

which it deals is of the utmost possible importance to Reformed theology: the doctrine of God. I beg him to force himself to interact with and honestly face the issues raised about the nature of God. I beg him to commence his thinking at this point and not with the gospel call itself. Perhaps then we can have dialogue which is profitable and progressive, for the sake of truth and unity in the churches of the Reformation. *Semper Reformata!*

## Correspondence

**From: Mr. Michael Kimmitt  
BRF Committee Member.**

The Church of God is, I understand, indebted to Dr. Ella both for his earlier missionary work and latterly for his biographies on Cowper, Huntington and Gill etc. though I have only read the Gill which I reviewed in "Peace & Truth".

The British Reformed Journal should be conservative but my concern is that it should not be obscurantist. Now, what are the facts about the Hebrew Vowel points? The earliest Hebrew Manuscripts do not possess them. The Leningrad Codex dating from around AD 1000 does. The current Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia has additional symbols as well. The logical explanation of these facts is that the originals, penned from Moses on, did not have the vowel points, which were added later, as we know the additional symbols were.

Now should the current building and excavation round Jerusalem turn up say the earthen vessel in which Jeremiah's deeds for the field in Anathoth are enclosed and on opening it we found the deeds did indeed possess the vowel points then we would need to think again. In the absence of any such result Occam's Razor would suggest we opt for the simplest explanation which fits the facts.

I must dissent from the view that the Hebrew has 23 letters, not 22. It is true that Dictionaries may distinguish for convenience between *c* and *v* but both are listed as the 21st in the Alphabet under the name: *ו* (shin). But I have the best of evidence here - and that some three thousand years old in the Acrostic or Alphabetical Psalm 119 which has 22 stanzas, each of 8 verses, beginning *a*, *b*, *g* down to *t*.

Finally a correspondent has kindly called my attention to a passage in Edersheim's Messiah Bk. 3 p. 538 on the word 'tittle'.

I rather suspect he knew more about it than either Dr Ella or certainly yours truly!

### Editor's response.

We are grateful for Mr. Kimmitt's interest and comments on these matters. We are not convinced, however, that pursuit of this matter is obscurantist in any way, whichever side may ultimately be found to be the correct one. On matters of ancient antiquities and ancient languages, prevailing hypotheses have often been shown to be incorrect. And after all, in scholarly circles the whole world of Evangelicalism and Calvinism is considered to be obscurantist anyway, for believing in Divine Inspiration of the Bible, not to mention the rest of Christian Dogmatics.

A hundred years ago, Schlieman was considered obscurantist because he believed Homer concerning Troy, and against the teeth of prevailing scholarly opinion Schlieman went out and actually discovered the long lost city.

The oldest Hebrew manuscripts *available to us* may lack vowel points. But I want to see more research done on this. James Barr, Prof. of Hebrew at Oxford University has commented that the Massoretes did not invent the vowel points "out of thin air" as it were. Even he accepts that there was already something there on which the Massoretes built. Research needs doing too on those MSS that Jerome used, and also Origen, as these men testified to grappling with what seems indubitably to be vowel points.

With regard to Edersheim, his ref. concerning the "tittle" is totally inadequate, notwithstanding his Jewish connections. He like Mr. Kimmitt and modern scholarship makes the "tittle" to be the little "nib" or "hook" that distinguishes between various Hebrew letters. If this is correct, then contra Edersheim, such "tittles" have come and gone over the centuries of the development of Hebrew script.