

THE REIGN OF ASA (2 CHRONICLES 14-16): AN EXAMPLE OF THE CHRONICLER'S THEOLOGICAL METHOD¹

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For the most part the books of Chronicles have not received attention proportionate to their length in the history of OT study. The benign neglect of Chronicles is no doubt due in part to its inauspicious beginning (those nine chapters of genealogies) and also the fact that it largely repeats, sometimes verbatim, much of the earlier record of Samuel/Kings. This attitude toward Chronicles is one of considerable antiquity shown even in the LXX title for these books, *Ta Paraleipomena*, "The Things Omitted," a title that itself relegates Chronicles to a position as a supplement to the earlier accounts. Chronicles has also been the object of extreme skepticism regarding its historical worth, as exhibited in the statement of Wellhausen that it is hard to find a grain of good corn among the chaff, or that of R. H. Pfeiffer who says of the Chronicler that "the fantasy and picturesque detail of his tales would make him an eligible contributor to the *Arabian Nights*."²

Happily a flurry of activity in the last couple of decades in monographs and journals has called attention to the uniqueness of the Chronicler's³ own theology and led to a redress of the skepticism surrounding his historical trustworthiness.⁴

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²J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (trans. Back and Menzies; Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1885) 224; R. H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (rev. ed.; New York: Harper, 1948) 806. For a more recent examination of archaeological evidence usually viewed as confirming the Chronicler's reliability, but with continuing skepticism, see R. North, "Does Archaeology Prove Chronicles Sources?," *A Light unto My Path: Old Testament Studies in Honor of Jacob M. Myers* (ed. Bream, Heim and Moore; Philadelphia: Temple University, 1974) 375-401.

³I use the term "Chronicler" in its more restricted sense of applying to the books of Chronicles alone. My own study leads toward repudiation of the identity of the author(s) of these books with those of Extra/Nehemiah. The relationship of Chronicles and Ezra/Nehemiah is among the issues being re-examined in contemporary scholarship. See the excellent monograph by H. G. M. Williamson, *Israel in the Books of Chronicles* (London: Cambridge University, 1977). Williamson's work is devoted to the question of this relationship and summarizes the growing dissent on the unity of Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah.

⁴I will not provide an extensive bibliography here. See the bibliography in Williamson, *Israel*, particularly the works by Ackroyd, R. L. Braun, Brunet, Caquot, D. N. Freedman, Mosis, Japhet, Lemke, Liver, Myers, Newsome, Welten and Willi. Important studies of the Chronicler's uniqueness from prior to the last couple of decades are M. Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1957), and G. von Rad, *Das Geschichtsbild des chronistischen Werkes* (Stuttgart: 1930). See also the monumental commentary of W. Rudolph, *Chronikbücher* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1955). Important articles since Williamson's bibliography are the following: R. L. Braun, "A Reconsideration of the Chronicler's Attitude Toward the North," *JBL* 96 (1977) 59-62, and "Solomon, the Chosen Temple Builder: the Significance of 1 Chronicles 22, 28, and 29 for the Theology of Chronicles," *JBL* 95 (1976) 581-590; Goldingay, "The Chronicler as Theologian," *BTB* 5 (1975) 99-126; Williamson,

The relationship between the Deuteronomic history and the Chronicler constitutes the synoptic problem of the OT. The issues of redaction and textual history, the author's audience and theology, dates and principles of composition, historical reliability—all so familiar in the NT synoptic problem—are here exaggerated to a new intensity.

In this paper we will examine the Chronicler's treatment of the reign of Asa (2 Chronicles 14-16) as an example of his theological method and as an entrance into several related problems.

I. RETRIBUTION THEOLOGY AND THE CHRONICLER

The Chronicler sets himself to the task of taking the data of redemptive history and organizing them in such a way as to answer the burning theological questions of the post-exilic community. The basic question that must be answered if the faith of the restoration community is to survive is the question of continuity with the past: "After judgment and the imposition of the covenant sanctions in the exile, is God still interested in us? What meaning have the promises of God to David and to Jerusalem when we have no king and the city has been destroyed?" In answering this question the Chronicler gives us not just the David and Solomon who were but the David and Solomon of his messianic expectation⁵—blameless and glorious, all-conquering and enjoying the undivided loyalty of the people of God. For a generation witnessing the re-establishment of temple worship,⁶ at every opportunity afforded by his *Vorlage* he adds material on the duties and organization of the priests and Levites and temple service. The reflex of continuity with the past is legitimacy in the present; the question of legitimacy is an-

"The Accession of Solomon in the Books of Chronicles," *VT* 26 (1976) 351-361; Japhet, "Conquest and Settlement in Chronicles," *JBL* 98 (1979) 205-218. The champion of a positive attitude toward the Chronicler's historical reliability was W. F. Albright, "The Date and Personality of the Chronicler," *JBL* 40 (1921) 104-127, and "The Judicial Reform of Jehoshaphat," *Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume* (ed. Lieberman; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1950) 61-82.

⁵There is considerable debate about the Chronicler's messianism; it centers around the question of the relationship of the Davidic dynasty to the cultic establishment. Some scholars see no messianic expectation in Chronicles, finding that the post-exilic community with its rebuilt temple were treated as a fulfillment of Davidic expectations; others see messianism as important to varying degrees. The unity of Chronicles with Ezra/Nehemiah also enters as an important concern; the absence of all but the briefest mentions of the Davidic dynasty in Ezra/Nehemiah is often read back into Chronicles on the assumption of their unity. The messianic contours of Chronicles are much clearer when it is read on its own. See the following: A. M. Brunet, "La Théologie du Chroniste: Théocratie et Messianisme," *Sacra Pagina* 1 (1959) 384-397; A. Caquot, "Peut-on parler de messianisme dans l'œuvre du Chroniste?," *RTP*, 3me serie, 16 (1966) 110-120; D. N. Freedman, "The Chronicler's Purpose," *CBQ* 23 (1961) 436-442; W. F. Stinespring, "Eschatology in Chronicles," *JBL* 80 (1961) 209-219; W. Rudolph, "Problems of the Books of Chronicles," *VT* 4 (1954) 401-409; Newsome, "Toward a New Understanding of the Chronicler and His Purposes," *JBL* 94 (1975) 201-217.

⁶Independently, though on similar lines of argument, I have come to agree in the main with the conclusions of Freedman, "Chronicler's Purpose," on the redactional history of Chronicles, specifically that the occasion and inspiration of the work was the return of the exiles to Jerusalem and that the author was influenced by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah both in their attention to messianism and the building of the temple. I regard the genealogies as part of the original composition; they may, however, have been added subsequently. At the very least, additions to the genealogies are required for this early a date (1 Chr 3:17-24).

swered with long lists and an extensive genealogy,⁷ thereby securing the right of the Davidic line and the priests who served in his own day.⁸ Since the restoration community is confined to Judah alone, he writes the history of Judah and appears to mention the north only as its history impinges on the south.⁹

There is some debate about all of the above-mentioned theological themes in Chronicles. On one theme of the Chronicler's historiography, however, there is virtually no debate. It is his dominant compositional technique and can be discerned by even a cursory reading of the text. It is called "retribution theology"¹⁰ and represents the Chronicler's conviction that sin always brings judgment and guilt always brings disaster (usually war or illness), whereas obedience and righteousness yield the fruit of peace and prosperity. In a number of the nonsynoptic passages the Chronicler specifically announces this as his literary program. Consider the following:

Be careful to follow all the commands of the LORD your God, that you may possess this good land and pass it on as an inheritance to your descendants forever. And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever (1 Chr 28:8b-9).

If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land (2 Chr 7:14).

This is what the LORD says: "You have abandoned me; therefore, I now abandon you" (2 Chr 12:5).

The LORD is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you (2 Chr 15:2).

Beyond these specific announcements of the principle of retribution is the Chronicler's untiring effort to demonstrate it in his reshaping of the accounts of individual reigns.¹¹ We will take examples from the reigns of Saul, Rehoboam and Joash.

⁷The function of genealogies in the literature of the ancient Near East has been studied by R. R. Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* (New Haven: Yale University, 1977). His study is employed in the analysis of 1 Chronicles 1-9 by W. L. Osborne, *The Genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1-9* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dropsie University, Philadelphia, 1979). See also M. D. Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies* (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), and Japhet, "Conquest and Settlement." For the Chronicler's other lists, see 1 Chr 11:10-12:40; 15:5-24; 23:1-27:34; 2 Chr 17:14-19; 29:12-14.

⁸For the Chronicler as a legitimist see Freedman, "Chronicler's Purpose," 436-437, 440-441.

⁹Among the most hotly debated items in the study of Chronicles is the question of the author's attitude to the north. Once again, when Chronicles is read on its own and not as a unit with Ezra/Nehemiah, the picture is considerably different. For a survey of the problem see Williamson, *Israel in the Books of Chronicles*; Newsome, "New Understanding"; Braun, "Reconsideration."

¹⁰There is a good summary of retribution theology in Chronicles in Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, 203-210. See also the dissertation of G. E. Schaefer, *The Significance of Seeking God in the Purpose of the Chronicler* (unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, 1972). The caution of Rudolph is well taken: There is no question that the Chronicler delights in demonstrating his conviction in the whole course of Israel's history, but it is not as a barren unalterable principle taken to logical extremes (Rudolph, "Problems," pp. 405-406).

¹¹Compare in addition to the examples given the reshaping of the following reigns: Jehoshaphat (1 Kgs 22:41-50//2 Chr 19:1-20:37), Amaziah (2 Kgs 14:8-20//2 Chr 25:14-28), Uzziah (2 Kgs 15:1-7//2 Chr 26:1-23), Ahaz (2 Kgs 16:1-20//2 Chr 28:1-36), Manasseh (2 Kgs 21:1-18//2 Chr 33:1-20).

1. *The reign of Saul.* The account in 1 Sam 31:12-13 mentions the recovery and burial of Saul's body, essentially parallel to 1 Chr 10:11-12—but the Chronicler goes on to add the theological evaluation that Saul died because he had rebelled against the Lord, because he did not keep the Lord's commands and because he sought a medium rather than seeking the Lord. Sin brings punishment—in this case, death and the loss of the kingdom.

2. *The reign of Rehoboam.* The Deuteronomist reports (1 Kgs 14:21-29) that Judah did evil during his reign and that Shishaq despoiled Jerusalem—but no causal connection is drawn. The Chronicler takes the same data and carefully breaks it into chronological periods of righteousness, sin, and then punishment (2 Chr 11:4-12:4): Rehoboam obeys God in not attacking the north (11:4); the faithful priests and Levites come to Jerusalem even from the north to side with him, along with all who had set their hearts to seek the Lord (11:13-17); for three years Rehoboam walked in the way of David and Solomon.¹² Rehoboam builds fortifications and has numerous progeny and wise sons (11:18-22). But after the three years of righteousness, presumably in his fourth year, "he and all Israel with him abandoned the law of the LORD. Because they had been unfaithful to the LORD, Shishaq king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem in the fifth year of King Rehoboam" (12:1-2). A prophet reinforces the point: "You have abandoned me; therefore, I now abandon you to Shishaq" (12:5).¹³ Because Rehoboam humbled himself,¹⁴ the Lord relented and he was not totally destroyed. Note the sequence of righteousness-blessing, sin-disaster, repentance-restoration; note also the way in which the Chronicler has introduced a chronological schema to effect the immediacy of these cause-effect cycles.¹⁵

3. *The reign of Joash.* The account in 2 Kings 12 reports that after his rescue from the coup of Athaliah, Joash cooperated with the priest Jehoiada in religious reforms (12:1-16). Late in his life he faced an attack from Hazael of Damascus, which was averted by payment of tribute from the temple and palace (12:17-18). Then comes the death notice: assassination by his own officials (12:19-21). Contrast this with the Chronicler's account (2 Chronicles 24). Joash was pious only so long as Jehoiada lived; after his death "they abandoned the temple of the LORD

¹²When one compares the portrait of Solomon in Kings, it is easy to see why the Deuteronomist would never liken a righteous king to Solomon. See Braun, "Solomonic Apologetic in Chronicles," *JBL* 92 (1973) 503-516, and Williamson, "Accession of Solomon."

¹³It is not stated what this "abandoning" was. The statement that a king abandoned the Lord in Chronicles is almost as formulaic as the Deuteronomic condemnations of the sins of Jeroboam in Kings. See Schaefer, *Seeking*, 67-70.

¹⁴Humbling oneself is another of the Chronicler's favorite themes; 8 of 11 occurrences in the OT of the verb *kāna'* are found in Chronicles. Its occurrence in Solomon's prayer in 2 Chr 7:14 sets the pattern of repentance for the kings of Judah. See the discussion in Osborne, *Genealogies*, 55, and in Schaefer, *Seeking*, 72-75.

¹⁵The comment of Wellhausen is helpful: "Joram, Joash, and Ahaz, who are all depicted as reprobates, build no fortresses, command no great armies, have no wealth of wives and children; it is only in the case of pious kings (to the number of whom even Rehoboam and Abijah also belong) that the blessing of God also manifests itself by such tokens. Power is the index of piety, with which it accordingly rises and falls" (*Prolegomena*, 209).

the God of their fathers. . . . Because of their guilt, God's anger came upon Judah and Jerusalem" (24:18). They would not respond to the prophets the Lord sent (24:19). Finally the son of Jehoiada, a prophet named Zechariah, came to denounce Joash; Joash has him killed, and while he is dying he says, "May the LORD see this and call you to account" (24:22). The very next year Hazael brings retribution (24:23): "Because Judah had forsaken the LORD, the God of their fathers, judgment was executed on Joash" (24:24). The Chronicler also gives the reason for the assassination plot: a result of his murder of Zechariah the prophet (24:25). Once again a careful attention to chronological sequence provides the means by which the Chronicler can introduce his retributive concerns. The theology of retribution is a transparent concern for the Chronicler, and examples can be taken from almost any reign.

II. THE REIGN OF ASA

Now we turn to the reign of Asa as illustrative of the Chronicler's theological method.¹⁶ First we will look at the account in Kings (1 Kgs 15:9-24). The Deuteronomist tells us that Asa ruled for 41 years (15:10) and that he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord (15:11). His religious reforms included removing the sacrificial prostitutes and idols, and even deposing his grandmother for her idolatry (15:12-13). His heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life (15:14). Throughout his reign he had war with Baasha of Israel (15:16-17). To repel Baasha, Asa paid Ben-Hadad to open a second front to the north of Israel. Asa then dismantled Baasha's fortifications at Ramah and used them to reinforce Geba and Mizpah (15:18-22). In his old age his feet became diseased and resulted in his death (15:23-24). The Deuteronomistic account contains no cause-effect arrangements nor any chronological notes for Asa's reign.

In turning to the Chronicler's account (2 Chronicles 14-16), we note immediately the much greater length of the account: 48 verses (compared to the 15 in Kings). Why so much extra material? A partial answer to that question is the theological difficulties that the Chronicler would feel with the Kings account. At least two problems would confront the Chronicler: (1) If Asa was such a righteous king, why does he have war throughout his reign? Rest from enemies, peace and prosperity are the lot of the righteous king.¹⁷ Blessing for faithfulness is the expected norm. (2) If severe illness is the result of sin and guilt, why would the righteous Asa die of a foot disease?¹⁸ Will Asa be the example to overturn the Chronicler's retributive historiography? Let us review the account to see how the Chron-

¹⁶In my presentation at this point I acknowledge a particular debt to W. Rudolph, "Der Aufbau der Asa-Geschichte," *VT* 2 (1952) 367-371, and to F. Michaeli, *Les Livres des Chroniques, d'Esdras et de Néhémie* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1967) 179-185.

¹⁷Disobedience brings defeat and disaster. Jehoram is defeated by the Edomites, Ahaz and Joash by Syria, and Zedekiah by Babylon (2 Chr 21:8-10, 16; 28:5-8, 17-18; 24:23-24; 36:17-20). Victory belongs to the righteous Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat and Uzziah. See Osborne, *Genealogies*, 40-42. Rest from enemies as a reward for righteousness is programmatic in Chronicles: 1 Chr 22:8-9, 18; see in the Asa account 2 Chr 14:5-6; 15:15; see also 20:29-30. On the use of the rest motif see Schaefer, *Seeking*, 113-114, and Braun, "Solomon the Chosen," 582 ff.

¹⁸For illness as a result of sin see the accounts of the death of Joram (2 Chr 21:16-20) and the leprosy of Uzziah (26:16-23). The parallel accounts are strikingly different (2 Kgs 8:22-24; 15:5-7); the Deuteronomist does not even mention the nature of Joram's death.

icler brings his theology into the narrative. The chronological notes that the Chronicler introduces into his *Vorlage* provide a framework.¹⁹

1. *2 Chr 14:1 (MT 13:23)*. The Chronicler notes that after the accession of Asa the land was quiet for "ten years." There is an immediate contrast with the account in Kings, which describes warfare between Baasha and Asa "throughout their reigns" (1 Kgs 15:16). The Chronicler goes on to elaborate on the blessing and peace enjoyed by Asa with a lengthy section of material unique to his account through 2 Chr 15:16. Apart from the agreement of 14:2-3 (MT 1-2) with 1 Kgs 15:11-12, the material of the Chronicler's account is not known from any other source. 2 Chr 14:4-15:15 is essentially an interpolation between 1 Kgs 15:12 and 15:13. There are three speeches (14:7; 14:11; 15:1-7),²⁰ further details on the extent and activities of the reform (14:4-5; 15:8), the battle with Zerah the Ethiopian (14:9-10, 12-15) and the fortifications and mobilization.²¹

2. *2 Chr 15:10*. The Chronicler records an assembly in the third month of the "fifteenth" year, a covenant renewal incorporating large numbers who had gone over to Asa from the northern kingdom.²² The emphasis is on seeking the Lord.²³ The Chronicler resumes with his source in 15:16-18 (=1 Kgs 15:13-16).

3. *2 Chr 15:19*. There was no (more) war until the "thirty-fifth" year of Asa. Here the Chronicler seems to correct—almost negate—the Kings account (1 Kgs 15:16), which describes war between Baasha and Asa all their days.²⁴ This modification is in accordance with his emphasis on peace and rest in the reign of Asa (14:1, 5-7; 15:3-7).

4. *2 Chr 16:1*. The first recorded conflict of Baasha and Asa is set in Asa's

¹⁹Obviously the use of a Hebrew synopsis is valuable at this point. See Ben David, *Parallels in the Bible* (Jerusalem: Carta, 1972), or P. Vannutelli, *Libri Synoptici Veteris Testamenti*, 2 vols. (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1931).

²⁰The Chronicler is noted for his introduction of speeches in the nonsynoptic portions as a ready vehicle for his theological pronouncements. Of the 165 speeches in Chronicles, 95 have parallels in Samuel/Kings (Schaefer, *Seeking*, 29). On the speeches in Chronicles see Braun, *The Significance of 1 Chronicles 22, 28, and 29 for the Structure and Theology of the Work of the Chronicler* (unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Concordia Theological Seminary, 1971) 159-168, 225-251; G. von Rad, "The Levitical Sermons in I and II Chronicles," *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966) 267-280; Schaefer, *Seeking*, 24-52; S. R. Driver, "The Speeches in Chronicles," *The Expositor*, 5th series, 1 (1895) 241-256, and 2 (1896) 286-308; C. Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech* (trans. White; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967) 163-168.

²¹See the quote from Wellhausen in n. 15.

²²See n. 9.

²³See the discussion in Schaefer, *Seeking*, 47-48.

²⁴The warfare at issue was probably razzias rather than full-scale mobilization. Kings can say there was warfare while the Chronicler only has in mind the full mobilization.

“thirty-sixth” year.²⁵ As a righteous king, Asa is victorious; but he has not trusted the Lord as he did when Zerah attacked (14:11; 15:8). Instead he was involved in a foreign alliance, as a result of which Hanani the seer gives the fourth speech unique to Chronicles in this account, a speech condemning Asa’s disloyalty and announcing the retribution: war for Asa from then on.²⁶ In anger Asa imprisons the prophet and oppresses some of his subjects (16:7-10).²⁷

5. *2 Chr 16:12*. In his “thirty-ninth” year of reign Asa contracts a foot disease of some sort, becomes seriously ill, but still will not seek the Lord—looking instead to physicians.

6. *2 Chr 16:13*. He dies in the “forty-first” year of his reign. Chronicles adds details also on his funeral and burial.

Once again the cycles of blessing and prosperity in obedience and of disease and illness in disobedience have been demonstrated. The treatment of Asa’s reign is quite typical for the Chronicler. He has done what we would have expected.

III. PROBLEMS AND APPROACHES

But one substantial problem remains—one of the oldest problems in the study of the OT: the chronology of the divided monarchy. 1 Kgs 15:33 records that Baasha ruled for 24 years, while 1 Kgs 16:8 reports that Elah succeeded Baasha in the twenty-sixth year of Asa. It is obvious that Baasha could not have been alive in Asa’s thirty-sixth year where 2 Chr 16:1 places him—unless Asa had been coregent with both Rehoboam and Abijah. The LXX variant at 16:1 does not supply a solution but only makes the gap greater.²⁸ In confronting this case Thiele says, “It is obvious that if the synchronism of 2 Chronicles 16:1 is accepted as historically correct, the chronological pattern of Kings is completely shattered.”²⁹ This is an

²⁵The LXX reads “thirty-eighth year” though other recensional evidence agrees with the MT. The LXX reading should probably be viewed as an assimilation toward 16:12 and places the disobedience in warfare and the harm of the prophet in the year immediately preceding contracting the disease. The retribution is usually in the following year, as seen in the examples from the reigns of Rehoboam and Joash. Even leaving 16:1 is in accord with retribution in the following year: In the thirty-sixth year, Baasha attacks; it would presumably be in the following year that Ben-Hadad opens his second front to Baasha’s north (thirty-seventh year), and the thirty-eighth year when the fortification at Ramah is destroyed, Geba and Mizpah are built and the prophet comes to condemn Asa. Then in the thirty-ninth—that is, the following—year, the foot disease afflicts Asa.

²⁶On the role of the prophets in Chronicles see Willi, *Die Chronik als Auslegung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1972) 216-229 and J. Myers, *I Chronicles*, lxxv-lxxvii. Almost every king has his prophetic counterpart who functions as a guardian of the theocracy. Prophetic addresses are found in the reigns of David, Rehoboam, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, Joash, Amaziah, Uzziah, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Josiah and Zedekiah.

²⁷Other examples of condemnation for involvement in foreign alliances are found in the reigns of Jehoshaphat (2 Chr 19:1-20:37) and Ahaz (28:1-36). Foreign alliances show a lack of trust in the Lord; the pious king stands alone as did Rehoboam against Shishaq and Asa against Zerah.

²⁸See n. 25.

²⁹E. R. Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 60. Albright’s acceptance of 2 Chr 16:1 as sound set his dealing with the data of Kings into disarray. See Thiele’s discussion.

important test case: Thiele's carefully structured chronology, which has become something of a mainstay in the evangelical apologetic for the reliability of the transmission of the text, is here pitted against a passage where an appeal to primitive textual error³⁰ can scarcely be adequate. Such an appeal would require alterations not only in 2 Chr 16:1 but also in 15:19 and 16:12. A variety of options is open for approaching this problem. We will examine two polar examples.

1. *A theological approach.* Perhaps the immediately apparent—and easiest—approach to this problem is to repudiate any harmonization pressure and to allow the texts to stand as they are. It is to acknowledge that Chronicles is through and through a theological essay and to allow the Chronicler to take such liberties as necessary to demonstrate his points. One could not then allege deceit or error on the part of the compiler: The numerous points at which he assumes the reader's familiarity with the account in Samuel/Kings shows that he is using the Deuteronomistic history as a "control" to an audience well familiar with that account.³¹ In this respect the problem of historiographical typology is prior to and relieves concerns about inerrancy.

Not only is this approach easy and apparent, it is also powerful: It can swallow up almost any problem under the label "theologizing." The problem with it is that it also swallows up the factuality of the Scriptures. A cavalier invoking of this solution can be as arbitrary as any other special pleading through appeal to *ad hoc* harmonization devices. Nevertheless this approach does raise the necessary question about assuming that the presence of narrative style in Chronicles also requires that the author be writing an account that would be acceptable by historical positivist standards. Lest we do violence of another kind to the Bible, the historiographical canons of the ancient Near East become a crucial object of research.

2. *A harmonization approach.*³² Another avenue is that taken by Thiele himself.³³ Noting that Rehoboam had reigned for 17 years and Abijah 3, Thiele suggests that the dates of 2 Chr 15:19 and 16:1 are references to the date of the schism (931 B.C. for Thiele). Thus he is able to subtract twenty years from the references to Asa's thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth years, which then become the fifteenth and sixteenth years of his reign and synchronize quite nicely with the years of Baasha. The passage is reconstructed as a double account with the following sequence of events: The victory celebration after the battle with Zerah in the fifteenth year included large numbers who had defected from the northern kingdom to join Asa; this defection prompted Baasha to fortify Ramah to prevent further desertion, "so that no one could go out or come in to Asa" (16:1).

³⁰A primitive textual error is one that is quite early in transmission with the result that no extant document attests the correct text.

³¹I hope to write a paper shortly discussing the passages where the account in Chronicles is not clear without a prior knowledge on the part of the intended audience of the material in Samuel/Kings.

³²When the difficulty in the passage is as intractable as is the case with this example from the Asa narrative, any harmonization runs the risk of undermining the Biblical authority it sought to establish by implausible distortions of the intent of one or both authors and of the plain meaning of the text.

³³Thiele, *Numbers*, 57-61. It is somewhat of an anachronism to label this as "Thiele's approach." Keil was already able to describe it as the approach of "the older commentators"; see his comment at 1 Chr 16:1-6.

The solution is quite ingenious. Can we follow it? I think not, and for the following reasons: (1) Of the hundreds of bits of data for the chronology of the divided monarchy, this would be the only occasion of dating from the schism. It would be unique to this passage and it is therefore arbitrary to appeal to it—another example of special pleading. (2) It ignores the plain sense of the text that these were the thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth years “of Asa’s reign.”³⁴ The formulae used for these regnal years are identical to the formulae used throughout Chronicles³⁵ as well as in Kings and generally throughout the OT to cite the regnal years of individual kings. While it is certainly allowable that the Chronicler used a doublet account to achieve his purposes, it is hard to argue that the Chronicler intended anything other than the thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth years of Asa’s reign. Redating by eliminating the twenty years of earlier reigns in Judah also does not ease the inerrancy question: The specter remains that the Chronicler may have misunderstood some sources which dated from the schism, for this was certainly not his intent or practice. (3) Thiele’s reconstruction would also play havoc with the Chronicler’s argument and theological method. While in effect emending 15:19 and 16:1, Thiele leaves the date in 16:12 untouched. This results in the following sequence: victory celebration in fifteenth year, attack by Baasha in the sixteenth year, the rebuke of the prophet and his imprisonment, all presumably in the sixteenth through eighteenth years, and the foot disease in the thirty-ninth year. The foot disease as retribution would come over 20 years after the offense. The cycles of obedience-blessing and sin-punishment that everywhere characterize the Chronicler are thereby destroyed. If 16:12 is also reduced by twenty years so that the foot disease is contracted in the nineteenth year, then it took 22 years for it to kill him—and that will not work either. (4) Thiele’s method would also fail to take account of the Chronicler’s careful introduction of chronological patterns into his accounts of various reigns to achieve his theological purposes.³⁶ The example from the reign of Rehoboam has been discussed above; the treatment of Josiah is also particularly interesting.³⁷

It is difficult to escape the Chronicler’s dates or intentions. We are left with the first alternative discussed or with invalidating the approach to the chronology of the divided monarchy taken by Thiele.³⁸ For this latter alternative the growing evidence for the existence of alternative Hebrew text types as described in the local-text theory requires that attention be given to the variant readings in the chronological data of the OG LXX. The probability that the variant data were al-

³⁴Keil rejected this solution for this reason. He concluded that the accounts cannot be reconciled and that the text must be erroneous.

³⁵1 Chr 26:31; 2 Chr 3:2; 13:1; 15:10; 16:12, 13; 17:7; 34:8; 36:22.

³⁶The Chronicler introduces a variety of chronological notes not found in Samuel/Kings. This is a partial list: 2 Chr 11:17; 12:2; 13:23; 14:5; 15:10, 19; 16:1, 12, 13; 17:7; 21:20; 24:15, 23; 27:5, 8; 29:3; 34:3; 36:21.

³⁷The Chronicler organizes his material chronologically in the eighth (34:1, 3), twelfth (34:3) and eighteenth (34:8; 35:19) years of Josiah’s reign. There are harmonization difficulties with the account in Kings. Kings appears to organize geographically: The reform begins with the discovery of the law book in the temple, spreads through the city, and then through the nation. The Chronicler’s dates, so long suspect, have been accepted with new confidence as reflecting the religious counterpart of political developments; see F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman, “Josiah’s Revolt Against Assyria,” *JNES* 12 (1953) 56-58.

³⁸This would be in accord with his own statement cited earlier in this paper (see also n. 29).

ready present in the LXX translator's *Vorlage* eliminates the possibility of dismissing Greek readings as late and inaccurate. Shenkel's pilot study in this area has not produced any systematic chronology,³⁹ but it has led its author to the conclusion that the OG chronology rested on a presumed Hebrew original and is more accurate in some accounts than the MT chronology, which he regards as a secondary development.⁴⁰ There is also evidence that the Chronicler may have been following a Hebrew recension used in the OG.⁴¹ Yet these problems of relating the synoptic parallel chronologies of Samuel/Kings and Chronicles are not necessarily related to the questions posed by the nonsynoptic chronological notices where the sources for the Chronicler's data are not known.

Barring further epigraphical discoveries that might show Thiele's chronology to be unquestionably invalid, or further discoveries of Biblical texts that might provide information on the history of recensions and their chronologies, the two options here outlined for approaching our passage make for something of an impasse. Each approach relates immediately to much larger issues of OT interpretation and theology. (1) In an area where the textual reliability of the OT has been most questioned, Thiele provided a masterful solution and a firm chronology. It had appeared, and much evangelicalism continues to agree, that Thiele's work was the showcase proof that God had by his singular care and providence kept the text pure in all ages.⁴² But increasingly Thiele's work comes into question. (2) On the other approach the basic issues of the inerrancy debate clamor for attention. I would like to suggest several attendant questions where evangelicals must do more homework in confronting the "leave-it-alone—it's-theology" approach. (a) One of these questions comes primarily from anthropological evidence. The philosophical question of "Greek mind-set" or "Hebrew, Oriental, African mind-set" has been around for a long time (and it is related), but the "hard data" for diversity in the concepts of historiography in different cultures come to us from anthropology. It is inescapable that twentieth-century western scholarship brings to bear an historiographical grid that is essentially dictated by historical positivism in our culture. We are not entitled to assume a similar grid for the authors of the OT. Further investigation of historiographic concepts in the ancient Near East is crucial. An example of the kind of question that is pressing is the approach of Wilson to the genealogies of the OT.⁴³ Wilson

³⁹J. D. Shenkel, *Chronology and Recensional Development in the Greek Text of Kings* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1968) 26. Contrast D. W. Gooding, "An Impossible Shrine," in *VT* 9/4 (1965) 405-420.

⁴⁰Shenkel, *Chronology*, 110-111.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 101-102. For the current state of studies in the text of Chronicles consult the following: Lemke, "The Synoptic Problem in the Chronicler's History," *HTR* 58 (1965) 349-363; L. C. Allen, *The Greek Chronicles*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1974), and "Further Thoughts on an Old Recension of Reigns in Paraleipomena," *HTR* 61 (1968) 483-491; Gerlemann, *Synoptic Studies in the Old Testament* (Lund: Gleerup, 1942); Shenkel, "Comparative Study of the Synoptic Parallels in 1 Paraleipomena and 1-2 Reigns," *HTR* 62 (1969) 63-85; S. Talmon, "The Samaritan Pentateuch," *JJS* 2 (1951) 144-150; Cross, "Contributions of the Qumran Discoveries to the Study of the Biblical Text," *IEJ* 16 (1966) 81-95 (reprinted in *Qumran and the History of the Biblical Text* [ed. Cross and Talmon] 278-292); R. Klein, "Supplements in the Paraleipomena: a Rejoinder," *HTR* 61 (1968) 492-495; E. C. Ulrich, Jr., *The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus* (HSM 19; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978).

⁴²Westminster Confession of Faith I:8.

⁴³See n. 7 for bibliography.

examines the anthropological evidence from many societies on the function of the genre genealogy. Among the aspects of genealogies that he investigates is fluidity, the capacity of genealogies in many societies to alter lineage statements to adjust to new—primarily sociological—structures. Moving from broadly anthropological concerns, Wilson then investigates extra-Biblical evidence from the ancient Near East and finds that fluidity also characterizes these genealogies. He then turns to the Biblical materials for a similar investigation and also concludes that fluidity is found among the Biblical genealogies. He concludes that conflicting or varying genealogical statements in the Bible may be due to functional changes.⁴⁴ In short, for Wilson the genre of genealogy does not function in the ancient Near East in the same manner as it does in western societies. Wilson has given a good example of the types of historiographic questions that demand further investigation. If his approach to these questions is correct the genealogical statements of the Bible ought not to be artificially harmonized as is often done. (b) Another question comes from the area of the presumed sources of the Chronicler. Simultaneous to that singular care and providence of God in the protection of the Biblical text there is the corruption of that text during transmission. Current evidence is that the Chronicler used a recension of Samuel/Kings at variance with the text type of the MT. If this is the case, we have an analogous situation to NT citations of the OT, where the text cited from the OT by the NT is, to the best of our text-critical faculties, not the actual text of the OT. In these cases we ordinarily say that inerrancy does not apply, that inerrancy cannot be used for text-critical decisions. What is the principial difference, then, if the Chronicler's citation of Samuel/Kings is also based on an inferior text, and one that happens to contain a number? The principial difference must be more than simply the degree to which the discrepancy is transparent. (c) A related question involves the matter of dischronologization. Most persons subscribing to inerrancy are willing to allow the evangelists to repackage material chronologically where it suits their distinctive portraits of Christ. For example, we are satisfied if there was only one cleansing of the temple instead of two. Similarly we are satisfied if materials are dischronologized in Exodus, in 2 Samuel 23 or in the account of Josiah's reform.⁴⁵ Once again the question must be asked if there is a principial difference when that dischronologization involves a number—for example, a regnal year. This problem is usually handled by appeal to ambiguity: "John does not state or insist that the cleansing of the temple was early in Jesus' ministry, and we are not entitled to insist that he taught it was." While this approach may be satisfactory in the NT, it fails in the OT histories. The books of Samuel/Kings are histories in which it is implicit that events are presented in the sequence of reigns. The implicit character of chronological ordering in these passages restricts the appeal to ambiguity. Is dischronologization acceptable only so long as it is ambiguous, only so long as no numbers are used?

These questions demand attention. At the outset of the paper it was mentioned that the synoptic questions in the OT are even more intense than in the NT, and it is in the OT that these issues must be discussed. In wrestling with the

⁴⁴See Wilson, *Genealogy*, 137-202. Wilson does not himself discuss the genealogies in Chronicles. His study, however, is foundational in the dissertation of Osborne. See n. 7 for bibliography.

⁴⁵See n. 37.

phenomena of Scripture we must keep our eyes focused on the Scripture's teaching about itself, its perfections, its beauty, its truth and power. To paraphrase the statement of the prophet Azariah to Asa, let us "be strong and not give up, for our work will be rewarded."