
Did Jesus and his followers preach the right doctrine from the wrong texts? An examination of the presuppositions of Jesus' and the apostles' exegetical method

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The question of the NT's use of the OT is a thorny one, which has been addressed more than once in Themelios, most recently by Prof. R. N. Longenecker (vol. 13, pp. 4-8). In this further study Dr Beale, who teaches at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Massachusetts and who is author of a detailed study on The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St John, offers another perspective.

Introduction

The degree of continuity and discontinuity in both theology and interpretative method between Christianity and its Jewish environment has been a point of much debate in NT studies. This has especially been the case with the issue of the use of the OT in Judaism and in the NT.

One widely-held position is that Jesus and the writers of the NT used non-contextual and atomistic hermeneutical methods such as were used by their Jewish contemporaries. We today would regard such methods as illegitimate. But, we are assured, they were guided in their interpretation by the example of Christ and by the Spirit, and so, although we cannot initiate their methods today, we can trust their conclusions and believe their doctrine.¹ This article is

intended to raise questions about this approach and to offer a possible alternative.

The issue of non-contextual exegesis in post-biblical Judaism and its relation to the NT methodology

Our starting-point is to observe that it is not at all clear that non-contextual midrashic exegesis was as central to earlier Pharisaic and Qumran exegesis as is suggested by scholars favouring the approach we have described. First, it may not be appropriate to speak of a non-contextual *rabbinic* method in the pre-AD 70 setting, since most examples come from after AD 70 and those which can be dated with probability before that do not appear to reflect such an atomistic approach.² Second, concern for contextual exegesis is found not uncharacteristically both in Qumran and in Jewish apocalyptic.³ This analysis has far-reaching implications for the argument of those who believe that early Christian exegetes were influenced by a prevalent atomistic Jewish hermeneutic.

But even this assumption of influence may be questioned. It sounds *a priori* plausible that the exegetical procedures of the NT would resemble those of contemporary Judaism. And

yet, since early Christianity had a unique perspective in comparison with early Judaism, one should not assume that Jewish and Christian hermeneutical approaches will necessarily have been identical in every way.⁴ It is necessary to look at the NT itself, without prejudice about methodological continuity or discontinuity, in order to assess the issue.

It is often claimed that an inductive study of the NT reveals a predominantly non-contextual exegetical method. But, in fact, of all the many OT citations and allusions found in the NT, only a very few plausible examples of non-contextual usage have been noted by critics. These include:⁵

1. *ad hominem* argumentation: the role of angels revealing the law in Galatians 3:19; the Exodus 'veil' theme in 2 Corinthians 3:13-18.

2. non-contextual midrashic treatments: the understanding of baptism and the 'following rock' in 1 Corinthians 10:1-4; Deuteronomy 30:12-14 in Romans 10:6-8; Genesis 12:7ff. in Galatians 3:16; Psalm 68:18 in Ephesians 4:8.

3. allegorical interpretations: Deuteronomy 25:4 in 1 Corinthians 9:9; the use of the OT in Galatians 4:24; Genesis 14 in Hebrews 7.

4. atomistic interpretation: Isaiah 40:6-8 in 1 Peter 1:24ff.

Two things need to be said about such examples. First, it is by no means certain that even these examples are actually non-contextual. A number of scholars have offered viable and even persuasive explanations of how they could well be cases of contextual exegesis.⁶ But, second, even if it is granted that they are convincing examples of non-contextual hermeneutics, it does not necessarily follow that they are truly representative of a wider hermeneutical pattern in the NT.⁷ They may be exceptional rather than typical.

The contribution of C. H. Dodd

A substantial and often neglected argument against the view that the NT uses the OT atomistically is C. H. Dodd's classic work, *According to the Scriptures* (London: Nisbet, 1952). In brief, Dodd observed that throughout the NT there are numerous and scattered quotes that derive from the same few OT contexts. He asks the question why, given that the same segment of the OT is in view, there are so few identical quotations of the same verse, and secondly, why it is that different verses are cited from the same segments of the OT. He concludes that this phenomenon indicates that NT authors were aware of broad OT contexts and did not focus merely on single verses independent of the segment from which they were drawn. Single verses and phrases are merely signposts to the overall OT context from which they were cited. Furthermore, he concludes that this was a *unique hermeneutical phenomenon* of the day. He goes on to assert that since this hermeneutical phenomenon can be found in the very earliest strata of the NT traditions, and since such innovations are not characteristic of committees, then Christ was the most likely source of this original, creative hermeneutic and it was from him that the NT writers learned their method.⁸

Some disagree with Dodd; indeed, many scholars in this field affirm that the NT writers often employ a non-contextual exegetical method.⁹ Nevertheless, others have supported Dodd's thesis about the NT's unique and consistent respect for the OT context, rightly in our opinion.¹⁰

(To accept Dodd's view is not to deny that NT authors display varying degrees of awareness of literary context, as well as perhaps of historical context. Those texts with a low degree of correspondence with the OT literary context can be referred to as semi-contextual, since they seem to fall between the poles of what we ordinarily call 'contextual' and 'non-contextual' usages.¹¹ Indeed, there are instances where NT writers handle OT texts in a diametrically opposite manner to that in which they appear to function in their original contexts. Often, upon closer examination such uses reveal an ironic or polemical intention.¹² In such examples it would be wrong to conclude that an OT reference has been interpreted non-contextually. Indeed, awareness of context must be presupposed in making such interpretations of OT texts. On the other hand, non-contextual uses of the OT may be expected to occur where there is unintentional or unconscious allusion. Caution should be exercised in labelling OT usages merely either as contextual or non-contextual, since other more precisely descriptive interpretative categories may be better.)

The distinctive presuppositions of the apostles' exegetical method

But neither Dodd nor his followers have inquired deeply enough into the more fundamental issue concerning the reason why the NT is different from Judaism in its contextual approach (assuming for the sake of argument that a non-contextual method was an inherent trait of Jewish exegesis, a position we have tentatively questioned). Therefore, what were the presuppositions which inspired what Dodd and others believe to be a unique, consistent contextual approach to the OT?

The answer which makes most sense of the data is that Jesus and the apostles had an unparalleled redemptive-historical perspective on the OT in relation to their own situation (there are some parallels with Qumran but there is not space to discuss the reasons for its methodological differences with the NT, except to note the following assumptions of the NT writers). This perspective involved a framework of five hermeneutical and theological presuppositions:

1. the assumption of *corporate solidarity* or *representation*;¹³
2. that Christ is viewed as representing the *true Israel* of the OT and true Israel, the church, in the NT;¹⁴

3. that *history is unified* by a wise and sovereign plan so that the earlier parts are designed to correspond and point to the latter parts (*cf.* Mt. 11:13f.);¹⁵

4. that the age of *eschatological fulfilment* has come in Christ;¹⁶

5. as a consequence of (3) and (4), 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 OT and its promises*.¹⁷

It is only in the light of this fifth presupposition that we may legitimately speak of a *sensus plenior* of Scripture, although it is probably best not to use this phrase since it is not often understood in this precise manner (*sensus plenior* is typically defined as the full meaning of Scripture of which an author

was likely not cognizant; there is a wealth of literature discussing the legitimacy of seeing such meanings).¹⁸ On this view it is quite possible that the OT authors did not exhaustively understand the meaning, implications and possible applications of all that they wrote. Subsequently, NT Scripture interprets the OT Scripture by expanding its meaning, seeing new implications in it and giving it new applications.¹⁹ I believe, however, that it can be demonstrated that this expansion does not contravene the integrity of the earlier texts but rather develops them in a way which is consistent with the OT author's understanding of the way in which God interacts with his people — which is the unifying factor between the Testaments. Therefore, the canon interprets the canon; later parts of the canon draw out and explain more clearly the earlier parts.²⁰

LaSor has explained well the fifth presupposition of canonical contextual interpretation:

In one sense, it [the *sensus plenior* or fuller meaning] lies outside and beyond the historical situation of the prophet, and therefore it cannot be derived by grammatico-historical exegesis. But in another sense, it is part of the history of redemption, and therefore it can be controlled by the study of Scripture taken in its entirety.

Perhaps an illustration will make [this] clear. . . . An ordinary seed contains in itself everything that will develop in the plant or tree to which it is organically related: every branch, every leaf, every flower. Yet no amount of examination by available scientific methods will disclose to us what is in that seed. However, once the seed has developed to its fullness, we can see how the seed has been fulfilled . . . [and] we have sufficient revelation in the Scriptures to keep our interpretations of *sensus plenior* from becoming totally subjective.²¹

The biblical basis for each of these presuppositions needs more elaboration than the limits of this essay allow. Nevertheless it is within this framework that we are to understand why the early church believed that through identification with Christ it was the continuation of the true Israel, living in the inauguration of the latter days. As such it was beginning to fulfil the OT prophecies and promises about eschatological Israel.

It is within this framework too that the whole OT was perceived as pointing to this eschatological age both via direct prophecy and the indirect prophetic adumbration of Israel's history. This latter point is especially significant. OT history was understood as containing historical patterns which foreshadowed the period of the eschaton. Consequently, the nation Israel, its kings, prophets, priests and its significant redemptive episodes composed the essential ingredients of this sacred history. This is what scholars sometimes call 'typology', which is often defined as the study of correspondences between earlier and later events, persons, institutions, etc., within the historical framework of biblical revelation, and which from a retrospective viewpoint are perceived to have a prophetic function. Ideal or even enigmatic depictions in the OT became 'ideal' candidates to select for descriptions of features in the eschatological period which had finally arrived. These came to be considered as typical or ideal prophetic portraits.

I would argue that this broad redemptive-historical perspective was the dominant framework within which Jesus and the NT writers thought, serving as an ever-present heuristic guide to the OT. In fact, it is this framework which

should be seen as the wider literary context within which the NT authors interpreted OT passages. Consideration of the immediate literary context of OT verses, which is what most exegetes affirm as an essential part of the historical-grammatical method, should therefore be supplemented with the canonical literary context.

But when these five presuppositions are related closely to the NT's exegetical method, they provide the best explanation for Dodd's observations and conclusions, especially why the NT does not focus on verses independent of their contexts. Their selection of OT texts was determined by this wider, overriding perspective, which viewed redemptive history as unified by an omnipotent and wise design. Throughout this plan are expressed the unchanging principles of faith in God, God's faithfulness in fulfilling promises, the rebellion of the unbelieving, God's judgment of them and his glory. Therefore, there was an emphatic concern for more overarching historical patterns or for significant persons (e.g. prophets, priests and kings), institutions and events which were essential constituents of such patterns. Such an emphasis was probably facilitated by the belief that Christ and the church now represented the true Israel, so that it would have been attractive to see various segments and patterns of Israel's history from the OT as recapitulated in the NT. This then was a holistic perspective guiding them away from concentrating on exegetically or theologically insignificant minutiae in passages and quoting individual references as signposts to the broad redemptive-historical theme(s) from the immediate and larger OT context of which they were a part. Is not this the most likely explanation for the phenomenon in the NT of so few identical quotations but different citations from the same segments of the OT?

One reason why many see the NT typically interpreting the OT non-contextually is often because the NT applies the OT to new situations, problems and people which were not in the minds of the OT authors. Interestingly, many of the cases where such misuse is cited are passages where what was intended for Israel (or leaders or righteous individuals in Israel) in the OT is now applied often by a typological method to either Christ or the church.²² One aspect of this is that many see typology as an arbitrary method which typically involves allegory and therefore it is also viewed as a good example of non-contextual exegesis. But most scholars today agree that typology is not allegory because it is based on the actual historical events of the OT passage being dealt with and because it essentially consists of a real, historical correspondence between the OT and NT event. Typological interpretation involves an extended reference to the original meaning of an OT text which develops it but does not contradict it. Put another way, it does not *read into* the text a different or higher sense, but *draws out* from it a different or higher application of the same sense.²³ Indeed, the five presuppositions of early Christian exegesis cited earlier undergird the typological method and distinguish it from allegory which not only disregards historical context but reads in a new, unrelated meaning to passages.²⁴

Typology is also faulted for being non-contextual because it sometimes refers to purely historical events as being prophetically fulfilled (*cf.* the introductory *πληρώω* formula) when they are clearly not intended as prophecies from the OT

author's perspective. This occurs mostly in Matthew but appears as well in the other gospels. But as we have discussed above this is partly explicable on the basis of the early Christian community's presupposition that Christ and the church (believing Jews and Gentiles) now represented true Israel, so that the various characteristic segments and patterns of God's interaction in Israel's history now apply to Christ and the church as the new people of God in the NT. Alternatively, such an approach is understandable because of its foundational assumption that history is an interrelated unity and that God had designed the earlier parts to correspond and point to the latter parts, especially to those events which have happened in the age of *eschatological fulfilment* in Christ. Consequently, the concept of prophetic fulfilment must not be limited to fulfilment of direct verbal prophecies in the OT but broadened to include also an indication of the 'redemptive-historical relationship of the new, climactic revelation of God in Christ to the preparatory, incomplete revelation to and through Israel'.²⁵

Typology therefore indicates fulfilment of the indirect prophetic adumbration of events, people and institutions from the OT in Christ who now is the final, climactic expression of all God ideally intended through these things in the OT (e.g. the Law, the temple cultus, the commissions of prophets, judges, priests and kings). Everything which these things lacked by way of imperfections was prophetically 'filled up' by Christ, so that even what was imperfect in the OT pointed beyond itself to Jesus.²⁶ Romans 5:12-21 is a classic example of this, where Christ is not only contrasted with Adam but is said to have accomplished what Adam failed to do, *i.e.* to obey righteously. This is why Adam is called a *τύπος* in Romans 5:14. Therefore, it is a too narrow hermeneutic which concludes that NT writers are being non-contextual when they understand passages from historical or overtly non-prophetic genre as typologically prophetic.²⁷

In addition, changed applications of the OT in general, whether or not typology is involved, do not necessitate the conclusion that these passages have been misinterpreted. For example, Matthew applies to Jesus what the OT intended for Israel (e.g. Mt. 2:4-22)²⁸ or Paul does the same thing with respect to the church (e.g. Rom. 9:24-26). What should be challenged is not their interpretation of the OT but the validity of the above-mentioned framework through which they interpreted the OT, especially the assumption that Christ corporately represented true Israel and that all who identify with him by faith are considered part of true Israel. If the validity of these presuppositions be granted, then the viability of their interpretation of the OT must also be viewed as plausible. Of course, many do not grant the legitimacy of these assumptions and consequently view the NT as distorting the original intention of the OT. But whatever conclusion one reaches, it is not based only on raw exegetical considerations but on the theological presupposition of the individual interpreter! For example, Hanson affirms that modern interpreters cannot reproduce the typological exegesis of the NT writers because essential to such exegesis was belief in the actual historicity of the events of the OT texts being referred to, a belief purportedly no longer tenable to post-critical thinking.²⁹

Further, changes of application need not mean a *disregard* for OT context. Given the viability of the presuppositions,

although the new applications are technically different, they nevertheless stay within the conceptual bounds of the OT contextual meaning, so that what results often is an extended reference to or application of a principle which is inherent to the OT text.³⁰ Of course, it would be possible to hold these presuppositions and still interpret the OT non-contextually, but the point we are attempting to make here is that when a case by case study is made, our recognition of such presuppositions among the NT writers nevertheless helps us to see *how* their interpretations could have been contextual from their particular perspective and *why* they would have been more sensitive to respecting contexts.³¹

Even when there is use of the OT with no apparent interest in prophetic fulfilment, there appears to be a redemptive-historical rationale at work behind the scenes. For example, when an OT reference is utilized only for the perceptible purpose of making an analogy, a key idea in the OT context is usually in mind as the primary characteristic or principle applied to the NT situation. These comparisons almost always broadly retain an essential association with the OT context and convey principles of continuity between OT and NT even though they are handled with creative freedom. This is true even in the Apocalypse,³² which is often seen as creatively handling the OT in a hermeneutically uncontrolled manner.³³

In the light of our overall discussion, the proposal of many that the NT's exegetical approach to the OT is characteristically non-contextual is a substantial overstatement. It would take more space than allowed in this article to discuss all the relevant cases where the OT is used in the NT, but the present aim has been to focus on methodological and presuppositional issues which often influence the exegetical task itself. I remain convinced that once the hermeneutical and theological presuppositions of the NT writers are considered, there are no clear examples where they have developed a meaning from the OT which is inconsistent or contradictory to some aspect of the original OT intention.³⁴ However, there will probably always remain some enigmatic passages that are hard to understand under any reading.

The normative versus descriptive debate

The conclusion of those who see the NT use of the OT as non-contextual is that twentieth-century Christians should not attempt to reproduce the exegetical method of the NT writers, except when it corresponds to our grammatical-historical method.³⁵ There are usually two major reasons given for this assertion. First, we do not have the revelatory inspiration which the NT writers had in their *peshet* (and other non-contextual) interpretations (direct prophetic fulfilment and typological fulfilment are typically included as sub-categories of the *peshet* method, which can be defined as an *inspired application*³⁶). But it is not necessary to claim that we have to have such inspiration to reproduce their method or their conclusions. The fact that we don't have the same 'revelatory stance' as the NT writers only means that we cannot have the same epistemological certainty about our interpretive conclusions and applications as they had. *Exegetical method* should not be confused with *certainty* about the conclusions of such a method, since the two are quite distinct.

One reason for discouraging imitation of the NT's exegesis

is a justified fear of an uncontrollable typological exegesis, since typology has been misused throughout church history. How can we today look at the apparently non-prophetic portions of the OT and try to make the same kind of correspondences between them and the NT which the inspired authors were able to make? However, the wrong use of a method should not lead to the conclusion that the method itself is wrong but only that great caution should be exercised in using it. Yet should not such care be taken with all the methods we employ in interpreting the Bible, since it is God's Word? Although we cannot reproduce the certainty the biblical authors had about their conclusions, should we not try to interpret the OT in the same way as they did, as long as we keep in mind the presuppositions which guided their approach to the OT and as long as we are ever cautious, in the light of the way such a method has been misused in past church history?³⁷

Uppermost among the presuppositions to be aware of is the concern for broad historical patterns or significant individuals (prophets, priests, kings, *etc.*), institutions and events which integrally formed a part of such patterns.³⁸ Such a perspective should steer us away from illegitimately focusing on minutiae as typological foreshadowings (like the scarlet thread which Rahab hung out of her window in Jos. 2 being a type of Christ's blood, or the trees which Israel cut down in the promised land as a type of Satan whom Christ would slay).

Therefore, typology by nature does not necessitate a non-contextual approach (although like any method it can be misused in that way), but it is an attempted identification of OT contextual features with similar escalated NT correspondences (many evangelical scholars would want to restrict the identification of what OT texts are typological only to those so referred to by NT writers, yet, on the other hand, they would not be willing to acknowledge these as non-contextual uses of the OT). Whether or not we have made a legitimate connection is a matter of interpretive possibility or probability. One may not reply that this is an inappropriate method on the basis that the authorial intention of OT writers, especially of historical narratives, would never have included such NT identifications. This is because we are also concerned with divine intention discernible from a retrospective viewpoint, which is fuller than the original human intention but does not contradict its contextual meaning. The larger context of canonical, redemptive history reveals how such narrow human intentions are legitimately and consistently developed by other biblical writers (and ultimately the divine author) to include wider meaning, so that the whole canon of Scripture becomes the ultimate context for interpreting any particular passage.³⁹ Other controlling, heuristic guides helpful for typological exegesis may also be suggested. Repeated historical events, phrases or pictures may provide hints of typological correspondences both within the OT and between the testaments.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, these are only general parameters and will not be infallible guards against misuse and misinterpretation. We must also remember that the conclusions of all biblical exegesis are a matter of degrees of possibility and probability, and the conclusions of typology must be viewed in the same way.

Some dispute that typology should be referred to as a method of exegesis since exegesis is concerned with deriving

a human author's original intention and meaning from a text.⁴¹ But this question is also bound up with the prior question of whether or not typology is prophetic.⁴² If typology is classified as partially prophetic, then it can be viewed as an exegetical method since the NT correspondence would be drawing out retrospectively the fuller prophetic meaning of the OT type which was originally included by the divine author. One's presuppositions also can determine how typology is classified. For example, if we concede that God is also the author of OT Scripture, then we are not concerned only with discerning the intention of the human author but also the ultimate divine intent of what was written in the OT, which could well transcend that of the immediate consciousness of the writer.⁴³ The attempt to draw out the divine intention of a text is certainly part of the exegetical task. And above all, if we assume the legitimacy of an inspired canon, then we should seek to interpret any part of that canon within its overall canonical context (given that one divine mind stands behind it all and expresses its thoughts in logical fashion).

In this regard, typology can be called contextual exegesis within the framework of the canon, since it primarily involves the interpretation and elucidation of the meaning of earlier parts of Scripture by latter parts. If one wants to refer to such canonical contextual exegesis instead as the doing of biblical or systematic theology, or even as scriptural application, it would seem to be but a purely semantic distinction. Rather than exegeting a text only in the light of its immediate literary context within a book, we are now merely exegeting the passage in view of the wider canonical context. The canonical extension of the context of a passage being exegeted does not by itself transform the exegetical procedure into a non-exegetical one. Put another way, the extension of the data base being exegeted does not mean we are no longer exegeting but only that we are doing so with a larger block of material. Even those rejecting typology as exegesis employ exegetical language to describe typology.⁴⁴

The plausibility of the suggestion that typological interpretation is normative and that we may seek for more OT types than the NT actually states for us is pointed to by the observation that this method is not unique to the NT writers but pervades the OT.⁴⁵ The fact that later OT writers understand earlier OT texts typologically also dilutes the claim that the NT writers' typological method was unique because of their special charismatic stance.⁴⁶ It is nevertheless still true that we today cannot reproduce the inspired *certainty* of our typological interpretations as either the OT or NT writers could, but the consistent use of such a method by biblical authors throughout hundreds of years of sacred history suggests strongly that it is a viable method for all saints to employ today.

A second reason given for rejecting the normativity of NT exegetical method is because of their supposed non-contextual use of the OT.⁴⁷ But we have already seen reason to question whether such use was characteristic of the NT writers. According to some scholars, the NT writers' methods were wrong according to twentieth-century standards but their conclusions from this method were right because they were inspired. Of course, if this assessment about the NT approach is correct, one is forced to conclude that we should not imitate their methods. However, if an inductive study of

the NT yields the results that the NT method is contextual, then we may imitate their approach. This is the answer to the question sometimes posed about 'how those exegetical procedures [of the NT] should be considered normative and exactly how they should be worked out'.⁴⁸

I am prepared to accept the possibility of non-contextual, Jewish *ad hominem* argumentation used polemically by NT writers, although I am unconvinced that this occurs anywhere in the NT. If it did occur, it might best be understood as the author's intention not to exegete the OT but to beat the Jews at their own game. This would not be imitated by us as a method of exegeting the OT since it plausibly would not have been originally intended as a method of exegesis but as a manner of polemicizing. This is not to say that the NT writers were not influenced by Jewish exegetical methods, interpretations and theology. Indeed, such influence pervades the NT but the influential methods consist of varieties of contextual approaches (which include *degrees* of contextual consideration) and the interpretive and theological traditions upon which they relied can be seen viably as consistent though quite creative developments of the OT.

A possible response to part of what has here been said is that it is incorrect to label the NT's (or the Jewish) interpretive method as 'wrong' according to twentieth-century criteria of logic, since first-century Judaism thought more holistically and employed less analytical and logical ways of thinking. We may only say that what applied in that culture and time no longer applies to ours, which can appear equivalent to saying that methodology is culturally determined and therefore relative (the same argument is sometimes appealed to in the biblical authority debate). But this response is a philosophical one (part of which James Barr in his studies on semantics has rightly criticized), arguing that our laws of logic underlying our evaluative standards were not the same laws of thought governing ancient, Semitic writers. The inductive historical evidence for this is negligible and, therefore, the assertion takes the form of a presupposition (although some have proposed that the purported presence of 'error' in biblical literature supports the contention, a proposal which itself has met with much response in recent discussions concerning the nature of scriptural inspiration). Moreover, it is unlikely that it is logically legitimate to separate method in this instance from conclusions derived from the method.

Finally, the significance of this discussion should not be limited to exegetical method because it also has a bearing on theology and theological method, since the use of the OT in the NT is the key to the theological relation of the testaments, which many scholars have acknowledged.⁴⁹ If we are limited to understanding this relation only by the explicit conclusions concerning particular OT passages given by NT writers, vast portions of the OT are lost to us. We can use the 'contextual method' of interpreting these portions but we have to remember, according to some scholars, that this was not the dominant hermeneutical approach of the NT writers. Therefore, a hiatus remains between the way they linked the testaments both exegetically *and* theologically and the way we should. If the contemporary church cannot exegete and do theology like the apostles did, how can it feel corporately at one with them in the theological process? If a radical hiatus exists between the interpretive method of the NT and ours

today, then the study of the relationship of the OT and the NT from the apostolic perspective is something to which the church has little access. Furthermore, if Jesus and the apostles were impoverished in their exegetical and theological method and only divine inspiration salvaged their conclusions, then the intellectual and apologetic foundation of our faith is seriously eroded. What kind of intellectual or apologetic foundation for our faith is this? M. Silva is likely correct when he states that 'if we refuse to pattern our exegesis after that of the apostles, we are in practice denying the authoritative character of their scriptural interpretation — and to do so is to strike at the very heart of the Christian faith'.⁵⁰ Indeed, the polemical and apologetic atmosphere of early Christian interpretation also points to an intense concern for correctly interpreting the OT (e.g. Acts 17:2; 18:24-28; 1 Tim. 1:6-10; 2 Tim. 2:15).

Thus, I believe a positive answer can and must be given to the question, 'Can we reproduce the exegesis of the New Testament?'. True, we must be careful in distinguishing between the normative and descriptive (and this is an area in which there is disagreement in many areas among evangelicals in general), but in the case of the NT's method of interpreting the OT the burden of proof rests upon those attempting to deny its normativity.

¹ For a lucid and sympathetic presentation of this sort of view see, for example, the writings of Richard Longenecker, including his recent article "Who is the Prophet talking About?" Some Reflections on the New Testament's Use of the Old', *Themelios* 13 (1987), 4-8.

² On this latter point D. Instone Brewer has identified all the exegetical examples representing this early period (approx. 100) of purported pre-AD 70 proto-rabbinic exegesis. He has attempted to demonstrate every example shows that, while these Jewish exegetes may not have always succeeded, they attempted to interpret the OT according to its context, and they never supplanted the primary meaning by a secondary or allegorical one. Even if his conclusions are judged to be overstated, they nevertheless reveal an early concern for context to varying significant degrees which previously has not been sufficiently acknowledged (see his 'The Hermeneutical Method of Early Judaism and Paul', forthcoming PhD dissertation, Cambridge University, 1989).

³ In Qumran, e.g. 1QM1; 1QS A 1; in Jewish apocalyptic, e.g. Enoch 36-72; 4 Ezra; 2 Baruch; The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. See my own *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St John* (Lanham: University Press, 1984); L. Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted* (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1966).

⁴ E.g., as Longenecker surprisingly assumes ('NT's Use of the Old', 7), since he points out the same kind of presuppositional fallacy on the part of others (*ibid.*, 1).

⁵ Here I am using Longenecker's examples from his 'Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the New Testament?', *Tyndale Bulletin* 21 (1970), 3-38, and *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).

⁶ On 1 Cor. 10 and Gal. 3-4 see E. E. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1957), 51-54, 66-73; R. M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University, 1981), 193-297, and D. A. Hagner, 'The Old Testament in the New Testament', in *Interpreting the Word of God*, FS in honour of S. Barabas, ed. S. J. Schultz and M. A. Inch (Chicago: Moody, 1976), 101-102, who sees a broad, contextual and typological approach in these texts.

On 2 Cor. 3 see W. J. Dumbrell, *The Beginning of the End* (Homebush West, Australia: Lancer, 1985), 107-113, 121-128, and S. Hafemann's forthcoming work in progress on 2 Cor. 3:13-18.

On 1 Cor. 9:9 cf. A. T. Hanson, *Studies in Paul's Technique and Theology* (London: SPCK, 1974), 161-166; S. L. Johnson, *The Old*

Testament in the New (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 39-51; D. J. Moo, 'The Problem of Sensus Plenior', in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 179-211.

On Rom. 10, cf. M. A. Seifrid, 'Paul's Approach to the Old Testament in Romans 10:6-8', *Trinity Journal* 6 (1985), 3-37, who sees a contextual and typological use.

⁷ But Longenecker has most recently contended that among NT writers there can be found only 'some literalist, straightforward exegesis of biblical texts', that the *pesher* method (which he defines as an atomistic approach and which includes typology) 'dominates' Mt., Jn. and the early chapters of Acts and 1 Pet., and that midrashic interpretation (which he also views as a non-contextual method) 'characterizes' Paul and Heb. ('NT's Use of the Old', 6-8; cf. his *Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 218-219). He does qualify this by saying that NT authors employed a 'controlled atomistic exegesis' (*ibid.*, 7), but this is unclear and he never explains what he means by this.

⁸ Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*, 110, 126-127.

⁹ E.g. A. C. Sundberg, 'On Testimonies', *NovT* 3 (1959), 268-281; B. Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic* (London: SCM, 1961); S. V. McCasland, 'Matthew Twists the Scripture', *JBL* 80 (1961), 143-148; S. L. Edgar, 'Respect for Context in Quotations from the Old Testament', *NTS* 9 (1962-63), 56-59; A. T. Hanson, *The Living Utterances of God* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1983), 184-190; M. D. Hooker, 'Beyond the Things That are Written? St Paul's Use of Scripture', *NTS* 27 (1981-82), 295-309; B. Lindars, 'The Place of the Old Testament in the Formation of New Testament Theology', *NTS* 23 (1977), 59-66; for other references in this respect consult Longenecker's bibliography in *Biblical Exegesis*, 223-230.

¹⁰ In addition to the sources cited above in this regard, see also, e.g., S. Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Amsterdam: Van Soest, 1961); R. Rendell, 'Quotation in Scripture as an Index of Wider Reference', *EQ* 36 (1964), 214-221; Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted*; R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971); *idem*, 'The Formula-Quotations of Matthew 2 and the Problem of Communication', *NTS* 27 (1980-81), 233-251; D. Seccombe, 'Luke and Isaiah', *NTS* 27 (1980-81), 252-259; Johnson, *The Old Testament in the New*; Moo, *The OT in the Passion Narratives*; W. C. Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody, 1985); Moo, 'The Problem of Sensus Plenior'; Beale, *The Influence of Daniel Upon the Structure and Theology of John's Apocalypse*, *JETS* 27 (1984), 413-423; *idem*, 'The Use of the OT in Revelation', in *It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture*, FS for B. Lindars, ed. D. A. Carson and H. Williamson (Cambridge: University Press, 1988), 318-336; *idem*, 'The Old Testament Background of Reconciliation in 2 Cor. 5-7 and Its Bearing on the Literary Problem of 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1', *NTS* forthcoming (1989), approx. 25pp.; I. H. Marshall, 'An Assessment of Recent Developments' in *It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture*, 1-21. Although more nuanced than Dodd, see now also Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

¹¹ Cf. Beale, 'OT in Revelation'.

¹² Cf. Beale, 'OT in Revelation', 330-332.

¹³ E.g. H. W. Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel* (Phil: Fortress, 1964; as qualified by later critics) and his bibliography; E. E. Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 170-171.

¹⁴ E.g. Is. 49:3-6 and the use of 49:6 in Lk. 2:32, Acts 13:47 and Acts 26:23; note how Christ and the church fulfil what is prophesied of Israel in the OT; see also France, *Jesus and the OT*, 50-60, 75; N. T. Wright, 'The Paul of History and the Apostle of Faith', *TynBull* 29 (1978), 66-71, 87; H. K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University, 1983); Beale, 'The Old Testament Background of Reconciliation'.

¹⁵ Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*, 128, 133; and F. Foulkes, *The Acts of God*, Tyndale Monographs (London: Tyndale, 1958); cf. the significance of the temporal merisms applied to God's — and Christ's — relation to history in Ec. 3:1-11; Is. 46:9-11; Rev. 1:8, 17; 21:6; 22:13; see likewise Rev. 1:4; 4:8; cf. Eph. 1:11.

¹⁶ E.g. Mk. 1:15; Acts 2:17; Gal. 4:4; 1 Cor. 10:11; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1; Heb. 1:2; 9:26; 1 Pet. 1:20; 2 Pet. 3:3; 1 Jn. 2:18; Jude 18. Longenecker has a brief discussion of these first four presuppositions but he does not relate them to the issue of contextual exegesis (cf. *Biblical Exegesis*, 93-95, and 'NT's Use of the Old', 4-5). Likewise, see

the forthcoming brief article by E. E. Ellis, 'Biblical Interpretation in the New Testament Church', in *Mikra, Text, Translation and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989).

¹⁷ Cf. 2 Cor. 1:10-21; Mt. 5:17; 13:11, 16-17; Lk. 24:25-27, 32, 44-45; Jn. 5:39; 20:9; Rom. 10:4.

¹⁸ For one of the most recent surveys of significant literature discussing *sensus plenior* see G. Reventlow, *Problems of Biblical Theology in the Twentieth Century* (London: SCM, 1986), 37-47.

¹⁹ For a partial exegetical demonstration of this see the representative literature in favour of a contextual interpretation of the OT in the NT cited throughout the present article.

²⁰ So also Moo, 'The Problem of Sensus Plenior', 204-211; V. S. Poythress, 'Divine Meaning of Scripture', *WTJ* 48 (1986), 241-279; W. S. LaSor, 'Prophecy, Inspiration, and Sensus Plenior', *TynBull* 29 [1978], 54-60; *idem*, 'The "Sensus Plenior" and Biblical Interpretation', *Scripture, Tradition and Interpretation*, FS for E. F. Harrison, ed. W. W. Gasque and W. S. LaSor (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 272-276; D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 92-93; J. I. Packer, 'Infallible Scripture and the Role of Hermeneutics', *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 350; see Moo and LaSor for examples of how this method can be applied.

²¹ 'Prophecy, Inspiration and Sensus Plenior', 55-56.

²² Cf. the typical examples noted by McCasland, 'Matthew Twists the Scriptures'; Edgar, 'Respect for Context in Quotations from the Old Testament', 56-59.

²³ P. Fairbairn, *The Typology of Scripture* I (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1876), 19.

²⁴ This is an important distinction which cannot be developed further here, but for more discussion in agreement with our distinction see, e.g., L. Goppelt, *Typos* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982); Hanson, *Studies in Paul's Technique and Theology*, 186; Foulkes, *Acts of God*, e.g. 35; O. Cullmann, *Salvation in History* (London: SCM, 1967), 132-133.

²⁵ Moo, 'The Problem of Sensus Plenior', 191, who cites others such as Moule, Banks, Metzger, Meier and Carson in support.

²⁶ On this point see G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* II (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 372-373.

²⁷ Cf., however, France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 38-40, and D. Baker, 'Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament', *SJT* 29 (1976), 149, who do not conclude that typology includes a prophetic aspect. But the *πληρωμα* formulas prefixed to citations from formally non-prophetic OT passages in the gospels decisively argue against this. See in general agreement Fairbairn, *The Typology of Scripture* I, 46; Johnson, *OT in New*, 55-57; Goppelt, *Typos*, 18, 130, *passim*; Davidson, *Typology in Scripture, passim*; Moo, 'The Problem of Sensus Plenior', 196-198; Foulkes, *Acts of God*, 35-40, although he is sometimes cited wrongly as not holding this position.

²⁸ Cf. France's good discussion of this context in 'The Formula-Quotations of Matthew 2'.

²⁹ *Studies in Paul's Technique and Theology*, 229-235.

³⁰ For examples of these kinds of changes of application see France, *Jesus*; Beale, 'The Use of the OT in Revelation'; *idem*, 'The OT Background of Reconciliation'; for further discussion of the legitimacy of this principle of extension see the section below entitled 'The normativity versus descriptive debate'.

³¹ Again, for numerous examples of inductive case studies where this can be argued see the literature supporting a contextual approach cited throughout this article.

³² For examples of this see Beale, 'OT in Revelation', 321-332; J. Cambier, 'Les images de l'Ancien Testament dans l'Apocalypse de saint Jean', *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* (1955), 114-121; A. Vanhoye, 'L'utilisation du livre d'Ezéchiel dans l'Apocalypse', *Biblica* 43 (1962), 462-467; 'L'utilizzazione del Deutero-Isaia nell'Apocalisse di Giovanni', *Euntes Docete* 27 (1974), 322-339.

³³ E.g. see L. A. Vos, *The Synoptic Traditions in the Apocalypse* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1965), 21-37, 41.

³⁴ This conclusion is corroborated by the articles of Moo, 'The Problem of Sensus Plenior'; R. Nicole, 'The New Testament Use of the Old Testament', in *Revelation and the Bible*, ed. C. F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958), 135-151, and *idem*, 'The Old Testament in the New Testament', in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* I, ed. F.

E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 617-628.

³⁵ E.g. see Longenecker, 'Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the New Testament?', *Tynbull* 21 (1970), 38.

³⁶ Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 99-100.

³⁷ See likewise Moo, 'The Problem of Sensus Plenior', 197, 206-210; Fairbairn, *Typology* I, 42-44; M. Silva, 'The NT Use of the OT: Text Form and Authority', *Scripture and Truth*, 162-163; Johnson, *OT in New*, 23, 67, 77-79; who generally hold that it is plausible to attempt to discern with caution OT types beyond those mentioned in the NT.

³⁸ For one of the most recent surveys of significant literature discussing typology, see G. Reventlow, *Problems of Biblical Theology in the Twentieth Century*, 14-37.

³⁹ See on this point the above discussion of the fifth presupposition of early Christian exegesis of the OT.

⁴⁰ E.g. see Foulkes, *The Acts of God*.

⁴¹ E.g. France, *Jesus and the OT*, 40-41, and Baker, 'Typology', 149.

⁴² France, *ibid*.

⁴³ On the fallacy of equating meaning exhaustively with authorial intention see P. B. Payne, 'The Fallacy of Equating Meaning with the Human Author's Intention', *JETS* 20 (1977), 243-252, in contrast to the more extreme position of W. Kaiser, 'The Eschatological Hermeneutics of "Evangelicalism": Promise Theology', *JETS* 13 (1970), 94-95; 'The Present State of OT Studies', *JETS* 18 (1975), 71-72; who thinks that discerning only the human author's intention exhausts the *full meaning* of an OT text and that the NT provides no fuller meaning of OT texts than the OT authors would not also have been completely cognizant of; the unusual interpretations which result from this view can be seen in Kaiser's *The Uses of the OT in the NT* (Chicago: Moody, 1985).

⁴⁴ E.g. Baker, 'Typology', 155, says that 'although it is not a method of exegesis, typology supplements exegesis by throwing further light on the text in question'; cf. Goppelt, *Typos*, 152, 198, who, although referring to typology as not 'a systematic exposition of Scripture, but as a spiritual approach', says it 'is the method of interpreting Scripture that is predominant in the NT'.

⁴⁵ So Foulkes, *Acts of God*, *passim*; e.g. 40.

⁴⁶ In addition to Foulkes, *Acts of God*, cf. M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 350-379, and sources cited therein for discussion of such typological exegesis within the OT itself; see likewise H. G. Reventlow, *Problems of Biblical Theology in the Twentieth Century*, 28-29; H. D. Hummel, 'The OT Basis of Typological Interpretation', *Biblical Research* 9 (1964), 38-50.

⁴⁷ E.g., Longenecker refers to their 'atomistic manipulations of midrash . . . the circumstantial or [Jewish] *ad hominem*' polemical argumentation ('NT's Use of the Old', 8) and 'their allegorical explications' (*Biblical Exegesis*, 218).

⁴⁸ Longenecker, 'NT's Use of the Old', 7.

⁴⁹ E.g. see G. Hasel, *Current Issues in NT Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978); D. L. Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible: A Study of Some Modern Solutions to the Theological Problem of The Relationship between the Old and New Testaments* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1977); Reventlow, *Problems of Biblical Theology in the Twentieth Century*. So also Longenecker, 'NT's Use of the Old', 1.

⁵⁰ 'NT's Use of the OT', 164, although he does slightly qualify this assertion; so likewise Johnson, *Use of OT in NT*, 67.