Steins, Georg.

Die Chronik als kanonisches Abschlussphänomen: Studien zur Entstehung and Theologie von 1 / 2 Chronik

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This revision of Stein's 1993 Münster dissertation (directed by Erich Zenger) is an impressive application of redaction criticism to Chronicles. The author was preceded in this effort to track the growth of Chronicles by several others (e.g., K. Galling, T. Willi, and H. G. M. Williamson; the recent work of E. M. Dörffuss--as well as S. Japhet's commentary--which was not available to Steins), and in some respects his work parallels that of the Göttingenschule on the Deuteronomistic History in its attempt to identify the various redactional layers (Schichten) of the biblical text. In addition to his attempt at reconstructing a history of composition, Steins has been attentive to the influence of redactional activity on the formation of the canon, for which he has built especially on O. H. Steck's research on Deutero-Isaiah. In spite of these precedents, however, it must be acknowledged that Steins has produced a creative, coherent, and intriguing study of Chronicles that will surely provoke discussion and demand the attention of all who follow.

There are four chapters plus a massive bibliography and an index of Scripture citations (an index of modern authors would have been helpful). The first two chapters take up important introductory issues. Chapter 1 deals with the literary character of 1-2 Chronicles--its literary unity; Chronicles as interpretation; intertextuality; Chronicles as a targum, midrash, or "rewritten" Bible; the problem of Chronicles' sources; and the relation of Chronicles to Samuel-Kings. The second chapter is devoted primarily to the relation of Chronicles to Ezra-Nehemiah, and Steins concludes that the two derive from different authors.

The third chapter constitutes the body of the work and takes up successively several important blocks of material: 2 Chronicles 29-32 (Hezekiah); 34-35 (Josiah); 1 Chronicles 11-29 (David); 2 Chronicles 1-9 (Solomon); and several other smaller units of text (1 Chronicles 9; 2 Chr 13:9-11; 20:14, 19, 21-22, 28; 26:16-21). Steins concludes
that the Grundschicht of Chronicles dated from the Maccabean period and presumed the existence of a basic form of Ezra-Nehemiah (as well as most of the rest of the canon of the Hebrew Bible), and he detects three major redactions of the book. The first focused on cultic personnel, especially Levitical musicians and doorkeepers, and included 1 Chronicles 23-24*; 26*; 2 Chr 8:14-15*; 35:2-3, 6, 8-10, 14b, which themselves may be further divided into discrete redactional layers. The second major redactional effort concentrated on the role of the nation's leaders and the assembly in Israel's cultic life and is designated the "communal layer" (Gemeinde-Schicht). It included 1 Chr 28:12-19, 21a; 29:1-20, 21-22*, 2 Chr 29:21a, 23-24, 31-34a, 35b; 30:1b-5a, 13b, 15-17, 23-25; 35:17.

The final major layer, the "Kult-Schicht," dealt primarily with the details of cultic practice as these related to Pentateuchal law, and it affirmed the participation of Northerners in the worship at the Jerusalem temple. This final reworking of Chronicles includes some longer texts (e.g. 1 Chronicles 27; 2 Chronicles 30-31) as well as many shorter ones (e.g., 1 Chr 28:17a; 2 Chr 13:10).

The final chapter is a summary that also suggests implications of Steins's research, especially as these relate to larger issue of canonization. He affirms that Chronicles did not prepare for the canonization process but assumed much of it, becoming deeply enmeshed in the second division, changing its significance, and thus becoming the "most canonical" of all the books in the Writings. In addition, the Babylonian Talmud's placement of Chronicles at the end of the Hebrew Bible illustrates Steins's assessment of Chronicles as Abschlussphänomen.

The most serious problem with Steins's research is his redactional analysis of Chronicles, the heart of his work. The division of verses (sometimes requiring the separation and assignment of a single word to a layer) among the various layers is reminiscent of nineteenth century source criticism and will be dismissed by many. It assumes a long and enormously complex process of literary growth (contrary to recent trends in Chronicles research) and an incredibly optimistic confidence in modern critical methods. In some instances a text that seems unified and completely coherent (e.g. Josiah's Passover in 2 Chr 35:1-19) is pulled apart into several different layers, sometimes on the basis of little more than the variety of persons or things mentioned. In addition, the concerns of the various layers (e.g. Levites, community, cult) are so intimately related to one another and so ubiquitous in Chronicles that it seems unnecessary to disassociate them from one another and to argue that one author would not have discussed them all. Finally, confidence in Steins's redactional analysis may be further eroded by his inability to distinguish the dates and circumstances of the various redactions.

Steins's minute analysis of individual texts in Chronicles is indeed impressive, however, especially when considered in the context of his broad, canonical perspective. Similarly, Steins demonstrates a thorough familiarity with the preceding two centuries of critical research on Chronicles and deals in detail with all the important critical issues.
related to Chronicles. Therefore, while this reviewer remains unpersuaded by Steins's redactional analysis, his work is a goldmine of information, replete with scholarly insights, and well worth the time that researchers find to spend with it.