

A Response to W. Edward Glenny, “Gentiles and the People of God”

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This paper is not a defense of the “traditional” dispensational interpretation of Acts 15,¹ nor a critique of the interpretation by progressive dispensationalists²—since there are variations within each of those categories. Each approach, however, has its distinctive traits. Traditional dispensational interpreters, though disagreeing among themselves on some matters, have been reticent to see Acts 15 as providing any form of OT fulfillment of Amos 9 in the church, and progressive dispensationalists, with some variations, use the same texts to argue for an inaugurated (but not yet consummated) Davidic kingdom in the present dispensation.³

My assignment is rather to interact with one particular approach to these texts and suggest both what can be learned from it and what might be challenged. Although being a respondent is easier than being the plenary speaker (in that one does not have to present nor argue for a comprehensive alternate solution), responding to a technical paper such as this one is quite a challenge, especially given the LXX⁴ technicalities presented by someone who is a specialist in both NT and LXX.⁵

You should know up front that Dr. Glenny was my *Doktorvater*—and one tends to be cautious when challenging one who holds that respected position. I well remember the

¹ More specifically, my purpose is not to defend Brian Moulton’s dissertation, which Dr. Glenny uses as representative of the more traditional position (Brian K. Moulton, “The Use of the Davidic Covenant in Acts 15” [Ph.D. diss, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1999]).

² I will not address directly nor critique Darrell Bock’s essay on Acts, which is the equivalent progressive foil (Darrell Bock, “Evidence from Acts,” in *A Case for Premillennialism*, ed. D. Campbell and J. Townsend, 181-98 [Chicago: Moody Press, 1992]).

³ I have not attempted to incorporate the wide scope of research on this topic. Although I have read some of the key articles (many [but not all] of those that Dr. Glenny cites), I have not attempted to be exhaustive, limiting my work to this paper and the issues it raises. I received a rough draft of the paper in early October and a revision that was largely “content complete” in mid-October. The bulk of the response was written during a two-week “window” in mid-October and is based on the 2d draft. I have updated the page references to the 3d (and final?) edition of early November which is to be distributed at the conference.

⁴ In this paper I am using “Septuagint/LXX” in the non-technical sense to include what is more properly designated as the Septuagint (the earliest Greek translation of the Pentateuch) as well as the Old Greek translations of the remainder of the OT and the Apocrypha. The issues discussed here do not necessitate more technical terminology.

⁵ Dr. Glenny is nearing completion of his second doctorate, this time a Ph.D. at the Univ. of Minnesota. His dissertation is the translation technique of LXX-Amos; the fruit of that study can be seen in this paper. (His first doctorate was a Th.D. in NT at DTS in 1987, and his dissertation dealt specifically with the sort of issues explored in his current paper: “The Hermeneutics of the Use of the Old Testament in 1 Peter.”)

blush of embarrassment in being “called” on my handling of a text in Thucydides in one of his doctoral seminars on Advanced Greek Grammar a dozen years ago. I hope to avoid such gaffes today. I have learned much from him and count him a friend. We are not here today as adversaries, but as fellow travelers struggling with the same text within the same hermeneutical system with the same commitments to exegetical fidelity. We do see some things a bit differently, but that’s why I’m the respondent rather than one of Dr. Glenn’s fellow progressive dispensationalists. ☺ To help set the tone that I intend for my response I have deliberately chosen to refer to Professor Glenn simply as Ed in the remainder of my paper—no disrespect is intended. Although some may think I speak strongly at times, what I say is not a personal attack nor do I denigrate Ed’s work in this paper. This is an academic response which will not affect our personal friendship or fellowship. I have learned a lot from the paper and I appreciate the opportunity to interact with Ed in this venue.

Summary

Ed’s paper is a good model of exegetical methodology. He begins with the structure and exegesis of the OT text in its context. The LXX evidence is discussed next and the various possibilities for explaining the changes from the MT are canvassed. “After this” (pun intended!) comes the NT data from the citation in Acts 15 including its changes from the LXX and MT. The various conclusions offered by varying hermeneutical models are summarized in light of the exegetical data already in place, and specific conclusions are drawn. If I have understood the paper correctly, the argument runs somewhat as follows.

In terms of the OT text, Ed argues that Amos 9:11 places the prophecy in the future Day of the Lord (the probable referent of “in that day”) when God will restore the Davidic kingdom, both dynasty and reign, consisting of a reunified north and south. As a result, the Davidic kingdom will subdue the surrounding nations, referenced here as Edom by synecdoche. “Called by my/God’s name” in this context does not refer to a covenantal relationship (as it sometimes does in reference to Israel), but to the result of conquest: the nations become God’s subjugated vassal. This is the fulfillment of Deuteronomic promises and eventuates, not in doom, but ultimately in blessing for these gentiles under the aegis of the restored Davidic kingdom.

The paper then takes a much more technical turn as it examines the LXX translation of Amos. Ed suggests that in LXX-Amos we have, not a judgment oracle, but one of salvation in which is foretold the future restoration of David’s dynasty and kingdom. There is evidence of stylistic “polish” by the LXX translator of Amos⁶; his work is not a simple interlinear or formal equivalent.⁷

⁶ The alterations that Ed points out take some careful reading and thought, but his conclusions in this section will generally withstand scrutiny. In addition to the instance which Ed notes in Amos 9:11, Dines also cites instances of similar aesthetic changes in 1:3–2:6 and 9:2–4 (*The Septuagint* [London: T. & T. Clark, 2004], 55–56). In other words, the phenomenon noted in 9:11 is not unique, but appears to be characteristic of LXX-Amos. I suspect, based on Ed’s notes, that Dine’s dissertation (“The Septuagint of Amos: A Study in

Though much of the LXX is an accurate representation of the MT, some of the changes have modified the meaning. The best known of which are the change from “that they may possess the remnant of Edom” (= MT), to “that the remnant of men may seek me” (= LXX). Ed offers several possible explanations, concluding that “it appears that several factors may have influenced the translator in this passage, and the changes likely reflect the theology of the translator, which was influenced by other portions of Scripture, especially the Prophets.” To substantiate and explain this conclusion, Ed cites favorably from Bruce and Bauckham,⁸ the later of which concludes that deliberate alternate readings such as this would be considered (by a Jewish-Christian exegete) “a legitimate way of reading the Hebrew text” due to their “exegetical potential.” The LXX is said to present a very different idea from the MT: rather than God’s name being called over the gentiles by right of conquest, the LXX pictures the gentiles seeking a covenant relationship with God because his name is called upon them, thus constituting them the people of God *as gentiles*.⁹

Turning next to Acts 15, and particularly to James’ speech which bolsters the testimonies of Peter, Barnabas, and Paul by an appeal to Scripture, we find Amos 9 cited in a form that most closely corresponds with LXX-Amos. The citation provides Scriptural support for the inclusion of gentiles as the people of God on an equal level with Jews. Ed argues that this is actually a conflate quote (noting the plural προφητῶν), drawing from several different texts in the Prophets, usually from a Septuagintal-type text, but sometimes from a Hebrew *Vorlage*. After detailing the specific differences from (what we know as) the LXX, the paper explores possible sources for these variants in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, and Zechariah. These conflated passages are all *in harmony* (συμφωνέω, v. 15) with each other and with the apostolic testimony (vv 7–12). The key phrase “hut of David” (τὴν σκηνὴν Δαυίδ, v. 16) has been taken in at least four different ways. Ed concludes, following Strauss, that it refers to the Davidic dynasty, restored through the resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

Next there is a survey of representative interpretations by both traditional and progressive dispensationalists, the traditionalist view as defended by a recent DTS

Interpretation,” Ph.D. diss., Univ. of London, 1991)—which I have not seen—cites a number of additional examples.

⁷ If this is the case, then we have evidence that the translator was actively engaged with his text and might well have felt free to take other “liberties” in his translation.

⁸ F. F. Bruce, “Prophetic Interpretation in the Septuagint,” *BIOSCS* 12 (1979): 17–26 and Richard Bauckham, “James and the Gentiles (Acts 15.13–21),” in *History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts*, ed. B. Witherington III, 154–184 (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996)—the quote in the summary above is from p. 161.

⁹ Ed has opposing statements here (at least in the first draft I read). Initially he says that the nations seek God *because his name is called on them*, but later we learn that this seeking is the result of God restoring the Davidic dynasty. These are related factors, but the first is not what the text actually says (the 2d is legitimate).

dissertation by Brian Moulton, and the progressive view from Darrell Bock.¹⁰ Kaiser's non-dispensational, promise theology approach is also reviewed here.

The council letter (vv 23–29) is considered next. Drawing heavily on Bauckham's article, it is proposed that the four prohibitions for gentile Christians are drawn from Lev 17–18. These are selected since they were that portion of the law which applied to resident aliens (בְּתוֹכְכֶם הַגֵּר הַגֵּר, e.g., Lev 17:12) in Israel. These four provisions in particular are connected with the situation in Acts 15 by means of a *gezērâ šāwâ* hermeneutic¹¹ which observes parallel conceptual passages in Lev 17–18, Jer 12, and Zech 2 and בְּתוֹךְ (“in the midst”) as a catch word—though now from the Hebrew text rather than LXX.

Four conclusions from this study are offered: 1. The existence of the church is a function of the restored Davidic dynasty; 2. The church is neither Israel nor her replacement, but equally God's people through the Davidic Covenant; 3. The church is not a parenthesis, but part of the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant; and 4. The church is not a new, second people of God, but is incorporated (by relation to Messiah) into a renewed Israel, the one people of God.

With that summary of my understanding, let me move to the kudos and caveats that I deem appropriate.

Kudos

By rights, this very short section should be much longer. It is as brief as it is, not because I could not list other things with which I agree, but simply because I have limited time allotted—and because in this setting the goal is to generate discussion regarding the divergent emphases of traditional and progressive dispensationalism as it relates to a crucial passage in Acts 15.

I appreciate Ed's critique and rejection of the replacement theology reflected in Bauckham's article (which identifies David's tent as the church—the “true Israel”).¹² The discussion of David's hut/tent I have found helpful. Though I might work out some of the implications of this discussion a bit differently, that this is a figure for the Davidic dynasty/kingdom is well established in its OT context. In general I found the discussion of Amos 9 in the MT to be well done. Since that must be the starting point for any discussion of its use in the NT, this lays a critical foundation for the later discussion. As one might expect from someone working on the translation technique of LXX-Amos, Ed has provided a very detailed examination of the LXX text, especially in terms of the textual differences from the MT and the possible changes in theological emphasis between those two texts.

¹⁰ I will not summarize these sections since they are only representative and not a direct part of Ed's argument. Moulton's work is disappointing; though it presents a traditional dispensational view, it is neither a rigorous treatment nor well argued.

¹¹ Citing Bauckham, Ed might prefer to call this “exegetical logic.”

¹² Ed's discussion of this is crystallized best in the lengthy n89 on p. 27.

Caveats

Ed's paper is helpful, not only in providing some significant discussion with which I agree, but also—as we all expected—some proposals that help us focus on areas where TDs and PDs do not agree. So let me turn now to my catalog of caveats. They are not all of the same weight and some may not even be crucial to the TD/PD debate, but I will enjoy reciting them, nonetheless. ☺ I will first address some smaller issues roughly in the order in which they appear in the paper, then I will turn to some more significant questions, and finally to the fundamental matters upon which our differences hinge.

First, I would observe that Ed's conclusion that in the restored kingdom the gentiles will enjoy blessing “*just like the remnant of Israel*” (7–8, emphasis added) is neither stated nor implied in the text of Amos. Perhaps that could be argued from other texts, but it cannot be substantiated from Amos 9:11–12.

Second, I must confess to wondering if small variations in the LXX text might be “over blown” in significance. Perhaps this is my non-specialist viewpoint,¹³ but my *perception* is that this is not uncommon in LXX studies. In the broader field of LXX studies (i.e., not Ed's paper in particular), I sometimes wonder how much of what I read about variations in the text or translation is legitimate. An exegete *should* pay close attention to his text, but not to the point of creating artificial differences. The question, of course, is just what differences are significant and which ones are imagined.¹⁴

As one example of what I have in mind, Ed points out that the LXX of Amos 9:11 is “very polished” (8–9), citing several features of the text. Some, such as the harmonization of the pronouns, seem obvious, but I'm less confident that we ought to make much of the pairs of identical verbs in that verse. Were this a total change from MT, perhaps, but only one change is necessary since one pair already matches in MT and the translation choices are straightforward ones rather than unusual choices. The same may be true of the four fold repetition of ἀνα-. Perhaps this is stylistic, but the concept of *rebuilding*¹⁵ is already inherent in the vocabulary and context of MT.¹⁶

Third, on p. 15 Ed says, in reference to LXX-Amos, that the nations “seek the Lord, the God of Israel, *because his name is called upon them*” (emphasis added). He contrasts the MT and LXX at this point (“whereas in MT...”). But this is not what the text says. It is *because*

¹³ I have read a fair bit in LXX studies and teach an elective class that spends about half the semester reading from the LXX (in Greek). Of about two dozen chapters in my forthcoming *Koine Greek Reader* (Kregel, 2007?), six chapters are from the LXX. I also deal with the LXX in a Ph.D. seminar in NT backgrounds, but I have neither the training nor ability to wade in the depths of LXX studies where Ed and other LXX scholars swim regularly.

¹⁴ Karen Jobes and Moisés Silva point out that determining if a difference between the MT and the LXX is due to an alternate *Vorlage* or to a deliberate change by the translators of the LXX is “perhaps the weightiest problem of Septuagint scholarship” (*Invitation to the Septuagint* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000], 90).

¹⁵ R. Timothy McLay observes this also (*The Use of the Septuagint in New Testament Research* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003], 19).

¹⁶ These two paragraphs are intended as a qualification of my comments in n6, not a contradiction of that judgment.

God rebuilds David's tent that the nations seek God. The reference to those upon whom God's name is called is part of the compound subject phrase¹⁷: the seekers are the remnant who have God's name called upon them. In other words, the referent in LXX-Amos may be the same as in MT-Amos at this point. This may not be an "alternate reading" at all. Is the purpose of restoring David's tent "fundamentally different" (15) in MT and LXX? Perhaps the difference is not nearly so dramatic.

Fourth, a brief note is in order regarding the methodology of argumentation on p. 27. There Ed argues against a particular view of David's fallen tent (#1 in the list from Strauss) on the basis that it is "foreign to the rest of the NT." But if we are talking about Amos 9, it would be methodologically invalid to reject an interpretation of an OT text based on NT theology. Perhaps he intends the use of that phrase in Acts 15 (esp. since he refers to "the rest of the NT")—but then we would have to ask why we don't interpret the figure in its OT context. I hope this does not imply a NT-priority view in which the NT provides the "real meaning" of the OT text for that would raise serious hermeneutical questions.¹⁸

Fifth, in regard to the connection of Acts 15:20 with Lev 17–18 (pp. 36–39), it is interesting that we must now assume MT rather than LXX! Thus far in the paper it has been the LXX holding pride of place in understanding Acts 15, but now we must shift to MT. The proposed connection of these two texts is based on *gezērâ šāwâ* (catch word, word association). It is actually a rather indirect association, since it is assumed that the key is the occurrence of *קִּתְּוֹן* in Lev 17:8, 10, 12, 13; 18:26, but this word does not appear in Amos 9. Rather it is in the *MT context* of two other *LXX texts* (Jer 12:16; Zech 2:15) that have been proposed as the source for parts of the conflate quote in Acts 15! As "creative" as these associations may be, it seems to be a rather involved and remote association. Perhaps I may be excused for skepticism of this sort of "intricate" exegesis.

Perhaps more significantly in terms of the dispensational question, if we were to grant the explanation given, the argument would appear to assume (though it is not stated directly¹⁹) that these four prohibitions are included because this is the part of the Law that is (still?) binding on (believing) gentiles. But if the Mosaic Covenant is now defunct (as an administrative covenant replaced by the new covenant), the Law is *not* binding on Christians, whether Jew or gentile—as Ed himself notes on p. 17 n59!

Next, I would like to raise some questions that are perhaps of greater significance in our discussion. Although I have expressed my agreement with Ed's conclusion that David's tent refers to the Davidic dynasty/kingdom, I would like to ask *when* is this dynasty

¹⁷ See the grammatical diagram in the appendix.

¹⁸ I assume the hermeneutical autonomy of the OT at this point. Although the NT certainly adds new information and helps integrate various OT texts, the NT does not reinterpret or change the meaning of the OT. This is true even in areas such as typology, for there the new referents or escalated meaning comes at the level of the NT text; typology does not retroject new meaning into the OT antitype.

¹⁹ Bauckham *does* argue this; see the quote from Bauckham in Ed's n130 (p. 39) and Bauckham's own article at greater length.

re-established? Ed makes a point of the Davidic dynasty being re-established *prior* to the gentiles seeking God; the first is the cause of the second (15). I agree. This is clear in the MT (לְמַעַן), in LXX, and in NT (both ὄπως). Yet elsewhere in Ed’s paper we learn that this restoration includes the reunification of the northern and southern kingdoms (5), and that it is not just that a Davidite is to reign, but that David’s tent (i.e., his dynasty) will be rebuilt *as in former times* (5, 10). If that is the case (and I think Ed is right on this point), then the restoration of the dynasty is yet future. The response may be an *already/not yet*. Perhaps that is a legitimate explanation in some situations,²⁰ but I think it fails here on two counts. One, the point of the restoration seems to be that it is something of this magnitude that provokes the gentiles to seek God. He will restore the dynasty as in former times *so that* they may possess the remnant of Edom (Amos), or *so that* the nations will seek God (Acts). I fail to see how having Jesus seated on the throne of David in heaven produces the expected response. Second, the text explicitly includes “as in former times” as part of the restoration/rebuilding. Jesus ruling as a Davidite on a heavenly throne but not exercising immediate dominion over the nation Israel in the land is not “as in former times.” It would be a very different type of reign and a singular sort of kingdom. Yet it is this feature that is explicitly listed in Amos 9 as being the cause for the nations seeking God. I think if we follow the description of the text, we cannot postulate a restored Davidic dynasty/kingdom until a “former times” sort of kingdom exists.²¹

I would also want to ask if the quote in Acts 15 is, indeed, a *conflate* text?²² Ed has argued (20–26) that the quotation in Acts 15 is a conflate one, drawing phrasal fragments from multiple OT texts to produce our text. But is this the case? Or is it an adaptation by the writer? That NT authors adapt OT quotations to fit their NT context is well known.²³ I would comment on three issues in this regard. First, “after this” (μετὰ ταῦτα, tech., “after these things”) is found in the NT in place of “in that day” in MT (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) and LXX-Amos (ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ). Both Hebrew and LXX phrases are very common ones, often

²⁰ Theoretically, there might not be a problem with Jesus reigning over the church *in addition* to his reign over Israel even though this is not stated in the OT text (i.e., some form of a complementary hermeneutic), but that is different from what is described here.

²¹ I note also that Acts 15 does not include any “fulfillment language.” This cannot be predicated on συμφωνέω since that word has a very general meaning and is not used elsewhere in a similar context (i.e., in reference to a text of Scripture); it occurs only 6× in the NT. (Nor do the Apostolic Fathers use it in this way; 7 ×, all in Hermas.)

²² I have no objection to the category of conflate quotation; it is self-evident in a number of quotations of the OT in the NT (e.g., Mark 1:2–3 citing both Mal 3:1 and Isa 40:3 as a single text, in this case attributed to “Isaiah the prophet”). The difference is in the combination of two substantive, identifiable quotations (in the case of Mark 1) as opposed to multiple words and phrases (esp. common ones) drawn from widely scattered texts.

²³ E.g., John 19:37 adapts the referent of the pronoun from “me” (God) to “him/the one whom” (Jesus); see also Matt 1:23, “they” for “she” in Isa 7:14, etc. See the discussion of this in Paul’s citations by E. Earle Ellis, *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament* (1957; reprint: Baker, 1981), 11–16, esp. n6. Ellis also points out that a citation formula is no guarantee of exact quotation, illustrating with 1 Cor 1:31 (p. 22).

with a similar semantic value as is found here.²⁴ Richard argues that the phrase is used in the Acts 15 quote because μετὰ ταῦτα is “a favorite expression of Luke,”²⁵ and of the two dozen occurrences in the NT, Luke does account for about a third of them.²⁶ With a common phrase and one distinctive of Luke, I am skeptical that we should trace it to Hosea 3:5. It may not even be intended to be a part of the quotation, serving simply as an introductory, transitional statement.²⁷

The second variation in Acts, “I will return” (ἀναστρέψω), replaces “I will raise up” (קָם־וְשָׁמַר in MT, ἀναστήσω in LXX). The NT term is as infrequent as the LXX term is common.²⁸ Ed proposes that it comes from Zech 8:3 or more likely Jer 12:15 because of conceptual parallels in the context. Both of these instances, however, are forms of ἐπιστρέφω rather than ἀναστρέφω. Perhaps, but given the very short snatch of text (only part of one word!), and especially with the change of words, it seems “extremely tenuous.”²⁹ I am not convinced.

The last phrase evidencing variation is “known from eternity” (v 18, γνωστὰ ἀπ’ αἰῶνος). Ed tells us (without argument) that this is a conflation from Isa 45:21. This is a difficult text, but for grammatical, not theological reasons. Although it is true that the language here is “reminiscent”³⁰ of Isaiah’s statement, there are significant differences as

²⁴ The Hebrew and LXX phrases both occur over 200 times.

²⁵ Earl Richard, “The Creative Use of Amos by the Author of Acts,” *NovT* 24 (1982): 46. See also McLay, *Use of the Septuagint*, 29.

²⁶ Total: 7 of 25, 3 in the Gospel and 4 in Acts; the others being in John: 7 in his Gospel and 9 in Revelation.

²⁷ If it is intended to establish a specific time relationship, there are several possible referents of “this”: the events of Amos 9:1–10 (thus W. Kaiser, “The Davidic Promise and the Inclusion of the Gentiles,” *JETS* 20 [1977]: 104–06), or the events of the early chapters of Acts (> v 15 > v 14 > vv 7–11, so W. Aldrich [“The Interpretation of Acts 15:13–18,” *BSac* 111 (1954): 320–23]). Given that James *does* adapt the opening words of the quotation using a near demonstrative pronoun (ταῦτα), the only possible antecedent of which is the description found in vv 7–11 (via the topic markers: καθὼς πρῶτον, v 14 and τούτῳ, v 15), it would seem necessary to conclude that the Amos prophecy is placed chronologically after the time when God is described as taking out of the gentiles a people for his name. This would force us to see a subsequent time period when Amos 9 is fulfilled. Had James intended otherwise we might have expected the “after this” to precede the quotation, or for the opening words of Amos 9 to remain unchanged.

²⁸ The word ἀναστρέφω (lexeme of ἀναστρέψω) occurs 9 × in the NT, though it is more common in LXX at just over 100 ×, while ἀνίτημι (lexeme of ἀναστήσω) occurs nearly 500 × in the LXX.

²⁹ As McLay says, “It is suggested by some that the opening of the quotation has been influenced by Jeremiah 12:15, but there is no linguistic justification for this connection. The only similarity between Jeremiah 12:15 and Amos 9:11 is the theology that expresses that the Lord will have compassion of the nations after Judah is restored. Is this similar theology sufficient ground for claiming that the writer of Acts was influenced by Jeremiah? A positive response would be based on extremely tenuous reasoning given the fact that there is no demonstrable lexical dependence of the quote in Acts upon Jeremiah” (*Use of the Septuagint*, 28).

³⁰ This is F. F. Bruce’s term, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (2d ed., London: Tyndale, 1952; reprint, Eerdmans, 1984), 298. Likewise Kirsopp Lake and Henry Cadbury say that it reflects “the thought (not the Greek wording) of ... [Isa 45:21]” (*The Beginnings of Christianity*, ed. F. J. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, part 1, *The Acts of the Apostles*, vol 4, *English Translation and Commentary* [London: Macmillan, [1932]; reprint, Baker, 1965], 176).

well.³¹ There is not sufficient space here to resolve this question; I will be content to point out that there are several other possibilities that should be considered before assuming it is a conflate quotation.³²

It remains, in my mind, questionable as to the likelihood that James is deliberately selecting fragmentary phrases from several other prophets based on contextual associations³³ to create a conflated text at this point.³⁴

Moving on to even more substantive issues, Ed argues that “the Spirit signifies that the age of Messianic salvation and deliverance promised in the OT has arrived” (17 n57, citing a half dozen OT texts).³⁵ This is an over-simplified statement. The only common factor in all the texts cited is that Messiah and his kingdom will evidence the work of the Spirit, but that alone is not distinctive—the Spirit has been active in all eras (though in different ways). To identify something unique we must add the contextual features³⁶—and almost

³¹ The three texts that need to be compared at this point are as follows:

LXX-Amos 9:12c: λέγει κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιῶν ταῦτα

NT-Acts 15:17c–18: λέγει κύριος ποιῶν ταῦτα 18 γνωστὰ ἀπ’ αἰῶνος

LXX-Isa 45:21: ἵνα γνῶσιν ἅμα τίς ἀκουστὰ ἐποίησεν ταῦτα ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς—which is a quite different phrase.

³² The quote might end with ἐπικέκληται τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐπ’ αὐτοῦς, with the remainder of vv 17 and 18 being an added statement by James. Or the quote might end with λέγει κύριος ποιῶν ταῦτα. Or this might be a loose paraphrase at this point. The writer might have been quoting from memory. There are other possibilities as well, but these serve to point out that no one conclusion can be assumed. See also McLay’s discussion of this clause (*Use of the Septuagint*, 29).

³³ McLay rejects strongly the use of such conceptual associations without linguistic parallels to justify conclusions regarding NT variation from the OT text (*Use of the Septuagint*, 28–29).

³⁴ I do not think that the plural “prophets” (προφητῶν) need argue otherwise; usage seems somewhat arbitrary at times. The singular can refer to more than one prophet (Mark 1:2), and the plural to a single prophet (John 6:45), or a single statement in the prophets (Matt 2:23, though this might be a collective summary). The term is a collective reference to the prophetic corpus even if only one of the individual books is involved (e.g., Acts 13:15 in which likely a reading from only one of the Prophets is intended, though Abraham Block contends that the reading of a selection from the Prophets comes in the time of the Mishnah [*The Biblical and Historical Background of Jewish Customs and Ceremonies* (NY: KTAV, 1980), 134], which would postdate the NT; perhaps he refers to the time when the liturgical readings were codified). The reference to the words of the prophets “agreeing with this” (τούτω συμφωνοῦσιν οἱ λόγοι τῶν προφητῶν) will not resolve the questions here one way or the other since συμφωνέω has a wide semantic range (BDAG, 960–61). Neither views of fulfillment nor analogy (or any other view) should be based on συμφωνέω.

³⁵ For a similar argument, see D. Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology*, JSNTSupp 12 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987), e.g., 166–69.

³⁶ Ed’s list (with my comments): Isa 11 (see v 2, only says that Messiah himself would have the Spirit resting upon him); 32:15 (Spirit poured out, yes, but next phrase says “and desert becomes a fruitful field”!); 42 (Messianic signs, yes, fulfilled during Jesus’ earthly ministry; but in itself cannot prove that this continues post-Pentecost; such a conclusion would have to be established first, then this text might be relevant); 44 (v 3, “I will pour out my Spirit on [Israel]”—says nothing re. gentiles); 61 (vv 1–2a = Luke 4:16, Jesus’ incarnate ministry, but we can’t assume from this that the Messianic kingdom has begun; the King came and performed Messianic signs, but that’s all); Ezek 36–37 (36:24f is a new covenant *Israel* text which includes their regathering to and restoration of the land); Joel 2 (vv 28f = Acts 2, only one common feature: Spirit poured out, but not on “all people” and none of the other accompanying signs were fulfilled [apart from allegorical interpretations of them]; best viewed as an illustration/analogy). On Joel 2/Acts 2, which raises similar issues

none of these have been seen in the church, certainly not enough upon which to base a claim for a reigning Davidic Messiah. Jesus did fulfill some parts of these texts during his incarnate ministry, but that served only to substantiate his Messianic credentials,³⁷ not to prove that the kingdom had begun in any sense.³⁸ And then, too, note that these are mostly New Covenant texts, not Davidic, and they refer specifically to Israel. None of the texts that Ed cites refer to gentiles. The New Covenant *does* have church relevance which the NT clearly states (IMHO!)³⁹; there are no Davidic Covenant texts that are nearly so explicit or clear as those regarding the New Covenant in relation to the church. Davidic Covenant connections almost always seem to be argued by implication and allusion, theological constructs that draw together bits and pieces and weave them into a system.⁴⁰ There is no problem with making theological connections, but it is nice to have some clear, solid, explicit texts around which to associate these less clear allusions; exegesis needs to precede theological system.

A similar issue is raised on p. 17 n58, “John prophecies a two-fold baptism (Spirit and fire) to inaugurate the Messianic Age.” This is overstated. John’s prophecy only specifies what Messiah will *do*, but that it indicates the inauguration of the Messianic Age is not stated in the text. That is a theological construct that cannot be substantiated by this text.

On another issue, Ed suggests that explaining Acts 15 as an analogous use of Amos 9 lessens the authority of James’ argument (19, esp. n64)⁴¹ and “diminishes the fulfillment or realization of what is cited from the prophets” (25–26, see the comment in n84). I would respond on three fronts. First, the crux of this issue is not starting with a theological system and forcing Acts 15 to fit. Traditional dispensationalists do not (or at least, “should not”!) argue that since this text suggests a fulfillment in the church, and that doesn’t fit the preconceived dispensational system, then some “creative” hermeneutics are necessitated to explain how this is the case, thus an analogy. Rather, it is a hermeneutical issue regarding the fulfillment of OT prophecy. Can a prophecy be *changed* or *reinterpreted* in its fulfillment in the NT?⁴² If Amos says that the Davidic dynasty will be rebuilt “as in former

to our present texts, see Roy Beacham, “Joel 2, Eschatology of,” in *Kregel Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*, ed. Mal Couch, 216–19 (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996).

³⁷ As Bock says, “The signs of Jesus only show him to be a divinely attested representative of God” (*Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern*, 346 n43).

³⁸ Most progressive dispensationalists formally begin the “already” aspect of the Messianic kingdom at the Ascension/Pentecost rather than with Jesus’ earthly ministry.

³⁹ This is, of course, debated among traditional dispensationalists. For a survey of the options and my own conclusions, see Rodney J. Decker, “The New Covenant and the Church,” *BSac* 152 (1995): 290-305, 431–56.

⁴⁰ This was observed early in the development of progressive dispensationalism. As one sample, see David A. Dean, “A Study of the Enthronement of Christ in Acts 2 and 3” (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1992), 68, 88–90, 94–99.

⁴¹ Kaiser says essentially the same thing: “The Davidic Promise and the Inclusion of the Gentiles,” *JETS* 20 (1977): 106–08.

⁴² Not “added to” (i.e., some form of a complementary hermeneutic), but actually changed/reinterpreted from what the OT text says. Some traditional dispensationalists accept a limited form of what has been called a complementary hermeneutic (i.e., that God can do more than he promised, but no less and not different—

times”—then anything less is not fulfillment. The “so that” of Amos immediately follows the “rebuilt as in former times” statement; we can’t have the result without the cause. A partial cause, an “already,” is not sufficient to produce the stated result apart from what is being called the “not yet.” When we then turn to the NT, if we do not see the fulfillment of the OT text, we must conclude that there is some other factor involved. Here (i.e., Acts 15) it appears that analogy makes good sense.⁴³ As Ed says (and I whole-heartedly agree! 😊), “We dare not skip over it or reinterpret it to fit our systems. Instead, we need to incorporate the contextual and normal reading of this text into our systems of interpretation and our theology, so that it plays an important part in them like it did in the theology of the early Church” (42).

Second, as to the “authority of analogy” issue, I would observe that Ed acknowledges the validity of an analogical category in the use of the OT in the NT. In his dissertation he explains the use of Lev 19:2 in 1 Peter 1:16 as analogous, explaining that this use is not classified as “literal because of the change of referents from Israel to the church.” He goes on to class this officially as “legal proof” due to the introductory formula which also “shows that [Peter] presupposes the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures for the church.”⁴⁴ This citation is not exactly parallel with Amos 9/Acts 15, but there are some significant similarities. In each passage a NT writer cites an OT text, introducing it with a quotation formula, thus implying its authoritative nature. In 1 Peter the *referents* are different: Israel, whose holiness related to the Levitical holiness code; and the church, whose holiness is “in Christ.” In Acts 15, I would suggest that the referents are the same: Israel in the kingdom. This is not a command that has an analogous relationship with a different group of people, but the work of God that is the same at two different times for the same class of people (i.e., gentiles). The analogy is not between two different referents, but between two different times: what God will do then he is also doing now—taking out of the gentiles a people for his name.

and the addition is only at the NT level, not changing or adding to the meaning of the OT), especially in regard to the church’s relationship to the new covenant. This is a debated issue and other traditional dispensationalists assume (quite illegitimately, IMHO!) that any use of this terminology makes one a progressive dispensationalist. This terminology is used with a wider scope in progressive dispensationalism; on this see Darrell Bock, “Hermeneutics of Progressive Dispensationalism,” in *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism: A Comparison of Traditional and Progressive Views*, ed. Herbert W. Bateman IV, 85–101 (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 89, 94–98. For a critique of the progressive version, see Bruce Baker, “Is Progressive Dispensationalism Really Dispensational?” in *Progressive Dispensationalism*, ed. Ron J. Bigalke, Jr., 343–75 (Lanham, MD: Univ. Press of Am., 2006), 349–54.

⁴³ As it does in the quote from Joel 2 in Acts 2; there were parallels in the events described in Joel 2, but the prophesied events did *not* occur, so we conclude that “this is that” does not mean “this is [the fulfillment of] that” but rather “this is [similar to] that”—and note that *either* of those statements requires us to supply an additional semantic element! But that is a different paper! (On this, see the reference to Beacham’s article in n36.)

⁴⁴ Glenn, “The Hermeneutics of the Use of the Old Testament in 1 Peter,” 81. See also D. Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology*, JSNTS 12 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 50.

Third, an analogical view does nothing to diminish fulfillment of the OT prophecy. True, it does eliminate the fulfillment of Amos 9 in Acts 15, but that does not affect the prophetic proclamation in the slightest; it only sees it as fulfilled at a different time. I would protest the suggestion that traditional dispensationalism diminishes fulfillment.

Moving on to another topic, the question of using “deliberate alternate readings” needs to be addressed. In discussing one of the better known variations between MT and LXX (MT: “that they may possess the remnant of Edom,” to LXX: “that the remnant of men may seek”), it has sometimes been suggested that the LXX translator misread his *Vorlage*.⁴⁵ I am inclined to agree with Ed that the differences in this passage are not likely explained as a simple misreading of one letter (yodh for dalet; from יִירְשׁוּ to יִדְרְשׁוּ). For one thing, that explanation would require the assumption that the LXX translator was reading a text in the square Aramaic script. But at the time LXX-Amos was translated, texts were in transition,⁴⁶ many still using paleo-Hebrew script—and dalet and yodh are quite distinct in that orthography.⁴⁷ Second, dalet and yodh, though appearing somewhat similar in shape in the square script, are *not* one of the commonly mistaken characters according to Wurthwein.⁴⁸ It is possible this was a simple mis-reading, but not likely and not a given.⁴⁹

An alternate explanation is needed. Ed considers several possibilities which reflect the theology of the translator, but finally appeals to intertestamental exegetical practice which accepted “deliberate alternative readings” in seeking to determine the “exegetical potential” of the text (13–14). One might assume from Bauckham’s comments which Ed cites that this was either the standard way or perhaps the only way in which the OT text was handled in STL. But that is manifestly not the case. Brewer has demonstrated that *Al Tigré* methodology (“deliberate alternative readings”) was not part of scribal exegesis in the pre-70 AD period, though it was common among later rabbinic writers and to a lesser degree in some other early strands.⁵⁰ I will return to this topic shortly.

What are the implications of this approach to the text? Ed does not develop it much beyond citing Bauckham. I am not prepared with a full critique of this concept, but I do not like the hermeneutical implications of either the practice itself, or our use of the practice to explain the phenomena of the text. At the least it appears to suggest that a multivalency of meaning is legitimate—one that goes well beyond the usual debates regarding

⁴⁵ E.g., Jobs and Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint*, 194. One hesitates to disagree with two good LXX scholars such as this, so my suggestions here will remain tentative.

⁴⁶ This is clear from the evidence at Qumran which includes numerous scrolls in both scripts.

⁴⁷ See the tables in Ernst Wurthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament*, transl. E. Rhodes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 217.

⁴⁸ Wurthwein, *Text of the OT*, 106. The most commonly confused letters in square script are: כ & כּ, ד & דּ, ה & ח, ה & ת, ו & וּ, ע & צ, and כּ & גּ.

⁴⁹ See further, McLay, *Use of the Septuagint*, 20–23.

⁵⁰ David Instone Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis before 70 CE*, *Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum* 30 (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1992), 158, 171, 173–74, 178–80.

meaning/significance and sensus/references plenior.⁵¹ Is it ever valid to use variant texts or textual variants within a text, or to adopt multiple variants in order to extrapolate additional meanings? It matters not whether this may have been the practice of some people in the intertestamental period or the first century, or whether modern scholars might do so. To defend “deliberate alternative readings” as normative for “Jewish Christian exegetes,” or for the NT, or for our own day is enormously problematic. An emphasis on single meaning and authorial intent is clearly at variance with such a practice.⁵²

This is actually but one aspect of the entire question regarding the role of second temple literature in the interpretation of the NT.⁵³ There is no question that the literature of this period is very helpful in NT studies. As but one example, the summary work *Jesus in Context* edited by Bock and Herrick has shown the potential of this literature for work in the Gospels.⁵⁴ Understanding the “customs, language, culture, and conventions”⁵⁵ of the first century is essential to avoid misreading our first century text. But this is quite different from the idea that the exegetical practices of the second temple period should be treated as normative for NT exegesis.⁵⁶ There is wide diversity in how second temple literature uses the OT just as there is also a wide diversity in how our contemporaries use it.⁵⁷ But that does not legitimate any particular practice (or all of them) just because it is attested.⁵⁸ Rather than making the “exegesis” of “Jewish readers” or of “Jewish Christian

⁵¹ The classic statements of these issues are by Walter Kaiser, “The Single Intent of Scripture,” in *Evangelical Roots*, ed. K. Kantzer, 123–41 (Nashville: Nelson, 1978), and Elliott Johnson, *Expository Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990).

⁵² I realize that this is questioned by some evangelicals, though I would argue that abandonment of it results in hermeneutical chaos.

⁵³ My comments in this section do not so much respond to Ed’s paper as address common assumptions in contemporary evangelical scholarship, both in progressive dispensational and non-dispensational circles.

⁵⁴ Darrell L. Bock and Gregory J. Herrick, *Jesus in Context: Background Readings for Gospel Study* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005). There have been numerous other works in recent years by both evangelicals and critical scholars that have explored the pseudepigrapha, the apocrypha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, etc.—the whole gamut of second temple literature, to say nothing of the Greco-Roman corpus.

⁵⁵ This is the summary list in the helpful preface to Bock and Herrick, *Jesus in Context*, 13.

⁵⁶ This is one of the differences between papers presented at this study group in recent years. Bateman assumed that the NT used the same “exegetical” methods as does Second Temple Literature (STL); Helyer’s paper was descriptive of theological content. Although we might discuss what role the content of various STL documents should play, that is a quite different question from exegetical method (Herbert W. Bateman IV, “Second Temple Exegetical Practices: Extra-Biblical Documents Compared with the Book of Hebrews,” and Larry R. Helyer, “The Necessity, Problems and Promise of Second Temple Judaism for both Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology,” both papers presented at the Dispensational Study Group, Evangelical Theological Society, Atlanta, Nov. 2003).

⁵⁷ The New Perspective on Paul has committed a similar error is neglecting the diversity in Jewish thought regarding justification. As *Justification and Variegated Nomism* has shown, this is an oversimplification (2 vols., ed. D. A. Carson, P. T. O’Brien, and M. A. Seifrid [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001, 2004]).

⁵⁸ This is one of my concerns with Bateman’s paper. In his conclusion he compares STL practices with those of contemporary evangelical preachers—apparently arguing that if we “use Scripture” this way, and if STL does similar things, then it is a valid way to do “exegesis” and it is to be expected in the NT as well (“Second Temple Exegetical Practices,” 30–32). We ought, rather, to be concerned to evaluate what are

exegete[s]” (13–14, citing Bauckham) the norm by which we understand the text, we need to assess whether or not such early readers have accurately understood the text and used it appropriately. We should not homogenize the data and use the resulting generalization as normative.⁵⁹ Brewer has shown that there is considerable diversity in STL use of the OT. Although the later rabbis, the Qumran sectarians, and Philo played quite loose with the text (my terminology, not Brewer’s!), the pre-70 AD scribes⁶⁰ “did not interpret Scripture out of context, did not look for any meaning in Scripture other than the plain sense, and did not change the text to fit their interpretations”!⁶¹ That is not the impression one gets from those who focus on other STL approaches that handle the text in a more cavalier fashion or from post-STL examples. Why should, say, those writers represented at Qumran be our primary guide rather than the pre-70 AD scribes whom Brewer has studied? Textual variants were apparently *invented* at Qumran (in “vast number”) and then treated as equal with Scripture itself.⁶² The existence of such “exegesis” does not, however, justify it even if it does predate the NT.

Granted, STL presuppositions and theology differ from ours, but that does not determine legitimacy nor does it specify how NT writers thought, what they believed, or how they used the OT. Their cultural/theological milieu was one input, but they were also taught by Jesus and received revelation from God.⁶³ As a result I would *expect* that their views on such things would be different from their contemporaries at some points.

Yet, returning to Ed’s paper, the NT *does* cite the LXX. And that text does vary from the MT. How does that impact our views of bibliology, particularly inspiration and inerrancy? What are the implications for our views of the NT’s use of the OT? What other alternative explanations are possible? I think these issues ought to be explored, even if only in an extended footnote, and not just cited without comment.

legitimate ways to use our authoritative text. The STL writers are as much subject to that scrutiny as are contemporary preachers—and contemporary scholars.

⁵⁹ It is not clear to whom Bauckham refers by his “Jewish readers” and “Jewish Christian exegete[s].” It cannot include all of them (given the diversity of perspectives), but the appeal is very broad as if this was the only way Scripture was handled at the time.

⁶⁰ Brewer defines “pre-70 AD scribes” as those “authorities before 70 CE who were regarded by the rabbis as their predecessors. This term is used simply as a short-hand way of referring to a group which has no distinct name and which is very difficult to define. It does not imply that all the exeges in rabbinic traditions from before 70 CE came from Scribes or that the Scribes of this period are linked with the Scribes or Sopherim of the Great Assembly associated with Ezra, although both may be the case” (*Techniques in Jewish Exegesis*, 2). In the book these scribes (ch. 1, pp. 11–176) are contrasted with “non-scribal traditions” (ch. 2, pp. 177–221) which include ancient texts (e.g., MT, targums, LXX/Old Greek), Josephus, Qumran, and Philo.

⁶¹ Brewer, *Techniques in Jewish Exegesis*, 1—a summary statement that is reinforced and fleshed out throughout the book.

⁶² Brewer, *Techniques in Jewish Exegesis*, 197–98.

⁶³ Some contemporary scholars seem to write as if the only relevant factors are human ones. I would hate to think that evangelicals minimize or denigrate revelational elements in such discussions, but they are too seldom discussed. Perhaps we have over-reacted to our forebears’ neglect of legitimate human elements in the text and moved, as a result, to an over-emphasis on the human. (I am not suggesting that Ed in particular has done this; my comments here address our evangelical community generally.)

Ed proposes four conclusions from his study (39–40). Of these, I would suggest that the first and third are valid conclusions *if his thesis stands*. But in regard to his second conclusion, can we argue that the church is the result of the restoration of David’s dynasty? Just because the gentiles can come to God as gentiles would not require us to assume that there is a new entity, the church. It could also imply that God now has a second way for people to become part of Israel—which seems to be the gist of Ed’s fourth point: that the church is part of a renewed Israel. If we agreed that there were not “two peoples of God,”⁶⁴ this paper would still not justify the conclusion that the gentiles are incorporated into “a renewed Israel” and into “the one people of God continuous with Israel” (40). Indeed, this appears to directly challenge one of the most basic tenets of dispensationalism: the distinction between Israel and the church. If the church is now viewed as a part of Israel (renewed or otherwise), there would appear to be a substantial confusion of categories, even if it is protested that “the Church ... is distinct from Israel” (40). This could only be a hyponymous relationship with the church as a sub-group within the larger category of Israel. But on what basis does Israel become the superordinate—the over-arching category?

Appendix: Grammatical Diagram of LXX-Amos 9:11-12

(See next page.)

Note: Some printers are “stubborn” about printing some characters in this document correctly. They are correct here (as you can see in the screen version of the pdf), but esp. characters like smart quotes and dashes are printed as small rectangles on some printers. If you get such a copy, try a different printer.

⁶⁴ I do not insist on “two peoples of God” terminology, but I would define “people of God” differently than either Ed or many traditional dispensationalists.

Amos 9:11-12 (LXX)

