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The righteousness of the Levites in Chronicles and Ezekiel

1 Introduction

In an article in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* in 2006, I made a passing remark about 2 Chronicles 29:34, that it seemed to be “a direct response to Ezek 44:12–13 ... (the play on words is quite obvious).”¹ In that article my focus was on the legitimacy of the expanded role of the Levites in Josiah’s Passover in 2 Chronicles 34. In this contribution, I take up the issue of the dialogue between the texts of Chronicles and Ezekiel on the question of the Levites. Because of the linguistic similarities and the tone of both texts, I argue that the dialogue is not a mere discussion, but is a polemic, where the audience of one text sees the implied polemic against the other text. In the case of each text, there is a view of the role, function, and evaluation of the Levites: in the case of Chronicles, it is a positive evaluation; while in the case of Ezekiel 40–48, it is a negative evaluation. In both texts the role and function of the Levites is described in similar terms; it is the aetiology of the role and function that is different, leading to the opposite evaluations. However, unlike the majority of previous scholarship, I do not consider these aetiologies and evaluations to be useful in reconstructing a history of the Judahite priesthood or Levites (cf. some of the work cited below). Instead, I consider both texts to be part of a project of utopian world construction in the Second Temple period: they are texts at play, imagining possibilities rather than reporting actualities.² The

1 Christine Mitchell, “The Ironic Death of Josiah in Chronicles,” *CBQ* 63 (2006): 430.

2 Steven Schweitzer, *Reading Utopia in Chronicles*, LHBOTS 442 (New York: T&T Clark, 2007); Steven J. Schweitzer and Frauke Uhlenbruch, eds., *Worlds That Could Not Be: Utopia in Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah*, LHBOTS 620 (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016). The literature on Ezek 40–48 (or Ezekiel as a whole) is more complex: although “utopian” is occasionally used as a way to describe the book, somewhat more often Ezekiel’s vision of the temple in Ezek 40–48 is described as “eschatological.” For a good summary of a variety of positions, see Steven S. Tuell, “Ezekiel 40–42 as Verbal Icon,” *CBQ* 58 (1996): 649–64. He concludes that the envisioned temple is a heavenly temple, not to be built on earth. Although he does not spell out the implications for the Levites in ch. 44, such a vision would suggest an imagined role for Levites and priests. For a critique of Tuell’s position, see John T. Strong, “Grounding Ezekiel’s Heavenly Ascent: A Defense of Ezek 40–48 as a Program for Restoration,” *SJOT* 26.2 (2012): 192–211. His point that Ezek 40–48

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written form of these imaginings should not be discounted: as Donald Polaski has noted, the stability of writing – even though it may be subject to scribal processes such as supplementation – lends authority to these imagined possibilities.³ More to the point, while it cannot be discounted that these textual visions had either a descriptive or prescriptive relationship with levitical and priestly practices, it is the rhetorical and textual relationships that I am investigating.

While I tend to the view that Ezekiel was composed before Chronicles, and therefore as a matter of literary history Chronicles is a response to Ezekiel, in a web of textuality, or canonically (if you like), or as components of an educational curriculum in the Second Temple period, either can be read as a response to the other.⁴ Readers of texts at any point after the composition of Chronicles would not necessarily encounter Ezekiel before Chronicles, so it is important to discuss the mutual effects of the texts if we are interested in the rhetorical and textual relationships. In this, I remain an unregenerate post-structuralist: “il n’y a pas hors texte,” as both Barthes and Derrida famously proclaimed. I also continue to be influenced by the work of Mikhail M. Bakhtin and his followers in terms of how inserted texts interact with their surrounding text. These theorists help us to understand the effect that inserted texts have in relationship to the text that surrounds them: the inserted text, which may have had its own independent function and meaning, now both influences the reading of the surrounding text and in turn is influenced by it.⁵ The phenomenon of the inserted text is a significant issue for

was written as an archive of a temple plan that could be studied is well-taken and aligned with an understanding of the text as an imagining of a temple.

3 Donald C. Polaski, “Writing and the Chronicler: Authorship, Ambivalence, and Utopia,” in *Worlds That Could Not Be: Utopia in Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah*, ed. Steven J. Schweitzer and Frauke Uhlenbruch, LHBOTS 620 (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 129–43.

4 The relationships between the various posited Pentateuchal redactional layers and the formation of Chronicles is spelled out in detail in Louis C. Jonker, “Melting Pots and Rejoinders? The Interplay among Literature Formation Processes during the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods,” *VT* 70 (2020): 42–54. As I am not expert in Pentateuchal redaction hypotheses, I leave these arguments aside. On the whole, though, I think Jonker’s point is important: the final stages of the formation of the Pentateuch and the writing of Chronicles demonstrate similar tendencies: to merge traditions, and to debate new understandings of holiness (p. 43).

5 Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986); Yuri M. Lotman, “The Text within the Text,” trans. Jerry Leo and Amy Mandelker, *PMLA* 109 (1994): 377–84. The best evidence for a manuscript used in a Judahite community with an inserted text is the Aramaic copy of the Bisitun text found at Elephantine, although very little work has been done on the text in terms of these dynamics. See Christine Mitchell, “Berlin Papyrus P. 13447 and the Library of the Yehudite Colony at Elephantine,” *JNES* 76 (2017): 139–47.

both Chronicles and Ezekiel: Chronicles in terms of how textual fragments are integrated into overarching sections of text, and Ezekiel 40–48 in particular as a component of the larger book of Ezekiel.

Linking two texts, 2 Chronicles 29:34 and Ezekiel 44:12–13, is hardly the formation of a web. In order to form a web of textuality, I bring in texts from Psalms and Deuteronomy. It is through this web that we can see the basis for the connection that forms the polemic between Chronicles and Ezekiel on the topic of Levites: in Chronicles not only are Levites more upright of heart than priests, but they have more righteousness than priests (*tsedeq*). To claim that someone was more righteous than priests might be a serious-enough claim, but when the priests themselves that Ezekiel promotes are Zadokite (whose name Zadok means “righteousness”), it is a more biting polemic.⁶

2 Second Chronicles 29

The relevant passage in 2 Chronicles 29 deals with Hezekiah’s Passover. This Passover is so magnificent, so full of people (especially from the northern tribes), that there are insufficient priests to undertake the sacrifices. In this context, in 29:34, the Levites participate in sustaining or encouraging them, perhaps restoring their numbers (יחזקום); חזק in the Piel can mean “to encourage” or it can have a meaning similar to the Hifil “to strengthen.” The LXX translates the verb here with ἀντελάβοντο, which suggests more than simple encouragement: active participation. At this point, the Chronicler makes the comment that seems to justify the Levites’ participation and that casts a slur upon the priests: כִּי הָלְוִיִּם יִשְׂרֵי לֵבָב לְהַתְקַדֵּשׁ מִהַכֹּהֲנִים “For the Levites were more upright of heart [conscientious] in sanctifying themselves than the priests.” From a narrative standpoint, this slur is not necessary: it has already been established that the Passover is extraordinarily large, and that because of the number of offerings there were too few priests to do all the work. The Levites’ participation as reinforcements makes narrative sense. Therefore, I conclude that there must be a rhetorical purpose to this slur, especially given that throughout Chronicles otherwise there are no negative comments

⁶ Contra Iain M. Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders of Israel*, VTSup 56 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 81–82. He argues that the link of Zadokite and “righteousness” is a matter of degree, not a binary with “unrighteous.” In this reading the Levites are not condemned for their unrighteousness (or un-Zadokite nature) but rather are put into the proper place along the continuum of righteousness and its concomitant responsibilities in the spatial continuum of the temple.

about priests as a whole.⁷ The Chronicler's usual stance on priests is that they are necessary, and there are certain functions that only they can perform (blow on trumpets, for example: cf. 1 Chr 15; 2 Chr 7). Normally this includes making sacrifices (e.g. 1 Chr 16:37–43). There is one exception: in 2 Chronicles 36:14, the “chiefs of the priests and the people” continued to commit sacrilege (כל־שרי הכהנים והעם) (הרבו למעל־מעל). This ultimately led to the destruction of the temple by the Babylonians. However, the point of including the leaders of the priests (not all the priests) at this juncture is to give a picture of the totality of the sin and to provide justification for the destruction of the temple. The sin of Zedekiah alone is not enough, as previous kings had sinned but the temple and Jerusalem had not been destroyed. It took a wider adoption of sinful practice and acts of sacrilege to justify the destruction of the temple; thus, the invocation of the priestly leaders as well as the people (or perhaps just their leaders, if שרי governs העם as well as הכהנים). To recognize the purpose of the slur in 2 Chronicles 29 we must turn to other texts.

3 Ezekiel 44

While the key text is Ezekiel 44:12–13, verses in the middle of Ezekiel's diatribe against the Levites, I shall first examine the relevant passage of Ezekiel 44. This chapter contains the only references to the Levites in the book of Ezekiel. There have been suggestions that these verses (44:10–14) are a later redactional addition to the book, based in part on these unique references to the Levites, and in part on a seeming interruption of the polemic against foreigners found in this chapter.⁸ I leave the merits of these arguments to the experts on Ezekiel, only to note that should this passage be a later interpolation, then the question of influence from Chronicles may be pertinent. As I am interested in the rhetoric of the final form of the book, the redactional history is not as important.

In 44:4–9, Ezekiel sees the *kabod* of Yhwh filling the temple, and denounces Israel for permitting abominations in the temple in the past. In the future, foreigners are not to be permitted to enter the temple (to serve?). *But*, (note the contrastive כִּי אִם in v. 10), Levites *are* to be servants of the temple, not as an honour, but as a punishment. Rodney Duke attempted to read verse 10, with the Levites “bearing

⁷ Lars Maskow (in this volume) identifies textual “over-information” as pointing to something else relevant for interpretation that is not directly identified. He points to the “minor incident” of Uzziah's leprous forehead as a way to reinforce Zadokite supremacy over the king.

⁸ E.g., Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, Vol. 2, trans. James D. Martin, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

their guilt,” as having the same sense as it does in Numbers 18, a Priestly text: the antecedent is Israel rather than the Levites, and the Levites are responsible for Israel’s guilt should the Israelites encroach upon the temple in the future as they had in the past.⁹ The problem with this argument is that it requires all the verbs in the succeeding verses to have the antecedent Israel as well. Duke’s assertion that, “The general theme of Ezekiel’s vision in chs. 40–48 is restoration ... and not further judgment”¹⁰ is not tenable in the face of the contrastive rhetoric in these verses.¹¹ Stephen Cook’s similar proposal suggests that the Levites are being punished, but their punishment is a form of collective atonement.¹² However, the root שרת is used in chapter 44 in ways that suggest a contrast between the shame of the Levites and the honour of the Zadokite priests. The root is repeated four times in 44:11–12 as applied to the Levites: “And they shall be servants (משרתים) in my sanctuary ... and servants (משרתים) in the house/temple (הבית) ... and they shall attend them to serve them [viz. the people] (לשרתם) because they served (ישרתו) them before their fetishes ...” The root is then found four more times in verses 15–19, where it is used in reference to the service of the Zadokite priests. The Levites’ service-punishment is placed in contrast to the Zadokites’ service-reward. The polemic against the Levites within Ezekiel is made acute by the repetition of שרת.

4 Returning to 2 Chronicles 29

Turning to 2 Chronicles 29 again, in verse 11, Hezekiah does name the Levites as chosen by Yhwh to stand before him to serve him (לשרתו) and to be his servants (משרתים) and sacrificers (מקטרים). However, the whole of the passage is depicting this Passover as unique, a singular set of circumstances leading to the Levites’ participation beyond their normal role. There is only this one verse in the Passover episode of 2 Chronicles 29–30 that sets up a contrast between the Levites and the priests, 29:34b, as I noted above. In this slur, the phrase ישרי לבב interests me. It is an unusual although not unique phrase in Chronicles, appearing in a similar

⁹ Rodney K. Duke, “Punishment or Restoration? Another Look at the Levites of Ezekiel 44:6–16,” *JSTOT* 40 (1988): 66–67.

¹⁰ Duke, “Punishment or Restoration,” 67.

¹¹ Cf. Nathan MacDonald, *Priestly Rule: Polemic and Biblical Interpretation in Ezekiel 44*, BZAW 476 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 49–51.

¹² Stephen L. Cook, “Innerbiblical Interpretation in Ezekiel 44 and the History of Israel’s Priesthood,” *JBL* 114 (1995): 204.

form (nominal) also in 1 Chronicles 29:17. Both occurrences are in non-parallel passages with Samuel-Kings.

The root **ישר** and its derived nouns and adjective appear many times in Chronicles. It is significant that of the eleven occurrences of **ישר** (adjective), all but two are paralleled in Kings, and the two non-paralleled occurrences are 2 Chronicles 29:34 and 31:20; in the story of Hezekiah. The three occurrences of the verb **ישר**, 1 Chronicles 13:4; 2 Chronicles 30:4; 32:30 are also non-paralleled, and occur in the stories of David and Hezekiah. The nouns **ישר** and **מישר** occur in 1 Chronicles 29:17, describing David. This root is thus not typical of the Chronicler's own general usage; and being used only in texts with either David or Hezekiah is surely significant. In Ezekiel, words from the root **ישר** are almost non-existent. The adjective occurs twice in its meaning of "straight" in chapter 1, but there are no uses of the verb or of any nominal forms.

The phrase **ישרי לבב** occurs most frequently in Psalms (nine times: 7:11; 11:2; 32:11; 36:11; 64:11; 94:15; 97:11; 110:7; 125:4) and in five of those occurrences it is paralleled by words from the root **צדק**, as it is also in Deuteronomy 9:5. "Upright" or "uprightness" more generally is found paralleled by words from **צדק** nine more times in poetic texts (Ps 9:9; 58:2; 98:9; 99:4; 140:14; Isa 33:15; 45:19; Prov 1:3; 2:9) and is also identified as a word-pair in Ugaritic texts.¹³ If this is a stock word-pair, then to say that the Levites were "upright of heart" in 2 Chronicles 29:34 is also to say that they were righteous. Not, on the face of it, particularly controversial, except that in this verse it is a comparative: the Levites were "more upright of heart than the priests in sanctifying themselves."

5 Priests and Levites

Who are the priests that the Levites outstripped in uprightness of heart? At the time of David's establishment of Solomon's succession in 1 Chronicles 28–29, Zadok was anointed as (high) priest, after having been active in the previous chapters. The Zadokite nature of the priesthood, however, is not mentioned again in Chronicles, *except* in 2 Chronicles 31:10 – another episode from the reign of Hezekiah. While it is often assumed that the priests in Chronicles are Zadokites, this one explicit mention of Zadok both emphasizes the link between Hezekiah and David and reintroduces Zadokites into the discourse of the book. The priests

¹³ Loren R. Fisher, ed., *Ras Shamra Parallels: The Texts from Ugarit and the Hebrew Bible*, Vol. 1 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1972), 320.

of 2 Chronicles 29, therefore, are quite plausibly Zadokite, even though it is only the chief priest Azariah who is named as Zadokite in 2 Chronicles 31:10.

The implications of the Levites being more upright of heart should be clear: they are more upright of heart, thus more righteous than the priests, who are Zadokite, or, “Righteous.” Within the context of Chronicles, which generally elevates Levites without polemicizing against priests, this slur is difficult to comprehend. Only when placing Chronicles next to Ezekiel do we see the two sides of the polemic. Although Ezekiel does not use *ישר* except in chapter 1, the way *שרת* is used in chapter 44 can be read as making the link: it is a pun. This kind of pun: the use of two root letters in common between two root words, is a common form of word-play in Hebrew texts, sometimes called “parasonance.”¹⁴

It can be argued that the priests are not being named as Zadokite in this passage, nor are priests generally assumed to be Zadokite in Chronicles. While there are several references to Zadok as David’s priest and to Zadok in the priestly genealogies, there are very few references to Zadok as a priestly family. Jotham’s mother in 2 Chronicles 27:1 is named as “daughter of Zadok,” but this is taken over from the notice in 2 Kings 15:33 – whether this notice then influenced the construction of Jotham as a “good king” in Chronicles or might be read simply as another piece of evidence for Jotham as a “good king” is still up for debate. The other reference is in 2 Chronicles 31:10. On the other hand, there are a number of references to priests being Aaronide: David assembles the Aaronides and Levites in 1 Chronicles 15:4 as part of the preparations for bringing the ark into Jerusalem; the Levites are complementary to the Aaronides in 1 Chronicles 23:38, 32; 24:31; 27:17; the priests are explicitly named as Aaronides in 2 Chronicles 13:9–10; 26:18; 29:21; 31:19; 35:14. The usual patronymic for priests, when it is given, is Aaron, not Zadok. It may well be that the polemic in Chronicles is not against priests in general – seen as Aaronide – but against a particular priestly family, the Zadokites. By naming Zadok so prominently in the time of David, the Chronicler might be limiting the authority of Zadok to the time of David himself. Yet if that is so, why is the Zadokite nature of the high priest named in the story of Hezekiah? Hezekiah is the king most like David of the post-Solomonic kings, and there are a number of elements of his story that tie back to the reign of David.¹⁵ Ralph W. Klein also notes that the chief priest in 2 Chronicles 31:10 is Azariah, and a previous

¹⁴ Scott B. Noegel, “Paronomasia,” in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, Vol. 3, ed. Geoffrey Khan (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 26.

¹⁵ For a convenient list, see Ralph W. Klein, *2 Chronicles: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 413.

Azariah is named as the son of Zadok in 1 Kings 4:2.¹⁶ This is another instance of what I followed Lars Maskow in referring to as “over-information” that points to something of importance. It may be pointing to some kind of temporal development in the understanding of the priests and Levites over the course of the book of Chronicles,¹⁷ but I think it more likely, if there are different understandings of the roles of priests and Levites, that the dividing line is at the death of Solomon.

The Levites were part of (even led?) Israel’s עון (iniquity); this word is used four times in Ezekiel 44:10–12 (in the passage about Levites), and not at all in the following passage about Zadokite priests, who bear not עון but חלב (fat) and דם (blood). In this comparison, עון is likened to two very concrete things: it becomes a physical thing to be carried by the Levites, just as fat and blood are physical things to be carried by the Zadokite priests. The fat and blood, while concrete, are also symbolic of the abstraction of sacrifice just as עון is an abstraction. While the biblical occurrences do not present a clear antonym to עון, Ezekiel 18:20 and Psalm 69:28 suggest that it might be צדקה: righteousness.¹⁸

Uncovering the logic of this polemic from the perspective of a reader of Chronicles who already knew Ezekiel, we might say that in Ezekiel, not-Zadok equals not righteous; not righteous equals bearer of עון. Thus, Levites who are not Zadokite are bearers of עון. Rodney Duke argues that this is not a bad thing – it is more in line with atonement, and therefore the Levites’ service is not a punishment.¹⁹ Jacob Milgrom agreed with this position.²⁰ While this is a plausible reading of Ezekiel 44 (cf. esp. Isa 53), 2 Chronicles 29 suggests that the Chronicler, at least, saw a polemic against the Levites. Therefore, the Chronicler’s logic was: more upright of heart equals more righteous (using the well-known stock parallel), therefore Levites are more righteous than priests. Priests are Zadokite, therefore Levites have more צדק than צדוק. Additionally, the uprightness of the Levites is a pun on their “ministering” or “service” in Ezekiel: their service is not a punishment, but a reward.

Were the reader of Ezekiel previously familiar with Chronicles, the polemic is less subtle. The emphasis on Levites in Chronicles, present throughout the book, culminates with the statement in 2 Chronicles 29:34 about the Levites being more

¹⁶ Klein, *2 Chronicles*, 450.

¹⁷ Jonker, “Melting Pots and Rejoinders,” 51.

¹⁸ Klaus Koch, “‘āwōn,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Vol. 10, ed. Gerhard Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001).

¹⁹ Duke, “Punishment or Restoration.”

²⁰ Jacob Milgrom, “Ezekiel and the Levites,” in *Sacred History, Sacred Literature: Essays on Ancient Israel, the Bible, and Religion in Honor of R.E. Friedman on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Shawna Dolansky (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 9–11.

upright of heart and therefore more righteous than the priests. The loving descriptions of the Levites' different forms of service found throughout the book have as their conclusion the Levites taking on the responsibilities of the priests. It is important to note that the verb שרת is about as common in Chronicles as Ezekiel, but while twelve of the seventeen occurrences in Ezekiel are in chapters 44–45, eleven of the eighteen occurrences in Chronicles refer to Levites, and are spread throughout the book; only two occurrences refer to priests. It is language typical of Chronicles in that only two of the occurrences are in parallel texts in Kings. One of these, 2 Chronicles 5:14, is important in that it is one of the two uses of שרת for priests, and while Chronicles takes over the Kings text here, the text refers to an event where the priests “were not able to stand to minister before the Cloud of Presence, because the *kabod* of Yhwh filled the House of God.” For the reader of Ezekiel who knew Chronicles, the whole passage of Ezekiel 44–45 is a response and polemic against this version of the priesthood, a version of the priesthood in which the priests are not able to fulfill their duties either due to God's presence or to their own incompetence.

Many commentators have suggested that Ezekiel 44–45 is a later addition to the book, or parts of it are later redactional layers. The links between Ezekiel 44 and Numbers have led some to propose that Ezekiel 44 is modeled on the Korahite rebellion in Numbers.²¹ If so, those parts may be contemporary with Chronicles. It is typical of scholars writing on Ezekiel to show little awareness of the depiction of Levites in Chronicles, thus reinforcing the “history of the priesthood” model even while explicitly critiquing such an approach. While any of these redactional arguments may be made, from the reader's perspective of the book as we have it now, it does not matter which was written first. The polemic between Ezekiel and Chronicles on the relative worth of Zadokites and Levites can be entered from either direction. While the Ezekielian polemic is blunt and unsubtle, relying on the contrastive use of the same word שרת with respect to Levites and priests, the Chronicler's polemic hinges on the scribal curriculum of stock word-pairs. By making use of a phrase, “upright of heart,” that had a stock complement in *tsedeqah/tsadiq* (or some other word from the root צדק), the root of the Zadokites' name is evoked. The same phrase “upright of heart” also puns on the root שרת, the “service” or “ministry” claimed by the Levites, especially so when the priests were not able to complete their own. The Levites' ministry is righteous, no matter what Ezekiel might say.

²¹ Cook, “Innerbiblical Interpretation in Ezekiel 44.”

6 Historical development of the priesthood?

In none of the above have I attempted to make any arguments about the development of the Judaeen priesthood. Most discussions of priests and Levites in Ezekiel, Deuteronomy, and Chronicles have taken a historical approach to the question, based on their dating of the texts.²² There is no doubt that the Levites as described in many biblical texts such as Deuteronomy, Judges, Kings, etc. look quite different from the Levites as described in Chronicles. Interestingly, and importantly, the Levites in Ezekiel 44 look a lot like the Levites of Chronicles. It seems that Ezekielian scholarship does not typically pick up on this depiction. Iain Duguid notes the careful construction of the lines between sacred and profane in Ezekiel, both in the temple personnel as much as in the temple itself.²³ Notably there are just as careful lines drawn in Chronicles about the sanctity of the temple and the structure of its personnel: where Chronicles and Ezekiel differ is in what place the line should be drawn. Louis Jonker notes that both Levites and priests are described as sanctified from 2 Chronicles 23:6 onward.²⁴ Chronicles does not advocate in any way for either kings or the people to take up temple functions, and in fact the episode of Uzziah in 2 Chronicles 26 shows clearly that kings are not qualified to take part in temple rituals.²⁵ Most Ezekielian scholarship looks for parallels with Numbers and points to Isaiah 56–66 as representing the object of Ezekiel 44's polemic, rather than Chronicles.²⁶ Nathan MacDonald even goes so far as to suggest that a later priestly redactor of Chronicles did not even know the text of Ezekiel.²⁷ Gary N. Knoppers, on the other hand, did show the extensive links

²² For Ezekiel, e.g. MacDonald, *Priestly Rule*; Milgrom, "Ezekiel and the Levites"; but cf. Cook, "Innerbiblical Interpretation in Ezekiel 44" as already questioning this perspective; even so, he concludes his article with a tentative reconstruction of a social situation that would have led to tensions between priestly groups; for Chronicles, e.g. Gary N. Knoppers, "Hierodules, Priests, or Janitors? The Levites in Chronicles and the History of the Israelite Priesthood," *JBL* 118 (1999): 49–72.

²³ Iain M. Duguid, "Putting Priests in Their Place: Ezekiel's Contribution to the History of the Old Testament Priesthood," in *Ezekiel's Hierarchical World: Wrestling with a Tiered Reality*, ed. Stephen L. Cook and Corrine Patton (Atlanta: SBL, 2004), 58.

²⁴ Jonker, "Melting Pots and Rejoinders," 47–48.

²⁵ Contra Jonker, "Melting Pots and Rejoinders," 48. He sees holiness being "democratized" in this part of Chronicles under the influence of the Holiness Code and associated Pentateuchal redaction.

²⁶ But see Benjamin Kilchör, "The Meaning of Ezekiel 44,6–14 in Light of Ezekiel 1–39," *Bib* 98 (2017): 191–207 as a welcome corrective to the search for an external referent, instead placing Ezek 44 in the context of Ezek 1–39.

²⁷ MacDonald, *Priestly Rule*, 121.

between the depictions of Levites, priests, and cultic concerns in Chronicles with the Priestly and Ezekielian material,²⁸ which suggests that if the Chronicler did not know Ezekiel, the Chronicler knew material that resembles Ezekiel. Knoppers' caution that "Shared terminology does not constitute sufficient grounds to conclude that the levitical (*sic*) work profile is pro-Priestly in orientation"²⁹ should be heeded, and indeed provides support for reading a polemic: "Similar verbiage has misled scholars into thinking that there is more continuity between P and the Chronicler than is warranted by the evidence. The Chronicler draws on Priestly terminology, but he does so to expand levitical (*sic*) responsibilities and to blur some of the clear distinctions advanced by the Priestly writers and defended by Ezekiel."³⁰ Rather than seeing both texts (or redactional layers) as deriving from a specific historical period and stage in the development of the priesthood, I have examined these texts from a purely literary perspective, looking at them as examples of the genre of polemic, and placing the Chronicles reference as the primary referent for understanding the Ezekielian text.

7 Conclusion

Although many have suggested that Chronicles is a dull book, a simple cut and paste job with some other bits sandwiched in; and although many have commented on the relentlessness of Chronicles in promoting certain themes: David, Levites, temple, etc., a great deal of subtle artistry went into producing such a dull book. The book of Chronicles is filled with sly allusions, complicated word-plays, irony, and other forms of literary artistry. That the "Levites were more upright of heart than the priests in sanctifying themselves" is one more example of this artistry and erudition. In this case, a polemic between the books of Chronicles and Ezekiel can be discerned; although it is not possible to discern with certainty which is a polemic against the other, Chronicles as a polemic against Ezekiel seems most likely.

²⁸ Knoppers, "Hierodules, Priests."

²⁹ Knoppers, "Hierodules, Priests," 58.

³⁰ Knoppers, "Hierodules, Priests," 64.