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Respect for Context Once More

Steve Moyise

It is a great privilege to write something in honour of the editor of this journal on the occasion of his retirement. I was aware of his work on the textual form of the quotations in Hebrews[1] when I was undertaking my own doctoral work on the book of Revelation but it was not until the mid-90s that we were introduced at one of the British New Testament meetings. I had just given a rather tentative paper on Mark's opening composite quotation and Cecil offered to publish it in *Irish Biblical Studies*.[2] Since I wasn't sure where my ideas concerning Mark's use of scripture were leading, I was glad of an early publication (the waiting list on most journals was well over a year) and awaited feedback from Markan scholars. I mention this because it is one of the areas where I believe the journal has made a significant contribution to scholarship. By allowing prompt publication of short and sometimes tentative articles, it has fostered discussion at an early stage of an author's thought, sometimes leading to more in-depth articles elsewhere. In this article, I wish to pay tribute to Cecil's editorship of the journal by giving a brief account of the 'afterlife' of the three articles that I have submitted to *IBS*.

In my article on Mark's opening quotation, I wished to test the hypotheses of Joel Marcus (Isaiah) and Rikki Watts (Malachi and Isaiah) that Mark's opening quotation was intended to evoke an overarching scriptural framework for understanding his Gospel. It was clear that both scholars can point to a considerable number of references to Isaiah in Mark's Gospel (and a few from Malachi) but the question that interested me was whether this is best understood as Mark understanding Jesus in the light of scripture or scripture in the light of Jesus. As a way of investigating this, I considered the three explicit quotations that Mark uses to interpret Jesus' death. These are the rejected stone from Psalm 118 (Mk 12:10-11), the smitten shepherd of Zechariah 13 (Mk 14:27) and the forsaken sufferer of Psalm 22 (Mk 15:34). What struck me about these uses of scripture was the way that Mark juxtaposes them with a contrasting statement:

Old Testament text	Contrasting statement
'this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes' Ps. 118:23	So they seized him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard Mk 12:8
'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered' Zech. 13:7	But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee Mk 13:28
'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' Ps. 22:1	And the curtain of the temple was torn in two... 'Truly this man was God's Son!' Mk 15:38-9

As a result, I suggested that the function of the opening quotation was not so much to evoke an overarching scriptural framework for understanding the Gospel but to establish

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[1] J.C. McCullough, *Hebrews and the Old Testament* (PhD Belfast, 1971): 'The Old Testament Quotations in Hebrews', *NTS* 26 (1980),

[2] S. Moyise, 'Is Mark 1:1-3 the key to his use of the OT', *IBS* 20 (1998), 146-158. I notice that the other article in that volume is by Gary Burnett, his colleague at Union College and editor of this volume.

a hermeneutical pattern where the ancient text is juxtaposed with elements of the Christian tradition. Scripture only bears its witness to the gospel events when it is interpreted in the light of what came next. The gospel is 'written in the prophet Isaiah' (Mk 1:2) but only when Isaiah is interpreted in the light of the gospel events.

A far more significant challenge to seeing the opening quotation as evoking an overarching framework was the monograph by Tom Hatina, *In Search of a Context: The Function of Scripture in Mark's Narrative* (Sheffield, 2002). For Hatina, the meaning of a scriptural quotation derives primarily from its narrative function in the Gospel, not from something outside of it. Whatever meanings and functions the text once had, the quoted material now takes its meaning from the contextual connections that the new author has established. One should not assume, therefore, that Mark intends his hearers to interpret his quotations in the light of their surrounding contexts unless he explicitly draws attention to them.

This monograph prompted me to rethink my article on Mark and resulted in a further article where I discussed a number of methodological issues concerning this question. I began with the following paragraph:

> There are a number of factors which come into play when seeking to interpret scriptural references in the New Testament. (1) The author may indicate how he wishes the words to be taken, either by an introductory or concluding formula, the exegesis that follows or the role the quoted words play in the new work. (2) Changes to the scriptural material might indicate the author's redactional interests. (3) The quoted text might bring with it connotations or associations from its original historical or literary context. (4) The quoted text might bring with it connotations or associations from significant subsequent contexts. (5) The commentator's own ideological stance and social location might influence how the evidence is evaluated (and more fundamentally, what is to be considered as evidence). [3]

The problem for those who work in this field is that there is no agreement on how these factors should be prioritized. For example, some would argue that a quotation from Isaiah 53 inevitably brings with it the whole context of the 'suffering servant', but do not wish to argue that applying Hos. 11:1 to Jesus in Matt. 2:15 ('Out of Egypt I have called my son') involves implicating him in the accusation that immediately follows ('The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Baals, and offering incense to idols'). My conclusion was that

> The ideological stance of the commentator is a significant factor in assessing the meaning of the wilderness quotation of Mk 1.2-3. Hatina's commitment to a narrative approach diminishes the influence of sources outside of Mark's story world, but is this true? Real readers inhabit many worlds, not just the world of the text. They are thus influenced by many things, one of which is other texts. On the

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[3] S. Moyise, 'The Wilderness Quotation in Mark 1:1-3' in R.S. Sugirtharajah (ed.), *Wilderness:Essays in Honour of Frances Young* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), p. 78.

other hand, Watts's commitment to biblical theology does not allow for the possibility that Mark *might* be giving new meaning to the wilderness text. After all, Mark is writing for a completely different audience in a different time and a different place. It would surely be surprising if we could maintain identity of meaning across such divides. In both cases then, it would seem that ideological commitments have led to blind spots when interpreting certain aspects of the evidence.[4]

In the same year as my *IBS* article (1998), Greg Beale published a monograph on the use of the Old Testament in the book of Revelation which criticised my own book on three points: (1) It is wrong to speak of Old Testament texts receiving new meanings; (2) New Testament authors do not take texts out of context; and (3) Meaning derives from authorial intention, not the creative processes of readers. He chose to illustrate this with an analogy:

> The notion that readers create meaning is likely due in part to a hermeneutical flaw of confusing original 'meaning' with 'significance'... By way of illustration, we can compare an author's original, unchanging meaning to an apple in its original context of an apple tree. When someone removes the apple and puts it into another setting (say, in a basket of various fruits in a dining room for decorative purposes), the apple does not lose its original identity as an apple, the fruit of a particular kind of tree, but the apple must now be understood not in and of itself but *in relation to the new context* in which it has been placed... .[5]

I responded to this with a short article, 'The Old Testament in the New: A Reply to Greg Beale', published in the May 1999 edition of *IBS*. I happily agreed with the final sentence that quoted texts now have to be understood in relation to their new context but disagreed that their original meaning is always preserved. In short, I argued that quoted texts are *not* like apples in a decorative bowl of fruit, which have hard surfaces to protect them from change or modification (though that is not always true in our house!). They are more like ripples on a pond or sound waves which interact with one another to produce new patterns. Thus the meaning of the quoted words is not identical to either their original meaning or what they would mean in the new context if they had not been a quotation. The meaning of a quoted text lies in the interaction between these (and possibly other) contexts.

It says something for the circulation of *IBS* that Beale was able to write and have published a 'Rejoinder to Steve Moyise' in the November issue of the same year. The gist of his rejoinder is summarised in the abstract:

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[4] Ibid, p.86. Tom Hatina is editing a series of books that will consider these methodological issues in each of the Gospels. The first volume has just been published as *Biblical Interpretation in Early Christian Gospels. Volume 1: The Gospel of Mark* (LTSN 304; London: T&T Clark, 2006).

[5] G. Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation* (JSNTSup 166; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp.51-2. Emphasis original.

First, I argue for the legitimacy of an ongoing distinction between original authorial intent and subsequent interpretative expansions and applications of that original intent by later reader/authors. These should not be collapsed into one another. Secondly, I contend that, while it is true that New Testament reader/authors had presuppositions through which they interpreted Old Testament texts, these presuppositions did not distort the original authorial intent of the Old Testament writers, partly because the presuppositions of the early Christian community were rooted in the Old Testament itself. I conclude in the third and final section that the presuppositions of modern readers does not have to prevent understanding what New Testament writers said; though we cannot achieve exhaustive knowledge of their intention we can achieve some adequate knowledge.[6]

Though tempted to further the alliteration (Reply, Rejoinder) by writing a Refutation, my third article for *IBS* focused on the analogy that NT authors viewed the OT through their presupppositional lenses. My problem with this analogy was not that it is false but that it is a truism and does not, therefore, explain anything. In particular, the use of 'lenses' in the plural prompts the deeper question of how the interpreter chooses which lens or combination of lenses to view the scriptural text in question: 'In other words, what is the principle at work when a New Testament author cites some texts as being literally true, others as true only when understood in the light of recent events, others as true only when quoted in variant forms, others only when the wording is altered, and yet others only when given an inverted or ironic meaning?'[7] There is always a deeper question of how they made such choices.

Secondly, I had problems with the 'lens' analogy itself. The analogy suggests predictability. If I possess a lens that makes objects looks taller or fatter, it does this with all objects. It does not discriminate between objects that are already 'tall enough' or 'fat enough'; it magnifies everything by the same factor. For this reason, I do not think it is a helpful analogy for NT interpretation. It suggests that once we have discovered an author's 'lens', we could point it at a text from Genesis or Isaiah and predict how they would interpret it. But having read Paul's careful exegesis of the significance of Abraham's faith in Romans 4, who would have predicted that he would see in the story of Sarah and Hagar an allegory where 'Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem' (Gal. 4:26). Or in the book of Revelation, that John would model his final chapters on Ezekiel's description of the new temple (chs 40-48), only to deny the existence of a temple in the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:22).

This debate was picked up by Jon Paulien of Andrews University, Michigan. In the introduction to *AUSS* 39 (2001), the editor of the journal notes that the current edition contains a 'cluster of articles on intertextuality and authorial intent in the Book of Revelation, a discussion that arose recently and has been conducted until now in British

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[6] G.K. Beale, 'Questions of Authorial Intent, Epistemology, and Presuppositions and Their Bearing on the Study of the Old Testament in the New: a Rejoinder to Steve Moyise' *IBS* 21 (1999), p.152. His article particularly draws on the work of E.D. Hirsch, K.J. Vanhoozer and N.T. Wright.
[7] S. Moyise, 'Seeing the Old Testament through a Lens', *IBS* 23 (2001), p.38.

publications'.[8] Paulien suggests that Beale and I are right in what we affirm but wrong in what we deny. In other words, Paulien agrees with me that John's interpretative goal was primarily to communicate Christian truth rather than discovering what the historical Ezekiel had in mind when addressing the problems of his day. But he agrees with Beale that the NT authors can rightly be said to respect the original context of their quotations/allusions 'given two realities: (1) They are reading OT writers in terms of the total context of "Scripture" as they perceived it, not primarily in terms of an individual writer's intention for a specific time and place; and (2) they were reading the OT from the perspective of where they understood themselves to be in the context of a divine plan for history.'[9] He thus discerns that at least part of the disagreement between Beale and I is terminological; we are using the term 'original meaning' in different ways. I am using it in the purely historical sense of how the book of Ezekiel (for example) would have been understood in its own setting. Consequently, I find many examples where the NT authors mean something different from the original meaning (e.g. Ezekiel 40-48 does not envisage a new Jerusalem without a temple). Paulien thinks Beale is using the term in the sense that the 'New Testament writers were offering an interpretation of the OT that they believed the OT writers *would have given* had they been alive to encounter Jesus'.[10] John's vision of the new Jerusalem, where there is 'no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb' (Rev. 21:22) is the true fulfilment of what Ezekiel meant and would have said so had he lived in John's time.

This is a helpful clarification though both of us wished to add caveats. For my part, I suggested that it was misleading to use the term 'original meaning' for what an OT writer *would have meant* had he been writing in NT times. Surely the point of using the word 'original' is to distinguish it from interpretations and perspectives that stem from a later period. Had Ezekiel known and believed what John did, he would no longer be the 'original' Ezekiel. Indeed, though I did not say this at the time, I think we can illustrate this even from the NT. What would be the point of saying that Paul's teaching on the state in Romans 13 (God's servant for good) would be the same as John's teaching in Revelation 13 (destructive usurping beast) if only Paul knew what John knew? Had Paul known and believed everything that John did, he would no longer be the apostle Paul.

For Beale, while he agrees that the NT authors read the OT from the perspective of the fuller revelation enjoyed, he does not accept Paulien's corollary, '[and] not primarily in terms of an individual writer's intention for a specific time and place'. Instead, Beale thinks that 'a trait of any valid interpretation is some element of recognizability with the original meaning of a text', or, put another way, that it is 'implied by and partially derivative of authorial intent'. He adds, 'If one goes further than this concession, then one places the reader in a sphere separated from all significant links to a text's original meaning, which appears to be Moyise's position'.[11]

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[8] *AUSS* 39 (2001), p.3 (attributed to J.M.).

[9] J. Paulien, 'Dreading the Whirlwind. Intertextuality and the Use of the Old Testament in Revelation', *AUSS* 39 (2001), pp. 19-20.

[10] Ibid, p. 20. Emphasis added.

[11] All quotations in this paragraph from G.K. Beale, 'A Response to Jon Paulien on the Use of the Old Testament in Revelation', *AUSS* 39 (2001), p.32.

To some degree, it would appear that there is something of the half full/half empty syndrome in this debate. I see considerable differences between Ezekiel's vision of a new temple and John's vision of a new Jerusalem without a temple.[12] That is why I think it is appropriate to speak of John giving 'new meaning' to Ezekiel's vision. However, Beale understands the phrase 'new meaning' as a denial of any 'single significant' link between the two passages or any 'element of recognizability' with the original intention. Since he can easily show that there are *some* similarities between the two visions, he thinks he has disproved my statement and verified his own, namely, that John has preserved the original meaning of Ezekiel. But in saying that John gives 'new meaning' to Ezekiel's vision, I am not asserting that there are no links whatsoever between the two passages. Indeed, I take this for granted, for we would hardly be considering Ezekiel 40-48 as one of John's sources if no links were detectable. My point is that along with these links, there are also significant differences, and this makes it impossible for me to agree with Beale that John has preserved the 'original' meaning of Ezekiel. On the other hand, the fact that the two passages have some things in common (e.g. both are concerned with the locus of God's glory) makes it impossible for Beale to agree with me that John has given 'new' meaning to the Ezekiel text.

Of course, discussion of the 'original meaning' of a book like Ezekiel is itself problematic. If we are referring to what was in the prophet's mind when he was having his visions, this is surely asking the impossible. Visionary experience can be variously understood but most would agree that it involves some sort of 'altered state of consciousness'. It is not easy to see how this can be analysed in terms of the author's original 'meaning' or 'intention'. Perhaps, then, we should locate 'original meaning' in the act of committing the visions to writing. Since this act involves obtaining the necessary labour and materials, it is reasonable to assume that there was 'intention' behind it. Someone, perhaps the prophet himself, wanted the visions recorded so that they could perform some function. However, since we are told that the visions derive from various times and places (Ezek. 1:1; 8:1; 20:1 etc.), this would not necessarily equate with their meaning in the book of Ezekiel. For this, we must look to the unknown editors or compilers who were responsible for the final form of the book. But since we have no idea who these people were or for whom they were writing, it is difficult to see how we can hope to establish their 'original meaning' or 'original intention'.[13]

As a result, a number of scholars have drawn on ideas from Speech-Act theory to assert that a text can be said to embody a 'communicative act'.[14] We do not need to know who is responsible for Ezekiel 40-48 or speculate about his (or her or their) mental processes

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[12] In my monograph, I quote from J.M. Vogelgesang's PhD thesis, 'The Interpretation of Ezekiel in the Book of Revelation' (Harvard, 1985): 'John made detailed use of Ezekiel 40-48 in constructing the new Jerusalem vision. Yet a greater contrast with that vision, where seven of nine chapters describe the temple, its ordinances and its priests, and the glory of God dwelling therein, cannot be imagined' (p.77).

[13] In my critique of Beale, I suggested that the difficulty of establishing the 'original meaning' of Ezekiel undermines his claim that John has preserved it. He replied that if we cannot know Ezekiel's 'original meaning', then neither can we say that he has not preserved it.

[14] See the various contributions in C. Bartholomew, C. Greene & K. Möller (eds), *After Pentecost: Language & Biblical Interpretation* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001).

during its production. The text itself embodies a 'three-fold communicative act' that can be described as its *locution* (the literary act of using words to express something), its *illocution* (what one does in saying something, such as promise or warn) and its *perlocution* (its effects). In other words, the focus is not on what an author planned to do (they might have been incompetent) but what in fact they have done, as embodied in the text that has come down to us.[15] On this basis, we could say that Ezekiel 40-48 attempts to produce a response (hope), by asserting something (the promise of renewal), in a particular way (a detailed description of a new Jerusalem and temple). If we were to do a similar analysis of Revelation 20-22, we might decide that its 'communicative act' also involves hope, through a promise of a renewal, but its method is by describing a new Jerusalem which does not contain a physical temple because God and the Lamb are its temple. On this more 'structural' analysis, we might conclude that the two visions have much in common, especially as Revelation offers an explanation for why the city lacks a physical temple.

In a further publication, I have explored the notion of 'trajectory' for understanding the relationship between Revelation and the Old Testament.[16] A trajectory implies a beginning (with an initial direction), a path (which might be curved) and a destination (where it ends up). Texts are 'launched' (by authors, editors, publishers) and encounter a variety of readers in a variety of times and places. Modern historical critics have been primarily concerned with determining a text's origins in order to determine its meaning. However, New Testament interpreters (and those at Qumran) appear to be more concerned with the path (how it has led to them) and its goal (what is still to happen) than its origins (what it meant then). This analogy meets Beale's requirement that there is some 'element of recognizability' with the origins of the text but it also helps to explain why later interpreters differ. The Qumran community 'tracked' the trajectory as leading to them (the establishment of their community, their Teacher of Righteousness, his persecution by the Wicked Priest) and thereby projected its future goal (including restored temple worship). John 'tracked' the trajectory to Christ and the church and projected its goal to a new Jerusalem without a physical temple. Readers cannot make texts mean whatever they like (the trajectory began somewhere) but they do have a role in construing meaning.

On this analogy, I could agree with Beale that Revelation does not offer an interpretation of Ezekiel 40-48 that goes *against* the text's 'three-fold communicative act'. But then neither does the interpretation of Qumran or the later rabbis. Following Vanhoozer, Beale attempts to broaden the definition of 'authorial intention' to something that can encompass the various interpretations found in the New Testament. Now if this is taken as a general principle, as his illustrations suggest, then it opens the door for various other interpretations to claim that they also fall within this expanded definition. For example, if a 'temple-less new Jerusalem' is said to have the *same meaning* as a 'new Jerusalem with a restored temple' (because Beale denies there is any change of meaning), it is hard to see

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[15] It was a great pleasure and privilege to work with Cecil and his colleagues as External Examiner from 2002-6, where on many occasions, we had to remind ourselves that marks can only be awarded for what is present in the script, not our attempt to guess what the student was intending.
[16] S. Moyise, 'Does the Author of Revelation Misappropriate the Scriptures?', *AUSS* 40 (2002), 2-21.

why a modern Zionist vision for rebuilding the temple cannot make the same claim. This is somewhat ironic since the emphasis on 'authorial intention' was supposed to protect the text from the multiple interpretations of later readers. In fact, an expanded definition of 'authorial intention' opens the door to multiple interpretations because a number will now be able to meet the expanded criteria.

However, it is my guess that Beale does not actually want to operate with an understanding of 'authorial intention' that is so broad that it would allow Qumran and the rabbis to claim equal validity. The expanded definition of 'authorial intention' that he has in mind is in fact limited to the interpretations we find in the New Testament:

> If one presupposes the existence of God and includes God as author of particular biblical texts and of the whole canon, then specific expansions of earlier texts in later ones is part of one complex authorial act of communication.[17]

I have two comments to make about this. First, if this is a presupposition, then his various attempts to show that John preserves the 'original meaning' of his sources are surely ingenuous; he holds this to be true as a matter of dogma. In a more recent review of our debate, Waddell cites Beale as stating that the phrase in the inaugural vision, 'I turned to see the voice which was speaking' (Rev. 1:12) is probably an allusion to the boastful words of the beast in Dan. 7:11. Waddell comments:

> I find this paradoxical. On the one hand, I am asked to believe that John is careful never to disregard the context of the Old Testament passages he employs, and on the other hand, I am asked to believe that the same John, whose mind is saturated with the Old Testament, will inadvertently identify Christ with the words used by Daniel to identify the beast! It seems to me far better to acknowledge that John may not be as bound by contextual obligation as Beale wishes.[18]

Secondly, Beale acknowledges in this quotation that God's authorial act of communication in scripture is 'complex'. It does not follow, therefore, that John must always and everywhere have the same meaning as his Old Testament sources. Though the so-called 'New Perspective' has urged us to see more continuity between Paul and the law than was previously thought, it remains the case that those insisting on identity of meaning were the Judaisers (scripture intends circumcision and cannot be altered). I maintain that this was neither Paul's nor John's position.

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[17] Beale, 'Rejoinder', p.165.

[18] R. Waddell, *The Spirit of the Book of Revelation* (Blandford Forum: Deo, 2006), p. 85.

Gary W. Burnett

Covenant of Peace: The Missing Peace in New Testament Theology and Ethics,
by Willard M. Swartley, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2006), 542pp. $34.00. ISBN: 0-8028-2937-6

As a former student, and now colleague, of Professor Cecil McCullough, I am delighted to offer this book review in his honour on the occasion of his retirement. A review of a book on peace is, I believe, most fitting, given that Cecil has spent so much of his professional life working, ministering and contributing positively in parts of the world which, during this time, enjoyed little in the way of peace – Lebanon and Northern Ireland. This contribution is offered with much gratitude for his scholarship, encouragement and friendship over recent years.

Swartley's book is a comprehensive analysis of the often neglected theme of peace throughout the New Testament, examining all of its one hundred occurrences, along with associated ideas of reconciliation and love of enemies. This is not simply a discussion of the biblical mandate, or otherwise, for either non-violence or participation in war. Rather, it seeks to understand the broader meaning of biblical ideas of shalom or eirēnē within the New Testament and to relate these to considerations of justice, integrity and salvation, in their broadest sense. Swartley sets out to show how prominent is the theme of peace in the New Testament and to highlight the way in which the New Testament shows the motivations, means and practices of peacemaking. As such, it is a major contribution to New Testament theology and ethics, and, in today's strife-torn world, is vital reading for all who are interested in understanding the application and relevance of the gospel to our modern situation.

Swartley proceeds by focusing on the contribution that the various New Testament books and letters make to the theme of peace, "noting on the one side the theological and christological matrix of this thought and, on the other side, observing features that alert us to issues of war or violence within the narrative as well". He begins by setting out his thesis by discussing how the themes of the reign of God, gospel and peace are closely integrated in the proclamation of Jesus and demonstrates how this proclamation pervades the various New Testament writings.

He then turns to examine the ideas of *shalom* in the Old Testament and *eirēnē* in the Graeco-Roman world, and argues that shalom is a wide-ranging concept that is closely related to both justice and the reign of God and that New Testament usage of eirēnē is based on shalom-ideas and stands in stark contrast to pretensions of the Roman Empire to peacemaking. There follows a helpful discussion of how warfare and violent language and imagery in the New Testament can be reconciled with the emphasis on peace.

With this foundation, Swartley examines in turn each of the Gospels, Acts, the Pauline literature, the Johannine corpus, Hebrews, James and 1 Peter, and Revelation, highlighting the distinctive emphasis on peace in each and demonstrating the prominence and central role of peace in the understanding and presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ of each author. Swartley devotes two substantial chapters to

Paul's writings and demonstrates how Paul makes peace, peacemaking and peace-building central to his theology and ethics. He carefully maps the relationship between justification/righteousness and reconciliation in Paul, highlighting the social meaning of justification, where the cross ends hostility between humans and God and between formerly alienated peoples. In addition, he helpfully draws attention to the way in which the gospel of Jesus Christ stood over against imperial Rome as an alternative social order and proclaimed a peace that "repudiates domination over others, unites people of diverse background…, exhorts believers to welcome one another…overcoming hierarchical societal structures, and commits his [Paul's] mission to reallocate monetary resources…to help the poor". This accords well with recent discussion in Pauline scholarship regarding Paul's gospel and the Empire by writes such as Wright, Elliott and Horsley. Swartley's peace angle gives an additional dimension to the debate.

Professor McCullough would, doubtless, be interested in Swartley's treatment of Hebrews, where he draws attention to the author's distinctive peace accent – presenting Jesus as King of peace; the requirement for Christians to pursue peace and the climax of the letter being a blessing from the God of peace. Swartley shows how the author of Hebrews intertwines the theme of Jesus' learned obedience through suffering (5: 7-10) with his eternal, royal priesthood in the order of Melchizedek, which is characterised by righteousness and peace (7:1-3).

The three concluding chapters of the book build on the textual survey that has preceded, discussing issues of contemporary Christian discipleship and ethics. This latter section of the book is particularly engaging and Swartley's argument is quite convincing that NT parensis is based strongly on the example of Christ and has an anti-rivalry and anti-violence strain throughout.

In this section of the book, Swartley enters the debate as to whether God is a God of violence who uses violence to conquer evil or should be seen as a non-violent God. His conclusion is that this debate is, in fact, better avoided as misconceived. For Swartley, God's faithful love and his wrath and judgement are, in fact, integrated in the divine nature, but he is quick to point out that there is no biblical warrant for ascribing either violence or non-violence to God. Furthermore, he concludes that in the Bible, vengeance and judgement of evil is the sole remit of God and that Christian ethics must rather be grounded in God's love and mercy. Using the language of mimetic desire, Swartley shows how the gospel of Jesus Christ exposes the normal acquisitive desire of human beings which generates rivalry and leads to violence, and makes a claim on each life for *imitatio Christi* which revolves around unselfishness, servant-hood and non-violence.

These chapters on the imitation of Jesus and God's moral character as the basis for human ethics are the most thought provoking and rewarding in the book. The emphasis here on the need not to disconnect discipleship from salvation based on Christ's atoning work is very worthwhile and Swartley argues that Jesus' life and death serves to break the spiral of violence empowered by rivalry, thus enabling believers to eschew destructive impulse, violence and self-serving. He highlights the frequency of "imitation texts" in the New Testament documents, suggesting that "a mimesis pattern lies at the heart of NT thought". Believers are saved by the one who rejected the mimetic pattern of rivalry and violence in the world, through his

transforming of our own desires, which, in turn, leads us to follow in his footsteps and be conformed to his image.

Swartley concludes with a very helpful appendix which gives an analysis of major contributions to the theme of peace in the New Testament over the fifty years.

Swartley more than accomplishes his aim of placing a comprehensive understanding of peace at the centre of both the gospel message and Christian behaviour. There is a great deal of careful analysis of the New Testament texts by Swartley to make his case, but he never loses sight of bigger themes such as soteriology, Christology and righteousness. His work coheres well with other current approaches to the New Testament which stress the continuity of the theology of the New Testament writers with Second Temple Judaism and the importance of the kingdom of God and eschatology. For Swartley, a vision of peace, of shalom, was very much integrated to all of this and, perhaps it should not be so surprising that his careful research uncovers such a wealth of reference to and concern with peace in the New Testament documents.

This outstanding book will appeal both to New Testament scholars and serious Christian readers.

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