

THE END OF THE BIBLE?

THE POSITION OF CHRONICLES IN THE CANON

Edmon L. Gallagher
(egallagher@hcu.edu)

Summary

Scholars have argued for the originality of the position of Chronicles at the end of the canon based on both external and internal considerations. As for the latter, various 'closure phenomena' allegedly indicate that Chronicles either was written for the purpose of concluding the scriptural canon or was redacted for that purpose. The external evidence includes the Talmudic order of books (b. Bava Batra 14b), various Masoretic manuscripts, and a passage from the Gospels (Matt. 23:35 // Luke 11:51). This paper argues that while Chronicles surely forms an appropriate conclusion to the Bible, the evidence to hand does not demonstrate that it actually took up its place at the end of the Bible before the rabbinic period.

1. Introduction

The Hebrew Bible ends with Chronicles, for now, anyway. So it is in the standard scholarly edition, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, and in many critical introductions to Hebrew scripture.¹ So it has been in every major printed edition of the Hebrew Bible since the fifteenth

¹ Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979); Walter Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination* (Louisville: WJK, 2003); Rolf Rendtorff, *The Canonical Hebrew Bible: A Theology of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Deo, 2005); Thomas Römer, Jean-Daniel Macchi, and Christoph Nihan, eds., *Introduction à l'Ancien Testament* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2009); Marvin A. Sweeney, *Tanak: A Theological and Critical Introduction to the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011).

century.² However, this will not be the case for the next edition, *Biblia Hebraica Quinta*, which will place Chronicles at the head of the third section of the Hebrew Bible, the Ketuvim, rather than its end. In this way, BHQ will fully conform to the order of its base text, the Leningrad Codex B19a, which, along with many Masoretic manuscripts, presents a sequence of books different from what has become traditional for printed Hebrew Bibles.³ Soon Chronicles will no longer be at the end of the Hebrew Bible, at least the one most commonly used by scholars. This repositioning of Chronicles might seem a rather inconsequential development, but several scholars have urged recently that the placement of Chronicles at the end of the Bible constituted a very early feature of the canon, possibly reflecting an ‘original’ sequence. This paper will carefully examine this view, seeking to demonstrate the tendentiousness of the arguments used in its support and that the evidence cannot show that Chronicles definitely took up its place at the end of the Bible before the rabbinic period.

Scholars advocating the concluding position of Chronicles promote varying notions of what this means, but they divide roughly between those who emphasise the external evidence and those who focus more on internal considerations. The former group argues that post-biblical sources suggest that the arrangement of the Hebrew Bible with Chronicles at the end was achieved very early, perhaps in the second century BC. Furthermore, this arrangement evinces an intentional design, though this design is more at the level of arrangement rather than composition or redaction. We will see that this position is especially well-represented by Roger Beckwith. The other group, relying on internal evidence, actually comes close to saying, or even explicitly affirms, that Chronicles was written or redacted for the purpose of concluding the biblical canon.⁴ Usually external evidence plays a supplementary role in such discussions, but the focus is on features within the Book of Chronicles that are judged to be most appropriate only at the end of the Bible. Thus, the role played by

² Cf. Christian D. Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* (London: Trinitarian Bible Society, 1897; repr. New York: Ktav, 1966): 779-976. Ginsburg gives a detailed survey of Hebrew Bible editions up to the Second Rabbinic Bible (1524–25) and a little after. He describes the *editio princeps* of the Hagiographa on pp. 807-814.

³ See Roger T. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and Its Background in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985): 452-64.

⁴ Scholars advocating such a position receive extended treatment in Section 2 below.

external and internal evidence essentially distinguishes two competing models: whether the Chronicler himself (or a very early redactor) intended his book to close the canon (internal evidence), or whether a later (but still very early) ‘canoniser’ intentionally set Chronicles at the end (external evidence). Scholars often fail to clarify which of these two models they advocate.

The attempt to see a purpose behind the location of Chronicles in the Hebrew Bible corresponds to broader concerns in biblical research over the past several decades. While isolating sources within biblical texts continues as before, a renewed emphasis on understanding the final form of the Bible has brought with it attempts to see intentional design where little such design had previously been perceived. One might think in previous generations of Noth’s theory of the Deuteronomistic History, but more recently a wave of studies have approached the growth of the canon, whether of individual books or groups of books, as a process of purposeful redaction with a theological message.⁵ The tripartite structure of the Jewish canon has, of course, served as a starting-point for much of this work, though other arrangements are sometimes also acknowledged as valid and ancient.⁶ The third section of the Hebrew Bible has received less of this treatment, apparently because scholars have usually assumed that there was not much canonical unity to be discovered there. But even this is now starting to change.⁷

Chronicles obviously did come to close the Hebrew Bible in some of its manifestations at some point. Moreover, it seems clear now, as we will see, that whoever was responsible for this had good reasons for putting Chronicles in this position since it forms an appropriate and theologically significant conclusion to scripture. This paper does not

⁵ See recently Christopher R. Seitz, *The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets: The Achievement of Association in Canon Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009). For a comparison of Noth’s work with these more recent studies, see Rolf Rendtorff, *Canon and Theology: Overtures to an Old Testament Theology* (Overtures to Biblical Theology; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993): 49.

⁶ E.g. Childs attributes ‘priority’ to the tripartite structure but recognises that the LXX arrangement was ‘equally as old’ (*Introduction*, 666-67).

⁷ See esp. Julius Steinberg, *Die Ketuvim: Ihr Aufbau und ihre Botschaft* (Bonner biblische Beiträge, 152; Hamburg: Philo, 2006); Albert de Pury, ‘The Ketubim, a Canon within the Biblical Canon’, in *The Canon of Scripture in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (ed. Philip S. Alexander and Jean-Daniel Kaestli; Lausanne: Éditions du Zèbre, 2007): 41-56; Seitz, *Goodly Fellowship*, 105-125; Timothy J. Stone, *The Compilational History of the Megilloth: Canon, Contoured Intertextuality and Meaning in the Writings* (FAT, 2/59; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013).

defend or dispute these ideas but takes them for granted. Rather, I will be interested here in how we can determine when Chronicles took up its final place in the canon. I will examine first the internal evidence brought to bear on the question before turning to the external evidence. It will be argued that the evidence to hand prohibits firm conclusions until the rabbinic period, and even at this time a sequence with Chronicles as a conclusion hardly predominates. The consistency with which modern editions position Chronicles as the last book reflects the stability brought by the printing press rather than the more fluid sequences of the manuscript tradition.

2. Internal Evidence

Since evidence internal to Chronicles or the biblical canon obviously must be dated early—how early is of course disputed, but certainly before the rabbinic period—there is an undeniable force to arguments based on it. The potential importance of this evidence for a proper understanding of biblical literature has been stressed in a recent article by Hendrik J. Koorevaar.⁸ Assuming that scholars have correctly identified redactional layers bringing books and even canonical sections to a close, Koorevaar wonders about the implications for interpretation:

This would mean that there is such a thing as an original or authoritative order in the Hebrew canon. After all, a number of added texts [i.e. the aforementioned redactional layers] not only belong to the specific book, but have an added value that is only apparent at one particular place in the canon and no other. When these books are moved to another position in the order, this value is lost. ... Because of [these added texts], the sequential order and subdivisions belong to the text of the canon itself and are of primary importance.⁹

As this quotation and the rest of his article make clear, Koorevaar is interested in the ‘original’ order of books of the Hebrew Bible. He incorporates the sequence of books (for Koorevaar, the sequence attested in *b. Bava Batra* 14b) within his understanding of canon due to

⁸ Hendrik J. Koorevaar, ‘The Torah Model as Original Macrostructure of the Hebrew Canon: A Critical Evaluation’, *ZAW* 122 (2010): 64-80.

⁹ Koorevaar, ‘Torah Model’, 66. Koorevaar goes on to criticise the ‘Torah Model’ as an interpretation of the tripartite Hebrew canon and says that he hopes to make the case in the future for a model focused on ‘exile and return’ (79).

the redactional layers designed ‘to establish a categorisation and order in the Hebrew canon’.¹⁰ Other canonical arrangements may produce ‘a beautiful reading effect’, but they are ‘later invention[s]’, not the true and authentic canonical sequence.¹¹

In this way, the search for internal evidence for a particular arrangement of the biblical books becomes imperative. Here I will leave aside the first two sections of the Hebrew canon and, indeed, most of the Ketuvim as well, so that I may narrow my focus to indications within Chronicles that it was designed to conclude the Bible. Despite the many arguments favouring this idea, I aim to show in this section that the internal evidence fails to establish that Chronicles does in fact close the canon at this early period. At most, it offers suggestive possibilities for why Chronicles was placed last at some point, but it cannot show when this happened or rule out other potential arrangements. All of this must be done based on the external evidence. Indeed, most scholars arguing from internal evidence seem to have recognised this fact, given their own discussions of the external evidence. This includes Koorevaar; while internal evidence has its role to play in his study, external evidence also proves to be crucial.¹²

I will now consider the internal evidence brought to bear on the question of whether Chronicles was designed by the Chronicler or a redactor to be the final book of the canon. Georg Steins dates the composition of Chronicles in the second century BC, a view not accepted by many other scholars.¹³ But this dating allows Steins to suggest that at that time Chronicles closed ‘one form’ of the *Ketuvim*, perhaps having been written for that very purpose.¹⁴ By limiting this

¹⁰ Koorevaar, ‘Torah Model’, 66.

¹¹ Koorevaar, ‘Torah Model’, 65.

¹² Koorevaar discusses the manuscript evidence at ‘Torah Model’, 68-70; see also the article’s conclusion (pp. 78-79), the first point of which—denying that the Torah model is ‘the oldest model’—depends on this manuscript evidence.

¹³ Georg Steins, ‘Zur Datierung der Chronik: Ein neuer methodischer Ansatz’, *ZAW* 109 (1997): 84-92; and, briefly, Georg Steins, ‘Die Bücher der Chronik,’ in Erich Zenger, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (7th ed.; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2008): 249-62, at 258-60. Contrast Steins’s views with those of Ralph W. Klein, *1 Chronicles* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006): 13-16 (first half of fourth century); and Gary N. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 12; New York: Doubleday, 2003): 101-117 (late-fourth or early-third century, with a *terminus ante quem* at the mid-third century, p. 106).

¹⁴ Georg Steins, *Die Chronik als kanonisches Abschlussphänomen: Studien zur Entstehung und Theologie von 1/2 Chronik* (Bonner biblische Beiträge, 93; Weinheim: Beltz, 1995): 509 (emphasis original). Steins more succinctly argues his case in

closure to only one form of the *Ketuvim*, Steins allows for competing arrangements of the Hebrew canon, such as the arrangement reflected in the LXX codices.¹⁵ But he does think the arrangement with Chronicles at the end was prominent, if not dominant. He does not mention in this excerpt the external evidence that permits him to date this closure in the second century BC, but he goes on to discuss it and it is the usual evidence that I will examine in the next section. Whereas Steins merely suggests that the Chronicler intended his work to conclude one form of the canon, Koorevaar argues more broadly: the Chronicler wrote for the purpose of ‘closing and sealing’ the Hebrew canon.¹⁶ The Chronicler becomes the canoniser.

As the title of Steins’s book indicates, he seeks to isolate in Chronicles certain ‘closure phenomena’ (*Abschlussphänomene*). These are elements of the text which seem to bring the redaction of a book to a close in a manner conscious of the biblical canon. Scholars have identified a variety of such ‘closure phenomena’, probably correctly. That is, Chronicles does attempt to sum up the history of Israel and it seems to have done this with conscious interaction with previous scripture.¹⁷ But can this show that Chronicles was intended to have a specific position in the canon? Some scholars have thought so.

The most significant text in this regard is the last couple of verses of the book. The Chronicler brings his history to a close with a quotation of the decree by Cyrus releasing the Jews from captivity, the last words of which are, ‘Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him! Let him go up [וַיַּעַל]’ (2 Chr. 36:23; NRSV). Several scholars—including Nahum Sarna, Jean-Louis Ska, and Stephen Dempster—find here a link to the Torah, whether to Joseph, who told his brothers in Egypt that God would someday visit them and

‘Torabindung und Kanonabschluss: Zur Entstehung und kanonischen Funktion der Chronikbücher’, in *Die Tora als Kanon für Juden und Christen* (ed. Erich Zenger; Herders biblische Studien, 10; Freiburg: Herder, 1996): 213-56, especially 247-52. See the critique of Steins by Peter Brandt, *Endgestalten des Kanons: Das Arrangement der Schriften Israels in der jüdischen und christlichen Bibel* (Bonner biblische Beiträge, 131; Berlin: Philo, 2001): 88-91.

¹⁵ See Steins, *Chronik*, 516-17, citing Qumran, the Samaritans, and the LXX; on these alternative arrangements, see below.

¹⁶ Hendrik J. Koorevaar, ‘Die Chronik als intendierter Abschluß des alttestamentlichen Kanons’, *JETH* 11 (1997): 42-76, at 42 (cf. 66-67, and *passim*).

¹⁷ See esp. Zipora Talshir, ‘Several Canon-Related Concepts Originating in Chronicles’, *ZAW* 113 (2001): 386-403; Ehud Ben Zvi and Diana V. Edelman, eds., *What Was Authoritative for Chronicles?* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011).

take them up (וְהָעֵלָה) to the Promised Land (Gen. 50:24), or again to the exodus, which also makes use of this verb, עָלָה (Exod. 3:8).¹⁸ The idea is that with the Torah at the beginning and Chronicles at the end of the Bible, the verb עָלָה forms a satisfying *inclusio*. Of course, it should be noted that this same verb appears nearly 900 times in the Hebrew Bible. Some scholars then point not only to the appearance of עָלָה but also of פָּקַד ('visit', 'appoint') in Gen. 50:24 and 2 Chr. 36:23, a combination that occurs in only thirteen verses in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁹ Yet, whether or not these are 'theologically significant words', and even if the Chronicler is harkening back to this particular passage in Genesis, it is still not clear that the intertextual echo depends on the location of Chronicles in the canon.²⁰ Would there not still be an echo even if Chronicles were located after Kings, as in the LXX, or at the beginning of the Ketuvim rather than its end?

But there are other suggestions for internal echoes implying a concluding position for Chronicles. Ska links Cyrus's command to rebuild the temple to the emphasis on the tabernacle in Exodus, on the cult laws in Leviticus, and on cult centralization in Deuteronomy, again trying to relate the beginning of the Bible to its end.²¹ Steins thinks the beginning and ending of Chronicles parallel the beginning and ending of Genesis (from Adam to עֵלֶה-פָּקַד, as above), or perhaps the beginning and ending of the first two sections of the canon, the Torah and the Prophets (Adam to Exile).²² On the other hand, Koorevaar relates the beginning of Chronicles to the beginning of Genesis (Adam) and the ending of Chronicles to the beginning of Ezra-Nehemiah (decree of Cyrus), the book immediately preceding Chronicles in most editions of the Hebrew Bible. In this way, Chronicles draws to a close

¹⁸ For the first interpretation, see Nahum M. Sarna, 'The Canon, Text, and Editions', *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (16 vols.; ed. C. Roth; New York: Macmillan, 1972): 4:816-36, at 831; Stephen Dempster, 'Canons on the Right and Canons on the Left: Finding a Resolution in the Canon Debate', *JETS* 52 (2009): 47-78, at 74. For the second view, see Jean-Louis Ska, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006): 13; cf. Zenger, *Einleitung*, 25.

¹⁹ Besides the two verses cited, cf. Gen. 50:25; Exod. 13:19; Josh. 8:10; 1 Sam. 13:15; 15:2; 1 Kings 20:26; Jer. 3:16; 27:22; 49:19; 50:44; 51:27.

²⁰ For the quotation, see Stephen Dempster, 'An "Extraordinary Fact": *Torah and Temple* and the Contours of the Hebrew Canon', *TynBul* 48 (1997): 23-56, 191-218, at 203, 210-11; cf. also Steins, *Chronik*, 515.

²¹ Ska, *Introduction*, 13. Ska's third argument, linking Neh. 8 to the Torah, seems to assume an arrangement in the order Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah.

²² Steins, *Chronik*, 514-15.

the entire biblical revelation, from the first book to the last but one.²³ John Sailhamer argues that the arrangement ending with Chronicles better reflects Daniel's prophecy of the seventy weeks (Dan. 9:24-27) than does the alternative arrangement ending with Ezra-Nehemiah.²⁴ Andreas Köstenberger sees a canonical *inclusio* in the placement of Zechariah's murder at the command of King Joash in 2 Chronicles 24:20-22 at the end of the Bible as parallel to the murder of Abel in Genesis.²⁵ Stephen Dempster thinks Chronicles rightly closes the canon because it constitutes a meditation and re-contextualization of Israel's scriptures and locates their fulfillment in David.²⁶

The weakness of these arguments, it seems to me, derives from the unremarkable nature of the phenomena highlighted by them. Yes, Chronicles contains intertextual echoes with previous scripture. This hardly makes it unique; intertextual echoes appear in many biblical books regardless of their location in the canon. As Zipora Talshir says, 'The patterns of creation and canonization operate on different levels and should not be confused. Chr[onicles]'s place at the end of the canon, has scarcely anything to do with the process of its creation or with its author's world of ideas'.²⁷ In other words, the intertextual phenomena in Chronicles do not mean that the Chronicler wrote his book in order to close the canon, nor that it was redacted for this purpose. They may, indeed, illuminate the reasons that a later person or group decided to place Chronicles at the end, but, again, the time period for this placement would have to be established on the external evidence. About this, there is, of course, disagreement, as we will see.

²³ Koorevaar, 'Die Chronik als intendierter Abschluß', 66-67.

²⁴ John Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition and Interpretation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2009): 214.

²⁵ Andreas J. Köstenberger, 'Hearing the Old Testament in the New: A Response', in *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006): 255-94, at 262-63. Cf. Matt. 23:35 // Luke 11:51, discussed below. On this idea, see now Edmon L. Gallagher, 'The Blood from Abel to Zechariah in the History of Interpretation', *NTS* 60 (2014): 121-38.

²⁶ Dempster 'Canons on the Right and Canons on the Left', 75-76; see also Koorevaar, 'Chronik als intendierter Abschluß', 55-59, 60-61; Marvin A. Sweeney, 'Tanak versus Old Testament: Concerning the Foundation for a Jewish Theology of the Bible', in *Problems in Biblical Theology: Essays in Honor of Rolf Knierim* (ed. Henry T. C. Sun and Keith L. Eades; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997): 353-72, at 371.

²⁷ Talshir, 'Canon-Related Concepts', 403.

The point here is that nothing intrinsic to Chronicles suggests that it ought—or was designed—to conclude the canon.²⁸

As one example of how scholars emphasizing the concluding function of Chronicles fail to consider its possible significance at other locations in the canon, I cite a recent article by Dempster. The aim of his discussion, Dempster says, is to show that ‘internal evidence within the biblical texts themselves [points] to evidence of canon 2’, where ‘canon 2’ is defined as a ‘final closed list’, with the necessary implication that the books already have a particular order.²⁹ Dempster cites previous scholarship regarding the Torah and Prophets, and so he himself concentrates on the Ketuvim, aiming to show that internal evidence suggests that Psalms (or Ruth) begins this section and Chronicles closes it. While discussing the two most prominent arrangements of the Ketuvim in the manuscripts—(1) Psalms to Chronicles and (2) Chronicles to Ezra-Nehemiah—Dempster claims, ‘If Chronicles begins a third division, there is no literary linkage with the Law and the Prophets, but if it begins with Psalms, there are extraordinarily significant formal connections’.³⁰ These connections between Psalms and the earlier divisions of the Law and the Prophets especially concern the first Psalm, with its focus on Torah, and the second Psalm, with its focus on the Davidic monarchy. But later, when Dempster wants to show that Chronicles fittingly concludes the Ketuvim and thus the entire canon, he asserts, ‘The genealogical line started so prominently in Genesis is resumed so prominently in Chronicles to show that David is the goal of the Tanak’.³¹ So, when

²⁸ One wrinkle in the argument that would also need to be addressed is Chapman’s contention that the Chronicler himself worked with a bipartite rather than tripartite canon; Stephen B. Chapman, *The Law and the Prophets: A Study in Old Testament Canon Formation* (FAT 27; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000): 218-31.

²⁹ Dempster, ‘Canons on the Right and Canons on the Left’, 69; see p. 50 for his definition of ‘canon 2’. This terminology—canon 1 for authoritative writings and canon 2 for an authoritative list of writings—was first proposed by Gerald Sheppard, ‘Canon,’ *Encyclopedia of Religion* (ed. Mircea Eliade; 16 vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1987): 3:62-69.

³⁰ Dempster, ‘Canons on the Right and Canons on the Left’, 72-73; see also Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2004): 35, 47-49, 223-27; and his earlier two-part article, ‘Extraordinary Fact’.

³¹ Dempster, ‘Canons on the Right and Canons on the Left’, 76. Cf. also Talshir, ‘Canon-Related Concepts’, who shows that Chronicles regularly interacts with Israel’s previous scripture; and Zenger, who points out that the arrangements that place Chronicles at the head of the Writings do so ‘um diesen Teil in Entsprechung zur Tora

Chronicles serves as a conclusion to the Ketuvim, it looks back to the Law and the Prophets, but when it serves as a beginning, there is ‘no literary linkage’. The logic here is puzzling.³²

Is it possible to show, at least, that the internal evidence indicates that Chronicles should be in the Ketuvim? The most prominent alternative location for the book is after Kings, according to the order of the Greek manuscripts.³³ Recently Julius Steinberg has argued in favour of locating Chronicles in the Ketuvim and thus against the Greek arrangement based on internal clues. In the Greek arrangement, Steinberg contends, Chronicles is viewed as a mere supplement to Samuel-Kings, while the Hebrew arrangement gives the book its own voice and purpose.³⁴ Surely Steinberg is correct that recent work has established beyond doubt that Chronicles must be viewed as more than a repetition and expansion of the Deuteronomistic History.³⁵ The Chronicler had his own purposes, his own theology to elaborate, and his book must be read for the genuine contribution it makes to biblical literature and thought, and not just as the ‘left-overs’, as the Greek title *Paraleipomena* would suggest.³⁶ However, does the simple placement

mit Adam (vgl. 1 Chr. 1,1) beginnen zu lassen’ (*Einleitung*, 22). For possible reasons behind the different arrangements of the Ketuvim, see Knoppers, *1 Chronicles*, 136-37.

³² Dempster does say in a note: ‘It is true that beginning the third division with Chronicles has its own suitability: Chronicles focuses on temple and David introduces the Psalms [here he cites Knoppers, *1 Chronicles*, 135-37]. But these are more conceptual linkages rather than formal ones’ (‘Canons on the Right and Canons on the Left’, 73 n. 159). But why should it matter whether the connection is formal or conceptual? And should not Chronicles’s genealogies, which Dempster connects to both Genesis and David, be considered ‘formal’?

³³ Cf. the order in the three great uncial codices: Vaticanus, Sinaiticus (apparently), Alexandrinus. This order also appears in the majority of the patristic authors collated by Lee Martin McDonald, ‘Appendix C: Lists and Catalogues of Old Testament Collections’, in *The Canon Debate* (ed. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002): 585-87. The only exceptions include Epiphanius, who twice places Chronicles before Samuel (*Mens.* 4; 23; though cf. *Haer.* 1.1.8, where Chr. appears after Kgs), and Jerome, who twice places Chronicles near the end of his list, though not at the very end (*Ep.* 53.8; *Prologus galeatus*).

³⁴ Steinberg, *Ketuvim*, 115 (cf. p. 122); see also Seitz, *Goodly Fellowship*, 118-19.

³⁵ See, e.g., Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989); M. Patrick Graham, Steven L. McKenzie and Gary N. Knoppers, eds., *The Chronicler as Theologian: Essays in Honor of Ralph W. Klein* (New York: Continuum, 2003); Isaac Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005).

³⁶ See G. N. Knoppers and P. B. Harvey, Jr., ‘Omitted and Remaining Matters: On the Names Given to the Book of Chronicles in Antiquity’, *JBL* 121 (2002): 227-43. It is not clear on what basis these scholars claim that this title in Greek is due to the translators themselves (pp. 233, 236).

of Chronicles following Samuel-Kings guarantee that it will be misunderstood in the way imagined by Steinberg? Does the order of books really command so much attention in the interpretive process? While Steinberg has argued that it does, the matter is far from obvious.³⁷ Indeed, the positioning of Chronicles immediately after Samuel-Kings could just as easily highlight their differences—and thus the Chronicler's distinctive contribution—as their similarities.

It is, in fact, far from clear how the ancients thought of the 'order' or 'sequence' of the canon in the period prior to the prominence of the codex, when the individual books were written on separate scrolls.³⁸ Some ancient *testimonia* do speak in terms of an 'order' for the books, but there is no indication that this is meant to represent the ideal reading order, as seems required by the arguments of Steinberg and others.³⁹ While it is true that 'order' can be maintained across multiple scrolls or multi-volume works (e.g. the Pentateuch, Deuteronomistic History, *The Lord of the Rings*),⁴⁰ no evidence known to me suggests that ancient Christians or Jews approached the Ketuvim in the same manner. Certainly, many modern Christians fail to see in the sequence

³⁷ Steinberg, *Ketuvim*, 84-87. The interpretation of biblical books in a certain order (whether LXX or Tanak) has also become a distinguishing feature of the work of Marvin Sweeney; see 'Tanak versus Old Testament'; Sweeney, *Tanak*. For a sympathetic but ultimately negative appraisal, see James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999): 307-309.

³⁸ Not to mention the anachronistic use of the word 'canon' for this period; see Eugene Ulrich, 'The Notion and Definition of Canon', in McDonald and Sanders, *The Canon Debate*, 21-35; but contrast Stephen B. Chapman, 'The Canon Debate: What It Is and Why It Matters', *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 4 (2010): 273-94. On what can be known about the OT canon during this early period, see Brandt, *Endgestalten des Kanons*, ch. 4 ('Frühzeit').

³⁹ Cf. *b. BB* 14b; the canon list of Melito of Sardis (*apud* Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 4.26.12-14); and Jerome, *Prologus galeatus*. Each of these sources seems to be presenting what should be the definitive order for the HB/OT, and each presents a different order. For discussion of what is meant by 'order' in these sources, see N. M. Sarna, 'Ancient Libraries and the Ordering of the Biblical Books', in *Studies in Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: JPS, 2000): 53-66 (arrangement in archives/library); Sid Z. Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1976): 162 n. 258, 202 n. 644 (writing multiple books on a scroll); John Barton, *Oracles of God: Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel after the Exile* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1986): 82-91 (no significance); Beckwith, *Old Testament Canon*, 181-234; Sailhamer, *Meaning of the Pentateuch*, 211, 216 (mental construct); Philip S. Alexander, 'The Formation of the Biblical Canon in Rabbinic Judaism', in Alexander and Kaestli, *Canon of Scripture*, 57-80, at 75-76; Steinberg, *Ketuvim*, 86-87.

⁴⁰ See again Steinberg, *Ketuvim*, 86-87.

of books any real significance.⁴¹ Again, the ancients do not discuss the appropriateness of reading the Ketuvim, or, shall we say, the poetic or prophetic books, in any particular sequence.⁴² None of this proves that the ancients thought nothing of these matters, but we lack the evidence to say otherwise.

Perhaps the most significant shortcoming of these arguments based on internal evidence is the persistent assumption that the arrangement judged to be best or most hermeneutically satisfying or theologically profound must be the earliest arrangement.⁴³ On what basis can this be sustained? Is it not also possible that some later Jews either altered an originally unsatisfying arrangement to conform it better to their theological sensibilities or perhaps brought order to a rather loosely arranged collection of canonical books? The variety of orders in extant lists and manuscripts indicates that multiple Jewish (and Christian) groups attempted one or the other. Rather than thinking that the 'original' order must have been the best order, the ancients seem to have been in continual search for a better arrangement of their books.

The entire enterprise of arguing from internal considerations that the canon properly ends with Chronicles cannot succeed. While some intertextual echoes and 'closure phenomena' show that Chronicles works well as the concluding book to the canon, they cannot show that the book was designed by its composer or a redactor to be at the end.

3. External Evidence

While internal evidence fails to establish the concluding position of Chronicles in the canon, we might still be able to say that the earliest recoverable arrangement of the Hebrew Bible did end with Chronicles. Such an argument needs to depend on external evidence. We must review this admittedly well-worn territory in this section.

⁴¹ This is one of the main criticisms of James Barr against the ideas of Sweeney; see *Concept of Biblical Theology*, 307-309. For examples of modern attempts to see some significance in the order of books, see Brandt, *Endgestalten des Kanons*, 19-25.

⁴² Jerome was keen to stress the Hebrew order for the Minor Prophets as opposed to the Greek order (*Praef. lib. XII*), but his commentaries on the Minor Prophets make nothing of the sequence.

⁴³ E.g. Stephen Dempster, 'Torah, Torah, Torah: The Emergence of the Tripartite Canon', in *Exploring the Origins of the Bible: Canon Formation in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective* (ed. Craig A. Evans and Emanuel Tov; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008): 87-127, at 103; Beckwith, *Old Testament Canon*, 156.

The presentation of external evidence by Roger Beckwith nearly three decades ago continues to be the standard articulation of this view. Beckwith sets himself the task of showing that the canon list contained in the *baraita* in *b. BB* 14b derives from the second century BC, whereas *beraitot* are conventionally dated to the second or third century AD since they are defined as tannaitic statements omitted from the Mishnah.⁴⁴ To accomplish his complex task, Beckwith first attempts to establish the tripartite structure of the Hebrew Bible as a very early feature of the canon, even giving it a date of 164 BC and assigning its arrangement to Judah the Maccabee.⁴⁵ Few scholars have followed Beckwith in the details of this proposal.⁴⁶ Still, many would be willing to locate the origins of the tripartite structure in the second century BC, though a significant number of scholars doubt even this, as we will see. At any rate, with the tripartite structure in place, Beckwith now attempts to demonstrate that already in this early period the third section featured Chronicles at the end.⁴⁷ What evidence can he cite? Not the patristic OT canon lists, since none of these places Chronicles at the end.⁴⁸ But how can he discount all of these lists, some of which probably genuinely reflect Jewish information?⁴⁹ Beckwith's main argument against these patristic lists is that they intermingle the Prophets and Writings, and thus obscure or demolish the tripartite structure of the canon, something he is quite sure no Jewish list would ever do.⁵⁰ What about Jerome's list (*Prologus galeatus*), which does

⁴⁴ On the dating of this *baraita*, see Beckwith, *Old Testament Canon*, 122; Giuseppe Veltri, *Libraries, Translations, and 'Canonic' Texts: The Septuagint, Aquila, and Ben Sira in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (JSJSup 109; Leiden: Brill, 2006): 13-14; Jack N. Lightstone, 'The Rabbis' Bible: The Canon of the Hebrew Bible and the Early Rabbinic Guild', in McDonald and Sanders, *Canon Debate*, 163-84; Alexander, 'Formation of the Biblical Canon', 77; cf. p. 78; Brandt, *Endgestalten des Kanons*, 64 n. 211.

⁴⁵ Beckwith, *Old Testament Canon*, ch. 4, pp. 110-80; on Judah, see p. 152.

⁴⁶ See, e.g. E. Earle Ellis, *The Old Testament in Early Christianity: Canon and Interpretation in the Light of Modern Research* (WUNT, 54; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991): 44 n. 140. Koorevaar actually suggests that an original order predated the Hasmonean period ('Chronik als intendierter Abschluß,' 51).

⁴⁷ Beckwith, *Old Testament Canon*, ch. 5, pp. 181-234.

⁴⁸ Beckwith, *Old Testament Canon*, 182-98.

⁴⁹ On the Jewish or Jewish-Christian origin of these patristic lists, see Gilles Dorival, 'L'Apport des Pères de l'Église à la question de la clôture du canon de l'Ancien Testament', in *The Biblical Canons* (ed. J.-M. Auwers and H. J. De Jonge; Leuven: Peeters, 2003): 81-110, at 88-89 n. 6.

⁵⁰ Beckwith, *Old Testament Canon*, repeatedly cites the non-appearance of the Prophets and Hagiographa categories in the patristic lists as decisive evidence against

distinguish the Prophets from the Writings, and yet does not end with Chronicles? Beckwith asserts that the testimony of Jesus in Matt. 23:35 (// Luke 11:51) confirms that the story of Zechariah's murder (2 Chr. 24:20-22), and thus Chronicles, was at the end of the Bible in his day, and so Jerome's list, ending as it does with Esther, cannot but be secondary.⁵¹ In this way Beckwith rules out as evidence all Christian *testimonia*.

Surely, then, the Jewish evidence substantiates his thesis by consistently following the order of books contained in the *baraita* of *b. BB* 14b, or at least by positioning Chronicles at the end? Actually, no. Some Masoretic manuscripts and other Jewish sources do reflect the sequence of books of the *baraita*; many more manuscripts, while not following the exact sequence of the *baraita*, nevertheless conclude with Chronicles.⁵² However, not a few of the most important Masoretic manuscripts, including the Aleppo Codex and the Leningrad Codex, place Chronicles at the beginning of the Hagiographa rather than the end.⁵³ With this agree, according to Beckwith, 'many' manuscripts of the tenth to fifteenth centuries.⁵⁴ So, it turns out that the Jewish

their Jewish origins: in general (182-83); Melito (183, 184); Origen (186-87); Epiphanius (188); the Bryennios List (188).

⁵¹ Beckwith, *Old Testament Canon*, 199-200. Beckwith also argues for the lateness of Jerome's list based on the priority of the number 24 over 22, and the chronological character of Jerome's categories.

⁵² On the orders of the Hagiographa in Jewish sources, see Beckwith, *Old Testament Canon*, 198-211, 452-64; Brandt, *Endgestalten des Kanons*, 148-64. According to Beckwith (*Old Testament Canon*, 452, note to col. I), the *baraita*'s sequence for the Hagiographa is attested in the following sources: 'Bab. Baba Bathra 14b (C.5-6 Babylonian); Anonymous Chronicle (Neubauer's no. 6, C.11? Italian?); Babylonian MSS Ec1 (or or. qu. 680, defective), Eccl. 19 (or Or. 2373, defective, C.13-14?); many MSS of C.12-15, Italian, German, Franco-German, Spanish, Yemenite, including the following C.12 MSS: Add. 21161, Kennicott 201 and 224, Schwarz 4, Modona 5b; Ben Uzziel, *Kitab al-Khilaf* (C.12? Egyptian/Palestinian); Joseph of Constantinople, *Adath Deborim* (C.12?)'.

⁵³ See Beckwith's list of what he calls 'liturgical orders' (*Old Testament Canon*, 458-60). On p. 208, Beckwith reports that he has documented 70 different orders for the Hagiographa. The group of manuscripts containing a 'liturgical order' is mentioned by Beckwith on p. 209: 'Liturgical orders group the five Megilloth together ...'. He does not explain why this would entail moving Chronicles to the beginning of the Hagiographa, but on this see Brandt, *Endgestalten des Kanons*, 153-54; Stone, *Compilational History*, 114-16. On p. 210, Beckwith 'rules out' the liturgical order from having developed before the tenth century, based on the common view that the Megilloth were grouped together only at this time, but against this see now Stone, *Compilational History*, 105-111.

⁵⁴ Beckwith, *Old Testament Canon*, 458, note to col. XXXII; he cites several specific early manuscripts.

evidence is somewhat more divided than would perhaps be expected. The recognition of this led Childs to assert that ‘the sequence of the books within the canonical division [of the Ketuvim] had little significance and no normative order was ever established by the synagogue’.⁵⁵ The only evidence before the twelfth century that assuredly places Chronicles at the end of the canon is the Talmudic statement, the *baraita* of *b. BB* 14b, that probably dates to the second or third century AD.⁵⁶ Against this arrangement are all of the patristic lists and some important Jewish evidence.

Nevertheless, other scholars also argue similarly to Beckwith. For example, Steins’s examination of the external evidence highlights first *Bava Batra*, then Matthew 23:35, and then the prologue to Sirach.⁵⁷ Steinberg cites much the same evidence.⁵⁸ It may seem that the Sirach prologue is out of place, since it offers no evidence whatsoever that Chronicles concluded the canon, but actually its alleged attestation of a threefold canon—Law, Prophets, and Other Writings—becomes crucial in the argumentation. Steinberg begins his analysis of the external evidence for the origin of the Ketuvim with a discussion of this prologue, and Steins says that it is ‘the most important witness for the formation of a tripartite canon’.⁵⁹ Other scholars also think that the prologue provides incontrovertible evidence for a tripartite canon in the second century BC.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, many have tried to present an alternative interpretation of the prologue that would allow for at least a competing bipartite arrangement for the Jewish canon until well after

⁵⁵ Childs, *Introduction*, 503; cf. Seitz, *Goodly Fellowship*, 99-101.

⁵⁶ Lee Martin McDonald has questioned the authority of the *baraita* based on the fact that it was omitted from the Mishnah; *The Biblical Canon: Its Origin, Transmission, and Authority* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007): 165. From a different angle, see Alexander, ‘Formation of the Biblical Canon’, 77. On the general reception of the Mishnah and the transmission of *baraitot* alongside it, see David Kraemer, ‘The Mishnah’, in *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Vol. 4: The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period* (ed. Steven T. Katz; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 299-315, at 314; David Weiss Halivni, ‘The Reception Accorded to Rabbi Judah’s Mishnah’, in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition, Vol. 2: Aspects of Judaism in the Greco-Roman Period* (ed. E. P. Sanders, A. I. Baumgarten, and Alan Mendelson; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981): 204-212.

⁵⁷ Steins, *Chronik*, 510-12.

⁵⁸ Steinberg, *Ketuvim*, 155-94, esp. pp. 158-62 (Sirach prologue), pp. 173-79 (NT evidence: Luke 24:44; Matt. 23:35), pp. 179-82 (Josephus), pp. 193-94 (*Bava Batra*).

⁵⁹ Steins, *Chronik*, 512; cf. Steinberg, *Ketuvim*, 158-62.

⁶⁰ Childs, *Introduction*, 66, 666-67; Dempster, ‘Torah, Torah, Torah’, 112-14; Ellis, *Old Testament*, 39-40; Stone, *Compilational History*, 50. See the summary by Brandt, *Endgestalten des Kanons*, 69-70 n. 234.

the turn of the era.⁶¹ This problem cannot be addressed in the present context.⁶²

But even if we are to assume a firmly established pre-rabbinic tripartite canon, are we justified in also locating Chronicles at its end? The usual interpretation of Matthew 23:35 // Luke 11:51 makes this assumption. We saw earlier that this passage mentions the blood of Abel and Zechariah, and many scholars have taken this to be a reference to the first and last martyr mentioned in the Hebrew Bible according to the conventional arrangement today, that is, from Genesis to Chronicles. However, not everyone is convinced.⁶³ Indeed, H. G. L. Peels wrote a significant article more than a decade ago questioning this precise point.⁶⁴ Peels convincingly argues that the ‘Abel to Zechariah’ phrase in Jesus’ rhetoric functions not to limit the culpability of his hearers to the blood of Old Testament prophets only, as would be the case if we interpreted Jesus to mean, ‘all the blood shed by prophets in the Hebrew Bible, from Genesis to Chronicles’. According to Peels, Zechariah was not chosen as the counterpart to Abel because he was in the last book of the Bible but because both were martyrs in God’s cause and their deaths were seen as worthy of divine vengeance (Gen. 4:10; 2 Chr. 24:22). Moreover, Zechariah’s

⁶¹ Peter Katz, ‘The Old Testament in Palestine and Alexandria’, *ZNW* 47 (1956): 190-217; J. C. H. Lebram, ‘Aspekte der alttestamentlichen Kanonbildung’, *VT* 18 (1968): 173-89; Barton, *Oracles of God*, 35-95; Dorival, ‘L’Apport des Pères’; R. Laird Harris, ‘Chronicles and the Canon in New Testament Times’, *JETS* 33 (1990): 75-84; Jean-Daniel Kaestli, ‘La formation et la structure du canon biblique: que peut apporter l’étude de la Septante?’ in Alexander and Kaestli, *Canon of Scripture*, 99-113. Childs concedes that Katz and Lebram argue the case convincingly (*Introduction*, 53, 677). Harry M. Orlinsky speaks of ‘two ‘original’ orders [...], both Jewish—perhaps one Judean and the other Alexandrian’ (‘Prolegomenon. The Masoretic Text: A Critical Evaluation,’ in the reprint of Ginsburg, *Introduction*, xx). For Beckwith’s response to all such arguments see *Old Testament Canon*, 125-27, and ‘A Modern Theory of the Old Testament Canon’, *VT* 41 (1991): 385-95, especially 386-90.

⁶² For a recent presentation of the ‘alternative’ bipartite view of the canon, see David M. Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011): 153-79. Against the idea, see Steinberg, *Ketuvim*, 167-72. See Brandt, *Endgestalten des Kanons*, 95-124.

⁶³ See, e.g. David M. Carr, ‘Canonization in the Context of Community: An Outline of the Formation of the Tanakh and the Christian Bible’, in *A Gift of God in Due Season: Essays on Scripture and Community in Honor of James A. Sanders* (ed. Richard D. Weis and David M. Carr; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996): 22-64, at 44-45.

⁶⁴ Cf. H. G. L. Peels, ‘The Blood “from Abel to Zechariah” (Matthew 23,35; Luke 11,50f.) and the Canon of the Old Testament’, *ZAW* 113 (2001): 583-601. For a response to Peels, see Steinberg, *Ketuvim*, 177-79.

death was remembered in rabbinic literature as a cause for the destruction of the First Temple, so that reference to it in Jesus' speech would sound an especially provocative note.⁶⁵ Peels concludes: 'Jesus' words in Mt 23, 35 and Luke 11, 50f. would have sounded exactly the same if the narrative of Zechariah's death had occurred in the book of Kings or in the Psalms'.⁶⁶ It is telling that no interpreter before the printing press gave any thought to whether Jesus's reference to Zechariah pointed to a concluding position for Chronicles within the canon.⁶⁷

Peels has thus seriously weakened the case for attributing a well-ordered canon with something like the modern arrangement to the period already before Jesus. In fact, Beckwith had already acknowledged that the meaning he draws from Matthew 23:35 would be impossible except in reliance on later sources (i.e. the rabbinic evidence).⁶⁸ If the 'canonical' interpretation of the saying by Jesus is considered dubious, the order attested in *b. BB* 14b cannot alone bear the weight of establishing a concluding position of Chronicles in the pre-rabbinic period. Even if this *baraita* can be taken back to the second or third century AD, there is no evidence that we should date it any earlier than this, despite Beckwith's ingenious argument. The *baraita* may preserve a well-known order of books going back some centuries, or maybe not. The great variety of orders attested in Jewish sources indicates that no one seems to have attributed an overriding authority to this particular sequence.

So, when did Chronicles take up a place at the end of the canon, and how widespread was this arrangement? The manuscript evidence to hand allows the conclusion that this sequence was widespread, but by no means universal, from the twelfth century AD forward, but a lack of evidence prevents firm conclusions about the situation before this

⁶⁵ Peels, 'Blood', 594-99. For Zechariah's death in rabbinic literature, see H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (6 vols.; Munich: Beck, 1922-1961): 1:940-43; Beckwith, *Old Testament Canon*, 215-20.

⁶⁶ Peels, 'Blood', 600. At one time Dempster considered 'Jesus' remark in Luke 11:51 (cf. Matt. 23:35) [to be] strong evidence for understanding Chronicles as the last book of the canon' ('Extraordinary Fact', 202 n. 27), but this argument goes unmentioned in his more recent studies (perhaps due to the influence of Peels' article? cf. 'Torah, Torah, Torah', 88 n. 4; 'Canons on the Right and Canons on the Left', 69 n. 141).

⁶⁷ See Gallagher, 'Blood from Abel to Zechariah'.

⁶⁸ Beckwith, *Old Testament Canon*, 181.

point. As we have noticed, the two manuscripts considered the best representatives of the Masoretic Text—the Aleppo and Leningrad codices, tenth century and eleventh century, respectively—do not feature Chronicles at the end, and they are not alone. The *baraita* of *b. BB* 14b is the only Talmudic statement on the sequence of books, and it does position Chronicles at the end. However, the sequence of books this *baraita* affirms for both the Latter Prophets (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, the Twelve) and the Hagiographa (Ruth before Psalms, Daniel before Esther, etc.) failed to command a majority following among the manuscripts.⁶⁹ How early this sequence concluding with Chronicles may be dated is, thus, difficult to determine, but we may say with certainty that no external evidence precedes the *baraita*, which most scholars would not wish to date before the rabbinic period.⁷⁰ In any case, Chronicles did not become firmly placed as the conclusion to the canon until the printed Hebrew Bibles almost immediately established a fixed order for the Hagiographa, which remains largely true today.⁷¹

4. Conclusion

This paper has argued that internal evidence cannot establish when Chronicles took up its concluding place in the biblical canon. Arguments for this must instead be based on external evidence. I have further argued that the external arguments cannot show that it happened before the rabbinic period, and the evidence to hand suggests that no particular sequence of books enjoyed a position of dominance before the invention of printing. In light of this, interpretations or theologies

⁶⁹ On the manuscripts attesting the *baraita*'s order for the Latter Prophets, see Beckwith, *Old Testament Canon*, 450. For the Hagiographa, see above, n. 52. Even Koorevaar seems to demur from following the *baraita* in terms of the sequence of the Latter Prophets ('Chronik als intendierter Abschluß', 68 with n. 66).

⁷⁰ As mentioned earlier, Beckwith dates the list precisely to 164 BC (*Old Testament Canon*, 152-53). Koorevaar ('Chronik als intendierter Abschluß', 62-63, 72-73), and Steinberg (*Ketuvim*, 186-92) date the sequence of books attested in the *baraita* earlier than does Beckwith, placing it in the Persian era. For an early (pre-rabbinic) date of the sequence, see also Dempster, 'Torah, Torah, Torah', 104. On the other hand, Zenger (*Einleitung*, 25), Sarna ('Canon, Text, and Editions', 4:829; cf. 4:827-28), and Alexander ('Formation of the Biblical Canon', 77) consider this placement of Chronicles to be tannaitic. See also Peter R. Ackroyd, *The Chronicler in His Age* (JSOTSup, 101; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991): 347.

⁷¹ Note that Sweeney, *Tanak*, 372 says that the order he follows for the Ketuvim is 'based on the orders of books as presented in printed editions of the *Mikra'ot Gedolot* beginning in the sixteenth century AD'.

based on a particular order of books should avoid attributing to the preferred order the status of 'original' or 'best'. It should also be remembered that interpreting a book in light of other books of the canon does not necessitate establishing a particular sequence of books as correct and interpreting each book within the sequence.⁷² Chronicles can be interpreted as part of the Ketuvim without binding it to a first or last position within the Ketuvim. This may require the abandonment or modification of certain cherished interpretations dependent on the order of books.

To conclude, I emphasise again that good reasons exist for placing Chronicles at the end of the Hebrew Bible. It now seems clear that this arrangement, whatever its origin, resulted from intentional design, and certainly understanding the reasoning behind the arrangement is a worthy pursuit. As Paul House has written:

Chronicles supplies an appropriate conclusion for the Writings and the rest of the canon through its historical awareness, canonical consciousness, sensitivity toward the importance of worship and emphasis on divine retribution. The breadth of the Chronicler's vision, spanning as it does from Adam to the exile, enhances its suitability as a summary book. Its placement at the end of the Writings makes this most diverse of all Old Testament histories a fitting end to the most diverse segment of the Law, the Prophets and the Writings.⁷³

Indeed, there are many reasons why Chronicles forms an appropriate conclusion to the Hebrew Bible. But none of these reasons suggests that Chronicles must conclude the canon, much less that it was written for this purpose. Very possibly, some Rabbis viewed Chronicles as an appropriate conclusion to the canon to which they were applying a specific sequence of books, and so they put it there. Nothing indicates that this happened earlier, or that this particular sequence is inherent in the formation of the canon.

⁷² This seems to be confused in Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 41-43.

⁷³ Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1998): 537.