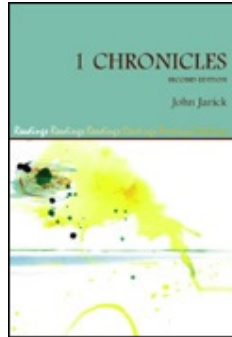


○ REVIEW OF JOHN JARICK, *1 CHRONICLES. 2ND ED. AND 2 CHRONICLES. READINGS: A NEW BIBLICAL COMMENTARY*

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Jarick divides his commentary into two even though Chronicles, or the Annals as he prefers, is one original Hebrew scroll split into two in the Greek translation. He makes a good argument for ‘the Annals’ as a better title than ‘Chronicles,’ but I use the latter in this review for the sake of clarity. The Annalists, which I will use in the review, composed the Annals; Jarick prefers the plural to the singular ‘the Chronicler’ and notes the pun on analysts.

Chronicles, or his Annals, is a post-exilic work – Jarick devotes only one paragraph to the question of actual date – that looks back to and analyses (hence Annalists) a mythic past to propose a way forward for Judahite society, a way founded on a total religious system based in the will of God and manifest in the dictates of the absolute monarch David and carried out in faithful detail by his son Solomon, another absolute monarch. The religious system revolves around the maintenance of the Temple with all its personnel and ritual. The Temple, in David’s preplanning and in Solomon’s faithful execution of his father’s plans, dominates the account from 1 Chronicles 13, the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem, to 2 Chronicles 9, the close of Solomon’s reign.

Maintaining this institution, in all its political and religious ramifications, constitutes, in large part, what it means to be faithful to Yahweh. Jarick maintains that a basic theme of the scroll is that ‘only absolute commitment to a system instituted by an absolute monarch can bring about a perfect society’ (*1 Chronicles*, p. 6). Fidelity or infidelity to Yahweh, demonstrated in proper attitudes toward the Temple and its rites, is a leitmotif of the scroll and it is the principle that explains the fate of the monarchs from David through Zedekiah. ‘If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you abandon him, he will reject you forever’ (1 Chr 28.9; see 2 Chr 7.17–20 and 15.2). It is intoned to account for Saul’s death – ‘Saul died for his unfaithfulness, for being unfaithful to Yahweh’ (1 Chr 10.13) – and then used to explain the varying fates of the kings who follow Solomon.

Jarick proposes to read Chronicles, particularly the large section on David and Solomon (1 Chronicles 11–2 Chronicles 9), on its own without constant comparison to and contrast with the narrative in Samuel-Kings. He does not engage in the debates about the Annalists' sources or in their uses of the material in Samuel-Kings. Positively this allows him to read Chronicles and not purported earlier material or editions. On the other hand, he says very little about how his reading stands in relation to the many other works listed in his bibliography, especially what is original or not in his interpretation of Chronicles in part and in whole. I can recommend his commentary but with the caution that one needs to read other works to understand where Jarick and his readings stand in the study of this scroll.

In his Introduction to *1 Chronicles* Jarick speaks of 'a mythical past,' of a comparison of Chronicles with fantasy literature and of 'an imaginary world in which things happen just so, and in which almost all the "loose ends" are tied together in a highly systematic way' (pp. 6–7). He emphasises, in contrast to this dream world, the dark side of totalitarian and authoritarian rule that is so well known from the modern world of the last century or more. He consistently notes this in the commentary, for example, in the brutality of Davidic wars of conquest, in the huge tribute levied on conquered peoples, in the enslavement of all aliens in Israel and Judah to build the Temple (2 Chr 2.17–20) and in the chilling oath in Asa's covenant: 'whoever would not seek Yahweh, the god of Israel, should be put to death, whether young or old, man or woman (2 Chr 15.13).

Jarick opens his first volume with a 70-page section on 1 Chronicles 1–9 subtitled 'David's Generation in its Context' and focuses on the genealogical lists in chapters 1–3. These are lists of the generations from Adam that mix bare names with notes of parentage (at times both father and mother) and occasional comments such as Nimrod the mighty in 1.11. The first four verses of chapter 1 comprise only the names of the 10 generations from Adam to Noah with the latter's three sons named; a total of 13 names without even a connective *waw* except for the final name. The three sons and their immediate descendants are then given in verses 5–23. The genealogy continues by focusing on the son, Shem, whose line will lead to Abraham and eventually to David and his descendants. The rest of the genealogies in chapters 1–3 follow this format of listing all sons and then focusing on the one who'll carry on the line.

Jarick, however, expands the bare bones style with lengthy quotations from both Genesis and the *Book of Jubilees* for the first 19 generations, Adam to Terah (1 Chr 1.1–26 but pp 11–34 in *1 Chronicles*). Jarick stated that he will read the material in Chronicles on David, Solomon and the remainder of the kings on its own with little or no reference to the other story of Israel and Judah in the book of Kings. He argues that the Annalists want their story of David, Solomon and the Temple, and also of their descendants, to be the true and only accepted version of these men and their accomplishments. I see no reason not to apply this line of reasoning to the opening chapters of Chronicles. I find that Jarick's lengthy presentation of the first 19 generations greatly lessens the impact of the minimal style by strongly implying or arguing that we need to read Genesis or *Jubilees* rather than these genealogical lists in Chronicles. The minimalist form of Chronicles denotes a different content than this much longer presentation.

In the closing verses of 1 Chronicles 3 Jarick accepts the Greek and other versions' reading of the singular 'son of' rather than the Hebrew 'sons of' to produce a line of 32 generations from David to Anani, David's last named descendant in 3.24 (*1 Chronicles*, pp 11–13). This would match the 32 generations from Adam to Jesse and would support Jarick's contention that the

Annals look for a possible New David in their time, a possible reestablishment of their imaginary world. The bare bones lists, obscured in Jarick's commentary, could also accord with this view by making the generations easier to follow and to count.

Jarick's commentary on the rest of 1–2 Chronicles in his two volumes is uneven in terms of what he comments on, how much attention he gives to a chapter or section, whether he notes general issues or details, explicit or implicit issues and whether he ties his treatment of a character, event or section into his overall understanding of Chronicles. He has many interesting and valuable insights, on a range of characters, events and details. For example, he devotes considerable space to developing the view that the Hebrew names of the kings of Judah, from Solomon on, are related to their depiction whether they exemplify the name or contradict it. Solomon, whose name intones both peace and perfection, exemplifies both in his rule; peace allows him to perfectly execute his father's directives. His father couldn't build the Temple since he had shed much blood and waged many wars (1 Chr 22.8; 28.3). In an ironic twist on his name Solomon's son Rehoboam, 'the Enlarger,' loses his rule over Israel and shrinks both kingdom and people. Jarick notes that this consistent play on the royal names is not present in Kings.

Let me return to the 70-page opening of *1 Chronicles* to expand a general critique of his work. The first chapter, titled '1 Chronicles 1–9,' treats in fact only 1 Chronicles 1–3. Chapter 3 ends with the Davidide Anani. Jarick goes immediately from these verses to 1 Chronicles 10–29, the account of David. He skips chapters 4–9, the detailed genealogies of the tribes of Israel that provide an intriguing bridge from the Davidic genealogy to the story of David and at points even preview what is to come. Jarick does comment on the lists of temple personnel in 1 Chronicles 23–27 noting the clear divisions and the appointment by both David and the deity through the use of lots. But he does not deal with their personal, genealogical and fantastic quality. Not only does David tell Solomon precisely how the physical temple is to be built but also he appoints all the Levitical personnel, who are in charge of religious functions and maintenance and security, by name and by family tracing them back to the ancestor Levi through Aaron and Moses. For example the gatekeepers are appointed by name in 1 Chronicles 26.1–19. The first named, from the Korahites, is 'Meshelemiah son of Kore, of the sons of Asaph.' His seven sons are immediately listed by name and in birth order. Such detail is incredible yet does not merit mention by Jarick.

Jarick, in the introduction and at points in the commentary, refers to the imaginary and fantastic world of Chronicles and details at points throughout both volumes the dark underbelly of authoritarian and brutal monarchy that questions this world. However, he does not detail, in matching fashion, this imaginary world in which everything works out just so and in which everyone of importance belongs to one of a limited number of long family lines that reach back to Adam. One needs to detail the vision, especially if it is a fantasy, to show its attractive side even if one's ultimate aim is to deconstruct the vision.

From the point of view of his commentary and reading Jarick fails to grapple with how Chronicles as a single scroll coheres or fails to cohere. Since he intones 'absolute commitment' to Temple and God to produce a 'perfect society,' I expect a certain matching commitment to all the aspects and parts of the scroll. Ignoring the great attention that the Annalists give to the genealogical and family aspect of the vision is, for me, the most obvious sign of this failure but there are others. One final example: Jarick makes an excellent case for the play on the names, whether in positive or ironic fashion, of the kings from Solomon through Zedekiah, but he does

not tie this into a reading of the full scroll of Chronicles even though such play has an imaginative, fantastic quality to it, tying loose ends together in a highly unexpected way.