

CAN WE REPRODUCE THE EXEGESIS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT? *

By RICHARD N. LONGENECKER

The New Testament's use of the Old Testament is a topic of perennial concern to the Christian Church. And this is especially true today, what with (1) rising interest in the field of hermeneutics generally, and (2) new data from somewhat analogous materials as supplied by recent discoveries, particularly from the Dead Sea Scrolls. Such terms as 'Midrash', 'Peshet', '*Sensus Plenior*', 'Theological Exegesis', 'Corporate Personality', 'Typology', 'Fulfillment Motif', '*Gemeinde-theologie*', and the like, have become rather fixed entities in current theological discussion, witnessing to the currency of the topic at hand.

Involved in any treatment of biblical exegesis in the New Testament are the dual issues of the descriptive (*i.e.* What exactly took place?) and the normative (*i.e.* How obligatory or relevant are such exegetical practices today? On what basis? How can they be employed?). It is with these two matters that this paper concerns itself, proposing first to elucidate the exegetical patterns within the New Testament in light of contemporary Jewish practices and then to deal with the question of the normative character of these practices in view of various suggestions offered today.

It is a recurring thesis of this essay that a great part of our problem in answering such a question as 'Can we reproduce the exegesis of the New Testament?' lies in (1) our failure to understand correctly the nature of *peshet* exegesis at Qumran and in the New Testament, (2) our inability to appreciate the circumstantial character of some of the exegesis in the New Testament, and (3) our uncertainties regarding the relation of the descriptive and the normative in the New Testament. I have therefore taken it upon myself to attempt some explanation of Jewish practices before dealing directly

* Delivered at Tyndale House, Cambridge, 7th July, 1969, as a special New Testament Lecture.

with the New Testament itself, believing that only with such a background are we able to answer with any degree of precision such questions as 'Ought we attempt to reproduce the exegetical practices of the New Testament?' and 'Are we able so to do?' Admittedly, space and time allow matters to be presented in only broad outline. Yet perhaps even a cursory overview will be of aid in establishing some guidelines.

I. EXEGETICAL PRACTICES OF FIRST CENTURY JUDAISM

Three methods of interpreting the sacred text have come to characterize the three most significant hermeneutical divisions within Judaism in the period roughly contemporary with the first Christian century.

1. *Midrash Exegesis*

For rabbinic interpreters, and presumably for the earlier Pharisees as well, the central concept in interpretation was that of 'midrash'. The word comes from the verb דרש ('to resort to', 'to seek'; fig. 'to read repeatedly', 'to study', 'to interpret'), and strictly denotes an interpretive exposition—however derived and irrespective of the type of material treated. The expositions of the Gemara and the Midrashim, therefore, while employing various exegetical methods, are referred to as either 'Midrash Halakah' or 'Midrash Haggadah'; the one term covering the range of hermeneutical devices involved, with the qualification having reference to the type of material alone.

Midrash must be defined according to its stages of development. It is in the Babylonian Talmud that midrash exegesis is distinguished from *peshaṭ* or literal interpretation, and questions are raised as to their relationship.¹ In such a context 'the term "midrash" designates an exegesis which, going more deeply than the mere literal sense, attempts to penetrate into the spirit of the Scriptures, to examine the text from all sides, and thereby to derive interpretations which are not immediately obvious'.² But for the tannaitic period (from

¹ B. Hul. 6a; b. Erub. 23b; b. Yeb. 24a. Also, of course, in the later cabbalist writings.

² S. Horowitz, 'Midrash', *Jew E.* VIII, 548.

Hillel through Judah the Prince), the distinction between *peshat* as the literal sense of Scripture and *derash* as a derivative exposition of hidden meanings seems not to have been consciously invoked. In the Palestinian Gemara and the earlier Midrashim, the verbs פָּשַׁט and דָּרַשׁ are used synonymously; which is the basis for J. Z. Lauterbach's contention that before the period of the Amoraim distinctions between *peshat* exegesis and 'midrash' exegesis were not made: 'the Tannaim believed that their Midrash was the true interpretation and that their "derash" was the actual sense of Scripture, and therefore "peshat"'.³

That there was a development in both the methodology and the terminology of Pharisaic exegesis is most easily illustrated by the progression from Hillel's seven 'middoth' or rules of exposition to Ishmael's thirteen to Eliezer ben Jose Hagelili's thirty-two during only the space of a century and a half.⁴ Yet it remains possible to postulate a basic continuity of practice between the earlier Tannaim and the later Amoraim. The fact of the necessity for Hillel's seven rules, for example, presupposes an employment of midrash exegesis in its more technical sense in the early first century AD;⁵ though only a few examples in this more technical sense are able to be credited to Hillel himself, and, significantly, all are relatively simple in character.⁶

We may therefore take it that Pharisaic teachers within first century Judaism not only (1) understood the Old Testament historically and literally, for which the talmudic writings provide abundant evidence, (2) exposed the text to a mild allegorical treatment at times, of which there are a few extant examples,⁷ and (3) worked the language of Scripture allusively into the very fabric of their formulations, which is also evident throughout, but that they also (4) employed a midrashic interpretation which sought to draw out the hidden meanings within the text over and above that which could be considered the obvious or plain meaning. In so doing, they developed

³ J. Z. Lauterbach, 'Peshat', *ibid.*, IX, 653.

⁴ For listings of these three sets of Middoth, see H. L. Strack, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, Meridian Press, New York (1959) 93-98.

⁵ On the antiquity of the Middoth ascribed to Hillel, see *ibid.*, 93-94.

⁶ Cf. Lev. R. 1.5, 34.3; j. Pes. 33a; Tos. Erub. 4.7; b. Shab. 19a; b. Kid. 43a.

⁷ See *infra*, 'Allegorical Exegesis'.

'an atomistic exegesis, which interprets sentences, clauses, phrases, and even single words, independently of the context or the historical occasion, as divine oracles; combines them with other similarly detached utterances; and makes large use of analogy of expressions, often by purely verbal association'.⁸

In days when Sadducees (until their demise) rejected the validity of the Oral Law, Gentiles scorned both Written and Oral, and the faithful required guidance for living in an alien milieu, it was considered necessary both to establish the Oral Law on a solid footing in Scripture and to explicate Holy Writ to cover every situation of life. And this halakic concern extended over into haggadic matters, so that the same methods were followed there as well.

Midrash exegesis, then, ostensibly takes its point of departure from the biblical text itself (though psychologically it may be motivated by other factors) and seeks to explicate the hidden meanings contained therein via agreed upon hermeneutical principles in order to contemporize the revelation of God for the people of God. It may be briefly characterized by the maxim: 'That has relevance to This'; *i.e.* What is written in Scripture has relevance to our present situation. Or, as the late Renée Bloch has described it:

1. Its point of departure is Scripture; it is a reflection or meditation on the Bible.
2. It is homiletical, and largely originates from the liturgical reading of the Torah.
3. It makes a punctilious analysis of the text, with the object of illuminating obscurities found there. Every effort is made to explain the Bible by the Bible, as a rule not arbitrarily but by exploiting a theme.
4. The biblical message is adapted to suit contemporary needs
5. According to the nature of the biblical text, the midrash either tries to discover the basic principles inherent in the legal sections, with the aim of solving problems not dealt with in Scripture (*halakhah*); or it sets out to find

⁸ G. F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. (1927) I, 248.

the true significance of events mentioned in the narrative sections of the Pentateuch (*haggadah*).⁹

Or, again, as B. Gerhardsson defines it:

Midrash is normally composed out of already-existing material, accepted as authoritative because it comes from the Scripture or the tradition. Using this raw material, the new is evolved. Naturally new terms, new phrases, new symbols and new ideas are introduced but the greater part is taken from that which already exists in the authoritative tradition. Midrash starts from a [sacred] text, a phrase or often a single word; but the text is not simply explained—its meaning is extended and its implications drawn out with the help of every possible association of ideas.¹⁰

2. *Pesher Exegesis*

The exposition in the materials from Qumran is usually introduced by the term 'pesher', a word meaning 'solution' or 'interpretation' and coming from the Aramaic *pishar*. There are also instances where 'midrash' is so employed, most significantly for our purposes in the first lines of the comments on Psalms 1:1 and 2:1–2;¹¹ though in these cases the word seems to have the non-technical meaning found in earlier rabbinism.¹² The Dead Sea sectarians considered themselves to be the divinely elected community of the final generation of the present age, living in the days of travail before the eschatological consummation. Theirs was the task of preparing for the coming of the Messianic Age and/or the Age to Come. And to them applied certain prophecies in the Old Testament which were considered to speak of their situation and circumstances. While it is true in general that 'the members of the community conceive(d) of themselves as repeating in a later age the experience of their remote forefathers in the days of

⁹ Quoted in G. Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, Brill, Leiden (1961) 7.

¹⁰ B. Gerhardsson, *The Testing of God's Son*, trans. J. Toy, Gleerup, Lund (1966) 14.

¹¹ 4QFlor. 1 and 14. For a discussion of the five occurrences of 'midrash' in the texts published to date from Qumran and in four reported instances, see A. G. Wright, 'The Literary Genre Midrash', *CBQ* 28 (1966) 116–117.

¹² Cf. *ibid.*, 117–118.

Moses',¹³ it must also be recognized, as F. F. Bruce has pointed out, that they did not think of the particular prophecies in question as the message of God which was significant in an earlier situation but now, *mutatis mutandis*, also relevant to them. Rather, they looked upon these selected passages as being exclusively concerned with them.¹⁴ And therefore, following almost every prophetic statement cited, there is the recurrence of the word פֶּשֶׁר, which may be variously translated as 'the interpretation of this is', 'this refers to', or 'this means'.

In an early study of Qumran's exegetical practices, W. H. Brownlee distilled the essence of the exegesis in the Habakkuk Commentary (1QHab.) to thirteen propositions;¹⁵ which thirteen points have been found to be generally representative of the other commentaries as well. Brownlee's first point, that 'everything the ancient prophet wrote has a *veiled, eschatological meaning*', has reference to the community's understanding of itself as God's righteous remnant in the period of eschatological consummation. Here Qumran distinguishes itself from rabbinic interpretation, for while in the talmudic literature there is a contemporizing treatment of Holy Writ that seeks to make God's Word relevant to the present circumstances and on-going situations, among the Dead Sea covenanters the biblical texts were considered from the perspective of imminent apocalyptic fulfilment. Brownlee's second point regarding '*forced, or abnormal construction of the Biblical text*' concerns 1QHab.'s more than fifty deviations from the MT (apart from the purely orthographic), of which several vary from all known versions of the LXX and Targums as well,¹⁶ and the four cases where the Old Testament text is read as though it were multi-form—i.e. not only as though each word has several meanings but also that the text itself has more than one wording, one

¹³ T. H. Gaster, *The Dead Sea Scriptures*, Doubleday, Garden City, New York (1964) 4; cf. W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*, Cambridge University Press (1964) 26n., 33.

¹⁴ F. F. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts*, Tyndale Press, London (1960) 16–17. On the selected nature of the passages treated at Qumran, see C. Roth, 'The Subject Matter of Qumran Exegesis', *VT* 10 (1960) 52, 56, though without accepting the implications drawn for his first century AD Zealot identification.

¹⁵ W. H. Brownlee, 'Biblical Interpretation among the Sectaries of the Dead Sea Scrolls', *BA* 14 (1951) 60–62.

¹⁶ For a tabulation of the 'Principal Variants', see W. H. Brownlee, *The Text of Habakkuk in the Ancient Commentary from Qumran*, Society of Biblical Literature, Philadelphia (1959) 108–113.

appearing in the quotation and the other in the comment following.¹⁷

The problem of textual variations and dual readings at Qumran is a difficult one. And in the present state of uncertainty regarding the history of the *MT* and early recensions of the *LXX*, a final solution seems out of the question. Stendahl, for example, tends to favour *ad hoc* creations in many of these cases;¹⁸ while Brownlee is more cautious in saying: 'Though deliberate alteration may have played a part in the formation of the Hab. text utilized in DSH, it is probably resorted to but rarely. Many divergent texts were current from which one might well select the reading most advantageous to the purpose at hand.'¹⁹ Until further evidence is forthcoming on the state of the Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic texts in this early period, we do well to withhold final judgment on the matter. It may well be that in some cases 1QHab. reflects *ad hoc* textual creations or deliberate corrections of existing versions by an expositor or group of expositors within the community. Or the phenomenon may be entirely one of selection among variants.

In the remaining eleven characteristics of his listing, Brownlee has clearly demonstrated that the mode of exegesis employed at Qumran is strikingly similar to that of rabbinic midrash. And thus many have followed him in labelling the exegesis of the Qumran commentaries a 'midrash pesher', considering it comparable to rabbinic 'midrash halakah' and 'midrash haggadah' and to be distinguished from them only in regard to literary form and content.²⁰

But, though it is often done, it is not sufficient to define

¹⁷ On the dual readings of Hab. 1:8; 1:11; 1:15-16, and 2:16, see *ibid.*, 118-123; also K. Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew*, Gleerup, Lund (1954) 186-189.

¹⁸ Stendahl's reaction, while favouring *ad hoc* creations, is rather mixed in saying: 'The relation between DSH, the M.T. and the Versions is of great interest. In many cases DSH appears to be created *ad hoc*. What is more remarkable is that some of these readings are supported by one or more of the Versions' (*School of St. Matthew*, 189). Stendahl later builds on this *ad hoc* understanding in his treatment of Matthew's formula quotations, though concludes his section on the textual variations in 1QHab. by stating: 'We must rather presume that DSH was conscious of various possibilities, tried them out, and allowed them to enrich its interpretation of the prophet's message, which in all its form was fulfilled in and through the Teacher of Righteousness' (*ibid.*, 190).

¹⁹ W. H. Brownlee, *Text of Habakkuk*, 117-118.

²⁰ Cf. W. H. Brownlee, 'Biblical Interpretation', 76. Note K. Stendahl's agreement in priorities and nomenclature (*School of St. Matthew*, 184), and M. Burrows' objection based on the priority of literary form (*The Dead Sea Scrolls*, Secker & Warburg, London (1955) 211-212).

pesher as midrashic exegesis which displays a greater audacity in its handling of the text, coupled to an apocalyptic orientation.²¹ Such a characterization is true as far as it goes, but it does not touch upon the vital factor in Qumran hermeneutics. Central in the consciousness of the covenanters of Qumran was what might be called the '*rāz* (mystery)-*pesher* (interpretation) revelational motif', which is found explicitly stated in the comments on Habakkuk 2:1-2:

God told Habakkuk to write the things that were to come upon the last generation, but he did not inform him when that period would come to consummation. And as for the phrase, 'that he may run who reads', the interpretation (*pesher*) concerns the Teacher of Righteousness to whom God made known all the mysteries (*rāzīm*) of the words of his servants the prophets.²²

And this is echoed in the treatment of Habakkuk 2:3:

The last period extends beyond anything that the prophets have foretold, for 'the mysteries of God are destined to be performed wondrously'.²³

Furthermore, to read the Dead Sea Hymns of Thanksgiving (1QH) not only as an expression of the Teacher of Righteousness himself, whether written directly by him or derived from his oral teaching,²⁴ but also with the *rāz-pesher* motif in mind, is illuminating. Repeatedly there occurs the idea of having been given the interpretation of divine mysteries, which are then shared with the people. Representative of this theme is 1QH 4.26-29:

Through me hast Thou illumined the faces of full many, and countless be the times Thou hast shown Thy power through me. For Thou hast made known unto me Thy deep, mysterious things, hast shared Thy secret with me and so shown forth Thy power; and before the eyes of full many

²¹ E.g., Stendahl, *School of St. Matthew*, 193; Brownlee, 'Biblical Interpretation', 54-76.

²² 1QHab. 7.1-5.

²³ 1QHab. 7.7-8, accepting T. H. Gaster's literal rendering of the maxim (*Dead Sea Scriptures*, 280, n. 25).

²⁴ Cf. J. T. Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judaea*, trans. J. Strugnell, SCM, London (1959) 40.

this token stands revealed, that Thy glory may be shown forth, and all living know of Thy power.²⁵

The men of Qumran seem not so much conscious of following a rabbinic mode of exegesis as of recreating the Danielic pattern of interpretation. In Daniel 9:24–27, Jeremiah's prophecy of 70 years is reinterpreted by the angel Gabriel to mean seventy heptads of years,²⁶ and in Daniel 11:30 Balaam's prophecy regarding the 'ships of Kittim' is employed to denote a Roman fleet.²⁷ In the Aramaic portion of Daniel (2:4–7:28) there are thirty occurrences of the word *peshar*; and the greater part of the material contained therein can appropriately be classed as 'Theme and Variations on the *Rāz-Pesher* Motif': Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the metallic human image, and Daniel's interpretation (ch. 2), Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the gigantic tree and its fall, and Daniel's interpretation (ch. 4), the writing on the wall at Belshazzar's banquet, and Daniel's interpretation (ch. 5), and Belshazzar's dream of the composite animal, and Daniel's interpretation (ch. 7). 'In the Book of Daniel it is clear that the *rāz*, the mystery, is divinely communicated to one party, and the *peshar*, the interpretation, to another. Not until the mystery and the interpretation are brought together can the divine communication be understood.'²⁸ And, as Bruce comments further:

This principle, that the divine purpose cannot be properly understood until the *peshar* has been revealed as well as the *rāz*, underlies the biblical exegesis in the Qumran commentaries. The *rāz* was communicated by God to the prophet, but the meaning of that communication remained sealed until its *peshar* was made known by God to His chosen interpreter. The chosen interpreter was the Teacher of Righteousness, the founder of the Qumran community.²⁹

Extensive consideration has been given to whether *peshar* exegesis as found in the Scrolls is to be classed as 'commentary' or as 'midrash'. But the discussions have usually been carried on solely in categories pertinent to either a commentary form or a mode of exegesis, and largely ignore the factor where-

²⁵ Cf. also 1QH 1.21, 2.13.

²⁶ See Je. 25:11–12; 29:10.

²⁷ See Nu. 24:24.

²⁸ F. F. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts*, 8.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

in the Dead Sea community felt itself to be distinctive. In fact, Qumran's *peshet* treatment of the Old Testament is neither principally 'commentary' or 'midrash'. 'It does not attempt to elucidate the Biblical text, but to determine the application of Biblical prophecy or, rather, of certain Biblical prophecies: and the application of these Biblical prophecies in precise terms to current and even contemporary events.'³⁰ The crucial question in defining *peshet* exegesis has to do with the point of departure. In contradistinction to rabbinic interpretation which spoke of 'That has relevance to This', the Dead Sea covenanters treated Scripture in a 'This is That' fashion. Or as Karl Elliger put it as early as 1953: 'Seine Auslegung gründet sich also nicht auf den Text allein, sondern in noch stärkerem Masse und im entscheidenden Punkte auf eine besondere Opferbarung.'³¹

Biblical exegesis at Qumran, then, was considered to be first of all revelatory and/or charismatic in nature. Certain of the prophecies had been given in cryptic and enigmatic terms, and no one could understand their true meaning until the Teacher of Righteousness was given the interpretive key. In a real sense, they understood the passages in question as possessing a *sensus plenior* which could be ascertained only from a revelational standpoint;³² and that the true message of Scripture was only heard when prophecy and interpretation were brought together. The understanding of the Teacher in regard to certain crucial passages and the guidelines he laid down for future study were to be the touchstones for all further exegesis,³³ and members were strictly forbidden to incorporate extraneous opinion 'in any matter of doctrine or law'.³⁴ We

³⁰ C. Roth, 'Subject Matter of Qumran Exegesis', 51-52.

³¹ K. Elliger, *Studien zum Habakuk-Kommentar vom Toten Meer*, Mohr-Siebeck, Tübingen (1953) 155; cf. 154-164. Elliger's main point is paralleled in the treatments of F. F. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts*, 7-19, and J. A. Fitzmyer, 'The Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in Qumran Literature and in the New Testament', *NTS* 7 (1961) 310; though the sharp dichotomy which Elliger draws between a revelational perspective and a midrashic mode of exegesis may be legitimately questioned.

³² Cf. J. A. Fitzmyer, 'Use of Explicit OT Quotations', 332. On the *sensus plenior* in Catholic theology, see R. E. Brown, *The 'Sensus Plenior' of Sacred Scripture*, St Mary's University, Baltimore (1955).

³³ 1QH 2.11-13: 'Thou hast set me as a banner in the vanguard of Righteousness, as one who interprets with knowledge deep, mysterious things; as a touchstone for them that seek the truth, a standard for them that love correction.'

³⁴ 1QS 5.15-16.

need not suppose that interpretation ceased with the Teacher himself, or that the Dead Sea texts preserve only interpretations given explicitly by him. He sounded the keynote and set the paradigms in his treatment of certain prophecies, and the membership met in study cells and communal sessions to carry on investigations along the lines set out for them by their teacher. In such meditations on the text, of course, exegetical methods at hand were employed.

We cannot deny midrashic modes of treatment at Qumran; but we must not allow them to take ascendancy in our definition of *peshet* interpretation. If we must use the term 'midrash' of Qumran exegesis, perhaps such a term as 'charismatic midrash' should be employed to distinguish it from the 'scholastic midrash' of the Rabbis.³⁵ As in Daniel 5, where the interpretation is understood to be a divine revelation given through Daniel to the king and yet is explicated in terms of a midrash on the cryptic מָנָא מֵיָא תִּקְל וּפְרִסִין, so with the community on the shores of the Dead Sea. Exegesis at Qumran stands between Daniel and the Rabbis, and is a matter of both revelatory stance and midrashic mode—though, it must be insisted, in this order.

3. *Allegorical Exegesis*

The most prominent Jewish allegorist known is Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BC–AD 50). In an endeavour (1) to safeguard the transcendence of God against all anthropisms,³⁶ (2) to vindicate Hebrew theology before the court of Grecian philosophy,³⁷ and (3) to contemporize the sacred accounts so as to make them relevant to current situations and experiences,³⁸ Philo treated the Old Testament as a corpus of symbols given by God for man's spiritual and moral benefit which must be understood other than in a literal or historical manner.

³⁵ Brownlee mentions H. L. Ginsberg's reference to the Teacher of Righteousness as a 'charismatic exegete' ('Biblical Interpretation', 60n).

³⁶ See *De Post. Cain.* 4; *Quod Deus Immut.* 59; *De Sacrif. Ab. et Cain.* 95; cf. also S. Sowers, *The Hermeneutics of Philo and Hebrews*, John Knox Press, Richmond, Va. (1965) 22–23.

³⁷ See *Quis. Rer. Div. Heres* 214; *Quod Omnis Prob. Liber* 57; *De Mutat. Nom.* 167–168; *De Migrat. Abr.* 128; *De Spec. Leg.* IV. 61; *Quaes. et Sol. Gen.* II. 6, III. 5, IV. 152.

³⁸ S. Sowers, citing S. Sandmel and G. Kuhlmann, speaks of Philo's work as 'a religious existentialism somewhat like the kind of interpretation fashionable because of Kierkegaard' (*Hermeneutics of Philo and Hebrews*, 32, n. 9).

For him, the historical and *prima facie* meaning must be pushed aside—even counted as offensive—to make room for the intended spiritual meaning which underlies them.³⁹ Exegesis of Holy Writ was for him an esoteric and mystic enterprise which, while not without its governing principles,⁴⁰ was to be dissociated from any literal interpretation however defined.

Philo, it is true, was not universally admired; and he may not represent the entirety of hellenistic Judaism at this point. But his exegetical methods were not unique to himself. C. Siegfried and H. A. A. Kennedy have shown that 'there can be little question that Philo stood in a long succession of allegorical interpreters of the Old Testament. The practice has been reduced to a kind of science.'⁴¹ Clement of Alexandria mentions a second century BC Alexandrian Jew by the name of Aristobulus who employed allegorical exegesis in a series of works on the Mosaic law.⁴² The *Letter of Aristeas* includes one instance of a mild allegorical treatment in its portrayal of the High Priest Eleazer's defence of the Jewish dietary laws;⁴³ which, judging from Josephus' extensive paraphrase of the Letter and his specific references to Aristeas,⁴⁴ probably was widely known. Jacob Lauterbach has identified two groups of Palestinian Pharisees active prior to the time of R. Judah the Prince, the *Dorshe Reshumot* and the *Dorshe Hamurot*, who employed a mild allegorical exegesis in their treatment of Scripture—and whose work was gradually repudiated, though not entirely purged, in the tightening up of Judaism at the end of the second century AD.⁴⁵ And Joseph Bonsirven and David Daube have presented significant papers in support of the thesis of an early Pharisaic allegorical exegesis within Palestine

³⁹ For Philo, 'der buchstäbliche Sinn ist lediglich der Körper, der den allegorischen also die Seele umschließt' (O. Michel, *Paulus und seine Bibel*, Bertelsmann, Gütersloh (1929) 106). Cf. also C. Siegfried, 'Philo Judaeus', *JE* X, 7.

⁴⁰ Philo speaks of 'canons of allegory' (*De Somn.* I. 73; *De Spec. Leg.* I. 287) and 'laws of allegory' (*De Abr.* 68); cf. also C. Siegfried, *Philo von Alexandria*, Dufft, Jena (1875) 165–168.

⁴¹ H. A. A. Kennedy, *Philo's Contribution to Religion*, Hodder & Stoughton, London (1919) 32; cf. also 32–34. C. Siegfried, *Philo von Alexandria*, 16–37.

⁴² *Strom.* V. 14.97.

⁴³ *Letter of Aristeas* 150–170. See esp. 150: 'For the division of the hoof and the separation of the claws are intended to teach us that we must discriminate between our individual actions with a view to the practice of virtue.'

⁴⁴ *Ant.* 12. 2.1–15 (11–118).

⁴⁵ J. Z. Lauterbach, 'Ancient Jewish Allegorists', *JQR* 1 (1911) 291–333, 503–531.

itself.⁴⁶ In addition, the Dead Sea Scrolls include a number of examples of allegorical interpretation; representative of which is the treatment of Habakkuk 2:17 in 1QHab. 12. 3-4: '“Lebanon” stands here for the Communal Council, and “wild beasts” for the simple-minded Jews who carry out the Law.'⁴⁷ But though allegorical exegesis was widespread within first century Judaism, it was not dominant in Palestine.

4. *Some Concluding Observations*

What then can be concluded regarding the exegetical practices of first century Judaism? Or, so as not unduly to complicate matters and to speak only to our immediate concern, perhaps we ought to ask: What then can be concluded regarding the exegetical practices of first century *Palestinian* Judaism?

In common, all Palestinian Jews seem to have held the convictions that (1) the biblical text, being divinely inspired, is extremely rich in content, (2) the task of the interpreter is to deal with both the obvious and the hidden meanings contained therein, and (3) the methods employed in this task, whether literal, midrashic, or mildly allegorical, are not to be too sharply distinguished since all may be legitimately employed in the explication of Holy Writ. Where they differed was on (1) the stance or point of departure in the exegetical enterprise, and (2) the purpose. In a Pharisaic tradition, one started with the Scriptures and sought via a detailed exegesis to make its principles relevant to the contemporary situation. For the men of Qumran, on the other hand, the days of eschatological consummation were upon them and the Teacher of Righteousness possessed the revelatory key to the mysteries of God; thus their biblical interpretations were charismatic in nature, stressing the note of fulfilment. In the process, feeling

⁴⁶ Bonsirven cites several cases of allegorical treatment of biblical legislation in the talmudic materials that fly in the face of prohibitions against allegorical interpretation of halakic passages ('Exégèse allégorique chez les rabbins tannaïtes', *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 23 (1933) 522-524); and Daube develops a thesis that the whole system of rabbinic exegesis initiated by Hillel about 30 BC was based on hellenistic models ('Rabbinic Methods of Interpretation and Hellenistic Rhetoric', *HUCA* 22 (1949) 239-264), and argues that 'in the eyes of the Rabbis, the Bible, since it enshrined the wisdom of God, contained various layers of meaning. . . . A word might have an ordinary sense and one or two allegorical senses at the same time' ('Alexandrian Methods of Interpretation and the Rabbis', *Festschrift Hans Lewald*, Helbing & Lichtenhah, Basel (1953) 38).

⁴⁷ Cf. also 1QMic. 8-10; CDC 6.2-11 (8:2-10); CDC 7.9-20 (9:2-9).

that they alone correctly understood the Old Testament prophecies, greater liberties were taken with the biblical text. In effect, they engaged in textual criticism on a theological basis.

II. EXEGETICAL PATTERNS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Jewish roots of the New Testament make it *a priori* likely that its basic presuppositions and exegetical practices would resemble those of contemporary Judaism to some extent. This has long been established with regard to rabbinic writings (especially in relation to Paul), and is becoming increasingly evident from the Qumran materials as well. In view of these data, we must abandon the mistaken idea that the New Testament writers' treatment of the Old Testament was either (1) an essentially mechanical process, whereby explicit 'proof-texts' and exact 'fulfilments' were brought together, or (2) an illegitimate twisting and distortion of the ancient text. It is true that literal fulfilment of a direct sort evidences itself as one factor in the New Testament. The Christian claim to continuity with the prophets could hardly have been supported were there no such cases. And it is also true that from a modern perspective the exegesis of the early Christians often appears forced, particularly when judged only by modern criteria. But neither approach does justice to the essential nature of New Testament hermeneutics, for both ignore basic patterns of thought and common exegetical methods employed in the Jewish milieu in which the Christian faith came to birth.

There is little indication in the New Testament that the authors themselves were conscious of varieties of exegetical genre or of following particular modes of interpretation. At least they seem to make no sharp distinctions between what we would call historical-grammatical exegesis, illustration by way of analogy, midrash exegesis, *peshet* interpretation, allegorical treatment, and interpretation based on a 'corporate solidarity' understanding. All of these are employed in their writings in something of a blended and interwoven fashion. What they are conscious of, however, is interpreting the Old Testament (1) from a Christocentric perspective, (2) in conformity with a Christian tradition, and (3) along Christological lines. And in their exegesis there is the interplay of Jewish

presuppositions and practices, on the one hand, with Christian commitment and perspective, on the other; which joined to produce a distinctive interpretation of the Old Testament.

1. *Pesher Motifs in Early Jewish Christianity*

It is in the material attributed to the earliest disciples and associates of Jesus that the New Testament use of the Old most approximates Qumran exegesis; that is, in the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of John, the preaching of Peter and other early Jewish Christian leaders reported in Acts, the First Epistle of Peter,⁴⁸ and the Epistle of James. There is indeed a literal use of the Old Testament (particularly in the quotation of direct and explicit prophecies) and an allusive use, but the dominant manner in which the Old Testament is employed within these materials is that of a *pesher* treatment.

In seeking to understand Matthew's use of the Old Testament, it is well to remind ourselves of a phenomenon in the First Gospel which has been often noticed and variously explained: that many parallels between the life of Jesus and the experiences of the nation in its early days seem to be drawn, especially in the earlier chapters of the Gospel. As even a cursory glance at a 'harmony' or a 'synopsis' of the Gospels reveals, Matthew's presentation in the first half of his work varies noticeably from the arrangements of both Mark and Luke. The First Evangelist seems to be following a thematic order in the structuring of his Gospel wherein, via the hebraic concepts of corporate solidarity and typological correspondences in history, Jesus is portrayed as the embodiment of ancient Israel and the anti-type of earlier redemptive activity.

And to this should be coupled the idea of a *pesher* handling of the biblical text and application of its meaning. As has been frequently pointed out, especially since Krister Stendahl's 1954 monograph, there is a striking similarity between Matthew's formula quotations and the exegesis of 1QHab.⁴⁹ There are differences, of course. In addition to the

⁴⁸ The problem regarding 2 Peter in this regard is the same as that for Jude, and cannot be treated here. I personally accept both as authentic, though neither yields evidence of pertinence for the question at hand.

⁴⁹ See Stendahl, *School of St. Matthew*. Whether or not the mixed text-form of the Matthean formula quotations is unique to Matthew or is shared by the other Synoptists is a question that need not detain us here (cf. R. H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel*, Brill, Leiden (1967)). It is the dis-

obvious fact that the introductory formulae vary, there is a difference of degree in the liberty taken with the text itself. Matthew's readings can be supported more adequately—though not entirely—by known variants than can those of 1QHab. And there is a decided difference in the application of the biblical texts. While both employ the 'this is that' theme in their treatments, Matthew does not necessarily pre-empt the narrative so as to make it meaningless in its earlier context while Qumran treated the texts as pertinent only to the present situation.⁵⁰ But in that Matthew's formula-fulfilment quotations (1) have their point of departure in the 'this' (the Christ-events) and move on to the 'that' (the Old Testament passages), (2) are employed to demonstrate the fulfilment of certain prophetic words and actions in the present rather than to elucidate principles in the text that have relevance to the present, and (3) are affected in their textual form by the application made, it is correct to speak of them as *peshar* treatments.

To summarize in a paragraph or two the evidence in support of Stendahl's thesis is impossible. Nor is it necessary in such an essay as this, especially in view of the prominence of his work. I would only express my basic agreement with Stendahl on the point in question (though without committing myself to his 'School' hypothesis). And I would suggest that we must understand Matthew's use of the Old Testament along the lines of the Jewish concepts of corporate solidarity and typological correspondences in history coupled to the Christian convictions of present eschatological fulfilment and Messianic presence; with these basic presuppositions coming to expression through a *peshar* treatment of certain Old Testament passages, resulting in a Christocentric interpretation. The remaining question as to whether Matthew's textual deviations are to be explained on the basis of a selection of variants or in certain cases as *ad hoc* creations (or independent corrections of existing texts) must remain for the present unresolved. Until more is known of the state of the text prior to Jamnia, it is necessary to reserve judgment;⁵¹ though whether the

tinctive application of the Old Testament and the type of mixed biblical text employed that sets Matthew apart from the rest, not just the fact of a mixed text.

⁵⁰ Cf. F. F. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts*, 16–17.

⁵¹ Cf. F. M. Cross, Jr., 'The History of the Biblical Text in the Light of Discoveries in the Judean Desert', *HTR* 57 (1964) 281–299; *idem*, 'The Contribution

phenomenon is one of selection or creation, a *peshet* treatment is involved.

It is in John's Gospel that we find the closest parallel to Matthew's formula-fulfilment quotations and treatment of the Old Testament. In the Fourth Gospel the fulfilment theme appears in the quotations approximately a dozen times: (1) in the Baptist's application of Isaiah 40:3 to his own person and ministry (1:23); (2) in the people's attribution of Psalm 118:25 to Jesus (12:13); (3) in three of the five quotations credited to Jesus (6:45; 13:18; 15:25), two of which are introduced by *ἡ αὐτοῦ λέξις*; (4) in Jesus' justification for employing a Christocentric approach to Scripture ('Moses . . . wrote of me', 5:39–47); and (5) in the seven quotations attributed to the Evangelist himself, six of which are formula quotations and five of which are introduced by *ἡ αὐτοῦ λέξις* (2:17; 12:15, 38, 40; 19:24, 36, 37).

Whereas Matthew's portrayal of Jesus seems to have been developed generally along the lines of the Messiah as the embodiment of Israel and its history (at least in the first half or so of the Gospel), John appears to have thought of Jesus in terms of the centre of the nation's life. He constantly relates his presentation to the Jewish festivals,⁵² emphasizes communal celebrations and social gatherings,⁵³ and presents Jesus as central in every relationship.⁵⁴ But though the imagery varies slightly, the presuppositions are the same as those inherent in the First Gospel. And the treatment of Scripture is comparable; especially so in the case of the seven quotations credited to the Evangelist himself, which in application and purpose are closely parallel, if not identical, to Matthew's formula citations. The texts of John's quotations, of course, evidence less deviation from known versions than those of Matthew, reflecting stronger LXX influence. But as with the similar phenomena in Matthew and at Qumran, our evidence is insufficient to make a final determination on whether the deviants are the products of selection or *ad hoc* creations.

of the Qumran Discoveries to the Study of the Biblical Text', *IEJ* 16 (1966) 81–95; P. W. Skehan, 'The Biblical Scrolls from Qumran and the Text of the Old Testament', *BA* 28 (1965) 87–100.

⁵² Jn. 2:13; 5:1; 6:4; 7:2; 10:22; 11:55; 12:1; 13:1; 19:14.

⁵³ E.g. Jn. 2:1ff.; 12:2ff.; 13:1–18:1.

⁵⁴ Esp. Jn. 7:37ff.; 8:12ff.

Assuming the speeches of Acts to be abstracts of early Christian proclamation and the Epistles of James and 1 Peter to contain early sermon material, we may presume to employ these portions in determining the use of Scripture in the preaching of the earliest Jewish Christians.

It is usually held that the source of Old Testament quotations and allusions in the Acts and the Epistles of James and 1 Peter is the LXX.⁵⁵ And on the basis of this observation, it is often concluded either that (1) the phenomenon of Greek citations credited to Aramaic-speaking preachers lies heavily against the authenticity of the records, or (2) the LXX was the Bible of the earliest Christians. But both the observation and the positions that spring from it neglect to take into consideration the degree of assimilation to the LXX form affected by the author himself or the amanuensis of the work in question.⁵⁶

As is inevitable in any historical account, the quotations in Acts are at least one step removed from their original source. And it may reasonably be supposed that their textual form, if originally deviant on the basis of a semitic variant, would be brought into greater conformity to the LXX—if for no other reason, for the sake of the Greek-speaking audience. Such could likewise be the case with James and 1 Peter, directed as they were to Diaspora Jews and, at least for 1 Peter, evidencing the presence of an amanuensis (*cf.* 1 Pet. 5:12). Max Wilcox has shown that while the citations of the Old Testament in Acts are fairly representative of the LXX in general, the allusions, because they are less capable of exact definition, seem to have escaped a process of assimilation.⁵⁷ In addition, J. de Waard argues that the LXX alone is not sufficient to explain the textual phenomena of the quotations in Acts, asserting that four biblical citations in Acts (3:22–23; 7:43; 13:41; 15:16) are prime examples of where ‘certain New Testament writings show affinities to the DSS as regards the Old Testament text’.⁵⁸

It seems, therefore, that we are here confronted with two issues: (1) the problem of pre-Jamnia variants, and (2) the

⁵⁵ Note the seminal article of W. K. L. Clarke, ‘The Use of the Septuagint in Acts’, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, 5 vols., F. J. Foakes Jackson and K. Lake, eds., Macmillan, London (1920–33) II, 66–105.

⁵⁶ *Cf.* M. Wilcox, *The Semitisms of Acts*, Clarendon Press, Oxford (1965) 20.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 20–55.

⁵⁸ J. de Waard, *A Comparative Study of the Old Testament Text in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the New Testament*, Brill, Leiden (1965) 78.

phenomenon of possible assimilation. Until further evidence is available, we are well advised to leave open the question of textual deviation in early Christian preaching. We may suspect a similar *peshar* treatment of the text as seen in Matthew and to an extent in John, but we are without data of sufficient strength either to affirm it or to deny it.

In use of the Scriptures, however, we need have little reticence in asserting a *peshar* approach as prominent in early Jewish Christian preaching. Peter, writing about AD 63, explicitly records his attitude toward the Old Testament prophecies in saying:

The prophets who prophesied of the grace that is yours searched and inquired concerning this salvation, inquiring regarding what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things which have now been announced to you by those who preached the gospel to you through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels desire to look.⁵⁹

While he did not use the terms ‘mystery’ and ‘interpretation’, the thought of the apostle is strikingly parallel to that of the *rāz-peshar* motif at Qumran.

And the exegetical practice of Peter, as seen in the quotations credited to him in Acts and those of his First Epistle, evidences the importance he placed on a *peshar* understanding of Scripture. There are instances where he treats the Old Testament in a midrashic fashion alone; that is, where he begins with the passage in question, actualizes its content and applies its principles, but does not enter into a demonstration of fulfilment.⁶⁰ But in the majority of cases, he employs the ‘this is that’ *peshar* theme; as seen in:

1. The ‘stone’ citations of 1 Peter 2:6–8 and Acts 4:11, quoting Isaiah 28:16, Psalm 118:22, and Isaiah 8:14; the point being that this stone is Christ.

2. The statements regarding Judas in Acts 1:20, quoting

⁵⁹ 1 Pet. 1:10–12.

⁶⁰ E.g., 1 Pet. 1:16 quoting Lv. 11:44, 19:2, 20:7; 1 Pet. 3:10–12 quoting Ps. 34:12–16; 1 Pet. 5:5 quoting Pr. 3:34. In 1 Pet. 1:24–25 quoting Is. 40:6, 8 there seems to appear a merging of midrash and *peshar* treatments.

Psalms 69:25 and 109:8. While the first of Hillel's exegetical rules is employed, arguing that that which is said regarding the unrighteous in general applies specifically to the betrayer of the Messiah, the aspect of fulfilment gives the treatment a *peshet* flavour as well.

3. The application of Joel 2:28–32 (*MT* 3:1–5) to the Pentecost outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2:17–21, stating explicitly that 'this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel'.

4. The argument in Acts 2:25–28 that David's words recorded in Psalm 16:8–11 were really prophetic, and that in the resurrection of Jesus their true character has been recognized and their prediction fulfilled.

5. The application in Acts 2:34–35 of Psalm 110:1 to the ascension of Jesus, insisting that this is that of which the Psalm really spoke.

6. The 'prophet' citation of Acts 3:22–23, quoting Deuteronomy 18:15, 18,⁶¹ and possibly alluding to Leviticus 23:29. Christ is 'that prophet', the prophet 'like unto me (Moses)', concerning whom Moses exhorted and warned the people to hear.

The 'this is that' *peshet* motif also appears in the church's ascription of Psalm 2:1–2 to the contemporary situation of Sadducean opposition to the preaching of Jesus (Acts 4:25–26), in Philip's proclamation of Jesus on the basis of Isaiah 53:7–8 (Acts 8:32–33), and in James' application of Amos 9:11 to the issue at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:16–17). Perhaps it is also implicit in Stephen's address of Acts 7 and in James' seemingly strange use of the fulfilment formula in James 2:23.

2. *Jesus as Source and Paradigm*

The 'this is that' *peshet* motif, as contrasted with the 'that has relevance to this' theme of the Rabbis, well characterizes the distinctive treatment of Scripture by the early Jewish Christians. But it also signals a difference of perspective, and, on the analogy with Qumran, points to an originating source. The maxim that 'in Palestinian Christianity, Jesus of Nazareth and

⁶¹ On the correlation of the textually aberrant τοῦ προφήτου ἐκείνου of Acts 3:23 with the reading יְהוָה of Dt. 18:18 in 4Q Testimonia, see J. A. Fitzmyer, '4Q Testimonia and the New Testament', *Theological Studies* 18 (1957) 537; J. de Waard, *A Comparative Study of the Old Testament Text*, 24.

the redemptive significance of his person is the creative element'⁶² is true of early Christian hermeneutics as well. Convinced of His Messiahship and Lordship, via the convergence of His historical presence among them, the witness of the Spirit, and the validation of the resurrection, the early Christians began with Jesus as the 'certain and known quality'.⁶³ In Him they witnessed a creative handling of the Scriptures which became for them both the source of their own understanding and the pattern for their treatment of the Old Testament.

The selection of Old Testament passages quoted in the New indicates a highly creative and original approach to Scripture. C. H. Dodd has pertinently observed that 'creative thinking is rarely done by committees, useful as they may be for systematizing the fresh ideas of individual thinkers, and for stimulating them to further thought. It is individual minds that originate.'⁶⁴ And he concludes in words which cannot be improved upon: 'To account for the beginning of this most original and fruitful process of rethinking the Old Testament we found need to postulate a creative mind. The Gospels offer us one. Are we compelled to reject the offer?'⁶⁵

Not only can it be reasonably argued that the selection of messianically relevant Old Testament portions is to be credited to Jesus Himself, but also it should be noted that all of the Gospels record that He treated selected biblical verses in a genuinely creative fashion employing a *peshet* type of approach. There are instances where Jesus used Scripture in an allusive and evocative manner, cases where His treatment was quite straightforward and literal, and some evidence of a rabbinic type of argument based on an Old Testament concept or passage. But in the majority of quotations attributed to Him, Jesus is represented as engaging in a *peshet* interpretation of the verses in question.

According to Luke's Gospel, Jesus began to expound Scripture in terms of a fulfilment theme very early in His ministry.

⁶² K. G. Kuhn, 'The Lord's Supper and the Communal Meal at Qumran', *The Scrolls and the New Testament*, ed. K. Stendahl, Harper & Row, New York (1957) 86.

⁶³ Using the phrase of J. Barr, *Old and New In Interpretation*, SCM, London (1966) 139, though in opposition to his point.

⁶⁴ C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*, Nisbet, London (1952) 109-110.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 110.

In Luke 4:16–21, He enters the synagogue at Nazareth and is called upon to read the lesson from the prophet Isaiah. He reads Isaiah 61:1–2, rolls up the scroll, hands it to the attendant, sits down to speak, and proclaims: ‘Today this scripture is fulfilled in your ears.’ In John’s Gospel the theme of fulfilment is just as explicitly stated in the denunciation of the Pharisees by Jesus in John 5:39–47. The passage begins with a rebuke of His antagonists’ false confidence, proceeds to given an unfavourable verdict on their attitudes and interpretations, and climaxes in the assertion: ‘If you believed Moses, you would have believed me; for he wrote of me.’ If we had only these two passages, it would be possible to claim that Jesus Himself gave the impetus to the fulfilment theme and *peshet* approach in early Christianity.

But the demonstration of Jesus’ use of the fulfilment theme and His own *peshet* treatment of the text does not depend upon these two portions alone. In addition, the following instances should be noted: (1) His application of Isaiah 6:9–10 in Matthew 13:14–15 in explanation of His use of parables; (2) His paraphrase of Isaiah 29:13 (possibly also collating Ps. 78:36–37) in rebuke of the scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem, introducing the quotation with the words ‘Isaiah prophesied concerning you, saying’; (3) His quotation of Zechariah 13:7 in Matthew 26:31 and Mark 14:27 in regard to His approaching death, directly invoking the ‘this is that’ *peshet* motif and altering the tenses, number and vocabulary of the LXX in the process; (4) His application of the conflated texts of Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 to John the Baptist in Matthew 11:10 and Mark 1:2–3, saying by way of introduction (in Matthew’s Gospel): ‘This is he of whom it is written’, and altering the pronouns and verbs of the LXX reading; (5) His citation of Psalm 118:22–23, ‘The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner’, in Mark 12:10–11, implying fulfilment in His own person; (6) His application of Isaiah 53:12 directly to Himself in Luke 22:37, saying first that ‘it is necessary that that which is written be fulfilled in me’ and then that ‘that concerning me (in the prophecy of Isaiah) has fulfilled’; (7) His allusion to the message of Isaiah 54:13 and Jeremiah 31:33 in John 6:45, making the point that the words ‘and they shall be taught of God’—as the prophets’ message

may be freely rendered—apply to His teaching and to His ministry generally; (8) His application of the lament of Psalm 41:9 to His betrayal by Judas in John 13:18, introducing the citation by *ὡς πληρωθῇ* and employing synonyms for the LXX rendering; (9) His application of the lament of Psalms 35:19 and 69:4, ‘hated without a cause’, to Himself in John 15:25, employing the *ὡς πληρωθῇ* formula and changing the participle of the LXX to a finite verb (though probably only to conform to sentence structure); and (10) His interpretation of Psalm 110:1 as reported by all three Synoptists (Mt. 22:41–46; Mk. 12:35–37; Lk. 20:41–44), arguing on the basis of David’s acclamation that the Messiah must be considered more than just a junior David, a ‘Second David’, or even the ‘Son of David’, with all the nationalistic connotations which that title evoked, and implying that David’s true intent found fulfilment in His person.

Assuming the Gospels to be giving at least a substantially accurate account of Jesus’ use of the Scriptures, it must be asserted that Jesus’ own treatment of the Old Testament was remarkably similar, if not essentially identical, to that of the earliest Jewish Christians. It can, of course, be argued that this similarity only indicates that the accounts of Jesus’ usage were fabricated by the authors of the Gospels themselves and that the whole is a product of *Gemeindetheologie*. But it can also be postulated—more plausibly I believe—that Jesus Himself was both the source and the pattern for early Christian interpretation: that certain selected verses which He interpreted continued to be interpreted in the same way by the earliest Christians (e.g. Is. 53:12 in Mk. 15:28 and Is. 53:7–8 in Acts 8:32–33, and less directly elsewhere; the ‘stone’ citations in Acts 4:11 and 1 Pet. 2:6–8; and Ps. 110:1 in Acts 2:34–36 and a number of times in Hebrews) and that His treatment of them furnished the paradigm for further exegetical endeavour within the early apostolic community.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Cf. C. F. D. Moule’s excellent treatment on Jesus’ use of the Old Testament in *The Birth of the New Testament*, Black, London (1966) 62–70, 84–85. See also J. A. Fitzmyer, ‘Use of Explicit OT Quotations’, 315–316; A. von Rohr Sauer ‘Problems of Messianic Interpretation’, *Concordia Theological Monthly* 35 (1964) 566–574; B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, trans. E. J. Sharpe, Gleerup, Lund (1961) 225–234, though with Gerhardsson’s thesis tempered by the comments of W. D. Davies in *Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*, 465–466.

3. *Midrash and Pesher Motifs in Paul*

It may be considered axiomatic that Paul shared generally the current Jewish exegetical presuppositions and Jewish Christian attitudes towards Scripture. His own personal history would lead us to expect this,⁶⁷ and his writings evidence it.⁶⁸ Further, Dodd has shown that a common body of Old Testament material underlies the Pauline exegesis and that of other New Testament writers.⁶⁹

But while there are broad areas of agreement between the Jerusalem apostles and Paul, there also appear differences of hermeneutical approach and practice. We must not magnify the variations into any dichotomous cleavage; though, on the other hand, we cannot merely equate Paul's exegetical habits with those mentioned earlier.

Together with the earliest Jewish Christians, Paul understood the Old Testament Christologically. And he worked from the same two fixed points: (1) the Messiahship and Lordship of Jesus, as validated by the resurrection and as witnessed to by the Spirit, and (2) the revelation of God in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. But though in his own experience a true understanding of Christ preceded a proper understanding of Scripture, in his exegetical endeavours he habitually began with Scripture and moved on to Christ. As C. H. Dodd has observed (even while constructing his important thesis regarding the common area of agreement underlying all New Testament interpretation), 'Paul in the main tries to start from an understanding of the biblical text just as it stands in its context'.⁷⁰ While the Jerusalem apostles placed the revelation of God in Jesus the Messiah 'neben dem Text', so that both stood starkly side-by-side, Paul's treatment evidences not quite this rather wooden juxtaposition, but a placing of Scripture as central within a larger context of Christological awareness. And while the early Jewish Christian leaders

⁶⁷ Cf. R. N. Longenecker, *Paul, Apostle of Liberty*, Harper & Row, New York (1964) 21-64.

⁶⁸ Cf. H. St J. Thackeray, *The Relation of St. Paul to Contemporary Jewish Thought*, Macmillan, London (1900); O. Michel, *Paulus und seine Bibel*, Bertelsmann, Gütersloh (1929); W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, SPCK, London (1955); E. E. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*, Oliver & Boyd, London (1957).

⁶⁹ C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*, esp. 23.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

characteristically began with Jesus the Christ and moved on to the understanding of the Old Testament from this Christocentric perspective, Paul usually starts with the text itself and seeks via a midrashic explication to show Christological significance. There is an area of overlapping. But whereas the exegesis of early Jewish Christianity has its closest contemporary parallel known to date in the *peshet* exegesis of Qumran, Paul's treatment of the biblical texts is more closely related to that of Pharisaism.⁷¹

This is not to value one approach and methodology more highly than the other. Both Paul and the Jerusalem apostles viewed the relations of the revelation in Jesus and the revelation in the Old Testament as complementary, as well as supplementary. And undoubtedly both would have acknowledged the legitimacy of the other's practice, as each seems to do unconsciously at those points where they overlap. It is only to point out that the Pauline approach to the Old Testament and Paul's own biblical apologetic varies to an extent from that practised by the earliest Jewish Christians, and to suggest that this difference is due in large measure to differences of training, ideological environment confronted in the missionary enterprise, and individual spiritual experience.

A common feature in the Pauline quotations is the Pharisaic practice of 'pearl stringing'; that is, of bringing to bear on one point of an argument passages from various parts of the Old Testament both to support the argument and to demonstrate the unity of Scripture. This is most obviously done in the citations of Romans 3:10-18 (joining five passages from the Psalms and one from Isaiah), Romans 10:18-21 (Ps. 18; Dt. 32; Is. 65), Romans 15:10-12 (Dt. 32; Ps. 116; Is. 11), and Galatians 3:10-13 (Dt. 21, 27; Hab. 2; Lv. 18); and it appears as well in Romans 9:25-29, Romans 11:8-10, and 2 Corinthians 6:16-18. In addition, a midrashic treatment of the Old Testament is evident in at least Romans 10:6-10 (the word *nigh*, even in the mouth and in the heart),⁷² 1 Corinthians 10:1-6

⁷¹ W. F. Albright, although here a bit extreme, nonetheless is generally correct and stresses a vital point too often overlooked in insisting that 'St. Paul's interpretation of the Old Testament follows the Greek hermeneutics of the Mishnah rather than the quite different type of interpretation found in the Essene commentaries on the books of the Bible' (*New Horizons in Biblical Research*, Oxford University Press (1966) 51).

⁷² On Dt. 30:11-14. See Thackeray, *Relation of St. Paul to Contemporary Jewish*

(the rock that followed in the wilderness),⁷³ 2 Corinthians 3:12–18 (Mosaic veil that still blinds),⁷⁴ Galatians 3:16 (seed and seeds),⁷⁵ and Ephesians 4:8–10 (Christ's ascent implies descent as well).⁷⁶ And even the two cases of a mild allegorical interpretation in 1 Corinthians 9:9–10 (not muzzling the ox) and Galatians 4:21–31 (Hagar and Sarah) find as close parallels in rabbinic practice as anywhere else.⁷⁷

But is there any evidence of a *pesher* treatment of the Old Testament by Paul? Three matters warrant comment here: (1) textual deviations, (2) the 'this is that' fulfilment motif, and (3) a *rāz-pesher* understanding of the prophetic message.

Earle Ellis has shown that of the 93 Old Testament portions cited by Paul, either singly or in combination, 38 diverge from all known versions of the LXX and *MT*. He further argues that about 20 of these give evidence of a *pesher* type moulding of the text.⁷⁸ In almost all of these latter instances, he points out, 'the variation seems to be a deliberate adaptation to the NT context; in some cases the alteration has a definite bearing on the interpretation of the passage'.⁷⁹ The problem, of course, is to what extent these deviations are (1) explainable on the

Thought, 187, for references to Jewish parallels. Note also what appears to be a rabbinic rebuttal to Paul in *Deut. R.* 8.6; though, interestingly, with the same exegetical method employed.

⁷³ Probably on Nu. 21:17. Regarding the rabbinic treatment of this passage and the legend that developed, see E. E. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*, 66–70.

⁷⁴ On Ex. 34:33–35. Regarding the rabbinic principle followed here of paralleling two passages having one term in common, and interpreting them in light of one another, see J. Jeremias, 'Zur Gedankenführung in den paulinischen Briefen', *Studia Paulina*, eds. G. Sevenster and W. C. van Unnik, Bohn, Haarlem (1953) 149–151.

⁷⁵ On Gn. 13:15; 17:7; 24:7. Cf. D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, Athlone Press, London (1956) 438–444.

⁷⁶ On Ps. 68:18. G. B. Caird speaks of Paul 'Christianizing the Rabbinic exegesis of the Pentecostal psalm' ('The Descent of Christ in Ephesians 4, 7–11', *Studia Evangelica*, II, ed. F. L. Cross (1964) 543). A form of the rabbinic argument of inference is used in Eph. 4:9. On a targumic basis for the text of Eph. 4:8, see *ibid.*, 540–541, H. St J. Thackeray, *Relation of St. Paul to Contemporary Jewish Thought*, 182, and M. Wilcox, *Semitisms of Acts*, 25. Conversely, crediting the form of the text to an early Christian 'midrash pesher', see E. E. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*, 144, and B. Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic*, SCM, London (1961) 52–56.

⁷⁷ Paul's treatment of 1 Cor. 9:9–10 should be compared to the rabbinic treatments in *Gen. R.* 44.1 and *Lev. R.* 13.3, as well as to the often cited Philonic parallel of *De Sacrif. Ab. et Cain.* 260. On rabbinic allegorical exegesis, see *supra*, 'Allegorical Exegesis'.

⁷⁸ E. E. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*, 11–16, 139–147.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 144.

basis of contemporary variants now extinct and not *ad hoc* creations, and (2) distinctive to *peshet* exegesis and not also true of rabbinic midrashic treatments? In the present state of our knowledge regarding early textual traditions, definiteness on the first issue is manifestly impossible; and opinions regarding the second are a matter of judgment. Ellis, following Stendahl's handling of similar phenomena in Matthew's Gospel, tends to view many of these as *ad hoc* creations of Paul in the working out of his *peshet* approach to Scripture. Yet, significantly I believe, Ellis points out as well that what he calls 'the *peshet* method' is 'not used extensively in Paul's quotations' and that where it does occur 'it often appears to go behind the Greek to reflect an interpretation of the Hebrew ur-text' and that 'some of the most significant instances appear to point back to a pre-Pauline usage in the early Church'.⁸⁰

Whether it be judged a process of selection among variants or the creation of interpretive readings—and after deducting the maximum of renderings which could stem from a tradition within the early Church—the conclusion is inevitable that Paul felt somewhat free in his handling of the Old Testament text as we know it. T. W. Manson has rightly characterized Paul at this point, as well as the Jerusalem apostles, in saying:

The meaning of the text was of primary importance; and they seem to have had greater confidence than we moderns in their ability to find it. Once found it became a clear duty to express it; and accurate reproduction of the traditional wording of the Divine oracles took second place to publication of what was held to be their essential meaning and immediate application.⁸¹

But the question must be asked, Is this true only of *peshet* exegesis, or does it also find parallels in rabbinic midrash as well? I would suggest that *peshet* interpretation is somewhat wrongly understood if it is defined only on the basis of deviations in text-form, for rabbinic midrash differs more quantitatively than qualitatively at this point.

In regard to the 'this is that' fulfilment motif, Paul's letters

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 146. Probable pre-Pauline text-forms include Rom. 12:19; 1 Cor. 14:21; 15:45; 2 Cor. 6:16ff.; Eph. 4:8.

⁸¹ T. W. Manson, 'The Argument from Prophecy', *JTS* 66 (1945) 135-136.

indicate that he used it very sparingly. 1 Corinthians 15:3–5 twice employs the phrase ‘according to the scriptures’. But the context and the manner of citation suggest that Paul is here employing a formula of earlier Christians who themselves made use of the fulfilment theme. His inclusion of their words indicates his agreement, but the verbal expression itself probably did not originate with him. In 2 Corinthians 6:2 the apostle asserts that the ‘acceptable time’ and ‘the day of salvation’ spoken of in Isaiah 49:8 are upon us ‘now’, and in Galatians 4:4 he speaks of ‘the fullness of time’ taking place in God’s sending of His Son, both passages reflecting his consciousness of living in the days of eschatological consummation. But only in his address in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia, as recorded in Acts 13:16–41, is Paul represented as making explicit use of the fulfilment theme. And that, of course, is directed to a Jewish audience. It seems, therefore, that Paul’s habit in his Gentile mission was not a demonstration of eschatological fulfilment in any explicit manner. Evidently such a procedure would carry little weight with those unaccustomed to think in terms of historical continuity and unschooled in the Old Testament.

In regard to the *rāz-pesher* understanding of the prophetic message, F. F. Bruce has pointed out that ‘in the Greek versions of the Septuagint and Theodotion, this term *rāz*, wherever it occurs in Daniel, is represented by *mystērion*’. And he further suggests that ‘it is helpful to bear this in mind when we meet the word *mystērion* in the Greek New Testament’.⁸² Now Paul employs *μυστήριον* some twenty times, and in a number of ways. But in three instances in his use of the term he seems to be definitely involving himself in a *rāz-pesher* understanding of the unfolding of redemptive history:

1. In the doxology of Romans 16:25–27, where he identifies ‘my gospel’ as being ‘the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret for long ages [times eternal], but now is disclosed and through the prophetic writings is made known to all nations’.⁸³

2. In Ephesians 3:1–11, where he speaks of ‘the mystery’ which was ‘made known to me by revelation’ and ‘which was

⁸² F. F. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts*, 8.

⁸³ Understanding the *kal* of verse 25 to be explicative.

not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit—‘the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things’.

3. In Colossians 1:26–27, where he mentions ‘the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to his saints’.

What is this ‘mystery’? From his reference to ‘my gospel’ in Romans 16:25, and his insistence in Galatians 1:11ff. that his gospel came to him via ‘a revelation of Jesus Christ’, we may take it that it is something which he considered uniquely his. And this consciousness of distinction comes to expression again in Ephesians 3:6–8, where he explicitly associates the mystery to which he has been given the interpretive key with his Gentile ministry and the equality of Gentile and Jew before God. Evidently, then, Paul’s gospel, which had been given by revelation, was not a gospel which differed in kerygmatic content from that of the early Church, but a gospel which included a new understanding of the pattern of redemptive history in these final days involving the legitimacy of a direct approach to Gentiles and the recognition of the equality of both Jew and Gentile before God.

Paul could not claim the usual apostolic qualifications, as expressed in John 15:27 and Acts 1:21–22. His understanding of the Old Testament could not be directly related to the teaching and example of the historic Jesus. And he was dependent on the early Church for much in the Christian tradition, as his letters frankly evidence. But he had been confronted by the exalted Lord, had been directly commissioned an apostle by Jesus Himself, and considered that he had been given the key to the pattern of redemptive history in the present period. The Jerusalem apostles had the key to many of the prophetic mysteries, but he had been entrusted with a *pesher* that was uniquely his. Together, they combined to enhance the fullness of the gospel.

4. *Some Concluding Observations*

I have not even touched upon exegetical patterns in the Epistle to the Hebrews. That is a large issue, which space and time forbid us to deal with here. What I have sought to demonstrate

is that in the literature attributed to the earliest disciples and associates of Jesus there is the interplay of Jewish presuppositions and exegetical practices with a Christian commitment and perspective which, via a *peshet* treatment of the Old Testament, produced a distinctive interpretation. The early Jewish Christians were not so much interested in commentaries on the biblical texts or the application of principles to specific developments in the present as they were in demonstrating redemptive fulfilment in Jesus of Nazareth. Thus they took a prophetic stance upon a revelatory basis and treated the Old Testament more charismatically than scholastically. Our Lord having opened their eyes so that they might understand the Old Testament correctly, they were able to see previously ignored meaning in the nation's history and to apprehend the enigmatic in the prophetic word. Their major task was thus to demonstrate that 'this' which is manifest in the person and work of Jesus 'is that' which was recorded in the Old Testament. And in that they felt they possessed a more adequate knowledge of the real meaning of Scripture than elsewhere available, they were not afraid to select among variants that text which would best convey Scripture's true meaning—possibly, at times, even to create a wording to express that meaning—and to treat the passage in a creative fashion.

Paul's use of the Old Testament, however, is not just the same as that found within the materials representative of early Jewish Christianity. While he shared common presuppositions, a common body of 'testimonia' biblical material, and a common attitude toward the relationship of meaning and traditional wording in the Old Testament text, he differed in his closer affinity to rabbinic exegetical norms, his infrequent use of a fulfilment apologetic, and his consciousness of a difference in revelational insight into the redemptive purposes of God. Training, audience, and spiritual experience varied; and these factors evidenced themselves in a difference of exegesis.

III. THE REPRODUCTION OF NEW TESTAMENT EXEGESIS TODAY

Having surveyed the hermeneutics of first century Judaism and delineated representative exegetical patterns in the New

Testament, the question with which we began this paper directly confronts us: 'Can we reproduce the exegesis of the New Testament?'

1. *Various Answers Currently Given*

The question is of renewed and vital interest today, and various answers are currently being given to it. Answering negatively are those representing what might be called 'classical liberalism' and 'unreconstructed Bultmannianism', who assert the impossibility of any such endeavour since: (1) much of the exegesis of the New Testament is an arbitrary distortion and ingenious twisting of the biblical texts going beyond the limits of any proper hermeneutic;⁸⁴ and (2) the self-understanding of contemporary man and the critical-historical thought of modern theology separates us from the methodology of the New Testament.⁸⁵ Those responding negatively do not deny that the Old Testament is important for the study of the New Testament. They insist, however, that the Old Testament represents a religion which stands outside of and apart from the religion of the New, and that it must therefore be treated not as prolegomena to the gospel but as a witness to the gospel on the part of a religion which is essentially distinct from the gospel. The New Testament writers, not realizing this, engaged in demonstrating continuity and fulfilment. But from our more advanced perspective, we now see how impossible such an endeavour was—and is.

Where a positive answer to our question is given, it is usually expressed in one or the other of the following ways:

1. Most conservative interpreters (whether orthodox or quasi-orthodox in theology) hold—or at least 'feel'—that on so vital a matter as the New Testament's use of the Old, the descriptive is also the normative; and thus believe themselves committed to explain the principles underlying the exegesis of the New Testament so that these same procedures may be

⁸⁴ E.g. S. V. McCasland, 'Matthew Twists the Scriptures', *JBL* 80 (1961) 143–148, who goes so far as to assert that Matthew's treatment aptly illustrates the words of 2 Pet. 3:16 regarding 'ignorant and unstable' men twisting Scripture to their own destruction.

⁸⁵ E.g. F. Baumgärtel, 'The Hermeneutical Problem of the Old Testament', *Essays on Old Testament Interpretation*, ed. C. Westermann, trans. J. L. Mays, SCM, London (1963), 134–159; cf. also R. Bultmann, 'Prophecy and Fulfilment', *ibid.*, 50–75.

followed today. Few would follow the flexible axiom of Cocceius that 'the words of Scripture signify all that they can be made to signify'; but many, taking their cue from such earlier writers as F. W. Farrar,⁸⁶ insist that the exegetical methods of Christ and the apostles must control exegetical practices today.⁸⁷

2. Many existential exegetes (particularly the so-called post-Bultmannians) insist, to quote Walther Eichrodt, that it is 'open to us to go beyond the New Testament types and to mention other similar correspondences',⁸⁸ since the faith which ties together Old and New Testaments into an essential unity is ours as well. These interpreters agree with the 'classical liberals' and Rudolf Bultmann in their disavowal of any real continuity of detail between the Testaments and in their insistence that 'modern scientific exegesis cannot be simply derived from its use within the New Testament'.⁸⁹ But they assert that because of the continuity of faith that exists between prophets, apostles, reformers, and ourselves, each—though in his own way and employing materials of relevance to his own time—must engage in a similar exegetical task. Thus, to quote Hans Walter Wolff, 'the witnessing word waits on its encounter with each new hearer'.⁹⁰

3. A number of Roman Catholic scholars have recognized that the New Testament frequently explicates the Old Testament along the lines of what they have called a *sensus plenior*, and have credited the origin of this fuller sense in one way or another to the historic Jesus. Following their doctrine of a dual basis of authority, they then go on to insist that in like manner theology today can carry on the New Testament exegetical procedures only as it is guided by the Magisterium of the Church, the expression of the 'Mystical Body of Christ'.⁹¹

⁸⁶ F. W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, Macmillan, London (1886) 434–436.

⁸⁷ E.g. L. Berkhof, *Principles of Bible Interpretation*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids (1950) 140ff., who, in discussing the interpreter's handling of the 'mystical sense of Scripture', begins by saying: 'The necessity of recognizing the mystical sense is quite evident from the way in which the New Testament often interprets the Old.'

⁸⁸ W. Eichrodt, 'Is Typological Exegesis an Appropriate Method?', *Essays on Old Testament Interpretation*, 244.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁹⁰ H. W. Wolff, 'The Hermeneutics of the Old Testament', *Essays on Old Testament Interpretation*, 164. In addition to the articles cited above by Eichrodt and Wolff, note the seminal article in the same volume by Gerhard von Rad, 'Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament'.

⁹¹ E.g. E. F. Sutcliffe, 'The Plenary Sense as a Principle of Interpretation',

Evangelicals generally have found themselves unhappy with the presuppositions underlying (1) the 'No' answers of the 'classical liberals' and the 'unreconstructed Bultmannians', and (2) the 'Yes' responses of the 'post-Bultmannians' and Roman Catholic interpreters; and thus have held themselves—in their sympathies, if not always in their formal practice—to some form of the thesis that the descriptive is also in some manner normative for exegesis today. In light of the nature of New Testament exegesis, however, especially as illumined to a great extent by first century Jewish practice, the question must be raised: Is there not a better way to solve the problem of relationships?

2. *A Proposed Solution*

It is the thesis of this essay that at least three issues must be taken into account when asking about the relation of New Testament exegesis and a proper hermeneutic today. In the first place, it is essential that we understand the nature of *peshet* interpretation in the New Testament. Secondly, there is the necessity of recognizing that in certain instances midrashic and allegorical exegesis seem to be employed in the New Testament somewhat circumstantially. And thirdly, some determination must be made as to the relation of the descriptive and the normative in exegetical matters. Involved in all three of these issues is the question of the extent to which Christianity today—and particularly orthodox Christianity, from which perspective I speak—is committed not only to the apostolic faith and doctrine but also to the apostolic practice.

I have spoken earlier regarding the charismatic nature of *peshet* exegesis, both as it evidences itself in the Dead Sea Scrolls and as it appears in the New Testament. As Christians, we dispute the claim of the Teacher of Righteousness and his associates at Qumran to speak in a revelational manner. Rather, as Christians, to quote F. J. A. Hort:

Our faith rests first on the Gospel itself, the revelation of God and His redemption in His Only begotten Son, and

Bib. 34 (1953) 333–343; R. Bierberg, 'Does Sacred Scripture Have a *Sensus Plenior*?', *CBQ* 10 (1948) 182–195; R. E. Brown, *The 'Sensus Plenior' of Sacred Scripture* (1955); *idem*, '*Sensus Plenior* in the Last Ten Years', *CBQ* 25 (1963), 262–285.

secondly on the interpretation of that primary Gospel by the Apostles and Apostolic men to whom was Divinely committed the task of applying the revelation of Christ to the thoughts and deeds of their own time. That standard interpretation of theirs was ordained to be for the guidance of the Church in all after ages, in combination with the living guidance of the Spirit.⁹²

As students of history we can appreciate something of what was involved in their exegetical methods, and as Christians we commit ourselves to their conclusions. But apart from a revelatory stance on our part, I suggest that we cannot reproduce their *peshet* exegesis. While we may inadvertently sound at times as if we are speaking direct from the courts of heaven, and while we legitimately seek continuity with our Lord and His apostles in matters of faith and doctrine, we must also recognize the uniqueness of Jesus as the true interpreter of the Old Testament and the distinctive place He gave to the apostles in the explication of the prophetic word.⁹³

That the authors of the New Testament employed the Old Testament somewhat circumstantially is seen first of all in the matter of the distribution of biblical quotations in their writings, particularly in Paul's letters. Accepting for the moment Earle Ellis' count of 93 Old Testament passages cited by Paul (and some count must be accepted as a working standard, though the distinction between quotation and allusion is admittedly often quite elusive), the frequency of occurrence in the various letters is both interesting and instructive: in Romans, 52 Old Testament portions are quoted; in 1 Corinthians, 16; in 2 Corinthians, 9; in Galatians, 10; in Ephesians, 4; in 1 Timothy, 1; in 2 Timothy, 1; while in the six Epistles of 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians, and Titus, Old Testament quotations as such do not appear.⁹⁴ Probably we will never be able to explain this phenomenon fully. Evidently it cannot be attributed just to the size of the letter in question,

⁹² F. J. A. Hort, *The Epistle of St. James*, Macmillan, London (1909) ix.

⁹³ Note the consciousness of the centrality of the apostles in early Christian tradition as expressed in such passages as Jn. 15:27; Eph. 2:20; Rev. 21:14.

⁹⁴ E. E. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*, esp. Appendix I (A). See also Appendix I (B), where allusions and parallels in the Pauline Epistles to the Old Testament are listed.

for Galatians, while relatively brief, is proportionately full of Old Testament quotations. More likely it has to do with the character of the audience addressed, the problems faced, and the immediate purpose of the author; factors involving something of a circumstantial rationale. And while this is most easily illustrated in the letters of Paul, simply because of the number of letters with which we have to work in the Pauline corpus, it is probably true of the other New Testament writers as well.

Not only in distribution, however, but also in the manner in which the biblical portions are employed in certain instances may we postulate a circumstantial character in the citations. David Daube has suggested that in Paul's treatment of 'seed' and 'seeds' in Galatians 3:16, not only is the apostle using a midrashic mode of interpretation but he is also responding to a Judaizing conception of what it means to be Abraham's 'seed'—and that, in addressing his converts now troubled by the Judaizers' exegesis, 'he deliberately furnishes them with a deeper application'.⁹⁵ Such a suggestion is pregnant with possibilities, immediately implying that Paul here (as he did elsewhere and in other contexts) is meeting and outclassing his antagonists on their own grounds. This is not to propose that Paul only used an atomistic type of exegesis when confronting those who employed a midrashic mode or were influenced by such teachers, for certainly there are other instances of midrash in Paul and the other New Testament writers which cannot be so explained. But it is to raise the possibility that the extent and the specific form of that exegesis may in this case need to be understood somewhat circumstantially. And what is true here may also be true elsewhere, particularly in the midrashic exegesis of Romans 10:6–10 (the word nigh, even in the mouth and the heart), 1 Corinthians 10:1–6 (the rock that followed in the wilderness), and 2 Corinthians 3:12–18 (the Mosaic veil that still blinds); and possibly also in the Hagar-Sarah allegorical treatment of Galatians 4:21–31. Admittedly, this whole subject of a circumstantial use of the Old Testament in the New needs much fuller explication and discussion than this paper is able to give it.

⁹⁵ D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, Athlone Press, London (1956) 441.

I would only suggest, however, that the instances cited are prominent examples of portions which could be treated in such a fashion and that this matter of circumstantial exegesis must be taken into account in discussing the normative character of New Testament exegesis.

What then can be said to our question, 'Can we reproduce the exegesis of the New Testament?' I suggest that we must answer both 'No' and 'Yes'. Where that exegesis finds itself upon a revelatory stance and where it evidences itself to be circumstantial in character, 'No'.⁹⁶ Where, however, it treats the Old Testament in more literal fashion, following the course of what we speak of today as historical-grammatical exegesis, 'Yes'. Our commitment as Christians is to the reproduction of the apostolic faith and doctrine, and only secondarily (if at all) to the specific apostolic exegetical practices. Orthodoxy has always distinguished between the descriptive and the normative in other areas; *e.g.* in matters pertaining to ecclesiastical government, the apostolic office, and the charismatic gifts, to name only a few. I propose that in the area of exegesis as well we may appreciate the manner in which the interpretations of the New Testament writers were derived and may reproduce their conclusions via historical-grammatical exegesis, but we cannot assume that the explanation of their methods is necessarily the norm for our exegesis today.

⁹⁶ While given facetiously, C. F. D. Moule's comment is illustratively apt: 'I wish I had lived in the age of פֶּשֶׁר. I would have shown how II Kings vi. 5f. is an account of St. Paul's conversion in code: the lost axe-head was שֶׁאֵר; what rescued it was פֶּעַר!' ('Fulfilment-Words in the New Testament: Use and Abuse', *NTS* 14 (1968) 297, n. 2).