The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets

The Achievement of Association in Canon Formation

CHRISTOPHER R. SEITZ
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Preface

The present book has as its center public lectures given at Acadia Divinity College in Nova Scotia in the fall of 2007. An earlier version of these lectures was also prepared for Golden Gate Baptist Seminary earlier that same year. I benefited from discussions that took place on these occasions. A St. Andrews and Yale friend, John Shouse, was a gracious host in California, and I am thankful for his invitation to give the lectures a “dry run.”

Craig Evans invited me to deliver the Hayward Lectures at Acadia, and I want to thank him and his colleagues for their hospitality and kindness. Again, formal and informal opportunity was given to discuss the content of the material with faculty, students, and guests. Nova Scotia is a beautiful place in the autumn. It was a memorable and stimulating experience. Glen Wooden was on sabbatical in St. Andrews when the invitation was issued, and I am very thankful for his collegiality and kind hosting during my stay in Wolfville.
I have adapted the lectures as given only minimally. They constitute the contents of the three main chapters. To produce a book of sufficient length for the present series, however, I have also drawn up a general introduction to the topic. Following the introduction, chapter 1 begins as the first lecture of the series proper and concludes with some explanatory notes as to why I am dealing with the topic I have chosen. Beyond that, there should be very minimal overlap, and I hope the book as a whole addresses the general theme of canon formation in the Old Testament in a straightforward and useful way.

I am also presently completing a book on the relationship between the Testaments and the exegetical and hermeneutical significance of the rule of faith in the early church, which is scheduled to appear in Baker Academic’s Studies in Theological Interpretation series. I have become convinced that certain accounts wishing to place the responsibility for canon formation in the church are rightly concerned with certain problematical North American formulations of sola scriptura and inspiration. This has led to an appeal to church authority and the rule of faith from an otherwise unlikely quarter. But the threat to the formative place of the Old Testament and its influence on the New Testament is often subsumed into theories of an open canon, Scripture rather than canon, and now a rule of faith whose scriptural rootage and grounding are obscured. The reader will see in the present work aspects of that concern, even as the present project sees the issue from the standpoint of standard accounts of the canon and debates about the status of the Old Testament at the time of the New Testament. The other project, titled The Character of Christian Scripture, addresses the issue from the standpoint of a two-Testament scriptural legacy.
and how the church should handle that canonical form in its present life.

My present concern is to understand the unique character of the prophetic division of the scriptures of Israel. Work on the book of the Twelve Minor Prophets has affected an older discussion about canon formation, and that new and exciting work has yet to find its place in discussions respecting the canon. I hope the present work remedies that and turns the discussion in a more theological and hermeneutical direction.

I am grateful for a series of conversations and thesis-topic discussions on canon and the Writings with Amber Warhurst and Timothy Stone, PhD students at St. Andrews. They have thought carefully about key issues in respect of canon. Mark Elliott, Daniel Driver, Mark Gignilliat, Nathan MacDonald, and others read portions of the manuscript and offered helpful comments. Steve Chapman at Duke has published his own trenchant analysis of canon, and he pointed me to several recent works. Georg Steins of Osnabrück gave an insightful lecture on canon at the 2007 Society of Biblical Literature international meeting in Vienna and was kind enough to send me his manuscript. Too late for me to incorporate was the 2005 Lund dissertation of Tomas Bokedal, a review of which has appeared in the October 2007 issue of *Journal of Theological Studies*.

While I was preparing these talks and reflecting on matters of canon and the Twelve, my close friend and colleague Brevard Childs had a fall upon returning from the United Kingdom that led to serious complications and, sadly and tragically, his untimely death. I cannot begin to express my gratitude for everything this great and kind man taught me, in seminar room, parlor, pulpit, and pew. The loss of his
companionship and counsel is inestimable. I have had the opportunity to read his (now to be published posthumously) manuscript on the Pauline Letters, and it is a stunning, clear, and morally urgent series of reflections. The implications of canon formation are deeply imbedded in the processes of the Bible’s coming to be and do not exist as extrinsic maneuvers in subsequent communities seeking to understand themselves or address perceived needs. The canon emerges from the lived life of Israel under the word of God, faithfully straining to hear that word and obey and live. The church’s role in canon is that of gratefully acknowledging a witness prepared in prophet and apostle and seeking to honor the providential work of God in Christ from within their own distinctive providential location.

My conviction is that the book of the Twelve is a “goodly fellowship of the Prophets,” akin to the apostolic fellowship represented by the Pauline Letter Collection within the canonical New Testament, and likely influencing both its formation and form. The book of the Twelve shows a sophisticated composition intended to preserve the historicality of God’s word vouchsafed to individual prophets and to address the generations beyond their times, which come to the Twelve to learn from the past so as to find present obedient hope and direction.

The present work is dedicated to Brevard Childs and his wife, Ann. This seems a meager offering, I must say, given all that Bard has taught me and the wider world, and in light of many years of friendship and collaboration of various kinds. But I trust in the end that all God has said through him will remain a legacy for generations to come and its own kind of canonical witness, appropriate to the place God set him down
in his mercy and loving-kindness. We have Ann to thank for so many things, and I am grateful that she remains a witness to Bard and his work and to the God who inspires us all in his service and in his hope.

Christopher Seitz
Introduction

Canon and the Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets

The glorious company of the Apostles praise thee.  
The goodly fellowship of the Prophets praise thee.  
The noble army of Martyrs praise thee.  
The holy Church throughout all the world doth ac-  
knowledge thee;  
the Father, of an infinite majesty;  
thine adorable, true, and only Son;  
also the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.  
Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ.  
Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.

—Te Deum, Book of Common Prayer

The Fate of the Old Testament in Canon Discussions

In an essay that appeared the year before his untimely death, 
Brevard Childs noted that recent discussions of canon went 
in different directions in North American and Continental
publications.¹ Doubtless this reflects cultural and ecclesial differences of the kind Childs noted in 1970 in *Biblical Theology in Crisis*. In that book, he showed how confusing and ill suited were methods developed in Lutheran and Reformed circles in Europe when they migrated into the life of Protestant churches and their institutions in North America. The theological context of critical methods was not sufficiently grasped and often did not match the concern with empiricism and evidentialism of greater importance in North American discussions.²

In the later essay, the topic was more specifically canon and Childs’s contributions to that, in a series of landmark publications appearing in the decades following *Biblical Theology in Crisis*. Europeans were interested for the most part in Childs’s work on canon from the standpoint of biblical theology and older questions of the relation of the Testaments, as well as newer concerns with reception history (or *Wirkungsgeschichte*), Jesus Christ and the OT, Israel and church, and so forth. North Americans, by contrast, focused on material issues, influenced by the discoveries at the Dead Sea and kindred finds. Here the concern was with closure, selection, exclusion, and delimitation. Reception history was a factor only to the degree that it was a resource for helping with these questions by supplying lists of the biblical books, citations, and clues as to the status of the canon. Canon, on these terms, was unable to work as a theological and


hermeneutical index since it was delimited to formal matters of closure and institutional decisions—which might in their own way call for reconsideration, depending on the predispositions of the interpreter (consider the work of Helmut Koester or Bart Ehrman). Only here would the hermeneutical dimension intrude.

Lately, a new dimension has emerged to breathe a kind of hermeneutical life into these more formal descriptions of canon. Lee McDonald, for example, has popularized old standards of canon development and closure traceable to Albert Sundberg. These old theories are left pretty much untouched, in spite of the discussions Childs has noted taking place on the Continent, with which there is little if any exchange. How might one use these theories hermeneutically? James Sanders had earlier put forward his own species of what he called “canon criticism” in an effort to describe the Bible as a resource for a form of reader-response application. The canon, as he saw it, was a collection of competing and dialogical voices. This view turned away from the details of closure and the assessment of that after the fact from the side of hermeneutics. Rather, it liked the idea of process and earlier development and saw in it the potential to link up with adaptability and diversity as hermeneutically rich concepts. The canon was a container. Nothing about its given form was crucial except to the degree that it preserved multiple voices and offered clues to motivations and identity struggles and so forth. Canon was a tribute to conversation inside Scripture. Picking up an older romantic notion of experiential-expressivist identification, it was a relatively straightforward move to see canon as a subset of this conception. People in the Bible had conversations and dialogues with one another over important religious issues, and so do we. In the light of
the first reality, the second finds warrant and its own kind of dialogue partner. This is the genius of canon. Sanders also believed his material descriptions of canon matched up with the more hermeneutical dimension.3

In McDonald one sees a slightly different marriage of concern with material matters of closure and listing with hermeneutics and application. When one succeeds in seeing stability and theological significance in the OT only in old subsections (i.e., Torah; the remaining books are diverse religious literature), it releases the wider scriptural canon from a role of authoritative influence on the formation of the NT and on basic Christian witness, including such a role for the work and person of Jesus Christ. Canon, on these terms, becomes “scripture,” which in turn is a loose collection of religious writings.

Perhaps unexpectedly, this excusing of the OT from a central significance in early canon formation leaves the role to be occupied by the church (or “community of faith”). The church forms the NT canon according to principles reconstructed by the interpreter (be they Weber/ Marxist or anti-Warfield), and the OT comes along after the fact, now in its guise as diverse religious writings.4 On this model, the


4. On terms congenial with the work of Barton and McDonald, C. Allert puts a question in a form that seems quite natural to him, given his understanding of the Scriptures of Israel: “How and why did the church come to accept as authoritative Scripture a NT containing no more and no less than twenty-seven books, and to place this alongside either the Hebrew or the Greek Scriptures, renamed the ‘Old Testament’?” (C. D. Allert, A High View of Scripture? The Authority of the Bible and the Formation of the New Testament Canon, Evangelical Ressourcement [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007], 41, emphasis mine). The foundational role of the Scriptures (Law and Prophets) for the logic of the rule of faith is overlooked entirely in this conceptuality.
scriptures of Israel become what the theory believed in the first place: general religious background material in the history of religion or, trading on a German Lutheran model, a tradition-historical development leading up to the NT. In McDonald’s hands, now followed by Craig Allert, recourse is to be had to a rule of faith, as they understand this. That is, given the more evangelically orientated context of their own work, the discussion shifts to address the front occupied by accounts of the Bible that stress inspiration and inerrancy. In an effort to replace this Anglo-Saxon view of *sola scriptura* as it exists within North American evangelicalism and a NT canon that gives rise to the church, McDonald and Allert seek to dethrone what the latter calls a “high view of Scripture” by calling on the Christian assembly to define the limits of the NT canon. This is done by appeal to what they call “the rule of faith.”

5. L. McDonald, “Identifying Scripture and Canon in the Early Church: The Criteria Question,” in *The Canon Debate*, L. McDonald and J. Sanders (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 416–39. In the introduction, he speaks of the “Bible as dialogical literature” and of “efforts to resolve the tension made by such an observation” as leading to appeals to canon within a canon and other such lenses (ibid., 15). He also mentions a rule of faith: “Some suggest reliance on an abstracted or even external *regula fidei* (*rule of faith*) by which to guide the perplexed” (ibid.). The *regula fidei* within the early church, it is to be argued here, is intrinsic to how Scripture makes its larger Christian claims felt, based on a grasp of the plain sense of the OT Scripture in the light of Christ’s according work.

6. Allert describes the rule as entailing “a progression of thought that moves from the teaching of Jesus, who hands it over to his apostles, who subsequently pass it on to the church, which is then charged with guarding the pure teaching” (*High View*, 54). This is unobjectionable except that Jesus is not known apart from scriptural promise and accordance, and the rule is the means of asserting this fact. There is no “progression” that is not essentially accordance, deference, and confirmation of the claims of a scriptural inheritance. One cannot remove the matter of a “scriptural Jesus” (in accordance with the testimony declaring his relationship to the God who sent him and with whom he is one) from a discussion of the canon of the NT, formed with this confession at its center. This is the rule of faith’s logic in the ante-Nicene fathers. See my discussion in *The Character of Christian Scripture: Canon and the Rule of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, forthcoming). “We must remember that by ‘Scripture’ the Fathers, up to Irenaeus,
It should probably not be surprising that having eliminated the canon of the OT from any significant hermeneutical and theological role in the formation of the NT, they also fail to comprehend the scriptures of Israel as the key to understanding the rule of faith in the period in question. Instead, the rule of faith becomes a vague descriptor for something like “central apostolic teaching,” which in turn serves as a criterion for canonical decisions with respect to the NT. Not only does this criterion jump the fence wherein the usual descriptions of the rule of faith are sought by scholars surveying the ante-Nicene fathers and their appeal to the rule. These descriptions also see the rule as the exegetical grounding of Hippolytus, and Theophilus of Antioch, usually meant the Old Testament. At first this was the only approved and recommended collection of writings. But the paradosis of the Church, faithful to that of the apostles, was precisely this transmission of the Christ-event, as based documentarily on the Old Testament writings and, at the same time, explaining the meaning of these writings” (Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions* [London: Burns & Oates, 1966], 31). “In the Christian faith from the very first both elements, Jesus and the Scripture, were mutually and inseparably related” (Hans von Campenhausen, *The Formation of the Christian Bible* [London: Adam & Charles Black, 1972], 21). “There is, of course, no need to argue the authority or the extent of the Old Testament, for the NT books it is different” (E. Flesseman-Van Leer, *Tradition and Scripture in the Early Church* [Assen: Van Gorcum, 1954], 131). On the centrality of the older Scriptures for demonstrating Christ, Behr notes: “Although Irenaeus clearly knows the apostolic writings [en route to a NT canon], the substance of his exposition is drawn exclusively from Scripture: that Jesus was born of a virgin and worked miracles is shown from Isaiah and others; while the names of Pilate and Herod are known from the evangelists, that Christ was bound and brought before them is shown by Hosea; that he was crucified, raised and exalted is again shown by the prophets. In the first part of the work ([Demonstration] 3b–42a), Irenaeus recounts the scriptural history of God’s salvific work which culminates in the apostolic proclamation of Christ. In the second part of the work (4b–97), Irenaeus demonstrates how all the things which have come to pass in Jesus Christ, were spoken by the prophets, both so that we might believe in God, as what he previously proclaimed has come to pass, and also to demonstrate that Scripture throughout does in fact speak of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, as preached by the apostles” (John Behr, *The Formation of Christian Theology*, vol. 1, *The Way to Nicaea* [Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001], 30).
basic theological affirmation in the scriptures of Israel—that is, that Jesus Christ the Son, or Logos, and the Creator God of Israel, the maker of heaven and earth, YHWH, are one. In addition, they understand the formation of the NT as dependent on a criterion that must be conjectured as fundamental to canonical decisions in respect of the NT (the rule of faith) as against the usual ones of apostolicity, catholicity, and so on. Again, this is probably consistent with the view that the “canon” of the OT is a development external to itself and trades on decisions tied up with the canonicity of the NT. Without understanding the rule of faith as operating in conjunction with a scriptural witness from Israel, they give it a role suitable to the churchly determinations with respect to the NT. The evidence of the early church and modern patristic studies of the role of the OT in the rule of faith has been insufficiently assessed and integrated. This has apparently happened out of a concern that the church has been insufficiently appreciated by evangelical North Americans as an ingredient in the formation of the NT. It would be a sad consequence of this if the crucial role of the OT in the early church were evacuated.

Recent Work on the Twelve and the Character of the Prophetic Accomplishment

One distinguishing feature of the present work is the incorporation of recent analysis of the book of the Twelve. Consolidation of the Twelve did not happen after the fact in terms of external editing, shuffling, exclusion, and closure but belongs intrinsically to the prophetic accomplishment of the Twelve itself. In the earliest phases we can detect, interest in relating individual witnesses to one another is evident. This
is motivated by a desire to show how the one God of Israel is speaking in mutually influencing ways through historically discrete figures. Because this conception has a counterpart in the book of Isaiah (over the long history of its development) and because it also is related to the history of the prophetic word seen in the Joshua–2 Kings complex (the so-called Deuteronomistic history), it is appropriate to let these findings of historical and canonical analysis have their impact on the older discussions of canon and the formation of the OT in that process.

In his first foray into the field of canon studies, Lee McDonald cites with approval the older view of James Barr, going back to Albert Sundberg, that NT references “strongly suggest that the category of ‘Prophet’ was not a closed one: any non-Torah book that was holy scripture was a ‘Prophet.’” This view trades in part on the idea that the canon develops one section at a time, rather than in mutually influencing and reinforcing ways, and also that the achievement of the Prophets is a kind of secondary sifting of all non-Mosaic books. This led to the determination of a category such as “Writings,” in one context, and to categories such as history books, prophetic books, lyrical books, and so on in another. By speaking of the non-Mosaic books as a random collection, a particular construal of the evidence is made possible, and a dampening down of the idea of a distinctive prophetic accomplishment results. Ironically, it is

9. Allert can make this kind of statement, reflecting the confusion: “The early Christians did not divide the Hebrew Scriptures the way the Jews did” (*High View*, 46), that is, according to the Law, Prophets, Writings division. This is an inaccurate and oversimplified statement of the matter. It also gives the impression that there
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precisely the hard work of the historical-critical method that best points to this accomplishment happening within Israel and not at later times due to the significant methodological and theological reflections on large-scale endeavors such as the Deuteronomistic history, Isaiah as a sixty-six-chapter work, and now the book of the Twelve. In the view of the present book, this hard work has not been adequately incorporated. The idea of a random collection of non-Mosaic books is a legacy of the stages-of-canonicity conception, which must ignore the sophisticated character of large-scale collections such as the Deuteronomistic history, the book of the Twelve, Isaiah, and the combination and mutual influence of these works on one another at the compositional level. The chronological argument never worked well with respect to the Writings, some of which are earlier than the prophetic books and nevertheless were not merged into these compositional accomplishments.

McDonald continues with a further reference to Barr’s theory: “Although Barr agrees that the Law was a separate and distinct part of the Jewish canon, he maintains that the boundaries among the Prophets and the other books were still imprecise even in the first century CE.” Then McDonald adverts that, at least for some Jews in the earlier period, a distinction existed and the Prophets were “more precise.”

In a later edition of this work, he then adds this view of the matter: “While we do not object to the view that the Former (or Early) Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuels, and Kings) had most likely been collected and circulated with the books of Moses in the late sixth to early fifth century BCE, it are “Christians” over here and “Jews” over there, each with their own “Bible” by the period of Barnabas.

10. McDonald, Formation, 53.
is another matter to say that they were recognized as sacred scripture on par with the law of Moses.”

This conception is flawed at several points. First, the “Former Prophets” do not seek a parity or grade of acceptance with the Law. Their relationship to Law is reciprocal. So the idea of being “on par” bespeaks the faulty (additive) model he envisages. Second, apparently trading on a view of Sanders, he refers to a “Genesis to Kings complex.” But this ignores the accomplishment of the Deuteronomistic history in relationship to Torah, which resulted not in a continuous historical narrative but in a grammar of Law and Prophets.

Failure to understand the significance of this conjunction, which led to Deuteronomy’s key hermeneutical position at the close of the Pentateuch, leads then to a further confusion. McDonald continues the quote above with this comment: “It is even less likely that the Latter Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and the Twelve) had obtained such a position


15. In an unpublished paper read at the 2007 international meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Vienna, Georg Steins argues along the lines of the present work. About the Torah-Prophets complex (of the present MT order and arrangement), he states that there is no canonized Torah without Prophets, for a Torah without interpretation is inconceivable (“Es gibt keine kanonisierte Tora ohne Nebiim, da eine ‘Tora’ ohne Auslegung nicht vorstellbar ist”; p. 13). He also envisions what he calls a hybrid formation (“Gestaltung von zweierlei Herkunft”) consisting of the Torah-Prophets achievement on one side and a different Ketubim conceptuality and canonical formation (“Zwei Konzepte—ein Kanon: Zur Gestalt und Gestaltung des TaNaK”). This is an important contribution to the discussion. He also provides a careful assessment of work by Albert de Pury (on the Writings), Stephen Chapman, and Karel van der Toorn.
Several things can again be noted in this flawed conception. First, McDon-
ald tips his hand here and in the handling of the “Former
Prophets” when he reflexively speaks of them as a species of
continuous history, distinguishing them from the Prophets as
such and then including Daniel in the number of the latter.
This replicates decisions made in certain translated forms
of the OT and indicates the way his mind is working. The
achievement of the Deuteronomistic history—intrinsic to the
development of the OT within its own historical context—
is ignored in favor of a much later rearrangement known in
certain forms of the Greek Bible. One gets a sense then that
the “Latter Prophets” (he does not use the term, but instead
gives a familiar English Bible list) are distinct from the Former
Prophets, when the achievement of early canon formation
was precisely to level any distinction between them in the
name of creating a complex category of non-Mosaic books
with their own character.

The historical reality is that already at Qumran one can see
the book of the Twelve as a single, ordered collection.17 Recent
historical-critical work has shown how massive is the accom-
plishment of this Twelve-Book collection. The fact that two
major collections of works existed deep within the historical
life of Israel indicates that efforts to describe the “canon” or
“Scriptures” at the time of the NT as consisting of a stable
Torah conjoined in some sense with a random enumeration
of individual works (“a diverse collection of religious works
with definite bounds”) has seriously misread the evidence.
One can add here as well the newer work on Isaiah, which

17. See the recent, thorough evaluation of Dead Sea Scroll manuscripts of the
Twelve by F. Watson in *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T
Clark, 2004), 78–88.
sees the sixty-six-chapter book coming together as a result of intentional and highly sophisticated labor (“a canonical process of shaping”) stretching over the same timeframe and addressing the same series of generations as the Twelve. The point is that the “goodly fellowship of the Prophets” is its own special achievement. The Deuteronomistic history provides an account of the divine word spoken by key prophetic figures and by “all my servants the prophets” (Jer. 7:25) through the history from Joshua to the exile, and the superscriptions of the Three Major Prophets and the Twelve clearly intend us to read the witness of the individual prophetic works in the light of the Prophetic History, and vice versa. To put the development of a prophetic canon (including Daniel) down to postexilic concerns for identity is badly to misconstrue the concern for coordinating the one divine word spoken by different prophets, a concern traceable to the formation of the very first prophetic works of Amos and Hosea.

According to this view, it matters little whether the final dating of these related editorial processes can be sharply distinguished, a theory that is questionable in its own right. McDonald appears to believe that a completed Deuteronomistic history existed prior to the other prophetic books in a way that makes it “more canonical” because of this, in contrast to the Three and the Twelve. But the evidence is rather that these great complexes of prophetic narrative and prophetic books are intimately related (consider the cross-references and major associations linking Micah and Isaiah, Micah

18. McDonald here cites with approval Sanders, *Torah and Canon*, 91.

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and Jeremiah, Isaiah and Kings, Obadiah and Jeremiah, and Jeremiah and Kings). It is of course counter-intuitive to think of Amos functioning in any form only after the “historical” Former Prophets’ consolidation. Newer work on the Twelve is instrumental in this debate because it shows how integrative were the concerns that brought about the accomplishment of this prophetic collection. These are traceable to the beginning of the process and are not additive features from a later period. Here again, the logic of sequential historical development (one-after-the-other closing phases), wrongly applied to Torah and Former Prophets, has been wrongly argued in the case of the prophetic accomplishment itself.

Conclusions

In what follows, we introduce the matter of canonicity and seek to relate it to newer developments in critical assessments of the Prophets. It will be our argument that the Writings do not seek a character of internal association akin to what we see in the Prophetic subdivision, and never did. They are a library of books whose associations are extrinsic to the books of the Torah-Prophets collection. This collection is the key grammar of the OT, reckoning with a lineage of prophecy begun with Moses and extended in History and individual Prophetic collections until Malachi and the hope for a “messenger” like him—one who will prepare the generation to whom he appears in the manner of Malachi himself in the context of the day of the Lord and in the light of intimations of this day in the book of the Twelve. This conception of prophecy is integrally related to Torah, that foundational account of God’s instruction, but also chiefly to God’s character, which is fundamental to any understanding of the thrust of the book

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of the Twelve. “The LORD, compassionate and merciful, slow to anger . . . but who will by no means clear the guilty” (cf. Exod. 34:6–7) is the main “theme” of the book of the Twelve, introduced in Hosea and serving as the source of hope and of justice in the context of affairs in the northern and southern kingdoms, in the nations, and in the remnant community of the final prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The efforts at associating and grounding this larger movement of the Twelve with Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel and with the prophetic history are prodigious and inspiring.

Turning this “achievement of association” into a collection of any non-Mosaic book, blurs the character of both the Prophets and the Writings. That in subsequent lists and arrangements the Writings may migrate is only an indication of logical movements or innocent changes that seek to make sense of associations operating extrinsically, true to the character of the Writings as Writings. It is meaningful to speak of an “open canon,” if by that is meant the capacity of the Law and the Prophets to function as canon, no matter the precise number or order of the books in the third distinctive section. Subsequent rearrangements are not so much the consequence of decisions to create rival orders as they are introductions of patterns of migration whose logic is patient of explanation. To use this phenomenon to argue for a distinction between Scripture and canon not only confuses the issue but also renders the significance of the core canon of Law and Prophets, as the NT acknowledges and defers to this, muddled and imprecise as an authoritative witness fundamental in the formation of the NT and in the early church’s appeal to a rule of faith.