THE MINOR PROPHETS
IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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Chapter 8

THE MINOR PROPHETS IN JAMES, 1 & 2 PETER AND JUDE

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Introduction

The New Testament letters of James, Peter and Jude are steeped in the Scripture and traditions of Second Temple Judaism. James, Peter and Jude each presents himself as standing in the prophetic line of this tradition by referring to himself, sometimes along with other descriptors, as a 'servant of Jesus Christ' (δούλος Ἱησοῦ Χριστοῦ; Jas 1.1, 2 Pet. 1.1, Jude 1.1). 1 This designation would no doubt have been understood by the original readers of these letters as a reference to those who enforced God's covenant as found in the prophetic texts of the Jewish Scriptures where, beginning with Moses as founding mediator of Israel's covenant with Yahweh, the prophets who enforced this covenant were referred to as 'servants of God/the LORD' (e.g. Amos 3.7; Zech. 1.6; Mal. 3.24 [4.4]; possibly Jonah 1.9). Therefore the continuation of this designation in New Testament epistles may be a convention that would have invoked the prophetic tradition as a contextual background for construing the author's message.

Of the many ways James, Peter and Jude could have introduced themselves in these epistles, it is significant that after identifying themselves as a 'servant of Jesus Christ' they then include language, themes, motifs and images from the Old Testament prophets as they instruct, rebuke and warn their Christian readers about life under the new covenant established by Jesus Christ. The letters of James, 2 Peter and Jude ring with the prophetic voices of Yahweh's previous servants who brought words of both judgement and hope to God's people. In contrast to James, 2 Peter and Jude, the author of 1 Peter introduces himself not as a servant of Jesus Christ but as an 'apostle' of Jesus Christ.

1. The question of pseudopigraphal authorship lies beyond the scope of this essay. Suffice it to say that as these letters stand they are written from James, Peter and Jude and were therefore intended to be read in light of the knowledge of those historical figures. For that reason these authors will be referred to by their traditional names throughout this work.
(1 Pet. 1.1) and the letter lacks the prophetic tone, language and images of judgement that characterize James, 2 Peter and Jude, while instead offering apostolic encouragement and instruction for its readers as they live in a society hostile to the Christian message and values. In other words, James, 2 Peter and Jude are concerned with confronting issues within the Christian community as if they were a reconstituted Israel; 1 Peter is concerned with the issue of how Christ’s covenant community relates to society.

A Brief Word on Methodology

It is clear that James, Peter and Jude appropriate themes, motifs, images and language that are found in the prophetic genres of the Old Testament in general and the Minor Prophets in particular. Although the Book of the Twelve existed in both its Hebrew and Greek forms at the time these epistles were written, it is difficult to conclude with any certainty that the authors of these epistles used the text of the Twelve, even where an allusion seems obvious, such as the reference to ‘my people’ in 1 Pet. 2.10 (see discussion below).

The use of the text of the Old Testament in the New (as opposed to the use of its concepts, themes, theology, etc.) involves discerning distinctive verbal parallels defined as ‘the occurrence of two or more passages of distinctive content, ranging in length from a few significant words to several sentences, which display identical or minimally divergent wording’.2 In James, 1 & 2 Peter and Jude there are no verbal parallels with the text of the Minor Prophets that are long enough to warrant the designation of quotation, though other books of the Old Testament, such as Isaiah and Psalms, are clearly quoted. The parallels of James, 1 & 2 Peter and Jude with the text of the Twelve are such that in a similar study Helmut Utschaschneider recently concluded ‘that most (if not all) short citations are aphorisms that have their roots beyond their respective literary references, in the oral tradition and in the general knowledge of the time, and are not bound to the written tradition’.3 Even those parallels that may seem rather striking at first glance may not be a deliberate parallel to the text of the Minor Prophets for there are several ways of explaining such brief parallels.


Nevertheless, if it can be shown on other grounds that a New Testament writer is using the Greek version of the Old Testament and if a number of distinctive Greek words are found together in near proximity in the same or similar contexts in both a New Testament passage and the Greek version of a passage in the Old Testament, then the probability of a deliberate allusion increases. If the New Testament writer is clearly citing from the Hebrew Scriptures, then the New Testament use of the Old must take into consideration a more complex study of the lexical equivalents between the Hebrew and the conventions and traditions of Greek translation of the Scripture.

The Minor Prophets in James

Introduction

Of the Twelve, Amos is often recognized as having the greatest influence on James, who has even been called ‘the Amos of the new covenant’.4 Although all the prophetic books bring a message of judgement, hope, and a call for repentance, the Twelve speak primarily a message that God’s people are covenant violators who have become morally and spiritually as bad as the surrounding pagan nations. The Twelve acknowledge that the chosen status of Judah and Israel will not protect them from God’s judgement when they presume upon their relationship with God and violate the covenant. Analogously, James wants his Christian readers to recognize that their faith in Jesus Christ does not give licence to live like pagans, but that the moral and spiritual demands represented in God’s covenant with ancient Israel are still his standard for faithful Christian living.

Textual Affinity

As D. A. Carson observes, almost all quotations and allusions to the Old Testament in James align with the LXX.5 For instance, Jas 2.23 quotes the text of Gen. 15.6 LXX almost exactly, with only small syntactical and morphological differences (a postpositive εκ instead of κατί and οὖς instead of εἰς). In comparison, the Hebrew text does not include the proper name and the verb translated ‘reckoned’ is in active


James's quotation of Prov. 3.34 in 4.6 also clearly follows the LXX text, 'The Lord resists the arrogant, but he gives grace to the humble' (NEWT), which is very different from the MT's reading, 'He mocks proud mockers but shows favor to the humble and oppressed'.

To these two clear examples could also be added Lev. 19.18 in Jas 2.8, the order of the commandments mentioned in Jas 2.11, and the allusion to Jer. 12.3 in Jas 5.5 which also indicate use of the Greek Old Testament. If the traditional ascription of authorship is taken seriously, this pervasive use of the Greek Jewish Scriptures in an epistle written by the leader of the church in Jerusalem to Jewish Christians adds further evidence to the extent the Greek language in the Roman period was used in Palestine, even beyond the Galilee.

**Quotations from the Twelve**

The question asked in Jas 3.13, 'Who is wise [τὸ σοφὸς] and understanding [ἐπιστήμων] among you?' is the closest James comes to quoting the Twelve, echoing the final verse of Hos. 14.10 (ET 14.9), which in summary of the prophet's entire message asks, 'Who is wise [τὶς σοφὸς] and will understand [ἐπιστήμη] these things, or prudent [ἐπιστήμων] and will comprehend [ἐπιστήμησις] them?' (NEWT). As a covenant enforcer, Hosea indicts both Judea and Israel for being unfaithful to their covenant with the Lord. With this question Hosea challenges his audience to return to covenant obedience of the Lord's statutes and rules, an obedience which in Deut. 4.6 LXX would earn Israel the description as a wise [τὸ σοφὸς] and understanding [ἐπιστήμων] nation.

James may be alluding to Deut. 4.6 directly, because the language of 'a wise and understanding [ποιήσει καὶ ἐπιστήμων] people' matches exactly the predicate adjectives of Jas 3.13. On the other hand, James' phrase and the challenge to his audience as a rhetorical question, matching the form of Hos. 14.10. Furthermore, an important allusion to Hosea tilts toward the conclusion that if James has Deut. 4.6 in mind, he is thinking of it as mediated through the message of Hosea.

**Allusions to the Twelve**

Following upon the echo of Hosea in Jas 3.13, James uses a word so striking that it should be considered an allusion to Hosea, even though one word is usually insufficient to constitute an allusion. In Jas 4.4,

introducing the most inductive part of the letter, James exhales using a feminine plural vocative, 'Adammites! [ἡμῶν ἄδαμ] Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God' (modified NRSV). 8 James has already mentioned in 2.21-23 the friendship of Abraham 'our father' with God. Conversely, James accuses those who are friends with the world to be enemies of God and 'adulatorics'.

The textual variant in Jas 4.4 that adds the masculine form, 'adulatorers and [τῶν ἀδαμ] adulatoritics' is certainly not original, for as Metzger explains, scribes were likely puzzled why James mentions only women in a moral failing that by definition involved both sexes and 'considered it right to add a reference to men as well'. Moreover, the shorter reading of the feminine plural alone is strongly attested by both Alexandrian and Western witnesses.

Perhaps for the same reason, virtually every major English translation except the NASB and ASV obscures this significant allusion to Hosea by translating it either as a generic masculine, 'Adulatorers' (NRSV, NLT) or as, 'You adulterous people' (TNIV, NIV, ESV). The KJV and NKJV join some of the ancient scribes who further confuse the allusion by adding the masculine form to the feminine, 'Adulatorers and adulteresses'! Such a translation leads the reader's mind in too literal a direction, for although marital unfaithfulness is one expression of spiritual unfaithfulness, this feminine vocative invokes the distinctive metaphor that describes the covenant relationship between God and his people. When viewed in light of the Greek version of Hosea, its use in James becomes powerfully clear.

Second only to Jonah in the belly of the whale, Hosea is probably the best known of the Twelve because of his scandalous marriage to Gomer, who in Hos. 3.1 LXX, is referred to with the feminine noun ἑκάστη ("one each"). The substantive ἑκάστη or its cognate verb (ἐκάστωσις) appear several other times in the Greek Hosea (2.4; 4.2, 13, 14; 7.4) along with occurrences of synonymous or closely related words to communicate by analogy the violation of the covenant with God. Furthermore, the divided person (δύο μητρικές; Jas 1.8; 4.8) who wants to be both a friend of the world and of God echoes Hos. 10.2 LXX, which speaks of the heart divided by the good things in the land, sadly fulfilling the prediction of covenant breaking in Deut. 8.11-20.

Though the form ἑκάστη appears several times in the Greek Old Testament (Prov. 18.22; 30.20; Hos. 3.1; Mal. 3.5; Ezek. 16.38; 23.45 [2x]), only in Hos. 3.1, Mal. 3.5 and Ezek. 23.45 it is used as a label for God's people who have broken the covenant. Distinctive to the Twelve, in

8. The NRSV will be used throughout unless otherwise noted.

Mal. 3.5 LXX the feminine plural accusative ‘adulteresses’ (μοιχοαδισκοι) occurs where the Hebrew text has a masculine plural participle צענוד (‘adulterers’):

And I will draw near to you in judgement. I will be a swift witness against the sorceresses and against the adulteresses and against those who swear by my name falsely and against those who defraud the hired worker of his wages and those who oppress the widow and those who buffet orphans and those who turn aside justice from the gate and those who do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts. (Mal. 3.5; emphasis added, slightly modified NETS)

Clearly the Greek translator of Malachi, the last book of the Twelve, is interpreting 3.5 in the light of Hosea’s use of the adulteress imagery to introduce the theme of covenant unfaithfulness, forming a type of inclusio. Hosea always stands first in the corpus of the Twelve and Malachi last, even though the sequence of the intervening books varies among ancient witnesses.10 This interpretive unity of the Greek Minor Prophets is picked up in the New Testament.

By echoing Hosea’s closing verse (Hos. 14.10) in his rhetorical question in Jas 3.13, James brings Hosea’s call to covenant obedience into view for his Christian readers. By referring to world-friendly Christians as ‘adulteresses’, James accuses them of the same kind of unfaithfulness to the new covenant in Christ as condemned by the Twelve.11 But why James is using the Greek Scriptures, this striking vocative also brings into view Mal. 3.5 LXX which includes not only the reference to adulteresses but also to some of the same ethical issues and even the language found also in James, as highlighted in italics above. Echoing Mal. 3.5 LXX, James twice mentions the Lord drawing near (4.8; 5.8) with a call to strengthen and purify hearts. Jas 5.12 prohibits swearing (ζυγεύονται) lest it bring condemnation as in Mal. 3.5. The defrauded wages of hired workers (άργυροι) mentioned in Mal. 3.5 cry out in Jas 5.4. For James, religion that God calls pure and undefiled is to care for the widow and orphan, a failure condemned in Mal. 3.5. Furthermore, the thought in the very next verse, Mal. 3.6, about God’s unchanging nature is also found in Jas 1.17. The concern for the poor that James shares with Amos has apparently caused some interpreters to overlook James’s allusions to the ‘bookends’ of the Twelve: Hosea and Malachi.

Furthermore, a comparison of twenty-six distinctive words from the epistle of James also found in the Twelve in the same or similar context shows that James shares language with every book of the Greek Minor Prophets except Nahum.12 The distinctive vocabulary of James clusters most frequently with Hosea, followed, interestingly, by Zechariah, with Amos ranking third. Hosea and Amos also share much of the same language, though with distinctive differences in their purposes. Writing about the redactions made to Hosea and Amos when they were brought together into one corpus, Jeremias observes, ‘The influence of the book of Hosea can be observed in nearly every chapter [of Amos].’13 Therefore, it may be Hosea behind the language of James where the influence of Amos has previously been seen. Niehuis, for instance, associates Jas 3.18 (‘a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace’ with Amos 6.12, presumably because both include the words ‘fruit of righteousness’ (κεφαλὴς δικαιοσύνης)).14 However, the command in Hos. 10.12, ‘Sow for yourselves unto righteousness [σπειρέτες ἐντούτοις γίς δικαιοσύνην];’ ‘reap unto the fruit of life’ (NETS) better fits the reference in James.

Conclusion

The teaching of James is strongly influenced by the message of the Twelve, especially by Hosea, Amos and Malachi. The first book of the Twelve, Hosea, challenges God’s people to return to covenant faithfulness by asking, ‘who is wise and will understand these things, or prudent and will comprehend them? For the ways of the Lord are upright, and the just will walk in them, but the impious will be weak in them’ (Hos. 14.10 NETS; ET 14.9). Jas 3.13 asks the same question, ‘who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom’. This may suggest that the well-recognized wisdom motif in James is mediated more through the prophetic message of the Greek Old Testament than through the wisdom literature of Second Temple Judaism. God’s wisdom (Jas 3.13) makes peacemakers (Jas 3.17) in a community where fighting and quarrelling (Jas 4.1) come from those who want more than they have (Jas 4.2) and


11. This striking allusion to the Twelve should therefore inform exegesis of the much-debated Jas 4.5, and its Old Testament background should be considered from the Greek, not the Hebrew, where the verb translated ‘yearn (jealously)’ (ἐπιθυμῶν) is found with God as the subject in Deut. 32.11 and Jer. 13.14.

12. Unfortunately, space constraints here prevent a complete listing of these words and citations.


are drawn to spiritual adultery by becoming friends with the world to get it (Jas 4:4). Some will even forget God in their quest for the wealth that comes from being friends with the world (Jas 4:13-17; cf. Hos. 13:6) and be driven even to the dishonest gain of exploiting and oppressing others, bringing themselves to a miserable end under God's judgement (Jas 5.1-6).

James views the moral and ethical demands of God's covenant as transposed by Jesus Christ. It is well recognized that James echoes much of Jesus' teaching from the synoptic tradition, especially the Sermon on the Mount, a teaching that does not abolish the Law of the Sinai covenant but underscores its extent and demand for internal transformation. Jesus was not being innovative with respect to the moral and ethical demands of God's standard; he was revealing the true nature of the requirements of the covenant and the innate inability of human beings to meet them. In this, Jesus took up Israel's prophetic tradition, transposing it into a higher key and stressing its violation. Just as in Galatians where the apostle Paul explains the continuity (and discontinuity) of the covenant in Christ with the Torah, James presents similar instruction to underscore that the Christian life of faith is nevertheless comprised of the moral and ethical obligations that God has always expected of his people.

The Minor Prophets in 1 Peter

Introduction

Peter states a hermeneutical principle in 1.10-12 that it was the 'Spirit of Christ' who inspired the prophets of old. He then immediately applies this principle of continuity between the Jewish Scriptures and the Christian gospel by applying several of the designations for ancient Israel to his Christian readers, many of whom were Gentiles. He applies the distinctive phrases from Hosea, 'not my people?not received mercy', to show that the restoration promised by Hosea has been fulfilled in those whose faith is in Jesus Christ.

Textual Affinities

Although 1 Peter does not quote the Minor Prophets, the use of the Greek Jewish Scriptures in 1 Peter has been well established on the basis of the substantial quotations from Isaiah and Psalms in the book (e.g. Isa. 40:6-8 LXX in 1 Pet. 1.24-25 and Ps. 34.13-17 LXX [ET 34.12-16]).

Because of Peter's use of the Greek Old Testament in quotation, any allusions to the Twelve would probably also be to the Greek version.

Allusions

The distinctive phrase in 1 Pet. 2.9, εἰς περιποίησιν ('God's own people'), is an allusion to Mal. 3.17 LXX where the same phrase is found as a reference to those faithful who do not lose heart and give up, those whom God will claim to be a people of his own:

Those who fear the Lord spoke among these things, each to his neighbor. And the Lord took note and listened ... And they shall be mine, says the Lord Almighty, in the day when I make them my acquisition (εἰς περιποίησιν ...). And you shall turn and discern ... between the one who is subject to God and the one who is not subject. (Mal. 3.16-18 NETS; italics added)

Although περιποίησις occurs two other times in the Greek Old Testament (2 Chron. 14.12; Hag. 2.9), the context of its occurrence in Mal. 3.17 LXX best fits Peter's message to not lose heart and give up when struggling with social opposition because of faith in Christ, for it will make a difference in the end.

The phrases 'not a people' and 'not received mercy' in 1 Pet. 2.10 echo those same phrases in Hos. 1.6; 9, 2.25 LXX (ET 2.23). It is possible, however, that Hosea is not directly behind the thought in 1 Pet. 2.10 since there is evidence that, following Jewish precedent, the 'my people' motif was closely associated with the so-called 'stone' passages (Ps. 118.22; Isa. 8.14; 28.16) in early Christianity. The 'stone' passages of 1 Pet. 2.6, 7, 8 are in close proximity to the 'my people' reference in 2.10, as also occurs in Rom. 9.25, 26 ('my people') and 9.33 (a conflation of the stone passages from Isa. 8.14 and 28.16; see also Rom. 6.2-4). The allusion to Hosea, the book which always stands first of the Twelve regardless of the subsequent sequence, points to the people's inability to be faithful to God, making them 'not my people'. The allusion to Malachi, always standing as the last of the Minor Prophets, points to the promise of restoration of a people who would be God's distinctive possession. Even if mediated through the Jewish tradition as reflected in the Greek version, Peter's application of these phrases to his Christian readers indicates his understanding that in Christ the promised


restoration has come and that the people to whom he wrote represented a fulfillment of the prophetic promises of Hosea and Malachi. Moreover and perhaps most astonishing, every Gentile who had never previously been God's people are now deemed God's people because of their faith in Jesus Christ.

Kelly Liebengood suggests that the Book of Zechariah might be more important to 1 Peter than has been previously recognized. He argues that 1 Pet. 2.24-25, by ‘employing the Jewish exegetical technique gezerah shavah, links 1XX Isa 53.5-6 with 1XX Zech 10.2 via the catchwords ἰαμάτος [‘as sheep’] and ιάσωμα / λοσι [‘we might be healed/healing’], so that the two texts and their wider text plots mutually interpret each other’. Liebengood points out the significant role of Zechariah’s prophecy in the passion narratives of the Gospels and argues that because 1 Pet. 2.21-25 functions as a passion midrash on the theme ‘Christ suffered on your behalf’ (1 Pet. 2.21), the shepherd/shepherdess in 2.22 alludes not to Isaiah but to Zech. 10.2, bringing the wider themes from Zechariah 9-14 into view. Liebengood points out that Zech. 10.2 is a fitting text to link with Isa. 53.5 because (1) God’s people are in need of restoration because they lack healing; (2) a major theme of Zechariah 9-14 is that YHWH will return his sheep (Zech. 10.10) through the affliction of the shepherd-king (Zech. 13.7-9); and (3) ‘sheep’ and ‘healing’ are found together only in Isa. 53.5-7 and Zech. 10.2. Although it is difficult to decide if Peter is citing one or the other of these texts, it may not be necessary to do so. The combination of both Isaiah and Zechariah could create an intertextual space where concepts from the shepherd theme in both prophets could mutually play upon and amplify each other. 

This present study shows further that indeed there is a high clustering of distinctive words shared between 1 Peter and Zechariah, considerably more so than with any other of the Twelve. Of a list of nineteen distinctive words in 1 Peter, many more by far are shared in the same context – that is, in the same theme, motif or image – with Zechariah than with any other of the Minor Prophets. On the other hand, virtually all of these words and the themes, motifs or images they represent are also found in the major prophets, especially in Isaiah. It is indeed quite difficult to differentiate a distinctive background for 1 Peter in Zechariah as opposed to Isaiah or the prophetic tradition in general.

That said, it is nevertheless interesting that Zech. 13.9 shares three elements with 1 Peter: (1) the theme of testing (σκοπεῖ ὁ Θεὸς) expressed (2) by the metaphor of gold being refined in fire (1 Pet. 1.7) along with (3) the Lord’s pronouncement that those so tested are ‘my people’. Only Peter’s further designation in 1 Pet. 2.10 that these formerly ‘had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy’ precludes Zech. 13.9 as alone sufficient and brings Hosea into view. And since the theme of testing by fire is not found in Hosea, it appears that Peter is conflating Hosea’s promise to ‘not-received mercy’ with the testing by fire imagery from Zechariah. This type of conflation may be evidence that Peter viewed the Twelve as one prophetic voice.

The greatest clustering of distinctive words in 1 Peter with the Greek Zechariah falls within chapters 9-12, where the prophet uses the imagery of the shepherd and sheep to describe the evil of the leaders who became rich while not tending to those under their care (especially Zech. 11.5). This resonates with the admonition in 1 Pet. 5.1-4 (especially v. 2) to ‘tend the flock of God that is in your charge, ... as God would have you do it – not for sordid gain but eagerly’. Zech. 10.3 and 11.6 both use the verb ἐπισκεπτόμαι (‘to care for’) to describe God’s concern for his sheep and the evil shepherd’s lack thereof, respectively. If Zech. 10.3 and 11.6 are indeed the background for 1 Pet. 5.1-5, then the originality of the cognate verb θεωρεῖν in 1 Pet. 5.2 is further grounded.

More importantly for the message of 1 Peter, it is Jesus who is both the shepherd and the guardian (ἐπισκεπτόμαι) to whom Peter’s readers, like straying sheep, have returned (2.23). First Peter 2.25 then becomes an indirect fulfillment of Zech. 9.16, ‘And on that day the Lord will save them, his people like sheep’ (NETS). Furthermore, this verse in Zechariah follows closely after 9.9, which is the prophecy that Mt. 21.4, 5 points to as having been fulfilled when Jesus entered Jerusalem for the last time, ‘Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! ... Lo, your king comes to you; ... humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey’.

Despite these striking similarities between 1 Peter and Zechariah, the shepherd/sheep motif is ubiquitous in the prophetic tradition of ancient Israel. Elsewhere in the Twelve it is also found in Hos. 13.5 and Mic. 2.12; 5.4, though not as fully developed as in Zechariah. It is also a theme in Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel (e.g. the Greek versions of Isa. 40.11; Jer. 3.15; 10.21; 12.10; 13.17; 20; 23.1-4; 27.6; 38.10; Ezek. 34.2-12, 23, 31; 37.24). Although it is difficult to prove that Peter draws from a specific text rather than the broader prophetic tradition, Liebengood’s point ‘that the two texts [1 Peter and Zechariah] and their wider text plots mutually interpret each other’ deserves further consideration.

See Metzger, A Textual Commentary, p. 625 for a discussion of this textual problem.


20. And so, for instance, the adjective ἱαματικός occurring in Amos to refer to ‘choice gifts’ would not be counted because Peter uses the adjective to refer to people (cf. the use of the adjective in Zech. 11.16, ‘the flesh of the chosen [people]’).
Conclusion

Using the Greek Scriptures, Peter makes clear allusions to the theme of the restoration of God’s people as promised in Hos. 2.25 LXX (ET 2.23) and Mal. 3.17, the ‘bookends’ of the Minor Prophets. Even if mediated through Christian interpretive tradition, 1 Pet. 2.10 clearly alludes to Hosea’s prophecy when addressing Christian believers of northern Asia Minor: ‘Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy’. Using Malachi, Peter reminds his readers that despite their society’s hostility to the Christian gospel, there is a distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between the one who serves God and the one who does not (Mal. 3.16-18).

In addition to these distinctive phrases from the Twelve, he uses others from Exodus and Isaiah to describe his Christian readers, applying his stated hermeneutical belief that it was the ‘Spirit of Christ’ who inspired the prophets of ancient Israel, prophets which Peter claims no longer belong uniquely to Jewish tradition but who serve those to whom the gospel of Jesus Christ has been preached, even Gentile converts (1 Pet. 2.10-12). Among those Christ-inspired prophets is Zechariah, which may have played a greater role in 1 Peter than has previously been recognized.

The Minor Prophets in 2 Peter

Introduction

It is both generally well known and obvious to any reader that 2 Peter, especially chapter 2, and the epistle of Jude appear to have a close relationship best explained as literary borrowing. The consensus of current New Testament scholarship is that the author of 2 Peter follows the sequence of thought and borrows the language of Jude. Even though discussed in traditional canonical order here, we anticipate the discussion of Jude below by noting that the language Jude shares with Amos and Zechariah is not found in 2 Peter.

Textual Affinities

According to Richard Bauckham, ‘2 Peter’s allusions are habitually to the LXX.’ He observes that the author of 2 Peter replaces two of Jude’s rather unusual phrases with equivalent phrases that occur frequently in the LXX. When discussing those who indulge depraved tendencies, 2 Pet. 2.10 employs a form of the verb ἀπεισάθι (πεῖσαθι) and the preposition ὑπὸ (‘to go after’) which occurs eighty-six times in the Greek Old Testament, three of which are in Hosea (2.15; 5.11; 13.4). In comparison, Jude 7 uses ἀπεισάθι ὑπὸ (πεῖσαθι) ὑπὸ (‘to go after’), which occurs in only one other place in the New Testament (Mk 1.20) and not at all in the LXX. In 2 Pet. 3.3 the frequently occurring phrase ἐπὶ ἐσχή τῶν ἔρημων (‘in the last days’) is found where Jude 18 reads ἐπὶ ἔσχή τοῦ ὑπαίτ.T. eva (‘in the last of time’), a phrase that appears only elsewhere in 1 Pet. 1.20 and not at all in the LXX. This indicates only that the author of 2 Peter was familiar with certain expressions in the Greek Old Testament that were most likely living idioms in Jewish Greek usage. (And that Jude was most likely not using the Greek Jewish Scriptures; see discussion below.)

Allusions

Not surprisingly, 2 Peter shares language and themes with the Minor Prophets. Sodom as the proverbial symbol of wickedness and judgement (2 Pet. 2.6) is also found in Amos 4.11 and Zeph. 2.9. The phrase ‘day of the Lord’ (2 Pet. 3.10) also occurs in Joel (5x); Amos 5.18, 20; Obad. 15; Zeph. 1.7, 14; and Mal. 4.5 (Heb. 2.23), but also in Isa. 13.6, 9 and Ezek. 13.5; 30.3. Scoffers who question God’s justice in 2 Pet. 3.4 are also found in Mal. 2.17 and 3.18. Judgement by fire in 2 Pet. 3.7, 10–12 is a common prophetic theme also found in Amos 7.4; 9.5; Zeph. 1.17-18; and Mal. 4.1, and calls into question Motyer’s belief that ‘[i]t is from Zephaniah as much as from any other biblical writer that Peter learned that the present cosmic order is reserved for fire in the day of the Lord.’

Conclusion

There is nothing in 2 Peter that can be said to be distinctively from the Book of the Twelve. Peter’s reminder that God will be certain to bring the wicked to judgement on a fiery day of the Lord while preserving the righteous is a common prophetic theme in the tradition of ancient Israel and he uses traditional prophetic language to express that message.

Introduction

The letter of Jude is a severe warning to Christians about self-deceived believers in the church whose false teaching in word and deed call forth Jude's scathing judgement. Jude perceives a danger that many in the church could be led astray, and therefore the letter's primary exhortation is to contend for the true Christian faith (v. 3), to be built up in the faith (v. 20), and to keep oneself in the love of God (v. 21). 'These people', as Jude often refers to the false Christians, will find their destiny in deepest darkness despite their self-identification as Christians (v. 13). Their sins are as egregious as those of the fallen angels and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, both of which serve typologically as examples of certain and irreversible judgement (vv. 6-7). Several Old Testament figures are named, including Moses (v. 9), Cain (v. 11), Balaam (v. 11), Korah (v. 11), Enoch (v. 14), and the archangel Michael (v. 9). Vivid images of judgement from the Old Testament colour Jude's message: wind-driven clouds without rain (Prov. 25.14) and wave-tossed mud (Isa. 57.20).

Textual Affinities

Since the work of Richard Bauckham, most scholars have abandoned the idea that Jude alludes to the Greek Old Testament, for it shares only a few terms with the Greek version. Bauckham argues that 'Jude's use of these terms really only proves his familiarity with Jewish Greek, in which there were common Greek renderings, used both in the Septuagint and in other Jewish Greek literature, for certain Old Testament Hebrew expressions'. He believes Jude has made his own Greek translation of his allusions to the Hebrew Old Testament. Firstly, the allusion to Prov. 25.14 in Jude 12 is more fitting to Jude's context as it appears in the Hebrew ('Like clouds and wind without rain is one who boasts of a gift never given') than in the Greek ('As winds and clouds and rains are exceedingly apparent, so are they who boast over a false gift'). Secondly, according to Bauckham, the reference in Jude 12 to shepherds who feed only themselves stands closer to the Hebrew of Ezek. 34.2 ('Ah, you shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves') than the Greek ('Oh, you shepherds of Israel, do shepherds feed themselves?'). The most decisive case in Bauckham's judgement is the allusion to Isa. 57.20 in

Quotations

Despite Jude's heavy dependence on Old Testament themes and images, there are no quotations of the Old Testament in this brief letter. At first glance the reference in Jude 14 to the 'ten thousands of his holy ones' accompanying the Lord may seem to paraphrase Zech. 14.5 that 'the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him'. But Jude 14 is clearly a quotation of 1 Enoch 1.9 (which may have derived from Zech. 14.5). 'He comes with his myriads and with his holy ones, to make judgement against all, and he will destroy all the ungodly, and convict all flesh about all works of their ungodliness which they in an ungodly way committed and the harsh words which they have spoken, and about

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all which the ungodly sinners have spoken evil against him. Edward Mazzich argues further that Jude’s source was an Aramaic version of 1 Enoch, reinforcing the view that Jude used Semitic, not Greek, sources.

Allusions

Even the several people and events Jude refers to from Genesis and Numbers refer not directly to the text of the Old Testament but to the interpretive tradition of the Hebrew Scripture. Jude 11, which pronounces woe on false Christian teachers who ‘go the way of Cain’ is a good example of this.\(^{34}\) What we know of Cain from Genesis 4 is that his offering was inferior to that of his brother Abel, whom he murdered in a jealous anger. It is not clear from Genesis 4 alone in what way the false teachers condemned by Jude are like Cain. But in post-biblical Jewish tradition, Cain was referred to as ‘the archetypal sinner and the instructor of others in sin’.\(^{35}\) Josephus characterizes him by greed, violence and lust (Ant. 1.52.66), Philo, Targum Neofiti and T. Benj. 7.5 also elaborate on the wickedness of Cain.

Jude 23 exhorts its readers to ‘save others by snatching them out of the fire; and have mercy on still others with fear, hating even the tunic defiled by their bodies’. This is likely an allusion to Zech. 3.2, where Joshua the high priest and representative of God’s people who had been restored from exile, stands before Satan and the angel of the Lord. The rebuke of Satan in Zech. 3.2 is deferred to the Lord much as Michael the archangel defers in Jude 9. Jewish interpretive tradition (eg. The Assumption of Moses) explains that when Moses died, Satan wanted to claim his body to signal Moses’s failure to obey God, just as Satan seems to be making some claim on Joshua in Zech. 3.2. The clear differences between Jude 9 and Zech. 3.2 prohibit a direct allusion, but both texts observe the same dynamic between angels, Satan, and the Lord.

In Zech. 3.2 the Lord asks, ‘Is not this man [Joshua] a brand plucked from the fire?’\(^{36}\) In the context of Zechariah, the fire was an image for exile, a precarious situation for God’s chosen. McComiskey comments, ‘[By] snatching them from the flames of exile, [the Lord] revealed that his grace was greater than their guilt’.\(^{37}\) Jude is probably similarly using the image, which may have become a common one in Jewish tradition, to represent the immediate spiritual danger of the influence of false Christians.

Zech. 3.3 also refers to the filthy clothing that Joshua the high priest was wearing as he stood before the angel of the Lord. The Hebrew word refers specifically to filth from excrement or vomit, a disgusting image that connotes how repulsive is the sin that clung to God’s people even after the restoration. Hollander’s claim that the cause of the tunic’s defilement in Jude 23 (presumably the phrase τού τῆς σορφῆς supports ‘the assumption that the author quoted the Old Testament (LXX) from memory’ is puzzling, for the Greek text of Zech. 3.3 has no such distinction, reading μετὰ πυρποδό.\(^{38}\) Because the Hebrew word (נַעֲשֶׂה) used in Zech. 3.3 is more specific as to the source and kind of filth than is the corresponding Greek word (πυρποδός), one could argue, contra Hollander, that Jude must have had the Hebrew text in mind and needed to add the prepositional phrase (τού τῆς σορφῆς) to make the allusion to the repulsive image of the Hebrew expression clearer.

Together the images of the firebrand and the removal of filthy clothing indicate that the charges of the Accuser, who is also present in this scene, cannot stand before the Lord’s sovereign mercy. In the context of Jude, those on the verge of following the false Christians into sin are to be plucked from the danger; mercy is to be extended but without tolerance for the teaching of the false teachers, which is to be regarded as disgusting as clothing soiled by excrement.

While the images of the firebrand and the filthy clothing together seem to point toward Zechariah as the background of Jude’s language, Amos 4.1 also refers to a brand plucked from the fire. Moreover, Amos 4.11 contains a second reference also found in Jude, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, “‘I overthrew some of you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were like a brand snatched from the fire; yet you did not return to me,” says the LORD’. However, the firebrand and the filthy clothing stand together in Jude 23 as they do in Zech. 3.2-3, which seems the more likely source.

Although the reference to the exodus from Egypt in Jude 5 may suggest the Pentateuch as its source, the point Jude makes is that the Lord did not hesitate to destroy even those he delivered because of their subsequent unbelief. As Carson puts it, “[W]e learn that just because people belong to the right community does not mean that they can

33. E. Mazzich, “The Lord Will Come with His Holy Myriads”: An Investigation of the Linguistic Source of the Citation of 1 Enoch 9 in Jude 14b-15”, ZNW 94 (2003), 276-81.
35. Bauckham, Jude, 2 Peter, p. 79.
36. The common English word ‘brand’ refers to a smoldering stick of wood that is about to ignite into flames.
escape the judgement of God, any more than could the Israelites after God had delivered them from Egypt and before they had been brought into the promised land?" Therefore Jude may be referring to the exodus motif as mediated by Amos 3.1, 2, which makes a similar, though milder, point: 'Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt: You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities' (italics mine).

Conclusion

Among the many images Jude finds in the Old Testament, his concluding exhortation may use metaphors found in Zechariah as he raises a prophetic voice of both judgement and hope. However, the metaphors of the firebrand and the filthy clothing may have become expressions in the idioms of Judaism rather than being a reference to the text of the Twelve. There is no evidence that Jude used the Greek version but there is some evidence that his sources were Semitic.

Summary of Conclusions

The use of the Minor Prophets in this section of the New Testament canon suggests that the Twelve were viewed as one book and one voice. James and 1 Peter clearly draw from the Greek Jewish Scriptures and Jude most likely from the Hebrew, whereas 2 Peter presents only Greek expressions commonly found in the Septuagint and other Greek Jewish literature.

The Twelve exert the greatest influence in the letter of James where the messages of Hosea, Amos and Malachi are used to underscore the moral and ethical demands of the new covenant in Christ. The translator of the Greek Malachi apparently has interpreted 3.5 in light of Hosea. Allusions in James previously thought to be from Amos are likely to have come from Hosea and Malachi.

The letters of 1 and 2 Peter each stand in a different relationship to the Minor Prophets. 1 Peter uses Hosea and Malachi to reinforce his readers’ identity as God’s people and, following the pattern of the Synoptics, perhaps uses the shepherd theme from Zechariah in his passion midrash in 2.21-25. In stark contrast, 2 Peter contains nothing that can be said to distinctively allude to the Minor Prophets, though it draws language from the Greek prophetic tradition. Its verbal similarities to Jude do not extend to Jude’s possible allusion to Zech. 3.1, 2.  

41. Ibid.