

## “PROPHETS AND APOSTLES”: THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON AND THE THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

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**Abstract:** *This study argues that Christian biblical interpretation should be based on the canonical tradition attested by the twenty-one ancient Greek and Latin canon lists rather than on the threefold Masoretic canon. The arrangement of books in this Christian tradition is in harmony with the NT because it integrates the books of the Writings into the Former and Latter Prophets to produce a canon list that emphasizes the ongoing history of God with his people and the future fulfillment of God’s promises. This article describes the common characteristics of the canonical tradition attested by these twenty-one lists by comparing it to the threefold Jewish canon, shows how a detailed analysis of these lists support this tradition, and suggests ways in which this Christian canonical tradition is a helpful guide to biblical interpretation. The contemporary canons of the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant churches are part of this Christian canonical tradition.*

**Key words:** *canon, Old Testament canon, threefold canon, Greek canon lists, Latin canon lists, Law, Prophets, Writings, Historical Books, Former Prophets, Latter Prophets.*

Second Temple Jewish writers often used “the Law and the Prophets” as a holistic description for the Scriptures of Israel. On the other hand, Irenaeus and Tertullian could employ “the Prophets and the Apostles” as a description of the OT and the apostolic teaching recorded in the NT.<sup>1</sup> The first of these expressions suggests a law- or Torah-centered view of the OT Scripture. The prophets call the people of God to Torah faithfulness. The second suggests an apostolic- or gospel-oriented approach to the entire Christian Bible (OT and NT). As in Hebrews 1:1, the entire OT is conceived of as “the Prophets” who point forward to and are fulfilled in the apostolic proclamation of the gospel found in the NT.

“The Law and the Prophets” developed into the “the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings,” the Torah-centered threefold division of the Jewish canon.<sup>2</sup> This

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<sup>1</sup> D. Faskasfalvy, “Prophets and Apostles: The Conjunction of the Two Terms before Irenaeus,” in *Texts and Testament: Critical Essays on the Bible and the Early Church Fathers in Honor of Stuart Dickson Currie*, ed. W. Eugene March (San Antonio: Trinity, 1980), 109.

<sup>2</sup> “In the Hebrew arrangement, the Torah is central, while the Prophets and the Writings constitute as it were larger concentric circles around it.” John Barton, “The Old Testament Canons,” in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 1: *From the Beginning to 600*, ed. James Carleton Paget and Joachim Schaper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 162. In contemporary Hebrew Bibles the books are arranged in this threefold order as follows: Law (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and

study argues that, despite their variety, the early Greek and Latin canon lists bear witness to a Christian tradition of OT canonical order that accords with the conviction that the OT is fulfilled in Christ. Since the twelfth century, Christian writers have seldom used “the Prophets and Apostles” as a description of the two-Testament Bible.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, like that expression, this Christian canonical tradition emphasizes the prophetic nature of the OT as the ongoing history of God with his people that anticipates the fulfillment of God’s promises of redemption. The development of this order can be seen as part of what Bokedal calls “a Christian ‘recanonicalization’” that reorganizes Scripture in terms of prophecy/fulfillment in Christ and shifts the locus of interpretation from Torah to gospel.<sup>4</sup> Thus, in my judgment, this Christian canonical tradition is the most appropriate and fruitful guide for Christian theological interpretation of the OT.<sup>5</sup>

There are several reasons why some have denied any prioritizing of a Christian tradition of canonical order. (1) Paul R. House, Jason S. DeRouchie, and others have claimed that Jesus and the NT writers authorize our use of the threefold Jewish canon.<sup>6</sup> (2) Gregory Goswell argues that authority resides in the biblical authors, not those who shaped the canon. The canon should thus be considered as nothing more than a part of reception history. We should, then, exploit the variety in both Christian and Jewish canon lists to gain insight into how the various books of the OT have been interpreted.<sup>7</sup> (3) Christopher Seitz contends that the great variety in the canonical order of the ancient Christian sources prohibits us speaking of a “Christian” canonical order. According to Seitz, “the only order that settles down

Deuteronomy), Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve), and the Writings (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles).

<sup>3</sup> Faskasfalvy, “Prophets and Apostles,” 110.

<sup>4</sup> Tomas Bokedal, *The Formation and Significance of the Christian Biblical Canon: A Study in Text, Ritual and Interpretation* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 52.

<sup>5</sup> This article is based on the assumption that the canon is “a theologically defined literary unit” and that it provides a “normative intratextual matrix” in which the arrangement or ordering of the canonical books has interpretive significance for theological interpretation. Bokedal, *Formation and Significance*, 3, 11. This type of interpretation is appropriate because the Bible is “inherently a theological book.” Gregory Goswell, “The Ordering of the Books of the Canon and the Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament,” *JTI* 13.1 (2019): 1. Theological interpretation is broadly “interpretation of the Bible for the church.” Craig G. Bartholomew and Heath A. Thomas, *A Manifesto for Theological Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), ix, 2. It is “reading the Bible with a concern for the enduring truth of its witness to the nature of God and humanity, with a view to enabling the transformation of humanity into the likeness of God.” R. W. L. Moberly, “What Is Theological Interpretation of Scripture?,” *JTI* 3.2 (2009): 163.

<sup>6</sup> Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998), 55–56; and Jason S. DeRouchie, “Is the Order of the Canon Significant for Doing Biblical Theology?,” in *40 Questions About Biblical Theology*, ed. Jason S. DeRouchie, Oren R. Martin, and Andrew David Naselli (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2020), 159–72. Stephen G. Dempster bases his use of the threefold Hebrew canon partly on the likelihood that it was the canon used by Jesus. Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, NSBT 15 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 35.

<sup>7</sup> Gregory Goswell, “Should the Church Be Committed to a Particular Order of the Old Testament Canon?,” *HBT* 40.1 (2018): 17–40. See also John Goldingay, “Old Testament Theology and the Canon,” *TynBul* 59.1 (2008): 3–4.

in the history of the Old Testament’s reception is the tripartite of the Hebrew order (with some minor movement in the Writings).<sup>8</sup> It is common also to assume that the threefold Hebrew canon is the oldest canonical order.<sup>9</sup> It is argued, then, that the threefold canon is a concrete historical given and thus “an objective starting point” for OT theology.<sup>10</sup>

In my judgment, the first objection has little weight. Even DeRouchie has admitted that the NT does not prescribe a canonical order.<sup>11</sup> It does not teach that the books should be ordered in a certain way. At best, several NT passages (Luke 24:44; Matt 23:35) suggest that Jesus and the NT writers were familiar with a threefold division of Scripture, presumably used by their Jewish contemporaries. Even then, it is uncertain which books might have been in the “second” and “third” sections or what positions they may have occupied within these groupings. While we can, with confidence, affirm that Jesus and the NT writers accepted the books of the Hebrew canon,<sup>12</sup> we lack clear evidence as to their canonical order. It would seem that if Jesus or the NT writers had intended to authorize a canonical order, they would have done so much more clearly and definitively.

How about the second objection given above? Let us accept, for the sake of discussion, that the shaping of the canon is nothing more than part of reception history.<sup>13</sup> Does that fact mean that no canonical order has precedence over another?

<sup>8</sup> Christopher Seitz, “Canon, Narrative, and the Old Testament’s Literal Sense: A Response to John Goldingay,” *TynBul* 59.1 (2008): 28. See also Seitz, *The Elder Testament: Canon, Theology, Trinity* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018). We cannot speak of the stability of the threefold Hebrew canon before the work of the Masoretes in the sixth through the ninth centuries. The twenty-one ancient Christian canon lists discussed below come from the second through the early fifth centuries. There are, however, only two witnesses to the Hebrew threefold canon during this same period—the Talmud tractate Baba Bathra 14b (fourth/second century) and Jerome’s Jewish list in *Prologus Galeatus* (which, since it was recorded by Jerome, is also one of the Christian lists). There are significant differences between the order of the books in Baba Bathra, Jerome, and our modern Hebrew Bibles. Baba Bathra 14b assumes that the canon begins with the five books of the Law (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), and then lists the Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, the Twelve) and the Writings (Ruth, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Daniel, Esther, Ezra, Chronicles). Edmon L. Gallagher and John D. Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity: Texts and Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 69. Jerome’s list differs in many ways. (1) It locates Ruth and Lamentations with Judges and Jeremiah respectively. (2) It reorders the Major Prophets as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. (3) It locates Job before Psalms and rearranges the last three books in chronological order: Chronicles, Ezra/Nehemiah, and Esther. Our modern Hebrew Bibles, representative of the Masoretic Text, differ from Baba Bathra 14b in the ordering of nine of the eleven books in the Writings.

<sup>9</sup> Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 35.

<sup>10</sup> C. Westermann, *Elements of Old Testament Theology*, trans. J. L. Mays (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 11, cited in Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 38.

<sup>11</sup> In the discussion that followed his ETS paper in November 2020 (“The Hermeneutical Significance of the Shape of the Christian Canon”), DeRouchie acknowledged that the NT does not prescribe a canonical order.

<sup>12</sup> Even Barton, “The Old Testament Canons,” 161, admits that the NT writers accepted these books as Scripture, though he is unwilling to say that their canon was closed.

<sup>13</sup> The development of the canon is, of course, part of reception history. However, I am not completely comfortable excluding God’s special activity from this process nor am I comfortable with too sharp a distinction between the inspired authors of Scripture and those who shaped the canon. An

Goswell accepts the reality of a Christian canonical tradition and, correctly in my judgment, contends that this Christian tradition is as ancient as the threefold Hebrew canon (see the discussion below). It is also true that observing a book's location in various canonical orders can highlight certain aspects of its content and, with profit, suggest ways in which it has been interpreted.<sup>14</sup> Goswell, however, fails to give adequate attention to *who* the people are who shaped the various canon lists. Should Christian scholars give priority to a canonical order that was stabilized by the ninth or tenth century for rabbinic Judaism, or one based on the tradition handed down from the lists of the early Greek and Latin Fathers?<sup>15</sup>

This study uses the resources provided by Edmon L. Gallagher and John D. Meade in their recent book, *The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity: Texts and Analysis*, to address the third objection listed above. I do not dispute the concrete reality of the threefold canon nor its importance, especially for Judaism. I argue, however, that, despite the considerable variety in these lists, the Christian tradition of canonical ordering is also a historical reality, that it is just as ancient as the threefold Hebrew canon, and that it is an appropriate guide for those who affirm a two-testament Bible. Gallagher and Meade have made the twelve extant Greek and nine extant Latin OT canon lists readily available in original languages, translation, and with helpful commentary and bibliography.<sup>16</sup> All students of the canon are deeply indebted to them for this resource. The argument below is my own, but it is based on a careful comparison and analysis of these lists.

There are three parts to the argument in support of this thesis. The first part identifies the common characteristics of a Christian canonical ordering. The second shows how this order has taken shape in the ancient Greek and Latin canon lists. The third suggests several of the hermeneutical and theological benefits that result when we allow this Christian ordering to guide our biblical interpretation.

## I. COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHRISTIAN CANONICAL TRADITION

Although the Greek and Latin Christian lists show greater variety than later witnesses to the threefold Hebrew canon, they represent a common canonical tradition with ancient Jewish roots. The common characteristics of this tradition be-

authoritative Bible requires an authoritative list of books. Thus, if we affirm the Bible as God's self-revelation, we must assume that he was at work at least in the selection, if not the ordering, of the books within the Bible, as well as in their production.

<sup>14</sup> Goswell, "A Particular Order," 26–27. Both Dempster and Seitz, in the sources noted above, have shown the insight that can be derived from attending to the threefold order of the Hebrew canon.

<sup>15</sup> Marvin A. Sweeney provides a clear, concise description of the theological differences between the threefold canon of the Hebrew Bible and the Christian OT canon in "Jewish Biblical Theology: An Ongoing Dialogue," *Int* 70.3 (2016): 317–19. In the rest of this article, Sweeney explores in greater detail the theological significance of the threefold Hebrew canon for Judaism.

<sup>16</sup> In *The Biblical Canon Lists*, Gallagher and Meade provide information about "Jewish Lists" (57–69), "Greek Christian Lists" (70–173), and "Latin Christian Lists" (174–235). The analysis of lists below as a whole is based on this information, but I will normally give specific page references only for direct quotations or for controversial issues lest I unduly clutter the text with footnotes.

come clear when we compare the Christian tradition with the threefold Jewish canon.<sup>17</sup>

First, let us examine the similarities and differences in content, in the grouping of books, and in order. (1) *Content*: As we will see below, many early lists made it plain that they contained only the *same* twenty-two/twenty-four books that were part of the Jewish Bible. Several lists transliterate the Hebrew names of the books into Greek. Those lists that admit deuterocanonical books do so around this twenty-two/twenty-four book core.<sup>18</sup> (2) *Grouping of books*: The five-book Law of Moses and the four-book group of Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings) are stable features of both the Christian tradition and the threefold Jewish canon. The only divergence in content or order is joining Ruth to, or locating it after, Judges in the Christian canon lists.<sup>19</sup> The Latter Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Book of the Twelve) also persist as a unit in both traditions, though Christian lists add Daniel, vary the order, and add Lamentations to Jeremiah. (3) *Order*: Books that would find their place in the Writings of the Jewish Bible were integrated into or between the Former and Latter Prophets. Nevertheless, in the Christian lists, the Law, Former Prophets, and Latter Prophets retain the relative position in relationship to each other that they have in the threefold Jewish canon.

What we have said above, however, about the books that find their place in the Writings of the Jewish Bible, points to the major difference in order: Apart from Jerome's *Jewish* list in *Prologus Galeatus*, none of these Christian lists show any interest in the threefold Jewish canonical division.<sup>20</sup> They neither adopt it nor reject it. They simply do not mention it. *This manifold dependence on the Jewish canon, including affirmation of its twenty-two/twenty-four books, yet without reference to the threefold division, strongly suggests that the Christian canon lists retained those features of a closed Jewish canon that were already stable before the threefold ordering of the canon attained the significance that it held in Baba Bathra 14b.*<sup>21</sup>

Second, let us compare the principles by which the Christian canonical tradition and the threefold Jewish canon order the canonical books. Two ordering principles or tendencies active in the threefold Jewish canon also influence the ordering of books in the Christian tradition. First, books that were alike in kind or closely related in content were often brought together. Second, there was a tendency to arrange books and groups of books in chronological order according to content

<sup>17</sup> “The evidence demonstrates that the Jewish canon exercised a profound influence on the Christian pursuit for the correct Old Testament.” Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists*, 29.

<sup>18</sup> It is important to note that even the lists that add deuterocanonical books maintain this twenty-two/twenty-four book core. The added books were all of Jewish origin. Barton, “The Old Testament Canons,” 146.

<sup>19</sup> The idiosyncratic Bryennios list is an exception. It begins with Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Joshua, Deuteronomy, Numbers, Ruth, Job, Judges. Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists*, 75.

<sup>20</sup> “No Christian source (besides Jerome) in the first four centuries explicitly arranged the Old Testament in the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible.” Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists*, 4.

<sup>21</sup> “An emphasis on the lateness of the canon fails to account for the high status that the books of the Jewish canon enjoyed at an earlier stage and their nearly exclusive use in Christian literature of the first two centuries.” Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists*, 14–15.

and/or author. The rabbis articulate these principles in Baba Bathra 14b. They tell us that they are locating the Twelve after the Major Prophets because Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi are the last prophets. Furthermore, they use the principle of similarity of content to explain why they have put Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah in non-chronological order. They note that Kings ends with destruction, Jeremiah is about destruction, Ezekiel begins with destruction but moves to comfort, and Isaiah is full of comfort. They therefore put destruction with destruction and comfort with comfort.<sup>22</sup> These principles are obvious in all the ways in which Jerome's Jewish list (*Prologus Galeatus*) differs from Baba Bathra 14b, especially the relocation of Ruth and Lamentations with Judges and Jeremiah and putting the last three books in the chronological order of Chronicles, Ezra/Nehemiah, and Esther. These principles also appear to have played a role in the formation of those already stable aspects of the Jewish canon that were retained in the Christian lists as mentioned above.

In the detailed analysis of the Christian lists below we will see these principles at work. The Christian canon lists, however, differ in their application of these principles because the Christian lists are *unhindered by the boundaries of the threefold canonical division*. Thus, these lists are characterized by the integration of the books of the Jewish Writings into the Former and Latter Prophets on the basis of similarity and chronology. This integration was neither mechanical nor mindless. The result, as we shall see, is a canonical order that emphasizes the ongoing history of God with his people that is moving toward future fulfillment.

This similarity and divergence in the principles by which the books have been ordered is what we would expect in light of the similarities and differences in content, grouping, and order outlined above. Furthermore, it accords with the conclusion already reached: *these early Christian canon lists are rooted in a twenty-two book Jewish canon that was closed before the dominance of the threefold division attested by Baba Bathra 14b.*<sup>23</sup> The threefold canon cannot claim superiority on the basis of antiquity.

Is there any source that might attest to such a time? Yes, Josephus in *Against Apion* 37–42, from the last half of the first century. Josephus insists that all Jews

<sup>22</sup> See original text and translation in Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists*, 68.

<sup>23</sup> It is not the existence of the threefold order but its early dominance that is in question. Hints of the threefold order appear in the preface to Sirach, written in the latter second century BC: (1) "The Law and the Prophets and the others that followed them" (*Prologue to Sirach* 1–2), (2) "The Law and the Prophets and the other books of our ancestors" (*Prologue to Sirach* 8–10), and (3) "the Law itself, the Prophecies, and the rest of the books" (*Prologue to Sirach* 24–25). Jesus referred to "the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms" (Luke 24:44). Thus, Gallagher and Meade's conclusion is correct: "The Tanak structure—Torah, Neviim [Prophets], Ketuvim [Writings]—for the Scriptures of at least some Jews certainly existed in Late Antiquity, even though the sequence of books within the Neviim and especially the Ketuvim was variable." Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists*, 17. In my judgment, however, the evidence given above warrants a much stronger version of Gallagher and Meade's next statement. Instead of, "There may have existed at this time other Jewish arrangements reflected now in the Christian canon lists," one can affirm: "At this time there was probably another Jewish arrangement of Scripture that is reflected in the Christian canon lists."

everywhere recognize only twenty-two books as Scripture.<sup>24</sup> These he then describes as five books of Moses containing laws and tradition, thirteen books of the prophets narrating history from the death of Moses to Artaxerxes, and four remaining books that record hymns to God and instructions for life.<sup>25</sup> Although he uses three divisions, they are not the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings of Baba Bathra 14b. Furthermore, Josephus has located seven of the eleven books from Baba Bathra’s “Writings” among the Prophets in a way that emphasizes the historical narrative character of the OT.<sup>26</sup> Thus, Josephus attests a time when there was a closed canon of twenty-two books before the predominance of the threefold division.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, he has no problem integrating books that would be in the Writings into the Prophets. Eusebius, who provides us with the lists of Origen and Melito of Sardis, also mentions Josephus’s twenty-two-book canon.<sup>28</sup> Thus the precedent, followed by the early Christian lists, of integrating the later books into the earlier part of the canon, is at least as ancient as locating them within a third canonical division.

In summary, the twenty-one early Greek and Latin canon lists represent a Christian approach to the ordering of the canon that is based on their Jewish heritage. This approach, however, integrates the books of the Writings into the Former and Latter Prophets instead of relegating them to a third division. Through this integration, as the analysis below will demonstrate, this Christian ordering emphasizes the ongoing history of God with his people and its future consummation. Thus, it is a more appropriate order for those who affirm fulfillment in Christ and a two-Testament Bible than the Torah-centric threefold order of the rabbis.

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<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the “nearly exclusive use” of the canonical books by the first- and second-century church fathers points to an earlier date. Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists*, 14–15. Gallagher and Meade cite 4 Ezra 14:44–48 as an additional first-century witness to a closed canon—in this case, of twenty-four books (7). This difference might be accounted for by Josephus’s inclusion of Ruth with Judges and Lamentations with Jeremiah (cf. Jerome’s Jewish list in *Prologus Galeatus* and see Gallagher and Meade, 60n12, for a discussion of this difference in numbering). Barton admits that Josephus’s belief in a fixed canon is “undeniable.” Barton, “The Old Testament Canons,” 159. He acknowledges that the NT probably recognizes all the books in the Hebrew Bible as Scripture, but questions whether the NT writers believed the canon was closed (161). However, the clear distinction between the way the NT refers to the canonical books and any allusion it might make to deuterocanonical books is overwhelming. “Neither Jesus nor any author introduces a real or alleged quotation from the apocrypha with a fulfillment formula such as ‘all this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet’ (Matt 1:22).” Daniel J. Harrington, “The Old Testament Apocrypha in the Early Church and Today,” in *The Canon Debate*, ed. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 200. Gallagher and Meade are certainly correct when they affirm that, if the Qumran sect accepted other books such as Jubilees along with the books of the Hebrew canon, they had few “allies.” Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists*, 25.

<sup>25</sup> See Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists*, for Josephus (57–65), Baba Bathra 14b (65–69), and Jerome, *Prologus Galeatus* (198–203).

<sup>26</sup> For various suggestions on Josephus’s order see Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists*, 63nn29–32.

<sup>27</sup> Steve Mason, “Josephus and His Twenty-Two Book Canon,” in McDonald and Sanders, *The Canon Debate*, 126–27.

<sup>28</sup> Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists*, 99.

The detailed analysis of the early Christian lists in part two shows how these lists have integrated the books found in the “Writings” of the threefold Jewish canon into the earlier part of the canon in order to highlight the ongoing account of God’s redemption and its anticipated future fulfillment.†

## II. CANONICAL ORDER IN THE ANCIENT GREEK AND LATIN CANON LISTS

Part two focuses on the twelve Greek and nine Latin lists in Gallagher and Meade because these lists clearly intend to provide an authoritative account of the OT’s content.<sup>29</sup> We begin by describing these Greek and Latin canon lists and what books they contain.<sup>30</sup> We then examine the way in which these lists integrated the books of the Writings into and between the Former and Latter Prophets and the effect of this integration on canonical order.

1. *The Greek and Latin canon lists and the books they contain.* Gallagher and Meade examine canonical lists in eleven different Greek Christian sources: two from the second century—the Bryennios List and Melito of Sardis (late 2nd century); one, Origen of Alexandria (ca. 185–254), from the third; one, Eusebius of Caesarea (ca. 260/262–339), from the third and fourth; and seven, Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. 315–387), Athanasius of Alexandria (295/300–373), the Synod of Laodicea (between 342 and 381), the Apostolic Canons (between 375 and 380), Gregory of Nazianzus (329/330–390/391), Amphilochius of Iconium (ca. 340/345–398/404), and Epiphanius of Salamis (315–402/403) from the fourth. Eusebius offers no OT list of his own but transmits the lists of Melito and Origen. Epiphanius, on the other hand, gives lists in three different places.<sup>31</sup> Thus Gallagher and Meade discuss twelve different OT lists in this section.

What books do these Greek lists contain? Most of these lists identify the content of the Christian OT canon with the content of the Jewish canon. The Bryen-

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<sup>29</sup> One can also consult the lists in Lee Martin McDonald, *The Formation of the Biblical Canon*, vol. 1: *The Old Testament: Its Authority and Canonicity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 489–97. He acknowledges his indebtedness to Gallagher and Meade. He omits the list of Innocent I, but includes the Council of Rome, several later lists, and the order of books in codices Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Alexandrinus. His earlier work, *The Biblical Canon: Its Origin, Transmission, and Authority* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 439–42, lacked six of Gallagher and Meade’s lists. Gallagher and Meade’s *Breviarium Hippo-nense* equals McDonald’s Council of Carthage.

<sup>30</sup> Of course, many lists refer to Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, and Ezra-Nehemiah/Esdras as one book each. Others refer to 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings as 1–4 Kingdoms, and 1–2 Chronicles as 1–2 Paralipomenon, or Ezra-Nehemiah/Esdras as 1–2 Esdras. Thus, for instance, “Chronicles” in one list is equivalent to “1–2 Chronicles” in another, and to “1–2 Paralipomenon” in a third. There is often ambiguity as to whether Esdras or 1–2 Esdras contain more than Ezra-Nehemiah. LXX manuscripts usually include Esdras A and Esdras B. Esdras B is our Ezra-Nehemiah, while Esdras A is an alternate version of Ezra-Nehemiah with some additions. The only one of these lists to use Esdras A–B is the Bryennios List from the 2nd century. It is difficult to know whether Esdras or 1–2 Esdras, when they occur in these lists, refer to Esdras A and B or only to Ezra and Nehemiah. See Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists*, 269. Fortunately, in evaluating the *order* of these lists we can consider these “Esdras” terms as equivalent.

<sup>31</sup> Epiphanius provides two lists in *On Weights and Measures* 4–5 and 22–23 and another in *Panarion* 8.6.

nios List, Origen, and Epiphanius transliterate the Hebrew names of each book into Greek. Origen, Eusebius, Athanasius, Gregory, and Epiphanius intentionally associate the number of books in the canon with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet.<sup>32</sup> Several lists, as will be discussed below, omit Esther, which was also disputed by some Jews.

Otherwise, the only deviations from the Hebrew canon occur in the *contents* of the books of Jeremiah, Daniel, Esther, and Esdras rather than in the *identity* of the books listed. Jeremiah often appears to have included Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah as well as Lamentations. Sometimes Daniel included the story of Susanna and, more rarely, of Bel and the Dragon. 1–2 Esdras in these lists may contain Esdras A from the LXX as well as Ezra and Nehemiah.<sup>33</sup> These additions were a matter of the text of the books involved rather than an issue of which books should be in the canon.<sup>34</sup>

Except for the Apostolic Canons, which come to us in the Greek tradition and also the Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic traditions, none of these lists includes deuterocanonical books such as Judith, Tobit, the Maccabees, the Wisdom of Sirach, or the Wisdom of Solomon. In fact, Origen, Cyril, Athanasius, and Epiphanius each identify a group of useful but noncanonical books to which they assign various deuterocanonical works. Some, such as Athanasius, felt free to cite these useful but noncanonical books along with the books they considered canonical.

So, what about the Latin lists? Gallagher and Meade review nine Latin canon lists from the fourth century and early years of the fifth.<sup>35</sup> Four of these lists, Rufinus of Aquileia (ca. 345–410), Hilary of Poitiers (ca. 310–ca. 367), and two lists from Jerome of Stridon (ca. 347–420), include only the twenty-two OT books of the Greek lists discussed above.<sup>36</sup> Hilary and Jerome join Origen, Eusebius, Athanasius, Gregory, and Epiphanius in affirming that the twenty-two books of the OT parallel the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Rufinus contends that he is passing on the list handed down by the fathers. Rufinus reminds us of Athanasius when he lists Wisdom, Sirach, Tobit, Judith, and Maccabees among useful “ecclesiastical” but noncanonical books.<sup>37</sup> Jerome included these in the “apocrypha.” Hilary admits that some included Judith and Tobit in a twenty-four-book OT.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>32</sup> They achieve twenty-two by including Lamentations with Jeremiah and by counting the five “double” books as one book each: Judges-Ruth, 1–2 Kingdoms, 3–4 Kingdoms, 1–2 Paralipomenon, and 1–2 Esdras. Epiphanius likens these five “double” books to the five letters of the Hebrew alphabet that have two forms.

<sup>33</sup> See n. 30 above.

<sup>34</sup> Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists*, 28.

<sup>35</sup> Rufinus lived until 410, Innocent I until 417, Jerome until 420, and Augustine until 430.

<sup>36</sup> Hilary’s list is very similar to Origen’s list, ending, as did his list, with Job and Esther. Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists*, 195. Jerome’s list found in *Prologus Galeatus* is the same list we examined when discussing ancient Jewish lists. His second list occurs in *Epistle* 53.

<sup>37</sup> Athanasius does not mention Maccabees but includes Wisdom, Sirach, Tobit, Judith, and Esther in this category.

<sup>38</sup> Jerome claims that some Jews had a twenty-four-book canon because they included Ruth and Lamentations in the writings. Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists*, 197. Jerome stands out

The other five Latin lists, Codex Claromontanus (4th century), the *Breviarium Hipponense* (393), the Mommsen Catalogue (ca. 365), Augustine of Hippo's list (354–430), and Pope Innocent I's list (402–417), included 1–2 Maccabees, Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, and Sirach within their lists of OT books in addition to the twenty-two books in the former lists.<sup>39</sup>

2. *The integration of the writings into the Former and Latter Prophets and this integration's influence on canonical order.* There is a pervasive tendency in these twenty-one lists to integrate the books of the Writings into the earlier part of the canon on the basis of the principles of similarity and chronology noted above.<sup>40</sup> This fact is immediately evident when we observe how few books follow the Latter Prophets in most of these lists. They maintain the “median” place that they occupied in the threefold canon in no more than four lists.<sup>41</sup> In nine of the twenty-one lists the Latter Prophets are followed by no more than three canonical books.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, Job, Esther, and Esdras (Ezra, 1–2 Esdras) are the *only* canonical books that follow the prophets in these nine lists. Finally, in the remaining eight lists the Latter Prophets conclude the OT canon. These eight lists include the official canons of the Synod of Laodicea; four of the most eminent church fathers, Cyril of Alexandria, Athanasius, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Augustine; Amphilocheus; the Mommsen Catalogue; and the Apostolic Canons. The Masoretes may have maintained the threefold canonical division of Baba Bathra 14b even though they re-ordered the Latter Prophets and the Writings. These Christian lists, however, followed the lead already present in Josephus by integrating the books from the writings into the earlier part of the list on the basis of chronology and similarity. We will look in detail at this integration and its effect.

For convenience we examine this integration under three headings: Historical Books, Poetic Books, and Prophetic Corpus. Use of these categories is no imposition upon the data; it accords with the data. As noted above, in these Christian lists, the Law, the Former Prophets (historical books), and the Latter Prophets maintain the same relative order that they have in the Jewish lists. This order provides the structure for integration of the books found in the Jewish Writings.

a. *The historical books.* We turn first to the association of Judges and Ruth. Since Ruth is set in the time of the judges, we are not surprised that it either fol-

among all these lists by making these two points clear: (1) He admits only the Ezra and Nehemiah of the Hebrew canon. (2) He includes only Lamentations with Jeremiah.

<sup>39</sup> Codex Claromontanus also included 4 Maccabees. Third Maccabees may have been omitted by accident.

<sup>40</sup> We have already seen that integrative tendency in Jerome's Jewish list (*Prologus Galeatus*) and especially in Josephus.

<sup>41</sup> Jerome's two lists, the list of Innocent I, and perhaps Rufinus's list. The Prophets are followed only by the five poetic books in Rufinus. It is no surprise that Jerome's lists show the influence of the threefold canon. The list of Innocent I is one of the two most idiosyncratic of these twenty-one lists (see n. 43 below).

<sup>42</sup> In Melito, the Prophets are followed only by Esdras; in Origen and Hilary, only by Job and Es-ther; in the Bryennios list and the three lists of Epiphanius, by 1–2 Esdras and Esther; in the *Breviarium Hipponense*, by Esther, 1–2 Ezra, and several deuterocanonical books; and in Claromontanus, by Ezra, Esther, Job, and several deuterocanonical books.

lows or joins Judges in every Greek and Latin list except the Bryennios List and the list by Pope Innocent I.<sup>43</sup>

Ten of the twelve Greek lists and five of the nine Latin lists include 1–2 Chronicles (1–2 Paralipomenon) after 1–2 Kings (3–4 Kingdoms) and thus with the other historical books. Epiphanius is the only exception among the Greeks. In two of his three lists he locates 1–2 Chronicles (1–2 Paralipomenon) *before* 1–2 Samuel (1–2 Kingdoms). Perhaps he does this for chronological reasons since 1 Chronicles (1 Paralipomenon) begins with Adam. Jerome (both lists), Codex Claromontanus, and Innocent I are the only exceptions among Latins.<sup>44</sup> However, in his recommended reading list in *Epistle* 107, Jerome suggests that 1–2 Chronicles should be read after 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings.

In seven of the twelve Greek lists, 1–2 Esdras (or Esdras) come, in accord with the chronological sequence of their content, immediately after 1–2 Chronicles (1–2 Paralipomenon) just as Ezra and Nehemiah follow Chronicles in modern Bibles. Hilary and Rufinus, the two Latin lists most like the Greek lists, also maintain this location.<sup>45</sup> Jerome includes Ezra-Nehemiah among the Hagiographa (a name for the Writings) in *Prologus Galeatus* and at the end of his list in *Epistle* 53. However, as with 1–2 Chronicles above, he recommends that Ezra and Nehemiah be read after 1–2 Chronicles in the canonical order familiar to us. The five remaining Greek lists (Bryennios List, Melito of Sardis, and the three lists in Epiphanius) end with Esdras (Melito of Sardis) or with 1–2 Esdras/Esdras A–B followed by Esther.<sup>46</sup> The Mommsen Catalogue omits Ezra-Nehemiah. In the other Latin lists, 1–2 Esdras/1–2 Ezra occur in different places among the deuterocanonical books.

One gets the impression that the authors of these lists did not quite know where to put Esther. Some Jewish sources rejected Esther. Thus, it is not surprising that Gregory of Nazianzus, Melito of Sardis, and Athanasius omit Esther, or that Amphilochius of Iconium lists Esther as disputed. Several lists appear to locate Esther with books of similar genre. The list from the Synod of Laodicea puts Esther after Judges-Ruth. Athanasius assigns Esther, along with Judith and Tobit, to the deuterocanonical books. Esther also occurs with Judith and Tobit in the four Latin lists that include deuterocanonical books within the canon. Origen and Hilary simply list Esther as the last book of the canon after Job. Yet we can see Esther beginning to assume a position after Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah based on chronological sequence. First, the Bryennios List and the three lists of Epiphanius conclude with 1–2 Esdras and Esther. Jerome, in *Prologus Galeatus*, concludes his list with Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Esther. Then, in the Apostolic Canons and

<sup>43</sup> These two lists are both idiosyncratic. The Bryennios List reads: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Joshua, Deuteronomy, Numbers, Ruth, Job, and Judges. Pope Innocent I inserted 1–4 Kingdoms (1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings) between Judges and Ruth!

<sup>44</sup> Claromontanus, probably inadvertently, omits 1–2 Chronicles. Jerome, under the influence of the Jewish threefold division, locates Chronicles among the Writings in *Prologus Galeatus* and just before Ezra-Nehemiah at the end of his list in *Epistle* 53.

<sup>45</sup> In his list Hilary uses neither 1–2 Esdras nor 1–2 Ezra but refers to “Words of the Days of Esdras.” Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists*, 196.

<sup>46</sup> The Bryennios List ends with Esdras A, Esdras B, Esther (see n. 30 above).

Cyril of Jerusalem, 1–2 Esdras and Esther follow 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings, and 1–2 Chronicles, assuming the place in chronological sequence that these books hold in modern English Bibles.

b. *The poetic books.* These Greek and Latin canon lists provide overwhelming evidence for the identification of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs as a group of Solomonic books. Fifteen of these twenty-one Greek and Latin sources list these books together in the order familiar from our English Bibles. Gregory of Nazianzus and Augustine also group them together but vary the order.<sup>47</sup> Four other lists do not mention them by name but obviously include them within a general designation as books of Solomon. In addition, Augustine, Gregory, Amphilochius, Hilary, and Jerome specifically refer to these books as three books of Solomon.<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore, it is clear that the Psalter followed by the three books of Solomon, was understood as a canonical unit stemming from David and Solomon. In eighteen of these twenty-one lists, the Book of Psalms/Psalter immediately precedes the Solomonic books.<sup>49</sup> Gregory, Melito of Sardis, the Mommsen Catalogue, Jerome (both lists), Rufinus, and Augustine all designate Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs as from David and Solomon.<sup>50</sup>

Both chronology and similarity appear to have influenced the location of Job. In regard to chronology, belief that Job lived in the time of either the patriarchs or the judges was significant for the book's location. In the Bryennios List, for instance, Job comes between Ruth and Judges. In Epiphanius, Job comes after Ruth (*Pan.* 8.6), after Joshua (*On Weights and Measures* 22–23), and after Deuteronomy (*On Weights and Measures* 4–5). In *Epistle* 53, Jerome also locates Job after Deuteronomy.

In regard to the influence of similarity, the association of Job with the other “poetic” books (Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs) was also a strong influence. In three lists (Melito of Sardis, Athanasius, and the Synod of Laodicea), Job occurs after Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs. In nine lists, Job occurs, as in our Bibles, before Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song

<sup>47</sup> Gregory lists them as Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Proverbs; while Augustine gives Proverbs, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes.

<sup>48</sup> See Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists*, 144, 152, 195, 208, and 210. The Apostolic Canons, Innocent I, and the *Breviarium Hipponense* refer to “The Five Books of Solomon,” “Solomon, five books,” and “Solomon, five,” respectively. The Mommsen Catalogue simply follows Psalms with the word “Solomon.” The Babylonian Talmud, Baba Bathra 14b, does list Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs in that order, though they are separated in our modern Hebrew Bibles. See Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists*, 69, and Seitz, *The Elder Testament*, 162–63.

<sup>49</sup> The Bryennios List; Epiphanius, *On Weights and Measures* 22–23; and Innocent I are the only sources in which these Solomonic books do not follow the Psalter. In the Bryennios List, the Psalter is separated from Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs by 1–4 Kingdoms and 1–2 Paralipomena. In Epiphanius, *On Weights and Measures* 22–23, the separation is by 1–2 Paralipomena and 1–4 Kingdoms. In Innocent I, the Psalter follows the five books of Solomon. Epiphanius lists the Psalter before Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs in his other two lists.

<sup>50</sup> Codex Claromontanus calls the Psalter the “Psalms of David.” Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists*, 184. As noted above, the Apostolic Canons, Innocent I, and the *Breviarium Hipponense* include Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs among the books of Solomon.

of Songs.<sup>51</sup> Two of Epiphanius’s lists mentioned above evidence both influences. In *Panarion* 8.6 and *On Weights and Measures* 4–5 he moved the other four poetic books along with Job when he relocated Job after Ruth and Deuteronomy respectively. Epiphanius’s willingness to move Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs with Job demonstrates the strength of the bond associating these books. In eight of the twelve lists that associate Job with the other poetic books, this group of books occurs approximately where it does in modern English Bibles.<sup>52</sup> The poetic books may have been brought together on the basis of a common genre, but they have been ordered according to chronology: the patriarch Job is followed by David, and David is followed by his son Solomon.

c. *The prophetic corpus*. Three issues arise in regard to the prophetic corpus: (1) the content of the prophetic corpus, (2) the order of the books in the prophetic corpus, and (3) the location of the prophetic corpus in the OT canon.

These Greek and Latin canon lists agree on the content of the prophetic corpus. As noted above, the unity of the prophetic corpus, less Daniel and Lamentations, is one of the stable features received from the Jewish canon. In *Prologus Galeatus*, Jerome says that the Jews included Daniel within the third section of the canon. In *Epistle* 53, however, he describes Daniel as a prophet and locates him along with the Twelve, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel within the prophetic corpus. All the other lists bear witness to a prophetic corpus that includes Daniel with the other prophetic books. Origen, Cyril, Athanasius, the Council of Laodicea, Gregory, Epiphanius (*Panarion*, *On Weights and Measures* 4–5), and Jerome (*Prologus Galeatus*, *Epistle* 53) explicitly include Lamentations with Jeremiah. Most of the other lists probably assumed its inclusion.<sup>53</sup>

It will facilitate analysis of the variety in these lists if we approach the question of order within the prophetic corpus under three headings: (1) the order of the Major Prophets, (2) the order of the twelve Minor Prophets, and (3) the location of the Minor Prophets in relation to the Major Prophets. Two of the twenty-one ancient lists, the Apostolic Canons and the list of Innocent I, read simply “Sixteen Prophets” without enumeration. Thus, the evidence for order in the prophetic corpus is based on the remaining nineteen lists. Examination of the evidence shows that chronology is an important factor in the ordering of the prophets.

<sup>51</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, the Apostolic Canons, Gregory of Nazianzus, Amphilochius of Iconium, Epiphanius (both *Panarion* 8.6.1–10 and *On Weights and Measures* 4–5), *Breviarium Hipponense*, Rufinus, and Jerome in *Prologus Galeatus*.

<sup>52</sup> After Chronicles in Melito of Sardis and *Breviarium Hipponense*; after Esdras in Athanasius, Synod of Laodicea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Amphilochius of Iconium; after Esther in Cyril of Alexandria and the Apostolic Canons (although in the Canons, Judith and 1–4 Maccabees come between Esther and Job).

<sup>53</sup> Many of these lists also explicitly or implicitly recognized the Epistle of Jeremiah and/or Baruch as part of Jeremiah. Origen, Epiphanius, and Jerome, all of whom had mastered Hebrew, knew that the Jews included only Lamentations. Only Jerome, however, clearly excluded Baruch and the Epistle.

Eight of the Greek<sup>54</sup> and four of the Latin lists<sup>55</sup> order the Major Prophets chronologically: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, as in our Bibles. Origen, Hilary, Augustine, and the Mommсен Catalogue reverse Daniel and Ezekiel.<sup>56</sup>

Only Gregory and Amphilochius among the Greeks and Codex Claromontanus, Jerome in *Epistle* 53, and Augustine among the Latins, list the names of the Twelve. Jerome and Augustine follow the Hebrew order found in our modern Bibles. Amphilochius, Gregory, and Codex Claromontanus, however, begin with the three earliest of these prophets—Hosea, Amos, and Micah, whose ministries come a bit before or are contemporary with Isaiah, the first of the Major Prophets.

The location of the Twelve in relation to the four Major Prophets is one of the most fascinating questions of canonical order. The Book of the Twelve appears to be located either at the end of the prophetic corpus in accord with the Twelve's latest books (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi), or at the beginning, in accord with its earliest (Hosea, Amos, Micah).<sup>57</sup> We know from Baba Bathra 14b that the Jewish tradition located the Twelve at the end on the basis of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Jerome's Jewish list in *Prologus Galeatus* accords with that tradition.

Daniel, however, prophesied things that would happen in the Seleucid and Roman times and beyond. Thus, the introduction of Daniel into the prophetic corpus, although it takes place before the return from exile, may have displaced Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi as the finale of the prophets. In his Jewish list recorded in *Prologus Galeatus*, Jerome located Daniel among the Writings and concluded the prophetic corpus with the Twelve. However, in *Epistle* 53, when he relocates Daniel among the prophets, he begins the prophetic corpus with the Twelve and ends it with Daniel. All nineteen of the Christian canon lists, except *Prologus Galeatus*, include Daniel among the prophets. Only two of them, however, Rufinus and the Mommсен Catalogue, conclude the prophets with the Twelve. Two locate the Twelve after Jeremiah.<sup>58</sup> Three begin the prophets with the Twelve and conclude them with Ezekiel.<sup>59</sup> The remaining eleven begin the prophets with the Twelve and bring them to a climax with Daniel.<sup>60</sup>

Furthermore, the eleven lists that begin with the Twelve and end with Daniel include the three lists mentioned above (Amphilochius, Gregory, Claromontanus) that begin the Book of the Twelve with the three *earliest* prophets it contains: Hosea, Amos, and Micah. This reinforces the conviction that, in light of the addition of

<sup>54</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius, the Synod of Laodicea, Gregory, Amphilochius, and all three of Epiphanius's lists.

<sup>55</sup> *Breviarium Hipponense*, Codex Claromontanus, Rufinus, and Jerome in *Epistle* 53.

<sup>56</sup> Three lists remain. Jerome's Jewish list in *Prologus Galeatus* reads "Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel," but, of course, it includes Daniel among the Writings. The Bryennios List reads, "Jeremiah, the Twelve Prophets, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel." Melito reads, "Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Twelve, Daniel, Ezekiel."

<sup>57</sup> See the previous footnote. The Bryennios List and Melito of Sardis are the only two lists that do not put the Twelve at either the beginning or end of the prophets.

<sup>58</sup> See n. 56 above.

<sup>59</sup> Origen, Hilary, and Augustine.

<sup>60</sup> Cyril, Athanasius, the Synod of Laodicea, Gregory, Amphilochius, Epiphanius (all three lists), Codex Claromontanus, Jerome in *Epistle* 53, *Breviarium Hipponense*. As noted in n. 56, the Bryennios List also ends with Daniel, though it does not begin with the Twelve.

Daniel to the prophets, the Book of the Twelve has been relocated at the head of the prophetic corpus in accord with its three earliest books, which precede (Hosea), or are contemporary with (Amos, Micah), Isaiah, instead of being left at the end, in agreement with its three latest books.

The prophets are united on the basis of similarity but organized according to chronology. In a sense, there are two chronological arrangements. There is a rough chronological arrangement within the Book of the Twelve, and there is a chronological arrangement of the prophetic corpus as a whole. Moreover, those whose NT ended with Revelation might have felt that Daniel (or Ezekiel) was an appropriate conclusion to the OT.

We introduced this section by demonstrating the strong tendency of these ancient Christian lists to integrate the Writings into the earlier part of the canon on the basis of similarity and chronology. This integration naturally tended to make the prophets the conclusion of the OT. The prophets were followed by a significant number of books only in Jerome's two lists, in the list of Innocent I, and perhaps in Rufinus's list.<sup>61</sup> Nine lists saw a considerable decrease in that number.<sup>62</sup> Finally, eight lists conclude the OT with the prophets.<sup>63</sup>

A summary evaluation of the evidence presented above is in order. First, when we look at the historical books, the evidence for associating Ruth with Judges is overwhelming. There is also strong precedent for locating 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah after 2 Kings. There is less support for following Ezra with Esther. However, Esther does not consistently occur in any other place.

For the poetic books, the evidence is overwhelmingly strong for a David-Solomon section of the canon, consisting of Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs. There is also good support for including Job before these books, and fair support for locating them between the historical and prophetic books.

Evidence for the unity of a prophetic corpus that includes Daniel and (in association with Jeremiah) Lamentations, is conclusive. There is strong support for ending the OT canon with the prophetic books, usually in the following order: the Twelve, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel. Only the Mommsen Catalogue brings the OT canon to an end with the Twelve.<sup>64</sup>

Taken together, the above considerations result in a list identical to Cyril of Jerusalem's canon list: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges-Ruth, 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings, 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, the Twelve, Isaiah, Jeremiah-

<sup>61</sup> Pope Innocent I's list is very idiosyncratic. He locates more books after the “sixteen prophets” (his term) than any other: Solomon (five books), Psalms, Job, Tobit, Esther, Judith, 1–2 Maccabees, 1–2 Esdras, 1–2 Paralipomenon. Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists*, 234.

<sup>62</sup> See the introductory paragraph under “2. *The integration of the Writings into the Former and Latter Prophets and this integration's influence on canonical order*” above and note 42.

<sup>63</sup> Six Greek lists (Athanasius, Cyril, Gregory, Amphilochius, Synod of Laodicea, Apostolic Canons) and two Latin lists (Mommsen Catalogue, Augustine).

<sup>64</sup> Rufinus ends the prophetic corpus, but not the OT canon as a whole, with the Twelve.

Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, at least eight lists parallel this order with only minor exceptions.<sup>66</sup> There may be no rigidly defined Christian canonical list. However, this study of the ancient canon lists substantiates a Christian tradition of canonical order that integrates the books found in the Writings of the threefold canon into the earlier part of the Christian canon and receives classical expression in the list of Cyril of Jerusalem.<sup>67</sup>

If we leave aside, for the moment, the deuterocanonical books, it will become clear that modern Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox canonical orders are all a part of this Christian canonical tradition. The Roman Catholic and Protestant canons differ from Cyril only by ending the prophets with the Twelve. The Greek Orthodox canon disagrees with Cyril only in locating Job after Psalms.<sup>68</sup> In these lists the integration of the latter books into the Former and Latter Prophets reaches full fruition in an order that emphasizes the ongoing history of God with his people and its ultimate fulfillment in the salvation of the world.<sup>69</sup> It is now possible to explore ways in which this tradition facilitates theological interpretation of Scripture.

<sup>65</sup> Cyril explicitly includes Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah, along with Lamentations, as a part of Jeremiah. In his list he does not mention either Susanna or Bel and the Dragon. However, elsewhere he refers to these accounts as if they were part of Daniel. See Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists*, 114–15, esp. n. 194.

<sup>66</sup> Amphilochius differs only in the omission of Esther as disputed. Origen, Hilary, Athanasius, and the Synod of Laodicea differ only in the location of Job and Esther (Athanasius omits Esther). Gregory Nazianzus differs only in the omission of Esther and the location of Proverbs after the Song of Songs. Rufinus's list differs in that the Twelve conclude the prophetic corpus and are followed immediately by the poetic books. If the deuterocanonical books are removed, the list in the Apostolic Canons differs only in that it concludes with "the Sixteen Prophets" rather than with a list naming them.

<sup>67</sup> Cyril uses a fourfold division to organize the OT canon: "Five Books of Moses," "The History Books," "Five Books in Verse," "The Five Prophetic Books." Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists*, 147. It is not unusual for scholars to refer to the "fourfold" Christian canon. See, for instance, Gregory Goswell, "Should the Church Be Committed to a Particular Order of the Old Testament Canon?" 17–40. Barton refers to a threefold Christian canon: "History, Poetry, and Prophecy." Barton, "The Old Testament Canons," 146. Gregory Nazianzus alone among the ancient lists uses this threefold division. His "History" section begins with the Pentateuch. See Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists*, 147. The other ancient lists (aside from Gregory, Cyril, and Jerome's Jewish list in *Prologus Galeatus*) list the books in order without divisions. Thus, it is evident that this fourfold or threefold division does not hold the importance in the Christian canonical tradition that the Jewish threefold division has for the Hebrew canon.

<sup>68</sup> The Greek Orthodox canon also differs from the Roman Catholic and Protestant in that, in accord with Amphilochius, Gregory, and Claromontanus, it begins the Twelve with Hosea, Amos, and Micah. Cyril, of course, does not list the prophets that make up the Twelve.

<sup>69</sup> The location of the deuterocanonical books in the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox canons does not detract from this conclusion. At the end of the Roman Catholic canon, 1–2 Maccabees bridge the gap between the Old and New Testaments. If the Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic canons give the deuterocanonical books a higher status than they had in the early Greek lists, Protestants have often given them a lower status.

### III. THE FRUITFULNESS OF THE CHRISTIAN CANONICAL TRADITION FOR BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Let me begin this section with a note of clarification. Those through whom we have received this tradition may have had some awareness of the theological significance of the canonical order they passed on. However, I am not arguing that they were intentionally making a theological statement when they handed on these lists or that they were aware of all the theological implications of canonical order suggested below. What I am arguing is that they *attest* a Christian tradition of canonical order that is fruitful for Christians because it accords well with the fulfillment in Christ that we find in the NT. Thus, although the NT does not authorize the threefold Hebrew canon, its affirmation of fulfillment in Christ provides theological confirmation of the forward-looking Christian canonical tradition.

This Christian tradition of OT canonical order that emphasizes the historical character of the OT as a meaningful narration of events that are moving toward a future final fulfillment is as much a concrete reality as is the threefold Hebrew canon.<sup>70</sup> Each section of the canon follows this narrative sequence. Genesis through 2 Kings runs from Creation through the fall of Jerusalem and the beginning of the Exile. 1 Chronicles through Esther retells this story from Creation through the return from Exile. We have seen that Job was often located either in the time of the patriarchs or that of the judges. Thus, Job through the Song of Songs follows the sequence Job, David, Solomon. The Minor Prophets conclude with the latest members of their fellowship, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The Major Prophets are in historical order. The Minor Prophets end with the forward-looking Malachi and the Major Prophets conclude with the prophecies of things to come in Daniel. The character of the OT as history moving toward fulfillment is not altered by the relative position of the Major and Minor Prophets.

This historical-narrative structure binds the various sections of the canon together. It is not hard to show how Genesis–2 Kings (essentially the same in everyone’s canon) fits with this emphasis.<sup>71</sup> After the fall, God promises that he will make Abraham’s children a great nation, give them a homeland, and “bless” the fallen peoples of the world through them. This promise finds initial fulfillment first in Exodus, Sinai, and the Promised Land, then in the establishing of the Davidic monarchy, but it is marred by the unfaithfulness of Abraham’s descendants and has not yet blessed the nations. The Prophets, however, speak into this history, pronouncing judgment on Abraham’s unfaithful descendants and promising that God will provide a future salvation that will deliver from sin and encompass the nations of the world.<sup>72</sup> The location of the Latter Prophets at the conclusion of the canon,

<sup>70</sup> For this use of the word “history” see N. T. Wright, *History and Eschatology: Jesus and the Promise of Natural Theology* (Waco, TX: Baylor, 2010), 86–87.

<sup>71</sup> Gregory Goswell, “The Macro-Structural Role of the Former Prophets and the Historical Books in Old Testament Canons,” *JETS* 63.3 (2020): 455–71. See also Gareth Lee Cockerill, *Christian Faith in the Old Testament: The Bible of the Apostles* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2014), 17–153.

<sup>72</sup> Seitz, *The Elder Testament*, 72–74, is, from a literary point of view, correct that the great variety of literary genres in the OT precludes describing the literary form of the OT as simply “narrative.” This

whether they end with Malachi, Ezekiel, or Daniel, clearly contributes to this emphasis on fulfillment and thus makes “straight paths” for the NT.<sup>73</sup>

We conclude with several brief suggestions of the fruitfulness found in this Christian canonical tradition. I would like to begin by highlighting the importance of the order and location of 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.<sup>74</sup> First Chronicles through Nehemiah retells the story of Genesis through 2 Kings and extends it into the period after the return from exile.<sup>75</sup> The Genesis-through-Kings account exposes the nature of sin, the intractable faithlessness of God’s people in the face of his great mercy, and thus the justice of his punishing them by exile. It bears a message of judgment calling for repentance. The Chronicles-through-Esther account, however, complements the first by presenting God’s past great goodness in the time of David and Solomon as hope for future fulfillment. I need not reiterate all the features of Chronicles that emphasize the grandeur and glory of what God did for Israel in the golden age of David and Solomon. For the people who live in the diminished existence depicted in Ezra and Nehemiah, that golden age is the basis for anticipating that the God who blessed them in David’s time has a glorious future in store. Esther strengthens that hope by showing God at work delivering his people even while they are in the grip of a pagan empire.

The location of the “poetic” books between this history of hope and the prophetic vision of the future is also significant.<sup>76</sup> These books deal with the daily life of the people of God as they live within this God-directed history. This section begins boldly in Job by confronting the ancient, ever-present issue of human suffering. The Psalter, then, invites God’s people to offer their daily life to him in confession, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise. Proverbs follows this Godward orientation by instructing those who fear God in the wise conduct of their daily lives in this world.<sup>77</sup> This section, dealing with the daily life of the people of God, is enfolded within the hope of the history that precedes it and the anticipation of the prophets that follow. The identification of these books with David and Solomon and their close proximity to Chronicles links the daily life of God’s people with God’s great goodness in the time of those two kings and thus with the hope of future glory.<sup>78</sup>

fact, however, does not contradict the historical character of the OT as a meaningful narration of events that are moving toward a future final fulfillment (see n. 70 above).

<sup>73</sup> Cockerill, *Christian Faith in the Old Testament*, 195–220.

<sup>74</sup> Cockerill, *Christian Faith in the Old Testament*, 155–74.

<sup>75</sup> It is common for scholars to say that Chronicles through Ezra extends the narrative of Genesis or Joshua through Kings (see, for instance, Goswell, “Macro-Structural Role,” 459). It is important, however, to realize that it not only extends, but retells, the story from its own point of view.

<sup>76</sup> Cockerill, *Christian Faith in the Old Testament*, 175–94.

<sup>77</sup> For the significance of the location of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs, see Cockerill, *Christian Faith in the Old Testament*, 190–93.

<sup>78</sup> For the identification of Psalms through the Song of Songs with David and Solomon and their relationship to the historical books, see Goswell, “Macro-Structural Role,” 466–69.

## CONCLUSION

Let me conclude with a summary. The above analysis of the ancient Greek and Latin OT canon lists substantiates the existence of a Christian tradition for the ordering of the OT canon. This tradition retained those features of the Jewish canon that were already stable before the threefold canon became standard. The early lists in particular were anxious to include only the twenty-two books of the Hebrew canon. They maintained the stable groupings already present in that canon—the five books of Moses, the four Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings), and the Latter Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Book of the Twelve). They followed the same principles of chronology and similarity in ordering the canonical books. However, instead of being bound by a threefold canonical structure, they integrated the books located in the third section of the threefold canon at appropriate places in the Former and Latter Prophets. This resulted in a tradition of canonical ordering that includes the orderings of the OT in modern Christian Bibles. This tradition emphasizes the historical character of the OT as a meaningful narration of events moving toward final fulfillment. Thus, this arrangement fits well with the NT emphasis on fulfillment in Christ.

If, intimidated by the variety in ancient Christian lists, Christian interpreters default to the threefold Hebrew canon as the primary basis for interpretation because it has been stabilized since the tenth century,<sup>79</sup> we do what the church fathers before us never did.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, we lose the benefit of a tradition of canonical ordering that fits well with the NT focus on fulfillment in Christ.

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<sup>79</sup> On the question of the early stability of the threefold Hebrew canon, see n. 8 above.

<sup>80</sup> With the possible exception of Jerome.