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QUOTATION IN SCRIPTURE AS AN INDEX OF WIDER REFERENCE

by ROBERT RENDALL

MR. RENDALL is no newcomer to the pages of THE EVANGELICAL QUARTERLY. Some of his earliest contributions formed the nucleus of his book "History, Prophecy and God" (1954). The present article is a sequel to an earlier one on "The Method of the Writer to the Hebrews in using Old Testament Quotations" which we published in October, 1955. Several studies of Old Testament quotations in the New have appeared in recent years, but Mr. Rendall, as in all that he writes, has an independent and original contribution to make.

IN an earlier paper¹ the writer sought to show how quotations from the Old Testament were used in the epistle to the Hebrews. Attention was first of all drawn to the fact that "so far from being proof texts only, they are used as clues or hints to some extended historical situation in the Old Testament with an important bearing on the general argument of the epistle".

It was further suggested that "the initial impulse that led him [the author of the Hebrews] to these fruitful trains of thought seems to have come from close reflection upon the language of the Psalms, from which book many of his quotations are taken. He likewise frequently quotes the book of Genesis, but—and here is the point—he reaches Genesis *through* the Psalms". The words *for ever* in Psalm 110: 4 are seen to be expegetical of the "order" of Melchizedek. These words, taken in conjunction with the absence in Genesis of any specific mention of perpetuity, must have led the writer of the Hebrews to the argument expressed in 7: 3. Similarly, "an interpretative utterance from the Prophets is made to serve as an index to earlier historical writings, which thereupon are expounded from that new angle". An example of this is seen in Heb. 12: 26, 27 which cites Haggai 2: 6, which in turn looks back to Exodus 19: 18. By this oblique method, too, Messianic figures from Adam onward are introduced to strengthen the author's main theme.

The present paper is an attempt to explore the use of quotation in other books of the New Testament, and to trace the mode of thought followed by those who wrote them. But since an ex-

¹ THE EVANGELICAL QUARTERLY, xxvii (1955), pp. 214 ff.

haustive study of the available material is beyond the scope of a brief article, our attention may be focussed on a single chapter which will serve as a typical example. The twenty-first chapter of Matthew's Gospel provides an excellent case for such an enquiry. But before considering the evidence some general principles underlying scriptural quotations may be noted.

Quotations from the Old Testament in the New are commonly taken as isolated proof-texts only, or as brief verbal prophecies that have found technical fulfilment. Occasionally, too, we may find it difficult to see their relevance to the later historical context. But this may only be because a superficial view is taken of the writer's purpose in using them, and sight lost of the essential richness of reference which they would have had for the original readers. These would for the most part have been Jews, or at least those who had some acquaintance with the Old Testament Scriptures, and thus were able to recall from a single key-verse its historical and prophetic background. For this reason it is not so much the actual words of a quotation that matter (though these also have importance) but the wider passage of Scripture to which they are an index. Seen thus, a whole perspective of reference opens out from a quotation, enriching its illustrative value.

Moreover, the method leaves something for the intelligent reader to supply from his own acquaintance with the Sacred Writings. Thereby, his own mind is stimulated and takes a closer interest in the theme. Even in secular discussion, when we wish to illustrate a point by reference to some English poem, we do not necessarily quote the whole poem, but simply give the opening line or some familiar phrase that brings the whole to mind.

The system of marginal references in our Bibles provides us with the means of tracing such clues (whether of direct quotation or of oblique allusion) to their original and collateral sources. Unfortunately, the average Reference Bible contains many cross-entries that merely ring the changes on a word and have no real exegetical value. But those who possess a copy of the Revised Version of 1898 in the edition *with the revised marginal references*² have a guide unsurpassed for its help in tracing the genealogical tree of verses in the New Testament which are rooted in the Old.

The frequency with which the writers of the New Testament, almost without exception, quote from the Old is an important feature of their writings, and even a casual reading of these shows that it is no mere literary grace giving elegance to their style, but

² [Or the 1910 edition of the Revised New Testament with "Fuller References".—ED.]

a method adopted to give form and substance to their message. It sets their teachings in a Biblical context that covers the divine purpose in history and prophecy as revealed in the earlier Scriptures.

This recourse to quotation is nowhere more marked than in the Gospel of St. Matthew. Both in his own citations from the Old Testament and in those which he records as having been made by the Lord Jesus, Matthew makes extensive use of the Old Testament and links it organically with the New. The quotations found in chapter 21 of his Gospel suffice to illustrate his method in using them.

They may be listed here.

- v. 5 from Isa. 62: 11 ; Zech. 9: 9.
- v. 9 „ Ps. 118: 25, 26.
- v. 13 „ Isa. 56: 7 ; Jer. 7: 11.
- v. 16 „ Ps. 8: 2.
- vv. 42-44 „ Ps. 118: 22, 23 ; Isa. 8: 14 ; Dan. 2: 34, 35, 44, 45.

It will be noted that three are composite, being drawn from more than one source. Such collocations of separate and distinct Scriptures into a single unit are found elsewhere in the New Testament, and they appear to have been a normal mode of handling Scripture.

“Tell ye the daughter of Zion.” Matt. 21: 5.

If these words had not been prefaced by “Now this is come to pass that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying . . .”, we might have been justified in concluding that they were simply a familiar verbal convention without any serious intention behind their use. But since they are clearly a deliberate quotation from Isa. 62: 11, we instinctively enquire why they were so used. For the words in themselves do not convey any precise information—they merely introduce. More surprising still, they supplant the introductory words from Zech. 9: 9, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion ; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem”, which we naturally would have expected to be used. For it is not as if the main quotation from Zech. 9: 9 were without a suitable herald voice ! This cannot be accidental. Clearly, they are to be understood as the opening words of a familiar passage. We must therefore seek in the passage itself the reason why its opening clause is used by Matthew. Immediately the meaning becomes clear. For the next words are “Behold, thy salvation cometh,” words that lie parallel with those also quoted from Zech. 9: 9, “Behold, thy king

cometh." And the words that follow in Isa. 62: 11, "Behold, his reward is with him", look back to Isa. 40: 10, which in turn is preceded in verse 9 by the proclamation to Zion, "Behold your God", and this in turn reminds us of Isa. 52: 7, "Thy God reigneth"—thus interlocking a whole series of passages. All this is implicit in the bare mention of the words quoted in Matt. 21: 5, "Say ye to the daughter of Zion." When writing materials were scarce, scribes knew how to condense !

*"Behold, thy King cometh unto thee,
Meek, and riding upon an ass,
And upon a colt the foal of an ass."* Matt. 21: 5.

That part of the quotation which comes from Zech. 9: 9, and which forms its main substance, is, in the Lord's ceremonial entrance into Jerusalem, seen to have had literal fulfilment. This did not come to pass by chance. For since He Himself sent for the ass and colt, it is clear that in so doing He claimed to be the Messianic King whose advent is foretold in Zechariah's prophecy. But striking as the words of the prophecy are in their correspondence with the actual event, this does not exhaust their scope of reference. For the action was symbolic of a royal entry in peace, in contrast to a warlike one upon a battle charger. This is made plain from the context in Zech. 9: 10, "I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations." The occasion therefore included also a pledge of blessing to the Gentiles, and agrees with the classic Messianic prophecy in Micah 5: 2-4, which declares that One born in Bethlehem would nevertheless be He "that is ruler in Israel", who, moreover, should be "great unto the ends of the earth". The words in Zech. 9: 10, "and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth", link the passage with Ps. 72, where the very same words are used, thus bringing the whole Psalm into a common context with these other passages of Scripture. In this composite quotation in Matt. 21: 5 the writer is not only drawing attention to a particular literal fulfilment of prophecy but by a concise form of reference introducing a whole background of related truth in the divine economy of revelation.

*"Hosanna to the son of David : Blessed is he
that cometh in the name of the Lord ; Hosanna
in the highest."* Matt. 21: 9.

"Hosanna to the son of David." Matt. 21: 15.

The quotation in verse 5 is the evangelist's own subsequent reflection upon the event, for John 12: 16 says, "These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him." That in verse 9, however, taken from Ps. 118: 25, 26, was the actual cry of the multitude. The Psalm describes the processional entry of the King of Israel into the house of the Lord. Students of Scripture may be divided upon who the actual king referred to in its original application was, but none can doubt that the Psalm points forward prophetically to the promised Messianic King, of whom all the others were but types. The acclamation of the multitudes, echoed in the temple itself by the children (these are quick to catch the mood of their elders) was the spontaneous recognition of a parallel between the Psalm and the occasion, even if the cry had no enduring depth of conviction.

"He that cometh." Until the identity of the promised Messiah was known He was appropriately referred to in this way, and is addressed so in the Psalm. This title is given a further shade of meaning by the marginal reference in the R.V., *"He that entereth,"* which looks back to Ps. 118: 19, "Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will enter into them," and throws a light upon the significant words of Matt. 21: 12, "And Jesus entered into the temple of God." This train of thought irresistibly brings to mind also the words of Psalm 24, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of glory shall come in."

The words of verse 25 in Psalm 118, "Save now, we beseech thee, O Lord", have their literal verbal equivalent in the word "Hosanna" of Matt. 21: 9. For Psalm 118 is a Psalm of triumph after conflict, and of salvation brought to the subjects of the King, and celebrated by His triumphant victory-march into the house of the Lord. He comes "bringing salvation". The added refrain "Hosanna in the highest" has a slight echo of Ps. 148: 1. Also the epithet "Son of David" links the cry of the multitude with the promise made in 2 Sam. 7: 12-16 and confirmed in Ps. 132: 11, and thus introduces a classic theme in Messianic prophecy.

"It is written, my house shall be called a house of prayer: but ye make it a den of robbers." Matt. 21: 13.

The next quotation (v. 13), again a composite one, is recorded as being made by the Lord Himself. It consists of two statements: "My house shall be called a house of prayer" (cited from Isa. 56:

7); "Ye make it a den of robbers" (cited from Jer. 7: 11). Their juxtaposition presents a striking contrast. What could be more antithetical than a divine sanctuary and a robbers' cave!

Once again, the Old Testament context from which the quotations come extends the reference. If we look up Isaiah 56 we find that the call of the Gentiles is immediately in view. Strangers are to be brought into God's holy mountain, and these would share in the worship and sacrifices of the house of the Lord. That this is the primary reason for the quotation in Matt. 21 is not in doubt, for the parallel version in Mark's Gospel plainly quotes in full, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations" (Mk. 11: 17). Not that Israel would be excluded, for Isa. 56: 8 explicitly tells us that it is the Lord God who gathers the outcasts of Israel who says, "Yet will I gather *others* to him, besides his own that are gathered." This presupposes a scattering of Israel in judgment and a subsequent re-gathering, followed by a gathering of "others" from among the nations. Israel indeed has priority (Rom. 1: 16), and the Lord came first of all to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15: 24). But He also spoke of "other sheep" that He had (Jn. 10: 16), thus directly referring to this same prophecy in Isaiah 56. On this occasion the gathering of the Gentiles must have been very present before the Lord's mind, for it was at this time that certain Greeks came, desiring to see Him, and in these He had prevision of the "much fruit" which would follow His death, now so near (Jn. 12: 20-24). And if at this time also He wept over the city (Lk. 19: 41) it was because He foresaw the early scattering of Israel consequent upon their rejection of Him.

This whole web of circumstances was brought further into focus by the quotation from Jer. 7: 11, which not only describes the degeneracy of the chief priests and scribes but takes into account the judgment that must inevitably follow such apostasy. The words in Jer. 7: 11, coming after those quoted in Matt. 21: 13, namely, "Behold I, even I, have seen it, saith the Lord", remind us of the poignant words of Mark 11: 11, "He entered into Jerusalem, into the temple, and . . . looked round upon all things." The still subsequent words in Jer. 7: 14 f. foretell the destruction of the temple and the dispersal of the Jewish people. They were once more to have literal fulfilment: "Therefore will I do unto the house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave unto you and to your fathers, as I have done unto Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim."

Did the rulers of the temple, when they heard the Lord's words, "Ye make it a den of robbers," perceive the implication and fuller reference? Or were their eyes blinded even to this? Yet in speaking these words the Lord appealed to their professed knowledge of the Sacred Writings, saying, "Is it not written?" (Mk. 11: 17).

*"Yea: did ye never read, Out of the mouth
of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected
praise?"* Matt. 21: 16.

Again it is the Lord who is quoting Scripture and doing it so effectively as to confound His adversaries. The words are from Psalm 8, which celebrates the excellence of the Lord's name, and does so by rising in thought from His glory as displayed in creation to that found in His gracious dealings with mankind. Even the inarticulate cry of a mere infant has in it that which expresses the providential kindness of God toward the human race. How much more, then, the joyous abandon of young children who still retain something of that simplicity commended elsewhere by the Lord (Matt. 11: 25; 18: 1-5)! And how much more inexcusable those who had attained years of full understanding, yet who in stubborn silence refused to honour Him who came in the Name of the Lord! If frail man, upon whom God had bestowed such honour and glory, such dignity and dominion, were to remain silent, the inanimate things of creation, the very stones, would cry out in His praise. Thus the Saviour's reply was rebuke as well as vindication. Here again, by the praise of little children, God had put to shame them that were wise (1 Cor. 1: 27), and, to use the language of the Psalm, "stilled the enemy and the avenger".

*"The stone which the builders rejected,
The same was made the head of the Corner:
This was from the Lord,
And it is marvellous in our eyes. . . .
And he that falleth on this stone shall be
broken to pieces: but on whomsoever it shall
fall, it will scatter him as dust."* Matt. 21: 42, 44.

These verses provide yet another example of a composite quotation based upon a common theme, namely, the ancient symbol of "the stone of Israel" (Gen. 49: 24). Does this original mention of the stone as a divine title look back to Jacob's experience at Haran, when he took "one of the stones of the place, and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep" (Gen. 28: 11), and later "set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it" (v. 18)?

Later passages in the Old Testament speak enigmatically of a foundation stone laid in Zion by the Lord, but rejected by the builders and becoming to them a stone of stumbling, though ultimately brought forth to be the head-stone of the corner. Three of these are here quoted by the Lord Jesus with reference to Himself (Psa. 118: 22, 23 ; Isa. 8: 14, 15 ; and Dan. 2: 34, 35, 44, 45). The first of these is also used by Peter (*vide* Acts 4: 11 and 1 Pet. 2: 7), who links it, as does Matt. 21: 44, with Isa. 8: 14, and in addition with Isa. 28: 16. The apostle Paul also, in Rom. 9: 32, 33 makes a significant fusion of separate Scriptures by combining Isa. 8: 14 with Isa. 28: 16.

In Matt. 21: 44 a still further extension of reference to the stone symbol is made by the use of a clause from a passage in Daniel that treats of the development of the great Gentile world powers and the final establishment of the kingdom of God (Dan. 2). Thus the complete context of the composite quotation made by the Lord concerning "the stone" not only covers the relation with Israel, both in their unbelief and their restoration, but also establishes His relation with the whole field of human history. And may it not be that the later interpretative use of these same Scriptures springs from the Lord's employment of them on this occasion? All illustrate the wide perspectives which open out from these several Old Testament sources, here so effectively brought together.

In conclusion, our study shows that the Scriptures enclose hidden meanings, not in any esoteric sense (for the plain surface reading is without equivocation) but in the sense that they have a richness of internal reference that requires to be 'opened up' by diligent search and enquiry. In some such way the Lord must have "opened" the Scriptures to the two disciples as they walked homeward to Emmaus. Thus the minds of the disciples, too, were "opened" that they might understand the Scriptures. There is nothing fanciful about this mode of interpretation. Scripture is interlocked with Scripture, and in each a sort of chain-reaction takes place, triggering off a whole series of interrelated passages. These ramifications are not only verbal but reveal historical continuity, and so point to the grand unity of the divine purpose. The earlier elements, while based on history, are also prophetic—not simply in the sense of foretelling things to come (though they are that also) but because of their vital relation to events still future. This is prophecy in its highest sense, linking the spoken word of God and the full sweep of human history.

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