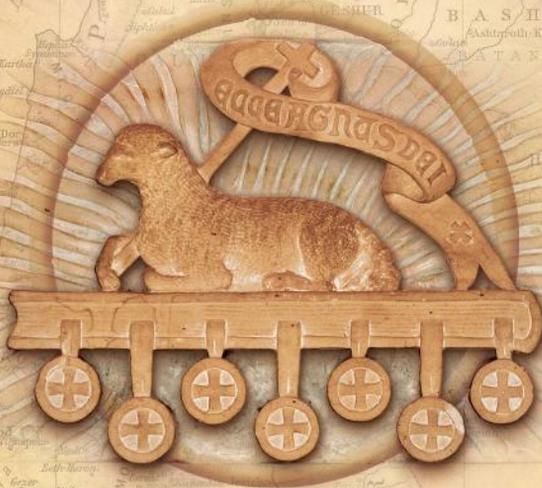


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1 & 2
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PETER J. LEITHART

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1 & 2 CHRONICLES

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To my granddaughter Frankie:
May you sing forever in the choir of God

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INTRODUCTION

The bulk of 1–2 Chronicles covers the same period of history covered by 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings, from the reign of Saul to the exile and restoration. Chronicles, though, covers the period in a significantly different manner. The book opens with nine detailed chapters of genealogy, beginning with Adam. Saul’s reign, which occupies two-thirds of 1 Samuel, is reduced to a single chapter, a record of Saul’s death (1 Chr. 10). David’s boyhood heroism and life as a refugee from Saul are deleted, as are the scandalous goings-on of David’s court—his adultery, murder, and the household mayhem that follows. Instead, the Chronicler focuses on David’s role in preparing for the construction of the temple.

In 1 Kings, Adonijah contests the transfer of the kingdom to Solomon; in 1 Chronicles, the kingdom passes smoothly from David to his son. After the kingdom is split during the reign of Rehoboam, the Chronicler keeps his eyes fixed on the southern kingdom. The northern kingdom appears only when it is in conflict or alliance with Judah. The Chronicler condenses the account of the divided kingdom in 1–2 Kings and entirely ignores the lives of Elijah and Elisha. Yet this is no *Reader’s Digest* version. Chronicles is as long as Kings, since the Chronicler adds episodes in the lives of numerous kings. Only from the Chronicler do we know of Joash’s late-life apostasy (2 Chr. 24), or Uzziah’s proud attempt to offer incense in the temple (2 Chr. 26), or Manasseh’s repentance (2 Chr. 33).

The Chronicler makes passing references to the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite regarding Jeroboam’s future (→ 2 Chr. 10–11; cf. 1 Kgs. 11) and alludes only glancingly to Jeroboam’s golden calves. Prominent in 1 Kings, Ahab is a bit

player in Chronicles, little more than Jehoshaphat's tempter, and we never learn anything about Jezebel. Writing after Samuel and Kings are already available, the Chronicler expects his readers to know the rest of the story.

The shape of the Chronicler's history is determined by two factors: the southern kingdom's relationship with the northern kingdom of Israel on the one hand, and the increasingly stark distinction of upright and evil kings on the other. The two threads of narrative overlap and come to a climax when the northern kingdom falls, which occurs during the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah of Judah. Let me sketch the course of these two narrative threads in more detail.

The Chronicler's attitude toward the north is complex. He never acknowledges the legitimacy of the northern kingdom as a polity and vehemently rejects it as an alternative liturgical community. His position is stated clearly in the speech of Abijah before his battle with Jeroboam (→ 2 Chr. 13): Jeroboam's kingdom originated in rebellion, and Yahweh's promise rests with the Davidic dynasty alone. Some of the sharpest ironies of the Chronicler's narrative arise from the failure of Davidic kings to act on the theological promise that "all Israel" should by right submit to the Davidic dynasty. At the same time, the Chronicler regards the northern tribes as part of all Israel, and Judah is incomplete without the other tribes. His history presses toward a reconciliation of the tribes, which can only take place when all Israel worships Yahweh alone at the chosen house in the chosen city of Jerusalem under the hand of the chosen king.

That is the ideal, realized most fully in the reigns of David and Solomon (→ 1 Chr. 11–2 Chr. 9), and the Chronicler devotes enormous, loving attention to presenting this model of Israel and its calling. The ideal is realized in partial ways in the reigns of Asa, Hezekiah, and Josiah. After the division of the kingdom, though, the history of Judah is largely a history of its fraught relationship with its brothers to the north. There are several stages to this history:

1. Judah is dominant over Israel (Abijah; → 2 Chr. 13).
2. Judah allies with Gentiles against Israel (Asa; → 2 Chr. 14–16).
3. Judah allies with Israel (Jehoshaphat; → 2 Chr. 17–20).
4. Israelite gods and ways dominate Judah (Jehoram to Athaliah; → 2 Chr. 21–24).
5. Israel is militarily dominant over Judah (Amaziah; → 2 Chr. 25).
6. Israel proves more faithful to Torah than Judah (Ahaz; → 2 Chr. 28).

After Ahaz, the northern kingdom ends. The last time we glimpse Israel, they are releasing Judahite slaves and restoring plunder to them. Israel, in short, leaves the stage looking like an exodus people.

The end of the northern polity opens the possibility for a reunion of the divided kingdom on *Davidic* terms. Hezekiah celebrates a Passover that includes people from the north (→ 2 Chr. 30), and Josiah's reforms extend into the territory once ruled by northern kings (→ 2 Chr. 34–35). These are tantalizingly hopeful moments, but Judah is, like Israel, finally driven from the land. The reason for that has to do in part with Judah's habit of imitating northern ways. But it also has to do with an internal dynamic that produces kings who do evil in Yahweh's sight.

The Chronicler is an exceedingly generous judge of royal virtue. Nearly every king of Judah leaves a mixed record behind. Good King Asa breaks faith by hiring Arameans to attack Israel; Jehoshaphat establishes circuit schools and courts, but he also allies with Ahab and Ahab's son; Joash restores the temple but abandons the Lord after his mentor Jehoiada dies; Uzziah's prosperity makes him proud, and he tries to offer incense in the temple; Hezekiah, too, becomes proud; and Josiah refuses to listen to Yahweh's word delivered through Neco, king of Egypt. Yet all of these are judged "good" or "upright" in the eyes of Yahweh. None is wholly evil.

Jehoshaphat's immediate descendants (Jehoram, Ahaziah) are evil, but the Chronicler, without excusing them, shifts blame to the house of Ahab. Jehoram walks in the way of the kings of Israel, "for Ahab's daughter was his wife" (2 Chr. 21:6), and Ahaziah continues in the way of Ahab because "his mother was his counselor to do wickedly" (22:3). Both texts refer to the same woman, Athaliah, who becomes queen after her son dies at the hands of Jehu. Only with Ahaz do we come to a Davidic king who defiantly walks in the ways of the kings of Israel, with none of the blame placed on counselors or family connections. He alone "did *not* do right in the eyes of Yahweh" (28:1 AT), and he alone among the Davidic kings makes "molten images for the Baals," becoming a direct promoter of Baal worship (28:2).

Up to the time of Ahaz, virtually all the kings have a mixed record, and those who do not are not entirely blamed for their wickedness. With the northern kingdom gone, Judah has no one to blame. Ahaz cannot shift responsibility to wife or counselors, and following his reign, the difference between good and evil kings becomes stark. Manasseh repents while in exile in Assyria (2 Chr. 33:12–13), but he spends much of his reign doing evil and promoting Canaanite abominations (33:2). His son Amon follows his example, and later kings are worse than

Manasseh, refusing to humble themselves before the word of the Lord’s prophets, even when Babylonians invade and deport the people (36:12).

Another form of regression is evident. The cycles of good and evil kings become shorter, the persistence of idolatry longer. Between the heights of David and Solomon and the nadir of Athaliah are four kings of mixed faithfulness (Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat) and two kings who follow the ways of Ahab (Jehoram, Ahaziah). Only three kings (Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham) intervene between Joash and Ahaz. Ahaz is immediately followed by the righteous Hezekiah, but after Hezekiah come two generations of wickedness (Manasseh, Amon). Josiah recovers the law and purges idols, but his gains are lost immediately by his sons. Periods of relative faithfulness get shorter, periods of wickedness longer. Asa’s reforms hold on for several generations; Hezekiah and Josiah cannot sustain their reforms into the reigns of their successors. Hezekiah and Josiah are not to blame for this. By the time they appear on the scene, idolatry has its own institutional inertia. Judah has developed its own *tradition* of wickedness. As thorough as their reforms are, they are not enough. Judah needs to be leveled and rebuilt.

These are among the narrative arcs of the history that the Chronicler records. But beneath the heard melodies are melodies unplayed, heard only by those with ears to hear. A virtual history intertwines with the history of Judah’s Davidic kings. The clues come at the beginning and end of the book. Chronicles begins with the name Adam and ends with the decree of Cyrus. It is a hint that the Chronicler is retelling the entire history of the Old Testament in, with, and under the history of kings. The scheme is essentially this:

Chronicles	Israel’s history
Genealogies, 1 Chr. 1–9	Genesis
Saul’s death, 1 Chr. 10	Slavery in Egypt
David, 1 Chr. 10–29	Exodus and Sinai, to the land
Solomon, 2 Chr. 1–9	Joshua’s conquest
Divided kingdom, 2 Chr. 10–35	Period of judges, ending with Saul
Decree of Cyrus, 2 Chr. 36	Establishment of monarchy

The scheme will be filled out as we move through the commentary, but let me provide some indicators here.

1. The Chronicler’s genealogy resembles the book of Genesis generically. Genealogies are sprinkled throughout Genesis (Gen. 4–5; 10; 11:10–26, 25:12–18; 36). Genesis as a whole is structured by ten *toledoth* (generations) statements,

and the word reappears frequently in 1 Chronicles (1:29; 5:7; 7:2, 4, 9, etc.). Substantively, the genealogies of both Genesis and Chronicles begin with humanity as a whole (Gen. 1; 4–5; 10) and then narrow primarily to the ancestors and descendants of Israel. The early genealogies culminate in the priestly genealogy of Moses and Aaron (Exod. 6). The Chronicler's genealogy has a similar priestly focus: the tribe of Levi is structurally central in 1 Chr. 1–9.

2. The Chronicler's narrative proper begins with Saul's death in 1 Chr. 10. In the aftermath of the collapse of Saul's house, the Philistines retake portions of Israel's land, reversing the conquest. Given the genealogical link between Philistines and Egyptians, it is also a reverse exodus, as Israel is once again subjected to "Egyptian" dominance. In Exodus, Yahweh triumphs over the gods of Egypt; in 1 Chr. 10, Dagon celebrates the "good news" of Saul's defeat.

3. David is a Moses figure. He liberates Israel by defeating the Philistines. But he is a Moses figure primarily in being a founder of Israel's cult. He brings the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem and, like Moses, pitches a tent (1 Chr. 13–16). He organizes priests and Levites (→ 1 Chr. 23–27; cf. Exod. 27–28; Num. 1–9) and receives the *tabnit* (pattern) for a new sanctuary from Yahweh (→ 1 Chr. 28–29; cf. Exod. 25:9). His "ordinances" rank with the *torah* of Moses as authoritative guides for Israel's worship.

4. In the final chapters of 1 Chronicles, David assembles Israel to crown Solomon and to apportion assignments for the building and maintenance of the temple. David's speeches to his son resemble the speeches of Moses to Joshua: "Be strong and courageous" (→ 1 Chr. 28–29; Josh. 1:6). Solomon's temple-building fulfills the conquest of the land and requires similar courage and skill. Solomon conquers kings, not with the sword but with the force of Yahweh's wisdom in him. He carries out a program of "sapiential conquest."

5. After Joshua's death, Israel entered a time of flux and confusion. The history of the period is a cycle of idolatry, political oppression, repentance, and deliverance, which always slides into another round of idolatry. Peace and faithfulness give way to renewed idolatry. At that level of abstraction, the divided kingdom period is similar to that of the judges. Good kings reform, bad kings restore the idols; a good king reforms again, and another bad king turns to Baal. Beyond the general similarity of pattern, 2 Chronicles includes a number of specific links with Judges: Rehoboam becomes king at Shechem (→ 2 Chr. 10), the site of Abimelech's seizure of royal power (Judg. 9); Jehoram kills his brothers (→ 2 Chr. 21), as Abimelech killed his rivals; Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah cast down idols, including Baals, as Gideon did in earning the epithet "Jerubbaal" (Judg. 6);

the Chronicler borrows the language of Judg. 2 to describe the sins of Judah (“played the harlot,” “forsook Yahweh,” “provoked Yahweh to anger”); Hezekiah and Josiah are heroic reformers who, like Samuel the judge, have wicked sons.

6. The messy period of the divided kingdom effectively ends with the death of Josiah in a battle with Neco, king of Egypt (→ 2 Chr. 35). Josiah’s death by arrows resembles the death of Saul, which brought an end to his dynasty. Several kings reign after Josiah (→ 2 Chr. 36), but Judah’s history is essentially over.

7. If the pattern proves true, then the king who follows the Saul-like Josiah should be a new David. But here is the surprising punch line of the Chronicler’s history: After Josiah, Judah *does* get a liberating king who initiates and sponsors the rebuilding of Yahweh’s house. But he is not a descendant of David. Cyrus, the king of Persia, inherits the Davidic task.

Though the history of the monarchy is a variation on themes from the book of Judges, the Chronicler does not outline a cyclical view of history. The rise of Babylon and Persia is a new establishment of kingship for Israel, but it is not identical to the establishment of the Davidic line. Cyrus is an anointed Gentile, a servant of Yahweh, who takes up the Davidic task but is not himself a Davidic king. First and Second Chronicles provides a narrative history of the transition that the prophets describe in other terms, a transition from a world order centered on the Davidic monarchy and Solomon’s temple to a world order dominated by Gentile emperors who are called by Yahweh to care for Israel. Chronicles provides the back history of the formation of the *oikoumenē* that provides the stage for ancient history between the fall of Jerusalem and the coming of the Christ.

For my purposes, the most important theological insights have to do with ecclesiology, though I recognize that this may be more a symptom of my own obsessions than the Chronicler’s. In any case, the Chronicler’s vision of the people of Yahweh is challenging, especially for Protestants in the genus *evangelicum*. Few books of the Bible stress the organizational features of the people of God more than the Chronicler does. First Chronicles includes several chapters of Levitical duty rosters. The Chronicler describes the gathering, storage, accounting, and distribution of temple gifts in great, not to say excruciating, detail. For the Chronicler, the people of God is not some formless community but a nation and people with an institutional structure. Every revival in Judah’s history is a revival of priestly organization, contributions to the temple, and careful oversight of the temple and palace treasuries. Church bureaucracies can become as clogged as federal agencies, but there can be no strong or vibrant church without them.

In keeping with this affirmation of the public, institutional character of the church, the Chronicler regularly depicts Israel in assembly. Nearly every major event of David's life takes place when he is presiding as head of a great assembly (*qahal*)—his coronation, the ascent of the ark to Jerusalem, and the preparations for the temple. Solomon gathers Israel to Jerusalem for the temple dedication, and every rededication is marked by a reassembly of the people. It is in assembly that Israel experiences the favor of Yahweh and the joy that comes with it. It is in assembly that Israel fights its battles and resists invaders.

One final note about the Chronicler's contribution to ecclesiology: 1–2 Chronicles is one of the Bible's great texts about music. The Psalms give us words to sing (perhaps also designating instruments and melodies). Chronicles tells us who sings when, and why. Music-making is a priestly activity. Song rises to God like the smoke of a sacrifice, and Chronicles describes music as a form of "guarding" (1 Chr. 25:8; the Hebrew *mishmeret*, or "duties," is from *shamar*, "guard") and Levitical "bearing" (1 Chr. 15:22, 27; for more, see Leithart 2003: 65). Kings make music too. To sing, we rule our bodies and breath. To make musical instruments, we cut and trim trees, pull guts into strings, mine and shape metals, train our fingers to pluck. Music turns creation into culture and cult. Music makes us warriors by enlivening our spirit. Soldiers march to battle in rhythm. The pounding beat and soaring chords of warm-up music fill athletes with the spirit of the game. Martyrs go to the arena singing psalms and hymns. Singing is, finally, a form of prophecy (→ 1 Chr. 25:1). Chronicles is a manual for church reformers, as well as for church musicians.

This commentary is not comprehensive in any way. It does not examine every verse in 1–2 Chronicles. I do not give much attention to the synoptic problem of coordinating Kings and Chronicles, or to the historical problems that Chronicles raises. There is no survey of the literature on Chronicles. I have consulted some of the major recent commentaries, articles, and monographs, as well as a handful of older works, but do not interact much with their arguments.¹ Instead, this commentary is an attempt to discern the shape of the book, to follow thematic threads as they begin, develop, diverge, and come to rest. I pay attention to literary structures and stylistic features and attempt to tease out theological conclusions from both the events recorded and the pattern of the Chronicler's record. It is an effort to make Chronicles preachable.

1. Far and away the most illuminating work is that of Johnstone (1998a; 1998b), whose fingerprints are everywhere here.

1

ISRAEL'S GENESIS

1 Chronicles 1–9

Chronicles begins with a nine-chapter section of genealogies. It is a challenging text for modern readers, perhaps also for ancient ones. Lists and brief genealogies are scattered throughout Chronicles (e.g., 1 Chr. 11:26–47; 12:1–14, 23–37; 15:4–11; 23:1–24; 24:7–31; 25:1–31; 26:1–11; 27:1–34; 2 Chr. 17:10–19; 29:12–14). It is something of an obsession for the Chronicler. The lists demonstrate the fruitfulness of Israel and Israel's kings. The lists are also a literary embodiment of another of the Chronicler's obsessions, the "assembly" (*qahal*) of Israel. David's reign seems to consist of nothing but public assemblies—for coronation, to carry the ark into Jerusalem, to exhort Solomon to build the temple, to assign duties to priests and Levites, to crown Solomon (twice!). Solomon presides over assemblies, as do Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Hezekiah, and Josiah. At the outset of his book of assemblies, the Chronicler assembles an intergenerational "all Israel" on the page.¹

1. Umberto Eco, author of *The Infinity of Lists*, says, "The list is the origin of culture. It's part of the history of art and literature. What does culture want? To make infinity comprehensible. It also wants to create order—not always, but often. And how, as a human being, does one face infinity? How does one attempt to grasp the incomprehensible? Through lists, through catalogs, through collections in museums and through encyclopedias and dictionaries. There is an allure to enumerating how many women Don Giovanni slept with: It was 2,063, at least according to Mozart's librettist, Lorenzo da Ponte. We also have completely practical lists—the shopping list, the will, the menu—that are also cultural achievements in their own right." "We Like Lists Because We Don't Want to Die," interview by Susanne Beyer and Lothar

The Chronicler assembles Israel and names names. Israel is not a faceless mob. Neither are David's assembly of mighty men and warriors, the assembly of priests and Levites and elders, or the gatekeepers and singers assigned to the temple. Individuals are named; they earn a spot in the credits; their names appear on the acknowledgments page. The Chronicler's genealogy is a literary portrayal of the one-body, many-limbs design of Israel. Even as they gather as one man to carry out a single intention, individual Israelites have a name, heritage, and specific vocation and task.

Genealogies can function "tribally." For tribal cultures, change is the enemy. Genealogies inevitably record change, but they may record change that holds the present hostage to the past, sons in thrall to fathers. Someone in the present has status—as king, priest, citizen—because of his genealogical connection with the founder, through a trail of descent, fathers begetting and sons begotten.

Biblical genealogies have a different orientation. To be sure, priests have status only because they are genetically linked with Aaron, then Zadok. For the writer of Hebrews, this is a sign of the preliminary character of the old covenant, its "fleshliness" (Heb. 7). As status legitimation, the Chronicler's genealogies diverge from earlier biblical genealogies. Genesis records genealogies from Adam through the sons of Jacob, but the priestly genealogy of Exod. 6 brings those lists to a climax. Genesis-Exodus traces descent from Adam through Aaron, thus underscoring the legitimacy of Aaron's priesthood. The Chronicler's genealogy includes "all Israel." Levites are at the center of his concern (see below), but every son and tribe is given an elevated status. Simply by tracing the genealogy of every tribe, the Chronicler shows that Israel is "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod. 19:6). Holy places are measured; holy things are counted and weighed; a holy people is delimited through its heritage and ancestry.

Though biblical genealogies identify humanity's or Israel's roots, they are fundamentally about looking forward. The key term in the genealogies of Genesis is "generations" (*toledoth*). The *toledoth* of Adam (Gen. 5:1) does not trace Adam's roots but Adam's fruit, what he begets. In Chronicles, too, *toledoth* describes chiefs and heads according to generations, that is, according to what they produce. Biblical genealogies lean eschatologically, not protologically.

One hint of this future-orientation is the repeated phrase "heads of the father's households" (e.g., 1 Chr. 5:15) or, more startlingly, "heads of the fathers" (e.g., 8:6 AT). In the Chronicler's view, a son does not merely become head of his

Gorris, *Spiegel*, November 11, 2009, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/spiegel-interview-with-umberto-eco-we-like-lists-because-we-don-t-want-to-die-a-659577.html>.

father's house after his father has died. Sons are described as heads of the fathers themselves. In a number of texts, the phrase appears in conjunction with *toledoth* (7:2, 9; 8:28; 9:9, 34). As head of the father's house, the son is *source* rather than product, root rather than fruit. Sons become heads of fathers not because of their fathers but because of what they themselves beget. Sons become heads of fathers by themselves becoming fathers.

In normal reckoning, fathers are, of course, prior to sons, but the phrase hints at the son's priority to (or equality with) the one who begets him. The sons are not merely extensions of their fathers; they are "heads" of fathers, crowning their fathers with glory as mighty men of valor. Sons secure their fathers' paternal name: without begotten sons, fathers would not be begetters; sons make fathers fathers. This can be stated christologically: biblical genealogies trace a line of descent from the first Adam to the last Adam. Genealogies end with Matthew and Luke. Fleshly qualification for priesthood (or kingship, or covenant membership) gives way to the indestructible power of the risen Priest-King after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 7). Abram's standing is finally founded not on his ancestry but on his descent, in being forefather of the ultimate Seed, Jesus. Jesus the son of Abram is "head of the father." Insofar as the genealogies are oriented toward the Messiah, they are oriented to the future rather than the past, and it is the future that secures the past rather than vice versa. More speculatively, the point can be stated trinitarianly: The Father is only Father by eternal generation of the Son. Without the Son, the Father is barren and unfruitful, without *toledoth*. The Father is "head" of the Son (1 Cor. 11:3), yet the Son is, in the Chronicler's sense, "head" of his Father, the filial source of the Father's paternity.

A similar point can be made from another direction. Genealogies trace the persistence of a family, clan, or nation through time. It is not enough to dig to the roots because a root without a trunk, branches, and leaves is no family tree. To be an origin, the origin must be supplemented. The Chronicler's genealogy demonstrates that Abram is a fountain, since he has descendants all the way to the Chronicler's own time. This becomes especially important at the end of the genealogy, when the Chronicler continues tracing the genealogy after it appears to come to an end in exile (→ 1 Chr. 9:1-2). Even when the descendants of Abraham have lost everything—land, temple, capital, king—they persist. Institutional continuity depends on procreation; unless people have children, there is no one to replace dying kings, priests, prophets, officials, elders, gatekeepers, or singers. When institutions collapse, procreation simply is the persistence of a community. When the inertia of court, capital, and temple stalls, Israel continues because it

continues to bear children. This is the logic behind Jeremiah's exhortation to exiles: seek the peace of the city, settle, reproduce, because that is the only way for a nation to rise again from the grave of exile (Jer. 29).

Some portions of the genealogies consist of name lists without any indication of the relation between them (1 Chr. 1:1–4, 24–27). At times the lists are lists of sons (1:5–7); at other times the emphasis is on “begetters,” fathers (1:10–16). Mothers (1:32; 2:3, 26; 3:1–5; 4:9) and wives (1:50; 2:18, 24, 26, 29, etc.) are occasionally named, as are sisters (1:39; 2:16; 3:9, 19; 4:3, 19; 7:15, 19, 30, 32). In addition, the lists are punctuated by narrative vignettes (1:10; 2:3–4; 4:9–10; 5:1–2, 18–22) and recurring patterns that introduce fundamental themes that run through 1–2 Chronicles. All this suggests that the purpose of the genealogies is not simply to list parents and children but to identify the “things begotten” by Israelites. Ultimately, what Israel begets is its history in all its fullness.

According to Dorsey (2004: 145–58), the genealogies are arranged chiastically (cf. Williamson 1982: 46; Boda 2010: 27–28; Merrill 2015: 83; Sparks 2008: 29 and *passim*):

- A Before tribes (1:1–54)
- B Royal tribe: Judah (2:1–4:23)
- C Peripheral tribes: Simeon, Reuben, Gad, Manasseh (4:24–5:26)
- D Levites (6:1–81)
- C' Peripheral tribes: Issachar, Benjamin, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Asher (7:1–40)
- B' Royal tribe: Benjamin (8:1–40)
- A' New Israel after exile (9:1–34)

With Levites at the center, the structure indicates one purpose of the genealogy: to authorize the temple personnel to carry out their role in the chosen house (Sparks 2008: 32).

First Chronicles 1 presents a “barren” humanity (the term is from Sparks 2008: 325–31). The world before Israel is bereft of worship, joy, song, and the house of God's name—all the things that, from the Chronicler's perspective, Israel will introduce into the human race. Israel serves the nations not by political means but through Levites, who stand at the center of the genealogy of Israel. We can be more specific. The center of the center of the genealogy is a list of Levitical musicians and singers appointed by David (6:31–48, embedded between genealogies of the three clans of Levites [6:16–30] and priests [6:49–53]). To be a priestly nation is,

by the Chronicler's lights, to be a choral nation. Israel fulfills its role among the nations through a continuous liturgy of praise. With the reference to Adam (1:1) in mind, we may draw a wider anthropological inference: God created Adam (not merely Israel) to produce a race of singers. Israel exhibits the destiny of humanity: to be brought into God's choir to sing in God's heavenly city (cf. Leithart 2018).

Musicians are at the center. At the edges of the genealogy are kings. Israel's genealogy proper begins with a lengthy genealogy of Judah (1 Chr. 2:3–4:23) and ends with the genealogy of the original royal tribe, Benjamin (8:1–40). As William Johnstone (1998a: 14–17 *passim*) puts it, Israel's kings play a "sacramental" role. As Yahweh's sons (17:13), they sit on Yahweh's throne (28:5) and lead the Lord's "hosts" into battle (5:18). The Davidic kings are effective signs of Yahweh's reign over the nations. Good kings accurately signify; bad kings do not.

David accomplishes this sacramental role in part by bringing surrounding territories into submission to Israel (1 Chr. 18–20), extending Israel's boundaries to those promised to Abraham (Gen. 15:18), from the river (Euphrates) to the brook of Egypt. The more fundamental task of the king is portrayed in the shape of the genealogy: the king guards the boundaries of Israel to protect Israel's central activity, which is worship. Good kings build and maintain temples, supply material for worship, and organize priests and Levites (1 Chr. 29:30; 2 Chr. 9:23). Bad kings neglect the Lord's house, its worship, and the Levitical priests. A literary "all Israel" is assembled on the opening of Chronicles, since the whole nation is implicated in this priestly mission to the nations (1 Chr. 9:1; 11:1; on the use of "all Israel" in Chronicles, see Sparks 2008: 269–89). Embraced by kings who serve the King, Israel participates through the Levites in the Lord's gathering of all nations into his liturgical community. The Chronicler is drawing pictures with lists (cf. Boda 2010: 98).²

Before Israel (1 Chronicles 1)

John's "in the beginning" (John 1:1) signals that his Gospel records a "new Genesis" for the world, as does Mark's more subtle "the beginning of the gospel" (Mark

2. The Chronicler highlights the king's role through the use of the key word "seek" (*darash, baqash*). David serves as the model king who seeks Yahweh (1 Chr. 13:3; 15:13; 28:8–9), while Saul is the negative type, a king who failed to seek God (10:13). Worship is one of the chief ways of seeking God (1 Chr. 22:19; 2 Chr. 11:16; 14:1–4; 30:18–19), and kings seek Yahweh through preparations for worship, such as transporting the ark into Jerusalem (1 Chr. 15:13). Yahweh rewards those who seek him (2 Chr. 14:1–7; 15:2–7; 17:3–4; 18:4–7) and disciplines unfaithful kings who do not seek him (1 Chr. 10:13–14; 2 Chr. 12:14; 16:12). Even good kings can fail by not seeking Yahweh according to his laws, statutes, and ordinances (1 Chr. 15:13). Worship is regulated; the path toward Yahweh is pre-scribed in the scriptures.