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Christian Use of the Old Testament

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There has often been an ambiguity, if not tension, in the attitude of Christians toward the OT. It is in their Bible, they read it, and they employ it for various purposes; but at the same time they recognize in it much which does not measure up to the standards of Jesus' teaching, and they feel its institutions and regulations are not binding for their lives. What, then, is the authority of the OT for the Christian? What is the proper use to be made of the OT by Christians? This article will consider the views of the OT expressed by early Christian authors, then will present aspects of the NT use of the OT: the removal of the Mosaic system of religion, the values found in the OT and problems in the NT use of the Old.

EARLY CHRISTIAN VIEWPOINTS

The Christian's relation to the OT has been a recurring problem in Christian history. In the century and a half after the writing of the NT, many different viewpoints toward the OT were expressed. These represent, often in extreme forms, the range of alternatives which have been explored in later periods of Christian history.

Marcion, in the middle of the second century, rejected entirely the Old Testament from his Bible. Marcion's own

writings are lost, but we know his viewpoint from Tertullian's five-book refutation, *Against Marcion*, written in the early third century. Setting the law and the gospel against each other in his book entitled *Antitheses*, Marcion concluded that the God of the OT could not be the God of the New.

Marcion's special and principal work is the separation of the law and the gospel. . . . These are Marcion's *Antitheses*, or contradictory propositions, which aim at committing the gospel to a variance with the law, in order that from the diversity of the two documents which contain them, they may contend for a diversity of gods also.

Against Marcion I.19

For it is certain that the whole aim at which he has strenuously labored, even in the drawing up of his *Antitheses*, centers in this, that he may establish a diversity between the Old and the New Testaments, so that his own Christ may be separate from the Creator . . . and as alien from the law and the prophets.

Against Marcion IV.6

Marcion saw the OT God as a God of justice; the Christ he prophesied was the warrior Messiah expected by the Jews. Jesus, on the other hand, revealed the Father who is love and grace and was previously unknown to man. Marcion "devised different dispensations for two Gods" (*ibid.* III.15). His Christ came not to fulfill but to destroy the law. The consequence of this radical separation was a total rejection of the OT in favor of the New on the view that the two were so incompatible that they must come from different Gods and could not both be espoused by man. "The whole of the Old Testament, the heretic, to the best of my belief, holds in derision" (*ibid.* V.5). Tertullian admits a difference and declares a superiority of the gospel to the law, but he denies Marcion's explanations and conclusions. "It is the office of Christ's gospel to call men from the law to grace, not from the Creator to another god" (*ibid.* V.2). The differences are not so great as Marcion makes out, for there is law in the NT and grace in the Old. Moreover, book III of Tertullian's refutation presents OT predictions of Jesus and argues the connection of Jesus Christ with the Creator God

of the OT. So, although the old dispensation has been abolished by something superior, even this was predicted by the OT, and the differences are consistent with the same God having planned the whole (ibid. IV.1). Marcion represents an extreme solution to the problem of the NT's relation to the Old. Few have followed him, but his very extremes help us to recognize tendencies which have recurred in Christian history.

The second-century Gnostics generally shared Marcion's negative evaluation of the OT, but there was a variety of positions. An interesting, and individual, view is that of the Valentinian Gnostic Ptolemy (about A.D. 160). His *Letter to Flora* (preserved in Epiphanius, *Heresies* XXXIII.3-7) presents an early example of "source criticism" applied to the OT. There are those, Ptolemy says, who teach that the law was ordained by God the Father (the orthodox Christians) and those who teach that it was given by the devil (Gnostics more extreme than Ptolemy). By way of contrast he takes a middle position that the law was given by the creator of the world (the Demiurge), who is different from the perfect God. Not all of the law, however, comes from this creator. The NT attributes some parts of the OT to God, some to Moses (not what was given by God through him but as legislating from his own understanding), and some to the elders of the people. The legislation of Moses and of the elders is without lasting authority. Even that part which came from the creator God may be divided into three parts. There is the pure legislation, free from evil, which the Savior "came not to destroy but to fulfill," identified by Ptolemy as the Ten Commandments. There is a second part bound up with wrongdoing and concerned with vengeance (such as "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"), which the Savior abrogated as alien to his nature. Finally, there is the typical and symbolical part (such as the sabbath, circumcision, sacrifices), which the Savior transformed from material and bodily things into spiritual (abstaining from evil, circumcising the heart, praise and thanksgiving).

So two parts of the OT did not come from God, and of the part that did some is still valid; some has been abolished;

and some has been transformed. Ptolemy shows his Gnostic bias in distinguishing the Creator from the Father of Christ and not allowing any of the OT to be derived from the Father. (Against the Gnostics the Orthodox church writers emphasized the continuity between the Old and the New as both given by the same God.) Otherwise, Ptolemy's view is highly original; it is nonetheless similar to other (later) efforts to make levels or distinctions within the OT, some of which is valid for Christians and some of which is not.

Another view which made distinctions within the OT, but from the very opposite premises, was that of the second-century Jewish Christians known as **Ebionites**. They represent a survival of those Jewish Christians who were "zealous for the law" and opposed Paul (Acts 15:1, 5; 21:20; Gal. 2:45). In contrast to Marcion, the Ebionites impressed the mainstream of the church with their adherence to the law. Irenaeus (ca. A.D. 180) says of them:

They use the Gospel according to Matthew only, and repudiate the Apostle Paul, maintaining that he was an apostate from the law. As to the prophetic writings they endeavor to expound them in a peculiar manner. They practice circumcision, persevere in the observance of those customs which are enjoined by the law, and are so Judaic in their style of life, that they even adore Jerusalem as if it were the house of God.

Against Heresies I.xxvi.1

Actually the Ebionites made distinctions within the OT, for not all of the law was considered binding. Their views in detail must be reconstructed from their teachings included in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* and *Recognitions*. Jesus appears as the teacher of a kind of "reform Judaism." Some passages now found in the Torah are not original but are later falsifications (*Homilies* III.47). Jesus as the True Prophet restored the proper law of God. Among the things rejected were "the sacrifices, the monarchy, and the female (false) prophecy and other such things" (*Homilies* III.52). The real point of Jesus' mission was annulling the sacrificial law (*Recognitions* I.35ff.). The bloodshed of war seems to have been a principal reason for rejecting the monarchy, but

there was OT basis for not considering it a divine ordinance. For reasons which seem complicated now, prophecy was disparaged or even rejected. Finally, offensive passages in Scripture (anthropomorphisms about God and immoral deeds recorded of OT heroes—the very things which Marcion and the Gnostics used against the OT) were rejected as false, later additions to the Scriptures. On the other hand, following and going beyond Jesus, the Ebionites intensified certain features of the law: prohibiting meat, emphasizing poverty, and increasing the purification ceremonies (ritual immersion-baths).

Jewish Christians took varying attitudes toward Gentile observance of the law: some (Ebionites proper) insisting that their law was binding on Gentiles and others saying that Jews must continue to keep it while exempting Gentiles from its ritual requirements (Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 47). The effort to be both Jews and Christians is reflected in the statement included in Eusebius' description of the Ebionites: "Like the Jews they used to observe the sabbath and the rest of the Jewish ceremonial, but on Sundays celebrated rites like ours in commemoration of the Saviour's resurrection" (*Church History* III.xxvii.5). Their view was largely lost to the church, as it became overwhelmingly Gentile in membership and considered such combinations heretical. After the Ebionites died out, few Jews who were converted kept the law. Conversion to Christianity meant a break with the Jewish life-style, something which was not true for the majority of Jewish Christians in the early days of the church.

The unknown author of the so-called **Epistle of Barnabas** (ca. 135, but possibly much earlier) also claimed the OT as the Christians' Bible but in a radically different way from the Ebionites. In one sense he is the very opposite of Marcion: the OT is altogether Christian. In another sense he accomplished what Marcion did without severing the church's ties with its OT heritage: the OT is not to be taken literally but only spiritually. The author used the OT against its own requirements, for example in quoting Isaiah 1:11-14, Jeremiah 7:22-23, and Psalm 51:19 to argue that God did not

intend the animal sacrifices but desired a sacrifice of the heart and in quoting Isaiah 58:4-10 to argue that God did not want literal fasting but service to others.

There were those who were saying that "the covenant is both theirs [Jews] and ours [Christians]." "Barnabas" replies with an emphatic, "It is ours." The covenant was offered to Israel, but the sin of the golden calf represented Israel's rejection of the covenant (Exod. 32). The covenant then was given to Christians. Moses broke the tablets of stone, "and their covenant was broken, in order that the covenant of Jesus the Beloved should be sealed in our hearts" (*Ep. Barnabas* 4:6-9; cf. 13-14). The renewed statement of the covenant given to Moses was never intended to be kept literally, not even by Jews. God intended it to be understood spiritually, and in that way it is observed by Christians. Most of the *Epistle of Barnabas* is a spiritual or allegorical interpretation of the characteristic features of the Mosaic religion. The ritual of the atonement was fulfilled in the sacrifice of Christ (chs. 5-8); fleshly circumcision is abolished and the real circumcision is that of the heart and ears (ch. 9); the food laws refer to types of men whose immorality is to be avoided (ch. 10); the ceremonial washings of the OT have been replaced by baptism (ch. 11); the sabbath of the Jews is displeasing to God, and Christians keep Sunday (ch. 15); the temple was in vain, for God truly dwells in the Christian people whose sin he forgives (ch. 16). "Barnabas" seems not to have had direct heirs to his novel and extreme interpretations, but the idea of reading the OT spiritually as an allegory of the Christian dispensation and preserving it as a Christian book in this way was a widely influential approach in the ancient church.

It was especially the school of interpretation associated with the great city and center of learning in Egypt, Alexandria, where the **allegorical interpretation** of the OT flourished. The earliest orthodox writer at Alexandria from whom extensive writings survive is Clement (died before A.D. 215). Clement of Alexandria reflects a common early Christian teaching that the law "was only temporary" (*Instructor* I.7; cf. *Miscellanies* VI. 5-7, 17). Its purposes

were to "show sin" (*Miscellanies* II. 7), to "train in piety, prescribe what is to be done, and restrain from sins by imposing penalties" (*ibid.* I.27). It prepared the chosen people for Christ's teaching (*ibid.* II.18). The "Mosaic philosophy" contains four parts: history, legislation (these two constituting ethics), sacrifice (knowledge of the physical world), and theology (metaphysics). The law has three meanings of value to the Christian: "exhibiting a symbol, or laying down a precept for right conduct, or as uttering a prophecy" (*ibid.* I.28). The symbols of the OT have three purposes: to arouse curiosity so men will study, to hide true doctrine from the profane, to make it possible to speak of God who is incomprehensible in his nature (*ibid.* VI.15). Clement shows especially the influence of Philo, the first-century Jewish philosopher from Alexandria, in finding allegories of the moral life and of the physical universe in the OT. Instructive is his treatment of the Ten Commandments in *Miscellanies* VI.16. The sabbath meant a rest from evil (not an uncommon interpretation in the early church); honor father and mother refers to God the Father and the divine knowledge and wisdom; adultery is abandoning the true knowledge of God; murder is extirpating true doctrine of God in order to introduce falsehood. The tabernacle was allegorized as the universe, for instance, the seven-branched lampstand representing the seven planets, but this Philonic interpretation is Christianized at several points, as in referring the lamp also to Christ, who gives light to the world (*ibid.* V.6).

Origen (185–253) systematized the Alexandrian interpretation of the Bible and carried through a massive amount of work in application of his methods. Origen found a triple sense in Scripture: the literal or historical sense, a moral or spiritual sense applying to the soul, and a mystical or typical sense referring to Christ, the church and the faith, or sometimes eternal life (*On First Principles* IV.xi-xxiii). Each passage may have all of these meanings, and every passage has a spiritual meaning even if no literal meaning. Origen applies the scheme to the NT as well as to the Old. He relates the two testaments to each other as letter and

spirit. Both are necessary, because one would not have the spirit without the letter, but the more important is the spirit which gives the true meaning. So it is Jesus who interprets the law to the church (*In Joshua, Homily ix.8*). After Christ the historical has passed, and Scripture has now acquired its spiritual sense. The law itself has a literal and a spiritual element. It is always impossible to keep according to the letter—Origen cites the sabbath command as his illustration—but spiritual obedience gives life (*Commentary on Romans vi.12*). Origen appeals to Paul as a justification for his spiritual reading of the OT, for example, his use of the Exodus in 1 Corinthians 10:1ff. (*In Exodus, Homily v.1*). There is the difference, however, that for Paul the basis is a similar situation between Israel in the wilderness and the Corinthian Christians (see the treatment below), whereas for Origen the real meaning of the OT text is the spiritual reference.

Whereas some, especially at Antioch, explained what were, from the Christian standpoint, imperfections in the OT by God's accommodations to the needs and capacities of man in preparation for a truly spiritual religion, Origen is one of the purest advocates of allegorism as the way of overcoming the imperfections while holding onto the OT as a sacred book. Origen reflects many of the common interpretations of the OT to be found in the early church which are not allegorical and on occasion can use the OT as ecclesiastical law in the manner of Cyprian (see below). His own preference, however, was obviously for the form of exegesis that interpreted Scripture with reference to the inner life. This became the distinctive mark of the Alexandrian school—to put the stress on the spiritual and mystical side. Thus Origen, in interpreting the tabernacle, can refer to the older interpretation that the tabernacle is the world, but he develops an allegory first in reference to the church, and then in keeping with his primary interest he passes to the soul. "Each may construct in his own soul a tabernacle to God" (*In Exodus, Homily ix.4*). This way of dealing with the OT may be seen in the widely influential treatment of the stations in Israel's wilderness wandering as

an allegory of the journey of the Christian soul towards perfection. An allegory of the religious life is combined with a statement of his principle of interpretation in the comment on the sweetening of the bitter waters of Marah, "The bitterness of the letter of the law is changed into the sweetness of spiritual understanding" (*In Exodus, Homily vii.1*). That is what Origen sought to do in his interpretation of the Bible.

By way of contrast with the Alexandrian way of using the OT allegorically as teaching spiritual lessons for the Christian life, Latin authors read the OT more literally and found in it legal requirements for Christians. The animal sacrifices were replaced by the nonbloody (spiritual) sacrifice of the eucharist, the Levitical priesthood was replaced by Christian ministers, the sabbath was replaced by Sunday, the tabernacle was replaced by the church, and so through all of the institutions of the OT, but the regulations stated for the Mosaic institutions could be applied to their Christian equivalent. The earliest expression of this tendency may be found in Clement of Rome (ca. A.D. 96), who used the OT regulations about who offered sacrifice, when, and where as an argument for the need of similar good order in the church (*Epistle to the Corinthians* 40, 41).

Tertullian reflects the two sides of the Christian attitude toward the OT when in his *Answer to the Jews* he affirms the contrast, "the old law has ceased [he has specifically mentioned circumcision, the sabbath, and sacrifices] and . . . the promised new law is now in operation" (ch. 6); but in his polemic *Against Marcion* he can affirm the continuity, "the whole Mosaic system was a figure of Christ, of whom the Jews indeed were ignorant, but who is known to us Christians" (V.11). Most of Tertullian's discussion of OT passages occurs in answers to Marcion's criticisms of them. There are hints of the legalistic reading of the OT that was to give a very Jewish cast to the developing catholic church. Thus Tertullian can cite Deuteronomy's prohibition of "the reception of the Ammonites and the Moabites into the church" [the Jewish church—the use of the Christian term is significant] as supporting the gospel's command to shake

the dust of the feet off against a disobedient people (*Against Marcion* IV.24). Or again, since no idolater was found in the ark, the type of the church, "let not that be in the church which was not in the ark" (*On Idolatry* xxiv).

A clearer reflection in the early centuries of the move in the direction of the use of the OT as a legal guide for Christian institutions is to be found in the writings of Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (248–258). He argues that the clergy should not engage in secular work. His basis is that the Levites did not share in the division of the land of Canaan and so (which is incorrect) were not compelled to transact secular business, but received tithes from the other tribes. This "plan and rule is now maintained in respect of the clergy, that they who are promoted by clerical ordination in the church of the Lord may be distracted in no respect from the divine administration" but are supported by the contributions of the brethren (*Epistle* i.1). In a similar vein, on the basis of Numbers 20:25-26, where the appointment of Aaron as priest was made "in the presence of all the assembly," Cyprian concludes:

God commands a [Christian] priest to be appointed in the presence of all the assembly; that is, he instructs and shows that the ordination of priests ought not to be solemnized except with the knowledge of the people standing near, . . . and the ordination . . . may be just and legitimate.

Epistle lxvii.4

Many examples of this type of argument can be found in Western writers, as when bishop Callistus of Rome (217–222) justified his laxer policies on church discipline with the argument that the ark of Noah, the symbol of the church, contained both unclean and clean animals (to the horror of Hippolytus, who supplies the information, *Refutation of All Heresies* IX.7).

The allegorical and legalistic interpretations were not the only alternatives within the mainstream of the ancient church. Tertullian spoke of the law "as preparatory to the gospel," training men gradually by stages for the "perfect light of the Christian discipline" (*Against Marcion* IV.17).

He, Cyprian, Clement, and Origen all employ prophecies and types from the OT as pointing toward the New. The **typological**, in contrast to allegorical, use of the OT became in the fourth century characteristic of the interpretation practiced at Antioch, whose scholars were rivals in the Greek church to those at Alexandria. This historical way of looking at the Bible in terms of successive covenants and progressive revelation had important roots in the early days of the church.

Justin Martyr, in his debate with the Jew Trypho about A.D. 150, gave expression to the **covenantal** or dispensational way of looking at biblical history:

As, then, circumcision began with Abraham, and the sabbath and sacrifices and offerings and feasts with Moses, and it has been proved they were enjoined on account of the hardness of your people's heart, so it was necessary, in accordance with the Father's will, that they should have an end in him who was born of a virgin . . . who was proclaimed as about to come to all the world, to be the everlasting law and the everlasting covenant.

Dialogue with Trypho 43 (cf. also 23)

Justin also says, "Some injunctions were laid on (the Jews) in reference to the worship of God and practice of righteousness; but some injunctions and acts were likewise mentioned in reference to the mystery of Christ" (ibid. 44). Because the OT comes from the Father of Jesus Christ and because of their prophecies of him, Justin can argue from what is contained in "your (Jewish) Scriptures, or rather not yours, but ours" (ibid. 29). "The law promulgated on Horeb is now old, and belongs to (Jews) alone," but Jesus is "the new law and the new covenant" and his law "is for all universally," so that Christians are "the true spiritual Israel" (ibid. 11).

Irenaeus (ca. 180) gives the fullest exposition to this view, which allows full historical validity to the OT, but sees it as fulfilled in Christ and superseded in the Christian age. Apart from specific interpretations of prophecies, his doctrine of the **history of revelation** has perhaps more to commend itself to modern views than anything found in other postapostolic

authors. Irenaeus suggests that there “were four principal covenants given to the human race”: those under Adam, Noah, Moses, and Christ (*Against Heresies* III.xi.8). More frequently he speaks simply of two covenants, the law and the gospel (ibid. IV.ix.1; xxxii.2). The Mosaic law and the grace of the New Covenant were fitted for the times; they are different, but (against Marcion) they have unity and harmony because they come from one and the same God (ibid. III.xii.12; cf. IV.ix-x). God first gave the natural law (enshrined in the decalogue), then the Mosaic law to discipline the Jews and by means of types to teach them the real service of God; and Christ has now fulfilled, extended, and given fuller scope to the law (ibid. IV.xiii-xv). Christians have no need for the law as a pedagogue, for they have a new covenant in the spirit (*Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 87; 89; 90; 96). Irenaeus makes much of the prophecies of the OT, but he insists that they can be understood only from the standpoint of their fulfillment in the Christian age (*Against Heresies* IV.xxvi.1).

With this review of the varied attitudes toward the relation of the Old and New Testaments in the postapostolic period as a background, we will now examine the NT attitude toward the Jewish Bible in both its negative and positive aspects.

OLD TESTAMENT REMOVED

No teaching is written more plainly across the pages of the NT than that the Old Covenant as a system of religion has been removed. A brief examination of particular passages demonstrates this teaching.

The whole argument of **Galatians 3-5** is germane. Judaizing teachers, themselves perhaps Gentiles, were insisting that Gentile converts to Jesus Christ must receive circumcision in order to become a part of God’s covenant people and so heirs to the salvation promised in Abraham. The issue was this: Who are the sons of Abraham and the heirs of the promises? Paul argues the case on the level of competing systems of religion—works of law versus faith in Christ.

Paul gives three arguments in **Galatians 3:1-14**: (1) The argument from the religious experience of the Galatian converts—whether they received the Holy Spirit by doing the works of the law of Moses or through faith in the preaching of the gospel (3:1-5); (2) The scriptural argument from the case of Abraham—faith was what made Abraham acceptable to God and faith marks his sons, not fleshly descent or a fleshly sign (3:6-9); and (3) the argument from the nature of the law itself—condemnation for not keeping its demands and life by keeping them (Deut. 27:26; Lev. 18:5)—in contrast to another principle of justification, namely, life by faith (Gal. 3:10-14; cf. Hab. 2:4). Verses 13 and 14 sum up in reverse order the three arguments: “the curse of the law,” “the blessing of Abraham,” and “the promise of the Spirit,” climaxing with the key concept of this section—faith. “In Christ Jesus” the curse is removed and the blessings come upon the Gentiles.

Paul then illustrates the promise of God to Abraham by a will (Gal. 3:15-18). The basis of the illustration is the double meaning of the Greek word *diathēkē*. The ordinary secular meaning of the word was a man’s last will or “testament.” The Greek translation of the OT used the word to translate the Hebrew *berith*, “covenant.” Since the word which might have been expected, *sunthēkē*, implied an agreement between equals, the Jews preferred *diathēkē*, which preserved the idea of God’s determination of the stipulations in the covenant. The giving of the law “four hundred and thirty years” later did not annul the earlier promises (testament) to Abraham.

Paul’s arguments and illustration required him to consider the objection “Why then the law?” The answer is that it was added because of man’s sins (3:19-22). It was a moral guide and disciplinarian (“custodian” or “pedagogue”). The law was temporary. Now that Christ has overcome sin, the law is obsolete (3:23-25). For the purposes of this study these verses are explicit. Now that Christ has come, now that a faith system has been instituted, the law has served its function. The Christian is “no longer under” the law. He is “in Christ” (3:26-27). The question about the recipients of the promise is answered. Christians are the offspring of Abraham, but not the fleshly offspring. Christ and all those

who are in Christ—whether Jew or Gentile—are the spiritual seed of Abraham (3:28-29). The word for “offspring” in Galatians 3:16 (cf. Gen 12:7; 15:5; 17:7, 10; 22:17, 18) is a collective noun but grammatically singular, so Paul can interpret it literally of Christ, but he brings in the collective feature at the end (3:29).

Chapter 4 continues the theme of sonship from chapter 3, employing it now as an illustration (4:1-11). The essential doctrinal argument having been made, Paul turns to a personal appeal (4:12-19). Then he seeks to clinch his case for his readers by an allegory drawn from the law (4:21-31). It probably carried much weight with his readers but has only illustrative value to modern readers. The doctrinal position which is being illustrated, however, does have substantive value for the study at hand. When we remember that the issue with Judaizers concerned identifying the true sons of Abraham, or in other words, how one received the promises given to him, the story is aptly chosen and the allegory pointedly made. Abraham had children by two women, Hagar the slave and Sarah the free wife. Ishmael was born according to the ordinary course of nature. Isaac was the child of promise, born by the power of God long after Abraham and Sarah had passed the normal age of conception. There was a real hook for the Jews in Paul's application. The Arabs were descendants of Ishmael. If one wanted to make the promises depend on physical descent, then Arabs would have to be included. Moreover, Mount Sinai, where the law was given, was in the territory of the Arabs. But the true sons of God are those born according to promise, not according to the flesh. Once this is recognized, there is no objection to including uncircumcised Christians among the sons of Abraham. Paul draws several parallels between the relations of Ishmael with Isaac and the relations of Jews with Christians. For the present purposes, however, note the forceful conclusion: “Cast out the slave [the covenant at Sinai].”

The practical conclusion of the arguments in relation to the issue at hand is stated in 5:1-12. To accept circumcision as a religious rite is to obligate one's self to keep the whole

law of which it was an integral part (5:3). And that is to cut one's self off from Christ (5:2,4). To seek to be justified by the law is to depart from and reject the system of grace. Circumcision is nothing; the law is nothing; to be in Christ is everything (5:6). The rejection of the law as a system of religion might seem to leave men without the moral guidance which the law provided. Paul offers an alternative basis for ethics (5:13-25). The removal of the law does not mean that any kind of conduct is acceptable. The choice is not between law and following the desires of the flesh. There is a third kind of life, that lived under the direction of the Holy Spirit. The personal activity of the Holy Spirit in the whole Christian people is frequently seen in the NT as the distinctive advance of the New Covenant over the Old (Acts 2:38f.; Heb. 6:4).

The New Covenant in Christ, therefore, is founded on the promise to Abraham, not on the Old Covenant through Moses. Behind Paul's argument for justification by faith instead of by law is his universalism. Only in Galatians and Romans, where Judaizing was a problem, does Paul make much of justification by faith. The law was given to Jews, and one was born into relation with it. There had to be another principle of justification, available to all men, in the new age that welcomed Gentiles. The answer was a spiritual principle: the faith principle, not the flesh principle. Under the Christian Age one has the privilege "to choose his own ancestors." He can become a part of the people of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, et al.

Other passages may now be examined more summarily. **Romans 7:1-7** declares the Christian's freedom from the law. Paul employs an illustration from marriage (vss. 2-3). As often happens in an illustration, not every point matches what is being illustrated, but that does not weaken the force of the illustration. In the present illustration the woman's husband dies, so she is free from his law and may marry another man. In the application (vss. 4-6) the person himself dies and so is free from the law and marries Christ. The parallel to the marriage illustration is kept to an extent in the allusion of verse 4 to the death of Christ as the means

through which the Christian dies to the law. The point is that death frees one from law (vs. 1—a good rabbinic principle), so it does not matter who is said to die. Paul may be influenced in the way he words his application by his teaching in chapter 6 that baptism is a death (vss. lff.). As the Christian is dead to sin (6:11), so he is dead to law (7:4, 6). The law to which the Christian died is specifically the Mosaic law, centered in the Ten Commandments. This is clear from verse 7, “You shall not covet,” as part of the law under consideration. Freedom from sin (Romans 6) and freedom from law (Romans 7) do not mean freedom from moral guidance but (as in Galatians) is followed by freedom in the Spirit (Romans 8; note especially verse 2). With the coming of the Messiah and the gift of his Spirit the law is rendered inoperative (cf. Rom. 10:4).

The contrast between the written code of the law and the Spirit in the Christian dispensation is stated strongly in **2 Corinthians 3:6-18**. The written code kills, but the Spirit gives life (vs. 6). The theme of the New Covenant comes to the fore. The Old Covenant was a “ministry of death.” This is strong language, but there is no doubt what is intended, for it was “carved in letters of stone” (vs.7). Nevertheless it came with splendor, and Paul’s following verses are a commentary on Exodus 34:29-35 with its account of glory which surrounded Moses when he came down from the mount of the giving of the law. For our purposes we note the contrasts which Paul makes: dispensation of death and dispensation of the Spirit; dispensation of condemnation and dispensation of righteousness; what faded and what is permanent. No wonder the splendor of the New Covenant far surpasses that of the Old. The glory of the old was fading, transitory (vss. 7,12). Paul interprets the veil which Moses put over his face as hiding the fact that the glory was fading, so Paul the preacher of the New Covenant does not veil himself as did Moses, the giver of the Old Covenant (vs.13). The veil on Moses was seen by Paul as symbolic of a veil which lay over the law and over the Jews when they read the law (vss. 14-15). According to the Exodus narrative, when Moses turned to the Lord, he removed the veil.

Similarly when one turns to the Lord (Christ) now, the veil is removed and he can understand the OT properly (vs. 16). Some have understood verse 14 as saying that in Christ the Old Covenant is "taken away" or "made inoperative." The RSV takes the "it" which is removed as the veil. The verb for "taken away" is the same as that translated "faded away" in verses 11 and 13 and "fading" in verse 7, and it is possible that the reference here also is to the splendor of the Old that fades away in Christ. That the Old Covenant itself is removed is correct to the passage as a whole. Such is implicit in the reference to a New Covenant (vs. 6) and to the fading glory of the Old (vs. 7) and is explicit in the declaration that the New abides but the Old is abolished or "fading away" (vs.11). Moreover, the word for "taken away" is that used in other passages for the abolition of the law (Rom. 7:2; Gal. 5:4; Eph. 2:15).

Colossians 2:13-17 employs the forgiveness by God and new life in Christ as the basis for rejecting ritualistic and ascetic practices advocated by certain false teachers. There are difficulties in interpreting the details of the passage, but the application which is made by Paul is clear. God "cancelled" or erased the "bond" or debt owed by man (vs. 14). That "bond" consists in "legal demands" or decrees, a word which suggests some connection with the law (cf. Eph. 2:15—"ordinances"), although the metaphor is wider in its application. Not only did God cancel the debt, but he also won a victory over "principalities and powers" in the death of Christ (vs. 15). The guilt and power of sin are destroyed. The conclusion which Paul draws shows that one of the things from which man is freed by the death of Christ is the legal requirements of the Mosaic law (human regulations as well are included—vss. 20-21). No one is to judge the Christian in the matter of the annual festivals, monthly new moon, and weekly sabbath prescribed in the law (vs. 16; 1 Chron. 23:31; 2 Chron. 2:4; Ezek. 45:17; Hos. 2:11). These laws were a "shadow"; the reality is Christ. When one has the reality, he does not follow the shadow. The connection of thought may be something like this : Law is the result of sin (Gal. 3:19); by reason of it one

is in bondage to principalities and powers (cf. Gal. 4:8-9); when sin is cancelled and the powers overcome, law is no longer binding. Legal demands are set aside, and one is not to be judged by them.

Ephesians 2:11-18 utilizes the abolition of the law to confirm the uniting of Jews and Gentiles in one new people of God. The religious condition of the Gentile world in relation to the Jews is painted in somber tones in verses 11 and 12. The change accomplished by the coming of Jesus is boldly stated in verse 13. What he did is elaborated in verses 14-18, developed around the theme of peace replacing hostility. Note especially verse 15. Jesus abolished the "law of commandments" in the ordinances of the OT. The language employs the terminology which is normal in the Bible for the OT laws. The Jewish law was a barrier between Jews and Gentiles. It had to be removed, not only in order to open the blessings of salvation to all men (as noted in the above texts), but also in order to create a new spiritual community (vss. 19-22).

The most comprehensive statement of the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old is **Hebrews 7:1-10:18**. The whole section is pertinent, but "of these things we cannot now speak in detail" (9:5) but can only sketch some of the main points. The superiority of the priesthood of Christ to the Levitical priesthood is emphasized in chapter 7. Christ was of the tribe of Judah, but the priests of the OT were drawn from the tribe of Levi (vs. 14). Christ's priesthood, therefore, must be of a different order (vss. 11, 15-17). A change in priesthood has occurred, "For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well" (vs. 12). No Christian rejects the high priesthood of Christ or seeks to continue the literal Levitical priesthood. Yet so integral was the priesthood to the law that if one accepts the priesthood of Christ he must reject the law. If one is to keep the law, he must keep the Levitical priesthood.

Connected with the priesthood are the covenant, sanctuary, and sacrifice (8:1-6). The discussion of these is interwoven in chapters 8-10. The change in priesthood

necessitated a change in the law on which it was predicated and to which it was central. A change in law meant a change in covenant (8:6-13). The New Covenant is better because it contains better promises (8:6). Jeremiah's prophecy of a New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34, quoted in 8:8-12) implied the deficiency of the Old (8:7) and the replacement of the Old, and the author can declare that Old Covenant in his time ready to vanish away (8:13).

The better promises of this better covenant are due to the superior sacrifice of the new priest. This priest offers his sacrifice in a different sanctuary—heavenly rather than earthly (9:1-12, 23-25). Employing the double meaning of the word *diathēkē*—covenant and will, the author connects the beginning of the New Covenant with the death of Christ (9:15-17). This death is the sacrifice offered by Christ, both priest and victim (9:12-14, 26-27). The sacrifices of the Old were imperfect because they could not touch the conscience (9:9), had to be repeated (9:25), and brought a reminder of sins rather than taking them away (10:1-4). The sacrifice of Christ does purify the conscience, was once for all (9:26-28; 10:10), and effects an eternal redemption (9:12, 14, 15; 10:12, 14, 18). The first sacrifices are abolished by the perfect sacrifice of Christ (10:5-10). The themes of priesthood, sanctuary, sacrifice, and covenant are caught up in a summary of the whole argument in 10:11-18. Therefore, the law was a shadow (10:1), not the substance, a rough outline without details. It has been replaced by the Christian reality.

The truth of the matter is that no one follows the OT completely, or even tries to do so. Christians who appeal to the OT do so when they cannot find NT authority for what they want to do. They employ a pick-and-choose method. On that basis almost anything can be legitimized from the OT, for all stages of man's religious history are reflected in it. But the method is illegitimate. As Galatians 5:3; Colossians 2:16; and Hebrews 7:12 indicate, it is all or nothing. There are two different covenants, two different systems of religion. If one takes Christ, he has chosen a different kind of relationship with God.

VALUES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The above passages may seem very negative. They do make a strong case. But they are not the whole story. There is a very positive assessment made of the OT by NT writers. The OT is not binding upon Christians. As a system of religion it has been superseded. Nevertheless, that does not mean that the OT is valueless or can be dispensed with by Christians. Let us notice the positive values of the OT for Christians.

Points to Christ

"You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me" (John 5:39). The OT points to Christ. It continues to bear witness to him (5:46-47). This is the reason that Christians can never give it up and the reason that it is not authoritative. As road signs are very valuable in directing a person to his destination but are passed by when the destination is reached (cf. Gal. 3:24-25), so the OT provides road signs pointing to Christ. But Christ is the goal and the authority. One no longer depends on the witnesses when he has the object of their testimony to examine. The Jews studied the law as an end in itself, but instead of being lifegiving in itself it points away from itself.

New Testament and early Christian authors found Christ everywhere in the OT. The gospel of John itself shows this, when it understands the heavenly vision of Isaiah 6:1ff. as referring to the glory of Christ (John 12:41). Another example is Hebrews 2:11-15, which quotes three different passages from the Psalms as words of Jesus himself. Christian preachers preached Jesus from the OT, as Philip did to the Ethiopian in Acts 8:27-35.

This interpretation of the OT is precisely the issue between Jews and Christians. Do the prophecies speak of Jesus, point to another yet to come, or refer to the Jewish people itself? The decision on this question is the decision of faith and is a part of the total response to the Christian message.

Shows the Unfolding Purpose of God

The prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired about this salvation; they inquired 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 good news to you through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.

1 Peter 1:10-12

The OT gives the grand sweep of the history of salvation. Without it Jesus would seem to have come suddenly. The Christian, in looking at the OT, has an advantage over the Jews, or even the prophets themselves. There is a meaning and pattern in the OT that can be seen in the light of the NT fulfillment which could not previously be seen. The prophets spoke of the grace of salvation which now has come in Christ and is proclaimed in the gospel (Rom. 1:2; 16:26). They were able to do so because the Spirit which inspired them was the very Spirit of Christ. But they did not know of what they were speaking. They were seeking and searching concerning a truth still hidden to them. They did not know the person or the time and circumstances to which their words referred. Especially perplexing was the paradox of suffering and glory to which they testified. Their words had special reference to Christ. Thus the prophets minister to Christians. They have received the gospel through the same Spirit that had spoken through the prophets. The Spirit of Christ spoke in OT prophets and in Christian evangelists. Both have words of salvation for Christians. God all along had a purpose and a plan; there was a fuller meaning in the prophetic messages which can be discerned only from the standpoint of the Gospel of Christ. Of this, more later.

Instructs in Salvation

With the viewpoint of the above verses, even bolder claims for the Christian value of the OT can be understood:

From childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred

writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:15-17

Whatever wider reference the passage may have, the "sacred writings" in this context refer to the OT. They are able to make one wise to salvation when accompanied by faith in Jesus Christ. The Scriptures instruct one for or toward salvation. The salvation itself is by means of faith, but not any kind of faith—the faith which is placed in Christ. Once more, there is the implication that Christian faith gives a fuller meaning to the OT Scriptures. Whether the statement in 2 Timothy 3:16 means that every passage of Scripture or Scripture as a whole is God-breathed is much debated but inconsequential for its statement of the value of the OT. The Scriptures can be used profitably for instruction or teaching, for refuting error, for correcting behavior, and for discipline or training in right conduct. They equip the preacher or teacher for every good work.

This bold statement reminds us that "the Bible" of the early church was the OT. It was the basis of preaching and teaching, understood in the light of the coming of Christ and supplemented by his teaching and that of his apostles. We now have that supplement and interpretation in the NT Scriptures. They form the norm of Christian faith and practice.

But they rest upon the foundation of the OT, which, taken along with faith in Christ, instructed men and women in salvation. Although we now ordinarily come to the Bible by way of the NT, the OT can still serve these valuable functions for us. We hold in common with the early disciples that the Christian faith is the key and standard for understanding the old Scriptures.

Provides Examples of Righteousness

A specific illustration of the way in which OT instructs in salvation may be seen in the way the NT appeals to examples of virtuous living in the OT. Hebrews 11 and 12 may serve to document the point. Hebrews 11 is an imposing roll call of men and women whose faithfulness commended

them to God. Faith enabled them to do the things for which they are remembered:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us.

Hebrews 12:1

And so much the more so because God has better promises reserved for the Christian (Heb. 11:40). The person who looks to Jesus (Heb. 12:2) has every reason for steadfastness in the struggle against sin (Heb. 12:4ff.). The OT heroes of faith remain a perennial source of encouragement to God's people. The most interesting study in the world is people. The characteristics of being human come out clearly in the OT narratives. The customs may be different, but in the attitudes and behavior we can see ourselves and our acquaintances in the marvelously told stories of the OT. The narratives may in fact have first taken shape as separate stories told and repeated in the oral tradition of the Hebrews. Perhaps that is why the stories of the OT remain favorites with children. But they have a power for persons of every age because of their reflection of human nature. A respected psychology professor in a state university in his introduction course to psychology includes a lecture on "Why I Believe the Bible." The point of the lecture has to do with the way in which the Bible is true to human nature. All great literature would partake of this quality to some degree. But the Bible is especially effective in bringing out man's motives, his faults, and his moments of greatness. When such men "of like nature with ourselves" demonstrate loyalty to God, it helps us to do the same in our circumstances.

Warns of Disobedience

The same book of Hebrews, which appeals to the examples of righteousness in the OT also uses its examples of disobedience as a warning to Christians:

Therefore we must pay the closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the message declared by

angels was valid and every transgression of disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will.

Hebrews 2:1-4

The author has demonstrated the superiority of the Son of God to angels (1:4-14). They minister to those who receive salvation, but the Son brings salvation. Angels mediated the OT revelation, as several passages affirm (Gal. 3:19; Acts 7:53; cf. Deut. 33:2). This partial revelation (Heb. 1:1) is inferior to the complete revelation brought by God's Son (1:2; 2:3). Yet disobedience to God in OT times was severely punished. The OT is replete with instances of man's transgression and its consequences. How much more careful, then, must man be who has the benefit of a message spoken by the Son himself, confirmed by those who heard him and approved by God's miraculous gifts (cf. 1 Pet. 1:12, above).

Specific instances of retribution for transgression are cited in 1 Corinthians 10:1-11. The Israelites of the exodus generation knew a great salvation in their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. They had counterparts of a baptism and a Lord's supper. Yet they fell into sin. They were guilty of idolatry, fornication, and grumbling. Hence, God was not pleased with them and destroyed them in the wilderness. "Now these things are warnings for us" (1 Cor. 10:6). The word translated "warnings" is literally "types," which makes the connection between Israel's history and Christian experience even closer. The Christians at Corinth were faced with temptations to the same sins. They seemed to trust in the power of sacraments to save them regardless of what they did. The experience of Israel could serve as a warning of what might happen to them: "Now these things happened to them as a warning (typically), but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come" (1 Cor. 10:11). The fulfillment of the OT has come upon Christians. They live in the overlap of the

present evil age (Gal. 1:4) and the powers of the age to come (Heb. 6:5). So, although living in the last dispensation, Christians can still profit from experiences of men in their dealings with God in earlier dispensations. Indeed those experiences were written down specifically for their instruction (1 Cor. 10:11). The principles of God's dealings with men remain the same, and so not only the Christians at Corinth but Christians of all time need to take heed to the OT Scriptures and the lessons they teach.

Gives Hope

"For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). Paul has referred in the preceding verse to Christ as an example of self-giving love which rather than pleasing self accepts others in their weaknesses. He cites Psalm 69:9 as the words of Christ, as is also done in John 2:17. In a parenthetical statement Paul enlarges on his citation to affirm that all of the old Scriptures were written for Christian instruction. The Scriptures serve Christians, as our preceding citations have also affirmed. God is a God of steadfastness and encouragement, a God of hope (15:13); and, if Christians have the self-effacing and forbearing attitude of Christ, this God will enable them to live and worship together in unity (15:5-6).

God has endowed his Scriptures with the same qualities which he possesses—steadfastness and encouragement. Because God and his word are faithful and consoling, his people may have hope. Biblical religion is a religion of hope. I well remember a fellow graduate student who had grown up in Burma as the son of missionaries describing the gloomier outlook among people who did not have a Bible background. Although its modern offshoot in the Western world is a secularized version, the progressive attitude toward the future is in no small measure due to the Judeo-Christian heritage. The OT is characterized by the note of hope, yet biblical religion is quite realistic about the world and life. Few if any peoples have suffered as did Israel.

Nonetheless, there is a positive, forward-looking emphasis in the OT.

Hope, in the Bible, does not refer to what one wishes for or only desires. It involves the idea of expectation and is associated with the words for endurance and faith. What gives the character of expectation to the anticipations for the future is the nature of the God who is served. His control of the world and history gives certainty about the outcome of the human processes.

Reveals the Nature of God

What was true in OT times is true now. There is much biblical doctrine—about God, creation, covenant, etc.—which is simply taken for granted or assumed without being detailed again in the NT. Revelation of the nature of God did not have to be repeated. It is the God revealed in the OT and proclaimed in the New, whose son Jesus is. There are many references in the NT to God, but most of these depend on the OT for their content. There are new emphases and corrections of misunderstandings, but the premises about God remain the same. The Christian doctrine of God goes beyond the OT but does not contradict its teaching. Certainly more is known about God now; the Christian knows God primarily as he sees him in Jesus. The coming of Jesus has brought a new revelation of God's love. The OT, too, had declared God's love (Deut. 7:7-8, 13). But the depth and extent of that love have been shown most fully in Jesus—his coming, life, teachings, actions, and especially his death (John 3:16; 1 John 3:16; 4:7-10). The Christian God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, now better known because of Jesus.

Provides a Philosophy of History and Nature

There is a biblical philosophy of history. It is not stated as such, nor is it presented as modern philosophy of history might be. Because of the longer time span covered and the special nature of the OT contents, this biblical understanding of human events may best be seen from the OT. Those who have cut themselves off from the OT (as the ancient

Gnostics) have lost a historical perspective. Briefly stated, the biblical view of history is that God is active in human affairs, that he ultimately is in control, and that he accomplishes his purposes through human processes. Men and nations preserve their freedom, but God can still overrule and use their free choices for his larger designs. All human history is potentially open to God. He is not necessarily present in all events and in all nations, at least not to an equal degree. But all nations and all events are within his perception and providence. And he is particularly active at certain times among certain peoples. This does not violate the human and "secular" character of history. It is only by revelation on the one side and by faith on the other that God's actions in history may be known by men.

Human and world history had a point of beginning—creation. The biblical view of history is based on the doctrine of creation. The God who overrules history is the God who started the whole process in the first place. The Christian view of the natural order finds its fullest exposition in the doctrine of creation in the OT. God made the world, and all the earth is his (Ps. 24:1 and frequently). God has given dominion over the created order to man (Gen. 1:28). There is therefore full scriptural warrant for the scientific enterprise. Since the world remains the Lord's, man's dominion is that of a steward. Hence, there is no excuse for abuse or misuse of the natural order. Man is accountable to the Creator for what he does with the natural world.

Shows the Pattern of God's Revelatory Activity

There is a "pattern of correspondence" in God's revelations and saving activities. Because it is the same God acting in the arena of his own history and for men whom he has created, there are similarities running through the two Testaments. One of the recurring motifs of the Bible is that of the exodus (Exod. 12-15; Ps. 106:6-12, 47; Isa. 43:16-21; 63:7-64:7; Matt. 2:15; Rev. 15-16). Another common pattern is that of suffering followed by exaltation (1 Pet. 1:11; Isa. 52:13-53:12). The scope of OT history once more gives one the possibility of discerning recurring correlations.

The NT attaches itself firmly to the hopes and expectations of the OT. Perhaps one of the best ways of expressing the relationship between the Old and the New is in terms of promise and fulfillment. The OT is incomplete by itself. It is looking in promise to the future. Where does one find the completeness which fulfills the OT? The Talmud or the Gospels? The Jews, realizing the incompleteness of the OT, have sought to make the law applicable to ever new situations through the accumulated rabbinic traditions of interpretation. Jesus stepped into the prophetic tradition of the OT, and Christians have attached themselves primarily to the prophets and Psalms. This has continued the note of hope and given the further sense of fulfillment which characterizes Christianity.

PROBLEMS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

According to one count, there are 239 acknowledged quotations of the OT, introduced by some kind of formula, in the NT; there are 198 quotations not introduced by any formula; there are 1,167 instances of OT passages reworded or directly mentioned. This makes a total of 1,604 NT citations of 1,276 different OT passages. There are many more allusions to the OT and borrowings of its phrases. Most of these passages represent a straightforward, literary use of the OT. The NT uses the Old in many ways: for vocabulary and phraseology to express its own ideas, for illustration, for proof of its statements, for moral instruction, for predictions of the new situation. Each of these and other uses could be discussed, but suffice it to say that problems in the NT use of the Old should not obscure the tremendous indebtedness of the later canon to the older, nor should they make that entire usage more problematic than it is.

An adequate treatment of the problems would involve looking at all the passages about which questions are raised, a task which must be left to the commentaries. Some of the principles applicable to a solution, however, may be seen by

looking at three different types of problems: quotations in the New which do not agree with the OT text, statements in the Gospels of the fulfillment of OT passages which in their context have another meaning, and arguments drawn by Paul from the OT.

Variant text forms of the OT circulated in the first century, both in the Hebrew texts and in the various translations into other languages. Differences between the wording of OT verses and their quotations in the New Testament are often due to the latter's following a different version from that which later became standardized by the Jews. The NT authors, writing in Greek for Greek-speaking readers, most often quote the OT according to the existing Greek translation of the OT (the Septuagint) rather than making their own translation direct from the Hebrew. Usually the Greek translation is so close to the Hebrew in meaning that the English reader is not aware of any difference. Sometimes, however, the Greek version gives a different nuance to the text (as in the Matt. 3:3 quotation of Isa. 40:3). Variations from the Hebrew OT in the NT quotations are often, therefore, due to the use of the form of the text with which the author and his readers were familiar.

A few times a NT writer appears to follow the Aramaic paraphrases of the OT (the Targums) in use in the Jewish synagogues (as appears to be the case with the Eph. 4:8 use of Ps. 68:18). Christianity inherited not only a Bible, but an interpreted Bible, from Judaism. When an existing interpretation of a text fits the purposes of the author, he employs it. Sometimes the NT writers make their own interpretations of the OT and cite it according to its meaning (an interpretative quotation) rather than according to its exact wording (such may be the case in the Rom. 11:26-27 departures from Isa. 59:20-21). Or variations may simply be due in part to a free rendering as well as to an interpretive purpose (as in the Mark 7:6-7 use of Isa. 29:13). The interpretation may be effected by combining two texts from different places in the OT according to a common key word or according to a common subject matter. This Mark 1:2-3 quotes as from Isaiah a conflation of Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3. The

explanation for Matthew 27:9-10, where a passage which seems to be closest to Zechariah 11:12-13 is ascribed to Jeremiah, may be that the quotation is a composite of ideas drawn from Jeremiah (cf. Jer. 18:1-3; 32:6-15). Although not covering all the problems, these practices provide an explanation for most of the instances where some have thought that the NT "misquotes" the OT.

Not all NT quotations of ancient writings are from the OT, and such quotation does not confer authority on anything beyond the idea quoted with approval (as Paul's quotation of Aratus in Acts 17:28 and the quotation of Enoch in Jude 14). The source of some quotations is unknown (James 4:5), and for the explanation to some problems we must simply confess our ignorance and await further information.

A different kind of problem is presented when a NT author assigns a different meaning to an OT text from what it apparently had in its context. The more that is learned about the exegetical practices of Jews in NT times, however, the more understandable the NT interpretation of the OT becomes. The Jewish interpretations of their Scriptures are known from the apocryphal and pseudepigraphical writings, rabbinic literature, the Targums, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the writings of Josephus and Philo. The types of interpretation practiced in these sources were varied: literal, legal and edifying reapplication, prophetic-fulfillment, and allegorical. The NT authors' use of the Old is often parallel to the kinds of interpretation to be found in the Dead Sea Scrolls (especially in the "this is that" understanding of prophecy) and in the rabbinic literature (reinterpretation of OT texts for new situations, especially notable in Paul). Rarely, if ever, does the Hellenistic type of allegory represented by Philo enter into the NT. These various Jewish methods of treating the OT text supplied the techniques for the Christian writers in their exegesis of the OT. Such were a part of the Bible study and the communication process of the time. It would be far beyond the scope of this chapter, both in technicality and space required, to discuss these methods, but the bibliography will direct the interested

reader to fuller treatments. It is sufficient for the present purpose to note that what may seem strange to the modern reader is often not so strange, or even is right at home, in the setting of first-century Jewish interpretation.

If Jewish exegesis supplied the methods, Jesus Christ supplied the formal principle for Christian interpretation of the OT. His coming and his work were seen as the key which unlocked the secrets of the OT. The problem of the NT interpreting the OT in a new sense occurs frequently in citations of events as fulfilling "prophecy." It is in these situations particularly that the revelation of Jesus Christ became normative for the Christian reading of the OT. Various theories have been put forward to explain the phenomenon: typology (an OT practice or event foreshadowed the NT counterpart), the "fuller sense" of Scripture (God had in mind a meaning or reference beyond what was described at the time), or "double fulfillment" (the prophet spoke of an immediate event which fulfilled his words, but a later event also fulfilled them). More important than labeling an explanation is to describe the reality. One passage may be selected to illustrate the nature of the problem and to suggest principles which may be helpful in a solution.

Matthew 2:13-15 says that the flight of Joseph and Mary with the infant Jesus to Egypt and their residence there until the death of Herod occurred in order "to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, 'Out of Egypt have I called my son.'" The quotation is from Hosea 11:1. There is no element of prediction in the Hosea passage. It is a historical reference to the exodus of the nation of Israel, God's "first-born son," from Egypt (Exod. 4:22-23). One looks in vain for anything in Hosea's context which would suggest the life of Jesus or a prophecy of his time. A superficial view, therefore, might dismiss Matthew's statement as a misuse of Scripture, a pulling of a statement out of context and making it mean something which apparently was not intended. A deeper look, however, would suggest that this is a premature judgment. Matthew presents Jesus as the founder of the new Israel. His characteristic title for Jesus is "Son of God." Whether it be viewed as typology or "fuller sense" or

whatever, there is a correspondence presented between what happened to the old Israel and the new salvation accomplished by Jesus. On this deeper level, the exodus of salvation for Israel found its counterpart in the experience of God's true Son. Jesus embodied and personified the nation, the true Israel; as such he was the beginning point of a new people of God. Jesus as the "beloved Son of God" "fulfilled" the experience of the people who were "typically" called God's "sons." In such a situation, instead of understanding "fulfilled" to refer to a prediction which comes to pass at a later time in history, we should think in terms of "this is the way God acts," "this is the pattern which is now accomplished," or "in this way the covenant promises are completely realized." When a Christian of the first century read the OT in the light of Christ's coming and activities, he could not help seeing parallels (patterns of correspondence) and so understand the OT in the light of the new developments. Very often, then, the presumed difficulties are of our own making when we impose our thought forms, or what we think ought to be the meaning, on the biblical texts. When we come to the Bible on its own terms and let the intentions and thought forms of the writer (which may be alien to us) determine his language and usage, then the problems or "discrepancies" either vanish or at least appear in a more understandable light.

Yet another way in which different (enlarged) meanings of the OT are found may be seen in the way Paul argues from it. Galatians 3-4, surveyed above, well illustrates the complex of freedom and faithfulness with which Paul dealt with the OT. There is a freedom which seems at times almost to abuse, if not ignore, the meaning of the OT, which on closer look is seen to be an obedient freedom derived from the standpoint of the coming of Christ. Looking at the law through Christ can mean a faithfulness to the law that at times makes him a stickler for literalism. Thus he insists on the grammatical singular of "offspring" instead of the proper meaning of the word (Gal. 3:16). He gives a literal application to Christ of the curse upon one who hangs on a tree (Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13). On a closer look, however,

Paul's use is faithfulness on a deeper level to the spiritual intent of the OT. It points to faith and a life of faith (Gal. 3:7, 9); it points to Christ (Gal. 3:22, 26).

The tension between an attentive listening to the text of the OT combined with a sovereign freedom in its use exemplified in the NT authors has remained a creative source of Christian theology throughout history. Maintaining the proper balance in the use of the OT remains important for the Christian today.

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