

HAVING THE LAST SAY: THE END OF THE OT

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This study views the OT as a unified corpus whose ending is significant for an understanding of the whole. According to the philosophy of Frank Kermode, the “end” signals a new start, a renovation, with this hope generated by the deeply-ingrained human need for finding meaning in the present.¹ For Kermode, therefore, apocalyptic thinking is not specifically Christian or biblical in origin, though he illustrates it from the Bible (notably the book of Revelation).² We do not, however, need to adopt Kermode’s view that beginnings and ends are merely cultural fictions.³ This way of looking at reality also applies to how books are read, and this may partly explain why a literary critic like Kermode developed his philosophy in the direction that he did.

The behavior of readers establishes the principle that a consideration of the end of a book transforms how one reads the book. It is not uncommon for a reader when taking up a book to start by turning to the last chapter as a guide to what the book is about and to use what is found there to guide the reading of the whole. A literary critic will read a book more than once, and second (and subsequent) readings are done with knowledge of how the book ends, and it is this epistemological vantage point that enables critical appraisal of a book’s contents. As stated by Jonathan E. Dyck, “Reading the ending first is simply a shortcut to a critical reading of the text.”⁴

Something similar is involved if the series of books that make up the OT is read as a coordinated canonical structure.⁵ The diversity of the contents and origins of the different parts that make up the Bible does not exclude it from being consid-

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¹ *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction (with a New Epilogue)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000 [1967]) 190.

² *Ibid.* 193.

³ See the critique by A. D. Nuttall, “The Sense of a Beginning,” in *Addressing Frank Kermode: Essays in Criticism and Interpretation* (ed. Margaret Tudeau-Clayton and Martin Warner; Houndmills, UK: Macmillan, 1991) 22–37.

⁴ *The Theocratic Ideology of the Chronicler* (Biblical Interpretation Series 33; Leiden: Brill, 1998) 78. For the study of the phenomenon of closure see, e.g., Marianna Torgovnick, *Closure of the Novel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981).

⁵ E.g. Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (NSBT 15; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003); idem, “Canon and OT Interpretation,” in *Hearing the OT: Listening for God’s Address* (ed. Craig G. Bartholomew and David J. H. Beldman; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012) 174.

ered a single work.⁶ A reader's expectation is that the last book in a series builds on, interacts with, and (re)interprets the books that precede it in a particular canonical order. If the Bible is read in canonical order and viewed as having a narrative trajectory (i.e. as one story moving toward a goal), this requires "an increased emphasis on the theology of the later literature which forms the end of the story."⁷ According to Kermode, "the end of the Bible transforms all its contents."⁸ It is no light matter, therefore, what book is placed last in the biblical canon, for that book will have *the last say* on what the OT is about and will in this way make a major contribution to an evaluation of its contents.⁹

I. THE QUESTION OF INTENTIONALITY

It is not necessary to decide how deliberative the process of canonical ordering was, for the focus of this study is the effect on the reader of ending the OT with a particular book, not the slippery issue of intentionality. As noted by John H. Sailhamer, the influence brought to bear on the reader by the act of juxtaposing books in a series, what he calls con-textuality,¹⁰ does not need to posit an *intentional* relative positioning of books for it to be viewed as significant. What book is placed at the end of the canon suggests a certain way of reading the OT as a whole and influences any evaluation of its theological shape.

It is by no means certain that the Hebrew orders (there are more than one) represent the oldest canonical arrangement and were subsequently altered by Christians (as witnessed by the various Greek orders), though a number of scholars think in such terms. For example, Isaac Kalimi contrasts the tripartite Hebrew canon (Tanak) ending with Chronicles with the Christian Bible and claims that Christianity adopted the order ending with Malachi because it suited its theology (ending with a prophecy of the messianic era). In other words, Kalimi reads the alternate endings in terms of an ideological clash between Jews and Christians.¹¹ However, the different arrangements of the OT are not to be construed in partisan terms (Jewish vs. Christian), though a number of scholars (Jewish and Christian) adopt this explana-

⁶ See the discussion provided by Nicholas Wolterstorff, "The Unity behind the Canon," in *One Scripture or Many? Canon from Biblical, Theological, and Philosophical Perspectives* (ed. Christine Helmer and Christof Landmesser; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 217–32, esp. 228–32.

⁷ Mark McEntire, "The God at the End of the Story: Are Biblical Theology and Narrative Character Development Compatible?," *HBT* 33 (2011) 187.

⁸ *Sense of an Ending* 196.

⁹ Cf. Christopher R. Seitz, *The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets: The Achievement of Association in Canon Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009) 115: "It stands to reason that significance would be attached to whichever book or books stood last in the Writings." See also his comments on p. 120.

¹⁰ *Introduction to OT Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995) 213.

¹¹ *The Retelling of Chronicles in Jewish Tradition and Literature: A Historical Journey* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009) 30–31. A similar contrast is made by Nahum Sarna, "The Authority and Interpretation of Scripture in Jewish Tradition," in *Understanding Scripture: Explorations of Jewish and Christian Traditions of Interpretation* (ed. Clemens Thoma and Michael Wyschogrod; New York: Paulist, 1987) 12.

tion.¹² It is more likely that the various sequences preserved for posterity in the Hebrew canon and Greek Bibles are all *Jewish* orders and were not shaped by Christian preconceptions.¹³

There are structural differences between the Hebrew and Greek canons, but Marvin Sweeney goes too far when he claims that there are “two distinctive readings” of the Bible, one belonging to Judaism and the other to Christianity.¹⁴ Christopher Seitz is on firmer ground in arguing that the later (according to Seitz) Septuagintal adjustments were not done with the aim of producing a counter-theological statement,¹⁵ though that does not mean that there is no difference. Whether haphazard or deliberate (and I am not at all sure how one would decide which it was), the different canonical sequences of the biblical books within a Jewish milieu lead to alternative readings of the OT. Irrespective of whether anyone in antiquity intended a particular meaning,¹⁶ just as significant is the effect of the ordering of books on the later reading of Scripture, even when fortuitous or unknown factors may have been involved in the process of ordering. This *de facto* effect on contemporary readers is the focus of the present study.

II. ALTERNATIVE LAST BOOKS

With regard to Hebrew canons, the final books are almost always Chronicles or Ezra-Nehemiah (when Chronicles is placed at the head of the Writings).¹⁷ Peter Brandt classifies those Jewish orders which place Chronicles at the end of the Writings as Eastern (Babylonian), and those that close with Ezra-Nehemiah as Western (Palestinian).¹⁸ Certainly, by the time of the Babylonian Talmud tractate *Baba Bathra*

¹² See, e.g., Rolf Rendtorff, “Jews and Christians: Seeing the Prophets Differently,” *BibRev* 19 (2003) 25–31, 54; Jack Miles, *God: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1995) 15–19; Harold Bloom, *Jesus and Yahweh: The Names Divine* (New York: Riverhead, 2005) 41–51.

¹³ Harry M. Orlinsky, “Prolegomenon: The Masoretic Text: A Critical Evaluation,” in C. D. Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Massoretic-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* (London: Trinitarian Bible Society, 1897; New York: Ktav, 1966) xix–xx; H. B. Swete, *An Introduction to the OT in Greek, Appendix Containing the Letter of Aristeas* (ed. H. St. J. Thackeray; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902; rev. R. R. Ottley; New York: Ktav, 1968) 217–26; Seitz, *Goodly Fellowship* 92, 93. J. C. H. Lebram makes use of Josephus (*Ap.* 1.38–41) to establish this point, see “Aspekte der alttestamentlichen Kanonbildung,” *VT* 18 (1968) 173–89.

¹⁴ “Tanak versus OT: 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 et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 353–72.

¹⁵ *Goodly Fellowship* 97–98, 108–109.

¹⁶ John Barton views this as a decisive issue; see *Holy Writings, Sacred Text: The Canon in Early Christianity* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997) 146 n. 24.

¹⁷ See the tables provided by Swete, *An Introduction to the OT in Greek* 200; L. B. Wolfenson, “Implications of the Place of the Book of Ruth in Editions, Manuscripts, and Canon of the OT,” *HUCA* 1 (1924) 151–78, esp. 160–161; Roger T. Beckwith, *The OT Canon of the NT Church and Its Background in Early Judaism* (London: SPCK, 1985) 452–64; Michèle Dukan, *La Bible hébraïque: Les codices copiés en Orient et dans la zone séfarade avant 1280* (Bibliologia 22; Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2006) 65–70, with a table on p. 67.

¹⁸ See his detailed discussion in *Endgestalten des Kanons: Das Arrangement der Schriften Israels in der jüdischen und christlichen Bibel* (BBB 131; Berlin: Philo, 2001) 148–55.

14b (a *baraita* originating in the Tannaic period [pre-AD 200]),¹⁹ Chronicles is at the end of the Writings. In line with this, the order found in the Mishnaic tractate *Yoma* 1.6 is “Job and Ezra(-Nehemiah) and Chronicles.” This is its position in the majority of manuscripts and printed editions of the Hebrew Bible, which is why the editors of *BHK*³ and *BHS* deviated from the order of books found in Codex Leninograd (their base text) and placed Chronicles in final position. The tradition in *Baba Bathra* (14b) has “the order of the Writings” closing with “Daniel and the Scroll of Esther, Ezra[-Nehemiah] and Chronicles” (my translation). The *baraita*, therefore, provides an early record of an acceptable order of the Writings (closing with Chronicles).

It is commonly said that the Greek canon in effect transposes the second and third sections in the Hebrew ordering of the books. In this way the Prophetic Books (= Latter Prophets of the Tanak) close the OT canon and (from a Christian perspective) provide a bridge to the NT, signaling that the main connection of the NT is with the words of the prophets who pointed forward to Jesus Christ. Jack Miles claims: “The Christian editor edited the Hebrew Bible to reflect this Christian belief.”²⁰ In actual fact, only Vaticanus (B 03) of the three Great Uncials places the prophetic books at the end of the canon (the Minor Prophets preceding the Major Prophets), with Daniel the last book listed. In Sinaiticus (Ⲁ 01) and Alexandrinus (A 02) the Poetic Books are placed last, so that the final section in these two codices is not all that different from the Writings.²¹ This suggests that we are not to overplay the difference between the (relatively settled) tripartite Hebrew order and the less uniform Greek orders of the canonical books.²² Seitz overstates the case, however, when he says that “there is no ‘Greek order’ as against a Hebrew order,”²³ for a compilation of Greek lists of sacred books shows that *majority* Greek order is exemplified in Vaticanus, with the Prophetic Books (ending with Daniel) placed last.²⁴

Though the reader of the English Bible is familiar with Malachi as the last book of the OT, this arrangement is not found in Hebrew, Greek, or Latin or-

¹⁹ For the text, see *Baba Bathra* (Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud; ed. I. Epstein; New Edition in Two Volumes I; London: Soncino, 1976).

²⁰ *God: A Biography* 18. A similar assertion is made by Bloom (*Jesus and Yahweh* 45, 47).

²¹ For further details, see Swete, *An Introduction to the OT in Greek* 201–2. There is no uniform Greek order; see B. Botte and P.-M. Bogaert, “Septante et versions grecques,” in *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible* (ed. L. Pirot and A. Robert; Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1996) 12.535–691, esp. 541–43; Martin Hengel, *The Septuagint as Christian Scripture: Its Prehistory and the Problem of Its Canon* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002) 57–60.

²² See the tables of lists of early Greek (Eastern) and Latin (Western) orders up to the fifth century provided in Appendix B in Lee Martin McDonald, *The Biblical Canon: Its Origin, Transmission, and Authority* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007) 439–42; cf. J. K. Elliot, “Manuscripts, the Codex and the Canon,” *JNTS* 63 (1996) 105–23; Albert C. Sundberg Jr., *The OT of the Early Church* (HTS 20; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964) 58–59.

²³ “Canon, Narrative, and the OT’s Literal Sense: A Response to John Goldingay, ‘Canon and OT Theology,’” *TynBul* 59 (2008) 28.

²⁴ Daniel is sometimes followed by what might be viewed as *other* “court tales” (namely Esther and/or 1–2 Esdras); cf. David Trobisch, *The First Edition of the NT* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 64.

ders.²⁵ Its late origin is due to the adjustment of the Vulgate tradition made in the Protestant Bible of the sixteenth century, when 1–2 Maccabees were removed from after Malachi.²⁶ It was, therefore, an adjustment of biblical book order *within* the Christian tradition, and this had the unpremeditated consequence of making Malachi the last book of the OT. This outcome had nothing to do with controversy with Jews and everything to do with disputes among Christians over the canonical status of the Apocrypha. Though of relatively recent origin, its current prominence in printed Bibles and its influence on contemporary readers means this order cannot be ignored. The four main books, therefore, to evaluate as last books of the OT are Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, Daniel, and Malachi.

III. ENDING WITH CHRONICLES

The placement of the book of Chronicles after Kings in Greek orders makes it look like an addendum, and the Greek title assigned it, namely “[The books] of the things left out” (Παραλειπομένων), confirms that Chronicles is being viewed as a supplement to 2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings. Only the final paragraph of 2 Chronicles (36:22–23) takes the reader beyond the point at which the account closed in 2 Kings. The fact that only the Judean line of kings is traced adds to the impression of Chronicles as an appendix to the history given a broader range in Kings. What is of relevance in the present discussion is the greater role assigned to Chronicles in the Hebrew Bible, for there it is no longer overshadowed by Kings. In particular, 2 Chr 36:22–23, when placed at the close of the Writings has new prominence, and its proper interpretation becomes a key issue.

Jonathan Dyck understands 2 Chr 36:22–23 as “a directive to keep reading (elsewhere),” namely in the book of Ezra-Nehemiah, which begins with the same words.²⁷ On this shaky basis, Dyck sees Chronicles (read together with Ezra-Nehemiah) as picturing the history of God’s people as a series of repeated exiles and restorations, culminating in the static portrait of the Chronicler’s own theocratic community. In other words, he follows the common scholarly viewpoint that the message of Chronicles is decidedly non-eschatological.²⁸ However, reading Chroni-

²⁵ For a detailed listing of the various Latin orders (212 orders are provided), see Samuel Berger, *Histoire de la Vulgate: pendant les premiers siècles du moyen âge* (Hildesheim, Germany: Georg Olms, 1976) 331–39. For comments on Berger, see Brandt, *Endgestalten des Kanons* 274–76.

²⁶ Brandt, *Endgestalten des Kanons* 320–22; cf. Berger, *Histoire de la Vulgate* 304. For early Protestant editions of the Bible, see Roland Deines, “The Term and Concept of Scripture,” in *What is Bible?* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 67; ed. Karin Finsterbusch and Armin Lange; Leuven: Peeters, 2012) 240–48.

²⁷ *Theocratic Ideology of the Chronicler* 83. Dyck acknowledges that his thinking has been influenced by Jack Miles (*God: A Biography* 391–96).

²⁸ E.g. Otto Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology* (trans. S. Rudman; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968) 39, in dependence upon Wilhelm Rudolph, who saw “das Ideal der Theokratie” as excluding any eschatological hope; see *Chronikbücher* (HAT 21; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1955) xxiii.

cles as a prequel to Ezra-Nehemiah is canonically untenable, if for no other reason that Chronicles, at least in the Hebrew Bible, is *never* followed by Ezra-Nehemiah.²⁹

As William Johnstone notes, in the account of the Chronicler, the word of Jeremiah superintends the final (post-Josiah) phrase of Judahite history, with Jeremiah mentioned by name four times (2 Chr 35:25; 36:12, 21, 22).³⁰ Jeremiah raises a lament over dead Josiah (35:25). The captivity of each of the last four kings is recorded (36:4, 6, 10, 20), and it is noted that the last king did not heed Jeremiah's words (36:12). In the first year of Cyrus (538 BC), Jeremiah's prediction of a period of "seventy years" exile stands behind the new development described (the issuing of a decree by Cyrus), if calculated as commencing with the death of Josiah (usually dated 609 BC). The Chronicler, by reproducing a truncated form of Cyrus's edict found in Ezra 1:1–4 (minus 1:3b–4), places a distinct focus on going up to Jerusalem, but he fails to describe its occurrence, suggesting that he is not thinking of the historical return described in Ezra-Nehemiah.

At the end of the Hebrew canon closed by Chronicles, it is implied that God's people are yet to return to the land (36:23b: "let him go up [יָעֵל] [to Jerusalem]"),³¹ given that Chronicles was written long after the temple was rebuilt (the date of composition is probably ca. 400 BC),³² that is, it was authored later than the Ezra-Nehemiah era. While the narrative of Ezra-Nehemiah depicts a *physical* return to the land, the Chronicler's thesis is that despite that return, Israel is still (theologically) in exile, "still poised on the eve of the definitive 'Return.'"³³ On this reading, 2 Chr 36:22–23 as the final passage in the Tanak "extends Jeremiah's seventy years beyond the time of the return from Babylon, closing the whole of the Tanak with a decidedly future reference."³⁴ The book of Chronicles interprets the prophecies of Jer 25:12 and 29:10 in the light of the warning in Lev 26:34–35,³⁵ so that the "seventy years" in Jeremiah's prophecy is viewed as a period of seventy years of Sab-

²⁹ For a telling critique of the idea that the last two verses of Chronicles are an "overlap" with the opening of Ezra, indicating the original connection between these two works, see H. G. M. Williamson, *Israel in the Books of Chronicles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) 5–70; idem, "Did the Author of Chronicles also Write the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah?," *BibRev* 3 (1987) 56–59; Stephen Dempster, "Canons on the Right and Canons on the Left: Finding a Resolution in the Canon Debate," *JETS* 52 (2009) 74.

³⁰ *1 and 2 Chronicles*, vol. 2: *2 Chronicles 10–36: Guilt and Atonement* (JSOTSup 254; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 259–60. Johnstone notes that an open Hebrew paragraph division in the MT after 35:24 separates off 36:25–27 from the rest of the account of Josiah's reign. I acknowledge my substantial dependence upon Johnstone for this paragraph.

³¹ William Johnstone, "Hope of Jubilee: The Last Word in the Hebrew Bible," *EQ* 72 (2000) 307–14.

³² For this dating, see Sara Japhet, *I and II Chronicles: A Commentary* (OTL; London: SCM, 1993) 3–28.

³³ William Johnstone, "Guilt and Atonement: The Theme of 1 and 2 Chronicles," in *A Word in Season: Essays in Honour of William McKane* (JSOTSup 42; ed. J. D. Martin and P. R. Davies; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1986) 114.

³⁴ Sailhamer, *Meaning of the Pentateuch* 174.

³⁵ For the combining of these texts, see Magnar Kartveit, "2 Chronicles 36:20–23 as Literary and Theological 'Interface,'" in *The Chronicler as Author: Studies in Text and Texture* (JSOTSup 263; ed. M. Patrick Graham and Steven L. McKenzie; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) 395–403, esp. 398.

bath rest for the land.³⁶ The same combination of texts lies behind the reinterpretation of Jeremiah's prophecy in Daniel 9 that there would be a much-extended period of "seventy weeks" (9:24; see below). It is not true, therefore (*pace* Sweeney), that the Tanak, ending with Chronicles, has no sense of incompleteness, for it looks for a more ultimate return of God's people as depicted by the prophets (Jeremiah included), with the result that the Tanak ends on a note of eschatological expectation.

Concerning the last two verses of Chronicles, Brian E. Kelly states, "The Chronicler wishes to emphasize that the conditions for achieving a fuller measure of restoration now exist. . . . the Chronicler indicates that the history of his community is not 'realized' or complete but rather is on the threshold of a new period, awaiting fulfilment."³⁷ In other words, the generation of the Chronicler is put in the same position as the original returnees (as depicted in 1 Chronicles 9),³⁸ but with the hope of a significant advance over the disappointments of the original return depicted in Ezra-Nehemiah. Kelly is right to insist on an eschatological interpretation of Chronicles, though he appears to think that for Chronicles to have an eschatology it must be messianic in character—but eschatology and messianism need not be equated.³⁹ There is nothing in 2 Chronicles 36 to suggest an expectation of the restoration of Davidic rule. The ambiguous hope provided by Jehoiachin's release from prison in 2 Kgs 25:27–30 has no parallel in Chronicles.⁴⁰ The rule of Cyrus confirms the termination of the Davidic dynasty, with the Persian king dressed in the Davidic garb of world ruler and temple-builder (cf. the portrait of Cyrus in Isa 44:28; 45:1).⁴¹ On the other hand, the glowing portrait of Cyrus does not need to mean that the Chronicler recommends political quietism under perpetual Persian rule and has no expectation or desire for a change for the better.⁴² Alt-

³⁶ Michael Fishbane suggests that the Chronicler understood Jer 25:9–12 as "a prophecy based upon that covenant warning" (*Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985] 481).

³⁷ Brian E. Kelly, *Retribution and Eschatology in Chronicles* (JSOTSup 211; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) 189–90.

³⁸ Martin J. Selman, *1 Chronicles* (TOTC; Leicester: InterVarsity, 1994) 38. Selman notes that 1 Chronicles 9 is another passage drawn and adapted from Ezra-Nehemiah.

³⁹ *Retribution and Eschatology* 135–85. On the problem of their relation, see Magne Sæbo, *On the Way to Canon: Creative Tradition History in the OT* (JSOTSup 191; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998) chap. 13.

⁴⁰ Donald F. Murray, "Dynasty, People, and the Future: The Message of Chronicles," *JSOT* 58 (1993) 71–92.

⁴¹ William Riley, *King and Cultus in Chronicles: Worship and the Reinterpretation of History* (JSOTSup 160; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993) 153–55; Ehud Ben Zvi, "When the Foreign Monarch Speaks," in *The Chronicler as Author* 209–28, esp. 223, 228; Isaac Kalimi, *An Ancient Israelite Historian: Studies in the Chronicler, His Time, Place and Writing* (Studia Semitica Neerlandica 46; Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2005) 143–57; Roddy L. Braun, "Cyrus in Second and Third Isaiah, Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah," in *The Chronicler as Theologian: Essays in Honour of Ralph W. Klein* (ed. M. Patrick Graham, Steven L. McKenzie, and Gary N. Knoppers; JSOTSup 371; London: T&T Clark, 2003) 146–64.

⁴² *Pace* E. J. Bickerman, *From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees* (New York: Schocken, 1962) 30. For a survey of scholarly opinion, see P. B. Dirksen, "The Future in the Book of Chronicles," in *New Heaven and New Earth: Prophecy and the Millennium: Essays in Honour of Anthony Gelston* (ed. P. J. Harland and C. T. R. Hayward; VTSup 77; Leiden: Brill, 1999) 37–51.

though Sara Japhet would classify Chronicles as non-eschatological, due to her overly precise understanding of eschatology as, by definition, otherworldly, she insists that the Chronicler “awaited the restoration of Israel’s fortunes”.⁴³

Chronicles is an appropriate last book of the Tanak, seeing that it “book-ends” the OT with Genesis, for it reviews the entire sweep of world history starting with Adam (1 Chr 1:1).⁴⁴ In line with this understanding, Jerome in his introduction to Chronicles in the Vulgate, says “all the teaching of Scripture is contained in this book” (*quod omnis eruditio Scripturarum in hoc libro continetur*).⁴⁵ As well, the first and last books of the canon end with the prospect of a divinely enabled going-up to the land (the same Hebrew roots עלה and פקד appearing in Gen 50:24–25 and 2 Chr 36:23).⁴⁶ Contrary to Barry Olshen, the future return to the land contemplated in 2 Chronicles 36 need not be equated with the vision of the modern Zionist movement.⁴⁷ Isaac Kalimi also wonders whether the Sages had a “Zionist” intention, given that the *baraita* in *Baba Batbra* postdated the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70), so that the Tanak ends by encouraging immigration to the land of Israel despite its attendant risks.⁴⁸ Rather, the concluding words of Chronicles, “let him go up [to rebuild the temple],” reiterate the prophetic hope of the return of God’s people within the consummated kingdom of God, anticipated by the rebuilt temple (= God’s palace [היכל]), as the final goal of God’s purposes in history.

IV. ENDING WITH EZRA-NEHEMIAH

Contrary to Sailhamer, I am not convinced that ending the Tanak with Ezra-Nehemiah rather than Chronicles as in the Leningrad Codex, wherein Chronicles is found at the start of the Writings (so too the Aleppo Codex), makes a material difference, in that both books show that God’s people are still in exile.⁴⁹ Building on

⁴³ *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought* (trans. Anna Barber; BEATAJ 9; New York: Peter Lang, 1989) 504. For the “future dimension” in Chronicles, see Mark J. Boda, “Gazing through the Cloud of Incense: Davidic Dynasty and Temple Community in the Chronicler’s Perspective,” in *Chronicling the Chronicler: The Book of Chronicles and Early Second Temple Historiography* (ed. Paul S. Evans and Tyler F. Williams; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013) 238–45.

⁴⁴ E.g. Beckwith, *OT Canon* 159. Though admitting the hypothesis is unprovable, Georg Steins claims that Chronicles was purposely composed as a conclusion to the Writings, see *Die Chronik als kanonisches Abschlussphänomen: Studien zur Entstehung und Theologie von 1/2 Chronik* (BBB 93; Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1995) 509. Likewise, Hendrik J. Koorevaar views the Chronicler writing to summarise and seal the OT canon; see “Die *Chronik* als intendierter Abschluss des alttestamentlichen Kanons,” *Jahrbuch für evangelikale Theologie* 11 (1997) 42–76.

⁴⁵ *Praefationes Sancti Hieronymi in Liber Paralipomenon*, see *Biblia Sacra, Iuxta Latinam Vulgatam Versionem*, vol.7: *Verba Dierum* (Rome: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1948) 9.

⁴⁶ As pointed out by Nahum Sarna, “Bible,” *EncJud* (2007?) 3.582.

⁴⁷ “The Return to Tanakh,” in *Approaches to Teaching the Hebrew Bible as Literature in Transition* (Approaches to Teaching World Literature 25; ed. Barry N. Olshen and Yael S. Feldman; New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1989) 54–58, esp. 55.

⁴⁸ *Retelling of Chronicles* 30, 31; idem, “So Let Him Go Up [to Jerusalem]! A Historical and Theological Observation on Cyrus’ Decree in Chronicles,” in idem, *An Ancient Israelite Historian* 153, 155–156. He notes an earlier positive reference to returning to the land in 2 Chr 30:9.

⁴⁹ “Biblical Theology and the Composition of the Hebrew Bible,” in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect* (ed. Scott J. Hafemann; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002) 34–36.

the work of David N. Freedman,⁵⁰ Sailhamer views the alternate positions assigned to Daniel as the most significant feature of the fluctuations in the order of the Writings.⁵¹ Daniel 9 reinterprets Jeremiah's prophecy of a return after seventy years (Dan 9:2) in terms of the much more extended and indefinite period of seventy sevens (or weeks; 9:24),⁵² so that the fulfilment of Jeremiah's prophecy is projected beyond the mundane return from Babylonian captivity in the years following 538 BC.

In the Leningrad Codex (B19a), the final three books are: Esther–Daniel–Ezra(-Nehemiah). In this order the decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1:2–4) immediately follows the book of Daniel. Sailhamer views this order as asserting that the historical return under Ezra and Nehemiah is presented as the true fulfilment of Jeremiah's prophecy of a return after seventy years, with Ezra 1:1 referring to the prophecy of Jeremiah. A comparison with 2 Chr 36:21–22 suggests that the prophecy of the seventy years is indeed in view, and if Ezra-Nehemiah directly follows Daniel, the natural supposition is that Ezra 1:1 refers to the same prophecy as does Dan 9:2. It is Jeremiah's prophecy of the seventy years that motivates the prayer of Daniel 9. That prayer is set in the first year of Darius (= the first year of Cyrus, given Dan 6:28 [Heb. 6:29]),⁵³ as is the fresh development described in Ezra 1. God used Cyrus to accomplish his purposes, and he did so "in fulfilment of" (root בָּלָה) the word he had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah.⁵⁴ With the capture of Babylon (the event presupposed by the notice in Ezra 1:1 that it is set in "the first year of Cyrus king of Persia"), the first part of the prediction of Jeremiah has occurred (cf. Jer 25:12; 29:10).⁵⁵ This gives reason to hope that his prediction of a return to the land will also come true, and this is the substance of the decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1:2–4).

According to Sailhamer, Ezra-Nehemiah ignores the apocalyptic reinterpretation of the seventy years found in Daniel 9.⁵⁶ It is not clear, however, that this is the case, given the prayer recorded in Nehemiah 9. Ezra-Nehemiah describes a national renewal with the rebuilding of the temple and the restoration of a law-

⁵⁰ *The Unity of the Hebrew Bible* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1991); idem, "The Symmetry of the Hebrew Bible," *ST* 46 (1992) 83–108.

⁵¹ *Meaning of the Pentateuch* 172.

⁵² Though the period is regularly viewed as 490 years; as noted by Michael B. Shepherd, "week" never means a period of seven years elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, see *Daniel in the Context of the Hebrew Bible* (Studies in Biblical Literature 123; New York: Peter Lang, 2009) 97.

⁵³ See Brian E. Colless, "Cyrus the Persian as Darius the Mede in the Book of Daniel," *JSOT* 56 (1992) 113–26.

⁵⁴ Though this root does not mean "to fulfil" elsewhere, it must mean this in the present context; see Serge Frolov, "The Prophecy of Jeremiah in Esr 1,1," *ZAW* 116 (2004) 598–99. For what follows I acknowledge my debt to Frolov.

⁵⁵ An alternate understanding of Ezra 1:1 is provided by H. G. M. Williamson. He sees it as referring to the prediction of Jer 51:1 ("I will stir up [רָעַר] the spirit of a destroyer against Babylon"), with this negative prophecy read in the light of the positive statements in Isa 41:2, 25; 44:28; 45:1 (which use the same Hebrew root) (*Ezra-Nehemiah* [WBC 16; Waco, TX: Word, 1985] 10).

⁵⁶ Seitz summarizes Sailhamer's view as follows: "The force of Daniel is thus domesticated by an editorial interpretation that construes exile as ending with the return and rebuilding of the temple" (*Goodly Fellowship* 116).

abiding Jewish community in fulfilment of the hope of the prophets,⁵⁷ but the restoration is far from complete. The Levitical prayer of Nehemiah 9 speaks of their continued hardship “until this day” (9:32) and in 9:36 there is the complaint to God by those who have returned to Jerusalem: “we are slaves.” The exploitation suffered under Persian rule is viewed as a continuation of the earlier Assyrian oppression (9:32: “since the time of the kings of Assyria until this day”).⁵⁸ As well, their present situation is one of “hardship” (9:32) and “distress” (9:37), with these expressions framing an appeal for divine relief in the final portion of the prayer (9:32–37).⁵⁹ In line with this gloomy evaluation of the current state of the nation, the notice at Ezra 1:1 must be understood as a *partial* fulfilment only of Jeremiah’s prophecy of a return to the land.

Consistent with this interpretation of the joint-book, the prayer of Nehemiah 9 is followed by a community oath (9:38–10:39 [Heb. 10:1–40]), whose third and largest section consists of a pledge to support “the house of our God” (10:32–39 [Heb. 33–40]). The oath closes with the words: “We will not neglect the house of our God.” Their hope is that in response to the prayer of his people and their recommitment to live under God’s rule (as indicated by their promise to provide material support for the temple), God will act to bring them relief from their burdens in a consummated kingdom over which he will rule.

As well, Ezra-Nehemiah shows the failure of God’s people to reform themselves, ending as it does with the depressing account of the recurrence of problems, for the final placement of Neh 13:4–31 demonstrates the people’s inability to keep their earlier pledge in Nehemiah 10. In Nehemiah 13, the people are described as doing the very things they promised they would not do.⁶⁰ The period of Ezra-Nehemiah ends with disappointment, for the popular reforms have failed. All this makes plain that the glorious visions of the prophets have not yet been fulfilled. Dissatisfaction with Persian rule implies a longing for its replacement by God’s rule, that is to say, there is an underlying “kingdom of God” theology in Ezra-Nehemiah.⁶¹ Sailhamer’s evaluation of Ezra-Nehemiah causes him to find two “contending ‘final shapes’ of the Tanak”⁶² and to posit the existence of “deep-seated disagreements over the meaning of Scripture” in the pre-Christian period.⁶³ In my view, it is Sailhamer’s misreading of Ezra-Nehemiah that leads him to find two conflicting theological shapes for the Tanak as a whole.

⁵⁷ Sweeney thinks in such terms; see “Tanak versus OT” 359, 366; cf. Hartmut Gese, *Vom Sinai zum Zion: Alttestamentliche Beiträge zur biblischen Theologie* (BEvT 64; Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1974) 16–17; James A. Sanders, “‘Spinning’ the Bible: How Judaism and Christianity Shape the Canon Differently,” *BibRes* 14/3 (1998) 27–28.

⁵⁸ See G. R. Goswell, “The Attitude to the Persians in Ezra-Nehemiah,” *TrinJ* 32 (2011) 191–203.

⁵⁹ As noted by Rodney A. Werline, *Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism: The Development of a Religious Institution* (SBLJL 13; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998) 58.

⁶⁰ We are to resist a critical reordering of the biblical material on the false supposition that Nehemiah 13 chronologically precedes Nehemiah 10; see G. R. Goswell, “The Handling of Time in the Book of Ezra-Nehemiah,” *TrinJ* 31 (2010) 187–203.

⁶¹ See G. R. Goswell, “The Absence of a Davidic Hope in Ezra-Nehemiah,” *TrinJ* 33 (2012) 19–31.

⁶² *Meaning of the Pentateuch* 173.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 175.

One feature that makes Ezra-Nehemiah an appropriate final book for the OT is the historical review provided by the penitential prayer of Nehemiah 9 (cf. Daniel 9). The prayer recapitulates and evaluates the course of biblical history (starting at creation). The Davidic-Solomonic period is not mentioned in the historical review, which only has generic references to “our kings” in 9:32, 34 (cf. Ezra 9:7; Dan 9:6, 8, 12 [“our rulers”]). The non-mention of David or the Davidic covenant in the historical review provided by the Levites’ prayer fits the context of the canonical book in which it is found, for the author of Ezra-Nehemiah chooses to concentrate upon the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants in the three main prayers of the joint-book (Ezra 9; Nehemiah 1, 9). In other words, the eschatological hope in Ezra-Nehemiah, consistent with the preceding book of Daniel (see below), is focused on the dawning of the kingdom of God, when God will act to redress the grievances of his people.

V. ENDING WITH DANIEL

With regard to Daniel as the final book of the OT, this occurs in certain Greek orders, though it is always *near* the end of the Tanak in the Hebrew ordering of the canon.⁶⁴ In the Greek canon, of which the early church became the custodian, Daniel is regarded as a prophet (the subscription of Alexandrinus names the book Δανιήλ προφήτου [Daniel the prophet]),⁶⁵ and his book follows that of Ezekiel as the last of the great prophets.⁶⁶ This tradition, which is of Jewish origin, shows itself in a *florilegium* of biblical passages from Qumran,⁶⁷ in the NT, in Josephus, in Melito, and in Origen,⁶⁸ all of which refer to Daniel as a prophet. The inclusion of Daniel among the prophets is undoubtedly due to the visionary character of chapters 7–12, wherein the Daniel receives visions depicting future events. Following Ezekiel, which ends with the vision of the new temple (Ezekiel 40–48), the temple theme of the book of Daniel is highlighted, commencing as it does with the sacking

⁶⁴ For a recent review of the alternate canonical positions of Daniel, see Jordan M. Scheetz, *The Concept of Canonical Intertextuality and the Book of Daniel* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2001) 140–46.

⁶⁵ H. J. M. Milne and T. C. Skeat, *Scribes and Correctors of the Codex Sinaiticus* (London: British Museum, 1938), plate 24; F. G. Kenyon, ed., *The Codex Alexandrinus (Royal MS. 1 D V–VIII) in Reduced Photographic Facsimile: OT Part III Hosea–Judith* (British Museum; London: Longmans & Co., 1936), plate 417.

⁶⁶ This is the order in Vaticanus and Alexandrinus (Sinaiticus is defective), namely Ezekiel, Susanna–Daniel–Bel and the Dragon, all viewed as one book in Alexandrinus (the subscription τελος Δανιήλ προφήτου [the end of Daniel the prophet] only coming after Bel and the Dragon). Φ ⁹⁶⁷ is a Greek manuscript dated ca. AD 200 (the earliest witness to the Old Greek version) and has this order: Ezekiel, Daniel, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, Esther.

⁶⁷ John M. Allegro, *Qumrān Cave 4.1 (4Q158–4Q186)* (DJD 5; Oxford: Clarendon, 1968) 54, 70.

⁶⁸ 4QFlor (4Q174) 2.3 (“[wh]ich is written in the book of Daniel the prophet”), Matt 24:15; Mark 13:14; Josephus (*Ap.* 1.8; *Ant.* 10.11.4, 7; 10.26.7–8; and 11.8.5); the order of the prophets (so designated) in Melito is: Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Twelve in one book, Daniel, Ezekiel (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.26.13–14); Origen in his exposition of Psalm 1 includes the catalogue: Isaiah, Jeremiah–Lamentations–Letter, Daniel, Ezekiel (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.25–26).

of the temple.⁶⁹ As well, the prayer of Daniel 9 results from the hero's pondering of the prophecies of Jeremiah (Dan 9:2), and Daniel 10–12 is full of exegetical reapplications of prophetic texts,⁷⁰ so that the book of Daniel sheds light on earlier parts of the prophetic corpus in which it is found in the Greek orders.

As in the case of Ezra-Nehemiah, the presence in Daniel of a long prayer that provides a review and evaluation of OT history (Daniel 9) makes its position near the end of the canon apposite. In that prayer, Daniel pleads for the restoration of the city of Jerusalem and especially its sanctuary (9:17–19), but rather than receiving a simple affirmative answer to his request, the prophecy of Jeremiah of a return after 70 years is given an apocalyptic reinterpretation. The “seventy years” becomes “seventy sevens [weeks]” (9:24–27),⁷¹ indicating that the imminent hoped-for return of the exiles and rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem (9:25) will not bring to an end “the desolations of Jerusalem” (9:2).⁷²

It is plain that the Jerusalem sanctuary is the focus of the angelic communication recorded in Dan 9:24–27, especially when the time of Gabriel's arrival is noted (9:21: “at the time of the evening sacrifice”; cf. 8:13–14).⁷³ The dual references to “an anointed” (9:25–26 [משיח]) pick up the earlier mention of the *anointing* of “a most holy (place)” (9:24 [למשה]).⁷⁴ Tim Meadowcroft argues that what is anointed in all three verses is the same, namely a corporate people (viewed as a divine sanctuary).⁷⁵ More likely, the references in verses 25 and 26 are to an anointed individual (whether king or priest), whose exact role is not specified, for the focus in the closing verses of Daniel 9 continues to be the fate of the sanctuary. A future destruction of the city and the “sanctuary” (קדש) is forecast in 9:26 (“desolations [שממות] are decreed”), together with the cessation of sacrifice and offering through the action of a “desolator” (9:27 שמש). The “most holy (place)” (קדש קדשים) is most probably the temple,⁷⁶ so that the action in 9:24 reverses the predicted treading down of the “the holy place” predicted in 8:13–14 (both verses using קדש, picking up the earlier mention of the “sanctuary” [מקדש] in 8:11).⁷⁷ On this under-

⁶⁹ See Tim Meadowcroft, “Exploring the Dismal Swamp: The Identity of the Anointed One in Daniel 9.24–27,” *JBL* 120 (2001) 429–49, esp. 435. For the importance of the temple theme in Daniel, see Greg Goswell, “The Temple Theme in the Book of Daniel,” *JETS* 55 (2012) 509–20.

⁷⁰ Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation* 489–95; Michael A. Knibb, “You Are Indeed Wiser than Daniel: Reflections on the Character of the Book of Daniel,” in *The Book of Daniel in the Light of New Findings* (BETL 106; ed. A. S. van der Woude; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993) 399–411, esp. 406–9.

⁷¹ See Pieter M. Venter, “Daniel 9: A Penitential Prayer in Apocalyptic Garb,” in *Seeking the Favor of God*, vol. 2: *The Development of Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism* (SBLEJL 22; ed. Mark J. Boda, Daniel K. Falk, and Rodney A. Werline; Atlanta: SBL, 2007) 33–49.

⁷² Knibb, “You Are Indeed Wiser than Daniel” 405.

⁷³ Jacques Doukhan views the specified timing as reflective of Daniel's piety that lies in the hope for the temple's restoration, see *Le soupir de la terre: Étude prophétique du livre de Daniel* (Dammarie les Lys Cedex: Edition Vie et Santé, 1993) 199.

⁷⁴ Meadowcroft, “Exploring the Dismal Swamp” 436. The idea that the rededication of the temple would involve an “anointing” may be inferred from the anointing of the tabernacle and its utensils (Exod 30:26; 40:9; Lev 8:10–11).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 444–46. His argument relies heavily on later usage in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

⁷⁶ C. F. Keil, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel* (trans. M. G. Easton; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1872) 348.

⁷⁷ קדש קדשים and מקדש are in apposition in Ezek 45:3.

standing, Daniel 9 contains the prediction that the sanctuary will be reconsecrated after its defiling (9:24), with a further destruction and restoration after that (9:26).

Within the closing vision of the book, there is yet another prediction of a later interference with the temple (11:31; 12:11). The temple focus of the material is supported by the argument of Arie van der Kooij, who finds a cultic connection in the cryptic expression *בְּרִית קֹדֶשׁ* in 11:28, 30 (x2; RSV “the holy covenant”), which he translates as “the covenant concerning the holy place, the sanctuary.”⁷⁸ What is described is foreign interference in the temple cult (11:28, 30a) and the culpable failure of the priests as temple functionaries (11:30b, 32a; cf. 2 Macc 4:14).⁷⁹ This interpretation can be coordinated with what is found in the closing chapter of Nehemiah, where the failure of priests with regard to the temple is exposed (13:4–14) and where covenant terms are used to condemn exogamous marriages contracted by priests (13:29: “they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites”). So, too, in the prophecy of Malachi, priestly failings are condemned on the basis of “the covenant with Levi” (2:4–7), with the background to this phrase found in the Blessing of Levi in Deut 33:8–11 or the reward promised to Phinehas in Num 25:11–13, or a combination of both Pentateuchal passages.⁸⁰ The Danielic focus on the fate and future of the temple is consistent with theology of the kingdom of God on show in the book generally. As a result of the placement of the Prophetic Books at the end of the canon (culminating with Daniel), the Greek canon points to an eschatological hope centred on the kingdom of God as the dominating theology of Scripture.

VI. ENDING WITH MALACHI

If the Prophetic Books are placed at the end of the OT (as in Vaticanus), it is implied that prophecy is mainly foretelling the future, with the prophets pointing forward to the eschaton in which God’s plan of salvation for Israel and the nations will come to completion. In line with this, the prophecy of Malachi includes the eschatological hope of the renovation of the Jerusalemite cult (3:4) and the universal recognition of God by the nations (1:5, 11, 14; 3:12), though we must rule out the idea that Malachi was consciously selected by Christians as a fitting conclusion to the OT (see above). In his explanation of the rationale of the structuring of the Greek canon, Marvin Sweeney places great emphasis on the theme of Israel’s interaction with the nations,⁸¹ and certainly the endtime salvation of the Gentiles is an important theme in the prophetic books, Malachi included (e.g. Isa 2:1–4; Amos 9:12; Zech 8:20–23; 14:16–19).

⁷⁸ Arie van der Kooij, “The Concept of Covenant (*Bʾrit*) in the Book of Daniel,” in *The Book of Daniel in the Light of New Findings* 498.

⁷⁹ The cross-reference is provided by van der Kooij.

⁸⁰ For a discussion of the alternatives, see Julia M. O’Brien, *Priest and Levite in Malachi* (SBLDS 121; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990) 104–6.

⁸¹ “Tanak versus OT”; see G. R. Goswell, “The Order of the Books in the Greek OT,” *JETS* 52 (2009) 454–55.

The theme of foreign nations surfaces in Malachi as early as 1:5b, which is best translated in the future tense: “YHWH will show himself to be great beyond the border of Israel” (my translation).⁸² The threat of God’s action against Edom (1:4–5a) is a portent of his future rule over all the nations of the world, given the regular role assigned to Edom as a representative of foreign nations generally in prophecy (e.g. Amos 9:12; Obadiah). Following Zechariah 14 (note 14:9: “the LORD will become king over all the earth”), we would expect Malachi’s eschatology to include the prospect of the extension of YHWH’s rule over the nations, as well as God’s punishment of non-compliant nations like Edom (cf. Zech 14:12–15), and these are leading features of the opening oracle of the prophecy of Malachi.

Malachi 1:11 depicts acceptable Gentile worship of YHWH on foreign soil, without any mention of the requirement of pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Despite the common rendering of this verse in English versions in the present tense, the text provides a picture of the future, as is clearly the case in the two texts closest to it in content (cf. Isa 19:18–25; Zeph 2:11). This implies that Mal 1:11 does not depict present practice but an eschatological prospect (“My name will be great among the nations”; NIV). The contemporary cultic failure of Jerusalemites (unworthy sacrifices) is set in contrast with the future universal worship of YHWH by all nations (“from the rising of the sun to its setting”). The picture is of the whole world united in Yahwistic worship (cf. the expressions in Pss 50:1; 113:3). As noted by Beth Glazier-McDonald, these psalmic references are in contexts that look toward an eschatological demonstration of God’s universal sovereignty, favoring the translation of the Hebrew verbless clause in Mal 1:11 as future.⁸³

Likewise, the close thematic relation of Mal 1:11 and 14b suggests the possibility that verse 14b is again an eschatological prospect: “my name will be feared among the nations” (my translation). Malachi 3:1–5 describes what God will do when he comes “to his temple,” namely, he will purify “the sons of Levi” and judge wrongdoers. These verses prophesy of the time when “the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD” (v. 4). Finally, the reference to “all the nations” in 3:12 is hyperbolic (“all the nations will call you blessed”), but hyperbole is appropriate for a verse, which, like 1:5, 11, 14, provides a glimpse of the end-time,⁸⁴ in this case the picture of the restored nation of Israel as the envy of the nations, implying international recognition of the God of Israel.

The focus of discussion on the suitability of Malachi as the last book in the OT is usually the final verses of the prophecy (4:4–6 [Heb. 3:22–24]), but need not be limited to them (as I have just demonstrated). It is not necessary to view these

⁸² For detailed argumentation, see G. R. Goswell, “The Eschatology of Malachi after Zechariah 14,” *JBL* 132 (2013) 625–38.

⁸³ *Malachi: The Divine Messenger* (SBLDS 98; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987) 60. Theodor Lescow interprets 1:11 in the light of psalmic acclamations, with which it shares various common terms, see *Das Buch Maleachi: Texttheorie–Auslegung–Kanontheorie: Mit einem Exkurs über Jeremia 8,8–9* (Arbeiten zur Theologie 75; Stuttgart: Calwer, 1993) 88–92.

⁸⁴ Cf. David L. Petersen, *Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995) 218: “this hyperbole emphasizes a motif important elsewhere in the book, the place of God’s people among the nations.”

verses as two redactional additions to the prophecy, added to cap the Book of the Twelve or perhaps the prophetic corpus as a whole, though this viewpoint is frequently adopted.⁸⁵ However, scrutiny of their content shows their suitability as the closing verses of the OT. The extensive use of Deuteronomistic terminology in 4:4 (Heb. 3:22) provides a strong link back to the Pentateuch.⁸⁶ As well, the reference to the Mosaic “law” in this verse coincides with the opening of the Former Prophets (Josh 1:8), the Latter Prophets if headed by Isaiah (Isa 1:10), and the Writings if headed by Psalms (Ps 1:2).⁸⁷ So, too, the promised sending of “Elijah” to turn hearts (cf. 1 Kgs 18:37) and the threat of the impending judgment recalls the prophetic section of the OT (4:5 [Heb. 3:23]). An Elijah-figure will be sent by God “before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes,” and this verse is the final instance of the pervasive theme of the day of the Lord in the Book of the Twelve.⁸⁸ The final three verses of Malachi, therefore, could be viewed as summing up and combining the total story told in the OT, which is understood as leading up to the dawning of the day of the Lord.

VII. A BRIDGE TO THE NT?

It is plain, therefore, that all four candidates for the final book in the OT (Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, Daniel, or Malachi) are eschatological in orientation. They each look forward to an unreached divine goal. On that basis, each can be viewed as a viable bridge to the NT, for the OT requires a sequel, though nothing suggests that this was a motivation for the placement of any of the four books in final position. According to Frank Kermode, the new end imposed on the OT by the addition of a NT (closing with the book of Revelation) causes a radical rereading of the OT.⁸⁹ The Bible opens with creation and (capped by Revelation) closes at the ultimate end,

so that the whole vast collection has unity, makes one sense, conferred precisely by this transformative fiction. The end-less successiveness of the original narratives is abolished; there is a peripeteia that turns everything around and gives sense and completeness (*pleroma*, as I called it) to the whole work.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ E.g. Stephen B. Chapman, *The Law and the Prophets: A Study in OT Canon Formation* (FAT 27; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000) 131–49; but see Hendrik J. Koorevaar, “The Torah Model as Original Macrostructure of the Hebrew Canon: A Critical Evaluation,” *ZAW* 122 (2010) 75, and Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi* 243–70. Both argue that these verses are by no means unrelated to the body of the prophecy.

⁸⁶ On Malachi’s Deuteronomistic theology, see William J. Dumbrell, “Malachi and the Ezra-Nehemiah Reforms,” *RTR* 35 (1976) 42–52.

⁸⁷ Cf. Sarna, “Bible,” *EncJud* (2007?) 3.582.

⁸⁸ See James D. Nogalski, “The Day(s) of YHWH in the Book of the Twelve,” in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve* (BZAW 325; ed. Paul L. Redditt and Aaron Scharf; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003) 192–213; Paul-Gerhard Schwesig, *Die Rolle der Tag-JHWHs-Dichtungen im Dodekapropheten* (BZAW 366; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006) 237–80.

⁸⁹ Kermode, *Sense of an Ending* 193.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

I have sought to show, however, that the OT itself, whichever of the four books is placed at its close, has an eschatological goal in view, and there is a remarkable coalescence of theme in all four books, namely the hope of the coming of God's kingdom.

The eschatological ending of Chronicles can be viewed as requiring a sequel such as provided by the coming of Jesus Christ, who viewed his death as the means of gathering God's people (John 10:16) and his resurrection as the raising up of the new temple (John 2:18–22). The non-use of Ezra-Nehemiah by NT writers may be due to its non-messianic stance, but that is not the same as saying that it is non-eschatological, for its profound dissatisfaction with present conditions leads to the hope of the dawning of God's kingdom, which is what takes place in the ministry of Jesus (Mark 1:14–15). With regard to Daniel as the final book of the OT, its kingdom theme is picked up in the teaching of Jesus (notably the parables).⁹¹ Lastly, though no one in antiquity placed Malachi in final position, it is almost universally recognized as making an effective transition to the revival of prophecy depicted in the NT. The prediction of the coming of "Elijah" (Mal 4:5 [Heb. 3:23]) is applied to John the Baptist who goes before the Lord "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17). Malachi's eschatological orientation is confirmed by its recurrent expression of the hope of the recognition of God by the nations of the world (Mal 1:5, 11, 14; 3:12), which in the NT leads to the gospel mission to the nations.

⁹¹ See Craig A. Evans, "Daniel in the NT: Visions of God's Kingdom," in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception* (ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint; VTSup 83.2; Leiden: Brill, 2001) 2.492–98.