

# PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book could not have been written without the help of many people.

In the fall semester of 2006 and the spring semester of 2008, I had the privilege of offering graduate seminars on the book of Joshua on the campus of Cincinnati Christian University. The brave souls who signed on did so without knowing that the grist for this manuscript was being ground. They learned of it though, soon enough, and indulged me. I am thankful for that kindness and for the insights gained as a result of the give-and-take that characterized our meetings. At the time, David Toundas and Nick Miller worked out of my office as graduate assistants. They doggedly chased loose details of this manuscript and gave me many reasons to smile. Beyond these fine students, the institutional support of CCU channeled through the able leadership of Mike Shannon and Jon Weatherly was critical.

Just as students and administrators facilitate the task of writing, so do librarians. I take my hat off to Jim Lloyd and his excellent staff at the G.M. Elliott Library of CCU. They never blinked when presented with my requests, no matter how odd. The footnotes in this book give testimony to their help. Additionally, they kept the refrigerator in the back room full of cola.

If I exhausted the patience of Dru Ashwell and the other good people at College Press, they did not show it. Instead of giving me what my tardiness deserved, they gave me steady encouragement and prayers. Shy and Dan Rees caught a good many errors and improved the manuscript considerably. Obviously, any wrinkles that remain belong on my own face.

Words cannot express my love for Vicki, Tanner, and Moriah. I know that all of this took time from you. I hope you will understand.

Finally, I must acknowledge those who have set me on the tracks

that run clear through this book. There are many deserving of mention, but for the moment, I will limit the discussion to just two. Willard (Wilkie) Winter went to be with the Lord on July 15, 1998, after 52 years of service at Cincinnati Christian University. Wilbur Fields is now retired after 35 years of service at Ozark Christian College. He still lives in Joplin, Missouri.

These two men were different in many ways, and yet they had much in common. Both loved the Old Testament and were convinced that its words are special and have relevance for the people of God today. Both were excellent teachers and churchmen. Both knew the archaeology of the *Heartland*, and, curiously enough, both scratched its surface in search of Joshua's 'Ai. Winter served as Joe Callaway's registrar at et-Tell; Fields worked with David Livingston at Khirbet Nisya, and later, with Bryant Wood at Khirbet el-Maqatir. As a result of these seasons in the sun, both Winter and Fields were well-situated to illustrate their stories with color slides, to launch the ministries of others, and to stir faith in believers and nonbelievers alike.

Despite these similarities, these two men were also unique. Perhaps their differences are best measured at a personal level. Dr. Winter (never did I have the courage to address him otherwise) was the quintessential gentleman-scholar. Rarely was he found without coat and tie, and when outside, without a hat. In conversation with others, he always respectfully referred to his wife as "Mrs. Winter." He was conservative in all his ways, except when it came to helping others. In this he was most liberal. As his graduate assistant, not only did I grade his papers and fetch his mail, but I drove him to professional meetings, Cincinnati Reds baseball games (which he loved), church functions, and to many fine breakfasts. Wherever we went, from his seminary office to the deserts of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, I observed his kind heart and steady consistency. To this day, I marvel at the way in which he was able to balance dignity and grace without missing a step. How honored I was—and remain so now—to be asked to participate in this new commentary series from College Press, knowing full well that the author of their original Bible Study Textbook Series, *Studies in Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, was Willard W. Winter!

In an earlier and very different stage of life I came to love Brother Fields (never did I have the desire to address him other-

wise). He too wore a coat and tie, but never comfortably. Raw-boned and rangy, he blew into the classroom as gently as a Kansas tornado. And in like manner, his voice rose and fell: whispering, wheezing, roaring! He commanded the attention of a room full of undergraduates by force of presence alone. But this is not the reason he is remembered by all who sat under him. Never, before or since, have I experienced one who both knew and *shared* Scripture like Brother Fields. It erupted from his heart and came out of his mouth: here, there, on the stairs or in the parking lot, in conversation or in song (yes—now I remember—*especially*, in song!). It also came out of his large hands, and, seemingly, even out of his eyes. Every part of him communicated his devotion to the Lord and his care for each of us—despite our superior numbers. How else could he single us out by name, hometown, and family, and then check back later to inquire as to our prayer requests, long after everyone else had forgotten them? Certainly, I will not forget his classroom, his friendship, his prayers, his song, his own contributions to the Bible Study Textbook Series. Neither will I forget the opportunity to travel with him in the summer of 1984 from Missouri to the Mediterranean and back again. As with Dr. Winter, in Brother Fields I witnessed the Word and Ways of God, modeled in human form. I am changed as a result. For this reason, I humbly dedicate this work to the ministry and memory of these two men.

For Bro. Fields and Dr. Winter  
*“There were giants in those days.”*

Mark Ziese  
May 1, 2008