

The response of the ‘World Community’ is interesting, as they are beginning it would seem, to use codified human rights as a kind of blue-print to police the world. The attempt to create an international criminal court to bring to trial those who commit crimes against humanity including genocide, is an attempt to make nation states subscribe to a way of behaving contained in UN documents such as the declaration. Although only applying to members of the UN who are signatories to the court, it seems likely that this could be extended in the end to cover the whole world. It is however interesting to note that the USA is not supporting the court, which will deprive it of much of the political muscle that it needs to be successful. It has been suggested by commentators, that the refusal of the USA to be involved stems from a fear that American citizens or even past presidents may be indicted by the court for crimes against humanity. The creation of an international criminal court may go some way towards addressing issues that have been raised by international lawyers in relation to the legality of trials conducted on defeated opponents by the victors after wars, examples being the treaty of Versailles, where the German Kaiser was indicted for war crimes and told to present himself for trial (he took political asylum in Holland instead) through the ‘Nuremburg Trials’ after WWII on the defeated Nazis and the Japanese equivalents up to the issues surrounding the investigations into war crimes in the former Yugoslavia in the Hague.

Although I disagree with Hordern, as I believe in the importance of codified bills of rights, Christians should not be frightened of debating the increasing development of international law around the issues of human rights in relation to biblical revelation.

Mike Hammond
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Rodney Horden replies

In reply to Hammond’s letter, I acknowledge that ‘codified Human Rights’ are being extensively used at both a national and international level. In this world of conflicting beliefs and diverse religions, many see human rights as a neutral concept with some chance of universal acceptance. They hope human rights (and related laws) will be the vehicle to stem the tide of atrocities and injustices we read of in the international press. Some even believe it will lead to world peace and here I am reminded of the ‘World Peace through Law’ movement. However, in my view the use of codified human ‘rights’ will not achieve these high goals.

Indeed the very purpose of my paper ‘Human Rights versus biblical responsibility’ in *TJ* 17(3), 2003, was to illustrate the fundamental defects of a human rights system (however structured). How do you base laws on a list of conflicting amoral rights? Which rights have precedence and to what extent? If you introduce a Bill of Rights, judges are inevitably given a wide discretion to invalidate state and national laws that conflict with the codified rights—notwithstanding that such laws are based on biblical concepts or passed by democratically elected governments. These ‘rights’ are so widely drafted that conflict is inevitable. (E.g. it is hard to imagine any law that will not conflict with the right to free expression held to include almost anything we do or say). Rather than upholding the Rule of Law, a Bill of Rights can be used to destroy laws and so leave us in the hands of judges making national policy decisions.

As for mentioning the United Nations, the paper was not concerned with tracing the origins of human rights or those involved, but with the international agenda established by the ‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights’. Not everyone is aware the universal declaration discloses an agenda to introduce an international belief system that will one day affect all our lives. The signatory nations

intend that human rights be ‘the common standard of achievement for ... every individual and every organ of society’ [emphasis added]. Similarly it is not appreciated that these widely drafted ‘human rights’ include all sorts of concepts and subsidiary rights not supported by the majority of people. (E.g. rights concerning defamation, sexual perversion, and child pornography).

Surely it is not beyond the wit of high level diplomats to oppose violence, torture, false imprisonment, murder, genocide and other atrocities, without having to establish a flawed human rights system full of conflicts and discretions. In my estimation a ‘rights’ based system is unbiblical, undemocratic, and ultimately unworkable. Such a system is contrary to the biblical ideal of judges impartially administering justice (with mercy) according to laws based on God’s righteous ordinances. The Creator of heaven and earth is the God of all nations and all peoples and no alternative justice system has been ordained by Him. Despite its superficial appeal, a human rights system is very much a case of ‘mutton dressed up as lamb’!

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Bristlecone pine growth rings

In the previous edition of this journal, John Woodmorappe concluded that bristlecone pine chronologies point, at least superficially, to a time scale that pre-dates a straightforward reading of Genesis.¹ Thus he looked for causes of multiple ring production within the apparent annual cycle. He mentioned that the pine trees were typically shallow-rooted but did not speculate on how the rainfall pattern might influence ring growth. One would imagine

that a long-lived shallow-rooted tree that grows in poor soil would have to have a growth strategy that maximizes growth when soil moisture is above a suitable threshold, but minimizes growth below that threshold. The rainfall pattern, rather than the annual solar cycle, might therefore control the ring structure. Has anyone considered this?

Alex Williams
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John Woodmorappe replies:

Based on currently-available evidence, it does not appear possible that the bristlecone pine rings could be governed by cycles of rainfall. To begin with, ring formation, at the high altitudes involved, is a complex interplay of temperature and rainfall, and could not be dominated by rainfall alone. After all, if it is too cold, then no amount of rainfall will cause ring growth. On the other hand, if it is too warm, any rainfall will evaporate rapidly and be unavailable for tree growth.

Secondly, two major bursts of rainfall per summer would not cause two rings in one year. This owes to the fact that, as discussed in my *ICC* paper,² the growing season is too short to support two distinct growth flushes. And were the growing season longer, it is doubtful that the characteristic longevity of bristlecones would have occurred at all.

As discussed in my *ICC* paper, the data does not show any significant cyclic pattern of recurrence. This alone rules out a cyclic rainfall pattern as the primary cause of tree ring widths.

Finally, even if rainfall patterns are what caused the ring growth sequences, they would not, by their very nature, lead to age-staggered ring growth. For this reason, there would be no compression in the ‘8,000 year’ tree ring chronology. Note that my migrating-disturbance model does allow for age-staggered ring patterns with ensuing compression of the early part of the chronology.

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References

1. Woodmorappe, J., Field studies in the ancient bristlecone pine forest, *TJ* 17(3):119–127, 2003.
2. Woodmorappe, J. Collapsing the long bristlecone pine tree ring chronologies: in Ivey, R.L. Jr (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 5th ICC*, Technical Volume, Creation Science Fellowship, Pittsburg, pp. 491–503, 2003.

The extra Cainan

A million thanks to Jonathan Sarfati and *TJ* for presenting a *long-overdue*, well-researched presentation on the ‘Cainan’ question. I’ve had a few pretty heated moments in the recent past over the apparent lack of justification for so quickly discarding the Cainan verses from Genesis 11 and Luke 3!

The reason for all the steam was that at one point some in the creationist camp (after discounting the LXX reference in Gen. 11) were flippantly attributing the verse in Luke 3 to a copyist’s error—without any mention of the earliest available manuscript of Luke *not containing* that reference. And that last part is what makes all the difference in the world.

Attributing a textual conflict to a ‘copyist’s error’ can be a reasonable explanation *once other manuscript evidence is present to support a different text*, but without that evidence, it becomes a *dangerous precedent* for

anybody who doesn’t like, agree with or understand a particular passage of Scripture.

For example, there’s a passage in 1 Corinthians concerning tongues that J.B. Phillips (the well-known 20th century Bible scholar) just could not get his arms around—so in his contemporary translation of the New Testament, he simply reversed the order of the words in the text! We’re not talking about plausible interpretations of an unclear meaning in the original grammar here—we’re talking about outright *changing the text!* And yet I can understand the text perfectly well just as it’s been handed down to us—and who am I?!

We must always be on our guard that we don’t fall into the trap of minimalizing (or giving the appearance of such) the sanctified nature of Holy Scripture when it becomes uncomortable to explain—that’s our antagonists’ job!

Please keep up the great work—*TJ* and *Creation Magazine* are like bricks of gold in my bookcase!!!

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Jonathan Sarfati replies:

Thank you for the generous comments. You are right that inerrantists should be sparing with appeals to copyist error, and informed ones will always back it up. Manuscript evidence for a harmonizing reading is ideal, but it is also reasonable to invoke a copyist error if there are known scribal errors that could explain it.¹ Textually, lists of things and numbers are the most prone to corruption, which applies to the case of the extra Cainan. In addition, many Hebrew numbers were represented by letters, which were very similar.

Another legitimate appeal to a copyist error is to reconcile the following 2 passages which appear to be inconsistent; and the first contradicts the well established history of David killing Goliath: