

## FROM BISHOP USSHER TO EDWIN R. THIELE

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Edwin R. Thiele's contribution to biblical scholarship is one of permanent significance. He succeeded in solving the problems of a segment of OT chronology that had baffled many generations of biblical scholars. In order to appreciate his life work in this respect it is useful to place it against the background of the historical discipline with which his accomplishments are concerned.

Chronology is an important historical discipline, and without it a correct reconstruction of history is impossible. For this reason some have called chronology the "soul of history."<sup>1</sup> I prefer to call it rather the "skeleton of history." Just as a human being cannot exist without a bone structure, even if it would have all other components such as muscles, organs, nerves, and sinews, so history needs a chronology. In fact, it cannot be understood correctly if it is based on a faulty chronology. This is true not only with regard to secular history, but also with regard to sacred history. For this reason Bible commentators have from the earliest periods of church history been engaged in reconstructions of the chronological framework of biblical history.

### 1. *The Nature of Thiele's Achievement*

Thiele's achievement is that of having solved, once and for all, the major chronological problems connected with the period of the

\*Adapted from an address presented during Founders' Week at Andrews University in honor of Edwin R. Thiele, March 8, 1979.

<sup>1</sup>F. D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7 vols. (Washington, D. C., 1953-1957), 1: 16.

kingdoms of Judah and Israel, a period of about 350 years.<sup>2</sup> The casual reader of the OT may gain the impression that a reconstruction of the chronology of this period should not be difficult, since in the books of Kings and Chronicles he encounters scores of passages that contain precise chronological data. These either state in terms of years or months how long every king ruled, or tell us in which regnal year of the neighboring kingdom a ruler came to the throne or died, statements which we call synchronisms. For most kings both types of data—the length of reign and synchronisms—are provided. Yet, as soon as one studies these figures in depth, serious difficulties appear (of which more will be said later), and it is an incontestable fact that the solution of these problems defied the combined wisdom of the ablest scholars for centuries. The result was that many gave up all hope that satisfactory solutions could ever be found for the seemingly insurmountable difficulties, and they expressed these feelings in no uncertain terms.<sup>3</sup>

That these difficulties have been overcome we owe in great part to Edwin R. Thiele. This accomplishment is the more remarkable in view of the fact that Thiele worked out his scheme of chronology single-handedly, by using only the biblical data and the available fixed dates of Assyrian and Babylonian chronology, without leaning on the work of scholars who had preceded him in the type of work in

<sup>2</sup>Edwin R. Thiele's articles and books on the chronology of the Hebrew kings are the following: "The Chronology of the Kings of Judah and Israel," *JNES* 3 (1944): 137-186; *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (Chicago, 1951; rev. ed., Grand Rapids, Mich., 1965); "A Comparison of the Chronological Data of Israel and Judah," *VT* 4 (1954): 185-195; "The Question of Coregencies Among the Hebrew Kings," in *A Stubborn Faith*, ed. E. C. Hobbs (Dallas, 1956), pp. 39-52; "New Evidence on the Chronology of the Last Kings of Judah," *BASOR* 143 (1956): 22-27; "The Synchronisms of the Hebrew Kings—A Re-evaluation," *AUSS* 1 (1963): 121-138; 2 (1964): 120-136; "Pekah to Hezekiah," *VT* 16 (1966): 83-107; "Coregencies and Overlapping Reigns Among the Hebrew Kings," *JBL* 93 (1974): 174-200; "An Additional Chronological Note on 'Yaw, Son of Omri,'" *BASOR* 222 (1976): 19-23; *A Chronology of the Hebrew Kings* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1977).

<sup>3</sup>Rudolf Kittel expressed this pessimistic view clearly by saying that there are two reasons which deprive us of the possibilities of obtaining a correct chronology of the Hebrew kings: first, errors in the transmitted data; and second, a failure to understand the original system of computing regnal years and synchronistic data. See his *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, 7th ed. (Stuttgart, 1925), p. 211.

which he was engaged. It was certainly an extraordinary achievement to have reached sound solutions for nearly every phase of the chronology of the Hebrew kings without first studying the results of the work of others whose results, in some aspects, were similar.<sup>4</sup>

Let me ask your indulgence by injecting here my own experience, because I believe it to be pertinent to a full evaluation of the genius of Thiele's work. For a long time I also have been interested in the work of reconstructing the chronology of this period; in fact, I worked intermittently for about sixteen years on it before I committed the results to writing. However, I began by first thoroughly studying and digesting the works of many biblical chronologers who had published their solutions during the last one hundred years. And in spite of combining the discoveries and plausible solutions of all these scholars, I did not come to a chronological scheme of the reigns of the Hebrew kings as satisfactory as Thiele's. In fact, I was able to reach acceptable solutions to a number of chronological problems only after I became acquainted with Thiele's work.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. *The Chronological Chaos Prior to Ussher*

Now let me come to the man mentioned first in the title of my paper: Why do I begin the period covered in this historical paper with Archbishop Ussher? The reason is that Ussher's reconstruction of OT chronology was the first one to find wide acceptance in the Christian world.

Ussher was not, of course, the first scholar who worked out a scheme of OT chronology. In fact, many students of the Bible had developed such systems before Ussher; and one of them, Jerome, had worked out a chronological scheme that found a place in the margins of some Latin Bibles long before Ussher. But all these earlier

<sup>4</sup>This information was given to me personally by Thiele.

<sup>5</sup>Although I have accepted several discoveries made and solutions found by Thiele, I do not agree with him in his interpretation of certain texts with regard to Hezekiah's reign. For my chronological scheme of that period see "The Chronology of King Hezekiah's Reign," *AUSS* 2 (1964): 40-52. One text for which I still had no satisfactory explanation in the article just mentioned was subsequently interpreted in a plausible way by E. A. Parker, "A Note on the Chronology of 2 Kings 17:1," *AUSS* 6 (1968): 129-133.

scholars had been hampered by two obstacles: first, the many difficulties inherent in all ancient chronological systems, which remained unsolvable until modern times; and second, the absence of a generally accepted era in which dates could be expressed in a way that everyone understood.

It is at present a generally little-known fact that for many centuries chaotic conditions existed with regard to chronology because of the many systems used for expressing dates. Let me first mention some of the dating systems of antiquity, of which some were used in parts of Europe until the Middle Ages: There was, in the first place, the "Era of the Foundation of Rome," according to which years were counted from the supposed founding of Rome in 753 B.C.<sup>6</sup> Then there were the "Roman Consular Lists," widely used for dating purposes throughout the Roman empire;<sup>7</sup> the "Era of the Olympiads," a cycle of four years beginning in 776 B.C.;<sup>8</sup> and the "Seleucid Era," beginning in 312 B.C.<sup>9</sup> In addition, many other more local dating systems existed in the ancient world.

This multiplicity of existing dating systems was, during the late-Roman and medieval periods, greatly increased by a multitude of new dating devices which were introduced by various authorities in different countries. Such systems existed side by side throughout the Middle Ages and in some countries almost to modern times. For example, secular and biblical historians dated historical events in many cases by the regnal years of Roman and Byzantine emperors, or by the years of the popes of Rome.<sup>10</sup> Many events were dated according to the "Era of Diocletian," usually called by Christians *Aera martyrum*, which began in A.D. 284.<sup>11</sup> Others used the "Indiction Era," a fifteen-year cycle which marked the interval between imperial tax assessments, and which originated three years before the

<sup>6</sup>Siegfried H. Horn and Lynn H. Wood, *The Chronology of Ezra 7*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C., 1970), pp. 24-25.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 25; E. J. Bickerman, *Chronology of the Ancient World* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1968), pp. 71-72.

<sup>10</sup>H. Grotfend, *Taschenbuch der Zeitrechnung des deutschen Mittelalters und der Neuzeit*, 10th ed. (Hannover, 1960), pp. 9-10.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 10; Bickerman, p. 72.

Christian era, although it was not introduced as a dating system until Constantine in A.D. 312 (this year being the beginning of the 22nd indiction).<sup>12</sup> Also the "Byzantine World Era" was widely used, according to which 5508 years had passed between the creation of the world and Christ's birth; this era was popular in eastern Europe until the eighteenth century.<sup>13</sup> Many editions of the Vulgate, the official Catholic Bible, contained dates according to the "Era of Jerome," mentioned earlier, which, based on the LXX, dates the beginning of the world to 5199 B.C.<sup>14</sup> But French scholars down to the eleventh century preferred instead the "Era of the Passion," which began thirty-three years after the incarnation, i.e., in A.D. 33.<sup>15</sup> In Spain, the "Spanish Era" was used until the fifteenth century; it began in 38 B.C., the year in which the Roman conquest of Spain was completed.<sup>16</sup> To mention one further example, the "Jewish World Era" was introduced in the ninth century by rabbinical sages according to whom the creation of the world had taken place in 3760 B.C. This era is still used today in Jewish religious literature.<sup>17</sup>

In order to bring order out of this chaos, another era was created by the Scythian monk Dionysius Exiguus, who lived in Italy. As a starting point for this new dating system, which has become known as the "Christian Era," he took the 247th year of the "Era of Diocletian" to be the 531st year after Christ's birth. This era (which, by the way, contains an error of four years) seemed for a long time to be just one more dating device among the many existing systems used throughout Europe, for its acceptance was a slow process. In A.D. 663, some 130 years after its invention, it was officially adopted in England, and it took another 400 years before most of Europe used this "Christian Era." In Spain it was not adopted until the fourteenth century and in Greece not until the fifteenth century.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Grotefend, pp. 8-9; Bickerman, pp. 78-79.

<sup>13</sup>Grotefend, p. 11.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>J. A. Robson, "Christian Chronology," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1973 ed., 5: 728.

<sup>16</sup>Grotefend, p. 10.

<sup>17</sup>Ernest Wisenberg, "Jewish Chronology," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1973 ed., 5: 725-726; Edgar Frank, *Talmudic and Rabbinical Chronology* (New York, 1956).

<sup>18</sup>Horn and Wood, pp. 25-30.

Looking over these chaotic conditions, one can easily understand that works on chronology in which dates were expressed in one or another of the locally accepted eras, and existing usually only in the handwritten manuscripts of the authors, found little interest among Bible-studying Christians or were not even understood outside of the authors' immediate circle of acquaintances.<sup>19</sup> To fill this void, a kind of stability was created by the biblical chronology worked out by Ussher. His use of the best available source material, biblical and non-biblical, and his reputation as an honored church prince and scholar of no mean accomplishment were probably responsible for the fact that his chronological scheme became so widely accepted and popular and that in the course of time its dates were inserted in the margins of most English Bibles and were considered by many Bible readers as an integral part of historical Bible truth.

### 3. *Archbishop Ussher's Work*

James Ussher, born in Dublin in 1581, was ordained in 1601 and served as Professor of Theological Controversies at the Trinity College in Dublin from 1607-1621. Then he became Bishop of Meath and four years later Archbishop of Armagh. However, his most famous accomplishment, by which his name became a household word among Bible-reading Christians, was his *Annales Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, which appeared from 1650-1654. An English edition of 907 pages was published in London in 1658, two years after his death, under the title *The Annales of the World . . . Containing the Historie of the Old and New Testaments with that of the Macchabees*.<sup>20</sup>

In this work Ussher, who utilized the "Christian Era," dated the creation of the world in 4004 B.C., a date that became quite

<sup>19</sup>More than twenty years ago I talked about this matter with Alfred Pohl, who was at that time the editor of *Orientalia*. He indicated that he was aware of several medieval manuscripts in European monastic libraries that dealt with biblical chronology. Someone interested in the history of biblical chronology and equipped with the necessary linguistic and calendrical skills may find here a rich and still largely untapped field for research.

<sup>20</sup>R. Buick Knox, *James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh* (Cardiff, 1967), pp. 105-107, 195; James A. Carr, *Life and Times of James Ussher* (London, 1895), passim.

famous. However, we are interested here only in his chronological scheme of the period of the Hebrew kings, which according to him began with Solomon's death in 975 B.C. and ended with the Babylonian exile in 589. For the last kings of this period he based his dates on the list of Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian, and Roman rulers, known from Ptolemy's *Canon*. This king list of the second century A.D. was the only reliable ancient chronological source available in his time. It began with Nabonassar, king of Babylon in 747 B.C., and ended in the second century A.D. with the reign of the Roman emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161). Since this king list contains the names of seven rulers mentioned in the Bible—namely, Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-Merodach, Cyrus, Darius I, Xerxes, Artaxerxes I, and Darius II—, it provided pegs to which events of biblical history could be fastened, for the Bible contains synchronisms with some of these kings. For instance, 2 Kgs 25:8-9 states that the destruction of Jerusalem took place in the 19th regnal year of Nebuchadnezzar. It was also of great importance that Ptolemy's *Canon* carried the stamp of reliability, since it mentions nineteen lunar eclipses ranging over nine centuries. These eclipses are dated to the year, month, day, and hour, mostly in terms of regnal years of various kings, and can be checked by astronomers and proved to be correct.<sup>21</sup>

Ussher was therefore able to date the events of the later part of biblical history quite accurately; namely, the period which began

<sup>21</sup>Ptolemy lists the regnal years of the various kings in his *Canon* by using the Egyptian solar calendar as a basis and reckons the years of their reign for some periods according to the Egyptian (later also Macedonian) antedating system and for others according to the Babylonian-Persian postdating system. Not being aware of these factors, scholars using Ptolemy's *Canon* until comparatively recent times made errors of one or two years in their computations of ancient dates. See Alan E. Samuel, *Ptolemaic Chronology* (Munich, 1962), pp. 64-65, 88-89, 159-160.

The reliability and even the integrity of Ptolemy have recently been challenged by Robert R. Newton, *The Crime of Claudius Ptolemy* (Baltimore, Md., 1977). I am not qualified to decide whether Newton's criticism of Ptolemy's astronomical work is warranted, but I want to say emphatically that Newton's criticism of Ptolemy's *Canon* is without any basis. During the last hundred years ancient king lists have been discovered, as well as thousands of dated contemporary records, which fully prove the reliability of Ptolemy's list of rulers from the eighth century B.C. down to the second century A.D. See Julia Neuffer, "Ptolemy's Canon Debunked?" *AUSS* 17 (1979): 39-46.

with Nebuchadnezzar's reign, the earliest ruler of Ptolemy's king list who was also mentioned in the Bible. Hence his date for the beginning of the Babylonian exile—589 B.C.—is only three years off from the real date as we now know it, and his dates for the postexilic events of biblical history are either correct or nearly so.

However, Ussher had no help from outside the Bible in understanding the systems used to date the reigns of the Hebrew kings who lived prior to Nebuchadnezzar's accession to the throne. He did not know that various calendar systems with various year beginnings existed among the ancient nations, and that the regnal years of kings were counted according to different methods in various countries and at various times. Without having a knowledge of these different methods of reckoning, he failed to understand the systems employed by the ancient Hebrew annalists whose original works were later excerpted by the compilers of the biblical books of Kings and Chronicles.

Let me briefly mention some of the difficulties which Ussher, like every other chronologer, faced and how he solved them. He found, e.g., that the period from Solomon's death, when Rehoboam and Jeroboam I came to the throne concurrently, down to Joram of Judah and Ahaziah of Israel, who both died at the same time, was given as 95 years for Judah but as 98 years for Israel, a difference of three years. In order to explain this difference, Ussher guessed that there must have been either a gap of three years between two kings of Judah or several short gaps totaling three years between more than two kings. Furthermore, he found that the years given for the remainder of Israel's existence came to 143 years when the regnal years of the kings of Israel were added up, but to 166 years for the kings of Judah for the same period—a difference of 23 years—whereas the figures should have been the same.<sup>22</sup> Hence he postulated again that gaps in the reigns of Israel's kings must have been responsible for this discrepancy. These supposed gaps he called "interregna," periods with no effective rulership.

<sup>22</sup>Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 1st ed., p. 6, where the different results of adding the regnal years of the Hebrew kings for the two periods mentioned here are conveniently tabulated.



But Ussher also recognized that he had to take account of the many existing synchronisms of the books of Kings and Chronicles and to find satisfactory solutions for them. Many of them he did not understand at all and simply ignored in his treatment of the chronology. Others, however, seemed to point again in the direction of interregna, for which reason several more interregna were invented by Ussher in order to fit the synchronisms into any acceptable chronological scheme. The result was that, to mention two examples, he put a gap of eleven years between Jeroboam II and his son Zachariah (a gap for which the Bible narrative gives no indication), and also created an interregnum of nine years between Pekah and Hoshea (although the biblical record states in 2 Kgs 15:30 that Hoshea slew Pekah and reigned in his stead, without giving any hint whatever that Hoshea might have come to the throne only after an anarchy of nine years following his murder of Pekah).

These are some of the reasons why Ussher dated the beginning of the divided kingdoms in 975 B.C., whereas we now know that this event took place 44 years later. Yet, at that time no one could propose better solutions for the biblical chronology than those offered by Ussher. The result was that his chronological scheme ruled the field of biblical history nearly unchallenged for two centuries.

#### 4. *Developments Subsequent to Ussher*

In the latter part of the nineteenth century this situation changed. The decipherment of the Egyptian hieroglyphic and hieratic scripts and of the cuneiform script used by the Mesopotamian nations opened the doors to a new world of scholarship. Original sources of antiquity revealed historical facts which had long been forgotten. Assyrian and Babylonian king lists came to light as well as Assyrian eponym lists which provided lists of the names of the officials after whom the years were named in Assyria. The accuracy of the eponym lists, which went back to the tenth century B.C., was authenticated by the mentioning of a solar eclipse observed in Assyria during the eponymy of Bur-Šagale, an eclipse which took place June 15, 763 B.C. Also, the accuracy of the king lists was corroborated through the discoveries of contemporary astronomical texts.

Furthermore, historians learned that there had been in existence different calendars in the various countries of the ancient Near East, and that the methods of reckoning a ruler's years of reign differed from one country to another. E.g., it was learned that the Egyptians antedated their kings' regnal years, which means that the last year of a king's reign was also counted as the first year of his successor, whereas the ancient Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians postdated such years, which means that the remainder of the last calendar year of a king was not counted among the regnal years of his successor, but was simply called "the year in which King X [the new king] came to the throne." This kind of knowledge opened entirely new vistas also for biblical historians with regard to the chronology of the Hebrew kings.

The first biblical scholar and noted orientalist who in modern times worked seriously on the chronological problems of the period of the Hebrew kings was Heinrich Ewald (1803-1875). In his *History of Israel* Ewald briefly treated the chronological problems of Judah's and Israel's history and came to the conclusion that only the years of reign deserve to be accepted as an historically reliable foundation for a reconstruction of the history of the divided kingdoms. The synchronisms, Ewald reasoned, were obtained by later compilers and editors of the original sources through computations, and are therefore worthless.<sup>23</sup>

This view was fully endorsed by Ewald's pupil, the famous OT scholar Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918), who in 1875 in an article of only thirty-four pages put forth his findings with such convincing arguments and so eloquently that they were almost universally accepted by biblical historians for nearly half a century.<sup>24</sup> In later

<sup>23</sup>Heinrich Ewald, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, 3d ed. (Göttingen, 1864), 1: 242; 3: 464.

<sup>24</sup>Julius Wellhausen, "Die Zeitrechnung des Buches der Könige seit der Theilung des Reiches," *Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie* 20 (1875): 607-640. The following list of works includes some of the most important treatments of the chronology of the Hebrew kings by scholars who more or less followed Wellhausen in their acceptance of the regnal data and rejection of the synchronisms: A. Kamphausen, *Die Chronologie der hebräischen Könige* (Bonn, 1883); F. Rühl, "Chronologie der Könige von Israel und Juda," *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 12 (1894-1895): 44-76, 171; and M. Thilo, *Die Chronologie des alten Testaments* (Barmen, 1917). For a

years, Wellhausen went even further and gave up the biblical data concerning the regnal years altogether. In his *Israelite-Jewish History* he fully ignored the biblical chronological data, basing his dates only on Assyrian and other non-biblical sources.

The first modern scholar who broke with Ewald's and Wellhausen's evaluation of the chronological data of the books of Kings and Chronicles was F. X. Kugler, who as a professional astronomer and Assyriologist was able to evaluate from first-hand knowledge the astronomical and chronological source material of ancient Assyria and Babylonia. In his important treatment of "The Chronology of the Kings of Judah and Israel," published in 1922, he convincingly defended the biblical synchronisms as valuable chronological data and seriously tried to find solutions for the biblical chronology by using the data presenting the lengths of reign of the Hebrew kings as well as the synchronisms. He also utilized all non-biblical sources as far as they were pertinent to his study.<sup>25</sup> Kugler was followed by the works of Assyriologist Julius Lewy in 1927,<sup>26</sup> and by those of biblical scholars Joachim Begrich in 1929<sup>27</sup> and Sigmund Mowinckel in 1931.<sup>28</sup>

These scholars came to various solutions, but all shared a willingness, first to accept the biblical data as reliable unless proved otherwise, and second, to resurrect the methods of calendation and computation used by the ancient annalists. Hence we find that these

description of their differences, see Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 1st ed., pp. 240-241, and J. Begrich, *Die Chronologie der Könige von Israel und Juda* (Tübingen, 1929), pp. 1-38. The chronologies of E. Mahler (*Handbuch der jüdischen Chronologie* [Frankfurt a. M., 1916], pp. 247-320) and M. Anstey (*Romance of Bible Chronology* [London, 1913]) must be mentioned, since some students of the Bible in the past have accepted their chronological schemes. However, their extreme views and their rejection of some of the well-established Assyrian dates or synchronisms make their attempts to solve the problem of the Hebrew chronology worthless.

<sup>25</sup>F. X. Kugler, *Von Moses bis Paulus* (Münster i. Westf., 1922), pp. 134-189.

<sup>26</sup>Julius Lewy, *Die Chronologie der Könige von Israel und Juda* (Giessen, 1927).

<sup>27</sup>See n. 24.

<sup>28</sup>Sigmund Mowinckel, "Die Chronologie der israelitischen und jüdischen Könige," *AcOr* 9 (1931): 161-277. It may be added here that another work in which solutions were presented for some parts of the chronology of the Hebrew kings, similar to those Thiele later independently discovered, was that of V. Coucke, "Chronologie des rois de Juda et d'Israël," *Revue Bénédictine* 37 (1925): 325-364; "Chronologie biblique," *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1928), cols. 1245-2379.

scholars reckoned with the possibility that the two ancient kingdoms had different calendars, counted their own or their neighboring kings' regnal years by different methods (such as postdating or antedating), and recognized that coregencies may have existed even where the narratives do not seem to give an indication of the existence of such coregencies.

### 5. *Thiele's Magisterial Contribution*

It was at this stage in the development of scholarly activities with regard to the chronology of the divided kingdoms that Thiele's magisterial work was published, first as an article in 1944 (which grew out of his doctoral dissertation at the University of Chicago) and seven years later in book form.<sup>29</sup> Its premises can be summarized briefly under the following six points, which, as they were applied to the chronological data of Kings and Chronicles, led Thiele to a perfect harmony between most biblical chronological data and the fixed Assyrian and Babylonian dates with the exception of a short period during the end of the eighth century B.C.:

1. The compilers of the books of Kings and Chronicles used official sources containing chronological data. Except in a few cases for the period of Hezekiah, these data were taken over and incorporated into Kings and Chronicles without changes and without any attempts to harmonize them with each other. Since they reflect different calendars and systems of computations, they cannot be harmonized by applying a uniform calendrical or chronological system to both kingdoms and to all the 350 years of the history of Israel and Judah covered by the historical source material of the two books.

2. In the northern Kingdom of Israel the civil calendar began in the spring with the month that was later called Nisan, while in the southern Kingdom of Judah the civil calendar began in the autumn with the month that was later called Tishri.

3. Both kingdoms used at various times of their history the antedating and postdating systems, and made shifts in the application of these systems as indicated by the chronological data of Kings and Chronicles.

<sup>29</sup>See n. 2.

4. Several coregencies took place in the southern kingdom, but only one in the northern kingdom. There is no evidence for the existence of interregna.

5. Where coregencies can be pointed out to have existed, the figures given in the available sources for the total number of years which a king was on the throne included in some cases the years of that king's coregency with his father or with his son, and referred in other cases only to the years of a king's sole rule.

6. Each kingdom expressed the regnal years of its sister kingdom in terms of its own system, not that of the other kingdom. Hence, the records of the northern kingdom expressed regnal years of a southern king in terms of its own antedating system when that system was employed in the north, even if at that same time the scribes of the southern kingdom counted the regnal years of their own kings according to the postdating system.

Some thirty-six years have passed since Thiele's work was first published. At first there appeared to be a certain reluctance on the part of many scholars to accept a chronological scheme which seemed to demonstrate "conclusively the precise and dependable accuracy of Hebrew chronology of the times of the kingdoms," to use the words of the prominent OT scholar William A. Irwin.<sup>30</sup> Others, especially conservative students of the Bible, however, were delighted to see that some of the thorny problems of biblical studies had successfully been solved. Yet, Thiele's chronological scheme with its logic and historical integrity has gradually been accepted by an ever-widening circle of biblical scholars of all persuasions,<sup>31</sup> and I foresee the time when it may universally be adopted and used as an accurate chronological framework of the history of the monarchies of Israel and Judah, enjoying the position formerly held by the chronology of Ussher.

<sup>30</sup>William A. Irwin in his "Introduction" to Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 1st ed., p. xiv.

<sup>31</sup>His scheme is, e.g., used in the following reference works: *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (Washington, D.C., 1960); *IDB*; *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible* (New York, 1963); *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1963); *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia* (Chicago, 1975).