

Jewish exegesis and the New Testament¹

Our studies have shown that the use of The Old Testament in the New has many similarities with contemporary Jewish exegesis. In particular, the New Testament authors share with the Qumran writings the presupposition that they are living in the age of fulfilment. This means that scripture can be applied directly to those involved in the final eschatological events. So just as the author of 1QpHab discovered the battle between the Wicked Priest and the Teacher of Righteousness in the book of Habakkuk, the Christian writers found the treachery of Judas and the need to replace him in the psalms. Both groups saw the establishment of their community as a fulfilment of God's promises to Israel and both thought judgement would soon fall on those who resist.

In some cases, they even use the same texts. The restoration of the fallen tent of David (Amos 9:11) is used in 4QFlor and Acts 15, the proclamation of liberty to the oppressed (Isa 61) in 11QMelch and Luke 4, and the rage of the nations against God's anointed (Psalm 2) in 4QFlor and Acts 4. One might suggest that these are fairly obvious 'messianic' texts and put it down to coincidence. But that can hardly be said of Amos 5:25–26 ('You shall take up Sakkuth your king, and Kaiwan your star-god'), which is quoted in CD 7 and Acts 7. Even more significant is that they use many of the same exegetical techniques. In the course of our study, we have seen examples of typology, allegory, catch-word links, quoting from variant texts, altering the quoted text, reading the text in an unorthodox manner, drawing on *haggada* legends and using homiletic forms of argumentation.

Typology

In Rom 5:14, Paul specifically says that Adam is a 'type of the one to come'. In other passages, the actual word 'type' is not used but it is clear that a 'biblical event, person, or institution' is serving as an 'example or pattern for other events, persons, or institutions' (Baker, 1994, p. 327). Thus eating and drinking in the wilderness corresponds to participation in the Christian Eucharist (both bring 'types' of life). The lifting up of the serpent corresponds to the crucifixion (both bring 'types' of healing). The crossing of the Red Sea corresponds to Christian baptism (both bring 'types' of deliverance). Fishbane says that such 'typological alignments have deep exegetical dimensions, in so far as they "read" one historical moment in terms of another, and thereby project the powerful associations of the past into future images of longing and hope' (1985, p. 371).

Allegory

The word 'allegory' is only found in Gal 4:24 (as a verb), where Sarah and Hagar are identified with two mountains, then with two covenants and finally with those who follow Paul's law free gospel and those who believe Gentiles must be circumcised. In the book of Revelation, a whole host of images (lampstands, stars, beasts, dragons, locusts)

¹Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the New : An Introduction* (, T&T Clark Approaches to Biblical Studies London: T&T Clark International, 2001), 128.

and numbers (666, 144,000) are given special symbolic meanings. Payment of those who work in Christ's service is supported by a quotation about not muzzling an ox (Deut 25:4). It is just about impossible to believe that these interpretations were in the mind of the original authors or editors.

Catch-word links

In Rom 4, Paul expounds the meaning of Gen 15:6 ('the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness') by referring to Psalm 32:1–2 ('blessed is the one against whom the Lord will not reckon sin'). The 'stone' passage quoted in Mark 12:10–11 has generated further 'stone' passages in Luke 20:18, Rom 9:33 and 1 Pet 2:6–8. In Gal 3, the 'curse' of not obeying the law (Deut 27:26) has led Paul to another 'curse' text, one which pronounces a curse on a criminal left hanging on a tree (Deut 21:23). Paul is able to use this connection by asserting that Christ's death on the cross/tree incurred the curse of Deut 21:23, which somehow neutralized the curse of Deut 27:26.

Quoting from variant texts

This is somewhat different from Qumran or the Rabbis in that the New Testament authors generally quote from a Greek translation rather than the Hebrew. Thus in one sense, they are always quoting from a variant text. But of particular interest are those occasions when the Greek text diverges significantly from the Hebrew. In Acts 15:16–17, a text of Amos 9:12 is quoted which read 'Adam' instead of 'Edom'. The author of Hebrews obtains a proof-text for the incarnation by means of a text that read 'body' instead of 'open ear'. In Acts 7:43, Stephen quotes a text of Amos 5:25 that names the foreign gods as 'Moloch' and 'Rephan', instead of 'Sakkuth' and 'Kaiwan'.

Altering the quoted text

In the above example, 'Moloch' and 'Rephan' are changes already found in the LXX but the change from 'Damascus' (Israel's northern exile) to 'Babylon' (Judah's southern exile) has no precedent and appears to be the author's. Matthew inserts *oudamos* ('by no means') in his quotation of Mic 5:2, effectively reversing its meaning. John has Judas betraying Jesus by raising 'his heel' rather than 'by cunning' (13:18), the latter probably being regarded as doctrinally inappropriate.

Reading the text in an unorthodox manner

In Matt 21:5 (donkey and colt) and John 19:24 (clothes and clothing) the Hebrew parallelism is ignored and taken to refer to two different things. It is impossible to believe that this was done in ignorance. One can only suppose that they regarded the parallelism as fortuitous (i.e. planned by God) and chose to exploit it. Paul's linguistic argument concerning the singular 'offspring' is similar. He clearly knows that the original promise refers to a multitude since he speaks of 'Abraham's children and his true descendants' in Rom 9:7. In Gal 3:16, he chooses to exploit a feature of the language to make a christological point.

Use of haggada legends

The extraordinary statement in 1 Cor 10:4, that the rock which supplied water for the wilderness generation followed them in their wanderings, was not original to Paul. It is known from Jewish tradition. Twice in the New Testament (Gal 3:19; Acts 7:53) we hear of the tradition that Moses received the law on Mount Sinai through angels. Jude and 2 Peter make use of the legendary interpretation of Gen 6, that angels had intercourse with women and produced a race of giants. Jude uses the tradition that Michael disputed with Satan concerning the body of Moses. In 2 Tim 3:8 there is a reference to the tradition that Satan raised up Jannes and Jambres to oppose Moses.

Traditional forms of homiletic argumentation

Kimball cites the rabbinic form of debate known as *yelammedenu* as the explanation for Jesus answering the lawyer's question ('who is my neighbour?') with the parable of the Good Samaritan. This tradition began with a question, cited relevant texts from the law, clarified with a text from the prophets, illustrated the meaning of key terms with a story and closed with a return to the original texts. Borgen does a similar thing for the 'Bread of life' discourse in John 6. Stockhausen argues that Paul often begins his argument with texts (or events) from the law, clarifies with a text from the prophets (or the wisdom writings) and uses *peshet*-type exegesis to bring out their contemporary meaning.

Explaining The Old Testament in the New

Do the parallels set out above 'explain' the use of The Old Testament in the New? Some scholars think so, suggesting that the only difference between the two sets of writings is that each saw their own community as the true fulfilment of scripture. In other words, they applied the same methods and techniques but with different presuppositions. The New Testament authors viewed the scriptures through the lens of the Christ event and the establishment of the Church. The Qumran authors viewed them through the lens of the Teacher of Righteousness and the establishment of the Essenes/Qumran community. If Luke thinks that Jesus opened the minds of the disciples to understand the scriptures (Luke 24:27), the Qumran community believed that the Teacher of Righteousness 'made known all the mysteries of the words of his servants the Prophets' (1QpHab 7:5). This of course raises the question of validity. Did the two communities simply find in the scriptures what they wanted to find? In other words, is ancient exegesis a serious attempt to discover what is in the text or an apologetic strategy to defend views arrived at on other grounds?

Other scholars regard the parallels as superficial and think that the use of The Old Testament in the New is quite different from the Qumran writings. This can take several forms. First, there are those who suggest that the more 'arbitrary' types of exegesis (allegory, altering texts, *haggadda*) are rare in the New Testament and should not be seen as parallel to the *extensive* use of such devices at Qumran. Second, there are those that regard the eschatological orientation of the two communities as quite different. The

Qumran community looked forward to a time when Isa 61 (liberty to the oppressed) or Amos 9 (restoration of Davidic dynasty) would come about. The New Testament authors proclaimed that these had been fulfilled in Christ. Third, some argue that christological exegesis is quite different from anything at Qumran. It is not about applying methods but being involved in a type of spiritual transformation. And lastly, we should not forget that scholars themselves have presuppositions. Christian scholars naturally think that the application of the Old Testament to Christ and the Church was correct, while the application to the Teacher of Righteousness and the Qumran community was false. It would be a naive scholar who thought this had no effect on their judgements.

1. Interpretations that emphasize continuity

We have seen a number of these in the course of our study. Moo argues that Jesus' use of the Old Testament is quite different from the arbitrary exegesis of Qumran. Jesus was not interested in bringing new meaning to old texts but aimed to show how the texts, when properly understood, spoke about himself. Kimball is happy to link Jesus with the more acceptable forms of Jewish exegesis but thinks the purpose of the quotations was (1) To claim eschatological fulfilment and (2) To correct traditional Jewish interpretation with his own superior exegesis. Thus he acknowledges that the reading in the synagogue consists of Isa 61:1–2 with a phrase from Isa 58:6 inserted, but believes we are to understand this as a summary of Jesus' sermon rather than the actual reading. He thinks that Jesus (not Luke) chose this combination of texts to assert that he was both the herald of the coming liberation (Isa 61) and its agent (Isa 58).

The most extreme form of continuity is argued by scholars such as Kaiser in his contribution to the Beale collection (1994, pp. 55–69) and in his book (1985). The title of the article ('The Single Intent of Scripture') makes his position clear. The meaning of the Old Testament is no more and no less than the original intention of the authors. This is ascertained by the normal means of understanding texts (genre, grammar, syntax, etc.) and this applies both to our use of scripture and that of the New Testament authors. The New Testament authors did not discover a *superadditum* in addition to the original intention of the authors. They simply applied the one single meaning to new situations.

The opposite strategy is found in Beale's contribution to the collection (1994, pp. 387–404) and in his book (1998). Beale argues that the single intent of scripture is the meaning that God intended when the writings were inspired. He believes that the New Testament authors had certain presuppositions, among the most important being: (1) Corporate solidarity, the way a person can represent and embody a people; (2) Christ's representation of true Israel in the Old Testament and the Church (the new Israel) in the New; (3) History is unified by a wise and sovereign plan so that the earlier parts are designed to correspond and point to the latter parts; (4) The age of eschatological fulfilment has come in Christ. As a consequence, the fifth presupposition affirms that the latter parts of biblical history function as the broader context to interpret earlier parts because they all have the same, ultimate divine author who inspires the various human authors, and one deduction from this premise is that Christ as the centre of history is the *key to interpreting the earlier portions of the Old Testament and its promises*. (1994, p. 392)

Thus Beale can acknowledge that the New Testament applies Old Testament texts in ways that were not necessarily envisaged by their original authors. But he insists that this never involves a change of meaning. Rather, it is drawing out the full potential of the

text, now that the age of fulfilment has come. It is like a seed which contains everything that is to develop from it, though this would not necessarily be evident simply by gazing at the seed.

2. Interpretations that emphasize discontinuity

One of the first scholars to compare the Qumran writings with the New Testament was Krister Stendahl (1954). The fact that he based his study on Matthew was significant. Matthew, as we have seen, is most open to the charge of manipulating texts to prove what he wants to prove. Stendahl pointed to the use of variant texts, changing the wording of texts, ignoring the original context and supplying different vowels, in order to make his point. He characterized Matthew's use of the Old Testament as *midrash-pesher*, by which he meant that it strongly resembled the type of interpretation found in 1QpHab. Davies and Allison continue this tradition in their multi-volume commentary, stating, for example, that contrary to Matthew's interpretation, Isa 7:14 only means that 'she who is now a virgin will later conceive and give birth: no miracle is involved' (1988, p. 214).

Interpretations that emphasize discontinuity often stress the apologetic nature of the New Testament use of scripture. The authors did not believe in the death and resurrection of Christ or the birth of the Church through scripture study. They believed in these things because they had experienced them and only turned to scripture in order to convince others. Thus Paul's quotations are mainly concentrated in Galatians and Romans, where the issue of 'works of the law' is uppermost. There are no explicit quotations in Philippians or Thessalonians, where this is not the issue. In the book of Acts, Luke portrays Paul as using scripture when preaching to Jews (Acts 13) but not when preaching to Gentiles (Acts 17). Instead, he has Paul quote from some of their poets. The apologetic interpretation is particularly associated with Lindars (*New Testament Apologetic*, 1961), who says that

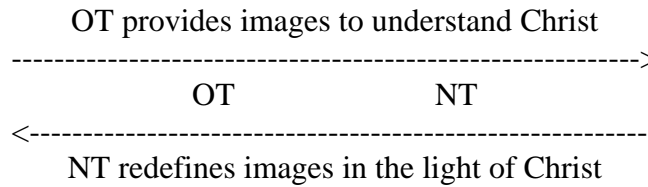
The place of The Old Testament in the formation of New Testament theology is that of a servant, ready to run to the aid of the gospel whenever it is required, bolstering up arguments, and filling out meaning through evocative allusions, but never acting as the master or leading the way, nor even guiding the process of thought behind the scenes. (In Beale, 1994, p. 145)

3. Interpretations that emphasize continuity and discontinuity

Not surprisingly, many scholars find the above positions too extreme and so seek to do justice to both continuity and discontinuity. This takes many forms. Some acknowledge that Old Testament texts *appear* to be taken out of context but appeal either to the surrounding verses or to exegetical developments that took place between the Testaments. Hanson makes this a significant feature of his work. Others seek to show that the Old Testament texts, while not specifically addressing the situation envisaged in the New, nevertheless have a certain 'givenness' to them. The obvious example is Isa 53, which seems to 'cry out' for an individual interpretation/fulfilment.

Joel Marcus argues that Mark modelled his Gospel on the new exodus promised by Isaiah but its application to Christ and the disciples caused a transformation. Yahweh's triumphant march through the wilderness is forced to collide with the reality of Jesus' death and the 'befuddled, bedraggled little band of disciples'. Mark has certainly learned

much about Christ from the scriptures. But he would not have been able to learn it had he not believed that Christ was the key to the scriptures. One might argue, therefore, that Christian experience comes first and reflection on the scriptures follows. On the other hand, it is also true that the New Testament writers were largely ‘formed’ by the scriptures before they ever set eyes on Christ.



Hays argues for a dialogical understanding of the Old Testament in Paul. The Old Testament, he says, is never played off as a foil for the gospel or regarded as sub-standard. Paul’s quotations and allusions bring powerful connotations that are not easily silenced. Paul sometimes offers specific interpretations that guide the reader down a particular path. But other times, he places new and old side by side and allows them to mutually interpret one another. Thus Moses is both witness to the old covenant when veiled and witness to God’s glory when unveiled. Hays challenges the view that Paul’s hermeneutics are christocentric, arguing that very few of his quotations are actually applied to Christ. However, if one suggests broader themes, such as, ‘God’s purpose to raise up a worldwide community of people who confess his sovereignty and manifest his justice’, then the continuity is more easily discernible.

Another important feature of Hays’s work is that while he acknowledges Paul’s debt to Jewish exegesis, he does not feel this adequately explains it. To argue that Paul went from text to text by catch-word associations does not explain why he chose *these* associations rather than others. Even the idea of presuppositional lenses does not adequately explain the choices made or even the process. Scholars expend a great deal of energy trying to trace Paul’s steps in such passages as Gal 3:10–14 but it is highly unlikely that Paul went through them one by one in discreet stages. According to Hays, Paul ‘seems to have leaped—in moments of metaphorical insight—to intuitive apprehensions of the meanings of texts without the aid or encumbrance of systematic reflection about his own hermeneutics’ (1989, p. 161).

Hughes tries to work out a dynamic interpretation for the use of the Old Testament in Hebrews. He notes that some passages emphasize continuity to the extent that the Old Testament heroes are virtually treated as Christians. On the other hand, it is clear that some parts of scripture are treated as obsolete. He thus asks: ‘How in one context can the scriptures of the Old Testament function so immediately as a vehicle for the Word of God while in other contexts the covenant which those same scriptures enshrine is unceremoniously dismissed as outmoded?’ (1979, p. 71). His answer is not so much exegetical techniques or fixed rules but context and perspective. When the author is thinking of the struggles of the Church, words spoken to Israel in her struggles are an immediate Word of God to the congregation. But when he is thinking of the benefits brought about by Christ, the ‘words can only be seen as preparatory, witnessing, some of them at least, to their own futurity and hence infinality’ (p. 71).

Finally, we must mention the growing use of the concept of intertextuality in the study of The Old Testament in the New. Biblical scholars are not the only ones interested in how texts relate to other texts. Students of literature have always been interested in how later writers situate their work with respect to the past. Intertextuality takes this one step further by suggesting that texts are always in a dynamic relationship with other texts. Paul's concentrated use of 'curse' texts in Gal 3 is not only an interpretation of Deut 21:23 and 27:26. It also does something to the word 'curse', so that even historically unrelated writings are affected. This offers a different orientation for the study of The Old Testament in the New. It is not about using the various sources and influences to complete a two-dimensional puzzle, as if that static entity represented the author's use of the Old Testament. Rather, it seeks to describe the complex interactions set in motion when the 'textual matrix' is disturbed by a new text. As Julia Kristeva puts it, we should try and see the interaction of texts as an 'intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point' (1986, p. 36). Scholars in this third category (continuity and discontinuity) agree that we are dealing with a dynamic interaction between new and old. The issue raised by intertextuality is whether this interaction results in a stable resolution (a point) or a range of possibilities (surfaces).

Conclusion

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and developments in literary criticism have shed new light on the use of The Old Testament in the New. The Dead Sea Scrolls reveal a community that believed the words of the prophets were being fulfilled in their own history and used certain exegetical techniques to prove it. The New Testament authors believed this of their community and used many of the same techniques, indeed some of the same texts, to prove it. As we have seen, much has been published (see Bibliography) but there is still much to do. Questions about hermeneutics (interpretation), the availability of Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic texts in the first century, the role of The Old Testament in the new work and the legitimacy or otherwise of certain techniques will continue to challenge scholars. Furthermore, developments in literary criticism have brought fresh insights into how texts interact with their subtexts. What happens when a text is lifted from its textual moorings and deposited somewhere else? Can the new author control the effects this will have on the reader? Or does it introduce a dynamic that requires the reader's participation? The aim of this book has been to provide an introduction to this fascinating area of study. My hope is that you will now go on to read some of the more detailed works mentioned in the 'Further reading' and begin a 'dialogue with the text and with the texts within the text' (Ruiz, 1989, p. 520). Perhaps in time, you will be writing your own text that interacts 'with the text and the texts within the text'.