



Southwestern

JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY



The Use of the Old Testament
in the New Testament



EDITORIAL

The Fall 2021 issue of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology* is devoted to “The Use of the Old Testament in the New.” This important theme has implications for how we understand both testaments. Should we consider the Old Testament to be Christian Scripture, or should we reserve this designation for the New Testament? What do the ways that the New Testament writers use the Old Testament tell us about translation and interpretation practices? Do answers to these questions help us develop a doctrine of Scripture and understanding for biblical interpretation in the twenty-first century? The contributors to this issue wrestle with these and other questions, which are not new, but which need to be revisited by each generation.

Marcion, a native of Pontus, taught in Rome during the middle of the second century. He made an absolute distinction between the God of the Old Testament, who was perceived as harsh and rigorous, and the good God of the New Testament, who was completely love. Marcion also affirmed the common Gnostic dualism and Docetism.

During the middle decades of the second century, the interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures remained the central hermeneutical task. This held true even for Marcion, whose reduced Christian canon was most likely the signal leading to the approaches of the early church apologists who strongly pushed back against the Marcionite directions. Marcion suggested that he had to reject the Jewish Scriptures as the work of a wrathful, vicious, evil God who was opposed to the God of love proclaimed by Jesus and revealed to Paul. Suspicious of the harmonizing tendency of allegorical and typological exegesis, he declared that only the Epistles of Paul, the true apostle, and portions of Luke’s Gospel, purged of Jewish contamination, were acceptable for Christian use.

Marcion maintained that the Scriptures should be taken literally and authoritatively, but his presuppositions forced him to eliminate most of what was recognized as Christian Scripture by the professing church.

He thus arrived at a truncated canon characterized by great confusion regarding the relationship of the Old Testament to the New. The early church was now faced with challenges from two quite different directions. It was the task of the apologists to demonstrate the continuity of the two Testaments to the Gnostics and the discontinuity of the same testaments to the Judaizers. For nineteen centuries, the church has continued to struggle with the relationship of the two testaments, especially seeking to understand how Jesus and the apostles understood the Old Testament. The contributors to this issue offer much insight and guidance for contemporary readers of Scripture.

Andrew Streett, who teaches in both the Old Testament and New Testament departments at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, brilliantly surveys the landscape regarding recent trends related to the question of how Jesus and the apostles interpreted the Old Testament. His overview is essential reading before engaging the other fine articles in this issue. Craig Evans, the John Bisagno Distinguished Professor of Christian Origins at Houston Baptist University, helps us understand how Jesus read the Old Testament and how the Synoptic Gospels presented the teachings of Jesus. Andreas Köstenberger, research professor at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, gives us guidance regarding John's use of the Old Testament. Another Midwesterner, Patrick Schreiner, seeks to unlock Luke's approach to the Old Testament in the Book of Acts.

Clarity regarding Paul's understanding of the relationship of the two testaments is given guidance by Craig Keener, the prolific New Testament scholar at Asbury Seminary. Dana Harris, author of a recent commentary on Hebrews and New Testament department chair at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, introduces us to the extensive literature focusing on the use of the Old Testament in the Book of Hebrews. The associate dean in the School of Theology at Southwestern Seminary, Mark Taylor, offers a thoughtful look at the interpretation and application of the Old Testament by the other writers of the General Epistles. Greg Beale, professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary, completes our study with his look at the Book of Revelation. Readers of this issue of *SWJT* will be blessed to have such gifted and capable scholars supplying new insights regarding these challenging issues of interpretation.

Time and again we see that Jesus and the apostles employed hermeneutical practices established in late Judaism, but, with the enablement of God's Spirit, they adapted the methods to the church with the addition of

a Christological focus. At the heart of the early church's biblical interpretation was a Christological and Christocentric perspective. Jesus became the direct and primary source for the church's understanding of the Old Testament, transforming the Torah into the Messianic Torah for the early church. Thus, through the pattern that Jesus had set, and his exalted lordship expressed through the Spirit, Jesus served as the ongoing source of the early church's hermeneutical approach to the Scriptures. The Christological perspective of the earliest Christians, therefore, enabled them to adopt Jesus' own usage of the Scriptures as normative and to look to him for guidance in their hermeneutical task.

How grateful we are that in God's good providence the pattern of interpretation found in the New Testament itself was accepted by the post-apostolic church. Marcion's approach was condemned; the Old Testament writings were retained as the inspired prophetic witness of the truth of the Christian faith. It has been suggested that Marcion was perhaps a greater danger to the early church than any of the other early heretics. Sadly, Marcionite tendencies have continued even to the present day. Thus, we recognize the importance and relevance of once again exploring the use of the Old Testament in the New. It is my privilege to invite you to take a good look at the interpretive issues so winsomely and carefully presented by the wise and skilled contributors to this fall issue of *SWJT*. Let me add that readers will not want to miss the thoughtful book reviews found in this issue. As has been the case in recent issues of *SWJT*, I am privileged to provide a few observations about a few new(er) publications in the Book Notes section.

Let me once again express my genuine appreciation to the contributors to this fall issue, thanking them for their fine work as well as expressing appreciation to all who participated in the editorial and publication process as well. I especially want to say a big word of thanks to the excellent editorial guidance provided by Andrew Streett. With this issue, we welcome Ashley Allen to the role of assistant editor. For the good work of Alex Sibley and Katie McCoy during their days on the editorial team, we are truly thankful. We express our gratitude as well to you, our readers, for your encouragement and support for the ongoing work of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology*.

Soli Deo Gloria

David S. Dockery