

# **Puzzling Apostolic Hermeneutics of the Old Testament as Theological Hermeneutics**

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## **Abstract**

In this article, I argue that puzzling apostolic interpretations of some Old Testament messages as fulfilled in specific New Testament contexts, to which the Old Testament messages do not apparently refer, are actually applications of the Old Testament messages to apostolic times. These applications are informed by a view of God, distinctively manifest in prophecy, which understands him to speak in ways commensurate with his foreknowledge and purposes, with the result that what he has said has multiple references beyond the single initial one. This view of God is presupposed by the apostles' use of the verb πληρωθῆναι through its close association with prophecy, hence their use of the verb for "applies to".

## **Keywords**

Old Testament – New Testament – theological hermeneutics – fulfillment – application – prophecy

## **Introduction**

Studies and scholarly literature on the subject of the Old Testament (OT from here on) in the New Testament (NT from here on) are plentiful<sup>1</sup> and encompass

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1 To get a sense of this, one only needs to look at a recent handbook by G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), or references in the single volume commentary on the NT use of the OT edited by G. K. Beale and

three main areas. Textual studies of the OT in the NT which are concerned with the source(s) and manner of OT citations in the NT.<sup>2</sup> Functional studies which have to do with the way in which the OT is used in the NT.<sup>3</sup> And Hermeneutical studies which are concerned variously with the way in which the OT is interpreted in the NT.<sup>4</sup>

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D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament's Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007) or look at the references on the use of the OT in a specific NT book such as the gospels (see for example C. A. Evans and W. R. Stegner, *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel*, [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994]), or even references of the use of the OT in a specific NT book such as in Hebrews (see for example G. H. Guthrie, "Hebrews' Use of the Old Testament: Recent: Recent Trends in Research," *CurBS* 1.2 [2003]: 271-294).

- 2 See for example R. T. McLay, "Biblical Texts and the Scriptures for the New Testament Church," in *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament* (edited by S. E. Porter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 38-58; S. E. Porter, "Further Comments on the Use of the OT in the New," in *The Intertextuality of the Epistles: Explorations of Theory and Practice* (edited by T. L. Brodie, D. R. MacDonald, and S. E. Porter; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006), 98-110; J. J. O'Rourke, "Possible Uses of the OT in the Gospels," in *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel* (JSNTSS 104; edited by C. A. Evans and W. R. Stegner, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 15-25; C. D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature* (SNTSMS 74; Cambridge: CUP, 1992); G. C. Archer and G. C. Chirichigno, *OT Quotations in the*

*NT: A Complete Survey* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983); and K. J. Thomas, "The Old Testament Citations in Hebrews," *NTS* 1 (1964): 303-325.

- 3 See, for example, D. L. Stamps, "The Use of the OT in the New Testament as a Rhetorical Device: A Methodological Proposal," in *Hearing the OT in the New Testament* (edited by S. Porter, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 9-37, and C. D. Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture: The Rhetoric of Quotations in the Letters of Paul* (London: T&T Clark, 2004); M. Silva, "Abraham, Faith, and Works: Paul's Use of Scripture in Galatians 3.6-14," *WTJ* 63 (2001): 251-267; I. Paul, "The Use of the OT in Revelation," in *The OT in the NT: Essays in Honour of J. L. North* (JSNTSS; edited by S. Moyise, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2006), 256-276; C. R. Bruno, "The Deliverer from Zion: The Source(s) and the Function of Paul's Citation in Romans 11.26-27," *TynBul* 59.1 (2008): 117-134; L. Perkins, "The Markan Narratives' Use of the OT Greek Text of Jeremiah to Explain Israel's Obduracy," *TynBul* 60.2 (2009): 217-238; T. L. Brodie, "The Triple Intertextuality of the Epistles: An Introduction," in *The Intertextuality of the Epistles: Explorations of Theory and Practice* (NT Monograph 16; edited by D. R. and S. E. Porter, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2004), 71-78; and J. B. Green, "The Problem of Beginning: Israel's Scriptures in Luke 1-2," *BBR* 4 (1994): 61-86.
- 4 See, for example, R. P. Juza, "Echoes of Sodom and Gomorrah on the Day of the Lord: Interxtuality and Tradition in 2 Peter 3.7-13," *BBR* 24.2 (2014): 227-245; T. Thatcher, "Cain and Abel in Early Christian Memory: A Case in 'The Use of the Old Testament in the New'." *CBQ* 72 (2010): 732-751; R.B. Hays, S. Alkier, and L. A. Huizinger, ed., *Reading the Bible Intertextually* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2009); D. R. McDonald and S. E. Porter, *The Intertextuality of the Epistles: Explorations*

*of Theory and Practice* (NT Monograph 16; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2006); P. Gresch. "Inner-biblical Reinterpretation

In the face of such plentiful and varied studies of the OT in the NT, one would be excused for concluding that, unless new material is discovered, there is nothing new that could be added to such studies. But such a conclusion would be premature. In this paper, I wish to demonstrate that there are valuable insights that could be added to hermeneutical studies of the OT to the NT through exploring and understanding aspects of OT interpretation in the NT as theological hermeneutics. To this we turn now.

### **Theological Hermeneutics and OT in NT Studies**

Advocacy and formulations of theological hermeneutics of the Bible which have been with us for a while arose in reaction to the limitations of historical criticism in the interpretation of Scripture together with its hegemony in biblical scholarship. Broadly speaking theological hermeneutics are interpretations of the Bible which are variously informed by its nature and subject matter, perceived function in Christian communities, and theology.<sup>5</sup> But inexplicably, OT in NT studies are bereft of theological hermeneutics since these kinds

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and Modern Hermeneutics,” in *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Biblical Exegesis* (ed. by P. Pokorny and J. Roskovee; WUNT 153, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002) 221-23; S. Moyise, “Intertextuality and the study of the OT in the NT,” in *The OT in the New: Essays in Honour of J. L. North* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 14-41; C. A. Evans and W.R. Stegner, ed., *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994); E. E. Ellis, *The OT in Early Christianity* (WUNT 54; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1991); R. Hays, *Echoes of Scriptures in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); D. Juel, *Christological Interpretation of the OT in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987); and E. E.

Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutics in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972) and P. Gresch, "The Testimonia and Modern Hermeneutics," *NTS* 19 (1972): 318-324.

- 5 For more on theological hermeneutics see S. A. Cummins, "The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recent Contributions by Stephen E. Fowl, Christopher R. Seitz and Francis Watson," *CurBS* 2.2 (2004): 179-196; D. Wood, "The Place of Theology in Theological Hermeneutics," *IJST* 4.2 (2002): 156-171; V. S. Poythress, *God Centered Biblical Interpretations*, (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1996); B. S. Childs, "Towards Recovering Theological Exegesis," *Pro Ecclesia* 4.1 (1995): 16-26; N. Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); 16-26; W. Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991); and P. Stuhlmacher, *Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretations of Scripture* (translated by R. A. Harrisville; London: SPCK, 1979). One could also consult K. J. Vanhoozer ed., *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005); however its wide range of, even disparate, entries does not make it helpful in introducing readers to theological hermeneutics save for the entries on "Introduction" and "Theological Hermeneutics, Contemporary."

of hermeneutics hitherto now, to the best of my knowledge, have not been brought to bear in efforts to enlighten the OT interpretation in the NT<sup>6</sup> save for typology (albeit when used is not recognised, and thus referred to, as a theo-logical hermeneutic).<sup>7</sup> This state of affairs is unfortunate given the nature of the Bible which renders theological hermeneutics absolutely necessary.

I therefore attempt, in this article, to explain eleven puzzling OT interpreta-tions in the NT as theological hermeneutics, which in these cases are applica-tions of the messages of the OT beyond their initial contexts to apostolic times on account of the OT messages being the words of God who speaks in ways commensurate with his foreknowledge. It is undoubtedly puzzling when Jesus or a NT figure (for simplicity ‘apostles’ from here on) interprets, and proclaims that, an OT’s message is fulfilled in a specific contemporary event to which that OT message apparently does not refer. These interpretations are found in at least eleven passages: Isa 7.14 in Matt 1.22-23; Hosea 11.1 in Matt 2.13-15; Jer 31.15 in Matt 2.17-18; Isa 40.3 in Matt 3.1-3 (cf. Mark 1.1-3); Isa 6.9-10 in Matt 13.14-15 (cf. Mark 7.6-7); Ps 78.2 in Matt 13.35; Zech 11.12-13 in Matt 27.9-10; Ps 41.9 in John 13.18; Ps 28.18 in John 19.23-24; Ps 34.20 (or Exod 12.46/Num 9.12) in John 19.36; and Ps 69.25 and 109.8 in Acts 1.15-20. The puzzle with these interpreta-tions is intensified by the fact that, with few exceptions,<sup>8</sup> the apostles are mute on the hermeneutics which guide them in arriving at such interpretations of fulfilment.

I am aware that there have been various explanations given to explain these puzzling apostolic hermeneutics. The explanation which have met some degree of universal countenance, and thus familiarity, in biblical studies<sup>9</sup> have

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6 As an illustration of what is typical, Moyise’s recent studies of the OT in the NT (S. Moyise, *Paul and Scripture: Studying the*



*New Testament Use of the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010]; and S. Moyise, *The Later New Testament Writers and Scripture: The Old Testament in Acts, Hebrews, the Catholic Epistles and Revelation* [London: SPCK, 2012]) have little, if any, discussion on theological hermeneutics in aiding our understanding and assessment of OT use in the NT.

7 Typological interpretations of the OT in the NT are theological hermeneutics to the extent that they are understood to be informed by the view that God is at work in history ordering it according to his own goals (hence the invariable connectedness between past and present, type and antitype, foreshadow and substance). For good illustrations or discussions on typology as theological hermeneutics, see P. J. Cahill, "Hermeneutical Implications of Typology," *CBQ* 44 (1982): 266-281, and G. W. Lampe, "The Reasonableness of Typology," *Essays on Typology* (edited by G. W. H. Lampe and K. J. Woollcombe; London SCM, 1957), 9-38.

8 Such as, for example, Acts 2.22-36.

9 For examples of explanations which have not gained much acceptance see, J. A. Fitzmyer ("The Use of Explicit OT Quotations in the Qumran Literature and in the NT," *NTS* 7 [1960/61] :

been ‘sensus plenior, promise-fulfilment, typology, and “narrative embodiment”. In “sensus plenior”<sup>10</sup> or “fuller/deeper sense”—the puzzling passages are explained in terms of the conviction that the intentions of God transcends the intentions of the human author of Scripture. In consequence a biblical text may have a meaning which, as in the case of these puzzling apostolic hermeneutics, is deeper than the historical sense which is revealed in God’s subsequent revelation as is the case in apostolic times. In promise-fulfilment explanations, puzzling apostolic hermeneutics are explained by arguing that the message of the OT is fulfilled in more than one event or in a series of related events, The initial, often a partial, fulfilment takes place in the immediate his-torical event the message refers to, or at least in the time period of the OT, while the subsequent, complete, fulfilment(s) takes place in a future, more distant, event to which the apostles point as the reference of the OT’s mes-sage. Accordingly, such explanations are known as double or generic fulfilment of OT prophecies;<sup>11</sup> but they have also been seen as “double disclosure”.<sup>12</sup> In typological explanations, the OT messages are viewed as fulfilled on the basis of typological relationships between elements (persons, places, -institutions,

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316-325); R. Pesch, “‘He Will Be Called a Nazorean’: Messianic Exegesis in Matthew 1-2,” in *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel* (Edited by C. A. Evans and W. R. Stegner, 1994, 129-178); R. T. France, “The Formula- Quotations of Matthew 2 and the Problem of Communication,” *NTS* 27 (1980): 233-251; S. V. McCasland, “Matthew Twists the Scripture,” *JBL* 80 (1961):143-184; G. Belfour, “The Jewishness of John’s Use of Scriptures in John 6.31 and 7.37-38 ,” *TynBul* 46.2 (1995): 357-380; C. A. Kimball III, “Jesus’ Exposition of Scripture in Luke 20.9-19: An Inquiry in Light of Jewish Hermeneutics,” *BBR* 3 (1993): 77-92; M. Black, “Christological Use of the Old Testament in the New,” *NTS* 18

- (1971): 1-14; and M. W. G. Stibbe, "This is That. Some Thoughts Concerning Charismatic Exegesis," *Anvil* 15 (1998): 184-85.
- 10 See, for example, W. S. LaSor, "Prophecy, Inspiration, and *Sensus Plenior*," *TynBul* 29 (1978): 49-60; and E. Johnson, "Author's Intention and Biblical Interpretation," in *Hermeneutics, Innerancy, and the Bible* (edited by E. D. Radmacher and R. D. Preus, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 409-447.
  - 11 See C. Blomberg, "Interpreting OT Prophetic Literature in Matthew: Double Fulfilment," *TJ* 23 (2002): 17-33; W. Kaiser, *The Uses of the OT in the New* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 61-76; and W. J. Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975). See specific examples of such in commentaries by R. H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for Mixed Church Under Persecution* (2nd Edition; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 25; D. A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13* (WBC 33A; Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1993), 20-21, 48; and P. Gresch, "Inner-biblical Reinterpretations and Modern Hermeneutics," 229.
  - 12 R. P. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed: Reactions and Responses to Failure in the OT Prophetic Tradition* (London: SCM, 1979), 112-117; and I. T. Ramsey, *Religious Language: An Empirical Placing of Theological Phrases* (London: SCM Press, 1957), 111-122.

events, or activities) in the OT and apostolic times. These elements in the OT are seen to foreshadow, mirror, prefigure, or parallel their counterparts in apostolic times. Such explanations have been articulated under the names of “typology”,<sup>13</sup> “prophecy and pattern”,<sup>14</sup> and even “objectified prophecy”.<sup>15</sup> Lastly, in “narrative embodiment”<sup>16</sup> Jesus is understood to relive the narrative of Israel. That is, Jesus’ story parallels the story of Israel, but crucially, in a way that fills, or reverses, it.<sup>17</sup> Such a perspective accounts for the numerous points of contact in the plot of Jesus’ life and that of Israel resulting in the fulfillments mentioned in the puzzling passages under consideration.

Now, I do not offer an alternative explanation, in what ensues, with any intention of challenging or discounting any of these explanations. Rather, I offer it with the dual desire first to show that theological hermeneutics can be applied fruitfully to, and shed new light on, studies of the OT in the NT. And secondly to have it considered alongside these explanations in discussions of OT interpretations in the NT since it offers an additional and different way to understanding the puzzling hermeneutics. With these aims and spirit of the paper clear, I am now in a position to offer my alternative explanation.

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13 See, for example, D. C. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis:

Fortress Press, 1993), and S. L. Johnson, *The OT in the New: An Argument for Biblical Inspiration* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980).

14 D. Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy to Pattern: Lukan OT Christology* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1987). See specific examples of such typological explanations of apostolic hermeneutics in commentaries by R. T. France, *Gospel of Matthew* (NICNT, Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2007), 56-57, 80-81; C. S. Keener, *Matthew* (IVP NT Commentary Series, Leicester: IVP Press, 1997), 70-71; A. A. Just Jr., *Luke 1.1-9.5* (Concordia

- Commentary, Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1996), 187-188; R. H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution* (2nd Edition; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 34; L. Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 43-44; and D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (The Pillar NT Commentary, Leicester: Appollos, 1991), 611-13, 627.
- 15 W. Eichrodt, "Is Typological Exegesis an Appropriate Method?," in *Essays in OT Interpretation* (edited by C. Westermann and translated by J. M. Mays; London: SCM Press, 1960), 229.
  - 16 This term is coined by Kirk (in J. R. D. Kirk, "Conceptualising Fulfilment in Matthew," *TynBul* 59.1 [2008]: 77-98).
  - 17 For more on this historical explanation, see C. A. Evans, "Jesus and Zechariah's Messianic hopes," in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus* (edited by B. Chilton and C. A. Evans; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 373-388, and B. D. Crowe, "Fulfillment in Matthew As Eschatological Reversal," *WTJ* 75 (2013):11-127.

## **Puzzling Apostolic Hermeneutics as Apostolic Applications of OT Messages**

We have already alluded in the introductory sections of the paper to our argument that the puzzling apostolic hermeneutics are applications of the OT to apostolic times. In this regard, the problem can be made sense of by a philosophical hermeneutic which grounds the appropriation of texts in cor-responses, variously understood, as argued by two leading hermeneutical philosophers of the 20th century, Hans-Georg Gadamar and Rudolph Bultmann.

Gadamar<sup>18</sup> argued that interpretation and application of a past text is possible only through our historical consciousness and experience which is open to the past (i.e., effective historical consciousness) and language with which it is inextricably related. Appropriation is brought about when our historical consciousness and experience (which essentially is our human experience, understanding and knowledge, i.e., our horizon), fuses with the text's horizon. As for Bultmann,<sup>19</sup> to access the abiding significance of the NT we have to demythologize Scripture through an existential understanding of history where we are caught up in the texts' inquiries, and the claims of human beings, that beguile us as well. Consequently, for Bultmann, existentialism provides the means by which the NT can be understood and applied today.

What is similar in these two hermeneutics of application is that they have appealed to some notion ("effective historical consciousness" and "existential-ism") which bridges or connects the text in its historical contingencies to the interpreter in the contemporary situation. The notion appealed to is either anchored in, or helps to bring out, what is common, i.e. correspondences, between the world to which the text is addressed and the world to which the interpreter of the text belongs. Indeed, determining correspondences between a historical text and a contemporary situation in order to be able to apply texts to the latter is prevalent in hermeneutics of application.<sup>20</sup>

- 18 H-G. Gadamar, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1975), 273.
- 19 R. Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth* (edited and translated by H. W. Bartsch; New York: Harper and Row, 1961).
- 20 So, for example, for Meyer what is common to both contexts is “the phenomenon or fact of evil” (B. Meyer, *Reality and Illusion in NT Scholarship: A Primer in Critical Realist Approaches* [Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994], 158), while for Edward Schillebeeckx, it is “experience” (see D. Rochford, “The Theological Hermeneutics of Edward Schillebeeckx,” *TS* 63.2 [2002] 251-67).

This hermeneutic of application has been taken up in principles of Bible application, and explained in manuals for the same. Thus, commentaries that seek to make the message of the Bible come to life in contemporary society use insight from this modern hermeneutic to do so. Indeed, some commentary series such as the “NIV Application Commentary” and “Interpretation Commentary for Teaching and Preaching” quite intentionally use this hermeneutic of application to apply the Bible to current society,<sup>21</sup> and they are complemented by the numerous handbooks which articulate this hermeneutic of application in efforts to help students of the Bible apply the Bible to their world and contexts.<sup>22</sup> What is more, we even have some theologies, such as liberation theology, which have been informed by this kind of Bible interpretation.<sup>23</sup> Coming closer to home, we have Bible scholars in NT commentaries using this hermeneutic of application through correspondences to explain the puzzling apostolic hermeneutics such as in the following illustrative example.

In Mark 7.6-7, Mark reports that Jesus sees the hypocrisy of the Pharisees in worship as the fulfilment of Isaiah’s message to Judah in Isa 29.13 in which Judah is charged with hypocrisy in her worship of Yahweh. It is not clear how the word of Isaiah to Judah is a prophecy, given that those words were an observation on the state of Judah’s worship, and, thus, devoid of any predictive or promissory overtone. France acknowledges this lack and explains it by arguing for a contemporizing (i.e. application) of Isaiah’s message by Jesus to the Pharisees by means of a correspondence of hypocrisy between 8th-century Judah and contemporary Pharisees. Thus, “The introductory formula . . . assumes that Isaiah’s words, which originally described the superficial religious devotion of his eight-century contemporaries rather than



predicting a future situation, can easily be applied to, indeed were written about, ὑμεῖς".<sup>24</sup>

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- 21 The NIV Application Commentary Series is quite explicit in its introduction to its commentaries about this hermeneutic.
- 22 See, for example, J. Kuhatschek, *Taking the Guesswork Out of Applying the Bible* (Leicester: IVP Press, 1991); D. M. Doriani, *Getting the Message: A Plan for Interpreting and Applying the Bible* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 1996), 137-154; M. J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers 2001), 123-134; J. S. Duvall and J.D. Hays, *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible* (foreword by K. Vanhoozer: Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 213-226.
- 23 For more on this, see M. Corner and C. Rowland, *Liberating Exegesis: The Challenge of Liberation Theology to Biblical Studies* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1989), 54-65.
- 24 R.T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (NIGTC, Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000), 284. W. Lane (*The Gospel of Mark* [NICNT, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974], 284-85) also assumes a similar explanation in seeing Isaiah 29.13 as applicable to the Pharisees' state with regard to worship.

As I have already mentioned, such explanations of the puzzling passages as applications of the OT based on its correspondence with NT contexts are not exceptions but are commonplace<sup>25</sup> with the correspondences seen thus:

<i>Corresponding motif/item</i>	<i>OT Message</i>	<i>NT Application</i>
"Emmanuel"	Isa 7.14	Matt 1.22-23
"Call from Egypt"	Hosea 11.1	Matt 2.15
"Slaughter of male children"	Jer 31.15	Matt 2.16-17 Matt 3.1-3 (cf. Mark 1.1-3)
"Voice in the Wilderness"	Isa 40.3	
"Thirty shekels of silver"	Zech 11.12-13	Matt 27.9-10
"Betrayal"	Ps 41.9	John 13.18
"Dividing of garments"	Ps 28.18	John 19.23-24
"Protection of the righteous"	Ps 34.20 Ps 69.25 &	John 19.36
"Destiny of enemy"	109.8	Acts 1.15-20

However, application through correspondence exclusively cannot suffice as an explanation of these apostolic hermeneutics since they are at variance with apostolic usage of the verb πληρωθῆναι for their interpretations. This contradiction is further accentuated as an issue by the observation that there are applications of the OT in the NT through a similarity of contexts in which the apostles have not used πληρωθῆναι. Such instances show, rather directly, the apostles' awareness that their interpretations are actually applications of particular

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<sup>25</sup> So, for more examples, apostolic hermeneutics of Isaiah 40.3 as fulfilled in John the Baptist is explained as an application through a correspondence between the contexts of Isaiah 40.3 and John the Baptist in Matthew 3.1-3 by Keener, *Matthew*, 75-77, and by D. A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13* (WBC 33A; Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1993), 48, and in Mark 1.1-3

by R. H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary for His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 35. As another example, apostolic hermeneutics of Psalms 22.18 as fulfilled in the casting of lots for Jesus' garments in John 19.24 is explained by G. R. Beasley-Murray (*John* [WBC 36; Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987], 355, and F. L. Godet, *Commentary on John's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publishers, 1980), as an application of Psalms through a correspondence between the two contexts. To give a last example, the fulfilment of Isaiah 7.14 in the conception of Jesus in Matthew 1.23 is explained by France, Watts, and Keener, as an application through a correspondence between the two contexts. See accordingly France, *Gospel of Matthew*, R. E. Watts, "Immanuel: Virgin Birth Proof Text or Programmatic Warning of Things to Come," in *From Prophecy to Testament: The Function of the OT in the New* (edited by C. A. Evans, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 92-113; and Keener, *Matthew*, 58-59. Also, Howard has, specific to Hosea 11.1 in Matthew 2.15, isolated this hermeneutic of correspondence which he labels as 'analogical correspondence' (in T. I. Howard, "The Use of Hosea 11.1 in Matthew 2.15: An Alternative Solution," *BSac* [1986] 320-322).

OT messages to contexts in their times (e.g. Ps 118, 22-23 in Luke 20.9-18 and Isa 6.9-10 in Acts 28.23-28).<sup>26</sup>

The only way, therefore, that applications can suffice as explanations of puzzling apostolic hermeneutics is if we can show that “applies to” in these apostolic hermeneutics connotes “fulfilment”. Of course, we take cognizance of the fact that Greek lexicons all uniformly give the meaning of πληρωθῆ (and its various conjugations ἐπληρώθη, ἀναπληροῦται, πεπλήρωται, and πληρωθῆναι) as, in one sense or the other, “fulfilment”. But the meaning of πληρωθῆ cannot be confined to this lexical meaning. Such a view may seem odd, but words can have contextual and specialised meanings that go beyond their semantic range with the effect that, as noted elsewhere, a word “never stands for a fixed concept but brings with it a wealth of connotations made more or less explicit in a given context.”<sup>27</sup> This understanding is significant for our purposes because the use of πληρωθῆ proliferates in the NT (in ways not paralleled in relative literature)<sup>28</sup> and is used indiscriminately, both of Jesus’ “verification of alleged predictions and of his fulfilling the Law and the Prophets.”<sup>29</sup> This is clearly the case when messages in the OT which are not prophecy (or promises), but narrative in nature, are understood to be fulfilled in the NT (such as the Pss in John 13.18, 19.23-24 and 19.23, and Isa 29.13 in Mark 7.6-7). For these reasons, NT scholars have long wrestled with the question of precisely how to understand πληρωθῆ in cases where it is used to interpret OT texts which are not prophecies.

In reviewing this struggle to understand πληρωθῆ Kirk<sup>30</sup> points out that πληρωθῆ has been understood to mean “peshar”,<sup>31</sup> a “Christological word”,<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> For more on this, see the article of G. V. Trull, “Abraham, Faith, and Works: Paul’s Use of Scripture in Galatians 3.6-14,” *WTJ* 63 (2004): 251-267; S. Motyer, “The Psalm Quotation of

- Hebrews 1: A Hermeneutic-Free Zone?" 50.1 (1999): 3-22;  
and J. Dupont, *The Salvation of the Gentiles: Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (translated by J. Keating, New York: Paulist Press, 1979).
- 27 This was noted in quite an illuminating article on the word 'anointed' by M. de Jong ("The Use of the Word 'Anointed' in the Time of Jesus," *NovT* 8 [1966]: 329-330).
- 28 For more on this see, M. P. Miller, "Targum, Midrash and the Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," 80-81.
- 29 C. F. D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) 127-134. See also C. F. D. Moule, "Fulfilment-Words in the NT: Use and Abuse," *NTS* 14.3 (1968): 293-320.
- 30 J. R. D. Kirk, "Conceptualising Fulfilment in Matthew," *TynBul* 59.1 (2008): 77-98.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 85-86.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 86.

“typology” and “catchword.”<sup>33</sup> The contexts in which πληρωθῆ appears, then, have a crucial influence on our understanding of the word and in effect how the particular OT message is understood to be “fulfilled” in the NT. Proposing, therefore, that πληρωθῆ connotes “applies to” is not wishful since in the eleven puzzling passages, the contexts of πληρωθῆ favour an understanding of the word as “applies to” as we have demonstrated in our discussion above. Seen this way, these puzzling apostolic interpretations of the OT as “fulfilled” are actually applications of particular OT messages in the NT context through a correspondence of contexts between the two.

Even with the persuasion that πληρωθῆ means “applies to” in these puzzling apostolic hermeneutics, we still must ask why the apostles chose this word in particular for their interpretations of the OT. How have they linked intimately “applies to” to πληρωθῆ to the extent that they have substituted one for the other? I am of the view that πληρωθῆ is used deliberately to indicate the theology which is informing the applications being made in these apostolic hermeneutics. Consequently rendering the apostolic hermeneutics of the OT messages as “applying to,” and not πληρωθῆ, would fail to indicate this theology and leave us at a loss as to what to make of the puzzling apostolic hermeneutics. This theology is encapsulated in the foremost meaning of πληρωθῆ: the fulfilment of prophecy which invariably presupposes divine communication and thereby foreknowledge and purpose. And if, as we shall point out, the apostles viewed the OT as divine communication, then our making sense of their puzzling interpretations must reckon with, and is actually bound by, this view. To this we now turn.

#### **4 Theological Presuppositions of Apostolic Applications of OT Messages**

The meaning most commonly associated with prophecy in the Bible is foretelling or prediction. Any cursory look at the messages

of the OT prophets who speak on behalf of God shows that in large measure their message has to do with future events and happenings to the extent that, according to the Bible, the measure of a true prophet from a false one is whether what he prophesies comes to pass or not (Deut 13.1-3 and 18.14-22).<sup>34</sup> It follows, then, that at

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33 Ibid., 87-88.

34 These references should cause those who have a different view of prophecy or who would like to see this meaning of prophecy downplayed on the basis of other roles of prophets or senses of prophetic prediction pause for thought. Such views are expressed by, for

the heart of Bible prophecy is YHWH's nature, since underlying the ability to predict and speak of future events and happenings are God's purposes and foreknowledge. To put it in another way, when God speaks of future events before they happen, he has a purpose for doing so and an advance knowledge of the said events. This observation is summarized by an OT prophet thus, "I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose', . . . I have spoken and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed and I will do it" (Isa 46.9-11). The observation explains why prophecy is not credited to human beings but, in view of his nature, to God (2 Pet 1.20-21). For these reasons when one talks of the fulfilment (πληρωθῆ) of an OT message, it is understood without much explanation that what was fore-told has come to pass. So strongly is this the case that when πληρωθῆ is used with reference to the OT, this meaning is presumed to the point that it is inexplicable to readers of the Bible when foretelling is not in view. But it is precisely the association of πληρωθῆ with prophecy that is the key to understanding its use, and in consequence, its substitution for the application of the OT message in the NT as I argue below.

The use of πληρωθῆ to interpret an OT message that is devoid of foretelling strongly implies that the OT message is indeed God's word. Because God is foreknowing and purposeful when he speaks at a given point in time, he speaks with a reason and in a way that anticipates future contexts and audiences. As Poythress has noted, "All assessments of an author's expressed meaning must reckon with the intended hearers and their situation. In the case of divine speech, "all future hearers are included, hence all their situations are included;"<sup>35</sup> or at least the full reference range of God's communication is in view and foreknown when he speaks. This is to say that the OT message, which



example, Sandy (in D. B. Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalypse* [Downers Grove: IVP, 2002]), and by Jenson (in P. P. Jenson, "Models of Prophetic Prediction and Matthew's Quotation of Micah 5.2," in *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of OT Messianic Texts* [edited by P. E. Satterthwaite, R. S. Hess, and G. J. Wenham; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995], 189-211). Those too who confuse a prophet with prophecy (although the two are closely related) in defining prophecy some-thing which Sanders has indicted 'popular Christianity' to have done (in J. Sanders, "From Prophecy to Testament: An Epilogue," in *From Prophecy to Testament: The Function of the Old Testament in the New* [edited by C. A. Evans, Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004]) should also pause for thought.

- 35 V. S. Poythress, 'Divine Meaning of Scripture' *WJT* 48 (1986), 252. For more on this, see also what Rae calls 'divine economy' (in M. Rae, "Texts in Context: Scripture and the Divine Economy," *JTI* 1.1 [2007]: 1-21).

is interpreted as fulfilled, is God's word, and, therefore, in the same way as is his prophetic word, it is commensurate with his foreknowledge and purposes. In consequence, the OT message is God's word which others elsewhere and in the future can hear and apply to their context. In other words, the OT message is God's word in Scripture to a specific audience—but subsequently, on the basis of his foreknowledge and purpose, his word through Scripture to anticipated others elsewhere and in the future. In these cases of puzzling interpretations, when God spoke, as is the case with his prophetic word, he had in mind the apostles' times which is the onset of the messianic age, the last epoch ushered in by the advent of Christ. Consequently, what he spoke with the messianic age in mind has now applied directly, like a prophecy fulfilled.

The argument above, that OT messages are believed to be what God spoke and thus interpreted in ways commensurate with his nature, is significantly supported in the NT itself where OT messages are proclaimed to be the word of God, thereby presupposing God's foreknowledge and purpose as is the case with prophecy, and interpreted accordingly. Of crucial importance is that this conviction is found in two of the eleven puzzling interpretations (Isa 7.14 in Matt 1.22-23 and Hosea 11.1 in Matt 2.13-15) where πληρωθῆναι directly means the fulfilment of what the Lord said:

All this took place to fulfil (πληρωθῆναι) what the Lord had spoken (τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπὸ κυρίου) by the prophet:

“Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel” (Matt 1.22)

And he rose and took the child and his mother by night, and departed to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil (πληρωθῆναι) what the Lord had spoken (τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπὸ κυρίου) by the prophet, “Out of Egypt have I called my son” (Matt 2.14-15)

Other places where passages of the OT's message are understood to be what God—or the Lord, or the Holy Spirit—said or is saying include: Ps 110.1 in Mk 12.35-37; Ps 109.8 and 69.25 in Acts 1.16-20; Amos 9.11-12 in Acts 15.15-18; Hos 2.2-23 in Rom 9.25; Deut 32.35 in Rom 12.19; Isa 45.23 in Rom 14.10-12; Isa 28.11-12 in 1 Cor 14.20-22; Jer 31.1, Ezek 37.37, Isa 52.11 *et al.* in 2 Cor 6.16-18; Jer 31.31-34 in Heb 8.8-12 and 10.30.

Moreover, the interpretation of Isa 6.9-10 in Acts 28.25 when related to the puzzling apostolic hermeneutics of the same prophet's message in Matt 13.14-15 lends bite to the argument above in the following manner. According to our argument, the introductory formula of the quotation of Isa 6.9-10 in

Matt 13.14 (cf. Mark 7.6-7) which says, “With them indeed is fulfilled the proph-ecy of Isaiah which says. . .” (καὶ ἀναπληροῦται αὐτοῖς ἡ προφητεία Ἰσαΐου ἡ λέγουσα . . .), actually means, “To them what God says through Isaiah applies indeed saying . . .”. Acts leaves us without doubt of this actual meaning because in Acts 28.25 this word from Isaiah is attributed by Paul to the Holy Spirit and on that basis applied to his disbelieving audience thus, “...the Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the Prophet . . .’ (...καλῶς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐλάλησεν διὰ Ἰσαΐου τοῦ προφήτου πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας ὑμῶν).

Seen in this light, firstly, applications through correspondences in the puz-zling apostolic hermeneutics are based on the foreknowledge and purposes of God. Secondly, prophecy and its close associate, πληρωθῆ, helps us both to reckon with this nature of God and invariably understand the basis of the applications.

## **Conclusions**

My explanation of puzzling apostolic hermeneutics has been premised on a theology which I have supported with pertinent Bible texts and the contexts of πληρωθῆ. My hope is that I have demonstrated that studies of OT interpreta-tions in the NT will benefit significantly if they open up to theology as a vital means of explaining interpretations of the OT in the NT. Such an opening up has the potential of shedding more light on OT interpretations in the NT, and opening new lines of inquiry in OT studies in the NT. Moreover, they also have the potential of putting to rest some questions on the puzzling apostolic hermeneutics which still sometimes linger amongst the faithful even after the usual explanations have been offered as I have witnessed with my theology students in a good number of my theological classes here in Africa.

