Finding Christ in the Old Testament:
Traditions and Types of the Messiah

by

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1. Approaching the Old Testament

The Old Testament is not a Christian book.

The OT is not Christian—in the sense that it was written by people with theologies and worldviews very different from our own—people who would not have agreed to any Christian doctrinal statement or systematic theology, and whose concept of 'the Messiah'—if they even had a concept of the Messiah at all—were almost as different from ours as is that of a modern Muslim. That this is true is shown by the fact that their descendants in the first century (and Jews up to today) have mostly not taken Jesus to be the Messiah. And for us it means that we must approach the OT as something *foreign—different* from us.

And the OT is not a book, but a collection of twenty-four books (split up into thirty-nine books in Christian Bibles), in a vast range of genres organised into three sections—Law, Prophets and Writings (five in Christian Bibles). These books were composed (orally at first) over a period of up to 1,000 years (describing events over a period of 4,000 years), in places up to 1,000 km apart, in cultures of demon and myth-minded desert nomads from Cain to Jacob,[1] a slave caste in Egypt, monolatrous minor monarchies from Melchizedek to David to Zedekiah, and exiled captives and international politicians and diplomats such as Joseph, Daniel and Nehemiah in vast polytheistic international empires of Pharaoh, Xerxes and Nebuchadnezzar.[2] And when we consider the vast differences in theology and worldview between ourselves and NT writers 2,000 years ago (an angel stirring up water to heal people, baptisms for the dead, women needing to cover their heads in worship lest angels are tempted to seduce them *etc*.), we should expect similar differences *within* the OT period—over the 2,000 years between Abraham and Jesus, or the 2,000 years between Adam and Abraham.

So if we accept that the OT Writings are not only different from us (they are not Christian), but also different from one another (they are not just one book), we must acknowledge that our interpretations are usually heavily influenced by our own theology and worldview. Our commitment to the NT has inclined us to a particular understanding of 'messianic' texts such as 'I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed' (Gen 3:15, the '*proto-evangelion*'), and 'they have pierced my hands and feet' (Psa 22:16); of the term עלמה, *almah*, as 'virgin' (Isa 7:14), and of משיח, *mashiakh*, 'Messiah, Christ' as 'the prophet, priest and Davidic king Jesus'; and of the identity of Immanuel (Isa 7:14), and the 'son of man' (Daniel). And yet when we study the OT within its own cultural and linguistic context, we may find that Genesis 3:15b is an aetiological myth, explaining why people and snakes don't like each other;[3] Psalm 22:16 actually reads כארי, *ka'ari*, 'like a lion', not כארו, *ka'aru*, 'they have pierced'; עלמה, *almah* just rneans 'young woman' and refers in Isaiah 7:14 to Ahaz's or Isaiah's wife; משיח, *mashiakh* is used only once in Isaiah—to refer to the pagan Persian king Cyrus; Immanuel is Hezekiah; and 'son of man' is just a common Semitic expression for 'human being'. It is this original meaning of the texts which biblicists obtain by 'emic' study (that is, studying texts within their own world) in Christian or secular academic institutions; the Christian interpretation is obtained by theologians of all types from Professors to Sunday School teachers by means of 'etic' study (that is, studying texts from one's own

distinct perspective). Both are valid parts of a whole Christian reading of OT texts. The latter is more widespread because it seems easier (it does not require knowledge of ancient languages, literature or cultures) and more immediately relevant to Christian life; however, the former is equally necessary if God's people are to respect and properly to understand the entire scriptures and the course of progressive revelation in salvation history, leading up to our own still imperfect understanding (1 Cor 13:8-12).[4]

The different approaches of biblicists and theologians may be illustrated in an example from the last *TCNN Research Bulletin*. Theologians (especially Reformed theologians) often make comments such as:

> Christ is the only one who can keep God's covenant perfectly. ... Christ alone could fulfil the "original great commission" [Gen 1:28//Matt 28:19-20] as God intended it.[5]

But a biblicist cannot so simply bring together covenant and Genesis 1, because Genesis 1 is a mythological[6] text from oral prehistory, whilst the concept of covenant is most characteristic of monarchic Deuteronomic theology from the seventh century BC. To discuss them in relation to each other is like linking together traditional harvest dances and email in a discussion of modem Berom culture—they are both parts of the whole, but with completely different origins, history, social significance and cultural associations.

Furthermore, if we look at the text of Gen l:28 itself, we read, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over ... every living thing... .'. To describe Jesus as the only person who could fulfil this text as God intended it sounds, to a biblicist, frankly absurd! The text is about physical biological reproduction and the relationship between humans and animals; meanwhile, Jesus never married and had relatively little to say about animals. The most a biblicist could do is, within the Biblical Studies sub-discipline of 'tradition history', to consider whether, for example, Genesis 1:28 influenced the description of the Suffering Servant as, against all odds, 'fathering children' (Isa 53:8-10) and whether either of these texts influenced the later discussion of the place of eunuchs in the new covenant (Isa 56:4-5) and what is the relevance of the fact that Isaiah 53:7-8 is the very text discussed by Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. This kind of study can be interesting in terms of the history of ideas, but it tells us nothing about the original meaning of Genesis l:28, and probably has little to do with Matthew 28:19-20.

Finally, a more linguistically-minded biblicist might note that the imperative verb forms in Genesis 1:28 are in fact best understood as a *permissive* speech act ('Go ahead and …'), not an *obligative* one (just as when I say 'Come in!' when someone knocks at my door), and that they function as a *blessing*, not a *command* (in contrast to, say, Matt 28:19-20).

Thus text-type, context, strands of tradition and linguistic analysis all make Helleman's point meaningless to a biblicist; but to the theologians on the editorial board of the *TCNN Research Bulletin*, it was valid. Two perspectives on the same texts can both be valid if those studying them are looking from different places.

2. Traditions

OT exegesis depends on the study of biblical and other Semitic languages, comparative literature and archaeology, and cultural, social, political and religious history of the Ancient Near East. But a number of key sub-disciplines relate to the chronological development of the text itself—from distinct sources (source criticism) into a new oral or written text (literary and form criticism), through stages of editing (redaction criticism) and tribal transmission (textual criticism), and on into its influence on other texts (tradition history) and ways in which it was

later read (history of interpretation). All of these involve linear development *forwards*—earlier stages influence later stages but not *vice versa*.

Thus Isaiah 7:14 is first studied in its own cultural context, starting with Ancient Near Eastern parallels (*e.g.* the Canaanite story about a virgin giving birth in the Ugaritic text UG77) and biblical traditions of messianic hope (starting at least as early as Gen 49:10; Num 24:17 and 1 Sam 2:10), semantic analysis of the term עלמה, *almah*, 'young woman or virgin' and its ANE cognates, and considering the political context of the Syro-Ephraimite war, then seeking literary clues as to the referents of the terms עלמה, *almah*, and עמנו אל, *Immanuel*. The results of this study can then be used to trace the 'Tradition History' of the Immanuel idea, through the Septuagint, where עלמה, *almah*, is mistranslated παρθενος, *parthenos*, 'virgin',[7] pagan Greco-Roman sources (*e.g.* Virgil's Eclogue iv), intertestamental texts such as the Deuterocanonical books (the 'Apocrypha') and the Dead Sea Scrolls, the early Gospel reconstruction known as 'Q' from which Matthew and Luke got the idea of Jesus's virgin birth, and on up to the writer of Matthew 1:23 (there is no biblical reason to believe his name was Matthew), who applied Isaiah 7:14 to Jesus.[8] By doing this, we learn to appreciate the chronological layering of the biblical text, and to see the many accidents and misunderstandings which God has used to lead his people through different cultures, times and places into understanding Jesus. Thus the recognition of Jesus as the ultimate Immanuel is a bit like the development of 'Post-It' notes from a flawed formula for super-glue—fortuitous accident—serendipitous.

The Law too must be viewed in tradition-historical terms—as one stage in the development of a moral code fitting for God's people. Most Christians read it as a mixture of obsolete dispensation-bound ritual laws alongside transcendent moral laws which apply to Christians today, but this is to ignore Jesus's insistence that not even *parts of letters* of the Law would become irrelevant until the end (Matt 5:18). To see it in a tradition-historical perspective does it more justice, by allowing it to stand for its time and original intention, whilst recognising that our understanding of it has been significantly altered by the prophets and then Jesus and Paul. Thus the Ten Commandments simply do not apply to Christian Gentiles like me, since they were given to non-Christian Jews (biblicists often end up antinomian in this way); instead, we live under a much greater law—the law of the Spirit (Matt 5:20; Rom 8:2).

But NT writers were not just the victims of historical developments in religious traditions—they were also propagandists. They chose the OT texts that they referred to for a purpose—most often, to prove to Jews that Jesus was the Messiah (see *e.g.* Matthew, Romans, Hebrews; Matt 5:17; l3:16-l7//Luke 10:23-24; Luke 24:25-27; 44; Jhn 20:31; Acts 3:24; 26:22; Rom 1:1-2; Heb 1:1-2; 11:10-16, 39; 12:22; 1 Pet 1:10-l2). This is a very interesting field of study for NT scholars—why and how NT writers sought proof texts for Christ's Messiahship, and what this tells us about the NT writers themselves and their own messianic expectations. The tradition of prooftexting was continued for the same propaganda purpose by the Church Fathers, as long as Christianity had close contact with Jews. And it is continued today in the long lists of 'OT Prophecies fulfilled in Christ' that can be found in most Study Bibles.[9] However, most Christians today have little need for apologetic arguments designed to persuade Jews of Jesus's messiahship, and so, though these lists of proof-texts may still have value in strengthening the faith of Christians, they are most often misused—as in the Genesis 1:28 discussion cited above—as a kind of key to the 'real' meaning of OT texts, which, as we have seen, they are absolutely *not*! After all, if the NT interpretation is in fact the true original meaning, why is it that most first-century Jews understood things differently (*e.g.* Mark 8:31-33; Luke 9:54; Jhn 6:14-15; 7:3-6; Acts 1:6) and so conflicted with or completely rejected Jesus? The reality is,

God's Messiah on the cross was a totally baffling fulfillment of the prophetic predictions and not something any literalist could have figured out.[10]

So a Christian biblicist simply does not go 'looking for' Christ in the OT. 'Christ', in the sense of 'the Messiah as he is understood to be in the person of Jesus in the (Greek) NT', is of course not present in the OT! At most, a biblicist can note points at which OT texts start or redirect traditions which were later (many hundreds of years later!) taken up by NT writers to argue for Jesus being the Christ. Far from being dry history, this is exciting work—such study reveals Jesus as the ultimate fulfilment of over 1,000 years worth of traditions and hopes—the ultimate 'Anointed One', the 'fulfilment of the Law' and the 'climax of the covenant',[11] the 'peak' of the story or the *dénouement* of the plot.

3. Types

Thus Biblical scholarship cannot show us Christ in the OT. But reasoned scholarship is not the only way in which we come to know things (epistemology). The early church used a range of different methods in biblical interpretation concurrently:

> … they seem to make no sharp distinctions between what we would call historico-grammatical exegesis, illustration by way of analogy, midrash exegesis, pesher interpretation, allegorical treatment, and interpretation on a 'corporate solidarity' understanding of people and events in redemptive history.[12]

As time went on, Christians did distinguish between the 'letter' (the *historia*, or narrative meaning) and the 'spirit' (the *theoria*, or spiritual meaning). In the 5th century, John Cassian made a distinction between the 'four senses' which was to last throughout the Middle Ages in Europe. It was later put in a small rhyme to aid memorisation:

Littera gesta docet;	—the literal, narrative or historical sense ('which 'teaches what happened')
quid credas *allegoria*;	—the allegorical or Christological sense ('what you believe')
moralis quid agas;	—the moral, tropological or anthropological sense ('what you do')
quo tendas *anagogia*.	—the anagogical, mystical or eschatological sense ('what you're heading towards')

In the 13th century, Thomas Aquinas said that only the first of these, which expresses the author's intention, is appropriate for scientific study, and so we too restrict our academic Biblical Studies to the literal meaning, emically understood.

The other methods we have mentioned here are all *figurative* meanings, where the literal meaning is *transferred* as a *metaphor* for something else. And whatever kinds of analogies are made, such 'prooftexting' is legitimate so-long as I do not claim that this is scholarship, I admit that it is subjective (my understanding of the Holy Spirit's interpretation of the text to me), and I use it to make or illustrate a point which is in keeping with other Christian teaching.[13] One such method is typology, which identifies one or more past or present experienced realities as representing a present or future greater and perhaps only conceptual reality.[14] Thus

- In Genesis 3:15b (discussed above), the snake is Satan and the woman's seed is Jesus (Rev 22:14)
- Hagar is 'Mount Sinai' and represents Jerusalem (Gal 4:21-31)
- In Num 21, Moses's bronze snake is Jesus (John 3:14)
- Crossing the Red Sea is baptism and water from the rock is provision through Christ (1 Cor l0:l-4)

- Jesus is Isaac (Matt 3:17;17:5 pars.; see below)
- Jesus is Hezekiah (Matt 1:23)
- Jesus is Cyrus (Matt 12:15-21)

It may even be acceptable for a preacher to see new analogies:

- God provides a ram in place of Isaac (Gen 22) just as he provides Jesus in place of us.
- Abraham sends his servant to get a bride for Isaac (Gen 24) just as God sends the Spirit to get the church for Christ.
- Crossing the Jordan into the Promised Land prefigures dying and going to heaven ('When I tread the verge of Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside', as the hymn puts it), contrary to Pentecostal theologies which see us as already in the Promised Land, driving out the nations.
- . The four living creatures or cherubim (man, lion, ox, eagle; Ezek l:10; Rev 4:7) prefigure the four canonical evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John).

But often this use of the OT goes too far for modern tastes, as frequently in interpretations of the Song of Songs,[15] and in the tendency to see Jesus himself as present with Abraham before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen l8) or with the three young men in the fiery furnace (Dan 3) or in almost any other angelic visitation. Such readings fail to give sufficient credit to an original, literal sense, just as do most readers of apocalyptic literature when they encounter expressions such as 'the abomination that causes desolation' (Daniel, clearly referring to Antiochus Epiphanes) and 666 (Revelation, quite clearly referring in Hebrew numerology to נרון קסר, νερων καισαρ, Emperor Nero).[16]

The Messiah is known above all by three generic types—Prophet, Priest and King, corresponding to the tripartite governmental structure of Ancient Israel. But each of these types undergoes a complex development of traditions within the OT texts. The Priest in particular, though perhaps most central to a Gentile Christian understanding of Christ, involves multiple types—the Levite Aaron, the Davidic priest-king (Psa 110), .the pagan Melchizedek, King of Salem/Sodom (Gen 14; Psa 110, Hebrews), *etc*. And even the Aaronic tradition itself undergoes major breaks, when Eli loses the priesthood to the non-Levite Samuel (1.Sam 2:27-36), and at the destruction of the Temple, which changed priests from sacrificers into teachers (Neh 8). We therefore focus here on just the King and the prophet.-But election functions at a deeper level in Israelite history than any of these three categories, so we then go on to look at Jesus's genealogy and birth narrative.

4. King and Messiah

The messianic tradition begins with the idealisation of the king in Jerusalem, and the Royal Psalms (Psa 2; 18; 20; 21; 45; 72; 89; 101; 110; 132; 144) and Zion theology which developed from it. And it is reflected in several of the prophecies in the Pentateuch which are cited in the NT as predicting Christ, but in fact referred in the first instance to David (Gen 49:10; Num 24:l7). The kingship in Israel had had ambivalent beginnings to say the least in the protracted fiasco over Saul's appointment (l Sam 8-12). But in David (1011-971BC[17]), the king became, like the kings of other nations, an ideal 'type' of the nation's god's 'indirect rule'-his 'vice-regent'.[18] Psalm 2 is probably a product of this period, with its *Sitz im Leben* as part of a coronation festival for the Davidic dynasty in Jerusalem; Psalm 72 is similar but perhaps later. But faced with the experience of a series of disappointing real kings, exile of the northern kingdom (722BC) and then the fall of Jerusalem (586BC), Psalm 89 laments God's neglect of his covenant with the king. And the further the ideal Davidic kingship in Jerusalem receded into *past* memory, the further hope for a restoration receded into the *future*, and the national ideal (Psa 101) became an eschatological hope for the Messiah in Zion (Psa 110).[19] In other

words, many of these texts with a real kingship background ('Royal Psalms') had already necessarily been reinterpreted as eschatological ('Messianic Psalms') by the time the Psalter was taking shape.[20] This same dynamic is reflected in proto-Isaiah, where secular coronation language known from Egyptian sources is used of the Messiah (Isa 9:2-7, esp. v. 6b).[21]

By contrast with the Psalms, much of the OT is strangely ambivalent about the kingship.[22] Deuteronomy (*c*. 622BC) presents a system which is 'potentially kingless',[23] but in which any king (Deu 17:14-20) is to be chosen by God himself (like the place of worship), and characterised as 'one of your brothers' (Deu l7:15) rather than 'God's son' (Psa 2). And the Deuteronomistic History (Deuteronomy-2 Kings) amply demonstrates the non-ideal nature of the kingship as an institution, with the notable exception of 2 Samuel 7 // 1 Chronicles 17, which 'remains … for messianic appropriation'[24] (in Psa 89; 132; John 7:42; Heb 1:5).

By the time of deutero-Isaiah (?550-538BC), the Suffering Servant motif had come into the Messiah concept. As a sufferer, the Servant is best understood as the prophet himself (as suggested by the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:34) and in line with the Jeremiah tradition (626-587BC), or as the suffering nation as a whole or its faithful remnant (see below; already anticipated perhaps in their ancestor Jacob's limp, Gen32:31-32). But as a restorer, the Servant is best understood as King Cyrus of Persia (550-530),[25] who is called YHWH's 'shepherd', the rebuilder of Jerusalem and the Temple and even YHWH's 'Messiah' (Isa 44:28-45:1). If this is right, we must understand Jesus as typologically prefigured by Cyrus—a pagan king! Jesus said, '[John the Baptist] is Elijah who was to come' (Matt 11:14), but can we imagine him saying, 'I am Cyrus who was to come'?!

5. Adopted Son and adopted Nation

A further important development can be seen in the way the Messiah concept increasingly gained a 'corporate solidarity'[26] or 'incorporative'[27] sense. Tom Wright argues on the basis of the Hebrew idiom 'to have a hand/portion in' a king (2 Sam19 40-43; 20:l; 1 Kgs 12:16) 'that the king and the people are bound together in such a way that what is true of the one is true in principle of the other',[28] and that the king thus represents the people. After the fall of Jerusalem, when there was no longer a king to stand as YHWH's covenant partner, it is natural that the focus shifted to the nation as a whole.

This perspective has resulted in the Suffering Servant being taken to represent the whole nation of Israel (Isa 49:3; the usual Jewish understanding) or more specifically the loyal 'servants of YHWH' (Isa 54:17; 65:13-16). And it may even be the background to the NT expression 'in Christ' where

> Paul uses 'Christ' here as a shorthand way of referring to that unity and completeness, and mutual participation, which belongs to the church that is found 'in Christ' ,that is, in fact, the people of the Messiah.[29]

This is of course not to argue that all or messianic texts—or even the Servant Songs themselves—are necessarily to be read as referring to a corporate messianic Israel, nor that they are fulfilled by the church. Far from it—Paul actually argues in 1 Corinthians15 and elsewhere that 'the role traditionally assigned to Israel had devolved on to Jesus Christ'.[30] But it does mean that integral to Jesus's messiahship is the formation of a community which lives 'in' him, and which participates in his own messianic experience of '[drawing] Israel's climactic destiny on to himself'.[31] This is an important issue of continuity:

> Jesus is corporate Israel. All that Israel was intended to be was fulfilled by the One. He is also the One into whom the many are incorporated. ... Those who believe and are built on Jesus inherit all the lofty titles of God's Israel … It's not *as if* they are Israel,

but they *are* God's Israel. ... The calling of the many (Israel) is fulfilled in the One (Christ), and the calling of the One (Christ) is effected through the many (Christ's church). Israel, Christ, and the church form only a single people of God.[32]

A distinct OT idiom ties together these strands of royal covenant in Psalms , national covenant in Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic History, and an incorporative understanding of Messiahship. And it appears at a number of key points in the NT too, and has been foundational to one major tradition in Christology. It is the adoption formula 'He will be my son and I will be his father' and its variants.

In Psalm 2:7, YHWH is reported as saying to the king, 'You are my son, today I have begotten you'. Of course, such a translation is literal nonsense—no one under normal circumstances can know that he has just begotten a child and then speak to it (babies in the womb develop the ability to hear around the twenty-eighth week, and to understand English—especially the word 'beget'—rather a long time after that!). In fact, היום, *hayyom*, 'today', is a standard form for adverbial marking of a performative utterance, and together with the first-person *qatal* verb form in its performative function, the text is clearly in fact an adoption formula, meaning, 'I hereby adopt you'. Similar expressions appear in Psa 89:26 '"You are my father" ... I will make him the firstborn' and 2 Sam 7:14 // 1 Chron 17:13 'I will be a father to him [Solomon], and he will be a son to me' (compare also 110:1). All of these reflect a tradition of the King's ritual 'adoption' by God as his firstborn son (that is, his vice-regent) at his coronation and perhaps at an annual covenant renewal festival every autumn thereafter. And in order to understand this tradition well, it should be borne in mind that a king's son would typically ascend to the throne upon the death of his natural father; this tradition has him at the same time adopted by a new father—becoming 'the son of God'—and taking on the authority which his human father had carried. Such an understanding of kingship was widespread throughout the Ancient Near East—it was not distinctive of Israel.

It is likely, though not certain, that the terminology of the Servant Songs is influenced by 'royal son' language. The substitution of the term 'servant' in place of-son may indicate deutero-Isaiah's greater concern with the nation than with the specific Davidic heir, who had been so prominent in proto-Isaiah (Isa 9:2-7; 11:1-9).

The derivative expression, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.' is used at Jesus's baptism (Matt 3:17 // Mark 1:11 // Luke 3:22) and transfiguration (Matt 11:5 // Mark 9:7 // Luke 9.35 // 2Pet l:17), and alludes both to Gen 22:2 'Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love ...', thus marking Christ intertextually as the anti-type of Isaac, *and* to Isa 42:1 'my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased' (the start of the first Servant Song), marking Jesus as the suffering servant (see also Matt 12:18-21 citing Isa 42:1-4). The link with Psa 2:7 was to be of great theological importance in the second century AD with the rise of an adoptionist Christology which saw Jesus as fully human and taking on divine nature only at his baptism. In fact the adoptionist view may be reflected in the quotation of Psa 2:7 'today I have begotten you' in the earliest manuscripts of Luke 3:22 before it was expunged (and the verse harmonised with the Matthew and Mark parallels) by a later orthodox scribe.[33] If Jesus's baptism and transfiguration were 'rites of passage' at which his sonship was affirmed, we see something similar again at his ascension—when he inherited his father's name (Phil 2:6-11—the 'name above all names' is of course YHWH).

The incorporative parallel appears in the form 'They will be my people and I will be their God'. The metaphorical use of 'son' for 'people' in Exodus 4:22-3 ('Israel is my firstborn son ... Let my son go.') forms the basis for the tenth plague, so it seems to me questionable whether this national adoption formula is in fact related in origin to the royal adoption formula discussed

above—they are perhaps to be seen as two intertwined strands of a cord of tradition. The national adoption formula is then integral to the Mosaic covenant (Exo 6:7; Lev 26:12; Deu 29:13). It is quoted in two Psalms (Psa 95:7; 100:3) and extensively in Jeremiah (626-587BC; Jer 7:23; 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 31:1, 33; 32:38), a contemporary of Josiah's reform (62lBC, 2 Kgs 22-23 // 2 Chron 34-35) and of the Deuteronomistic School which, as we have seen above, was rather ambivalent about the kingship. Finally, Ezekiel also uses the formula extensively (Ezk 11:20; 14:11; 34:30; 36:28; 37:23, 27), in line with his greater interest in God's own presence among his people than in his representation by a Davidic king.

The complementary relationship between these two adoption formulae—and thus also between the individual royal covenant and the incorporative national covenant—is shown in two NT texts where they occur together:

> I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ... and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters. (2 Cor 6:16-l8, explicitly citing OT texts)

> Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; … He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son. (Rev 2l:3-7).

It should be noticed that in both of these cases, the 'father-son' formula is used to refer, not to a ruling representative (whether king or Messiah), but to individual members of the 'God-people' covenant, that is, to members of the messianic community.

6. Prophet

The role of the prophet (in person, not just his utterances) in messianic expectation is rarely given much consideration. However the history of Israel's prophetic traditions has much to tell us about what the Messiah's reign was expected to look like. Though various OT figures are described as 'prophet', the true prophet tradition begins with Samuel and ends with Malachi (486-450BC) and deutero-Zechariah (320BC); these are understood in the Hebrew canon as the 'former' prophets, who did not write canonical books but whose ministry is described in Joshua-2 Kings, and the 'latter' prophets, who wrote the canonical books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve Prophets (Amos-Malachi); of course, their periods significantly overlap, and whole chapters of Isaiah and Jeremiah appear in 2 Kings. What should be noted here is that the role of the prophet is integrally connected to that of the king in ancient Israel. Samuel, the last judge and first prophet, anointed the first two kings, Saul and David, and retired from his role as judge once the kingship had been established (1 Sam 12), but not from his role as prophet. The ministries of his successors, Nathan, Gad, Elijah, Elisha, Ahijah, Iddo, Shemaiah, Huldah *etc*. were then integrally tied to the life of the king—many of them were 'court prophets', a professional title (as we can see most clearly from Amos's insistence that he was not one of them—Amos 7:12-14). Soon after the kingship ended with Zedekiah (597 - 587BC), the prophetic ministry too began to wane. This was then the great significance of the appearance of John the Baptist—a prophet had appeared to announce the coming of … the king! And hence Paul's own emphasis on prophecy should be seen in this messianic perspective—where there is a king (Jesus is now exalted—Phil 2:6-11), we should expect to find prophets (Eph 4:8 citing Psa 68:18; 1 Cor 14).[34]

But the Messiah fulfilled some of the prophetic role typologically too. And like most great prophets, this was as much in his actions as in his words. The prototypical prophet was Elijah (hence his appearance together with the lawgiver Moses at the transfiguration), and Malachi 4:5 and intertestamental traditions (e.g. Sir 48) resulted in the frequent (and contradictory!) mention of Elijah with reference to John (Matt 11 14; 17:10-13 // Mark 9:11-3; Luke 1:17;

John 1:21,25) or to Jesus (Matt 16:14; Mark 6:15; 8:28). But what is nowhere spelled out in the NT is the great extent to which Jesus's earthly ministry followed the 'pattern' or 'type' of those of Elijah and Elisha, calling disciples from their work (Elijah in 1 Kgs 19:19-21), receiving provision from women (Elijah's Zarephathite in 1 Kgs 17, Elisha's Shunemite in 2 Kgs 4), multiplying food (Elijah in 1 Kgs 17, Elisha in 2 Kgs 4) for many people (Elisha in 2 Kgs 4), raising a child from the dead (Elijah in 1 Kgs 17, Elisha in 2 Kgs 4), raising others when he himself was dead (Elisha in 2 Kgs 13) and ascending to heaven (Elijah in 2 Kgs 2).[35] Thus there is an analogy between the discipleship relationship we see between Elijah and Elisha, and the typological relationship between them and Jesus; and this is continued in Acts, where Paul models the course of his own life on Jesus's.

7. Jesus's Genealogy and Birth

Having traced traditions and types of the messianic king and the prophet, we have seen the role of the Messiah as much more integrally connected with the life of Israel than could ever be shown by lists of fulfilled messianic prophecies. In the same vein, we now turn to consider his (Matthean) genealogy and the circumstances of his and John's births as demonstrating his election—and in ways much more deeply prophetic than just the miraculous angelic announcements (to Mary, Joseph and shepherds), natural signs (the virgin birth and guiding star) and acclaim by shepherds and astrologers. His election is demonstrated through his fulfilment in himself of the identity of the nation.

Jesus's genealogy in Matthew and his and his forerunner John's birth narratives are marked by five features which firmly situate him within biblical election traditions (especially of the nation as a whole) and set the agenda for his messianic ministry.

Ethnic Impurity appears in the form of two Canaanites (Tamar and Rahab), a Moabitess (Ruth), a possible Hittite (Bathsheba), and the family's escape to Egypt. Thus Jesus is not 'purely' Abrahamic, but has Canaanite and Moabite blood through his forefathers Perez, Boaz and Obed, like also Ishmael and Ephraim (whose mothers Hagar and Asenath were Egyptian).[36] And he has run abroad for help, like his forefathers Abraham (to Egypt in Gen 12, and Philistia in Gen 20), Isaac (to Philistia in Gen 26) and Jacob (to Egypt in Gen 46). In this he fulfils the nation's identity with respect to its ancestor Abraham, the 'wandering Aramaean' (Deu 26:5) and its foundational experience of the exodus ('out of Egypt I have called my son', Matt 2:15 citing Hos 11:1). And this is integral to his Messianic ministry in terms of the inclusion of the Gentiles (Isa 56-66, and already anticipated in the messianic figure of Cyrus in Isa 44:28-45:l), especially the Moabites, who had been most explicitly excluded (Deu 23:3-6), and hence the assertion of YHWH's universal rule.

Immorality appears in the naming of two prostitutes (Tamar and Rahab), a possible seductress (Ruth), and an adulteress (Bathsheba), and then in the potential sex scandal of Mary's pregnancy.[37] Thus Jesus is personally tainted by the suspicion of illegitimacy, like his forefathers Perez and Solomon, and by prostitution, like his forefathers Perez and Boaz and the judge Jephthah. In this he fulfils the nation's identity with respect to the reproach which it had brought on itself through its adultery and idolatry (the two were usually concomitant in the form of cult prostitution) under Hosea, Ezekiel and others. And this is integral to his Messianic ministry in terms of calling in 'sinners' and spending time with Prostitutes.

Childlessness appears in the form of Elizabeth's story and in those of Jesus's forefathers who were the eventual product of childless marriages—Isaac, Jacob, Perez and Obed—as well as Joseph, Samson and Samuel. The Nazirite tradition is clearly closely related to an experience of childlessness in that Samson, Samuel and John the Baptist are the only three named Nazirites in the Bible.[38] In this he fulfils the nation's identity with respect to Abraham, 'by [whose] seed

all the nations of the earth [would] bless themselves' (Gen 22:18) and Sarah's eventual conception of Isaac. It is integral to his Messianic ministry in terms of the inclusion of eunuchs (Isa 56:3-5 cf. Deu 23:1), his defeat of the curse of barrenness on his own life (Isa 53:8-10) and the call to Israel, 'shout for joy, barren one!' (Isa 54:1-10); it may also relate to his inclusion of the healing of sickness (the start of which is symbolised by the childbirth curse in Gen 3:16) in his Messianic ministry in general and his atonement in particular (Matt 8:16-17 citing Isa 53:4; Luke 4:16-21 citing Isa 6l:l-2).

Threat appears in Herod's 'slaughter of the firstborn', corresponding to the threats to the lives of the young Ishmael, Isaac, Moses and Joash. This theme is related to the childlessness theme in Ishmael and Isaac, but also to genocide in Moses and cutting off of the Davidic dynasty in Joash. In this, Jesus enters into the nation's continual struggle for existence in the face of threat from God (Exod 32:10) and man (in exile in Babylon and very poignantly later under Antiochus Epiphanes, 2 Macc 4-7); it has continuing relevance in the light of mediaeval pogroms and the twentieth-century holocaust in Europe. And it is integral to his Messianic ministry in comforting 'Rachel' (Matt 2:18 citing Jer 31:15) and defying death (Isa 53:8-11; Acts 2:24).

Favouritism appears in Jesus's election to ministry ahead of his elder cousin, John, who 'leapt for joy' in his mother's womb at Mary's voice and later described himself as unworthy to untie Jesus's sandals. This is part of a strong biblical election tradition of 'the older serving the younger' and the 'forsaken firstborn', and it appears in Jesus's genealogy in Abel (supplanting Cain), Isaac (supplanting Ishmael), Jacob (supplanting his twin Esau), Judah (supplanting Reuben, Simeon and Levi), Perez (supplanting his twin Zerah), David (supplanting six older brothers) and Solomon (supplanting Amnon, Absalom, Adonija and three others); it also appears in Joseph (supplanting in ministry all his brothers), Ephraim (supplanting his twin Manasseh), Moses (supplanting in ministry Aaron), Gideon and Jephthah (supplanting in ministry unnamed brothers),Samuel (supplanting in ministry Hophni and Phinehas, sons of Eli), Saul (supplanting in ministry unnamed brothers and Joel and Abijah, sons of Samuel) and Shimri (1 Chron 26:10). In this Jesus fulfils the nation's identity with respect to election—the nation too had been chosen purely by God's sovereign choice, not because it had been more numerous than other nations (Deut 7:7). And this is integral to his Messianic ministry in provoking the Jews to jealousy over his choice of the 'younger brother' Gentiles (Rom 11:11-14; 1 Cor 14:21 citing Isa 28:11-12).

Thus these five features of Jesus's genealogy and his and John the Baptist's birth narratives serve to align Jesus with the nation and characterise aspects of his ministry, situating the Messiah and his ministry within the very fabric of election throughout the history of God's people.

8. Conclusion

We have sketched here an emic yet Christian approach to OT texts—trying to allow texts to retain their contextual meaning whilst also being part of a tradition and offering types which lead ultimately to Jesus. This contrasts sharply with a treatment of OT prophecies as a kind of 'Bible Code' which is miraculously resolved in Jesus when we find we have been able to 'tick all the boxes'.[39] We have then applied this approach to four aspects of Jesus's Messiahship—kingship, royal adoption, prophethood and genealogy/birth. Along the way we have touched on many points of specific application, but usually only implicitly. This approach to biblical texts does not lend itself to 'prooftexting' application of biblical texts to our Christian lives. Instead, it invites us to become *part of the story*—to enter into the tradition and live out biblical types. In this sense, I argue, it is not only more scholarly than much Christian use of the OT, but also more Christian—in that it seeks to know and to live out the *spirit* of the Law rather than picking at the letter.

¹ See Boyd, G.A., *God at War: The Bible and spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1997) 73-167.

² See the survey of OT spiritualities in Sheriffs, D., *The Friendship of the Lord: an Old Testament spirituality* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1996).

³ There is a similar story, common in West Africa, about why goats run away from cars but sheep don't—it's because the goat once cheated a taxi-driver out of his fare, but the sheep paid and is still waiting for his change.

⁴ Sheriffs describes this as a 'dichotomy between professional analyst and devout consumer' (*ibid.*, 1); see his methodological discussion, *ibid.*, l-26.

⁵ Helleman, A.A., 'The Original Great Commission and Christ's Great Commission' in *TCNN RB* 45 (2006) 21-37 (32).

⁶ In the literary sense—it is not 'unhistorical', but 'ahistorical'.

⁷ For another mistranslation or scribal error as the basis for NT teaching, see Amos 9:11-12 'Edom' // Acts l5:16-l8 'Adam' and the discussion in Ike, S., *The Messianic promise and the Inclusion of the Gentiles: A Study of Amos 9:11-15 in Acts 15:13-l8* (MTh diss., TCNN, 2006).

⁸ For a good discussion, see Norbon, J.D., *The Identity of Isaiah's Immanuel in Isaiah 7: 14* (MTh diss., TCNN, 2005)

⁹ See *The Full-Life Study Bible*, 893-6 and the diagrams in the *Thompson Chain Reference Bible*.

¹⁰ Kuyvenhoven, A., *The Day of Christ's Return; What the Bible teaches, What you need to know* (Grand Rapids, MI: CRC Publications, 1999) 126.

¹¹ Wright, N.T., *The Climax of the Covenant; Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

¹² Longenecker, R.N., *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 206. See also the survey in Ellis, E.E., *The Old Testament in Early Christianity: Canon and Interpretation in the Light of Modern Research* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1991) 77-121.

¹³ That is, I can teach 'the right doctrine from the wrong texts', to cite the title of a good book on this subject; Beale, G.K. (ed.), *The right Doctrine from the wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books,1994).

¹⁴ In this way, typology seems to me—a non-specialist—to be related to the Platonic doctrine of 'ideas'. Many objects may represent the ultimate idea 'chair', just as many people (Aaron, David, Cyrus) may represent the ultimate idea 'Messiah', but only only one perfectly (Jesus).

¹⁵ e.g. Hudson Taylor, *Union and Communion*.

¹⁶ See the research currently being done on this topic by James Zira (MTh diss., TCNN, f.c.).

¹⁷ Dates given in the following are often debatable, but are cited simply to give a sense of chronology to the discussion.

¹⁸ Other rulers went further and declared themselves to be God incarnate, such as the Egyptian Pharaohs, Antiochus Epiphanes (2 Macc 9:8-12), Herod Agrippa I (Acts l2) and the Roman Caesars.

¹⁹ Grant, J.A., 'The Psalms and the King', in Johnson, P.S. and Firth, D.G., *Interpreting the Psalms* (Leicester: IVP, 2005) 101-18 (108-11), citing Wilson.

²⁰ See the good discussion of the distinction between royal and messianic interpretations in Yilpet, Y.K., 'An Exegetical and Theological Analysis of Psalm 1l0', *TCNN Research Bulletin* 39 (2003) 4-24 (19).

²¹ *The New Jerusalem Bible* (New York *et al.*: Doubleday, 1985) note *in loc*.

²² Grant, *ibid.*, 113-116.

[23] McConville, J.G., *Deuteronomy* (Apollos Old Testament Commentary 5; Leicester: Apollos, 2002) 306.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Other candidates include later pagan rulers such as Darius, and rebuilders of Jerusalem such as Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah (returned 538, 458 and 445BC respectively); Watts, J.D.W., *Isaiah 34-66* (Word Biblical Commentary 25; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987) 115-118.

[26] Longenecker, cited above.

[27] Wright, N.T., *ibid*., 46.

[28] *Ibid*., 46. The origin of this idiom (which Wright does not discuss) of course lies in shared land rights between David and his Judahite clan-brothers.

[29] *Ibid*., 54.

[30] *Ibid*., 26.

[31] *Ibid*., 47.

[32] Kuyvenhoven, A., *ibid*., 108.

[33] Ehrman, B.D., *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 3rd edn. (Oxford: OUP, 2004) 484-5.

[34] This has obvious and serious implications for our modern churches; however, that is beyond the scope of this paper.

[35] Strikingly, when Jesus's disciples wanted to mimic Elijah in calling down fire from heaven, they were told off (Luke 9:52-55).

[36] A shadow of a doubt is cast over even Isaac in the fact that he is conceived just one verse after Abimelech has released Sarah and started having children by his own wives! Canaanite wives are also taken by Abraham (Keturah), Esau, Simeon and Judah; an Egyptian by Ishmael; and a Midianite and a black African by Moses.

[37] Ehrman finds this the best explanation for the naming of the four OT women, because it relates to Mary's own situation unlike the ethnic explanation; *ibid*., 97. However, both explanations have weaknesses. Despite the tempting ambiguity of Ruth's lying at Boaz's 'foot area' ('foot' is a common OT euphemism for sexual parts), Ruth is roundly praised as morally good (Rut 3:11; 4:15). And Bathsheba's Hittite ethnicity, though- not in fact belied by her name (surprisingly, all Hittites named in the OT have Hebrew names), is called into question by 2 Sa 1l:3; 23:34.

[38] This should be seen in the light of African traditions of giving a child a 'shrine' or 'fetish' name if it has come in response to a particular sacrifice or prayer.

[39] Compare approaches to yet-unfulfilled NT prophecies: 'Many wise Bible scholars, such as John Calvin and Martin Luther, have never written a commentary on [Revelation]. But many unwise people explain it as if they have next week's answer to this week's crossword puzzle.' (Kuyvenhoven, A., *ibid.*, 6).