

M. Christine Tetley, *The Reconstructed Chronology of the Divided Kingdom* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005).

This book is a revision of Mrs. Tetley's doctoral dissertation on the biblical chronology from the death of Solomon until the fall of Samaria. Eisenbrauns has done a fine job in formatting the book, providing a wide-page layout that is useful for displaying the numerous charts and tables. Indexes of authors, scriptural references, and royal names are provided. The author sees as her goal the presentation of a chronology that would replace the work of Edwin Thiele for this period of time. Overall, the system of Thiele and those who built on his research is characterized as too complicated, since it is based on giving consideration to whether the two kingdoms might have used a different calendar, or whether some regnal years and synchronisms might have been measured from the start of a coregency, or whether the first partial year of a monarch was considered his "zero" year or his "first" year (accession and non-accession counting, respectively). Dr. Tetley therefore sees the need for a fresh approach to the chronology of the divided kingdom. Her hypotheses are spelled out (p. 118) as follows: Only one dating system is employed in 1-2 Kings for both Judah and Israel, and that dating system was invariant over the time of the divided kingdoms. The regnal years of kings were counted from the day of accession, in the same way that modern people reckon birthdays, and so there is no need to consider whether the calendar year started in Nisan or Tishri. Regnal years were not exact, but were rounded up or down, with no explanation given of how this was done. No coregencies or rival reigns will be considered, since they are "witnessed neither by the regnal formulas nor any other textual evidence." Tetley's method can be described as a *tour de force* of developing a chronology based on these simplifying assumptions. It is only secondarily a text-critical methodology, which is Tetley's own characterization of her approach.

The second distinctive of the author's method is her endeavor to examine all recensions, Hebrew and Greek, of the Books of Kings, and to determine which recension, or combination of recensions, points to the original chronological data. Chapter 2 provides the background of these recensions. Chapter 3 then has useful charts for comparison of the chronological data—regn lengths and synchronisms—found in these various textual traditions. Chapter 4 looks more closely at c_2 , a tenth-century AD manuscript in the Lucianic family. For the second half of the period of the divided monarchies, Tetley offers the opinion that " c_2 is the only extant text to give synchronisms and regnal years that provide an internally consistent chronology for this period" (p. 63). To the author's credit, she nevertheless cites scholars who have decided that the Lucianic MSS in general, and c_2 in particular, are next to worthless for determining the chronology of the period. The reader is thus forewarned that the chronology about to be constructed will be in contradiction to the judgment of many critical studies of textual traditions in the Books of Kings.

After a chapter dealing with regnal formulas, Chapters 6 through 9 develop the Reconstructed Chronology, as based on the presuppositions presented earlier and the predilection for Greek texts, particularly c_2 , over the MT. As mentioned previously, the

methodology here is primarily presuppositional, not text-critical. This can be seen in the various instances where Tetley finds no textual support for her reconstruction, and indeed where all relevant texts contradict it, but the logical consequences of the presuppositions are allowed to override all evidence—textual, inscriptional, or otherwise. Even the text-critical method, which can usually be bent to favor an author’s presuppositions, is discarded by Tetley when it contradicts her presuppositions. The treatment given to the Tyrian king list illustrates this approach. This list, as cited in Josephus’s *Against Apion*, allows a calculation of the time that elapsed between the start of construction of Solomon’s Temple and the founding of Rome. Once the date for the founding of the Temple is calculated by this method, the biblical data for the regnal years of Solomon give 932 BC as the date of the beginning of the divided kingdoms, plus or minus two years at the maximum (see William Barnes, *Studies in the Chronology of the Divided Monarchy of Israel*, 29-55). This agrees remarkably well with Thiele’s date of 931 BC, but it contradicts the *Reconstructed Chronology* date (981 BC) by forty-nine years. To deal with this, Tetley starts by accepting the finding of Barnes, F. M. Cross, and other scholars that the Tyrian king Balezeros (*Ba’li-manzer*) is attested in the inscriptions of Shalmaneser III as giving tribute in Shalmaneser’s eighteenth year, but she assigns this to 885 BC, forty-four years earlier than the 841 BC acknowledged by Assyriologists. The 841 date is also consistent with Thiele’s dates for Jehu (841-814 BC), who gave tribute at the same time as Balezeros. Here the Tyrian data, the conventional interpretation of the Assyrian data, and the biblical data agree, and they all contradict Tetley’s chronology. The wisest course, once so many contradictions had been encountered, would have been to modify or discard the various presuppositions used to construct that chronology. Instead, Tetley added to them: she assumed that the Tyrian chronology needed to be extended, and the presumption was made that Dido, founder of Carthage, did not leave Tyre in Pygmalion’s seventh year, but in his forty-seventh, for which there is no textual warrant. Regarding the tribute of Balezeros in the eighteenth year of Shalmaneser III, Tetley assumed that the usual interpretation of the Assyrian data must be wrong (since it was not in keeping with her assumptions), so she rejected the Assyrian Eponym Canon for all years before the Bur-Sagale eclipse of 763 BC. She further assumed that the Israelite king *Iaúá* who gave tribute to Shalmaneser at the same time as Balezeros was Joram, not Jehu, and in 885 BC instead of in 841 BC. Tetley adds extra presuppositions like this throughout her work, so that her system ends up being more complicated than the system of Thiele that she rejected as too complicated.

Tetley’s rejection of the Assyrian Eponym Canon for all dates before 763 BC will not find a ready acceptance among Assyriologists. The rationale for rejection is an extra name during the reign of Adad-Nirari III in one list of eponyms. Thiele (*The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 3rd ed., 73-76) explains this extra name, and shows that the Eponym Canon is consistent with the Khorsabad King List and the other copies of the Eponym Canon when the single extra eponym, found in only one inscription, is recognized as an erroneous addition. Thiele’s treatment shows the proper usage of the text-critical method, which cannot be said of Tetley’s handling of the same Assyrian texts. When she claims that an extra twenty-two eponyms are missing from the reign of Adad-Nirari III, no Assyrian inscriptions can be cited that give these eponyms, nor is any explanation given how this stretching out Adad-Nirari’s reign to fifty years can be compatible with the twenty-eight years given to him in the Assyrian King List. It is

Thiele who uses properly the text-critical method in studying these data, whereas the approach of *Reconstructed Chronology* is clearly presupposition-driven, not text-driven.

Has this approach been able to make sense out of the biblical data for the divided monarchies? There are thirty-three monarchs involved in the two kingdoms for this period of time. The reign lengths given for these monarchs in Tetley's chronology differ from any text, MT or Greek, in eight cases, six of which are more than the one year that Tetley could attribute to "rounding." For seven of the eight cases, all Greek MSS agree with the MT, *contra* Tetley's figures. For synchronisms between these kings the statistics are equally bad: of the thirty-seven synchronisms between Israel and Judah that can be constructed from Tetley's charts, twelve of them find no support in any textual tradition, MT or Greek. In eleven of these cases, the difference is more than one year. Also in eleven cases, all Greek MSS that give a synchronism agree with the MT against Tetley. The *Reconstructed Chronology*, therefore, is in poor agreement with the extant Greek data or with any combination of Greek and Hebrew data. Its chronology is ultimately not determined by the underlying biblical texts, nor is it determined by the chronology of Assyria, Tyre, or any other surrounding nation. It is determined by the author's presuppositions.

If we apply a similar test to Thiele's chronology for the same period, we find that all Thiele's figures for reign lengths are in harmony with the MT. With regard to synchronisms, Thiele rejected the synchronisms between Hezekiah and Hoshea in 2 Kgs 18, and he also failed to understand the Hoshea/Ahaz synchronism of 2 Kgs 17:1. These synchronisms are all dealt with adequately by the scholars who corrected Thiele's deficiencies, most notably by Leslie McFall. The Thiele/McFall chronology has no cases in which the reign lengths and synchronisms do not have textual backing, compared to the twenty cases in which Tetley's chronology has no textual support. This disparity is even more striking when we consider that McFall uses a notation that is exact to within a six-month period in most cases, compared to Tetley's use of "rounding" to account for small disparities. Surely a system that uses precision and matches all the data is to be preferred to a system that is inexact and still conflicts with the data that supposedly support it.

For Tetley's purposes, the considerations of when the calendar year started and whether accession or non-accession reckoning was used are basically irrelevant, because the small differences that these issues determine can all be covered by her inexact "rounding." The real cause of the difference in the dates given by Tetley's chronology and that of Thiele, McFall, and the Assyrian data is Tetley's principle that there were no coregencies and no rival reigns during the time of the divided monarchies. This presupposition leads to statements that are clearly erroneous. For example, in discarding the data for a rivalry between Tibni and Omri, Tetley states that the texts that show that the rivalry began in Asa's twenty-seventh year (1 Kgs 16:15) and ended with the death of Tibni in Asa's thirty-first year (1 Kgs 16:31) are not compatible with Omri reigning six years in Tirzah before he built Samaria. This is a serious misunderstanding of the passage; the death of Tibni and the founding of Samaria are separate events that are not assigned to the same year in any text. Yet based on the misunderstanding that causes her to reject these synchronisms to the regnal years of Asa, Tetley goes on to conclude that "[i]t is evident that Tibni never reigned" (p. 139), contradicting 1 Kgs 16:21, and that "[n]either the MT pattern nor the OG/L [Old Greek/Lucianic] pattern explain the datum at 16:23 for Omri's accession in Asa's 31st year" (p. 41). Here, as in at least sixteen other

places, Tetley charges the Scriptures (particularly, the MT) with error, whereas it is her presuppositions, not the Scripture, that are the problem. In all these cases it should have been stated that the real conflict is with the author's presuppositions, not with the Scripture. Unfortunately this is not done, which would lead many readers to wrongly conclude that the MT is repeatedly in error in its chronological data. Another instance of misinterpretation of the scriptural data is found in Tetley's treatment of the only other example of a rival reign, when Pekah became leader over Ephraim while Menahem was reigning in Samaria. One part of the evidence for this rivalry is the chronological data and the other part is the various scriptural texts that imply that there were two rival kingdoms in the north in the time of Menahem. In dealing with one such text, Hos 5:5, Tetley writes (p. 116) that the *vav* between "Israel" and "Ephraim" should be translated as "even, indeed," so that there is no need to treat Israel and Ephraim as distinct entities. Since it was necessary to read the text in its original Hebrew to come to this conclusion, one wonders why it was not read more carefully. The construction has not just one *vav* but two, one before "Israel" and one before "Ephraim." This is the Hebrew way of expressing "both . . . and," as in Zech 5:4 and many other Scriptures. By saying "both Israel and Ephraim," the verse definitely implies two rival states; furthermore, the LXX here also says "both . . . and" (καὶ . . . καὶ). Since it was essential to Tetley's argument to show that this verse does not imply two distinct kingdoms, her lack of knowledge of Hebrew constructions has led her to a wrong conclusion. This would unfortunately mislead readers who had no solid grounding in biblical languages or who did not bother to check the text in its original language.

The presupposition of no coregencies and no rival reigns requires adding extra years to Tetley's chronology in those instances when the given figure for regnal years includes the time of a coregency. It therefore leads her into conflict with the Assyrian data, such as the tribute of Menahem to Tiglath-Pileser III. On p. 177 she writes: "Neither Assyrian inscriptions nor biblical text indicate any personal contact between Menahem and Tiglath-Pileser," despite 2 Kgs 15:19 (where Tetley acknowledges that Pul = Tiglath-Pileser) and Menahem's tribute being mentioned three times in Tiglath-Pileser's inscriptions. The final results put the beginning of the divided monarchy in 981 BC, fifty years earlier than the 931 date given by Thiele and accepted by the majority of scholars who are most influential in this field, including Jack Finegan, Kenneth Kitchen, T. C. Mitchell, Gershon Galil, Leslie McFall, and Eugene Merrill.

What if Tetley's approach were to be applied to the chronology of ancient Egypt? Her criticism that Thiele's system is too complicated would apply even more to Egypt: the Egyptian calendar, and how it changed throughout Egypt's history, provides a complex question that is still under investigation. How the various pharaohs related their reigns to this calendar is also a complicated issue, and the ways they did this was different at various times in the various dynasties. Egyptian chronological methods are more complicated than the methods that Thiele found were used by Israel and Judah. However, these minor matters regarding the calendar year could be ignored if Egyptologists adopted Tetley's "rounding," even though Egyptologists could argue from inscriptions that this is an improper understanding of Egyptian practice, in the same way that sound scholarship has shown that it is improper for treating the biblical texts. But the real problem would be because of coregencies and rival reigns, just as with Judah, Israel, and Assyria. Here the same criticisms that the *Reconstructed Chronology* makes of Thiele's interpretations could be applied to the Egyptian data: the various pharaohs do

not always tell us that they are measuring their years from a coregency, or that there was a rival pharaoh ruling in another city, and so all chronological systems that take these things into account would be rejected. All data that show that sometimes a change was made in either the calendar or the way that pharaohs counted their years would also be rejected, since these ancient personalities did not leave any explanation for the modern scholar that they were doing anything unusual. If these principles—the same as are applied as a criticism of Thiele’s chronology in *Reconstructed Chronology*—were applied to Egyptian history, the result would be disastrous, on an even grander scale than the dislocations already described in Tetley’s treatment of Hebrew and Assyrian history. What does this say about any methodology that starts with presuppositions, rather than with a careful study of the practices and methods of ancient scribes and court recorders? When such an approach would not be given serious consideration by Egyptologists or Assyriologists, why does it find acceptance in biblical studies?

There is, however, a different way to approach the study of OT chronology. It can be characterized as the inductive method—one that starts with observations, rather than presuppositions. Induction is the method followed by V. Coucke, Thiele, Siegfried Horn, Kenneth Kitchen, and Leslie McFall. It has led to lasting contributions in the field of ancient Near Eastern chronology, as well as in the more specific field of biblical chronology. Anyone who desires to understand the chronology of the divided kingdom can do no better than to read the first four chapters of Thiele’s *Mysterious Numbers* in order to grasp the fundamental principles of how ancient scribes measured the years of their king and their kingdom. Although some of Thiele’s Assyrian data have been updated by later studies, the general trend of these findings has been to corroborate his work, not invalidate it. After becoming familiar with the basic principles (accession vs. non-accession years, coregencies, Nisan and Tishri years), it would be profitable to read McFall’s “Translation Guide” article in *BSac* 1991 to see how they can be applied with an exact notation to produce a chronology that is in harmony with all the data used to derive that chronology, with no outlandish presuppositions necessary. McFall’s chronology is based on the MT, and in no case did McFall or Thiele find a superior reading in the LXX. This presents a challenge to all those who would favor the LXX: Produce a chronology that is based on any reading that is presumed to be superior in the LXX, and then demonstrate that the chronology has the same internal and external harmony as the Thiele/McFall system. Shenkel, who preferred “Old Greek” readings in the Books of Kings, was not able to do this; he did not even try. Tetley, with her preference for the Lucianic text c_2 and with various mixing and matching, was a long way from being able to do it, as was demonstrated above. So far it is only the MT that allows the building of a consistent chronology for the period of the divided monarchies. Until some scholar is able to produce a similar success with LXX variant readings, it must be said that the preference for the MT readings in all these matters is no longer just a hypothesis or a presupposition; it is a conclusion. This has an important bearing on textual studies: here is a mathematical system (a chronology) that can be used to test which data are original or authentic and which are later corruptions. If the chronological data of the MT were not authentic—the actual dates and synchronisms for these various kings—then neither Thiele nor McFall nor anyone else could have constructed a chronology from them that in every case is faithful to the original texts and in every proven instance is consistent with Assyrian and Babylonian chronology. This mathematical demonstration should sit in judgment over the various theories of text

formation: If a theory of text formation cannot explain how the chronological data of the MT has produced a chronology that in every respect seems authentic for the four centuries of the monarchic period, then that theory must be rejected as another example of a presupposition-based approach that cannot meet the rational criteria for credibility.

Christine Tetley's *Reconstructed Chronology* is therefore only recommended to those who have first read and understood the basic principles of the chronology of the kingdom period that Thiele explains and McFall works out in extensive detail, using an exact notation while at the same time correcting Thiele's errors in the handling of the eighth-century BC data for the southern kingdom. Once a basic understanding is achieved from these two sources, a reading of the *Reconstructed Chronology* will reveal how unfair its criticisms are regarding Thiele's work, and the reader will not be so likely to be misled by the author's misunderstandings of Thiele and the scriptural data. The reader might then be able to profit from the book's abundance of references to the various studies that have been done in this field. But perhaps the best benefit would come if the reader approaches the book with the purpose of seeing how an author's presuppositions can lead to repeated contradictions of the essential data, and then ask the question: When is it appropriate to stop and say that these contradictions mean that the presuppositions are wrong? All who write in the field of biblical studies need to continually ask this of our work, and if the reader will read the *Reconstructed Chronology* with this question in mind, it may be of considerable benefit. If, however, the reader is not solidly grounded in historical methods and the chronological usages of antiquity, then the book will lead him or her into the wrong conclusions about Thiele's methodology, the trustworthiness of the OT scriptures (particularly, the MT) regarding chronology, and several other matters such as the reliability of the Assyrian Eponym Canon from 910 BC to 763 BC.

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