to act in a certain way".¹ It is obviously difficult to talk about rights in the context of nebulous things like welfare or liberty. Legal rights, in this context, have to be of an indirect character, e. g. a right to the benefits which may be expected in turn to produce welfare. Legal rights and duties are closely connected at this point. For example, universal education is a right in our society, yet the legal implementation of that right carries with it certain duties, in that education is compulsory up to a certain age. However, a duty does not always imply a right. In England and Wales, a **duty** to care for the poor, although long accepted, has not always been seen to entail a legal **right** of the poor to be cared for. Under the English Poor Law it was seen as a duty owed to society, not to the poor

person as such.

However, for both rights and duties, practicality is a crucial test. As it cannot be our duty to do something beyond our ability (exempting here the spiritual obligation resting on the unbeliever to repent and believe), so to claim, as the United Nations declaration does, that “holidays with pay” is a right of many millions in Asia, Africa and South America, is vain and idle.

Christian Thinking About Rights

The evangelical unease about talk of rights is understandable on a number of counts. First, although what we would describe as infringement of human rights was as much an issue in New Testament times as now, the Bible has little or nothing to say directly on this issue. How are we to be faithful to Scripture when the debate, on the face of it, appears to be conducted in terms of categories which are outside of biblical teaching? Second, there is a danger that Christians will be solely taken up with religious rights. There are two dangers here: it may give the impression that we are only concerned with rights when it is **our rights** that are under attack. Also, it suggests that God is not interested in the wider sphere beyond the Church. Finally, recent evangelical thinking on this issue may seem to have confusing practical implications for the Christian. For example, the biblical teaching that man is made in God’s image has been used to justify all kinds of positions. Take the following:²

“Man is created in the image and likeness of God and has been given a vice-regency dominion over the earth. Accordingly, man(1) has a **right** to be free because he is an image-bearer of God, Who Himself is free ... (2) Man thus has a duty to remain free so that he can act responsibly as God’s vice-regent here on earth.”
(Rose, p.53)

These arguments are taken by Rose to justify the central principles of free market capitalism. “Nowhere in the Bible”, he claims, “is the civil ruler given authority to engage in charitable works or economic intervention and regulation.” Such state activities he castigates as “legalised theft”.

God’s Claims and Ours

Ill-founded dogmatism, of whatever hermeneutical or political hue, should not, however, prevent us from seeing that the Bible does provide us with teaching which is relevant to human rights. Its teaching is no less relevant for being presented indirectly, in the context of justice, righteousness and human nature.

For the humanist, human rights derive from claims we have as human beings, and often, though not always, entail an argument about desserts.³ Not so for the Christian. The Christian’s position is always three-dimensional: created in the image of God, God has a claim on me. Our obligation to each other is really an obligation **under** God. As A.A. Hodge — no friend of the notion of human rights — once said, all rights are really duties to God “The only ultimate right is his right to us”.⁴

This distinctive Christian three-dimensional approach comes out frequently in Scripture. In the face of God’s questioning about his murdered brother, Cain

attempted to deny that Abel had any rights over him — “Am I my brother’s keeper?” But “The Lord said, ‘What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground’ ” (Gen. 4:10). This threefold pattern — the rightful claims of others upon us; our rightful claims upon others; all subsumed under God’s comprehensive claim upon us all — is enriched for the Christian by the knowledge of their salvation. God’s grace shown to the Israelites was usually the reason appealed to by Moses in support of the requirement that God’s people should respond to the welfare claims of vulnerable members of society. The requirement not to oppress the foreigner but to love him as themselves is repeatedly reinforced with the recollection that “you yourselves know how it feels to be alien, because you were aliens in Egypt” (Ex. 23:9; cf. Lev. 19:34; Deut. 10:19). Precisely similar reasoning is employed to govern their attitude to servants and other people at risk of exploitation — “remember that you were slaves in Egypt, and the Lord redeemed you from there” (Deut. 24:17,18; cf. Deut. 16:11,12; 24:21,22).

Does this mean that the Christian will always have a different view of human rights from the non-Christian? Put rather differently, why is that, while starting from a fundamentally different motive, the Christian may end up fighting the same corner with the atheist? The answer is that, precisely because the law of God is written on his heart the Muslim, agnostic or Marxist has points of contact with the Christian. As David Field aptly remarks, “the atheist ... derives his knowledge of human rights and values from the God he says he does not believe in ... He shares my knowledge of God — derived human responsibilities and values because he is created in the image of the God he rejects” (Field, p.15). So, to return to the example given earlier, wisely conducted negotiations with political authorities in Muslim countries over the rights of Christians are being undertaken from a real point of contact.

Rights and Responsibilities

While the Bible has very little to say directly on rights, Scripture is full of teaching about responsibilities. For example, the letters of Paul have much to say, about marriage, the family, parent/child relationships and employer/employee relationships, and the framework of such teaching is mutual responsibilities in submission to Christ. When, as a result of the Fall, relationships are broken, rights and responsibilities become significant whether within marriage (“The husband should fulfil his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband” 1 Cor. 7:3), family relationships (Genesis 4), criminal and civil jurisdiction (“They beat us publically without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens” Acts 16:37), and between nations (Deut. 2:4-6, 18f., 26-29). Possession of rights creates special duties on all sides and new obligations to God.

It may be worth pursuing a particular example at this point. When a Christian becomes a member of a local church, a network of rights and responsibilities is created. In terms of responsibilities, a Christian is a “responsible” person answerable to Christ for all that he/she does (1 Cor. 16:20). The Christian has a responsibility of loyalty to the truth, which includes but is by no means

exhausted by, a biblical orthodoxy (1 Pet. 3:15). The Christian, in every sense of the word, carries Christ's name (Acts 9:15). Mutual ministry is a further responsibility (1 Thess. 5:11,14) through which we are to "refresh the hearts of the saints" (Philm. 7,20). Paul's whole letter to Philemon illustrates the interacting claims and privileges which should permeate the church. The exercise of gifts, giving, attendance at the gatherings of the church, responsibilities to those who have spiritual oversight and to the world are all included within such responsibilities.

If we have a firm theology of the grace of God, we will see that everything we are called to as Christians is a privilege, including those things we have identified as responsibilities or duties. For example to believe in Christ and to suffer for him are among God's gifts to us, granted as divine favours (Phil. 1:29). Thus rights and duties from a Christian perspective should never be balanced against each other in a series of trade-offs.

These are, however, more direct rights of church membership. While in one sense it may be correct to say that "rights" language is unnecessary, and can be thought of solely in terms of "duties", the rights of church membership do need explicit statement. For example, church members have the right to participate in church business, to speak on matters of finance, to elect church offices, and to contribute to decisions about relationships with other churches and within their own. Again, they have a right to pastoral care — to expect that their pastors will pay every possible attention to their needs, both collectively and individually. In this sense it is not true that the Church is the only organisation existing solely for the benefit of non-members. Furthermore, just as mutual ministry is a responsibility, so the love and ministry of fellow members is the right of all members (Acts 2:44; Mk. 3:31ff.).

Biblical Authority and Rights

Immediately we recognise that Scripture teaching relevant to any sphere of Christian ethics is presented to us indirectly rather than explicitly — as in the case of human rights — we are faced with a painstaking outworking and application of biblical principles.

Yet, one might reasonably ask, if Scripture has no direct teaching, in what ways can we test that a given application of Christian ethics is faithful to the Word of God? We need to take particular care to avoid an unwarranted separation between the text of Scripture and the Word of God. The recent Testimony on Human Rights from the Reformed Ecumenical Synod⁵ leaves the door open to this very danger. We could have wished for a clearer statement of the precise authority of the "down to earth concrete ways" in which Scripture is said to exemplify the "central love-command" (p.12). The report's talk of "salvation-history" is unhelpful.

This neo-orthodox concept can be used to replace verbal inspiration with a stress on the inner coherence of Scripture. "Proof words replace proof texts; holy history replaces biblical narrative".⁶ Scripture becomes witness to the truth, with all the ambiguities of that position (Schrotenboer, p.13).

The issue is a complex one, and it would be out of place to enter the debate here. It includes questions of the unity of Scripture, the relation of the Old and New Testaments, the relation of the permanent and temporary, cultural relativity within Scripture and the perspicuity of Scripture.

This may appear to leave one open to the apparently stigmatising charge of "extreme biblicism"⁷ However, the quest for a biblical and evangelical appreciation of human rights will eventually founder, without an equally biblical hermeneutic.

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God is a Spirit infinitely happy, therefore we must approach to him with cheerfulness; he is a Spirit of infinite majesty, therefore we must come before him with reverence; he is a Spirit infinitely high, therefore we must offer up our sacrifices with the deepest humility; he is a Spirit infinitely holy, therefore we must address him with purity; he is a Spirit infinitely glorious, we must therefore acknowledge his excellency in all that we do, and in our measures contribute to his glory, by having the highest aims in his worship; he is a Spirit infinitely provoked by us, therefore we must offer up our worship in the name of a pacifying Mediator and Intercessor.

To render our worship spiritual, we should, before every engagement in it, implore the actual presence of the Spirit, without which we are not able to send forth one spiritual breath or groan; but must be wind-bound, like a ship without a gale, and our worship be no better than carnal.

One spiritual, evangelical, believing breath, is more delightful to God than millions of altars made up of the richest pearls, and smoking with the costliest oblations, because it is spiritual; and a mite of spirit is of more worth than the greatest weight of flesh.

Stephen Charnock on John 4:24

Why Differences in the Church are Inevitable

Alan Gibson

This is one of a series in which we invite contributors to offer an exposition with application of texts of contemporary importance for evangelical churches.

"No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval." 1 Corinthians 11:19 NIV

To hear that a local church has been split and that a dissident group of members has set up a separate congregation meeting elsewhere is by no means uncommon today. The grounds for such schism may be various and do not need to be specified here. But schism is more than a local church problem. Whether we are prepared to accept a view of the catholicity of the visible church or base our convictions on what the old independents referred to as the "communion of the saints", the practical isolationism of some local churches amounts to schism in the real body of Christ.

I wish to explore the way in which Paul's comment on the differences in the church at Corinth is often wheeled out to justify such divisions as being inevitable and therefore to be accepted with no effort made to avoid, to minimise or to repair them. Can this use of the text be sustained?

There is a sense in which the maturity of the universal church "brought to complete unity" (John 17:23) lies in the future. "The radiant church without stain, wrinkle or other blemish" (Ephesians 5:27) awaits the *parousia*, for we are still in the flesh and are condemned to struggle with an inevitably imperfect holiness of the church which includes, as one aspect of it, inevitable divisions in the church. Regarding differences among Christians, John Owen remarks:

"Neither is it morally possible it should be otherwise, whilst in their judgment and profession they are left unto the ability of their own minds and liberty of their wills, under that great variety of the means of light and truth, with other circumstances, whereinto they are disposed by the holy, wise providence of God ... But their valuation of the matter of their union and agreement is purely spiritual, whereas their differences are usually influenced by carnal and secular considerations, which have for the most part, a sensible impression on the minds of poor mortals."¹

But that is not the point the Apostle is making here. The immediate reference is to the Christians at Corinth coming together "as a church", *en ekklesia*, note the absence of the article, almost equivalent to our expression "in church". The context is his serious rebuke, using the authoritative term "directives" (v.17) to set right their unpraiseworthy meetings. Interesting, and

of contemporary relevance, is his remark in v.18 that what “I hear ... to some extent I believe”. Even Paul recognised that the reports he heard from Chloe’s household (1:11) or perhaps from the three representatives who so refreshed him (16:17-18) might be exaggerated. The tale so often becomes elaborated in the telling and credulity about the problems in other churches does nothing to improve the standing of our own church in the eyes of God, however we might be tempted to feel otherwise.

One preliminary point is to ask whether any distinction in meaning is to be made between the word *schismata* in v.18 and *haireseis* used in v.19. Hodge regards them as synonymous in the context. There is little doubt that although the second word is the Greek root of our English word “heresy”, used here by the AV, it is only in post-Apostolic ecclesiastical usage that it came to have the technical meaning of “opinion contrary to the orthodox doctrine of the Christian Church” (Concise Oxford Dictionary). The etymology of the word looks back to the idea of “choosing” but its NT use points to external division resting on internal opposition and doctrinal differences, as between Sadducees and Pharisees in Acts 5:17 and 15:5. Godet takes the word used in v.19 as more serious than that in v.18; *schismata* as simple rents in a piece of cloth and *haireseis* as rendings which remove the fragments entirely, breaking the unity of the whole piece. This would neatly reverse the NIV translation which has “differences” in v.19, usually regarded by us as less serious than “divisions” used in v.18! NASB has “factions” in v.19 which fits well with the NIV use of the same English word in Galatians 5:20 as one of the works of the flesh. What is clear, however, is that Paul has in mind such traumas as gravely threaten the God-given unity of the body of Christ at Corinth.

The major abuse of this text is to isolate the main clause, “there have to be differences” with all the strength of the verb “must be”, *dei*, from the subordinate clause “to show which of you have God’s approval”, introduced by the conjunction of purpose *hina*.

Berkouwer warns against construing the use of *dei* as implying cosmic necessity, what he calls “the neutral necessity of fate”.² He shows that this cannot be thought of apart from actual history and particularly the history of how God in his sovereignty can bring good out of evil. God has a purpose for everything he allows to happen to his people whether it is the sufferings of Job or the divisions at Corinth. Paul is distressed by what he hears. “I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought” (1:10).

The key to understanding God’s purpose in allowing these differences is in what lies behind the expression “those who are approved” (NASB) *hoi dokimoi*. The NIV adds for clarification, “which of you have God’s approval”; although the word does not actually appear in the original. Now *dokimos* in the New Testament always means “approved after testing” based on the metaphor of metal being heated in a furnace to purge out dross, purify its substance and demonstrate its worth. Even in NT times, and perhaps especially in the moral confusions which had arisen at Corinth, not all who

were members of the gathered congregation were in reality regenerate members of Christ's body. One discipline by which God begins to "test" the church is by his permitting for his good purposes what the Devil intends for his evil purposes. Calvin makes the point well:

"In this way hypocrites are detected — in this way, on the other hand, the sincerity of believers is tried. For as this gives occasion for discovering the fickleness of those who were not rooted in the Lord's Word, and the wickedness of those who had assumed the appearance of good men, so the good afford a more signal manifestation of their constancy and sincerity. We know that Satan, in his activity, leaves no stone unturned with a view of breaking up the unity of the Church. We know also that ... God, by his infinite goodness, changes the nature of things, so that those things are salutary to the elect, which Satan had contrived for their ruin."³

Paul's concern for the Corinthians was a reflection of his concern for himself, that they might emerge from the test with God's approval. "I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court ... It is the Lord who judges me" (4:3-4).

It is the application to us of this matter of "testing" at Corinth which interests me. Perhaps these four suggestions will provoke further thought:-

- a. Natural differences of culture, temperament or education will exist in the Christian church whenever the Gospel is being effectively preached in a pluriform society.
- b. The Devil will seek to exploit these differences in order to cause harmful division in the church, both at local level and at inter-church level.
- c. The Lord may allow these experiences of temptation for the greater good of his people. Calvin calls this reminder "a lovely consolation" for the church. At Corinth he was able to encourage respect for the consciences of others (8:10-13), to teach us more about interdependence (12:21) and to stimulate mutual love (13:4-7). If there had not been any differences at Corinth over spiritual gifts we would never have had recorded for our lasting benefit that superb picture of "the most excellent way" in chapter 13!
- d. A creative response to the differences we do face is to see them as **both** a threat from the Devil **and** a challenge from the Lord. We shall not want to ignore them, but to restrict the harm they might do, to make every effort to maintain the unity God has created and to extract the spiritual benefit from the trial he is permitting.

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Bible Chronology

John Peet

While we can find substantial defences of the biblical record, a perusal of much archaeological literature draws one's attention to conflicts between the biblical and archaeological claims. In addition, we find that evangelical scholars conflict over dates such as that of the conquest of Canaan. Perhaps significantly, the presumed archaeological conflict occurs in the period of greatest chronological uncertainty. In this article we are to examine first the principles and then their application to the biblical record. Detailed analyses will be avoided, but suitable cross-references will be supplied to enable the reader to pursue these for himself. This writer is starting from the presumption — common to most of this journal's readers — that the Bible is definitive in this as in other matters. Only our interpretation is to be questioned; the Scriptures are inerrant.

I : Some Principles

The importance of chronology

According to Thiele,¹ "Chronology is the backbone of history ... Without an exact chronology, there can be no exact history."

If archaeological discoveries are to be used profitably in illuminating the background to the Scriptures, then it is necessary to relate exactly the events in each.

Relative and Absolute Chronology

We are used to thinking in terms of 1985 (or whenever) and often forget that biblical events are dated differently. For example, "In the year that king Uzziah died ..." (Isaiah 6:1); but, when did he die? Or, "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah ..." (Daniel 1:1); but, which year was that?

It is possible to build up a fairly accurate relative chronology (but see the problems outlined below) by relating events to some incident. For example, Nebuchadnezzar's attack on Jerusalem is related to the reign of Jehoiakim (2 Chronicles 36:5-8). Through Jehoiakim we can relate back to the other kings of Judah and Israel who preceded him. With the help of Daniel and Jeremiah (Daniel 9:1-2) we can move on to the time of the re-establishment of the nation. The chronicler enables us to relate the date of the exodus to the time of Solomon (1 Kings 6:1). And so we could go on (see below).

The biblical events can be related to the history of the nations surrounding Israel. As mentioned, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon played a key role in the history of Judah. We have references to Assyria (e.g. Sennacherib in 2 Kings 18:1-3) and Egypt (e.g. Necho in Jeremiah 46:2) to mention just two others.

However, the other nations used relative dates as well, so preventing us from using these as a means to quoting absolute dates. A lot of the records relating to the period of the late Israelite monarchy have unambiguous references to the kings of these nations.² These cross-references between the two systems enable us to lock them into each other.

But, how do we get an absolute chronology?³ The key is an eponymous system from Ashur. This is a chronological system which gives a name to each year and notes an important event in that year (see Table 1).

Table 1: Extracts from the Assyrian eponym list

853	Daian-Ashur	field-marshal	against Hatti
841	Adad-rimani	governor	against Damascus
763	Bur Ishi-Sagale	governor of Guzana	revolt in the city of Ashur; in the month of Simanu an eclipse of the sun took place
734	Bel-dan	governor of Calah	against Philistia
723	Shalmaneser	king of Assyria	against Samaria
709	Mannu-ki-Ashur-li	governor of Tille	Sargon took the hand of Bel

A key event noted in this long list (covering 150 years) was a solar eclipse. This is a sufficiently rare event, and one easily calculated astronomically, so that it can be identified as occurring on the 15th June 763 BC. Hence all the other years in this system can be dated. For example, Shalmaneser III of Assyria refers to Ahab as one who fought against him at the Battle of Qarquar during the eponymy of Daian-Ashur. Twelve years later he tells of receiving tribute from Jehu. The eponymy list tells us that the battle of Qarquar was in the year 853, so Jehu's tribute was paid in the year 841.⁴

The Assyrian and Babylonian chronologies are inter-related through Sargon. The Assyrian king, in year 709 BC, "took the hand of Bel", that is, he became king of Babylon. So, the Babylonian chronology can be linked to the Assyrian. And both are synchronous with biblical history. So, we can now convert the relative chronology of the Bible to an absolute chronology.

The Interpretation of Biblical Data

How do we approach the biblical data? Often there has been an arbitrary manipulation of data in order to harmonise it. Frequently biblical and archaeological scholars dismiss the biblical record as anachronistic (or worse!). For example, Aharoni says that "(the) political conditions ... (are) quite different from the biblical characterisation of the period ... (Judges 17:6)."⁵ Schmidt⁶ established five principles on which the data should be used in order to establish a chronology:

- a. We should be faithful to the Massoretic text which has been proved to be dependable;
- b. our interpretation should be faithful to **all** the biblical data, since it is inconceivable that the Holy Spirit would give so much data if it was not historical;

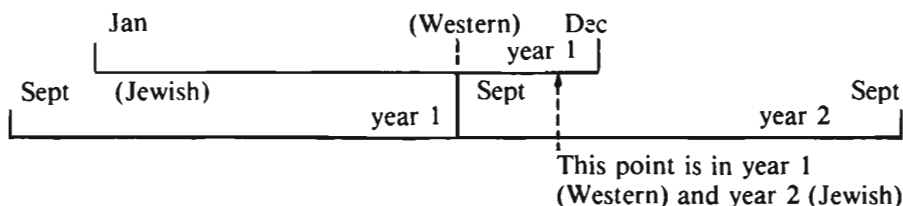
- c. as shown by Thiele's work,⁷ we need to understand the chronologer's mind;
 - d. there should be harmony with established extra-biblical data;
 - e. the overall chronology must be logically and mathematically sound.
- It is on these principles that we will proceed.

There are limitations imposed on us by the biblical record and these must be recognised:

- a. The Bible reports are selective — for example, only two or three years of the forty years of wilderness wanderings are recorded. Similar proportions apply to the monarchical period.
- b. Full details, often chronologically essential details, are not given. For example, the Pharaohs are not named for the time of the sojourn and exodus. This leaves a degree of ambiguity which is well illustrated by the conflicting views amongst evangelicals of the date of the exodus.⁸
- c. Ancient historians did not use twentieth century AD methodologies in commenting on the tenth to twentieth centuries BC. One reason for this was that there was not a universal date line. Even today there are different systems. For example, when this writer was in Morocco he was interested to see the dual dating on their coinage (e.g. 1974 and 1394 on one). Biblical writers (and their non-Jewish counterparts) dated events by a variety of contemporary incidents: "It came to pass in the third year of Hoshea, son of Elah, king of Israel, that ..."; "In the year that king Ussiah died, I saw ..."; "... two years before the earthquake"; etc. In the last example we see a typical problem: we do not know to which earthquake he was referring, though it was obviously of major significance.

Thiele was able to make a significant contribution in this field by deciphering the chronological systems of Israel and Judah. He identified three factors that need to be considered:

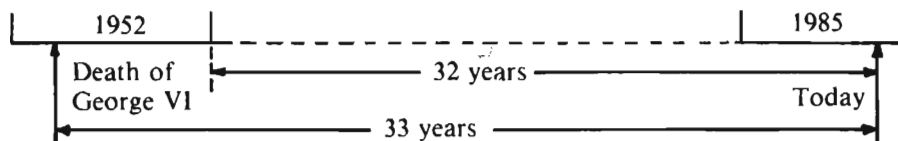
- 1. Coregencies — e.g. Tibni with Omri (1 Kings 16) and Jehoram with Jehoshaphat (2 Kings 8:16-17). This practice was more extensive in Judah (Israel being subject to usurptions). A similar pattern applies to the time of the Judges.⁹
- 2. Different calendar years — this can be illustrated by comparing modern calendars, "Christian" and Jewish. The western year starts on January 1st; the Jewish calendar on September 29th (see figure).



In the Old Testament, Israel's year begins in Nisan (spring) and Judah's in Tishri (autumn).

- 3. Different regnal years — for example, Queen Elizabeth II (as at 1st May

1985) could be described as having reigned for either 32 or 33 years (see figure), depending on whether her reign is dated as from her accession or from the beginning of 1953, her first full year. Israel followed the former system and Judah the latter one (though Judah did change for a while).



- d. Another problem is that characters and countries well known to us from the Scriptures are often known by different names in other nations. Daniel (Hebrew) was known as Belteshazzar (Babylonian). Who are Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah? They are the Hebrew names of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Similarly, Seir and Edom are names of the same country. (Compare Germany = Deutschland = Allemagne). So, we will not be surprised at the non-appearance of “Joseph” in the Egyptian records. On this point I would criticise the translators of the NIV; Esther 1:1 says “Ahasuerus”. To render this as Xerxes is unwarranted — it is interpretation and it is not certain that it is a valid one either.¹⁰
- e. One popular chronological technique is the use of genealogies. But, here again the ancient historian had a different approach to the modern genealogist. A careful comparison of Scripture with Scripture shows that frequently the family trees were condensed. The reason for this is unclear, though it was a widespread practice in the ancient world, but often symmetry seems to have been a factor. For example, Jehu was the son of Nimshi, but he is often identified by his relationship with his grandfather, Jehoshaphat.

The genealogical tables of Matthew 1 are well known for their abbreviation (Joram was the great, great grandfather of Uzziah) which appears to be linked to the symmetry of the passage (three periods of fourteen generations). In fact, the first verse of this chapter demonstrates the principle in an extreme form: “The generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham”. Similarly, a comparison of the genealogies of 1 Chronicles chapters two and six shows that there were, in fact, eight generations between Salmon (and Rahab) and Boaz (and Ruth).⁹

This difficulty is fairly easy to detect when we have different family lines to compare. Problems arise when we move into the pre-Abrahamic period leading to the dates of the flood and creation. Are the genealogies of Genesis five and eleven complete?¹¹ A number of reasonable arguments are presented in support of the contention that they *may* be incomplete. For example, although Scripture refers to total numbers of years from the call of Abraham, from the exodus, etc., it does not do so from the creation or the flood. (But compare Jude 14!) Also, the genealogies are presented in a symmetrical pattern (ten generations ending in three sons) suggesting that symmetry was more important than completeness (cf. Matthew 1). Genesis

11:26 is not presented in a form consistent with precise chronology (Abram was the youngest son of Terah, born when he was 130). It is also argued that they may be incomplete by analogy with other family trees (see above). But this is a two-edged argument: they could be compared to the complete trees instead!

In response to these arguments on the primeval period, we must emphasise a few points. Firstly, the best that can be claimed, as above, is that "... they **may** be incomplete". There is no substantial evidence to prove it. Even following the argument of analogy with other genealogies, we have to say that only a few generations are omitted. The reason for developing these arguments (refer to Green¹¹) is archaeological/scientific pressure. For example, by analogy with the antiquity of Egypt. This evidence is not without its challengers, but again supports our contention that there is a limit to the extension of the genealogies. One of the strongest arguments in favour of the exactness of the tables is the formula that is used: (e.g.) "Seth lived 105 years and begat Enos; and Seth lived after he begat Enos 807 years, and he begat sons and daughters: and all the days of Seth were 912 years, and he died." This writer finds it difficult to see any substance in arguments countering this formula. A strict interpretation of the data has the translation of Enoch and the death of Methuselah in the year of the coming of the flood. Allis¹¹ finds this a "startling conjecture". Why? If it was not a strict chronology we would be more likely to find their life spans overlapping the flood (in theory)! Also, the reference in Jude 14 must be considered. Again, I say they **may** be incomplete, but a substantive case has still to be made.

- f. Finally, in relating the biblical chronology to archaeology, we need to refer to archaeological "ages". The long period of man's sojourn on earth is described by the type of tools he used at different times: stone (palaeolithic and neolithic), copper (chalcolithic), bronze (early, middle and late) and iron ages. More recent periods are characterised by the dominant powers. In much of these former ages no written records are found in Palestine and so it is difficult to tie them into the biblical records directly; hence the uncertainty as to which age belongs to each part of the Bible. For example, the exodus has commonly been related to the Late Bronze Age,¹² but Bimson has tied it to the close of the Middle Bronze Age.¹³ A few less orthodox writers even suggested that it belongs to the Early Bronze Age.¹⁴

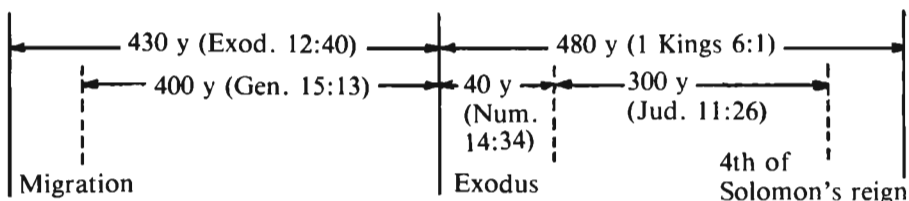
Towards an Absolute Chronology

The Bible gives us some data which we must take into account and use as fixed points:

- a. a seventy year exile in Babylon (Daniel 9:2; Jeremiah 25:12);
- b. a forty year wandering in the wilderness (Numbers 14:34; Acts 13:18);
- c. there were four hundred and eighty years from the exodus to the fourth year of Solomon's reign (1 Kings 6:1);
- d. there were four hundred and fifty years of rule by the judges (Acts 13:20);
- e. three hundred years passed from the initial occupation of east Jordan to the

Ammonite attack (Judges 11:26);

- f. Abraham's descendants were afflicted four hundred years (Genesis 15:13; Acts 7:6-7);
- g. four hundred and thirty years passed from the descent of Jacob and his family to the exodus (Exodus 12:40).



Interestingly, even though it is the pivotal point of modern chronology, the date of the birth of Christ is uncertain, because there is controversy about the date of the death of Herod the Great.¹⁵ This affects the precise dating of New Testament events. We know that our Lord was about thirty years old when He began His ministry (Luke 3:23). Many of the events of the early church can be pinpointed thanks to Luke's precise and accurate identification of historical events.

We can pick up some fixed points from archaeology too, though we recognise that these are not infallible data. We have already shown that Assyria provides some positive chronological links with Israel/Judah. We can add other Assyrian dates to this (Table II).

Table II: Some Assyrian Chronological Links

Battle of Qarqar (Ahab)	..	853
Jehu's tribute (Black Obelisk)	..	841
Stela from Rimah (Joash)	..	796 (approx)
Menahem's tribute	..	738 (approx)
Hoshea replacing Pekahiah	..	734 (approx)
Ahaz in Judah (Nimrud Slab)	..	734 (approx)
Capture of Samaria	..	722/721
Subjugation of Judah	..	715
Siege & capture of Lachish	..	701
Manasseh's tribute	..	676 (approx)
Fall of Nineveh	..	612

Babylonia can provide us with some further links (Table III).

Table III: Some Babylonian Chronological Links

Jehoiakim's submission and Daniel's capture	..	605
Battle of Carchemish and the 4th of Jehoiakim	..	605
Fall of Jerusalem and capture of Jehoiachin	..	597

Jehoiachin's rations (between)	..	595—570
Destruction of Jerusalem	..	587
Deportation	..	581

Egyptian history is less precise and not so useful for chronological purposes. Some useful correlations can be found in the periods covered by Assyria and Babylon, because the Bible names the Pharaohs (e.g. Necho) in this period. For a conventional interpretation of Egyptian history in line with this paper, see the work by Aling.¹⁶

II : Application

These principles will be applied with the aid of a series of figures. Details can be filled in with the aid of the cross-references given. In the period from the beginning of the dynasty of David, it is possible to quote the dates to within a year. As we move further back, the dates are related to the exodus. Since these latter periods are referred to in round numbers (often with the qualifier "about"), the precise values quoted below for this period should be treated with some caution. Because of the uncertainties mentioned previously for the patriarchal period, no attempt is made here to convert the biblical information on the pre-Abrahamic period into an absolute chronology.

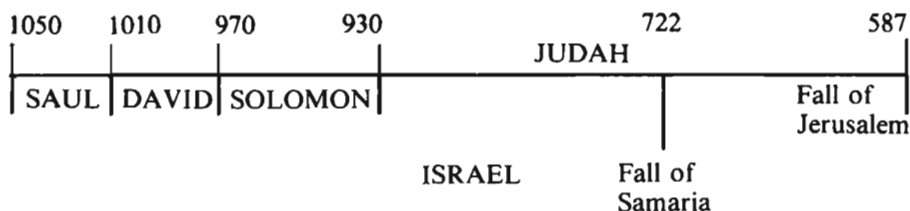
The death of Belshazzar can be dated, from contemporary history, to 539 BC. Since the exile was for seventy years (see above) and the return under Zerubbabel was about 537/6 BC (Ezra 1), the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar must have been about 606/5 BC, the third year of Jehoiakim. Daniel and his friends were taken into captivity in about 605 BC too and Jerusalem was destroyed in 587 BC.

After the initial return under Zerubbabel, the temple was rebuilt and dedicated in the sixth year of Darius (516 BC; Ezra 6:15). The second return, under Ezra, occurred in the seventh year of Artaxerxes (458 BC; Ezra 7:7) and Nehemiah rebuilt the walls, starting in the twentieth year of this king (445 BC; Nehemiah 2:1).

606	597		539	537		516		458	445
Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem			Fall of Babylon			Temple Restoration		Return under Ezra	
	Daniel to Babylon			Return under Zerubbabel				Nehemiah returned	

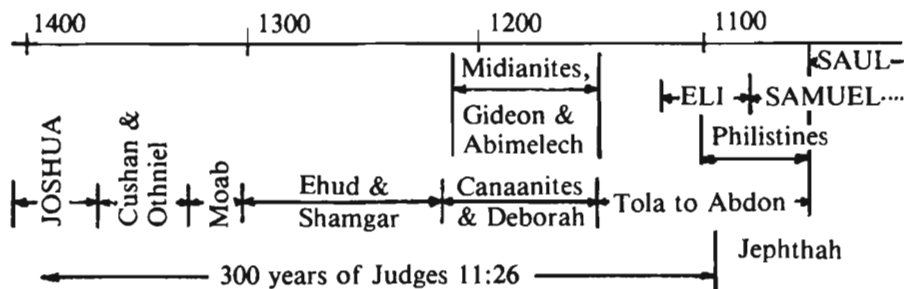
The period of the monarchies can be fixed by a number of points: the downfall of Babylon (587 BC) and the overthrow of Samaria (722 BC). In addition, Sennacherib mentions his attack on Hezekiah (701 BC), which is Hezekiah's fourteenth year (2 Kings 18:13). We have already mentioned the death of Ahab (853 BC) and accession of Jehu (841 BC). From these dates we can move back to the division of the kingdom in 931/930 BC. Solomon reigned forty years (2

Chronicles 9:30) and David for forty years (1 Kings 2:11), though they appear to have had a brief coregency (1 Chronicles 28:5). Saul also reigned for forty years (Acts 13:21).^{9,17}



The details of the reigns in the divided monarchy have been worked out by Thiele,¹ in accordance with his principles outlined above, though in the period of Jotham/Ahaz/Hezekiah he is clearly in error. This portion has been correctly decoded by Stigers.¹⁸

Prior to Saul, the country was ruled by judges. How long did they rule? The "obvious" answer is 450 years (Acts 13:18-20), taking us back to 1500 BC for the death of Joshua. However, this is not consistent with other biblical data: as mentioned earlier, there were 480 years from the exodus to the fourth year of Solomon's reign (1 Kings 6:1). This puts the exodus at about 1450 BC, which is too late for the 1500 BC start of the judges. This problem is compounded by some scholars who believe that the exodus must be dated to 1250 BC! What is the answer?



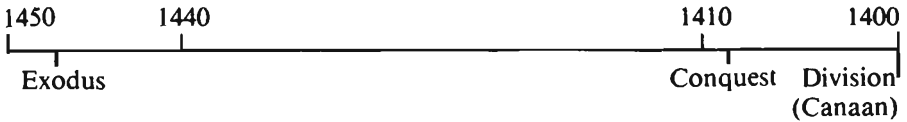
As the diagram shows, there is some overlap in the period of the judges. The arguments for this reconstruction are given elsewhere,⁹ but does conform to Scripture. The period of the judges is, on this model, of the order of 350 years. Merrill submits that the figure of 450 years, quoted by Paul, is a round figure which takes "the numerical data of the book of Judges (and 1 Samuel) at face value and with no allowances for synchronism, lapses or other possibilities which must be entertained in a truly 'scientific' approach to the problem."¹⁹

The figures for the judges from Othniel to Eli, on this principle, are 447 years, that is, "about 450 years".

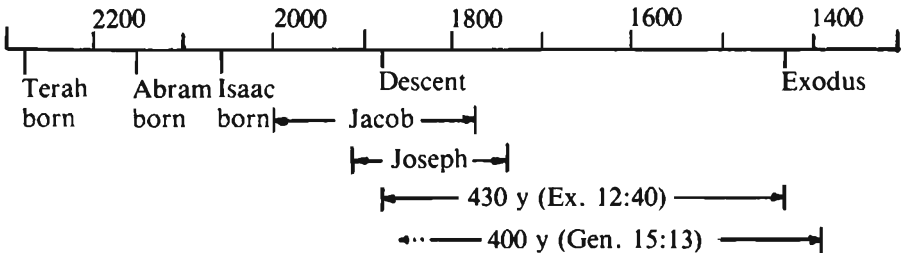
This reconstruction is consistent, not only with the biblical data on the exodus and conquest, but with the statement of Jephthah (Judges 11:26) that the Is-

raelites had occupied the territory for three hundred years.

The arguments concerning the data of the exodus have been well rehearsed elsewhere. The debate is between 1250 BC ("late date") and 1450 BC ("early date"). The former date has among its leading proponents such evangelical scholars as Kitchen¹⁷ and is determined by certain archaeological considerations. It is difficult to correlate this to the biblical data, though this has been attempted by some writers. However, it is not satisfactory in, for example, its discussion of the period of the judges. The natural biblical interpretation leads to the early date. This date has been skilfully defended by a number of scholars^{8,13,16} and the present writer considers this case to be the most satisfactory.



From Exodus 12:40, we learn that 430 years elapsed from the descent of Jacob into Egypt to the exodus. That puts the descent at 1875 BC. We can add to this further details about Joseph and so estimate the time of the oppression. Joseph met Pharaoh when he was thirty years old (Genesis 41:46). Before his father arrived in Egypt, the period of plenty had passed (seven years) and they were well into the time of famine. If we estimate that he had been vizier for ten years before the descent, he was born around 1915 BC and so died in 1835 BC (aged 110 years; Genesis 50:26). The oppression began, perhaps a generation later, under a Pharaoh who did not know Joseph (Exodus 1:8; Acts 7:18). This gives a period of nearly four hundred years of oppression in Egypt. Not surprisingly, this accords with Scripture (Genesis 15:13; Acts 7:6-7) which indicates that they were afflicted for 400 years (this could, of course, cover the period up to the conquest of Canaan). Since Jacob lived in the land of Goshen for seventeen years (Genesis 47:28) and died at the age of 147 years (Genesis 47:28), he must have been born around 2005 BC.²⁰ Comparing the biblical data on his forebears, we can complete the period of the patriarchs as shown in the diagram.



We have already noted the difficulty in dating the period before the birth of Terah without further confirmatory data.

Some Non-Orthodox Views

The chronological structure described is in line with the orthodox views (though there is division, as noted, over the date of the exodus). Various other approaches have been reported. Obviously non-evangelical scholars treat the biblical data with some scepticism, but there are some other proposals which seek to take the biblical data seriously. These are less orthodox in their interpretation of archaeology. One is by a Seventh Day Adventist, D. Courville.²¹ This model is based on an Early Bronze Age date for the exodus. He seeks to restructure all ancient chronology around this correlation. It does depend on this basic synchronism. Egyptian history is reconstructed so that the Old and Middle Kingdoms are simultaneous; there is no direct evidence for this. The later dynasties of the New Kingdom are also made contemporaneous, often on slender and ambiguous evidence.

A closely related, but different, restructuring is that by a Jew, the late Immanuel Velikovsky.²² His complete work is not yet available, but the essential features are known. The strength of his approach is his attempt to correlate the events of the exodus, as reported in Scripture, with the Egyptian history. The major weakness is his failure to consider stratigraphy and so most of his later work has had to be rejected even by his supporters. A lot of research is still going on to determine the viability of his basic model, some of the best by a British group, the Society for Interdisciplinary Studies. While Velikovsky linked his historical work to his cosmological hypothesis,²³ the two can stand or fall independently of each other. So, a rejection of the latter work need not disallow his primary historical thesis, though, as indicated, this still needs a conclusive analysis.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have discussed the underlying principles to biblical chronology and have proposed a structure covering the period 2295 BC to 445 BC. The Bible has become anchored into a chronological framework which helps us to study it in its true historical context.

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“When we confess that Holy Scripture is inerrant, infallible or truthful, we simply mean that whatever the Bible claims to be true is in fact true. It does not determine in advance what a particular passage is saying, nor does it answer the question of whether a given passage is prose or poetry, figurative or literalistic. The interpreter who accepts the inerrancy of Holy Scripture must continue to use the best tools available to him to determine what a given passage means. But whatever it claims to be true is in fact true, and that simply because it comes from the God of all truth.

To affirm that the Bible is inerrant is to recognise that it comes from God Himself, and that God does not lie, deceive or lead astray. To confess that God’s Book is without error is to express our confidence that the God we have come to know, love and trust in Jesus Christ is indeed faithful and trustworthy in all that He says and does, including the inspiration of Holy Scriptures.”

*Adapted from “The Inerrancy and Infallibility of the Holy Scripture”
in Lutheran Witness, March 1983, by Ralph Bohlmann*

Review of Theological Journals 1983—4

Part II

The Editor

On the general theme of hermeneutics, I benefited from reading *Preaching Old Testament Texts* in the **Calvin Theological Journal** (Vol.18, No.1). The writer, Carl Kromminga, addresses himself to the question, what is the message of God to the Church today in Old Testament narrative, and how does one discern that message? In order to avoid a more 'moralising' approach to the Old Testament, the following hermeneutic procedure is recommended. First, "in approaching narrative texts one must be aware of the basic **Continuity** in the substance of divine revelation and at the same time of the **Discontinuity** in the forms of its disclosure because of the historic character of the revelation which is itself revelatorily documented in Holy Scripture" (p.40). Second, "historical texts are literary compositions and must be interpreted as such ... because texts are parts of **Literary** documents, it is vitally important to look for clues as to the **Writer's Intention**". Third, it is essential "to grasp what the Lord was moving the biblical writer to communicate to his originally intended (hearers) in **their** situation". Fourth, "what is **God** recorded as doing in this text? ... What is the text's larger background in divine promise and deliverance?" Fifth, how are psychological and symbolical or typical factors used in the narrative? Finally, we must reckon with its Christodynamic character. Here indeed is food for thought for all preachers.

A similar article, *Is it right to read the New Testament into the Old?*, appears in **Christianity Today** (p.77, Sept. 2, 1983). Quoting Benjamin Jowett's statement in 1859 that "Scripture has one meaning — the meaning which it had in the mind of the Prophet ... who first uttered or wrote, to the hearers or readers who first received it," Dr. Waltke who is Professor of Old Testament at Regent College, Vancouver, argues convincingly in favour of the traditional view that the New Testament has priority in 'unpacking' the meaning of the Old Testament. "The Bible is not like a bookcase with each book standing as a separate entity in itself," and he adds that "the intention of the Author is found not in parts but in the whole ... let us join Jowett in his desire to be alone with the Author and hear His words, but let us keep in mind that the Author is Christ, who spoke through the prophets."

Perhaps this is an appropriate moment to widen our discussion by referring now to New Testament scholarship which was the burden of a useful article in **Christianity Today** (16 Sept. '83, p.52). "Many of the concerns," we are told, "that were in the ascendancy 25 years ago are still current: (1) how to understand the essentially eschatological framework of the NT writers; (2) the concern of the biblical theology movement to see synthesis and unity in the

New Testament alongside analysis and diversity; and (3) the redactional study of the Gospels, which had a similar interest in the wholes as over against the parts (in contrast to form criticism, which dominated the previous period).” Some themes have shown great resilience over the decades and continue to dominate NT scholarship. For example, Christology is in the forefront while in Pauline studies, interest has again shifted to re-evaluation of Paul and the law — whether Paul saw the law as essentially terminated or fulfilled (with some sense of continuation) in Christ. At the moment the trend is toward a middle position that sees the law ended as a means of righteousness, but continued as an ethical imperative. There has also been considerable interest shown in the parables while sociology is also being used increasingly as a means of understanding the early church. The writer’s conclusion is that “New Testament studies is much better off than it was 25 years ago, and the future looks even better.”

New Testament Studies is an international journal published quarterly by the Cambridge University Press and includes articles in English, French and German. Volume 30, No.3, interested me with an article on “Sir Edwyn Hoskyns and the Contemporary Relevance of ‘Biblical Theology’ ”. Hoskyns, of course, was one of the founders of the biblical theology movement some two decades ago, and in this article Reginald Fuller questions whether the biblical theology movement can be described fairly as a detour (the view, for example, of scholars like G. Lampe, J. Barr, B. Childs etc.) from the main task of theology. He concludes that “the unfinished agenda of the older liberal theology has certainly acquired fresh urgency since the sixties, but it would hardly be wise to approach that agenda as though Hoskyns and his biblical theology were merely a detour” (p.334).

The department of biblical studies in the University of Sheffield publish a **Journal for the Study of the New Testament** and in the first article of Issue 91 J.D. Kingsley of Union Theological Seminary writes on *The Figure of Jesus in Matthew’s Story: A Literary-Critical Probe*. The question of the Christology of Matthew’s Gospel continues to be debated but there is no general agreement amongst the more renowned New Testament scholars as to where the centre of this Christology lies. Kingsley, however, claims that Matthew’s Christology is pre-eminently a Son-of-God Christology. “Through the vehicle of the Son of God,” he writes, “Matthew calls attention to the unique filial relationship that Jesus has with God and to the soteriological implications associated with this” (p. 3). Other subjects in this issue include the Purpose of Luke, Hebrew Poetic Tenses and the Magnificat, Peter and his Successors: Tradition and Redaction in Matthew 16:17-19, The Translation of Matthew 28:17. This same University also has a **Journal for the Study of the Old Testament** and while some of the articles are informative they are also academic and critical.

But for those wanting to keep abreast of New Testament scholarship I can assure you that **New Testament Abstracts** will prove a mine of information. This journal is published three times a year by the Weston School of Theology in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and includes abstracts (title, author, date and basic outline of the thesis or publication) which are conveniently classified into

originally appeared in Christianity Today in 1981. He first sets out the characteristics of a good commentary and then goes through several of the arguments which are often used against the use of them. He mentions: the argument which "asserts that the Holy Spirit is the only one who can truly expound to our souls the real meaning of any text"; the assertion "that Scripture is already intelligible to those who possess faith" and the objection that "commentaries are unnecessary since the Word of God has its own compelling power". Finally, he concludes by setting out the defects of modern commentaries and the proper use of good ones.

As a commentary on Malachi this book should be used alongside Baldwin⁸ and the older T.V. Moore⁹ but as an introduction to the proper exposition of the Old Testament prophets it should be a **must** and used together with J.A. Motyer's "Day of the Lion"¹⁰. Thus used the preacher will both enrich his ministry and ensure his messages are truly biblical.

Kaiser would without doubt approve of D. Lane's "**The Cloud and the Silver Lining**".¹¹ This is a quite excellent, simple exposition of **Ezekiel** which is written in such a way as will appeal to the preacher and ordinary reader alike. Adopting the sort of methodology set out by Kaiser, Lane shows the underlying principles of God's revelation to Ezekiel and then indicates how they apply equally relevantly today. For the use of proper hermeneutical techniques and simplicity of expression this volume comes right out of the top drawer!

I.V.P. have been busy of late and produced two new commentaries in the Old Testament Series of Tyndale Commentaries. The first is by G. Lloyd Carr on the **Song of Solomon**¹² which is reviewed later in this section by the Rev. Hywel Jones.

The other title is the volume on **Esther** written by Joyce Baldwin.¹³ Unlike most of the volumes in the series this book can almost be read right through with profit. It is written in a lively style and provides a thorough, expanded paraphrase of the text. In addition, Baldwin shows a considerable sensitivity to the character of Hebrew narrative literature and with a careful literary analysis of the book is able to emphasise its main thrusts. In view of the various points made above it would have improved the volume if a more trenchant commitment to inerrancy were included and if more emphasis had been placed (as in the Ecclesiastes volume in the same series¹⁴) on application. However, despite these shortcomings the volume is a welcome and worthy addition to a series which has consistently maintained a high standard of faithful scholarship in the Old Testament.

R.E.O. White's **A Christian Handbook to the Psalms**¹⁵ provides a "layman" with a brief analysis of each psalm, drawing out the essential features and then applying them to the Christian believer. White seeks to emphasise the historical and pre-Christian context of the Psalms and the consequences of this for Christian interpretation. This is a proper and often neglected pursuit. However, his grasp of salvation

history seems at points defective: he has little grasp of the unfolding typological relationships in biblical revelation and has a tendency to oppose Old Testament and New Testament faith too radically. For all this, however, the volume is very useful in providing a birds-eye view of the Psalter.

Form criticism of the Old Testament has long had a bad press among evangelicals and not without reason since much that has passed under the name has been bad indeed. However, in itself, form criticism is a valid and necessary part of Bible study which we all engage in, although we are not always conscious that we are doing so! The series in which the volume on **1 Kings** by B.O. Long writes¹⁶ is intended to bring together the results of the last 70 years' study in this field.

Long's work still includes some gratuitous assumptions of critical orthodoxy, for example, stories depicting supernatural events are dubbed "legend". Though strictly the word is applied to a recognisable literary form yet it remains unfortunate that the label carries with it an implicit criticism of the historical reliability of the material. This feature, so prominent in form criticism, is to be deplored.

However, essentially concerned with the final canonical form of the Books of the Kings, Long's study helpfully highlights the character of the text and the techniques and emphases which the biblical writer brought to his work. His introductory essay goes a very long way to establishing the folly of postulating multiple recensions of Old

Testament narrative books and exposes some of the unfounded pre-suppositions of many literary and form critics. He argues that the proper literary context is ancient parataxis: a composition built upon the collation of various individual items which are placed with clarity of purpose in a literary plan.

In the main part of the book, which deals with the biblical text, Long uses form critical techniques in such a way as to highlight the work of the author and to emphasise his redactional work to draw attention to the theological intention of the writer of the biblical material.

The volume is not a full-scale commentary. It is also prohibitively expensive (£18.50 for a paperback with glued not stitched pages). This means that few of the readers of this journal will regard purchase of it as good stewardship. However, it is to be hoped that evangelical studies and commentaries will in future build upon the foundations laid by Long: if they do, we shall all be greatly indebted to him.

Ethics

For many evangelical believers the most crucial issue in their relationship with the Old Testament Law is the status of Sunday and how it should be observed. Without wishing to minimise the issue it needs, however, to be pointed out that several other questions of an ultimately vital practical nature have begun to be raised again over the last few years. The areas of debate include:

The adequacy of the threefold division of the Law and of identifying Moral Law with the Ten Commandments.

The relationship of the Law to the believer. Is the Moral Law the means of sanctification? Can a believer be rightly said to be under the Law at all? What does Paul mean when he speaks of our being 'in-lawed' to Christ?

The relevance of the Law to the unbelieving world. Is there a basis in the Law for addressing society on matters of personal morality, politics, economics, etc.

These questions, which mark the emergence of a more vibrant evangelical theological community, have re-aroused interest in a discipline long overgrown with neglect: Old Testament Ethics. The reason for this is that it has been quite properly observed that the starting point of the Christian's ethical pursuit must lie in what was the structure and content of Old Testament ethics. Thus, after eighty years in which no attempt at an introductory volume on the subject has been attempted in English, two books have recently appeared almost simultaneously. Setting out two complementary approaches they do not directly answer all the issues detailed above, but they do provide a basis upon which any answers should be built.

One book, *Living as the People of God*,¹⁷ by C.J.H. Wright was reviewed in *Foundations* Issue 13. The volume of Kaiser is more by way of a reference work, especially devoted to evangelical apologetics.¹⁸ This justifies the somewhat pedestrian approach which is adopted, Kaiser emphasises that Old Testament ethics were personal, internal, eschatological and universal, that is, they applied to the individual, emphasising personal responsibility

and accountability and judged not simply the outward action but also the disposition of the heart. Moreover, they enshrined principles valid for all men while, at the same time, looking forward to fulfilment in Christ. The book argues that Old Testament ethics were deontological, that is, they were a transcript of the divine character, this feature providing the wholeness, consistency and harmony which characterise Old Testament morality. There are, of course, limitations in Old Testament ethics but, says Kaiser, these have been greatly exaggerated. Rather, Old Testament ethics are the foundation upon which all Christian morality must be built since a Christian ethic must be a biblical one. This fact necessitates the discovery of legitimate principles of interpretation, a task which Kaiser seeks to initiate. Not the least important is his observation (so often missed by evangelicals) that the Law was given to a people who were already redeemed and was provided not as a basis for works-salvation but as a standard for redeemed life.

After a summary of the main moral texts of the Old Testament, Kaiser proceeds to detail the content of Old Testament ethics using the Ten Commandments as the basis upon which all subsequent moral instruction was based. This analysis is somewhat synthetic as is Kaiser's suggestion that holiness is the integrating core of Old Testament ethics: at least as prominent a feature in the Old Testament is the love of God. Kaiser is primarily descriptive but he does sometimes attempt to make a Christian application. This is, perhaps, the weakest point of the book since he is inclined

to be superficial and to reflect a position too close to that of the Chalcedon movement. A more rigorous analysis of the structure and character of the Law (such as is offered by Wright) would have been helpful. Nevertheless, there is much exegesis and exposition in this section of the book which is worth its weight in gold: a conclusion which is especially applicable to the major subsection entitled, "The Moral Difficulties of the Old Testament".

The final section of the book is given over to a discussion of the New Testament application of Old Testament laws. Kaiser, quite properly, argues that believers are not finished with the Law but, rather, only the obedience of faith can show the real purpose of the Law and allow a full appreciation of Old Testament ethics. Wright makes a similar point but it is one which neither book tackles at any depth. This is a real pity since a distortion of Pauline emphases has become so axiomatic in most evangelical circles that the Law as a whole is largely neglected. An extended exposé is really required to emphasise the importance of these two studies.

All Pastors and many others should read, mark and learn as they consult these two vitally important books. Go out and sell your shirt for them today!

Biblical Introduction

Carl E. Armerding has recently produced a most useful outline study of the way evangelicals should respond to modern methods of biblical criticism.¹⁹ By argument and example he shows how literary form and textual

criticism may and should be used, although discussing structural criticism he quite rightly concludes that it is a theological dead-end.

The work is fair and balanced, providing a reliable guide in a minefield. However, the review finds it unfortunate that Armerding argues that his 'Evangelical' position is to be distinguished between 'Traditional Conservatives' and 'Rational Criticism'. Such a division suggests an abandonment of a high view of Scripture and that the author is on the 'slippery slope' to liberalism — something true of many 'so-called' evangelicals. However, Armerding does not seem to have rejected the witness of the Scripture to itself and consequently the reviewer fails to discern a basic difference between Armerding and men such as Archer, Young and Wiseman whom he labels 'traditional conservatives'. The only difference (and it is not one of great substance) is that he stands with those who have a less defensive stance in which there are those who are more willing to use the results of modern criticism where they are not inconsistent with biblical faith. But this scarcely deserves a new label and drives an unnecessary wedge between "brethren"!

Biblical Hebrew

Several recent grammars have appeared which have sought to teach Hebrew by means of the inductive method, that is, moving from text to grammar and not vice versa. The most comprehensive is that by La Sor.²⁰ The volume by Sawyer²¹ is excellent for class use. Perhaps the most valuable for the beginner,

especially if he or she is studying alone is the two volume work of Mansoor.²² Volume 1 introduces grammar and the second book provides a series of reading lessons in the Book of Genesis which are intended to increase the student's competence.

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Thomas Brooks

Review Article

The Song of Solomon: An Introduction and Commentary

by G. Lloyd Carr

Tyndale Old Testament

Commentaries Series IVP 1984

175pp £3.95

This is a valuable commentary — enlightening and stimulating. Perhaps it is more technical and therefore more demanding than other volumes in this series, but no more than a most creditable examination of the Song requires. Dr. Carr is a professor of Biblical and Theological Studies at Gordon College, Massachusetts. He has a thorough grasp of the Song and its problems, the literature which has been produced on it and has also studied Ancient Near Eastern love poetry. He can, therefore, compare and contrast the Song with that type of literature. Most important of all, his perspective on the nature of Scripture is sound.

This work is divided into four parts, viz. introduction, subject studies, analysis and commentary. With regard to analysis, the author points out in the introduction that a firm and generally accepted analysis of the book is difficult to come by, but he has one to propose which he argues for and it is most interesting. In the author's preface, he pleads that the "commentary should not be read in isolation (a difficult thing to do to say the least), but with regular attention to and comparison with

the Bible itself". This indicates the high aim of the author in producing this commentary. There are many helpful comments on difficult words and expressions in the text and stimulating insights too, but devotional comment is excluded. The aim is to get at the meaning of the text.

The subject studies treat the garden, love, lover and wine. These are well worth careful examination in connection with the footnotes and the usage of these terms in the actual text of the Song. A wide range of material is covered from the Old Testament and the Septuagint.

The major question which this work will raise concerns Carr's solution of the age-old problem of the nature of the book. Is it allegory, typology, drama or is it a love poem? And is its purpose cultic, instructive or celebratory? Carr opts for its being a poem in praise of love, but discusses all the other options in some detail and most helpfully. Though he does not personally endorse Solomonic authorship, he quite clearly declares that a tenth century origin of the book and such a view of its opening statement are perfectly justifiable.

Though Carr opts for the "natural" view of the book's nature, he places its content very firmly in a sound biblical and theological context of creation and divinely ordained sexuality. He distances sexual love from the cultic associations of the Ancient Near East and anchors his view of the book in Genesis and

Hebrews 13:2. Chapter 3:6 provides the context of a marriage ceremony for the theme. Surely this emphasis is needed today — and among evangelicals.

His reasons for not favouring the typological interpretation, i.e. Christ and the Church, are in the main two. On the one hand, the vocabulary of the Song lacks the theological terms found in Psalm 45 — an associated passage in terms of theme. This amounts to saying that there is no specific evidence in the Song for treating it as a description of divine-human relationships. On the other hand, whereas Psalm 45 is quoted in the New Testament in a Christological manner, establishing that Psalm as typical, the Song is not cited in the New Testament in that way. So, Carr deduces two principles:

When the New Testament writers, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, selected certain Old Testament texts and applied them to Jesus, etc., their application and interpretation are correct.

It is not legitimate, however, to say, therefore, that all the Old Testament or even other specific texts must also be interpreted in the same way. Where the New Testament does not make these connections, we are not required to either.

Readers will want to ponder the latter of these principles. It must mean that explicit New Testament support is required before anything in the Old Testament is accorded typological significance. Is this not

difficult to accept in view of the breadth of reference explicit in Luke 24:27 and 44, and also that things are listed in Hebrews 9:5 as having such a character while their typological significance in detail is not spelt out? To take the view that explicit New Testament support is not needed is not the high road to allegorising, cf. Vos in **Biblical Theology**. The setting of the Song in the canon of Old Testament and also the New where marriage is used to describe God's relation with Israel and Christ's with the Church is, some will feel, not given sufficient weight.

Carr has one suggestion which if it were taken seriously would justify the typological interpretation. It concerns the Hebrew word *DODHI* frequently used in the book and translated "my beloved". Carr points out the consonantal identity between *DODH* and *DAVIDH* — David. He says: "If the Song is to be understood as a royal wedding song, the king in question ought to be David rather than Solomon? King David, *MLK DWD*, would be the 'beloved king' and the lover of the song."

Given this, what sense could be made of Song 1:1 where Solomon is mentioned? Would it not be Solomon as of the line of David on the basis of the promise in 2 Samuel 7? And would this not make the reference Messianic? However, this is a serious, responsible and useful piece of work on a difficult book of Holy Scripture.

Rev. Hywel R. Jones
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Keeping up Biblical Languages while in the Ministry

David Ford

It is to be feared that many ministers receive instruction in biblical languages, but within a few years the knowledge, which was obtained through hard work, has evaporated. The minister is reduced to an elementary knowledge in an area where he should be fluent. It is almost as if he never spent those years in the Greek class.

Philip Eveson has comprehensively dealt with the usefulness of the biblical languages in a previous *Foundations* article.¹ The purpose of the present article is to explain some practical ways of keeping up and developing our knowledge of biblical languages while engaged in a busy ministry. It is not intended that all the suggestions given would be feasible; and even those which may be practical need to be modified and applied to our situation. It should be pointed out that all the ideas suggested are the result of practical experience gained by one who has little natural bent towards languages. They are made to encourage those men who are aware of their own ineptitude in biblical languages, yet, out of concern to propagate the truth, have been forced to take up their study.

We will consider, first of all, general methods of language learning, and then apply this to find specific ways for the pastor to keep up his biblical languages.

Language Learning Patterns in General

For missionaries, Eugene Nida is one of the best known writers on foreign language learning.² Although he especially concerns himself with a modern spoken language, some of his comments are relevant to the study of biblical languages. He writes, "Learning to speak a language is very largely a task of learning to hear it." Listening to the nationals speak provides us with the correct pronunciation, the appropriate vocabulary and the usual syntax. It is an interesting observation on human nature that often a missionary's wife is more fluent than her husband! Now if we apply this to biblical languages we can draw the conclusion that it is not primarily a case of repeatedly trying to memorize the irregular paradigms, but of exposing oneself as much as possible to the languages. Knowledge of the irregular paradigms has its place in the initial part of language learning, but Nida warns about the person who "may spend so much time with the Masoretic pointing of Hebrew vowels that he does not get a chance to read the language extensively". So the first general language learning pattern is that we are to experience the Greek or Hebrew in as many different situations as possible. The solution to our problem lies not in going through Wenham again, but in continually reading and using the Greek we know.

A second essential aspect of language learning is the need for a regular or daily encounter with the language. This advice is often given, but in the midst of pastoral pressures it is ignored. The missionary who uses the language for a few hours each day will progress; those whose work leaves little time for personal contact may never be able to speak the language even after several years. A national newspaper carried an advertisement for language learning, which offered to those participating that they would be speaking the language of their choice after 30 to 45 hours. If we take the higher figure as realistic, it is equivalent to a pastor studying thirty minutes per day, five days a week for over four months. Now if we had that kind of diligence in our study of Greek and Hebrew, progress would be made. The second general learning pattern is the need for a continually, preferably daily, use of the language. As Gresham Machen says, "Ten minutes a day is of vastly more value than seventy minutes once a week."³

Specific Learning Patterns

1. The Basing of Sermons on the Original Languages

The desirability of basing our sermons upon the exegesis of the Scriptures in their original languages should be obvious to evangelical ministers. Such exegesis provides us with seed thoughts not noted in the English translation; we become less dependent upon commentaries and so the borrowing of other men's thoughts; and all this leads to freshness and originality in the sermon. One important factor in the brilliance of Calvin's expository ministry was his use of the Scriptures in Greek and Hebrew. For instance in his public lectures on Daniel he would evidently first read the text in Hebrew, then translate it into Latin, and then lecture extemporaneously for about an hour.⁴

The feasibility of using the original languages depends upon the size of passage chosen. It would be difficult to find time to work through the Hebrew of three chapters of Genesis each week; but a few verses from Malachi or a chapter of Jonah are practical. On the New Testament side, some books such as John can be worked through far more quickly than say 2 Corinthians or 1 Peter.

Two practical comments may be added. Firstly, it is necessary to make an early start in the week if we are to exegete the original languages. An hour spent on both Tuesday and Wednesday mornings could well be sufficient to translate and form our own opinions regarding the passage. Secondly, a manageable lexicon should be employed. It is not doubted that Arndt and Gingrich is the prince of New Testament lexicons, but it is time-consuming to use because of its bulkiness and comprehensiveness. A middle-sized lexicon that will provide not simply a translation of the word but some background information and its usage in other parts of Scripture provides for quicker work.⁵

2. Daily Audible Reading

Gresham Machen's advice regarding the Greek of the New Testament is of importance: "A language cannot be easily learned by the eye alone. The sound as well as the sense of familiar passages should be impressed upon the mind, until sound and sense are connected without the medium of translation ... The Greek Testament should be read every day without fail, Sabbaths included ... The Greek Testament is a sacred book, and should be treated as such. If it is treated so, the reading of it will soon become a source of joy and power." In a similar vein Berkeley Mickelsen makes the interesting comment that Germany has produced some of the greatest classical linguists, who have come from a teaching tradition emphasizing the need to vocalize the language.⁶

For daily reading it is useful to have a plan and John Skilton has suggested a programme for reading all the Greek New Testament each year.⁷ A daily Hebrew reading programme may not be so easy to practice due to our weakness on Hebrew vocabulary. But the language should still regularly be read audibly. Whatever system is chosen for reading it is important that it is a practical one which can be completed. Initially it would be useful to experiment with different reading systems until a feasible one for our own situation is found.

3. Extensive Reading of the Languages

A further way of improving our knowledge of the languages is to read as widely as possible in them. As far as the New Testament goes, our own familiarity with the English text often undermines the learning and appreciating of the Greek. It is a useful exercise, both pastorally and linguistically, to read the Greek writings of the early church.⁸ For instance, it is fascinating to read first hand early church customs regarding baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Greek is similar to that of the New Testament, and Arndt and Gingrich is of help with the vocabulary.⁹ A further source of Greek is the Septuagint¹⁰, which can be read in connection with sermon preparation, although the Greek is earlier than New Testament and so some of the vocabulary would not be found in New Testament lexicons.

On the Hebrew side the situation at first appears much more difficult. Outside of the Old Testament Scriptures little seems to be available. However one advantage nowadays is that modern spoken Hebrew has part of its roots within classical Hebrew. Thus it is possible to use the resources and materials available for modern Hebrew to develop our ability in biblical Hebrew. Recently in Spanish a programmed learning text for biblical Hebrew has been published.¹¹ The

approach given is considerably different from the standard Old Testament Hebrew grammars available in English. The author learned his Hebrew while living in Israel, and the procedure is to apply modern Hebrew learning techniques to biblical Hebrew. For instance, the Masoretic pointing as a subject is dealt with in the very last section of the grammar; the personal pronouns are repeated along with the paradigm, with the active participle being learned first.

Among the resources available on modern Hebrew are books teaching the language as a living and spoken one¹²; cassette tapes in modern Hebrew; as well as the possibility of study in formal courses. A knowledge of present day Hebrew then opens up to us the range of modern Hebrew literature.

4. Teaching Biblical Languages

Surprisingly enough William Barclay's 'New Testament Words' started life as a series of short articles for a congregational magazine. It then ran on to be a series in the 'British Weekly'. What amazed Barclay was the interest people showed, "I was surprised at this, for these articles might be defined as an attempt to popularise the Greek dictionary, and to teach Greek to people who do not know any Greek."¹³ If presented in an attractive and relevant manner, most people interested in the Bible are interested in the underlying texts. And one way for the pastor to grasp much better the languages is to teach them.

The aim of a language course in church would be to produce a deeper understanding of biblical truth. To achieve this end it is necessary to major on the side of exegesis and word study. For instance, in a Hebrew class the alphabet, pronunciation and word formation would be initially taught, and then it is possible to go into the Hebrew text, teaching grammar and vocabulary by means of the texts. Short Psalms like 117 or 23 could be exegeted; word studies could be done on the names of God, the Hebrew concepts of holiness, salvation, righteousness and love.

On the Greek side, one pastor who successfully ran courses in mission, city and rural charges stated that his twelve week Greek course had as its proximate aims, "not to master Greek, but to develop a basic working knowledge. Memorization of some 30 words and the alphabet and the ability to use the Greek dictionary in the back of the Bible Society's Greek text to translate 1 John 1."¹⁴ One point to be born in mind is the need for a brief review of English grammar at the beginning of a Greek course.

5. Periodic Study

Although we may regularly read the original languages and so gradually build up our familiarity with them, certain aspects of grammar, syntax or vocabulary will not be understood unless we take time apart to study them. For the busy pastor, one possibility is to have the occasional blitz on the language; studying say once every three months one particular topic. During the intervening period what has been studied will become clearer in the regular use of the language.

Many topics for study would come to mind, but it is best to be clear on the most important aspects of the language. For instance do we understand the significance and characteristics of the different forms of the Hebrew verb — how does the meaning of a *PIEL* differ from a *HIPHIL* and what do we look for to recognise them? How fluent are we in the prepositions of both languages — are we justified 'because of our faith' or 'through our faith'? Are we familiar with the important variations that distinguish Greek tenses and moods — which tenses and moods use a prefix and how can we recognise a subjunctive or an infinitive? Do we understand great biblical words like "covenant" — does it describe a contract or a constitution?

Concluding Comments

Our education system has changed a lot since the days when Samuel Pepys could see school notices written in Latin, Hebrew and Greek. Nor are there many ministers who would be able on their death bed to quote in Hebrew the opening words of Psalm 23 as Edward Irving did.

The maintaining of our knowledge of the biblical languages is not a case of inherent ability; but our own attitude to the importance of the languages. Do we agree with Mickelsen that our working at the languages is like a savings account; the more we put in the greater is the interest received? How do we react to the forceful words of Gresham Machen, "The New Testament, as well as all other literature, loses something in translation. But why argue the question? Every scientific

student of the New Testament without exception knows that Greek is really necessary to his work: the real question is only as to whether our ministry should be manned by scientific students."

For those who have neglected the languages since College days, now is the time to start the repair work. It will be a painful process, but one eminently worthwhile. How much better it is for us to work from first principles, and base our preaching and teaching upon the most accurate personal understanding of Scripture we can obtain.

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