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Dear Brother,

I suppose that you are aware of (and probably have read) my treatise The Gentile Times Reconsidered, which I sent to the Writing Department last year. This treatise presented a series of arguments demonstrating that Jerusalem was desolated by the Babylonians in 587 B.C.E., not in 607 B.C.E. as we have held hitherto. Although I have not yet received an answer with an appraisal of the evidence presented in the treatise, I understand and have been informed that one reason why the evidence has been disregarded is the importance you attach to a recent work by Robert R. Newton entitled The Crime of Claudius Ptolemy (Baltimore 1977), and especially the statement by the reviewer of this book in Scientific American of Oct. 1977, p. 80, to the effect that "Ptolemy's forgery may have extended to inventing the length of reigns of Babylonian kings". This statement, which was also quoted in the Watchtower of Dec. 15, 1977, p. 747, may be completely disproved, as is shown in the enclosed paper (a table with short comments) on The Reigns of Babylonian Kings: A Comparison of the Canon of Ptolemy with Older Sources, prepared early this year.

There are two reasons, brother Schroeder, why I am approaching you personally in this matter: 1) One of the district overseers here in Sweden, brother Rolf Svensson, told me that you are something of an expert on chronology at the headquarters, and 2) he also told me about a meeting that you held in Europe early in August with a number of prominent brothers. At that meeting you told the audience;

- A. that a campaign now is going on in USA both from the outside (the Seventh Day Adventists) and from the inside of our movement in order to overthrow our present 607 BCE - 1914 CE chronology,
- B. that the Society has no intention at all to abandon the chronology in its present form,
- C. that some of the old documents referred to by these "attackers" have been proven to be forged (Ptolemy's king list was mentioned) and that the Society is following this matter with the greatest interest, and
- D. that there is nothing in the arguments proposed by these "attackers" that is new to the Society.

This was, of course, very interesting information to me, and I would like to make some comments on it and ask you some questions, which I hope you will be kind enough to answer.

A. The campaign. Is it possible that you regard the research I have done on the Neo-Babylonian chronology and the evidence I have presented to the Writing Department as a part of the above-mentioned campaign? At least it seems that brothers in leading positions here in Sweden have understood your statement that way. I have been told by one district overseer that it is against the wishes of the Society to become involved in research of the kind I have done, that the Society does not need it, that a brother on Iceland recently was disfellowshipped because of his research, etc. Warnings of similar kind are also presented from the platform. At a circuit assembly I visited some weeks ago another district overseer spoke ironically of some "presumptuous brothers", who, acting as "small prophets", have worked out "their own little chronology" in opposition to the Society. Another brother, who belongs to the branch office committee, in an address he gives to the congregations, devotes considerable time to warnings against "dangerous elements" in the congregations, among which elements he especially refers to brothers who have no faith in the chronology of the Society. I think you can guess what kind of climate that develops from utterances such as these - a climate of fear, suspiciousness, etc., where you time and again find that some brother has interpreted a harmless remark you have made in a way that may be turned against you.

My research was started more than ten years ago as a result of questions put to me by a man I studied the Bible with. Gradually it dawned upon me that the generally accepted chronology for the Neo-Babylonian period has very strong evidences in support of it. I tried very hard to refute them, but could not, and at last I had to accept them. After having discussed the evidence with some of my closest friends (personally or by letter) for some time, it was decided that they should be presented to the Society. Consequently, I prepared the treatise The Gentile Times Reconsidered and sent it to the Writing Department. This work has been done with the greatest seriousness and in all sincerity. How tragically, then, to observe how a situation develops, where the attention is drawn away from the question raised - the validity of the 607 BCE date - and directed to the person who raised it, and he - not the question - is regarded as the problem! This is really distressing. How is it possible that a situation of this kind develops in our movement?

B. Abandon the chronology or not? I can readily understand the hesitation to abandon the chronology, even if the evidences against it are very strong. Abandonning the 607 BCE - 1914 CE calculation would have very serious consequences for our present understanding of the events since 1914 (as I also demonstrated in Part III of the treatise). And I can also understand the argument used by brother Fred Rusk to a close friend of mine, who recently visited the headquarters and discussed the chronology with him, viz., that "we cannot just take away the 1914 date, if we have nothing to put in its place". On the other hand, love for truth has been one of the most important earmarks of our movement and surely this has been one of the reasons why God has blessed this movement in the past. Those loving the truth will have no problems with even big changes, as they realize that the changes are made in order to conform to truth and facts. I know many brothers (who know nothing of the evidences against the 607 BCE date), who now have increasing problems with our present chronology, just because they see the 1914 date becoming more and more distant and the generation fixed to it extended to the breaking-point, and the critical decade of the 1970s (with the 1975 date) soon behind us. There is a

widespread and growing feeling that something is basically wrong, and this is, surely, our chronology. - Do we really need "something to put in its place"? To a Christian the Bible and what is contained therein is enough as a foundation for his faith. And he finds no 607 BCE or 1914 CE dates there. The first Christians had no such dates, and yet what they had was enough for them. When they asked Jesus about the time when the kingdom of God would be set up, he did not give them any dates or chronological calculations, and he did not refer them to Daniel, chapter four. He just told them that "It does not belong to you to get knowledge of the times (kairoi) and seasons which the Father has placed in his own jurisdiction". - Acts 1:6,7. Shouldn't this statement be enough to put in place of the 607-1914 calculation?

C. Forged documents? I was really surprised to hear that some of the documents establishing the chronology of the Neo-Babylonian period have been proven to be forged. I asked myself: If this is true, why wasn't I notified of it as an answer to my treatise? This would surely have been very helpful to me. I know nothing of such forgeries, although I have studied these documents for years and been following the discussions of them in the scientific journals. But soon I realized that the "documents" referred to could only be Ptolemy's king list (which I did not use as an evidence in my treatise). And perhaps you did not say that this king list has been proven to be forged (as it has not), but only that it could be proved. Brother Rusk, too, in his above-mentioned discussion with my friend, referred to the possible invention of Ptolemy's king list, and did not seem to know anything about other forgeries. So I draw the conclusion that this list is the "documents" referred to. Could you confirm this?

Ptolemy's king list was not invented, as I have demonstrated in the enclosed paper on The Reigns of Babylonian Kings, in which Ptolemy's canon is compared with the reigns of the Babylonian kings as found in other and much older documents. Ptolemy evidently got his information from older sources, available to him. On the other hand, R. R. Newton seemed to have demonstrated that Ptolemy had forged many of the astronomical observations attached to this king list in his Almagest. How could it be possible that these observations were forged, if the king list was not? In order to get an answer to this question, I sent my paper on The Reigns of Babylonian Kings to Mr. Newton and asked some questions. I also asked some questions about the solar eclipse in the eponymy of Bur-Sagale, mentioned in the eponym canon.

Mr. Newton is no expert on Assyro-Babylonian chronology and history, which he also readily admits in his book The Crime of Claudius Ptolemy: "I have not attempted to study the evidence available from sources other than Ptolemy for earlier years", that is, before Nebuchadnezzar (p. 375). This also became evident in our correspondence. Although he had examined the astronomical diary VAT 4956 and confirmed the date earlier established for Nebuchadnezzar's 37th regnal year (568/567 BCE), and thus also could fix Nebuchadnezzar's first regnal year to 604/603 BCE, he knew practically nothing about the old documents on which the Assyro-Babylonian chronology is founded. This is clearly demonstrated in his discussion of the Assyrian eponym canon, where he makes a very gross blunder. (Unfortunately, it seems as if the discussion of the eponym lists in the Aid book proceeds from the same mistake, giving the impression that the placing of Sennacherib's eponymy in his 18th regnal year is an invention by modern historians, while this information is given in the eponym lists themselves! p. 326:4,5)

In his answer, Newton admits that "the king list may be genuine", and by this he does not only mean that it was not invented (because this is very apparent from my table), but also that it may be correct. This is two different things: The canon was not invented, but took its information from older sources. But does it agree with facts? The answer to this question is of course dependent on the question if the older sources agree with facts. And this was what I demonstrated in my treatise, where

I presented several lines of independent evidence, demonstrating that the accepted chronology of the Neo-Babylonian period is correct. There are also other lines of evidence, not included in the treatise, which fix the length of the Neo-Babylonian period, but as it covers different segments of the period and not the whole period I did not include it in the treatise. One of these segments, for example, covers the period from the 18th year of Nabopolassar to the accession-year of Nabonidus. A document from the reign of Nabonidus states that this period was 54 years (610-556 BCE). - I enclose Newton's answer and also a copy of my answer to his letter. He did not answer my last letter, evidently because he could not refute it.

D. Nothing new? Of course you could say so in August, 1978. But when you received Part II of my treatise in May, 1977, didn't you find anything new in it? What about the Harran stele, Nabon. H 1, B? This stele was discovered in 1956, and a translation of it was published by Gadd in 1958. Did you know anything about this stele when the Aid book was published in 1971? I draw the conclusion that you didn't, because if you did, you wouldn't have referred to the damaged copy of the same stele, discovered in 1906, without mentioning the stele with the complete chronological information on it, discovered 50 years later. To discuss the damaged stele in order to demonstrate how little we know about the Neo-Babylonian chronology would not have been honest, if you knew about the new stele in good condition from 1956. As I am convinced that the one who wrote that article was an honest man, I must conclude that he didn't know of the new stele from 1956. To me it also seems very unlikely that you knew anything about the Egibi-tablets and the strong evidence they give for the Neo-Babylonian period, or the evidence from the contemporary chronology of Egypt, independently founded upon a series of Apis-stelae. The three kinds of evidence mentioned above are all contemporary with the Neo-Babylonian period, they are all independent of each other, and yet they all agree as to the length of the Neo-Babylonian period. They are the strongest evidence we have today as respecting the length of the Neo-Babylonian period. Yet, none of them have ever been mentioned in any of our publications, neither in the Aid book nor elsewhere. If this evidence was "nothing new", it seems very curious to me that it has never been discussed or mentioned anywhere, and no attempts have been made to refute it. Are you sure that nothing of this was new when the Aid book was prepared, or when you got my treatise in 1977?

One objection to my arguments against the 607 BCE date is that they are all built upon "worldly" or "profane" sources. To this it is only to point out that a very great part of our present "Bible chronology", too, is built solely on "worldly" sources, viz., the more than 2,500 years from 539 BCE to 1978 CE. And besides, exactly the same kind of evidence (= profane or worldly documents) that makes the 539 BCE date an "absolute date" or a "pivotal date" in our present chronology also makes the 587 date (as the 18th date of Nebuchadnezzar, when Jerusalem was destroyed) an "absolute date" or a "pivotal date". The fact is that our whole "Bible chronology", which is fixed to the 539 BCE date, for that reason is solely founded upon "worldly" sources! Every argument put forth against the documents on which the 587 BCE date is built also hits the 539 BCE date with the same force, and, indirectly, also the 607 BCE date, as that date is derived from the 539 BCE date! This is the real situation, and that is why we should accept the 587 BCE date instead of the 607 BCE date as the correct date for the destruction of Jerusalem.

I am confident that you won't take offence at my outspokenness, but will examine the enclosed material with an open mind. Feel sure that I have the best thoughts of all of you and, in spite of the present difficulties, am praying that Jehovah will continue to lead us all into his truth more fully and to show Christian love to each others. I am looking forward to your answer. Your brother,

Carl G. Jonsson