

PROPHECY, ILLUSTRATION AND TYPOLOGY

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In the current interest in hermeneutics, the science of interpretation of the Bible, there has been renewed attention to the subject of the use that the New Testament makes of the Old. In the past, the New Testament usage has usually been considered definitive. Sometimes the variant form of the NT quotation has been remarked upon and perhaps its derivation from the LXX noted. Usually in orthodox circles, when the NT and LXX differ from the MT, they are considered to have approximated the OT meaning and the differences are judged not to concern important points. Thus the New Scofield Reference Bible (1967) at Heb 10:5 gives seven ways the NT uses OT quotations. The first six are commendable: (1) Divine authority is attributed to the OT; (2) the LXX is usually employed "as an English translation may be employed today;" (3) there may be a desire to translate the Hebrew more accurately; (4) many quotations are not intended to be verbatim; (5) some quotations are a summary; and (6) some are only intended to be an allusion not an exact quotation. The seventh may be questioned: "The Holy Spirit who inspired the OT was free to reword a quotation just as a human author may restate his own writings in other words without impugning the accuracy of the original statement. While we may agree that both passages are inspired, a problem here is: Is it clear that this is the intention of the NT passage? It is seldom considered that the LXX and NT may be dependent on a superior text and the MT may be wrong. Actually, it does seem that once in a while the MT is erroneous or at least that the standard interpretation of the MT is erroneous.

An interesting example is Ps 19:4, which is quoted in Rom 10:18. The MT reads, "their line" (| ׀ׁׁׁׁׁׁׁ) and the LXX-NT reads, "their voice", which probably represents the Hebrew | ׀ׁׁׁׁׁׁׁׁׁ. The difference in the Hebrew consonants concerns the presence or absence of the letter "L" (lamedh). The context and especially the parallel stitch strongly favor the reading, "their voice." M. Dahood in his commentary on this Psalm argues that the MT is correct but that the Hebrew should be interpreted as "their voice." In either case the LXX-NT is correct.

In this paper, however, we are not so much concerned with textual-critical matters as with matters of interpretation. How does the NT interpret the OT and can its use of the OT materials be justified? The old view, going back to Augustine, was that "the New is in the Old contained and the Old is by the New explained." There was a tendency to enlarge the meaning of the OT texts to accommodate the NT usage. The idea was that the older authors wrote better than they knew. They may have done so. John assures us that Caiaphas, the high priest, did not speak "on his own" (John 11:51). The OT authors were inspired by the Holy Spirit and did