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The Making of Old Testament Books

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A contemporary person embarking upon the reading of the OT enters a different world. It is as if one in a few short hours flew from New York, landed in Teheran, traveled by Land Rover for two hours, and took up a stay with a nomadic group who rode camels, herded goats, ate figs, dates, and goat milk cheese, and kept a harem. In fact, this is exactly the life of certain people one comes to know from reading the OT.

The OT is different, not just because of the people one comes upon there, but also because of the very books from which one reads about them. Written documents differ considerably in terms of the manner in which they are put together. The reading of a letter from my wife's sister is a work of art. I am more accustomed to reading a letter from my mother. She sits down, picks up a pen, and in about thirty minutes turns out a two-page letter written on one side of the paper. She always writes her letters at one sitting and on pages consecutively. Not so with my wife's sister. She commences a letter which she may not finish for a couple of weeks. In different sections she puts Monday, Wednesday, Thursday. She makes later comments on remarks she has written earlier. She writes on five pages on one side then starts writing on the other side. By the time she is through it takes someone with a Master's degree to

decide what is supposed to follow what and how all the various ideas and comments fit together.

There are similar problems reading other documents. Take the Constitution of the United States, for example. We are not certain how it was produced. It is supposed that Thomas Jefferson had much to do with the final form. But it was not just Jefferson's work. It represented the thinking of the Constitutional Convention, made up of a number of men from the various states. Then, too, it was not all produced at one time. At the back are the amendments which have been added intermittently over almost a 200-year period. In order to make heads or tails out of this or any other document, it is necessary to have some understanding as to how it was put together. To assume that my sister-in-law's letters are just like my mother's would cause me to reach false conclusions about what she wrote. To assume that the Constitution of the United States was compiled by one man at one sitting is to fail to understand that document.

In order to understand the books of the OT it is necessary to have some vision of how they came to be. They were not each put together in the same way, obviously. The book of Psalms was not composed like the book of Isaiah. The books of 1 and 2 Chronicles were not put together like the book of Amos. One cannot presuppose how a book of the OT was put together. He must examine the book as closely as possible to determine what clues are found in it as to the manner of its composition.

Some assume, on the basis of a preconceived doctrine of inspiration, that all books of the Bible are produced just like a letter in the NT. Take an epistle such as 1 Thessalonians, for example. It is commonly assumed that Paul, guided by the Holy Spirit, sat down and wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians at one sitting. The assumption is made that all books of the Bible were produced in a like manner. In fact, it is claimed that if they were given by God, that is, inspired, this would have to be the method by which they were produced. Luke does not seem to share this assumption. At the beginning of his gospel, Luke states that he has collected materials which others have written, as well as

utilized stories about Jesus which he has heard orally. From these materials he has put together the Jesus story according to his own preference in content and order.

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus.

Luke 1:1-3

There is no biblical *a priori* as such as to how a document may be produced. One cannot argue that if Luke collected materials in order to produce his gospel, it is not a God-inspired document. In fact, if he claims he collected materials and if his work shows evidences of collected materials, then that must be considered as the means through which God worked. There is no *a priori* reason that God could not have been at work in Luke's process of collection. There is apparently no one way in which all books of the Bible were produced. At the same time there was no one way in which they were inspired. According to the writer of Hebrews, inspiration was multifold. "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son" (Heb. 1:1-2).

From claims in the Bible itself, biblical documents are inspired in various ways. Therefore, one who seeks the method through which a biblical document is put together is by no means denying the inspiration of the Bible. He, of course, could be, if in fact he does not believe the Bible inspired. But if he believes in inspiration, he can in good conscience seek to discover the various means through which OT materials were worked into a book. In fact, he claims that the very manner in which they were inspired has to be determined by looking at the book itself and examining the evidence. One cannot determine before looking at a specific book how it was inspired. If one can determine with some plausibility the manner in which a book was put together, then he understands something of the way in which God worked to make the words his own. In so doing

the biblical student enhances his understanding of the work. In having a glimpse of how it was put together, he understands how to read it. The difference between various OT books may be as much as the letters of my mother and my sister-in-law. Without understanding how differently they were written one really would not understand the letters. The same holds true for books of the OT.

THE MAKING OF THE BOOK OF THE PSALMS

Most Christians have received considerable enjoyment and comfort from reading the Psalms. All have favorites such as Psalms 23, 19, and 119. Many persons have searched out these Psalms individually without being much concerned to find out about overall structure. It is of some help in understanding the Psalms to see the larger pattern, to raise the question of how the larger book of the Psalms was composed.

In the NT one reads such statements as "For David himself says in the Book of Psalms . . ." (Luke 20:42). From this statement the conclusion could be drawn that the book of Psalms is a product of David's authorship. Should one form this conclusion he might conceive David near the end of his career, say about 965 B.C., getting the word from God one day that he was going to dictate the book of Psalms to him. Therefore, on that day he was to be prepared with ink, quills, and animal skins. On that day, then, God delivered to David, word for word, Psalms 1-150. An alternate version could be that rather than on one day, God gave to David the Psalms one by one over a period of years. As David received the Psalms, he put them into a box face down. At the end of his career he turned them over and there neat and nice were the 150 Psalms. Neither of these versions is possible, however, if one follows the evidence found within the book of the Psalms.

In the first place, only 73 of the 150 Psalms are ascribed to David. Of the rest, some are ascribed to Solomon, Moses, Asaph, the Sons of Korah, Heman, and Ethan. Fifty-three of the total are ascribed to no person. Others have super-

scriptions commenting on the psalm, but thirty-four are without superscription altogether. It seems unlikely that these superscriptions go back to the original authors of these Psalms. If they do, certainly God did not reveal the Psalms to David as a unit. Those of the other authors would have been revealed individually. If this is the case, then the question remains as to who collected them and when.

But it seems unlikely that at least all the superscriptions originally belonged to the Psalms. Should this be the case, then two conclusions follow. First, it is clear that whoever added these superscriptions considered the book of Psalms a collection of psalms, much like a twentieth-century hymnal, rather than the production of one author. Second, it would seem that someone later than the age of Solomon (about 961-922 B.C.) put the Psalter into its present form. How much later depends on the date of the latest Psalms. It is apparent to this author that Psalm 74 was written after the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in 587 B.C. Psalm 137 was obviously written a few months or years later by those who were taken as exiles to Babylon. Psalm 126 apparently was written after the captives returned and rebuilt houses, the city wall, and the temple, or sometime around 500 B.C. This means that the book of the Psalms as we now have it is probably no earlier than 500 B.C. and may have been put into its present form as late as 300 B.C., as numerous scholars think. Third, since the superscriptions are later, it is not necessary that all the psalms ascribed to David be written by him. In fact, the Hebrew *ledhawidh* may mean "to David," that is, a psalm dedicated to David, rather than by him, in which case the Psalm could have been written after his death. Despite the scepticism of certain scholars, however, there is no reason that David may not have written some of the Psalms himself. Clearly, he is identified as a psalmist (1 Sam. 16:18, 2 Sam 23:1; 2 Chron. 29:30). But he is even better known as one who commissioned the writing of Psalms (1 Chron. 16:4-7).

With these facts in mind we can now turn to the book of the Psalms to see what we can learn about it, then propose conclusions as to how it came to be that way. As we

examine the Psalms, we discover first that it is divided into five books—Book I, Psalms 1–41; II, 42–72; III, 73–89, IV, 90–106; and V, 107–150. At the end of each of these books is a doxology or expression of praise, so 41:13; 72:18–19; 89:52; 106:48, and 150:6 (or the whole of 150 may be considered as a doxology to the whole Psalter). Second, at the beginning of the book are to be found a number of laments, while toward the end hymns of praise prevail. Despite this general trend, however, the pattern is not rigorous. Third, the Psalter can be divided into three sections based on the preference of the name ascribed to God. In Psalms 1–41 the name Yahweh appears 273 times while Elohim occurs only 15. In Psalms 42–89 Yahweh is used 74 times while Elohim appears 207 times. In Psalms 90–150 Yahweh is found 339 times, while Elohim occurs only 7. Fourth, there are evidences of smaller collections within the larger five-book framework. At the end of Book II are found these remarks, “The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended” (Ps. 72:20). Since psalms attributed to David are found after this in the Psalter, for example 86 and 101, apparently a collection ended with Psalm 72, possibly 1–72. In addition, in 2 Chronicles 29:30, the statement is made that words of David and Asaph the seer were available in the time of Hezekiah (715–686 B.C.). All the Psalms attributed to Asaph are found in Book III, 73–89 with the exception of Psalm 50. The statement by the chronicler may imply that a collection was known starting with Psalm 1 and ending with 89, or it could have been 73–89. Other groupings of the Psalms may also be found. In Psalms 95–100 are a group of similar Psalms which, due to the influence of Sigmund Mowinckel, a Scandinavian, have been called enthronement Psalms. Psalms 120–134 include the superscription “A Song of Ascents.” These psalms may have been used by the people as they left their homes and traveled to Jerusalem for the religious festivals. Psalms 113–118 commence or end with “Hallelujah” or “Praise the Lord” and thus are called Hallel Psalms. They were probably sung at the three great feasts. Psalms 146–150 both begin and end with “Hallelujah.”

With this information we can now piece together some suggestions as to why the book of Psalms in our Bible turned out as it did. It seems likely that about the time of David's death the priests assigned to the music in the temple (1 Chron. 16:4-7) collected certain Psalms of David as well as those of Asaph and others. It is doubtful that all those available were added to the collection, since there are various Psalms in the Bible which did not make their way into the Psalter, for example Exodus 15:1-18 and Judges 5. As time went along, the priests added other Psalms to this collection. By the time of Hezekiah the collection may have totaled as many as eighty-nine Psalms. Not all the Psalms were written or collected in Jerusalem. Some of them apparently were written in the north because of the tribe and place names cited, for example Psalms 77, 80, and 81. There may have been a collection formed there which was brought to Jerusalem at the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. These would not have immediately been added to the Jerusalem Psalms, though they may have been added by the time of Josiah (621-609 B.C.) or more likely at the time of the exile (587 B.C.) or later. During and after the exile, the leaders and people felt constrained to reconstitute the faith of old. They thus became especially interested in the Scriptures (Neh. 8-9). They were also interested in cultic worship at the temple, including the temple music (Neh. 12:27-30). In the process they no doubt spent some time rummaging around and collecting Psalms. There is tradition to the effect that Ezra the scribe finished the collection of the Psalms and put the book into the form in which we now have it. While this is doubtful, the importance of the period for collecting Psalms should not be underestimated.

Finally, in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. the collections of the important Psalms had pretty well congealed. Some of the priests assigned to the temple music, or perhaps just one, started arranging these various collections into final form. He had one set of Psalms which used, for the most part, Elohim for God. These he kept essentially intact. He added other collections. The whole he divided into five books, perhaps in some measure preserving the groupings

in which they came to him. Why they were originally grouped into five books will likely never be known. The best surmise is that the fivefold division was laid out analogously to the five books of the law of Moses. So now there were five books of the law and five books of the Psalms. To these books the collector added certain beginnings and endings. We have already noted the doxologies. It may be that the collector himself "inserted," perhaps from certain traditional materials, Psalms 1 and 150 to serve as an introduction and conclusion to the whole book. Of course, a certain amount of guesswork has gone into this reconstruction, but the evidence of the case provides fairly certain data for these conclusions.

The question remains as to the manner in which the book of the Psalms is the inspired word of God. If one believes in the inspiration of the Scriptures he believes that God somehow was at work in each of these authors as the Psalms were produced. Just how God was at work is not always clear. It could be as with the prophets (e. g., Isa. 6:1-13), but we cannot be sure. But aside from individual authors, the question remains as to how the whole turns out as the word of God. The only suggestion forthcoming is that God was at work in the collectors as well as in the authors. There is no *a priori* reason which could rule out his presence. Therefore, the search for the way in which a book was put together is in part the search to uncover the presence of the Spirit of God in those who collected and put together the materials of the OT. Of course, one could claim that collecting and organizing is purely human activity, as radical biblical critics have done. But one can claim, as this author does, that such activity is not the mere effort of man, but each collector and editor received assistance from the Spirit of God.

With the process of the making of the book of the Psalms before us, we now are better prepared to understand its contents. We can perceive the larger framework in which individual Psalms are situated. We are sensitive to the need to examine each Psalm individually, to ascertain its origin, date, and setting, even apart from the superscription if necessary. We are prevented from making hasty judgments

trying to tie all the Psalms in some way or another into the details of the life of David. By these efforts the Psalms become alive, for they are the word of God to concrete men and women who lived before God with all the cares of man. In their human situation they suffered, complained, and approached death. But at other times they rejoiced and praised God for his good gifts.

We have employed the Psalms as something of a test case. Now that we have made observations on matters that may trouble our readers, these need not be repeated. We hopefully are now prepared to take up other OT books and draw conclusions from these documents themselves as to the manner in which they have come down to us in the form in which we have them.

THE MAKING OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

The book of Proverbs is much like the book of Psalms in that it consists of materials collected from more than one author. The main difference is that the units, for the most part, are much smaller, being often a proverb of two lines.

Headings in the book provide us with the following information. The first heading (1:1) reads "The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, King of Israel." A second heading is found at the beginning of 10:1, "The proverbs of Solomon." The reason for the second heading is apparent from the form, if not in some measure the content, of the material. The material in the first nine chapters contains ideas that are worked out at considerable length. The literary structure has continuity for a number of verses. Much more interest in God is manifested as well as citations of his name. The Proverbs after chapter 10 running at least through 22:17 are almost all two-line proverbs. The subject matter from one proverb to another may or may not relate to the same topic. The form most often is antithetical parallelism:

A wise son hears his father's instruction,
But a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.

Proverbs 13:1

Though some reference is made to God in this section, the theological underpinning of these proverbs is slight.

The third heading is found at the beginning of chapter 25, "These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied." This heading indicates that the proverbs attributed to Solomon were not all collected during his lifetime (961-922 B.C.); some were collected two centuries later in the days of Hezekiah (715-686 B.C.). The proverbs in this section have characteristics both like those of 1-9, and 10 following. The fourth heading is found at the beginning of chapter 30, "The words of Agur son of Jakeh of Massa." The final heading commences Proverbs 31, "The words of Lemuel, king of Massa, which his mother taught him." These two headings openly attribute these proverbs to someone other than Solomon. We thus learn that Proverbs is not a book produced at one sitting, but is at least five collections of materials from a minimum of three authors. These different parts have different characteristics, so it is important to recognize these sections in reading and attempting to understand these materials.

In addition to these professed divisions in the book itself, scholars find certain other sections which seem to be self-contained units. Proverbs 22:17-24:22 are different in that they consist, for the most part, of two or three verses for each period. They also stand apart because of their similarity to a collection of Egyptian proverbs titled *The Wisdom Amen-em-opet*. Another short collection is found in 24:23-34. This collection may be seen as having a heading "These also are sayings of the wise" (24:23). If so, then the phrase may be a reference to the first statement of 22:17, "Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise."

These headings are helpful in that they call our attention to differences in form and content in the Proverbs. But just as with the Psalms, we need to be careful about insisting that these are endemic in the text. In other words, not all the Proverbs attributed to Solomon need be claimed as authored by him. Obviously Solomon was heralded to be a wise man (2 Chron. 9) and a framer of proverbs (1 Kings 4:32; 10:23-24). There is no reason for denying that a number of

the Proverbs may be attributed to him.

The question is left as to the manner in which the book of Proverbs was compiled. Solomon in his time gave special attention to wise sayings, not only of Palestinian origin, but also from the other courts of Near Eastern nations, one of which was apparently Egypt. He had contact with these nations through his various wives (1 Kings 11:1-8). He no doubt added to these collections certain wise sayings of his own. So in the days of Hezekiah there was available a collection of Proverbs which probably was initiated in the time of Solomon and included some of Solomon's sayings as well as other materials, to which others were added in the intervening two hundred years, though perhaps not in any large number. To these proverbs were joined those collected by the men of Hezekiah. Some of these additional sayings may have been from the pen of Solomon. Others may have been assigned to him by way of recognizing his interest in the Proverbs and encouragement of their collection. As with certain Psalms, they may have been more associated with Solomon by way of paying tribute than because of actual authorship. Then after Hezekiah's time, to the former materials were added those attributed to the two kings of Massa. These may have been conjoined during the period of the exile and the final form given the book at that time.

Having this insight into the making of Proverbs sensitizes us to looking at the various sections of the book for the differences in structure and thought. By so doing we better understand what is going on. The Proverbs thus become more than a collection of wise insights to help young people. They become the word of God to specific persons with specific problems in specific times. But at the same time they speak to our problems, which are analogous.

But if this was the manner in which the book of Proverbs was formed, then how can it be the word of God? It seems to come more from the insights of man than from God. The writer of Proverbs himself provides an answer.

If you cry out for insight
and raise your voice for understanding,

if you seek it like silver
and search for it as for hidden treasures;
then you will understand the fear of the Lord
and find the knowledge of God.

For the Lord gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Proverbs 2:3-6

The man who struggles, observing life and the world, finds answers, but they are not alone from his knowing powers. They likewise come from God. This is the case whether or not one belongs to Israel, as with Agur and Lemuel. Numerous Proverbs existed from ancient times, but these the Spirit of God especially identified to be preserved age after age as a word for his people. God was at work in those who collected and preserved these words of wisdom.

THE MAKING OF THE BOOKS OF THE CHRONICLER

Four books of the OT are attributed to one author, commonly referred to as the Chronicler because his name is unknown. Various persons have assigned these works to Ezra the scribe, but, while this is possible, it seems unlikely. The four books are 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah. These works differ from the Psalms and the Proverbs by the fact that they are produced by one author or a few authors working together. They come from the same period of time and are consciously written to produce a continuous, integrated, and consistent account. At an initial glance they appear to be a history of the people of God from the beginning until the days of the author(s). Some scholars raise the question as to whether these documents should actually be called history, for they are not history in the modern, so-called objective sense. In this author's view they qualify as history, but a special sort of history, constructed not so much to set forth the facts as to bring the past to bear, as the Chronicler understood it, upon the present.

We are interested in this essay in the manner in which the Chronicler put together these four works. In order to see this we need to look over his shoulder and observe him at work. We need to ascertain his purpose and what he hoped to accomplish in these writings. We need some understanding of the people for whom he

was writing and what he was trying to say to them. We need an inventory of the sorts of material available to him and a determination of the ones he employed and how he employed them. With this information we can then advance conclusions as to the reasons for the form in which these books turned out. The other historical materials in the OT are not exactly the same as that of the Chronicler, but some similarities exist. With these insights into the manner of OT history writing, we will be better prepared to appreciate and understand these historical documents in the OT.

There are a number of question marks in trying to establish an exact date for the work of the Chronicler. Most scholars place the writing at about 400 B.C. In 587 B.C. Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians. The leaders and craftsmen of the land were transported to Babylonia to assure that no effective uprising would be forthcoming against Babylonia or Palestine. About forty years later, Cyrus the Persian overthrew the Babylonians. He adopted a different policy for controlling far-flung peoples and permitted the Jews to return to their native land. After some years of struggle, the city, the city wall, and the temple were rebuilt. Then an effort was undertaken to reestablish the people in the faith of old. This was not an easy task, as we learn from various incidents in Ezra and Nehemiah. In his reforming efforts, Ezra made special use of the priests and Levites (Neh. 13:30). The problems as seen in Nehemiah centered upon paying the tithes, keeping the Sabbath, and marrying foreign women (Neh. 13:4-29).

It was out of being plunged into the middle of these events that the Chronicler produced his magnum opus. He was aware that the catastrophe of fall and destruction weighed heavily upon the people, but not necessarily so as to change the manner in which they lived. The Chronicler wished to provide a rationale for the retribution of the past and to offer a program for the present, which entailed the reestablishment of the cult with its functionaries and a rigorous adherence to the law of God. A piece of poetry identified as a prayer in 2 Chronicles does an excellent job of summing up the central message of the Chronicler.

"And now arise, O Lord God, and go to thy resting
 place,
 thou and the ark of thy might.
 Let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salva-
 tion, and let thy saints rejoice in thy goodness.
 O Lord God, do not turn away the face of thy anointed
 one!
 Remember thy steadfast love for David thy servant."

6:41-42

The Chronicler has a deep conviction that victory comes through God acting on behalf of his people (2 Chron. 14:7; 18:31; 20:17; 32:21); therefore, in this poem Yahweh is called on to rise and act. In contrast, failure to depend on God, to be prideful of one's own ability, brings downfall and defeat (2 Chron. 13:15; 16:7; 26:16). The ark is cited as the center from which the power of Yahweh radiates. This emphasizes the temple and its role in the salvation and sustenance of God's people. In the view of the Chronicler, life in Palestine should revolve about the temple. Since the temple is the place from which the power of God radiates, the cult functionaries, the priests and the Levites become the most crucial figures in the land (1 Chron. 15:11-15). The northern kingdom fell upon hard times because the priests were driven out (2 Chron. 11:14ff.). The Levites served as teachers, instructing the people in the ways of God, securing the gifts he promised (2 Chron. 17:9; Neh. 8:1-13). The Chronicler says almost nothing about the priests. The people should support the priests with tithes and keep the law of God. When they do so, they will be immersed in God's love (2 Chron. 33:7-8). But most of all, as this poem indicates, the Chronicler saw the hope of God's people resting with David and his dynasty (2 Chron. 21:7; 33:7-8). For him God's presence was with the south, the kingdom of Judah. Hence he spent very little time discussing the north. He selected material which presented Judah in a favorable light and deprecated Israel.

Now that we have in mind the situation of the people to whom the Chronicler wrote and the message he wished to put across, we need to characterize the manner in which he

carried out his program in these four books. The indications are that at one time these books were one. They were divided at a later time for convenience and sequence in the canon. First Chronicles commences with the broadest possible genealogical survey from Adam to Saul (1 Chron. 1-9). Special attention is given to the two favorite lines, those of Judah (4:1-23) and of Levi (5:27-6:66). Saul is given one short chapter (10), then almost immediately the Chronicler turns to David, with chapters 11-29 devoted to him. The point is made that David was first of all recognized as king in the south (1 Chron. 12:38). David was given victory by Yahweh because he inquired of God in whatever task he undertook (1 Chron. 14:13-17), and God was with him (1 Chron. 17:2).

Second Chronicles commences with a long statement on Solomon (chs. 1-9). Solomon is depicted as taking up the work of David, especially in connection with the temple. He comes in for little criticism concerning his wives and waywardness, as in 1 Kings 11. In connection with the temple, David is seen as a second Moses, which is an important point for the Chronicler. Just as Moses gave the regulations concerning sacrifice, so David gave the regulations concerning temple worship (2 Chron. 8:12-15; cf. 29:25-30, Neh. 12:44-47). The last section of 2 Chronicles (chs. 10-36) contains the division of the Kingdom and the rise and fall of the various kings until the Babylonian exile. The kingdom is depicted as dividing because of God's promise to Jeroboam I (2 Chron. 10:15-16), but also because he "did evil, for he did not set his heart to seek the Lord" (2 Chron. 12:14). The history of the various kings was evaluated according to a set, if not single-minded, formula: "If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you" (2 Chron. 15:2).

Ezra 1-6 tells the story of the return to Jerusalem and the restoration of the temple. The importance of the temple to the welfare of Judah is highlighted. The Chronicler makes a point of the significance of Zerubbabel (Ezra 3:8-9) because of his Davidic origins (1 Chron. 3:10-24). Ezra 7-10 tells of Ezra's efforts to bring the people to a rigorous keeping of the Law and highlights the importance of the Levites. Nehemiah 1-7 tells the story of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. The last half of the work

(8-13) depicts the period of dedication and the efforts of Ezra to see that the people are faithful to the ways of God.

Thus I cleansed them from everything foreign, and I established the duties of the priests and Levites, each in his work; and I provided for the wood offering, at appointed times, and for the first fruits.

Nehemiah 13:30-31

The expectation is that by keeping the law of God, God in turn will be their keeper and prosper every activity.

We have now arrived at the situation to which the Chronicler spoke, the message conveyed, and an outline of the story through which he conveyed it. The final question is crucial. It is obvious that the Chronicler wrote of matters of which he was without firsthand acquaintance. He took his story back to the beginning, commencing with Adam. His observations were more genealogical than historical until the time of David; then he took up historical detail. David reigned from 1000-961 B.C., and the Chronicler did his writing about 400 B.C. In fact, much of the story about which he wrote preceded his days, with the exception of certain events found in Ezra and Nehemiah. The question then occurs, how did he generate the information to put together books of history? There are various options. (1) He could have received it all from God by direct revelation. (2) He could have received the details from some wise old religious man. (3) He could have searched in a number of available manuscripts and pieced together the story from them. It could also be that all three of these avenues were involved. At minimum, we know from his work that he claimed dependency on written sources at various points for his information. We now turn to noticing the sources which he himself cites.

In his Anchor Bible commentary on 1 Chronicles, Jacob M. Myers (1965) has collected the following references to sources in 1 and 2 Chronicles. [The citations here are Myers' translation; the RSV reads slightly different.] (1) Official records: "The book of the chronicles of King David" (1 Chron. 27:24), "The chronicles of the kings of Israel and Judah (2 Chron. 27:7; 35:27; 36:8), "The chronicles of

the kings of Judah and Israel" (2 Chron. 16:11; 25:26; 28:26; 32:32), "The chronicles of the kings of Israel" (1 Chron. 9:1; 2 Chron. 20:34), "The records of the kings of Israel" (2 Chron. 33:18), "The treatise (midrash) of the chronicle of the kings" (2 Chron. 24:27), and "The decree of David the king of Israel and the decree of Solomon his son" (2 Chron. 35:4). This is the language of the Chronicler. In some cases one suspects these titles may be different language for the same document. It is not clear how many of these sources were available and examined by the Chronicler, but likely some were. (2) Official genealogical lists: "They had an official genealogy" (1 Chron. 4:33), "All of them were included in the official genealogy" (1 Chron. 5:17), "Their official genealogy" (1 Chron. 7:9; cf. 1 Chron. 7:40; 9:1, 22; 2 Chron. 12:15). From what he says, it seems likely that he was in possession of the lists. (3) Prophetic records: "The records of Samuel the seer" (1 Chron. 29:29), "The records of Nathan the prophet" (1 Chron. 29:29; 2 Chron. 9:29), "The records of Gad the seer" (1 Chron. 29:29), "The prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite" (2 Chron. 9:29), "The visions of Iddo the seer concerning Jeroboam the son of Nebat" (2 Chron. 9:29), "The records of Shemaiah the prophet" (2 Chron. 12:15), "The visions of Iddo the seer" (2 Chron. 12:15), "The treatise (midrash) of the prophet Iddo" (2 Chron. 13:22), "The records of Jehu ben Hanani" (2 Chron. 20:34), "The history of Uzziah which Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, has written down" (2 Chron. 26:22), "The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, the prophet in the chronicle of the kings of Judah and Israel" (2 Chron. 32:32), and "The records of his seers (referring to Manasseh)" (2 Chron. 33:19). It may seem surprising that prophets kept official court records, but from these notices their role as official chroniclers and historians cannot be denied. (4) Other documents: "Message of Sennacherib to Hezekiah" (2 Chron. 32:10-15), "Other letters of Sennacherib" (2 Chron. 32:17), "The words of David and Asaph" (2 Chron. 29:30), "The document with plans for the temple" (1 Chron. 28:19), and "The Lamentations" (2 Chron. 35:25).

All these sources are extrabiblical (extracanonical). In addition to the extrabiblical materials the Chronicler had canonical OT books to draw upon, including the books of the law,

the histories, and the prophets. It is obvious that he drew upon these materials and had before him 1 Samuel—2 Kings as he wrote. He may have drawn upon these works for about half of his information and on the extracanonical materials for the other half.

In his commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah, Myers noted the sources cited there (1965): (1) Ezra: "The edict of Cyrus" (1:2-4), "List of temple vessels returned to Sheshbazzar" (1:9-11), "List of returnees with Zerubbabel" (2:1-70), "Letter of Rehum and Shimshai to Artaxerxes" (4:11-16), "Reply of Artaxerxes to Rehum, Shimshai, and their partners" (4:17d-22), "Letter of Tattenai and Shethar-bozenai to Darius" (5:7b-17), "Memorandum of Cyrus located from the archives at Ecbatana" (6:2c-5, "The reply of Darius to Tattenai, Shethar-bonzenai and their partners" (6:6-12), "Rescript of Artaxerxes to Ezra" (7:12-26), "List of family heads of those returning with Ezra" (8:1-14), "Inventory of vessels and bowls" (8:26, 27), "Ezra's prayer" (9:6-15), "List of those who had married foreign wives" (10:18-44). (2) Nehemiah: "The prayer of Nehemiah" (1:5-11), "List of builders" (3:1-32), "Complaint of Sanballat against Nehemiah" (6:6-7), "Note of Nehemiah to Sanballat" (6:8), "Census list" (7:6-72a), "Ceremony of dedication of walls" (12:27-43), "Law reading ceremony" (7:72-8:18), "Ezra's prayer" (9:6-37), "Signatories to agreement" (10:1-28), "The code of 'Nehemiah'" (10:31-40), "List of residents of Jerusalem" (11:3-24), "List of towns occupied in Judah and Benjamin" (11:25-36), and "List of priests and Levites" (12:1-26). These materials probably came from the temple archives. Some may even have come from the Persian archives, supplied to the Chronicler by someone who had access to them.

From the willingness of the Chronicler to identify his sources, we can be certain that he himself spent considerable time looking through biblical and official documents to tell the story and make the point he had in mind. It is also possible that he talked with older persons and those interested in history and received some information in oral form.

From reading the works of the Chronicler, we therefore receive the above glimpses into the making of his work. Some time about 400 B.C. a religious man in Jerusalem,

quite likely a Levite, decided to write a lengthy story of his people, told from a particular perspective. He was especially interested in the southern kingdom and the reasons for its ups and downs. He was convinced that it had managed to survive because of God's love for David and his promise to him. But at the same time the nation had been on the brink of disaster because it had not been faithful to God. He therefore wished to tell the story in such a way that God's care for David and his descendants would be obvious, as well as the need for life to revolve about the temple and the Levites and for the people to be faithful to the law. How was he to tell the story? Apparently he was a person who had access to the archival materials available in Jerusalem as well as elsewhere. He therefore read numerous documents and poured over the canonical books. As he gleaned pertinent information, he wrote his story, utilizing some of it and putting aside considerable as not directly related to his purpose. When he finished, his product was what we now refer to in the OT as 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

We have already affirmed that a person working in this manner might well be under the influence of the Spirit of God. Does this mean that such a person, by incorporating statements from secular documents, elevated them to the status of inspiration? That is a difficult question to answer. But at minimum, if God was at work with the Chronicler in turning out his history, then not only was this the account which the Chronicler wished to give to his time to be available to posterity, but God himself desired special preservation of the story as told in this manner. For this reason, the work of the Chronicler and all that is contained therein has come down to us as the word of God.

THE MAKING OF THE BOOK OF AMOS

Various suppositions might be advanced concerning the making of a prophetic book. One could suppose, for example, that the book of Amos was produced in one day when God told Amos to take a pen in hand and write down these words in nine chapters. This supposition, however,

runs counter to what can be discovered in the book of Amos itself. From an examination of a prophetic book, it becomes apparent that the word of the Lord which came to the prophets normally was in short oracles and not in extended utterances. A rather typical utterance may be found in Amos 3:1-2:

Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you,
people of Israel, against the whole family which I
brought up out of the land of Egypt:

“You only have I known of all the families of the
earth;
therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”

One reason for thinking that these were all the words the Lord said to the prophet at that time is the fact that the material in 3:3-8 does not take up the same point. In fact, 3:3-8 seems to be one utterance of the prophet, then 3:9-11 another. Two kinds of material are found in 3:1-2. First, the prophet makes an observation about the words which the Lord told him to speak. Second, he quotes the word which the Lord himself has spoken or given. Verses 3-8 contain only the first of these elements. Ostensibly, these verses are Amos' comments on the prophetic word and the basis upon which God gives it. But the book of Amos contains even a third type of material. Amos 1:1 is words neither from God nor from Amos, but rather comments on Amos made by a third party. There is another such section in the book, Amos 7:10-17.

From looking at the contents in Amos, therefore, we arrive at these conclusions. First, Amos does not contain a long, extended argument such as one finds, for example, in the book of Romans, or an extended narrative as in Esther. Rather, the comments are short and often appear without any bridge or continuity from one passage to another. Unlike the proverbs in Proverbs 10-22, there is no predictable length of utterance. Each section must be taken up and, on the ground of content and form, a decision made as to the length of the oracle. Second, there are at least three sorts of comments in the prophets, and we have identified these three in Amos: (1) the word of the Lord, (2) observations of

the prophet upon the word of the Lord, and (3) observations on the prophet by a third party. How then did these materials come to be molded into a prophetic book?

A second supposition might be that each time a prophet received a word from the Lord he either memorized it and wrote it down on papyrus when he got home or else wrote it down at the time it was given him so it could be read to those intended. A case of the latter is obvious in the famous situation in which Jeremiah was prevented from speaking at the temple, so he dictated a statement to Baruch, who in turn was to take the document and read it at the temple (Jer. 36:1-6). When the prophet was finished with the oracle, he placed it in a box for safekeeping. At some date late in his life he took out the materials and had some scribe transcribe them on a long scroll in the order in which they were preserved in the box. There are two problems with positing this as the manner in which a prophetic book was made. The first is that it fails to account either for the prophet's own comments on the word he received or comments contained in the book by someone else about the prophet. Second, it assumes that the material in a prophetic book is always in chronological order. Whether the oracles in the book of Amos are in chronological order is difficult to determine since few indications of place or date are obvious. But in certain prophetic books where such details are apparent, for example in Jeremiah, as we shall see, we find clear indications that chronology was not altogether the basis upon which the material in the book was organized.

With these facts we are in a somewhat better position to describe the making of a prophetic book. The first ingredient of a prophetic book is a word which has come from the Lord, an oracle. These oracles are usually short and are either written before being given or after. On the other hand, perhaps they were often memorized and only written at a considerably later date. Or it is also possible that the prophet had some of his disciples present when he uttered the saying and they memorized it, or he gave it to them orally at a later time so they could memorize it. (That prophets had disciples may be ascertained from the "sons of

the prophets" of an earlier day. See 2 Kings 4:38-41.) Then after preserving the word from the Lord, the prophet added his own comments and observations. These he might do either orally or in writing. At some time in his career a prophet probably organized some of his sayings according to a scheme, but not necessarily chronologically. Or it is possible that he did very little organizing or any other work on his sayings. At his death, when his disciples wished to preserve the sayings and writings of their master, they organized the materials, made certain chronological and biographical comments, and put it all in manuscript form. The final result may, of course, be basically the sayings of the prophet, but other elements are found.

With these observations before us, we are now ready to turn to the book of Amos to see what we can ascertain about the manner in which it was produced. There are three clear elements: (1) oracles from the Lord, (2) comments by the prophet upon the oracles, and (3) comments on the life and activities of Amos. Because of the last (Amos 1:1; 7:10-17), the supposition seems justified that Amos did not give the book its final form, but that someone else, possibly a disciple, at least an admirer of his, did so after his death. But the next question is difficult to answer. In what form was the material preserved when this disciple started to work on it? Had Amos already collected his materials and arranged them, or was this the work of the one who produced the book as we have it? Of course it is also possible that someone else had been working with the material even before the final editor. Before we attempt any answer to these questions we need to look at the arrangement of Amos.

Since there is an absence of historical references in Amos, it is almost impossible to determine whether the material is in chronological order. From the book itself there is nothing to prevent all of it, except the editorial comments, from being uttered on one occasion, though in this writer's view such a prospect is unlikely. If the order is not chronological, what sense can we make of it? The book commences with oracles of Amos against the nations (1:3-2:3), then follows with oracles against Judah (2:4-5) and Israel (2:6-8). The oracles against the nations are all col-

lected in this one place. It could well be that these oracles were given at disparate times and places, but were placed together in the book for topical and literary continuity. In one sense, not just 2:6-8, but the rest of the book also is an oracle against Israel.

The remainder of the book is divided into two parts: the oracles against Israel (2:6-6:14) and the visions against Israel (7:1-9; 8:1-9:15). A pattern in the oracles is not immediately apparent. They could well be a series of unrelated sayings. There is some flow, however, perhaps suggesting an effort on someone's part to provide order. The oracles move from Amos' declaration of the basis upon which Israel stands guilty before God (3:1-9) to her concrete guilt (3:9-5:15) to the coming of God (5:16-25) and inevitable invasion and exile (5:26-6:14). The visions are more clearly organized, though the biographical note serves as an interlude. There are visions of locusts (7:1-3), devouring fire (7:4-6), the plumb line (7:7-9), and a basket of summer fruit (8:1-3). These belong together both in terms of content and form. After the visions follows a section identifying Israel's shortcoming and affirming that punishment is on the way. A final or fifth vision shows the destruction of the altar at Bethel (9:1-10). The end of the book is an oracle of hope professing that God will raise up what he has destroyed (9:9-15). Certain materials in Amos seem to have no context, for example the three famous doxologies (4:13; 5:8; 9:5-6). Some propose that the doxologies are from someone other than Amos, but this is not necessary; in fact, they make a point in each case in the text as the doxologies now stand. What is clear is that someone has given thought to organizing the book, whether Amos or another. To this writer, this organization, especially in the section 2:9-6:14, does not represent the order of the material as originally given by Amos but is a later arrangement.

We cannot be too adamant, then, about the manner in which the book of Amos received its final form. A number of hypotheses have been presented. The best this writer can do is to conclude that Amos received a series of oracles and visions over a period of time. Some of these may have been

recorded and arranged according to his instructions. The rest were preserved without any particular arrangement. Then toward the end of Amos' career, or perhaps after his death, an admirer or disciple collected Amos' utterances, arranged them in a manner which appealed to him, added a historical and biographical note, and copied the book onto a manuscript. Not only then is the word from God to Amos God's message for man in all ages, but likewise the comments of Amos on the oracles, as well as the remarks of the editor and arranger who gave the book its final form.

Now we are in a much better position to set about understanding it. In the first place, we do not assume that it was given at one sitting. At the same time, we look for overall arrangement, understanding that this may be provided by someone other than Amos. Second, we are aware that prophetic oracles come in short utterances. As we look at the book, we must therefore try to determine what the boundaries of each saying are. We do not presume to find a continuity from one oracle to another. Furthermore, we do not suppose that the materials are in chronological order, though in some cases they may be. In other words, we check through the materials to determine what the facts of the case are rather than assuming ahead of time any particular characteristics of a prophetic book.

THE MAKING OF THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

The book of Jeremiah has the essential characteristics of the book of Amos so that we can build upon observations already made. In addition to oracles, visions, comments of Jeremiah, and comments about Jeremiah, one also discovers historical material (Jer. 52) taken almost verbatim from 2 Kings 24-25. Apparently Jeremiah has received more editing than Amos, since many sections are basically prose, for example 32-45. The assumption is, perhaps not altogether justified, that prophetic oracles were always in poetic form. But Jeremiah gives us an opportunity to do what we were unable to do with Amos, namely, to reflect on the historical and chronological settings of the material.

Jeremiah contains numerous references to kings, battles, and incidents. From these references we can date much of the material in Jeremiah and ascertain to what extent the whole is chronological in sequence.

In presenting observations on the book of Jeremiah as we have it in our OT, we need first to lay a historical base so that comments made on the chronological flow in the work will be obvious. Second, we need to see what we can make out by way of overall pattern in the book. Third, we want to examine the historical allusions in the book, to reconstruct it chronologically. Finally, we want to bring together what insight these facts reveal as to the manner in which the book was put together.

Certain dates and facts are important in grasping the historical background of Jeremiah. Jeremiah commenced prophesying in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah. Josiah reigned from 640-609 B.C., which means that Jeremiah began his prophetic career in 627. The dates of the reigns of the kings of Judah during Jeremiah's work are as follows:

- Josiah, 640-609
- Jehoahaz, 609 (three months)
- Jehoiakim, 609-598
- Jehoiachin, 597 (three months)
- Zedekiah, 597-587
- Gedaliah, 587 (served as governor)

As well as knowing the kings in Judah, we need to know events in the large empires of Assyria and Babylonia.

Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, fell to the Babylonians, 612 B.C.

Neco II was the king of Egypt, 609-597.

Nebuchadnezzar defeated Egypt at Carchemish, 605.

Nebuchadnezzar became king in Babylonia, 604.

Rebellion arose in Babylon, 595-94.

Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem, August 587.

The one other fact of considerable importance is that in 621 B.C. a book of the law was found in the temple in Jerusalem, which provided great impetus for the reform of Josiah.

We are not altogether in the dark as to major aggregations of materials in the book of Jeremiah. We are told about the writing down of the earlier oracles of the Lord to Jeremiah.

In the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord: "Take a scroll and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel and Judah and all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah until today."

Jeremiah 36:1-2

This scroll was destroyed by Jehoiakim with his penknife and the fire in the brazier (Jer. 36:22-23), but Jeremiah was told to rewrite the scroll (vss. 27-29). Jeremiah did not write down the words himself. "Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote upon a scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the Lord which he had spoken to him" (Jer. 36:4). This command came from God in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign, or 605 B.C. By that time Jeremiah had prophesied for twenty-two years. If we take the command seriously, Jeremiah has gone for twenty-two years without writing down the words of the Lord given him. Now he is asked to recall them all. With us such a feat would likely be impossible. But in societies where writing is scant, oral memory abounds. This indicates that prophets may or may not have written down their own materials. It further tells us that we have no way of predicting when or how such writing occurred.

The question now occurs as to whether we have the Baruch scroll in the book of Jeremiah. Obviously the scroll is not the book of Jeremiah as we now have it, for Jeremiah continued to prophesy until at least 587 B.C., or another eighteen years. But is it possible that somewhere within the book of Jeremiah this scroll may be located? The reply will no doubt always be under dispute, but a statement in Jeremiah 25:13 is of interest: "I will bring upon that land all the words which I have uttered against it, everything written in this book, which Jeremiah prophesied against all the nations." This seems to be a reference to a book which is not the entirety of Jeremiah. These words likewise come

from the fourth year of Jehoiakim (Jer. 25:1). In addition, Jeremiah 25:8-13 contains language sounding like Jeremiah 1:15-16. For these reasons, some have supposed that we have in Jeremiah 1-25 the contents of the scroll dictated to Baruch. If so (and this writer considers it a good possibility), Jeremiah 1-25 is not just the scroll, for we can identify some material which has been added, for example, comments about Zedekiah, who reigned 597-587 B.C. (Jer. 21), and on Jehoiachin, who reigned briefly in 597 B.C. (Jer. 13:15-27; 22:24; 20:7-18). So we do not know exactly how much of 1-25 is the Baruch scroll, but it may be all there with other materials added by Baruch if he was the one who put together the final manuscript.

Another section referred to as a book in the Hebrew text (Jer. 46:1) is a collection of prophecies against the nations (Jer. 46-51). It is obvious from what dates can be determined that these sayings were not given to Jeremiah at the same time. Neither are they arranged in chronological order. The first section is against Egypt and because of the citation in 46:2 is to be dated 605 B.C. The heading in verse 13 may indicate oracles against Egypt delivered at another time, but internal citations do not enable us to date them should there be any. Chapter 47 is against the Philistines. It is probably to be dated when Neco was in the land, which could be anywhere from 609 to 605 B.C. Chapter 48 contains a series of oracles against Moab. No datable material is immediately obvious, but it would seem that the comments fall after Jehoiakim rebelled in 600-598 B.C., but Moab remained loyal to Babylonia, assisting in restoring Judah to Babylonian hegemony. Chapter 49 contains comments on the Ammonites, Edom, Damascus, and Elam. The comments against Ammon probably are to be dated at the same time as those against Moab. The comments against Edom best fit the situation after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C., since the Edomites took advantage of Judah's defeat. The date of the comments against Damascus is uncertain, but they possibly fall before Nebuchadnezzar consolidated his occupation of the region, or before 600 B.C. The prophecy against Elam (Jer. 49:34-39) is dated at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah or 597 B.C.. Chapters 50 and 51 are against

Babylon and may be from the time of the final destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C., but there is little way of knowing for sure. The last section in 51:59-64 comes from the time when Zedekiah went to Babylon, 594. Jeremiah 51:60 speaks of a book, but, unless this has in mind chapters 50 and 51, we do not have these materials. The section ends with the statement "Thus far are the words of Jeremiah" (51:64), indicating an awareness that what follows in chapter 52 is not from Jeremiah.

We have located two books in Jeremiah. We now turn to a third. The first verse of Jeremiah 30 contains this statement: "The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: 'Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Write in a book all the words that I have spoken to you.'" This book apparently ends with chapter 31, inasmuch as in these two chapters the content and style are similar. The section is designated "the Book of Consolation," since it contains oracles of hope depicting the action of God in restoring his people beyond destruction. Apparently these materials have been collected by Jeremiah or someone else and put in this form. As to setting, they likely come from after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C., since the destruction seems presupposed (Jer. 30:18-21; 31:23-28).

By discovering these three books in Jeremiah we can see that a pattern is beginning to unfold. The books comprise (1) chapters 1-25, (2) chapters 30-31, and (3) chapters 46-51. The remaining material consists of chapters 26-29, 32-45, and 52. What is interesting about the materials in 26-29 and 32-45 is that they are prose and narratives written in the third person about Jeremiah. They contain almost no oracular material. These historical narratives could well have been composed by the one who gave the book its final form, perhaps Jeremiah's friend and scribe Baruch. Chapter 52, as we have already noted, is taken almost verbatim from historical materials in 2 Kings. It was apparently added to relate the narrative of the final days of Jerusalem in historical form.

Standing back from the book of Jeremiah, we thus obtain this picture: We have three books, transitional material, and a historical appendix. There is something of a historical

sequence involved, but anyone interested in following the book through from a chronological perspective has to provide his own outline. The earliest materials of Jeremiah are probably all in the first ten chapters. The materials relating to events from the death of Josiah (609 B.C.) to the fall of Jerusalem (587 B.C.) flow somewhat chronologically from chapters 7–45, with 30 and 31 as an interlude. But a sizeable amount is out of phase. Certain sections are, of course, not datable. Chapters 30 and 31, as we have dated them, should properly come toward the end of the book. Chapters 46–51, as we noted, are not in chronological sequence. They fall in the years 609–587 B.C. We thus conclude that whoever put together the book may have had some interest in chronology, but it was not a controlling factor. Rather, he utilized blocks of material that were already together, put certain oracles and narratives together according to subject matter, inserted oracles and transitions at places, and added a historical ending.

Much of the material in Jeremiah can be dated, but some cannot. We could spend considerable time giving detailed information about the dating of various materials. With the chronological details provided earlier, however, most persons can do this on their own by noticing section headings. For example, at the beginning of chapter 21 the remark is made, "This is the word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur the son of Malchiah and Zephaniah the priest" (Jer. 21:1). We know, therefore, that this falls in the reign of Zedekiah (597–587 B.C.) and probably at the last part of the reign. To show how a chronological reconstruction of Jeremiah would look, the following outline is presented. The prophecies against the foreign nations are left together at the end rather than being redistributed. In their form in Jeremiah they may have been written after the fall of Jerusalem.

CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

I. Jeremiah's Earliest Prophecies (616[?]-609 B.C.)

- A. His call, chapter 1 (ca. 627 B.C.)
- B. The northern peril, 1:13-19; 4:5-31; 5:15-17; 6 (also 8:13-17 and 10:22)
- C. Indictment of the people of the nation, 2:1-4:4, 5-6
- D. Jeremiah and the great reform under Josiah, 6:16; 4:10 (622 B.C.)
- II. Prophecies mostly from the Reign of Jehoiakim, (609-598 B.C.)
 - A. The temple sermon, 26-27
 - B. Further indictment and lamentation, 8-10
 - C. Writing of the scroll, 36, 45
 - D. Prophecy of the Babylonian captivity, 25
 - E. About Jehoiakim, 22:1-9, 13-19
 - F. Parables on the edge of doom, 13, 18-19
 - G. Trouble with the authorities, 20:1-6
- III. The Personal Life and Problems of the Prophet
 - A. Spiritual struggles, 12, 14-17, 20:7-18
 - B. Enemies, 23:9-40, 28
- IV. The First Captivity (598 B.C.)
 - A. About Jehoiachin, 13:15-17; 22:24-23:4; 24
 - B. Lesson from the Rechabites, 35
- V. Rebuke of False Hopes about a Speedy Return of the Exiles, 27-29 (ca. 594-593 B.C.) Cf. 28:1
- VI. The Last Days of Judah, (ca. 589-587 B.C.)
 - A. Commissions from Zedekiah, 21; 34:1-7
 - B. Fortunes of Jeremiah during the siege, 37
 - C. Redemption of family land at Anathoth, 32-33
 - D. Last days of the siege, 38
 - E. Cancelled liberation of slaves, 34:8-22
 - F. Fall of Jerusalem and the new order, 39-40, 52
 - G. Subsequent events in 587-586 B.C., 40:1-43:7
 - H. The Book of Consolation, 30-31
- VII. Prophecies against Foreign Nations
 - A. Egypt, 43:8-13, 44, 46
 - B. Syro-Palestinian countries, 47:1-49:33
 - C. Elam and Babylon, 49:34-51
- VIII. Historical Appendix, 52

From the preceding information we can now offer conclusions about the making of the book of Jeremiah. Apparently the first remarks of Jeremiah were put on papyrus by Baruch in 605 B.C. after Jeremiah had been prophesying some twenty-two years. Very little of this material, with the exception of that relating to the call of Jeremiah in chapter 1, preceded the discovery of the book of the law in the temple in 621 B.C. and the waves which went out from Josiah's attempt to take the book seriously. Most of the oracles in the book dictated to Baruch are from 616 to 605 B.C. Baruch preserved his book and with that as the beginning probably commenced recording certain of Jeremiah's other utterances. Some of these he kept together in chronological order; others he stored topically. At the death of Jeremiah he probably gave the book the form in which we now have it.

First of all, as with the other prophetic books, he wrote a historical introduction to the whole (Jer. 1:1-3). Next he placed the materials he had written down in the dictated scroll. At certain points, where he thought pertinent, he added items he had preserved, which occurred later. After this first book, he placed a narrative account of the actions of Jeremiah, which he may have been working on for some time or which he may have composed as the form of Jeremiah took shape in his mind. He broke up this narrative with the Book of Consolation, which he apparently felt was needed in order to show the future of Israel and Judah as anticipated by the prophet. Last of all, he included the oracles against the nations which he had been collecting for some time. Then at the end he provided a historical appendix, which he pieced together from materials in 2 Kings.

The end product of the work of Baruch, or perhaps someone else, is preserved for the people of God as the book of Jeremiah. It is a book of many elements. Among these are oracles from God, comments on the oracles by Jeremiah, comments on Jeremiah and his oracles by Baruch and perhaps others, and historical materials borrowed elsewhere. Because of the manner in which the book of Jeremiah was created, it is not easy to discern the particular

context for certain sections. But obviously if one is to have more than a cursory insight into what he reads, it is extremely important that he have an idea of how the book was put together, how one goes about determining the beginning and end of the various sections, and the contexts to which they are spoken.

The book of Jeremiah as we have it is the inspired word of God providing nourishment for those who are his from then to now. Much of the material in the book was, first of all, a word from God to those who lived in a particular time and under a particular set of circumstances. It can only be the word of God for those who live in later times and later circumstances when they are sensitive to the first set of circumstances. For that reason an insight into the manner in which the book was put together is of utmost importance. It is only when insights such as these are obtained that the word of God then can be transferred to the present. This is possible when the present set of circumstances is parallel. When the then and the now can be lined up and are analogous, God's word reaches into our lives just as it did into theirs. In this manner God's word becomes the living word. It comes to us as prophetic oracle, comment, or third-party reflection. All this is human word, but, upon reaching us, it is deeply and profoundly the inspired word of God.

CONCLUSIONS

The making of the books of the OT is a very complex matter. One can almost offer the suggestion that the rule is that there are no rules. Apparently certain documents were essentially the work of one author in a short span of time, for example, the book of Ruth. What we have provided in this chapter at best serves only as an introduction to the whole subject. If it has created a sensitivity to the means by which the composition and structure of an OT book may be discovered, then it has been successful. As the student takes up each book, he should read introductory remarks to the book calling attention to its composition. Then as he reads the work itself, he should pick up clues along the way.

Through these means he will secure the necessary insight for a more profound understanding of the word of God. The most significant conclusion of this chapter is that each OT book must be approached on its own grounds. The inspiration of God produced the Bible as it is, not as some scholar, however conservative or liberal, professes it to be apart from a hard-nosed look at the books. In the words of the hymn, "God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform." This is true, not only of his work in nature and history, but also of the manner in which he produced and preserved his word. The action of God is wondrous and multiplex. We should be very careful about declaring limits on the manner of God's inspiration. After all, he is God, and we have no franchise for providing arbitrary rules as to how he may or may not breathe his very way into his word. Just as it is exciting to discover the astounding and multifold ways in which God works in history, so also it is an exciting adventure to discover the manner in which the books of the Bible were made through which he spoke then and through which he speaks even now.

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