

## Adam Clarke:

### Preface to the Two Books of Chronicles

Anciently these two books were considered but as one: for this we have not only the testimony of St. Jerome, but also that of the Masoretes, who gave the sum of all the sections, chapters, and verses, under one notation at the end of the second book, without mentioning any division; and although the modern Jews divide them, yet they give the Masoretic enumeration of sections, etc., as it was given of old; and all editors of the Masoretic Bibles, whether Jewish or Christian, follow the same plan.

These books have had several names. In Hebrew they are denominated  $\text{דִּבְרֵי הַיָּמִים}$  (dibrei haiyamim); literally, The Words of the Days, i.e., The Journals, particularly of the kings of Israel and kings of Judah. But this name does not appear to have been given by the inspired writer.

The Syriac has, The Book of the Transactions in the days of the Kings of Judah: which is called, (Dibrei Yamim); referring to the Hebrew title.

The Arabic has, The Book of the Annals, which is called in Hebrew, (Dibrei Haiyamim).

The Septuagint has,  $\text{ἱστορίαι τῶν πραγμάτων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς Ἰουδαίας καὶ τῆς Ἰσραὴλ}$ , of the things that were left or omitted; supposing that these books were a supplement either to Samuel and to the books of Kings, or to the whole Bible. To this the Greek translators might have been led by finding that these books in their time closed the Sacred Canon, as they still do in the most correct editions of the Hebrew Bible.

The Vulgate uses the same term as the Septuagint, referring, like the Syriac and Arabic, to the Hebrew name.

In our English Bibles these books are termed Chronicles, from the Greek  $\text{ἱστορία}$ , from  $\text{ἵστωρ}$ , i.e., A History of Times; or, as the matter of the work shows,  $\text{ἱστορία τῶν βασιλείων, τῶν ἐθνῶν, τῶν πόλεων, καὶ τῶν πραγμάτων}$ , with an Account of the most memorable Persons and Transactions of those Times and Nations. Concerning the author of these books, nothing certain is known. Some think they are the works of different authors; but the uniformity of the style, the connection of the facts, together with the recapitulations and reflections which are often made, prove that they are the work of one and the same person.

The Jews, and Christian interpreters in general, believe they were the work of Ezra, assisted by the prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. That Ezra was the author is, on the whole, the most probable opinion. That he lived at the conclusion of the Babylonish captivity is well known; and the second book of Chronicles terminates at that period, barely reciting the decree of Cyrus to permit the return of the captivated Israelites to their own land; which subject is immediately taken up in the book of Ezra, in which the operation of that decree is distinctly marked.

There are words and terms, both in Chronicles and Ezra, which are similar, and prove that each was written after the captivity, and probably by the same person, as those terms were not in use previously to that time, and some of them are peculiar to Ezra himself: e.g., we have  $\text{כִּיפּוֹרֵי זָהָב}$  (kipporey zahab),  $\text{ἄρᾱ χρυσῶν ποτήρια}$  golden cups; Ezra 1:10; Ezra 8:27; and in 1 Chronicles 28:17; and  $\text{דַּרְכֵּמוֹן}$  (darkemon) or (drakmon),  $\text{ἄρᾱ δραχμῶν}$  or; drachm, 1 Chronicles 29:7; Ezra 2:69; Nehemiah 7:70; and  $\text{רַפְּסוֹדוֹת}$  (raphsodoth),  $\text{ἄρᾱ ραφῶδοντα}$  or floats, 2 Chronicles 2:16, widely differing from  $\text{דּוֹבֵרוֹת}$  (doberoth), 1 Kings 5:9, which we there translate in the same way. Calmet considers these words as strong evidence that these books were the work of Ezra, and penned after the captivity.

We are not to suppose that these books are the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah and Israel so often referred to in the historical books of the Old Testament; these have been long lost, and the books before us can only be abridgments, either of such chronicles, or of works of a similar kind.

That the ancient Jews took great care to register their civil, military, and ecclesiastical transactions, is sufficiently evident from frequent reference to such works in the sacred writings; and that these registers were carefully and correctly formed, we learn from the character of the persons by whom they were compiled: they were in general prophets, and seem to have been employed by the kings under whom they lived to compile the annals of their reigns; or most likely this was considered a part of the prophet's regular office.

Samuel, Nathan, and Gad, wrote under the reign of David; 1 Chronicles 29:29.

The acts of the reign of Solomon were written by Nathan, Ahijah, and Iddo; 2 Chronicles 9:29.

Shemaiah and Iddo wrote those of Rehoboam; 2 Chronicles 12:15.

Iddo wrote also those of Abijah; 2 Chronicles 13:22.

It is likely that Hanani the seer wrote those of Asa; 2 Chronicles 16:7.

Jehu the prophet, the son of Hanani, 1 Kings 16:1, 1 Kings 16:7, wrote the acts of Jehoshaphat; 2 Chronicles 20:34. Under this same reign we find Jahaziel the prophet, 2 Chronicles 20:14; and Eliezer the prophet, 2 Chronicles 20:37.

Isaiah recorded the transactions of Uzziah, 2 Chronicles 26:22; and those of Hezekiah, 2 Chronicles 32:32; and of Ahaz, of whose reign we find the principal facts in the fifth, sixth, and ninth chapters of his prophecies. Under this reign we find Oded the prophet, 2 Chronicles 28:9.

Hosea wrote the history of the reign of Manasseh. See 2 Chronicles 33:19, in the margin.

And Jeremiah wrote the history of Josiah and his descendants, the last kings of Judah.

This was such a succession of historians as no nation of the world could ever boast. Men, all of whom wrote under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit; some of whom had minds the most highly cultivated, and of the most extraordinary powers. Whether the prophets who flourished in the reigns of the kings of Israel wrote the annals of those kings, we know not, because it is not positively declared. We know that Ahijah the Shilonite lived under Jeroboam, the son of Nebat; 1 Kings 11:29; 1 Kings 14:2; and Jehu, son of Hanani, under Baasha; 1 Kings 16:7.

Elijah and many others flourished under the reign of Ahab. Elisha, Jonah, and many more, succeeded him in the prophetic office.

Besides these prophets and prophetic men, we find other persons, whose office it was to record the transactions of the kings under whom they lived. These were called secretaries or recorders; so, under David and Solomon, Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder. מִזְכֵּיר (mazzkir), a remembrancer; 2 Samuel 8:16, and 1 Chronicles 18:15. And under Hezekiah we find Joah, the son of Asaph; 2 Kings 18:18. And under Josiah, Joah the son of Joahaz, who filled the office; 2 Chronicles 34:8.

The real object of the author of these books is not very easy to be ascertained. But it is evident that he never could have intended them as a supplement to the preceding books, as he relates many of the same circumstances which occur in them, and often in greater detail; and, except by way of amplification, adds very little that can be called new, and omits many things of importance, not only in the ancient history of the Israelites, but even of those mentioned in the preceding books of Samuel and Kings. Nine chapters of his work are occupied with extensive genealogical tables, but even these are far from being perfect. His history, properly speaking, does not begin till the tenth chapter, and then it commences abruptly with the last unsuccessful battle of Saul and his death, but not a word of his history.

Though the writer gives many curious and important particulars in the life of David, yet he passes by his adultery with Bath-sheba, and all its consequences. He says nothing of the incest of Amnon with his sister Tamar, nor a word of the rebellion and abominations of Absalom. He says very little of the kings of Israel, and takes no notice of what concerned that state, from the capture of Amaziah king of Judah by Joash king of Israel; 2 Chronicles 25:17, etc. And of the last wars of these kings, which terminated in the captivity of the ten tribes, he says not one word!

The principal design of the writer appears to have been this: to point out, from the public registers, which were still preserved, what had been the state of the different families previously to the captivity, that at their return they might enter on and repossess their respective inheritances. He enters particularly into the functions, genealogies, families, and orders of the priests and Levites; and this was peculiarly necessary after the return from the captivity, to the end that the worship of God might be conducted in the same way as before, and by the proper legitimate persons.

He is also very particular relative to what concerns religion, the worship of God, the temple and its utensils, the kings who authorized or tolerated idolatry, and those who maintained the worship of the true God. In his distribution of praise and blame, these are the qualities which principally occupy his attention, and influence his pen.

It may be necessary to say something here concerning the utility of these books. That they are in this respect in low estimation, we may learn from the manner in which they are treated by commentators: they say very little concerning them, and suppose the subject has been anticipated in the books of Samuel and Kings. That the persons who treat them thus have never studied them, is most evident, else their judgment would be widely different. Whatever history these books possess, in common with the books of Samuel and Kings, may, in a commentary, be fairly introduced in the examination of the latter; and this I have endeavored to do, as the reader may have already seen. But there are various details, and curious facts and observations, which must be considered in these books alone: nor will a slight mention of such circumstances do them justice.

St. Jerome had the most exalted opinion of the books of Chronicles. According to him, they are an epitome of the Old Testament. He asserts, that they are of such high moment and importance, that he who supposes himself to be acquainted with the sacred writings, and does not know them, only deceives himself; and that innumerable questions relative to the Gospel are here explained. Paralipomenon liber, id est, Instrumenti Veteris Testamenti, tantus ac talis est, ut abeque illo, si quis scientiam Scripturarum sibi voluerit arrogare, seipsum irrideat. Per singula quippe nomina, juncturasque verborum, et praetermissae in Regum libris tanguntur historiae, et innumerabiles explicantur Evangelii Quaestiones. - Epis. Secund. ad Paulinum Presbyterum., Oper. Edit. Benedict. vol. iv., col. 574. And in another place he asserts, that all Scripture knowledge is contained in these books; Omnis eruditio Scripturarum in hoc libro continetur. - Praefat. in lib. Paral. justa Septuaginta Interpret Oper. Edit. Bened., vol. i., col. 1418. This may be going too far; but St. Jerome believed that there was a mystery and meaning in every proper name, whether of man, woman, city, or country, in the book. And yet he complains greatly of the corruption of those names, some having been divided, so as to make two or three names out of one, and sometimes names condensed, so as of three names to make but one. To cure this evil he labored hard, and did much; but still the confusion is great, and in many cases past remedy. To assist the reader in this respect I wish to refer him to the marginal readings and parallel texts, which are here

carefully represented in the inner margin; these should be constantly consulted, as they serve to remove many difficulties and reconcile several seeming contradictions. In addition to these helps I have carefully examined the different ancient versions, and the various readings in the MSS. of Kennicott and De Rossi, which often help to remove such difficulties.

There is one mode of exposition which I have applied to these books, which has not, as far as I know, been as yet used: I mean the Targum, or Chaldee Paraphrase, of Rabbi Joseph. It is well known to all oriental scholars, that a Chaldee Targum, or Paraphrase, has been found and published in the Polyglots, on every book of the Old Testament, purely Hebrew, the books of Chronicles excepted. Neither in the Complutensian, Antwerp, Parisian, nor London Polyglot, is such a Targum to be found; none having been discovered when these works were published. But shortly after the London Polyglot was finished, a MS. was found in the University of Cambridge, containing the Targum on these books: this, with several other pieces, Arabic, Persian, Syriac, etc., Dr. Samuel Clarke collected, and intended to publish, as a supplementary volume to the Polyglot, but was prevented by premature death. The MS. was afterwards copied by Mr. David Wilkins, and printed, with a Latin translation, at Amsterdam, quarto, 1715. Of this work the reader will find I have made a liberal use, as I have of the Targum of Jonathan ben Uzziel, on the preceding books. Rabbi Joseph, the author, lived about three hundred years after the destruction of the second temple, or about a.d. 400. The MS. in question formerly belonged to the celebrated Erpen, and was purchased by the duke of Buckingham, then Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, and by him presented to the public library of that University.

It is worthy of remark, that the term  $\text{meymera}$  (meymera),  $\text{word}$  and  $\text{meymera dayeya}$  (meymera dayeya),  $\text{the word of Jehovah}$  is used personally in this Targum; never as a word spoken, but as a Person acting: see the notes on John 1:1.

The first book of Chronicles contains a sort of genealogical history from the creation of the world to the death of David, A.M. 2989.