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THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

STEVE MOYISE





**JOURNAL FOR THE STUDY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
SUPPLEMENT SERIES**

115

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Sheffield Academic Press
Sheffield

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Journal for the Study of the New Testament
Supplement Series 115



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Published by
Sheffield Academic Press Ltd
Mansion House
19 Kingfield Road
Sheffield, S11 9AS
England

Typeset by Sheffield Academic Press

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library

EISBN 9781850755548

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, my thanks go to Professor Frances Young, who taught me as an undergraduate and supervised my doctorate. My six-year association with the theology department of Birmingham University was a very happy one. I am also indebted to the critical comments of Dr Paul Joyce and Dr George Brooke, which led to many improvements. Some of the ideas were first presented at the annual seminar (Hawarden, N. Wales) on the use of the OT in the NT. I am grateful for the encouragement and friendship shown to me by its convener, Dr Lionel North, and its members. Completion of the book was largely the result of study leave granted to me by the St Albans Ministerial Training Scheme. I am particularly grateful to the scheme's principal, the Revd Geoff Gillard, who urged me to 'get it finished' and covered my work while I was away. It is to him that I would like to dedicate this book.

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	<i>Anchor Bible</i>
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BAGD	W. Bauer, W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament</i>
BDB	F. Brown, S.R. Driver and C.A. Briggs, <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
BDF	F. Blass, A. Debrunner and R.W. Funk, <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature</i>
BFCT	Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BZNW	Beihefte zur ZNW
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
<i>Ecc. Hist.</i>	Eusebius, <i>The Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>Exp Tim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FOTL	The Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal for Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series</i>
JSPSup	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha, Supplement Series</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LS	H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i>
MNTC	Moffatt New Testament Commentary
NA ²⁶	Nestle-Aland, <i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , 26th edn
NCB	New Century Bible

NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	<i>Novum Testamentum, Supplements</i>
NRT	<i>La nouvelle revue théologique</i>
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
RevQ	<i>Revue de Qumrân</i>
RivB	<i>Rivista biblica</i>
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SJT	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
TDNT	G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.), <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
UBSGNT	<i>United Bible Societies Greek New Testament</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	<i>Vetus Testamentum, Supplements</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

During the early part of this century, studies on the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament focused on parallels found in Rabbinic works.¹ This was of value as it showed that the New Testament authors did not operate in a vacuum but were part of a continuous tradition of interpreting Scripture. Unfortunately, the date of these sources (several centuries after the Christian era) meant that one could never be sure whether they were representative of how things were in the New Testament period. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS), however, changed all this.² It has now become possible to make comparisons with a collection of writings that span the New Testament period and even use some of the same texts.³ Interest has revolved around three areas, each of which deserves introduction and discussion.

Text-Form of the Quotations

Why is it that some quotations agree exactly with the Masoretic Text (MT) or Septuagint (LXX), whereas others are very different? Was it lapse of memory on the part of the author, or were there a number of different text-traditions in circulation? The question is made particularly interesting by the fact that some of these differences are crucial to the author's argument. Did the author choose the text that best suited his

1. J. Bonsirven, *Exégèse rabbinique et exégèse paulinienne* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1939); W.D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (London: SPCK, 4th edn, 1981 [1948]); A. Schlatter, *Das alte Testament in der johanneischen Apokalypse* (BFCT 16.6; Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1912).

2. For a brief introduction, see the latest edition of Y. Yadin, *The Message of the Scrolls* (with a new Introduction by J.H. Charlesworth; New York: Crossroad, 1992).

3. For example, the use of 2 Sam. 7.14 in 2 Cor. 6.18; Heb. 1.5; Rev. 21.7 and 4QFlor 10–11.

argument or did he actually modify an existing text so that it said what he wanted it to say?⁴

Respect for Context

There has been much debate as to whether the authors (New Testament or DSS) were interested in the original context of their quotations.⁵ Part of the 'argument from prophecy' was that the new movement was able to give the true meaning of Scripture and this ability was thought to originate with the founder:

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day...' (Lk. 24.45-46).

and God told Habakkuk to write down that which would happen to the final generation, but He did not make known to him when time would come to an end. And as for that which He said, *That he who reads may read it speedily*: interpreted this concerns the Teacher of Righteousness, to whom God made known all the mysteries of the words of His servants the Prophets (1QpHab 7.1-5, trans. Vermes).

Such a view contrasts sharply with the historical consciousness of our own age. For example, many of the interpretations offered in the New Testament depend on the hearer/reader knowing about the coming of Christ, the birth of the Church and the inclusion of the Gentiles. They are meanings that the ancient people could not possibly have given to the texts. Thus Grollenberg deduces from the quotations in Matthew that 'the first Christians were not concerned with what the authors of the ancient text had wanted to say. That is something that we moderns ask about. They inferred the meaning of the ancient text from the events brought about by God in which they themselves were involved.'⁶ On the other hand, it must surely be maintained that these beliefs did not arise in a vacuum but in minds that had already been significantly moulded by the Scriptures. Borgen says, 'Since the Old Testament was the thought-world in which Jesus, the disciples and the other first

4. For a recent study, see C.D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature* (SNTSMS 74; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

5. See my article, 'Does the New Testament Quote the Old Testament out of Context?', *Anvil* 11 (1994), pp. 133-43.

6. L. Grollenberg, *Unexpected Messiah* (London: SCM Press, 1988), p. 7.

Christians lived, and since the Old Testament was woven into the very fabric of Jewish institutions and Jewish ways of life, it therefore determined the theological issues raised to a large extent, either negatively or positively'.⁷

Exegetical Methods of the Author

In the face of the above, attempts were made to try and understand the principles or techniques used by the author in order to move from text to interpretation.⁸ Were authors free to make the text mean whatever they liked, or were there rules (like the rabbinic *middôt*) that governed such exegesis? It might be thought that the claim to divine inspiration would rule out the use of fixed methods of exegesis, but this is not necessarily the case. Authors still have to persuade others to accept their interpretations.

With all this interest and activity, it is somewhat surprising that Schlatter's work (1912) remained the only scholarly book on John's use of Scripture until 1984.⁹ Trudinger¹⁰ (1963) and Ozanne¹¹ (1964) both produced dissertations on the language of John's allusions, but these were never published. Articles appeared in Italian,¹² French¹³ and

7. P. Borgen, 'Response', *NTS* 23 (1976-77), p. 68.

8. See G.J. Brooke, *Exegesis at Qumran: 4Q Florilegium in its Jewish Context* (JSOTSup 29, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985).

9. G.K. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St John* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984).

10. L. Trudinger, 'The Text of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation' (ThD Dissertation, Boston University, 1963).

11. C.G. Ozanne, 'The Influence of the Text and Language of the Old Testament on the Book of Revelation' (PhD Thesis, University of Manchester, 1964).

12. A. Lancellotti, 'L'Antico Testamento nell'Apocalisse', *RivB* 14 (1966), pp. 369-84; A. Gangemi, 'L'utilizzazione del Deutero-Isaia nell'Apocalisse di Giovanni', *Euntes Docete* 27 (1974), pp. 109-44; B. Marconcini, 'L'utilizzazione del T.M. nelle citazioni Isaiane dell'Apocalisse', *RivB* 24 (1976), pp. 113-36; G. Deiana, 'Utilizzazione del libro di Geremia in alcuni brani dell'Apocalisse', *Lateranum* 48 (1982), pp. 125-37. I am indebted to J.-P. Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse: The Transformation of Prophetic Language in Revelation 16:17-19:10* (European University Studies 23; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1989), pp. 78-90, for his review of Italian scholarship.

13. M.E. Boismard, "'L'Apocalypse" ou "Les Apocalypses" de St Jean', *RB* 56 (1949), pp. 507-41; J. Cambier, 'Les images de l'Ancien Testament dans l'Apocalypse de Saint Jean', *NRT* 77 (1955), pp. 113-22; A. Vanhoye, 'L'utilisation

German,¹⁴ but very little was published in English.¹⁵ As Beale says in his Festschrift article, 'In comparison with the rest of the New Testament, the use of the Old Testament in the Apocalypse of John has not been given a proportionate amount of attention'.¹⁶

The main reason for this neglect concerns John's particular style of using the Old Testament. Works like the Gospels or Paul's major epistles are easily compared with the Damascus Rule (CD), the Habakkuk peshet (1QpHab) or the florilegium (4QFlor) because they all contain explicit Old Testament quotations.¹⁷ The book of Revelation, however, never uses introductory formulae to introduce its Old Testament references, but weaves its words and phrases into its own composition. The index of allusions and quotations in the back of the *United Bible Societies Greek New Testament* reveals that Revelation contains more Old Testament allusions than any other New Testament book, but it does not record a single quotation.¹⁸ The total number of quotations and allusions listed in *UBSGNT* for Romans, Matthew, Hebrews and Revelation is illustrated in the following graphs. No great claim for objectivity is being made for these since (a) deciding what constitutes an allusion is itself a very subjective affair and (b) *UBSGNT* does not take into account the length of the quotation/allusion. For example, in the book of Hebrews, it only records two quotations and four allusions from Jeremiah, which disguises the fact that one of the quotations runs to 131 words (Heb. 8.8-12 = Jer. 31.31-34). Nevertheless, it is interesting to compare the overall shape of the graphs. Romans, Matthew and Hebrews have the highest number from the Pentateuch (particularly

du livre d'Ezéchiel dans l'Apocalypse', *Bib* 43 (1962), pp. 436-76.

14. E. Lohse, 'Die alttestamentliche Sprache des Sehers Johannes', *ZNW* 52 (1961), pp. 122-26.

15. The first to appear was Trudinger's summary of his thesis, 'Some Observations concerning the Text of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation', *JTS* 17 (1966), pp. 82-88. A short book appeared in 1972 by F. Jenkins, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972) but this was for a popular audience. In the early eighties, there were articles by Lust and Goulder (see Bibliography).

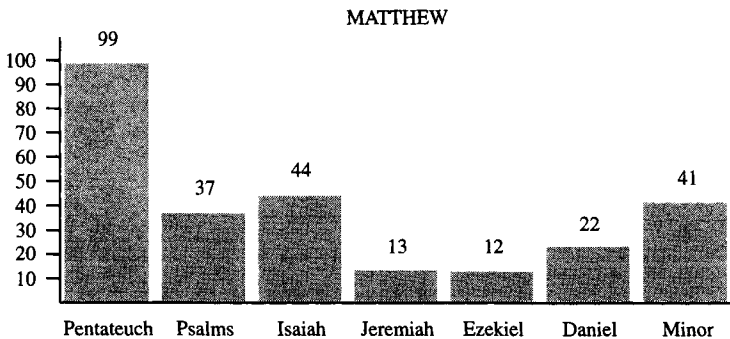
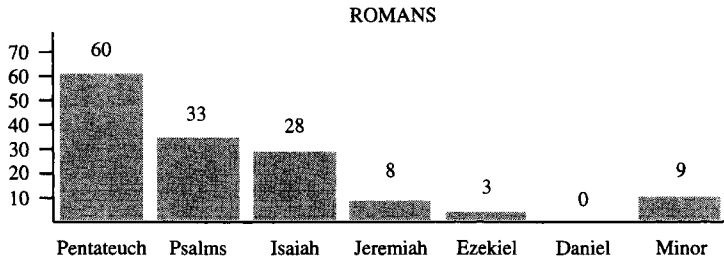
16. 'Revelation', in *It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture* (FS B. Lindars; ed. D.A. Carson and H.G.M. Williamson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 318.

17. The first works to use the material from the DSS were K. Stendahl on Matthew (1954) and E. Ellis on Paul (1957).

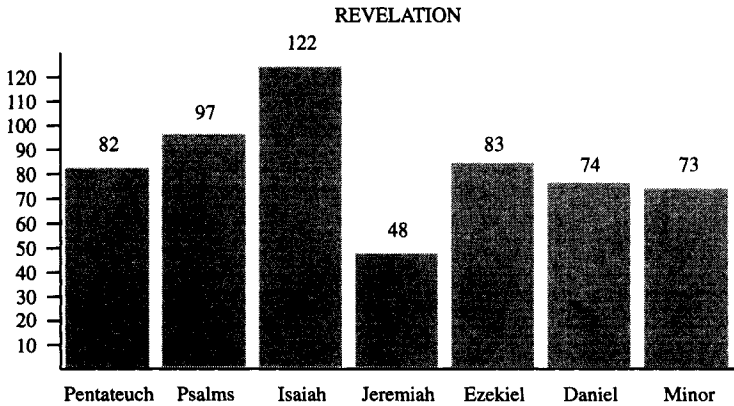
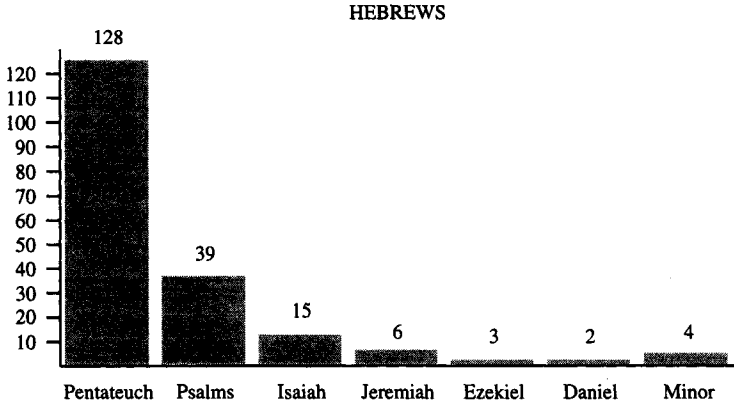
18. *UBSGNT*, 3rd edn, pp. 897-911.

Hebrews). Next come either Psalms or Isaiah; there are very few from Jeremiah, Ezekiel or Daniel, with a slight increase for the minor prophets (notably in Matthew).

QUOTATIONS AND ALLUSIONS IN CERTAIN NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS



In contrast, the graph of Revelation is almost the opposite, peaking in the middle rather than the ends (only Jeremiah spoils this). Thus whilst no claim for objectivity can be made for these graphs, it is nevertheless interesting that John's choice of scriptures is substantially different from Romans, Matthew and Hebrews. It would appear that his primary interest was not the Torah but the prophetic literature, along with the worship language of the Psalms.



Previous studies on John's use of the Old Testament have been aware that we are dealing with allusions rather than quotations, but they try to get around this by distinguishing between allusions and echoes.¹⁹ The

19. G.K. Beale proposes a distinction between 'clear', 'probable' and 'possible' allusions. The first is when the wording is almost the same as the source, has the same general meaning and could not reasonably have come from anywhere else. The second is less precise but contains an idea which is uniquely traceable to that text. The third is better referred to as an 'echo' and is of a much more general nature. See 'A Reconsideration of the Text of Daniel in the Apocalypse', *Bib* 67 (1986), pp. 539-43. A. Vanhoye divides them into 'Utilisation certaine' and 'Contacts littéraires', which in turn are divided into 'fidèle' and 'libre' for the first and 'plus probants' and 'moins probants' for the second ('L'utilisation', pp. 473-76).

aim has been to avoid the sort of subjectivity that Sandmel²⁰ has called 'parallelomania', by dealing with a smaller group of allusions that can more or less be treated as quotations. For example, Charles uses the differences between John's allusions and the LXX (which he refers to as ο') to conclude that 'our author draws his materials directly from the Hebrew (or Aramaic) text, and apparently never solely from ο' or any other version'.²¹ Thus John's use of ἐξάλειψω in Rev. 7.17 instead of the LXX's ἀφαιρέω (Isa. 25.8) means that we must 'maintain our author's independence of the LXX'.²² His use of αἶρω in Rev. 10.5 instead of the ὑψόω of the Greek versions (Dan. 12.7) leads him to conclude that 'our author did not use the Versions but the Hebrew of Daniel, which he rendered freely to suit his purpose'.²³ His use of νικάω in Rev. 11.7 and 13.7 (one of John's favourite words) instead of Theodotion's ἰσχύω (Dan. 7.21) points in the same direction.²⁴ The implication is that John would have followed the LXX more closely, had he known it. But is this true? Was it John's purpose to quote texts accurately, whether from Greek or Semitic sources? Most commentators think not. Indeed, even Charles says that John used the 'Hebrew of Daniel, which he rendered freely to suit his purpose'. Differences from the LXX are likely to arise from John's particular way of using Scripture, rather than constituting proof that he is following a Semitic text.²⁵

When it comes to analysing John's use of Scripture, there is clearly some value in trying to distinguish between allusions that are virtually certain and the countless echoes or literary parallels that various scholars

20. S. Sandmel, 'Parallelomania', *JBL* 81 (1962), pp. 1-13.

21. R.H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St John* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), I, p. lxxvi.

22. *Revelation*, I, p. 217.

23. *Revelation*, I, p. 263.

24. *Revelation*, I, p. 286.

25. A full discussion of this can be found in ch. 7 of my thesis, 'The Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation' (University of Birmingham, 1994). The conclusion reached there is that John makes use of both Greek and Semitic sources and is not solely dependent on either the Greek (*contra* Swete) or the Hebrew (*contra* Ozanne). Various scholars have tried to show that John prefers the Hebrew (e.g. Trudinger) or that his use of it is different from his use of Greek texts. For example, Charles distinguishes between *drawing directly* on the Hebrew, and simply being *influenced* by the Greek. I argue in my thesis that such a view can only be maintained by extensive special pleading.