

Introduction

I. Jesus and Memory Studies

In the past, πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως,¹ much has been written regarding the use of the Old Testament (OT)² in the New Testament (NT), memory studies and Jesus. Throughout the course of this book the aim will be to draw together these three areas of study to begin to answer the question of how, to what extent and in what ways the NT writers used certain OT texts ‘because Jesus appealed to them’.³ Or, another way of saying it, what is the relationship between ‘Jesus and Scripture’ within non-Pauline epistles?⁴ In order to begin to assess this, this book aims to offer a comparative study of the presence and impact of Jesus’ life, Jesus’ teaching and Jesus’ use of the OT upon the use of the OT in Hebrews, James, and 1 and 2 Peter. Consequently, the argument that will be put forward is that Jesus’ use of the OT does indeed impact the NT writers and their use of the OT, but in a variety

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1. At many times and in many ways (Heb. 1:1).
 2. This study uses the phrase ‘Old Testament’ due to the primacy of its use in scholarship, but also due to this study’s focus on the NT’s use of both the Masoretic Text (MT) and the LXX (or Septuagint). As will be discussed, there are also several texts such as 1 Tim. 5:18 and 2 Pet. 3:16 that open the concept of ‘Scripture’ beyond the OT to include NT texts and so, while imperfect, the designation OT encapsulates via ease of reference the first 39 canonical books of the biblical text. All OT texts are cited from the MT, unless otherwise stated.
 3. Cf. Craig A. Evans, ‘Why Did the New Testament Writers Appeal to the Old Testament?’, *JSNT* 38, no. 1 (2015), 36-48. The work of Evans is a key conversation partner in this study.
 4. Specifically, this study will focus upon Hebrews, James, and 1 and 2 Peter.

of different ways. As a result, however, a critical question arises regarding the extent and propriety of the impact of Jesus' teaching within these epistles, how that can be assessed and discussed, and what impact it then has upon epistolary literature.⁵ To be even more specific, we are seeking to note and measure the impact of Jesus' teaching and life encapsulated within the *oral traditions* emanating from Jesus and in turn impacting the NT writers.⁶ As a result, it is in considering oral traditions, memory, eyewitness testimony and other means of transmission of the narratives, words and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, that we shall begin to note the impact of Jesus upon the use of the OT in the NT. Therefore, it is reasonable to note the variety of means through which information about Jesus spread through the early Christian communities and the associated impact upon the composition of the NT. Practically, we might consider the impact of Jesus upon the writing of the NT to occur directly and not through intercalated media. Rather, through the passing on of the events and teachings of Jesus through oral traditions, performative retellings, written media, eyewitness testimony, apostolic witness and other ways of distributing and distilling the teaching and events of Jesus' life as circulated in the various communities.⁷ Importantly, however, this book will argue that Jesus' teaching and use of the OT does indeed impact the use of the OT in the NT. In that sense, the mode and means of impact, as well as studying 'why' certain OT texts are used by NT writers, are key methodological drivers that will be used to demonstrate the impact of aspects of the early Jesus movement's intertextual approach.

Moreover, this discussion concentrates upon a core part of what we might call the 'mnemonic activity' within these reading communities that we are seeking to assess. Given that concepts of 'memory' are significant in the spread of the teachings of Jesus, and when considering

5. For example, note the work of Allison, who studies the presence of Jesus traditions within the Pauline epistles. Dale C. Allison, *Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History* (London: SPCK, 2010), 392-403. Cf. David Allen, *The Historical Character of Jesus: Canonical Insights from Outside the Gospels* (London: SPCK, 2013).

6. As with the process of transmission described in Heb. 2:2, as well as in 1 Cor. 15:3 and 2 Thess. 2:15.

7. Cf. Michael J. Kruger, *Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 179. Also see 2 Thess. 2:15.

James Dunn's suggestion that 'the only Jesus is the remembered Jesus',⁸ quite what constitutes 'memory', its efficacy and veracity within the composition of the NT is significant when considering the impact of Jesus upon the use of the OT.⁹ This is significant as a key part of the argument made herein is based around the mnemonic activity linked to Jesus being found within NT epistles. Critically, a key suggestion will be made that certain OT texts, words or phrases could function to evoke mnemonic material linked to Jesus. This would then begin to prove the impact of Jesus because, for the evocation of Jesus to mean anything, there must thus be a pre-existing knowledge base that is being sought to be evoked. This process is called 'mnemonic keying' and is a central part of the arguments being made regarding the impact of Jesus upon the use of the OT in the NT.

II. Mnemonic Keying

When considering how memory may have worked in the writing of NT epistles, a critical aspect of what some call social memory¹⁰

8. James D.G. Dunn, *The Oral Gospel Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 128-32.

9. See: Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History: A Study in Historical Methodology* (London: James Currey, 1985), 51; Arie W. Zwiép, *Jairus's Daughter and the Haemorrhaging Woman: Tradition and Interpretation of an Early Christian Miracle Story*, WUNT 421 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 195-98. Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 14, n. 67. John S. Kloppenborg, 'Memory, Performance and the Sayings of Jesus', in Karl Galinsky (ed.), *Memory in Ancient Rome and Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 293-94. Jens Schröter, 'Der "erinnerte Jesus": Erinnerung als geschichtshermeneutisches Paradigma der Jesusforschung', in Jens Schröter and Christine Jacobi (eds), *Jesus Handbuch* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 11-24.

10. Social memory in this context considers that any written history emerges from a social setting, interacts with oral and mnemonic traditions, and will contain elements of an original 'event' and narrativel and interpretive discussions aimed at a particular context. Craig S. Keener, *Christobiography: Memory, History, and the Reliability of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019), 193. Viewed in a positive way, social memory studies highlight the importance of the community within oral traditions and memory, even if discussing individual eyewitness influence upon the NT: Keener, *Christobiography*, 407.

contains a process known as ‘keying’.¹¹ Keying is the means, perhaps without conscious decision, of linking a present situation with an historic person or narrative. For example, Tom Thatcher notes how Hebrews 11:4, 12:24, 1 John 3:12 and Jude 11 each draw upon Genesis 4, and the narrative of Cain and Abel, in order to encourage the community to persevere in the face of opposition, conflict and persecution.¹² Subsequently, a key aspect of Thatcher’s work is how this process of ‘keying’ may create ‘mnemonic keys’ within a community.¹³ Specifically, that key words or phrases can function to evoke (or ‘key’ to) a known past event or narrative. Thatcher does not, however, consider the impact of Jesus’ use of the OT within oral and written sources upon this process. Nevertheless, much of his work is highly relevant to considering the impact of Jesus upon the use of the OT in the NT.¹⁴ Specifically, what this opens up is the concept of key words and phrases within a NT epistle to function as a mnemonic key to something Jesus said and did. This is important because, if a word or phrase in the NT can evoke mnemonic activity linked to Jesus, then that begins to establish a connection with Jesus’ impact upon the NT. What is particularly pertinent for this study, however, is how the use of the OT in the NT functions to create mnemonic keys to the life and teaching of Jesus.

Another way of saying this, perhaps, is for one to consider that, when a ‘text’ is cited, more is communicated than simply the written form. For example, Jesus’ citation of Psalm 22 in some passion narratives may originate as a written text, become encapsulated

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11. Both are key aspects of the work of Barry Schwartz. See Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). Barry Schwartz, ‘Christian Origins: Historical Truth and Social Memory’, in Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher (eds), *Memory, Tradition, and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2005), 43-56. See, also, the book, Tom Thatcher (ed.), *Memory and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity: A Conversation with Barry Schwartz* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2014).
 12. Tom Thatcher, ‘Cain and Abel in Early Christian Memory: A Case Study in “The Use of the Old Testament in the New”’, *CBQ* 72, no. 4 (2010), 721-51, 740-46.
 13. *Ibid.*, 738-39.
 14. A key element of this is both the development of the performances of the Jesus tradition alongside an understanding of the oral and textual media behind the Gospels. Eric Eve, *Behind the Gospels: Understanding the Oral Tradition* (London: SPCK, 2013), 134.

within an oral tradition, and is ultimately found again in a written form that has crossed between languages.¹⁵ What we might propose, therefore, is how this ‘new text’ can then evoke a mnemonic response to the oral tradition or the OT, or even some other stage on the text’s journey. To say it another way, when someone in a gathered setting in the early Christian communities quoted the phrase, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me’, what came to mind? A similar question could be asked of people today. For many, these are the words of Jesus on the Cross in some Gospel accounts. For others, they are the opening of Psalm 22. For others, they are Jesus’ quotation of Psalm 22 on the Cross. None of these are necessarily ‘wrong’, but this shows us how a word or phrase could evoke mnemonic activity within an audience hearing a letter. Quite how these sources interact with one another, and how they impact the reading communities in question, is important for assessing the impact of Jesus upon the use of the OT in the NT and needs to be evaluated in a comprehensive manner.¹⁶ This aspect of Jesus and the OT coming together is critical to the choice of studying Hebrews, James, and 1 and 2 Peter within this monograph. For example, in Hebrews 5:7, James 2:8, 1 Peter 2:21-25 and 2 Peter 1:16-18 we see examples of the OT and aspects of Jesus’ life and teaching drawn together and operating in tandem, albeit in divergent ways. Therefore, this project seeks to illustrate the degree to which Jesus’ use of the OT informed the use of the OT in non-Pauline

15. See Meek’s analysis of this in: R. Meek, ‘Intertextuality, Inner-Biblical Exegesis, and Inner-Biblical Allusion: The Ethics of a Methodology’, *Bib* 95, no. 2 (2014), 280-91, 283.

16. Also, critically assessing what some scholars call ‘scripturalisation’, where the OT may be being used to develop Jesus traditions is vital in analysing the interplay between the OT and the development of Jesus traditions: Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 387. John Dominic Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper, 1995). Anthony Le Donne, *The Historiographical Jesus: Memory, Typology, and the Son of David* (Waco, TX: Baylor, 2009). Ellen Aitken, *Jesus’ Death in Early Christian Memory: The Poetics of the Passion* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 16ff. Also, see John S. Kloppenborg, ‘Book Review: Jesus’ Death in Early Christian Memory: The Poetics of the Passion’, *BTB* 35, no. 4 (2005), 155-56. Critically, the recipients of NT letters may already have had a ‘relatively extensive knowledge of Jesus tradition(s)’: James D.G. Dunn, *Christianity in the Making: Volume 1: Jesus Remembered*, 3 vols (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 184.

epistles through, first, noting how the NT use of the OT can evoke both the OT and Jesus. Or, in other terms, how a text drawn upon *because* of the influence of Jesus functions conversely to evoke that very source of influence via a citation of an OT text.

Finally, one key voice moving forward will be that of Craig Evans who suggests that ‘some of the New Testament writers appealed to certain passages because Jesus appealed to them’.¹⁷ As a result, it is possible to further explore aspects of Evans’ hypothesis by both broadening the argument and narrowing the focus upon non-Pauline epistles, and by pressing the concept of mnemonic keying to include evocations of Jesus. Consequently, this project seeks to bring together these two areas of memory studies and the use of the OT in the NT in a dialogical and comparative way in order to develop an approach to assessing the impact of Jesus upon the use of the OT in the NT. This approach will then be used primarily on four canonical epistles, as well as some examples from non-canonical literature, to show five different ways (or as we shall call them ‘categories of interaction’) in which Jesus’ use of the OT impacts the NT writers. This is important because, while the suggestion we are considering is that Jesus’ teaching and use of the OT impacts the use of the OT in the NT, this does happen in different ways. As a result, it is noting this variety of ways in which Jesus impacts the use of the OT in the NT that requires significant attention and a nuanced methodological approach that the next chapter seeks to outline more fully.

17. Evans, ‘New Testament Writers’, 36.