

THE INTERPRETATION OF  
THE "STONE" PASSAGES BY PETER AND PAUL:  
A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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The cornerstone of evangelical hermeneutics since the Reformation has been that Scripture, and only Scripture, is the objective revelation of God, the inerrant and infallible rule of faith and practice. Perhaps no topic in recent years has called this foundational truth more into question than the use of the OT in the NT.<sup>1</sup> On the basis of the exegetical methods and interpretations of the NT writers, some scholars have been led to reject the traditional evangelical cornerstone of inerrancy while others have continued to accept and affirm it on the basis of those same NT methods. Within the debate concerning the use of the OT in the NT, then, as it is written, "for those who believe, the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone," but "for those who do not believe, it is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense."

Consequently, of major importance is the continued investigation of the hermeneutical methods that are operative in the NT. It would be problematic if not paradoxical to affirm on the one hand the inerrancy of Scripture, if on the other hand one denies the validity of the very methods that played a vital role in the production of its content. This of course raises the complex question of whether modern exegetes should use the methods of the NT authors. If the exegetical principles and procedures we find in the NT were valid in the first century, are they still valid today? This and related issues will be taken up later in our discussion. For now we must focus on the more fundamental issue of determining the influence of the first-century Jewish intellectual milieu on the hermeneutics in the NT corpus. Moreover we will give consideration to specific methods that are demonstrable in the interpretations of the OT in the NT.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf., for example, E. E. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1957); A. T. Hanson, *The Living Utterances of God* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1983); S. L. Johnson, Jr., *The Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980); W. C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody, 1985); R. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975); D. J. Moo, "The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*," in *Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon* (ed. D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986) 179-211; M. Silva, "The New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Text Form and Authority," in *Scripture and Truth* (ed. D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) 147-165; R. F. Youngblood, "Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament," in *The NIV: The Making of a Contemporary Translation* (ed. K. L. Barker; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986) 111-118.

When one undertakes to investigate the hermeneutical principles and procedures of the first-century Jewish milieu it is not long before he realizes that there is no one technique that is constitutive of any single group or genre. Nor is any single technique solely the prerogative of any particular type of literature, whether pesher, midrash, targum or whatever.<sup>2</sup> Rather, it appears that the Jewish intellectual milieu pervaded the various schools of exegesis such that the similarities of method are much more striking than the dissimilarities. Again, no single exegetical feature is entirely distinctive of any single corpus of literature.<sup>3</sup> So, then, our discussion will assume that the NT also is a reflection not of any single, distinctive approach to exegesis but rather of the many approaches to exegesis prevalent in the larger Jewish milieu of the first century.

At this point I think it is important to distinguish between method and presupposition. The preunderstanding of the NT authors is well documented.<sup>4</sup> Primary to the approach of the NT is a pronounced Christocentric perspective that resulted in interpretations being conducted along Christological lines in a very consistent manner. This in itself, however, is not an exegetical method. It is a presupposition, legitimate though it may be. Christ as presupposition, then, is what gives the NT its distinctive hermeneutic. In terms of exegetical procedure, though, it is possible that the authors were simply men of their times.

The issues briefly described above, as well as related issues, will be the focus of concern in our present discussion. Furthermore I have chosen to investigate specifically the use of the "stone" passages in Rom 9:33; 1 Pet 2:4-10 in order to see what light they might shed on these matters. The OT texts known as the "stone" passages are Isa 8:14; 28:16; Ps 118:22, and 1 Peter's author (hereafter referred to as Peter) and Paul were only two of the several NT authors who, either by allusion or explicit quotation, made use of one or more of the stone passages (cf. Mark 12:10-11 and parallels; Acts 4:11; Eph 2:20-22). We proceed now to a consideration of the Pauline and Petrine approaches to these OT texts.

#### I. EXEGETICAL METHODS COMPRISING IMPLICIT INTERPRETATION: TEXT FORM

As a consequence of the basic uniformity in the NT of linking the stone passages together and of using similar (but not identical) text forms, it is probable that they formed an early Christian collection of Christological proof texts. Much has been written speculating about the exact nature of this early testimonium and the development of this

<sup>2</sup> G. J. Brooke, *Exegesis at Qumran* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1985) 43; E. Slomovic, "Toward an Understanding of the Exegesis in the Dead Sea Scrolls," *RevQ* 7 (1969) 3-15; Hanson, *Utterances* 7-26.

<sup>3</sup> Here I am not speaking of specific literary structures such as the pesher formula, which is distinctive, but rather of exegetical techniques *per se*. Cf. Brooke, *Exegesis* 43.

<sup>4</sup> Longenecker, *Exegesis* 206-208; E. E. Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 163-172; R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1971) 223-226.

collection of sayings into a catena. Also much has been written concerning the literary affinities between the various NT citations of these texts and the possible dependence of one author on another. A detailed discussion of this source-critical problem is beyond the scope of this paper.<sup>5</sup> So I will state only the obvious conclusion that Jesus himself is the source of the NT stone tradition (Mark 12:10-11 and parallels).

While the text forms of the stone passages and the fact that they were commonly associated with one another points to a significant degree of uniformity in their NT usage, the Pauline and Petrine methods of combining these particular texts are quite different. And this distinct difference provides us with an idea of how wide a variety of combinational techniques was operative in the first century. The diverse techniques of our two authors in treating the stone passages appear to have been fairly common, though, and thus demonstrate for us two mainstream methods of combination.

Paul quotes only the two passages from Isaiah, omitting the text of Ps 118:22 entirely from his citation. A major point of discussion with respect to Paul's quotation is his technique of merging the two texts. E. E. Ellis contends that Paul combines the texts on the basis primarily of conceptual parallels and that the *Stichwort* method operated only at a secondary level.<sup>6</sup> While this is a possibility, I do not consider it necessary to distinguish between levels of influence for one method over against the other, particularly in the light of the diversity of influences that may have been operating, consciously or unconsciously, in the mind of the author. It is possible that Paul here is employing the method often called *gězērâ šāwâ*.<sup>7</sup> Frequently, by means of verbal analogy, the passages so combined were indeed conceptually parallel. Furthermore, contrary to a rather common assumption that *gězērâ šāwâ* is only a rabbinic method, it is found in a wide variety of texts at Qumran.<sup>8</sup> But merged quotations are not characteristic of verbal analogy by strict definition. In fact, merged quotations are quite rare in the rabbinica.<sup>9</sup> Merged texts are not uncommon, however, in the Qumran corpus.<sup>10</sup> With respect to Paul's merging of

<sup>5</sup> For detailed discussions of these issues cf. Ellis, *Use* 89, 98-107; Hanson, *Utterances* 33-34; J. H. Elliot, *The Elect and the Holy* (Leiden: Brill, 1966) 26-33, 130-133; C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (London: Nisbet, 1953) 35-42, 57; B. Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961) 13-31, 177; F. F. Bruce, "The Corner Stone," *ExpTim* 84 (1972-73) 231, 233.

<sup>6</sup> Ellis, *Use* 50.

<sup>7</sup> D. M. Cohn-Sherbok, "Paul and Rabbinic Exegesis," *SJT* 35 (1982) 128.

<sup>8</sup> F. F. Bruce, "Biblical Exposition at Qumran," in *Gospel Perspectives: Studies in Midrash and Historiography* (ed. R. T. France and D. Wenham; Sheffield: JSOT, 1983), 3, 81-82; Brooke, *Exegesis* 279, 292-294. An excellent example of *gězērâ šāwâ* in QL can be found in 1QM x 1-8.

<sup>9</sup> Longenecker, *Exegesis* 117; Ellis, *Use* 50-51. Longenecker argues that the merged quote is an example of verbal analogy, whereas Ellis argues that the evidence does not support the categorizing of merged quotations under this method. In my opinion Longenecker produces only sparse and indirect evidence to validate his view. Conversely, merely by pointing out the dearth of merged citations in rabbinical literature Ellis, in my judgment, makes his case.

<sup>10</sup> E. E. Ellis, "Midrash, Targum and New Testament Quotations," in *Neotestamentica et Semitica* (ed. E. E. Ellis and M. Wilcox; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1969) 68-69, provides examples of how 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> makes substantial use of merged texts.

the two texts, I do not think it is necessary to try to categorize exactly what Paul does in terms of a specific method. It is not easy to determine—indeed, it is virtually impossible to determine—whether citations such as we have in Rom 9:33 are *ad hoc* assimilations to fit the context or are the result of a method patterned after targumic expansion, Qumranic shaping, or some other feature of first-century exegesis. Thus it is more useful to view Paul's conflation here as reflective generally of his intellectual milieu. It is a creative use of the Biblical text quite in conformity with the LXX, targums and Qumran.<sup>11</sup> Peter's presentation of the texts, however, involves a hermeneutical method somewhat different from Paul's.

Peter includes Ps 118:22 in his citation, which, in the light of its use elsewhere in the NT, gives a clear Christological focus to his exegesis (cf. Mark 12:10–11 and parallels; Acts 4:11). He also cites the texts consecutively in contrast to Paul's conflation. This consecutive citation of texts is known as the *hārāz* method and can be amply illustrated from the Talmud.<sup>12</sup> Moreover this method of citation is much more in keeping with *gēzērā šāwā*. The conjunction joining the text is usually "and" or "and then," although sometimes a more complex connective is used.<sup>13</sup> In the case of 1 Pet 2:6–8, the author inserts commentary between the quotations in one instance (2:7) and joins them with a simple *kai* in the other (2:8). So the structure of the quotations in 1 Pet 2:6–8 is quite different from Rom 9:33: He juxtaposes the texts separately around his theme.

Although the Pauline and Petrine combinational methods are dissimilar, Peter's shaping of the text to suit his theological purpose is quite similar to Paul's since both writers choose between variants and traditions in the pursuit of their respective interpretations. Furthermore both Paul and Peter shape the text to varying degrees with the result that they follow neither the MT nor the LXX exactly. To begin our discussion of their respective methods of handling the text in quotation, let us first set forth the relevant texts. Compare the following:

MT Isa 8:14

And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling.

LXX Isa 8:14

And if you put your trust in him, he will be a sanctuary to you, and not as a stone for stumbling will you meet him, nor as a rock for falling.

MT Isa 28:16

Behold, I am laying in Zion a tested stone,  
a precious cornerstone of a well-founded foundation.  
He who believes will not hurry/move.

<sup>11</sup> Ellis, "Midrash" 68–69; J. A. Fitzmyer, "The Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in Qumran Literature and in the New Testament," *NTS* 7 (1961) 324–325; Longenecker, *Exegesis* 130; A. T. Hanson, *Studies in Paul's Technique and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 193; T. W. Manson, "The Argument from Prophecy," *JTS* 46 (1945) 135–136.

<sup>12</sup> *Ber.* 6a, 18a; *Mak.* 13b, 16a; *Pesah.* 7b, 8a.

<sup>13</sup> Ellis, *Use* 51.

LXX Isa 28:16

Behold, I will cast into the foundations of Zion a costly stone,  
a chosen and precious cornerstone into its foundations,  
and the one who believes in it/him will by no means be ashamed.

MT Ps 118:22

The stone the builders rejected has become the head of the corner.

LXX Ps 117:22

The stone that the builders rejected,  
this has become the head of the corner.

Rom 9:33 (Isa 8:14; 28:16)

Behold, I am putting in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense,  
and the one who believes in it/him will not be put to shame.

1 Pet 2:6 (Isa 28:16)

Behold, I am putting in Zion a stone, a chosen and precious cornerstone,  
and the one who believes in it/him will by no means be put to shame.

1 Pet 2:7 (Ps 118:22)

The stone that the builders rejected,  
this has become the head of the corner.

1 Pet 2:8 (Isa 8:14)

A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.

An initial concern, of course, is to determine whether the hand of the LXX translator is at work in shaping the text for theological purposes. In Isa 8:14 it appears as though the translator sets out to make his point that judgment can be avoided by having faith, in which case the stone is not a stone of stumbling. This is seen in the LXX interpolation "and if you put your trust in him" as well as in the addition of the negative particles: "*not* as a stone for stumbling . . . *nor* as a rock for falling." Thus the translator provides the two houses of Israel with an alternative to judgment if they trust in the Lord. Still, the rest of the LXX context does describe judgment for the unfaithful, but it is not as widespread as in the MT (8:14b-15). By implication the translator appears to have a higher view of Israel's faithfulness than the MT presents.<sup>14</sup> Moreover he presents the "Lord Almighty" (8:13) as the protector of those members of the house of Israel who trust in him rather than as the harsh judge. So the addition of the negative idea in 8:14—that the stone will not be an obstacle that causes Israel to stumble—is consonant with the apparent theological motive of the translator to emphasize the role of the Lord as faithful Israel's guardian rather than as faithless Israel's judge.

These same two concerns of the translator(s), to enhance the image of Israel's spiritual condition and to paint a picture of God as guardian rather than solely as judge, are evident in the LXX of Isa 6:9-12; 8:21-23. In the MT of 6:9-10 God is portrayed as the one who causes the hearts of the people to become insensitive, their ears to become dull, and their eyes

<sup>14</sup> Targum Jonathan reverses the procedure of the LXX by putting the introductory conditional clause in the negative: "And if you are not obedient, His word will be against you as an avenging and as a rock of destruction." Cited in Elliot, *Elect* 25 n. 2.

to become dim. The LXX translator, on the other hand, portrays the people as responsible for their own spiritual insensitivity and deletes the emphasis on God's causal role altogether (cf. Matt 13:14-15, which follows LXX). Furthermore, after the desolation of the land and the removal of its inhabitants in Isa 6:11-12, the MT of 6:12b describes the resulting condition with the phrase "great is the desolation in the midst of the land." The LXX of 6:12b changes the consequences of the desolation so that a remnant of people will be multiplied in the land. In similar fashion the LXX changes the MT of 8:21 so that instead of cursing both their king and their God the people speak ill of the ruler and the traditions of the fathers. The translator also deletes the reference to God's previous degradation of the land in 8:23. Thus, again, in these two passages the translator is shaping the text in order to soften the image of God as judge and to portray Israel in a more positive light.

In LXX 28:16 the interpretive molding of the text is not as striking. The translator did express the relationship between the "stone" and the "foundations" idiomatically, and he also made the connection between Zion and the foundation more explicit. But this hardly can be said to change the sense of the text. In this passage the salient alterations are the addition of *ep' autō* ("in it" or "in him") and the translation of *lō' yāhîš* ("will not hurry") by *ou mē kataischynthē* ("will not be ashamed").<sup>15</sup> By the interpolation of "in him," the translator has channeled belief toward the stone as the specific object of faith. This explicit identification of the stone as faith-object implies a personalizing of the concept. The translator takes this approach in *Tg. Isa* 28:16: "Behold, I will appoint in Zion a king, a strong king, powerful and terrible. I will make him strong and powerful, saith the prophet; but the righteous who have believed in these things shall not be dismayed when distress cometh."<sup>16</sup> It is difficult in this targumic rendering to determine precisely where translation ends and interpretation begins, although it is obviously an interpretation and not merely a translation. In any event, it is the approach of the targumist in personalizing the "stone" that is significant for our purposes.

Furthermore the translation of "will not hurry" by "will not be ashamed" changes the meaning of the passage to a certain extent. In the MT the emphasis is on the lifestyle of the person who trusts in the Lord. In the context of the "foundations," the sense of "will not hurry" appears

<sup>15</sup> There is a textual problem here. Codex Alexandrinus has the reading *ep' autō*, as also do 1 Pet 2:6; Rom 9:33. But MT and Codex Vaticanus omit the reading. The source of the variant is unknown, and any influence between the LXX and NT is not overtly demonstrable. Hence one must proceed with caution at this point. But it is probable that this variant was known in the first century. For discussions of the text-critical problem cf. Bruce, "Stone" 231; Elliot, *Elect* 23.

<sup>16</sup> J. F. Stenning, *The Targum of Isaiah* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1949). C. A. Evans, "Paul and the Hermeneutics of 'True Prophecy': A Study of Romans 9-11," *Bib* 65 (1984) 564 n. 17, correctly points out that *Targum of Isaiah* regularly refers to the Messiah as "King." This may provide us with the conceptual framework exploited by the early Church for Christological purposes. However, the dating of the *Targum* itself is a problem. Its existence in the first century is not demonstrable.

to be that the one who trusts will be steadfast and deliberate, he will not waver.<sup>17</sup> The LXX translator associates faith with the avoidance of shame rather than an unwavering lifestyle. Hence the one who lacks faith will be ashamed, probably in the judgment about to come upon the nation. Strictly speaking *kataischynthē* is not a possible meaning for *yāhīš*, and it changes the result of faith from the idea of stability in life to that of the avoidance of shame.

The last of our OT texts, Ps 118:22 (117:22 LXX), appears to be a straightforward translation with no arresting alterations of the MT. Thus we will shift our attention for a moment to the interpretive method we have just witnessed in the LXX. Numerous examples can be cited from the targums and the LXX that display the same features of interpretation interwoven with the text that we have just observed in the treatment of the stone passages.<sup>18</sup> This expansion/paraphrase of the text as a means of expressing its meaning is also known as "targumizing." Accurate reproduction of the text seems to be subordinated to the presentation of its meaning, at least its meaning as seen through the eyes of the translator. Considerable freedom was taken in communicating the theology of the passage to the extent that interpretation was introduced into the translation itself. Does this particular method impact upon the NT corpus? Perhaps the quotations of the stone passages by Peter and Paul will provide us with some insights.

Peter and Paul make use of the same basic tradition in shaping the texts. The use of *kataischynthēsetai*, the inclusion of *ep' autō*, the omission of the negative particles, and the substitution of *skandalou* for *ptōmati* are the salient considerations in their handling of the LXX. In quoting Isa 8:14 they also change the datives of the LXX to genitives (*proskommati* to *proskommatos* and *ptōmati* to *skandalou*). In quoting 28:16 they use *tithēmi* rather than *emballō* and omit *eis ta themelia*.<sup>19</sup>

By retaining the LXX reading "in him," our authors give a clear Christological twist to the quotation. But this does not do violence to the

<sup>17</sup> J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986) 519.

<sup>18</sup> For further examples consult P. Churgin, *Targum Jonathan to the Prophets* (New Haven: Yale University, 1927) 84-85; B. Chilton, "Varieties and Tendencies of Midrash: Rabbinic Interpretations of Isaiah 24:23," in *Studies in Midrash and Historiography: Gospel Perspectives* (ed. R. T. France and D. Wenham; Sheffield: JSOT, 1983), 3, 22; Brooke, *Exegesis* 25-36; Ellis, *Prophecy* 173-181.

<sup>19</sup> Lindars, *Apologetic* 178-180, contends that the reference to the "foundations" is omitted by the NT writers because it would be impossible for anyone to stumble over a stone that was below ground level, having been cast into the foundations. Hence the NT writers made it a cornerstone, placed above ground, where it could logically be the cause of stumbling. I am not sure, however, that the writer would have had in mind this kind of precise view of construction. Moreover, even if he did, the cornerstone still is part of the primary support system of the wall in which it is placed and therefore does not protrude so as to cause anyone to stumble. Logically, the only way someone would stumble over the cornerstone is if he were to walk into the wall within which it is placed. Lindars may be drawing a conclusion as to the author's purpose that is not demonstrable. In my opinion the omission of the "foundations" from the NT is probably because it was not specifically germane to the Christological focus of the passage and not necessarily because it would have ruled out the message about stumbling.

OT texts, because in close contextual proximity to Isa 8:14 is a clearly messianic pericope in 9:1–7. Nevertheless the specific Christological “meaning” of 8:14; 28:16 may not have been a conscious aspect of the truth intention of the original author since in the OT context the specific identity of the stone may not have been the Messiah. In point of fact, in their original contexts they refer to the faithful remnant (28:16) and to Yahweh himself (8:14).

In addition to the Christological perspective, the Pauline and Petrine treatments also give to the texts a few other nuances by means of their choice of variant readings. The use of *kataischynō* follows the LXX and likewise shifts the emphasis concerning faithfulness from stability in life to the avoidance of shame. Moreover the substitution of *skandalou* for LXX *ptōmati* may convey more explicitly the idea of that which is offensive, an object of disdain or anger. The term *ptōmati* refers to an object that has fallen, but it does not carry the connotation of “offensive” or “repulsive.” This particular variant follows neither the MT nor the LXX (the *negep* of the MT does not carry the connotation of “repulsive” or “offensive”) and certainly adds a significant dimension to the stone as a cause of stumbling. Finally, both writers omit the negative particles from the LXX for the obvious reason that they want to identify with certainty the stone as a cause of stumbling.

One additional feature of Paul’s molding of the text needs to be addressed: his quotation of Isa 28:16b later in his exposition at Rom 10:11. He adds “everyone” to the beginning of the quotation, which as we have already seen is characteristic of first-century Jewish exegesis. Paul has just universalized the gospel’s application to all rather than restricting it to any particular group (thus 10:11–13). Furthermore the quotation in 10:11 is also descriptive of the present situation and is probably an example of what Silva has called “shifts in application.”<sup>20</sup> It acts to describe the contemporary situation between Jew, Gentile, and all peoples (10:11–13).

The use of the LXX, *ad hoc* renderings, and other variant readings in order to shape the text toward theological ends is not something coincidental to these quotations. The use of textual variants to fit the text to one’s interpretation was a common method in Qumranic exegesis.<sup>21</sup> Thus by his very inclusion or rejection of the LXX modifications, by substituting one word for another, perhaps by his omission of other material from the MT/LXX text, and certainly by combining the two texts in a merged quotation, the NT author is doing theology. Ellis has stated correctly that

these variations should not be viewed as capricious, or arbitrary, or merely incidental. Similar features found in other writings of the New Testament

<sup>20</sup> Silva, “Text Form” 160.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. e.g. 1QpHab iii 1; vi 8; viii 10–11; xi 3, 6, 9; 4QFlor i 10–11; cf. also Lindars, *Apologetic* 24–27, 175–178; Bruce, “Exposition” 81–82; Brooke, *Exegesis* 280–282, 288. Silva, “Text Form” 155, gives an example of how the author of Hebrews used the LXX variant to support his point (Heb 11:21). Cf. Ellis, *Use* 139–141; Longenecker, *Exegesis* 125.



and of the Qumran Sect indicate that this procedure has a more significant purpose: Paul utilizes *ad hoc* renderings and the deliberate selection and rejection of known readings to draw out and express the true meaning of the Old Testament passage as he understands it.<sup>22</sup>

The same holds true, of course, for Peter.

As we have seen, both Peter and Paul reflect to a significant degree the type of molding of texts that is common to the Qumranic literature, to the targums and even to the LXX. That is, both authors expand or modify in some way the material in the OT text in order to transform the text itself into an interpretation. Thus the quotation is neither precise translation nor exact duplication of the OT text. Rather, it is theologically shaped according to the author's understanding of the text. The striking similarities of the Pauline and Petrine quotations where they diverge from both the LXX and MT probably indicate a common tradition.<sup>23</sup> But both authors made conscious decisions to follow the tradition. In terms of the quotations from Isaiah, it is quite possible that this early tradition was based more directly on the MT than the LXX.<sup>24</sup> Such freedom in handling Scripture is the result of their attitude toward the meaning of the text as opposed to merely its vocabulary stock. They were not concerned to distinguish carefully between the text on the one hand and commentary or exposition on the other.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Ellis, *Use* 140-141. Even if one agrees with Hanson (*Studies* 193) and Lindars (*Apologetic* 175) in contending that Paul simply took over the quotation that had already been merged in the early Christian tradition, one must still acknowledge that this in itself also would have been a conscious choice by Paul in his presentation of the text. Hence he still would have been shaping the text.

<sup>23</sup> E. Best, "1 Peter 2:4-10: A Reconsideration," *NovT* 11 (1969) 279, demonstrates that 1 Pet 2:6-8 presents the stone passages in their fullest NT form. As a general rule, Peter makes significant use of the LXX and follows it rather closely. His quotation of the stone passages, however, is an exception. In quoting Isa 8:14; 28:16 Peter makes the same alterations of the LXX that Paul makes. In addition he changes the case of *lithos* and *petra* from the accusative to the nominative, although this has no theological significance.

<sup>24</sup> Elliot, *Elect* 25. Lindars (*Apologetic* 181-183) submits that the two Isaiah texts were influential in the formation of the Petrine texts in Matt 16:17-19, 23. His argument is based on the Matthean addition of *skandalon ei emou* in 16:23, which he says is based on the use of Isa 8:14. Moreover since 8:14 in the NT is used as a commentary on 28:16 it is not improper to look for evidence of this connection in the Matthean pericope similar to the kind of connection we have seen in Rom 9:33; 1 Pet 2:6-8. Lindars finds the connection in Matt 16:18, which he contends is based on the Isa 28:16 text and is used by Matthew to describe the foundation of the Church upon the "rock." Both texts are applied typologically to Peter rather than to Christ and describe specifically the birth and growth of the Church. Hence in similar fashion to Peter and Paul the Isaiah stone passages are used to speak of the Church, although with a Petrine rather than Christological typology in evidence. While there is no specific evidence to refute Lindars' hypothesis concerning the use of the stone passages in Matthew 16, the evidence he himself cites is somewhat less than convincing. In fact the only basis for his argument is the Matthean addition in 16:23. This, it seems to me, may simply be a case of descriptive terminology that is Biblically shaped and not necessarily even a conscious allusion to Isaiah. For example, "You are a stumbling block to me" may have been a common expression similar to "You are a pain in the neck."

<sup>25</sup> Manson, "Argument" 135; Ellis, *Prophecy* 175-179; Lindars, *Apologetic* 27-28; Brooke, *Exegesis* 25-36; Chilton, "Varieties" 22.

However, the quotations are not identical in every respect. The dissimilarities in the handling of the quotations by Peter and Paul can be summarized in four points: (1) The texts are quoted at different lengths; (2) the texts are combined differently; (3) the texts are introduced in different contexts; (4) the texts are given somewhat different interpretations.<sup>26</sup> Hence the individual hands of the writers were still at work in the quotations with a view toward distinct purposes.

In the light of the shaping of the texts by both Peter and Paul, some thought needs to be given to the fact that they introduce the texts by means of formulae that give the impression that they are quoting Scripture. Let us proceed, then, to give attention to the nature and function of introductory formulae.

The primary purpose of the introductory formulae (hereafter referred to as IF) was to show that the words were taken from or refer back to OT books.<sup>27</sup> This very basic description of the purpose of IF provides a starting point for any analysis of the use of this feature by Paul and Peter. Also, the IF provide us with an insight into the high view of Scripture held by the NT writers and other Jewish interpreters of the first century. The Bible was the final authority in all matters of faith and practice. But this high view of Scripture should not be defined by twentieth-century standards. Their reverence for God's Word and its authority must stand on its own merits, even though some features of their treatment of texts may not be as "scientific" as ours. One thing is clear for the NT writer: God speaks through the Bible. Thus any sharp dichotomy between the divine and human authors is not apparent in the NT.<sup>28</sup>

Paul's use of IF is the traditional use in the milieu of his time, being common in both rabbinic and sectarian Judaism. Virtually every IF found in the Pauline corpus has its counterpart in Jewish literature, including the OT.<sup>29</sup> The IF we encounter in Rom 9:33—*kathōs gegrapται* ("as it is written")—is quite common in Paul. In point of fact, *gegraptai* is Paul's most frequently used form when introducing OT quotations, occurring 29 times in his writings. But because of Paul's wide variety of IF, it is impossible to infer a uniform function for any of them. Sometimes the IF will introduce explicit quotations, other times paraphrase, and still other times even thematic presentations.<sup>30</sup> This flexibility is evident in the use of "it is written" in Rom 9:33, where it introduces the merged quotation of

<sup>26</sup> Elliot, *Elect* 31, provides a summary of the differences between all seven NT occurrences of the stone passages, not all of which apply to the differences between Rom 9:33 and 1 Pet 2:6-10.

<sup>27</sup> Ellis, *Use* 22.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* 22-25; Fitzmyer, "Quotations" 299-305.

<sup>29</sup> Fitzmyer, "Quotations" 301-303; Ellis, *Use* 48-49. Ellis gives numerous examples of Paul's IF. Both Ellis and Fitzmyer are excellent resources for examples of IF in first-century Jewish exegesis.

<sup>30</sup> Ellis, *Use* 48-49. Fitzmyer, "Quotations" 299-301, gives a summary of the use of *katab* as an IF in QL. It was also used by the rabbis.

Isa 8:14 and 28:16 that follows neither the MT nor the LXX. Furthermore, as we have seen, he again cites Isa 28:16 (Rom 10:11) and again shapes the text with the result that his quotation agrees neither with the MT nor the LXX. Paul's IF in Rom 10:11 is *legei gar hē graphē* ("for the Scripture says"), which is also a common IF in first-century Jewish exegesis.<sup>31</sup> Does this flexibility with the text diminish the authority of Scripture, since Paul appears to be altering Scripture to fit his argument? Is this problem compounded in the light of the IF? We will hold this question in abeyance for the time being and proceed to the Petrine IF.

Peter's citation consists of all three stone texts: Isa 8:14; 28:16; Ps 118:22. But only one of the texts, Isa 28:16, is directly tied to the IF. Peter introduces his quotation with the phrase *dioti periechei en graphē* ("for in Scripture it says"). Although the specific vocabulary of the IF is uncommon it is not unheard of, and the sense of it falls well within the scope of other formulae.<sup>32</sup> On the surface Peter also appears to introduce a quotation, not an altered version of the text. He describes his quotation as though it were the veritable words of the text.

Now let us return to the question posed above—that is, what implications this phenomenon holds for our view of Scripture. When the NT author quoted the OT and used an IF to introduce the quotation, his intention was not to present an exact reproduction of the text. It was not part of his mind-set, for surely he had the ability to reproduce the text exactly if he so desired (based on the text before him, of course). Rather, as we have seen, the whole approach to the text was flexible, so a first-century exegete would have seen nothing improper or dishonest about this kind of citation using IF. It is tantamount to "term-shifting" for a modern exegete to load up a first-century procedure for quoting the Biblical text with his twentieth-century concept of "quotation." If we see the use of IF in its historical context, then it should present no threat whatever to our doctrine of inerrancy.

The exegetes of the first century did not restrict their interpretations to these more implicit hermeneutical methods. Much as we find in modern hermeneutics, they also engaged in more explicit kinds of interpretation and theological reflection. Our discussion now proceeds to give attention to these more explicit methods of communicating the meaning of texts.

## II. EXEGETICAL METHODS COMPRISING EXPLICIT INTERPRETATION: EXPOSITION

Whenever the topic of NT interpretation of the OT is raised, some very basic issues come to the fore. Since in this part of our investigation we are discussing the more explicit interpretations given to the stone passages

<sup>31</sup> Ellis, *Use* 22–23, 48–49. Fitzmyer, "Quotations" 301–303, gives a summary of the use of *ʾamar* as an IF in QL. This verb was the most common in IF at Qumran. It too is found in rabbinic literature.

<sup>32</sup> E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (London: Macmillan, 1964) 163.

by Peter and Paul, we need to set forth the basic issues at the outset. Actually the issues among evangelicals can be boiled down to one very fundamental concern: the doctrine of inerrancy. All other concerns are tied to this one in some way. Many evangelical scholars argue that the doctrine of inerrancy requires the meaning a NT writer uncovers in the OT text actually to be in the text; otherwise, they claim, the NT writer is errant and fallible. Others allow for a deeper and clearer meaning that becomes apparent in the light of later revelation but that was not part of the original intent of the author.<sup>33</sup> We will take up this and related matters again after we have examined the expositions.

When dealing with explicit NT assignation of meaning to OT texts, we note that a major point of concern is always whether the NT author dealt accurately with the OT context. The general OT context of Isa 8:14; 28:16 is one of judgment against Israel. To this extent Paul is faithful to the OT context. In 8:14 the people are unwilling to accept the warning concerning the dangers of the Syro-Ephraimite alliance. Frightened by the possible consequences of this alliance for Judah, King Ahaz turns to Assyria for help. Isaiah warns Ahaz that the Assyrians will overflow the land of Judah and devastate the entire area. During that crisis only one sanctuary will be available: the Lord himself. Those who trust in him will find refuge, but to those who do not trust he will be "a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling" against which they will be shattered. In 28:16 the prophet warns Judah of the impending Assyrian invasion that will sweep away the "refuge of lies" in which the people have put their trust. There exists, though, a faithful remnant that will form the basis for the new community subsequent to the rejection of the present ungodly government. The foundation of this new order of society is announced in 28:16.<sup>34</sup> The dual role of the stone in its OT context is captured by Paul, then, in his commentary on the quotation—namely, refuge for believers and judgment for unbelievers (Rom 10:1–13). This is also consonant with his discussion of the subject in chap. 9, which takes up the same two themes regarding justification of the faithful and judgment of the unfaithful. In our pericope (9:32–10:13), however, Paul does lay more emphasis on the judgment of Israel than on the election of believers.

Peter, on the other hand, has constructed a context dealing primarily with the election of the Church. Hence Peter's context brings out more clearly the idea of the LXX translator in emphasizing that the Lord is a sanctuary and not a stone of stumbling for those who trust in him. Peter

<sup>33</sup> Moo, "Sensus Plenior" 186–187; Johnson, *Old Testament* 66; B. K. Waltke, "A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms," *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg* (ed. J. Feinberg and P. Feinberg; Chicago: Moody, 1981); W. C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 23–50, 131–140. Kaiser argues that the meaning must not just be in the OT text but also in the conscious intent of the author of that text. This is a very difficult position to prove for every instance of NT interpretation of OT texts, although it may be true for many.

<sup>34</sup> For the summaries of the OT context in Isaiah I am indebted to Oswalt (*Isaiah* 224–229, 515–520) and Bruce ("Stone" 231, 233).

also presents a somewhat different perspective than that of Paul in that he is not overtly polemical toward Israel and the judgment motif is not as pronounced. Furthermore he inserts his treatment of the texts into a parenthetic context, which gives 1 Pet 2:4-10 a unique function as the basis for ethical exhortation. His ultimate goal may not have been to establish the position of the Church in Christ as an end in itself. Since 2:4-10 is bracketed on both sides by parenthetic material, Peter's ultimate theological use of the stone texts may have been to establish a compelling foundation for his ethical exhortation, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone of Christian ethics.

The Petrine exegesis, furthermore, gives clear expression to the common Jewish understanding of the OT stone imagery as being descriptive of the community.<sup>35</sup> This unique understanding of the stone imagery is founded on Peter's Jewish-Christian presupposition of corporate solidarity.<sup>36</sup> Identification of Christ with the Church is a common motif in Paul as well, being expressed in numerous passages with a wide variety of imagery. One quite similar idea from the Pauline corpus is found in Galatians where Christ is the "seed" of Abraham (Gal 3:16), and because of the believers' position in him they too are "Abraham's seed" (3:29; the seed motif occurs in our immediate context as well, cf. 1 Pet 1:23). So if Christ is the living stone, then we are living stones also (2:4-5).

In another respect, though, there are striking similarities between the Petrine and Pauline interpretations. For although Paul uses the quotation in Rom 9:33 to explain the rejection of the Jews (9:32-10:3), a feature not explicitly present in the Petrine passage, on the basis of those same texts he goes on to support the election of all who have faith in Christ (10:4-13), just as Peter does in 1 Pet 2:4-10. Hence in my judgment the entire pericope of Rom 9:32-10:13 carries out the implications of 9:33. In this passage Paul contrasts those who have faith with those who do not and explores the implications of faith for God's people. His particular concern is to describe the people of God in terms of faith in Christ, irrespective of their ethnic origins or previous role in redemptive history (cf. 10:11-13). All who have faith in Christ are counted among the people of God; conversely, all who do not have faith are not children of God, including faithless Jews. This conceptual affinity is quite remarkable and indicates that both Peter and Paul are essentially faithful to the OT dualistic role of the stone imagery.

According to Elliot the most distinctive aspect of Peter's interpretation, when compared to other uses of the stone passages in the NT, is his use of traditionally Christological texts as the foundation for his theology of election.<sup>37</sup> This is true to an extent, particularly if we compare Peter's use only with the gospels and Acts. Peter presents his theology of election not only in his exposition of the stone in 1 Pet 2:4-5 but also in 2:9-10, where

<sup>35</sup> 1QS viii 7-8; 1QH vi 26; cited in Longenecker, *Exegesis* 203.

<sup>36</sup> Bruce, "Stone" 235; Longenecker, *Exegesis* 121.

<sup>37</sup> Elliot, *Elect* 38, 196.

he is continuing his interpretation of the stone in terms of its implications for God's covenant community. He contrasts the Church, which believes in the Stone, with those who "stumble because they disobey the message" (2:8). His description of the Church (2:9-10) is framed with paraphrases from Exod 19:6; Isa 43:20-21. He has merged these OT texts not only with one another but also with his own commentary, which as we have already noted was a common practice in Jewish exegesis.<sup>38</sup> Perhaps the key word in 1 Pet 2:4-10 is not "stone" but "chosen" (2:4, 6, 9). As Christ was chosen by God but rejected by men (2:4), so also believers are chosen by God but rejected by men (2:9-10 and the "alien" motif in v 11; cf. also the alien/chosen motif in 1:1-2). This is certainly congruent with the notion of corporate solidarity. Elliot is incorrect, however. As we have seen, the Pauline interpretation of the stone passages also emphasizes the election motif. Therefore the use of the stone texts for this purpose is not distinctive of Peter alone but rather of Peter and Paul.

Using Bloch's very general definition of midrash, what we have in the explicit Pauline and Petrine interpretations of the text falls within the basic category of the genre.<sup>39</sup> Their point of departure is Scripture, their comments are of a homiletical nature, they explain the text by means of other texts, and they contemporize its meaning. But by what method do they derive the specific Christological nuance? The Christocentric perspective on the whole Bible by the NT authors is probably part of the solution, but that is in itself a presupposition, not an exegetical technique. So we must look elsewhere in our search for an identifiable method.

In terms of technique, Dodd has demonstrated that NT quotations are often pointers to larger literary contexts.<sup>40</sup> Expanding on Dodd's notion Silva has suggested that when the NT writer quotes a verse he intends not just the verse but an entire interpretive framework. Extreme compression of arguments is a characteristic of the Mishna, and brief citations are intended to evoke sizable theological structures.<sup>41</sup> If this is at work in Rom 9:33; 1 Pet 2:4-10, then the context of Isa 8:14 provides us with the messianic reference (9:1-7). Obviously not all of the connections in the theological structure are available to us, but could Paul also have intended that the well-known Ps 118:22 be a part of that which was evoked by his quotation? It certainly would provide even more messianic overtones, as it did for Peter in his explicit quotation of it.

Uses of the stone texts parallel to those found in the NT abound in early Jewish literature, especially in the targums and the Qumran corpus. In addition to *Tg. Isa* 28:16, *Tg. Ps* 118:22 also personalizes the "stone" and substitutes "king and ruler."<sup>42</sup> At Qumran the image of the stone in

<sup>38</sup> Cf. nn. 20, 21 above.

<sup>39</sup> R. Bloch, "Midrash," in *Approaches to Judaism: Theory and Practice* (ed. W. S. Green; Missoula: Scholars, 1978) 31-34, 48; M. A. Seifrid, "Paul's Approach to the Old Testament in Rom. 10:6-8," *Trinity Journal* 6 (1985) 3-37.

<sup>40</sup> Dodd, *Scriptures* 126.

<sup>41</sup> Silva, "Text Form" 160.

<sup>42</sup> Cited in Elliot, *Elect* 27.

Isa 28:16 was applied to the community and its eschatological role, and the members of the community are even described as stones.<sup>43</sup> The idea that the stone could be contemporized as descriptive of the present situation was probably a widespread notion in the NT milieu. Thus the Christocentric interpretation of the stone and its implications for the corporate community were not unusual hermeneutical moves in the NT milieu. But do Peter or Paul make any moves that would have been unusual in a first-century, Jewish intellectual milieu?

In my estimation, one salient and unusual (from a first-century Jewish perspective) aspect of Pauline interpretation is to be found in his view that Israel's very seeking after righteousness by means of the law is what causes them to stumble, even though they are doing so sincerely (Rom 9:32-10:4). Did the OT author of the stone passages "intend" that the judgment would befall those who are seeking sincerely after righteousness by means of the law? Is this specific meaning "in" the OT text? If it is not, then is Paul arbitrarily and illegitimately assigning meaning to an OT passage on the basis of his Christological presuppositions? Of course we can always solve this problem by appealing to Paul's revelatory stance. And perhaps in some instances we will have to. In this case, though, is it possible that Paul is using Biblical phraseology to describe a contemporary event and that he is not necessarily after an exact recapitulation of meaning in every detail but rather is after a description of the present situation? I submit that this may be an instance in which Paul's use of the OT falls somewhere between illustration and proof and thus may constitute another example of a shift in application.<sup>44</sup> Certainly nothing in the logical structure of the pericope demands that the quotation function strictly as a proof text. Perhaps we should allow for the possibility that it is being applied to the situation descriptively. Another possible solution is that Paul has arrived at this view of the law by exploring the canonical context, and although it may not have been a part of the original author's conscious intent it was a part of the divine Author's meaning for the text.<sup>45</sup>

Turning to further consideration of Peter's exposition of the stone passages (1 Pet 2:4-10), we find the most distinct Petrine use of the midrash-pesher genre available to us. Whereas both the Pauline and Petrine treatments fit Bloch's definition of midrash, it is only the Petrine exegesis that is exemplary of the pesher approach to interpretation in terms of conceptual development, structure and eschatological perspective.<sup>46</sup> Thus, in a manner evocative of the midrash-pesher approach to Scripture, Peter's exegesis contemporizes the stone passages for his own community.

Midrash-pesher exegesis at Qumran has been the object of much discussion, particularly with respect to the question of whether it is

<sup>43</sup> 1QS viii 4-10; 1QH vi 25-26; 4QpIsa<sup>d</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> Silva, "Text Form" 157-158.

<sup>45</sup> Moo, "Sensus Plenior" 205-206. Cf. also Waltke, "Canonical Process."

<sup>46</sup> Longenecker, *Exegesis* 202.

distinctive or simply a type of midrash.<sup>47</sup> Certainly there is a great deal of overlap between Qumranic exegesis and the features of other exegetical traditions in the first-century Jewish milieu. But there are a few distinctive characteristics of Qumranic literature that, although they are not unique to the Qumran corpus, serve to identify the salient features of the exegesis over against those found in the corpora of other traditions. First, as we have already seen, the Qumranic commentators shaped the text to suit their theological purposes. Second, the structure of the commentaries followed a stylized format of quotation followed by “interpretation” (*pešer*). Finally, and perhaps most distinctive, we find at Qumran a striking eschatological focus in the interpretation of Scripture. When contemporizing Scripture the writers consistently viewed the fulfillment of prophecy as already having been accomplished or as imminent. Integral to this perspective was the notion of “mystery” (*rāz*) and its “interpretation” (*pešer*). These terms describe the view of the Qumran community toward prophecy, which held that the mysteries were given to the prophets but were not understood by them. The specific eschatological meanings of the prophecies were given to the Teacher of Righteousness and to his disciples at Qumran, who believed they were the eschatological community of the last days.<sup>48</sup> Although Peter’s exegesis exhibits characteristics that were widespread in the first century, in terms of these three features his handling of the OT is particularly evocative of Qumran.

Starting with the first chapter we find indications of Peter’s *pešer* attitude toward the OT prophets. Even though the words “mystery” and “interpretation” are not used, the thought expressed in 1:10–12 is similar to the approach of the Qumran covenanters in dealing with prophecy. Specifically the similarity consists of Peter’s perspective that the prophets prophesied concerning things that were not fully understood until a later point in salvation history. While it was revealed to the prophets that they were not serving themselves but a future generation, the specific message of “person and time” (1:11b) indicated in their prophecies was not revealed until the Holy Spirit revealed it to the preachers of Peter’s own day. Compare the perspective of 1 Pet 1:10–12 with the following quotation from 1QpHab vii 1–5: “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 (*pešer*) concerns the Teacher of Righteousness to whom God made known all the mysteries (*rāzîm*) of the words of his servants the prophets.” The correspondence of the Petrine and Qumranic perspectives may not be exact, but both indicate that the

<sup>47</sup> Slomovic, “Understanding” 3–15; G. J. Brooke, “Qumran Peshar: Towards the Redefinition of a Genre,” *RevQ* 10 (1981) 483–503; *Exegesis* 43, 284–286; Ellis, *Use* 149–153; Bruce, “Exposition” 77–80; Longenecker, *Exegesis* 41–45; W. H. Brownlee, *The Midrash Peshar of Habakkuk* (Missoula: Scholars, 1979) 19–36.

<sup>48</sup> Bruce, “Exposition” 77–80; Longenecker, *Exegesis* 41–45; cf. 1QpHab vii 1–5, 7–8; CD i 11–12; 1QH vii 26–27.



specific time of fulfillment was unknown to the prophets and that when the specific fulfillments occurred, they were disclosed to the community by a third party (Qumran: Teacher of Righteousness; Petrine community: those who preached the gospel). Moreover in 1:24–25 Peter's approach to Isa 40:6–8 is quite characteristic of Qumran, especially the remark "this is the word that was preached to you" (1 Pet 1:25b). In our pericope this same basic perspective concerning the stone is expressed in 2:7: an explicit definition of what the stone prophecy means now in the light of its eschatological fulfillment in Christ (cf. similar Petrine approaches in Acts 2:16; 4:11). Here, as at Qumran, the exegete is atomistically focusing on a single feature of the text (in this case "stone") and its fuller eschatological meaning.<sup>49</sup>

As for the other two salient features of Qumranic exegesis, we have seen already that Peter shaped the text to suit his theological purpose. He also follows a structure similar to that found in the commentaries of Qumran. Although the specific terminology of Qumran is not used, the presentation of the exegesis follows basically the Qumranic pattern of catenated quotation and exposition. Thus in 1 Pet 2:4–10 we find that the author presents quotation and exposition as a series of connected thoughts. Specifically, Peter first presents exposition (2:4–5), followed by quotation (2:6), then exposition again (2:7a), followed again by quotation (2:7b–8a) and concluding with exposition (2:8b–10).

Peter's apparent attitude toward Scripture leads logically to the conclusion that his own comments in 2:4–10 are based on the OT quotations.<sup>50</sup> Best, however, proffers the opinion that here Peter is not using the OT as the foundation of his exegesis but rather as a means of advancing his own thought. Peter is couching his own ideas in Biblical phrases.<sup>51</sup> Best reasons that if the OT words were omitted, the sequence of thought would be harmed and the exhortation lost. Consequently the quotations are neither prepared for by preceding midrash nor do they form the foundation for an argument explicitly stated in the context.<sup>52</sup> Both of these positions—that Peter is quoting and then commenting, or that he himself is speaking through the medium of quotations—find parallels in the Jewish intellectual milieu. While it is true that the flow of thought is disrupted when the OT passages are removed, I am not sure it follows that this necessarily implies that the OT is being used to advance the thought and not as the basis for midrash. Besides, what exposition would be uninterrupted by the removal of its text? Moreover, following the quotation of Isa 28:16 in 1 Peter 2:6, Peter begins 2:7 by describing what the stone means for those who believe. If he is not expounding on the stone of Isa 28:16, what is he doing? On the other hand, it is true that the OT quotations are

<sup>49</sup> Longenecker, *Exegesis* 201–202; Fitzmyer, "Quotations" 310; Bruce, "Exposition" 81.

<sup>50</sup> Elliot, *Elect* 17–20; Longenecker, *Exegesis* 201.

<sup>51</sup> Best, "Reconsideration" 275.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

advancing the argument by providing Peter with the means to make the transition from a Christological/holiness perspective to a Christological/election perspective. Is it necessary that we maintain a strict dichotomy between these two views of Peter's methods? I think not. Perhaps both are operating in the text. In examples of Jewish exegesis from the first century both methods—exposition that comments on a text, and texts that are themselves used to comment on other texts—are manifest.<sup>53</sup> The important point in my opinion is that we view the pericope as an integrated whole, with the entire milieu of Peter coming to expression through his exegesis. Therefore text and interpretation are inseparable.

### III. CONCLUSION

We have examined some of the features of NT interpretation through the binoculars of Petrine and Pauline exegesis of the same OT texts and contextual framework. It has become apparent in the course of this investigation that both Peter and Paul were men of their times with respect to hermeneutical methodology. The methods that were at work in other first-century corpora of Jewish exegesis were also at work in the exegesis of our two authors. What sets apart the NT exegesis, then, is not any particular method but an entire hermeneutical posture that is both Christocentric and revelatory. Thus the distinctives of Peter and Paul over against other examples of first-century interpretation can be explained on the basis of their theological purpose in the light of Christ. While it would be impossible and undesirable for us to operate entirely within their intellectual milieu, are there any features of apostolic exegesis that are valid approaches for the modern exegete? I would like to make a few concluding observations concerning this matter.

My primary concern actually relates to the inspiration of Scripture. Returning now to one of the initial questions posed in this investigation: If the content of the NT has full divine authority by virtue of having been written by inspired authors, then are we as evangelicals consistent when we dismiss the very methods that played so vital a role in producing that content? I think not. While the methods found in the NT should not be slavishly imitated since we are operating here in the arena of descriptive rather than normative data, in the light of inspiration it is my opinion that they must have value for us. These methods are a part of the canon by virtue of their utilization in the composition process, a process that itself was inspired. As a warp and woof of inspired canonical literature, then, they must have a word for us. Precisely because their word for us is at the descriptive level, however, we must exercise caution in using them. It would be ungrounded to claim normative status for something that is taught only at the descriptive level and not taught elsewhere in propositional form. So we must remember that the canon is not primarily a

<sup>53</sup> Brooke, *Exegesis* 284–286; Slomovic, “Understanding” 14–15.

textbook on exegesis, and any exegetical method we derive from a secondary or implicational level of meaning has no claim of normativeness.

Arguments that reject the methods of the NT writers because they were capricious, arbitrary and precritical do not, in my opinion, stand up upon close analysis of the data.<sup>54</sup> The exegeses we have examined in this paper certainly do not reflect an arbitrary treatment of the OT, and others have demonstrated the same legitimate uses of the OT in the NT.<sup>55</sup> Rather, what at face value often may appear to be arbitrary is explicable if we understand the various methods that were part of the first-century intellectual milieu. In other words, some of their methods were culturally conditioned and do not fit into the categories of a twentieth-century, western mind-set. Problems do arise, however, if we contend that the NT writers had a univocal view of meaning in texts and used only a narrow, so-called scientific, twentieth-century-style, historico-grammatical exegesis in determining what that single, one-dimensional meaning was.<sup>56</sup> The possibility that the NT uses the OT in ways other than as authoritative, univocal proof texts must be given consideration.<sup>57</sup>

Should we use the methods evident among the NT authors? Certainly a modified form of historico-grammatical exegesis is evident in the NT, Rom 9:32-10:13 and 1 Pet 2:4-10 being cases in point. And everyone in the evangelical camp appears to agree that it is legitimate for the modern exegete to use the historico-grammatical method. But at times the NT writers seem to go beyond what the Biblical author could have consciously intended into a kind of *sensus plenior*. Is it also legitimate for us to take the results of historico-grammatical exegesis and expand on them to the extent that our resultant interpretation goes beyond the conscious intent of the author? This is an area that needs further discussion in the evangelical community but that has potential for fruitful results in our own exegesis.<sup>58</sup> With respect to those methods that are culturally conditioned to a significant degree—such as flexibility in quotation, or freedom to mingle interpretation and text—it probably is best not to use them, given our twentieth-century perspective on quotation and interpretation. Also those methods that indicate a revelatory stance by the author—such as the eschatological feature of NT interpretation (e.g. a “this is that” revelatory stance)—are not reproducible today, unless we are willing to entertain the idea of continuing special revelation. After all, in this area the NT data are descriptive and not necessarily normative or repeatable.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>54</sup> I am speaking here of views such as those held by Hanson, *Utterances* 182-185, 190; *Studies* 228-236.

<sup>55</sup> E.g. Kaiser (*Uses*) and Johnson (*Old Testament*), although in my opinion they go too far; Longenecker (*Exegesis* 214-218), who takes a moderate perspective by saying some methods are still useful but others may not be.

<sup>56</sup> Note the exegetical moves of Kaiser (*Uses*, esp. 61-88, 103-110), which are the result of trying to defend this postulate for the NT method of exegesis.

<sup>57</sup> E.g. Silva, “Text Forms.”

<sup>58</sup> Moo, “Sensus Plenior” 205-206; Waltke, “Canonical Process.”

<sup>59</sup> Longenecker, *Exegesis* 214-215.

In sum, any solutions offered by evangelicals to the multiplicity of problems we face in the use of the OT in the NT should be linked explicitly to our doctrine of inerrancy. Indeed the articulation of our solutions invariably should include discussions pertaining to the implications of such solutions for our doctrine of Scripture. This, I submit, will serve as a safeguard against potential inconsistencies between the articulation of our evangelical heritage and our continued investigation of apostolic interpretation.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>60</sup> The inspiration and assistance of M. Silva in the preparation of this paper are gratefully acknowledged.