

BOOK REVIEW

Steve Moyise, *Jesus and Scripture: Studying the New Testament Use of the Old* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011). vii + 147 pp. Pbk. US\$21.99.

With the ever-increasing number of detailed studies devoted to the New Testament's use of the Old Testament, there is a tangible need for materials that gently introduce newcomers to the field. With several high quality publications in this area already, Steve Moyise has jumped to the task, publishing two brief works: *Paul and Scripture* and *Jesus and Scripture* with Baker Academic, in 2010 and 2011 respectively. These books serve as a consolidation of recent research presented in an accessible fashion, ideal for pastors and young scholars new to the field. It is the latter of these works, *Jesus and Scripture*, that I wish to consider.

An important feature of this book is Moyise's explicit attempt to move beyond a simple assessment of the Gospels' use of Scripture towards how Jesus interacted with and used it. While this relationship is framed in terms of a fourfold witness (see below), the result is a study that becomes centred around questions of the Historical Jesus. Moyise thus undertakes the complex task of negotiating occasionally divergent uses and contexts of the Old Testament while fitting these variations within a harmonized and historical reconstruction. Moyise accomplishes this task with consistency and fairness; however, it seems as though exegetical issues, though not ignored, become secondary to questions of historicity.

The first chapter of *Jesus and Scripture* (entitled 'Introduction' rather than 'Chapter 1') introduces the reader to the major issues in Gospel studies, with Old Testament in the New Testament concerns fitting within that rubric. In light of space constraints, Moyise does a good job of bringing the reader up to speed on the complexities of Gospel studies, namely the issues that stem four witnesses to a single story. The reader should be immediately impressed by how this four-fold

witness affects readings of Old Testament use through the example of divergent quotations of the ‘greatest commandment’ in Mark and Luke (Mark places these quotations in Jesus’ mouth while Luke places them in the mouth of a lawyer). A brief description of the Synoptic problem follows at this point, through the lens of three divergent perspectives: maximalist, moderate and minimalist. These receive further treatment in subsequent chapters. Source-criticism takes a prominent role here vis-à-vis Markan priority (including Q, L and M), though at times Moyise succumbs to oversimplification in these areas (for example, he seems to imply that early necessarily means more reliable).

Chapters 1, 2 and 3 focus on each of the Synoptics’ portrayal of Jesus and his interaction with Scripture. As discussed in his introduction, Moyise assumes a three-fold division of the Hebrew Scriptures: Law, Prophets and Writings. These major divisions form sub-sections in each chapter addressing how Jesus—as recounted in each Gospel—interacts with the books of the Law, with the Prophets and with the Writings. Moyise’s emphasis on Jesus is evidenced here as Old Testament use by the Gospel writer or other secondary characters receive little to no treatment.

Moyise asks some rather surprising questions in his analysis. For example, his concern is not necessarily with what version of the Law was used (Hebrew, LXX, other), how Jesus’ use of a quotation or allusion aided in his proclamation, etc., but instead focuses on questions of authority and Jesus’ relationship to the Law as a teacher (i.e. did Jesus accept and abide by the Law or did he contradict it?). Similarly, frequent reference is made to concerns of a historical nature, namely, whether or not a particular pericope or saying should be considered authentic or not. Another feature that figures prominently into Moyise’s analysis is how scriptural quotations fit into each Gospel’s redactional scheme. These are important questions to ask; however, they are somewhat removed from how Jesus *used* the Scriptures in his ministry. Even so, Moyise does an excellent job of introducing the exegetical issues present in each Gospel’s portrayal, fairly representing opposing scholarly views, and providing his own opinions in a reserved but convincing manner. His conclusions are neither radical nor revolutionary. Nevertheless, the strength of these chapters lies in Moyise’s ability to cogently express important issues within the flow of contemporary interpretation and their relevance to interpretation.

Chapter 4, with its focus on John's Gospel, requires some additional comments vis-à-vis its dissimilarity as compared to the Synoptics. First, Moyise organizes the material differently, attending to explicit quotations, allusions and the phrase 'King of the Jews' rather than the three-fold Law, Prophets and Writings division. The Gospel's choice of Scripture paints a different picture of Jesus as compared to the Synoptics. For example, Moyise argues that in the bread of life discourse, John's portrayal reveals a Jesus who is an expert in the Law and whose exposition is characterized by (a high) christological fulfillment. In terms of historicity, Moyise describes (though he does not engage) the consensus view, which sees very little historical reliability in Jesus' use of Scripture. Even with the Johannine emphases removed, John's Jesus is not contradictory to the Synoptic Jesus.

The final chapters (5, 6 and 7) move beyond a descriptive programme in an effort to articulate various methods of harmonization, that is to say, the practice of determining historicity. Chapter 5 presents the minimalist view, Chapter 6 presents the moderate view and Chapter 7 presents the maximalist view. Moyise argues that the theory of Markan priority led to a minimalist view; the ambiguity of Mark's Jesus presents an authentic, underdeveloped picture in comparison to later, theologically motivated developments and expansions. The minimalist view wants to draw a line between the authentic Jesus and the early church vis-à-vis how that may have influenced the Gospels' choice of Scripture. Three important thinkers are mentioned: Geza Vermes, who emphasizes the Jewishness of Jesus as opposed to a 'Christian Jesus'; John Dominic Crossan, who emphasizes Jesus the witty peasant, characterized by his socially subversive aphorisms rather than elegant exegesis; and Marcus Borg, who, while remaining a minimalist, heads in a more moderate direction.

The moderate view gets its name from the belief that a moderate amount of material in the Gospels should be considered reliable. Moderates often assert that Jesus may have repeated himself from time to time and accept Q as reliable. Moyise points to themes representative of a more developed Jesus: an urgent eschatological prophet (a development from Schweitzer's apocalyptic prophet), rejected stone, smitten shepherd (taken from a variety of Old Testament texts), son of man (in an effort to identify himself with the nation of Israel) and an interpreter of the Law (which qualifies the notion of Jesus as a law-keeping Jew). Moyise finishes this chapter with a brief description of James Dunn's

and N.T. Wright's moderate perspective on Jesus and Scripture. Dunn's 'performance' paradigm re-visioning the redactional motivations of Matthew and Luke, while Wright rejects atomistic application of historical criteria, finding most sayings authentic as he fits apparent contradictions into Jesus' self-understanding in the initiation of a new exodus.

Maximalist tendencies are usually restricted to rather conservative, confessional stances on Scripture, questioning the objectivity of historical criteria, rejecting the potentially over-critical readings of Matthew and Luke that are characteristic of source criticism and an attempt to rescue 'inauthentic' expressions of high Christology. Charles Kimball and R.T. France are presented as major proponents of the maximalist view. Kimball, constraining his study to Luke's Gospel, asserts that because Jesus' method of interpretation fits with early Jewish methods, these pericopes may be considered authentic. France also sees Jesus' interpretation as a reflection of the contemporary Jewish milieu, though suggests that Jesus' understanding of Scripture is closer to the original sense. Moyise's description of the proponents of minimalist, moderate and maximalist views, though brief, is instructive and contains helpful illustrative examples. Unfortunately, some of these advocates are quite dated and may not reflect the cutting edge of research from these perspectives.

Moyise briefly concludes by providing some insight into the convictions held by proponents of the variant historical perspectives. This is perceptive and aids the reader in sifting through the wash of information presented in earlier chapters. As Moyise admits, he is sympathetic to moderates yet desires his readers to thoughtfully engage the texts and make up their own minds. Moyise thus concludes with a provision for further reading via a select bibliography.

Rather than being a book devoted primarily to the New Testament's use of the Old Testament (as is to be expected from the title), this work reads more like a work on the historical Jesus, with typical Old Testament in the New Testament concerns fitting within that rubric. This is a worthwhile study; however, my initial expectations—created by the choice in title—were disrupted. For students interested in historical Jesus research and how the use of the Old Testament figures into that field, this book is a good introduction that fairly weighs divergent perspectives. On the other hand, the (over)emphasis on the historical Jesus, especially in the latter half of the book, may be disappointing for

some readers. It appears as though, for Moyise, source criticism is the only means to interpret the Gospels and ask historical questions therein. In that respect, this book fails biblical critics of a different sort.

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