

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE APPLICABILITY OF SECOND
TEMPLE PERIOD JEWISH HERMENEUTICAL METHODOLOGIES
TO THE INTERPRETATION OF POPULAR ESCHATOLOGY**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Abstract</i>	v
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	vi
<i>Abbreviations</i>	vii
A. Introduction	1
B. Biblical Foundations of the Modern Eschatological “Popularisers”	3
1. Introduction	3
2. The Theology	3
3. The Problem	4
4. The Hermeneutical Methodology	6
5. Conclusion	7
C. Early Palestinian Judaism	9
1. Introduction	9
2. Judaism and Christianity	10
3. Jewish and Christian Writings	12
4. Early Jewish Hermeneutics	14
5. Conclusion	17
D. Rabbinic Exegesis in Early Palestinian Judaism	18
1. Introduction	18
2. Midrash	18
3. Peshat	20
4. Patterns of Fulfilment	21
5. Hillel’s Seven Middoth	25
6. The Targums	28
7. The Rabbis and the Eschaton	31
a. Introduction	31
b. The Rabbis and the Messiah	32
c. The Rabbis and the Messianic Age	34
d. The Rabbis and Certain Events of the Eschaton	36
i. Introduction	36
ii. Tribulation	37
iii. Wars and Battles	40
a) Introduction	40
b) Gog and Magog	41
iv. The “Antichrist”	43
v. The Temple	44

vi. Restoration	45
a) To Eretz Yisrael	47
b) To the Messiah	49
vii. Summation	50
8. Conclusion	50
E. The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Qumran Sect	52
1. Introduction	52
2. The Qumranians and Early Christianity	52
a. Introduction	52
b. Common Characteristics	54
3. The Teacher of Righteousness	56
4. Raz-Pesher	57
a. Introduction	57
b. Pesher, the Scrolls and Early Church Writings	59
c. Pesher, the Scrolls and Early Church Writings: Some Examples	60
5. The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Eschaton	61
a. Introduction	61
b. The Messianic Age	62
c. The Messiah	64
d. The Tribulation	67
e. Wars	68
f. Apostasy and the "Antichrist"	70
g. The "Two Witnesses of Revelation 11"	71
h. The Temple	72
6. Conclusion	72
F. Early Jewish Hermeneutics and the Second Testament	74
1. Introduction	74
2. The Second Testament and Rabbinic Hermeneutics	75
a. Peshat	75
i. Introduction	75
ii. Paul	75
iii. Jesus	76
iv. Peter and James	77
b. Midrash and Hillel's Middoth	78
i. Introduction	78
ii. Jesus	80
iii. Matthew	82
iv. Paul	84
c. Allegory	84
3. The Second Testament and the Dead Sea Scrolls	85
a. Introduction	85
b. Pesher	87

i. Introduction	87
ii. Matthew	88
iii. Jesus	90
iv. Paul	91
v. Summation	92
4. The Second Testament and the Eschaton	93
a. Introduction	93
b. Paul	93
c. Mark	97
5. Conclusion	98
G. The Early Church Fathers	101
1. Introduction	101
2. Hellenistic Allegory enters the Early Church	101
a. Introduction	101
b. The Two Schools of Exegesis	104
c. The Influence of Philo	106
d. Origen	107
e. Augustine	108
f. The Antiochene School	110
g. Justin Martyr	111
h. Other Fathers	114
i. Summation	114
3. Early Church Fathers' Views on Certain Eschatological Events	114
a. Papias	114
b. Irenaeus	115
c. Justin Martyr	116
d. Commodianus	117
e. Hippolytus	118
f. Victorinus and Lactantius	119
g. Cyril of Jerusalem	120
4. Conclusion	120
H. The Middle Ages	122
1. Introduction	122
2. The Influence of Certain Jewish and Christian Scholars	123
a. Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac (Rashi)	123
b. Rabbi Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam)	125
c. The Victorines	126
d. Nicholas of Lyra	129
e. Cajetan et al	131
f. Summation	131
3. Views in the Middle Ages on Certain Eschatological Issues	132
a. Introduction	132
b. Norbert of Xanten	132

c. Bernard of Clairvaux	133
d. Brother Dolcino	134
e. Pseudo-Ephraem	137
f. Maimonides and other Jewish Sages	137
4. Conclusion	139
I. The Reformers	140
1. Introduction	140
2. The Reformers and Prophecy	143
a. Introduction	143
b. Luther and Prophecy	144
c. Luther and the Eschaton	147
d. Calvin and Prophecy	149
e. Calvin and the Eschaton	150
f. Summation	154
3. Conclusion	155
J. On To The 21st Century	157
1. Introduction	157
2. Orthodox Judaism and Eschatology	159
3. Messianic Judaism and Eschatology	163
4. Eschatology and the Popularisers	169
a. Introduction	169
b. Hermeneutics and End-time Events	170
i. Introduction	170
ii. The Rapture	172
iii. Pre-tribulational Escape	174
iv. The Messianic Age	177
v. Gog and Magog	183
5. Conclusion	185
K. Conclusion	188
<i>References</i>	199

ABSTRACT

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE APPLICABILITY OF SECOND TEMPLE PERIOD JEWISH HERMENEUTICAL METHODOLOGIES TO THE INTERPRETATION OF POPULAR ESCHATOLOGY

This study endeavours to ascertain whether or not eschatological scenarios propounded by certain writers of highly influential and popular “end-time” texts are biblically sustainable, according to the hermeneutical methods employed by them.

Firstly, the hermeneutical methods utilised by Christianity’s exegetical predecessors, namely, the rabbinical Pharisees and the Qumran sectaries of the Second Temple period, are considered. Such methods, and the eschatological convictions ensuing therefrom, are apparent from canonical and non-canonical literature relevant to these two groups. Thereafter, the applicability of these methods to a Second Testament context is examined, the rationale being that if the use of such methods is significantly evident in the Second Testament, then they should, it is proposed, be germane to Christian scholars of both earlier and modern times since Christianity arose from the matrix of early Judaism. This is particularly so as regards the writers of popular eschatology whose end-time positions are then examined in the light of early Jewish hermeneutical methods, and their own interpretative stance.

The conclusion is reached that the Second Testament does reflect extensive use of the hermeneutical methods of early Judaism and that, consequently, subsequent Christian scholars should endorse these methods. It appears, though, that Christians through the ages have ignored such methods. It is further concluded that the main eschatological issues promoted by the popularisers cannot easily be defended solely through the use of the exegetical methods employed by them. However, it is submitted that many such issues can be substantially justified through the use of traditional Jewish hermeneutical methods, as employed by the Second Testament redactors and Jesus himself.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A. The Dead Sea Scrolls

CD - Damascus Document

1QH - 1QHodayot

1QM - War Scroll

1QpHab. - Habakkuk Peshier

1QS - Rule of the Community

2Q4[2QNJ] - New Jerusalem Scroll

4Q174 - 4QFlorilegium

4Q175 - 4QTestimonia

4Q177 - 4QCatena

4Q246 - 4QAramaic Apocalypse

4Q252 - 4QCommentary on Genesis A

4Q369 - 4QPrayer of Enosh

4Q521 - 4QMessianic Apocalypse

4QpGen. - 4QGenesis Peshier

4QpIsa. - 4QIsaiah Peshier

11Q19 - 11QTemple

11Q20 - 11Qtemple

B. Bible References

Bible references are from the New International Version (NIV) unless designated "KJV" which indicates the King James Version.

A. INTRODUCTION

The cover of the July 1, 2002, issue of Time magazine has as its headline, "The Bible and The Apocalypse: Why more Americans are reading and talking about the End of the World" (Time, 2002, C.O1). The related lead story is titled "Apocalypse Now" and bears the caption, "The biggest book of the season is about the end of the world. Its also a sign of our troubled times" (Gibbs, 2002, p.39). The book referred to is "The Remnant" by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, being Volume 10 in the authors' "Left Behind" series. In similar fashion, the cover of Newsweek magazine of November 15, 1999, reads, "Prophecy: What the Bible says about the End of the World", with the lead story titled, "The Way the World Ends" (Woodward, 1999, p.46). Newsweek's lead article also discloses a statistic to the effect that "40% of American adults do believe that the world will one day end, as Revelation describes, in the Battle of Armageddon" (Woodward, 1999, p.47).

In both these articles, reference is made to a proliferation of new books about the "End Times". Newsweek quotes Bernard McGinn of the University of Chicago Divinity School as saying, "Over the past 30 years...more scholarship has been devoted to apocalypticism than in the last 300 years" (Woodward, 1999, p.48). Both Newsweek and Time make particular reference to the popularity of the non-scholarly, apocalyptic book by Hal Lindsay entitled "The Late, Great Planet Earth" which in the 1970's, was rated "the best-selling book of the decade...with 28 million copies sold by 1990" (Woodward, 1999, p.48). It is further reported that Lindsay's book has been translated into more than fifty languages and that Lindsay claims to have sold in excess of forty million copies of the book and its sequels (Clouse, Hosack, and Pierard, 1999, p.126). Until the advent of the "Left Behind" series, such sales figures rated "The Late Great Planet Earth" as the "greatest selling book in the history of Christendom next to the Bible itself" (Ice, 1996, p.242).

More recently, though, the focus has been on the enormous popularity of the apocalyptic fictional series, the "Left Behind" novels by Tim LaHaye and co-author, Jerry B. Jenkins (Gibbs, 2002, pp.38-46). Time recounts that the novels are "among the best-selling fiction books of our times" and are "based on the Book of Revelation" (Gibbs, 2002, p.40). Newsweek, too, acknowledges this popularity (Woodward, 1999, p.48). The official "Left Behind" website elaborates that the Series, which was first launched in 1995, has now sold "more than 50 million copies...and spawned three New York Times number one best-sellers" (leftbehind.com, 2002). Time confirms these amazing figures adding that "Book 9, published in October, was the best-selling novel of 2001" (Gibbs, 2002, p.41).

The popularity of the Series is further highlighted by the American publishing trade magazine, Publishers Weekly, which in its issue of March 18, 2002, disclosed that, "Book #10 in the megaselling Left Behind series, The Remnant, lands at the top of this week's hardcover best-seller list after a week in the stores...This is the fourth book in the series to debut in the lead position on the national charts" (Maryles, 2002, July 15). The Washington Post summarised the popularity of the series by recounting that "'The Remnant', debuted at No.1 on the hardcover fiction best-seller lists of USA Today, Publishers Weekly and the New York Times and No.5 on The Washington Post list" (Weeks, 2002, p.C.01). LaHaye himself confirmed that the Series has, "remained at the top of the best-seller list every month since it appeared four years ago" (1999, p.9).

These achievements, by "popularisers" of biblical world eschatology, are unprecedented in publishing history.

B. BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE ESCHATOLOGICAL “POPULARISERS”

1. Introduction

LaHaye avers that the “entire (Left Behind) Series is based on the future events found in the Book of Revelation” (1999, p.9). In Time magazine the further claim is made that the Book of Revelation, although somewhat “mysterious” (Gibbs, 2002, p.40) has now been suitably deciphered by LaHaye and Jenkins. The Time article also asserts that, indeed, for “millions of people the code was broken in 1995, when LaHaye and Jenkins published ‘Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth’s Last Days’” (Gibbs, 2002, p. 40.).

Some prominent eschatological events in the Series, arising out of LaHaye and Jenkins’ interpretation of the Book of Revelation and related texts, include a pre-tribulational Rapture, the coming of the Antichrist, the desecration of an eschatological Temple in Jerusalem, the Great Tribulation, the Battle of Armageddon and other end-time wars, the restoration of Israel, a messianic reign on earth during the Millennium, and the Final Judgement. Not all these subjects have been dealt with in the current volumes of the series but are apparently to be included in future issues and so enable the Authors to provide a complete overview of their understanding of end-time events. However, all these events are mentioned in LaHaye’s various books on prophecy including, “Understanding Prophecy for Yourself” and “Revelation Unveiled”, the latter a commentary on the Book of Revelation.

2. The Theology

The theology underpinning the Left Behind series, as well as Hal Lindsay’s best seller on the same topic from a few decades ago, “The Late, Great Planet Earth” and its sequels, “Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth” and “There’s a New World Coming”, is, according to the Authors, based upon a strict literal and

futurist interpretation of certain biblical prophetic texts (LaHaye, 1999, p.17; Lindsay, 1970, p.165).

LaHaye and Lindsay's approach is typical of the premillennialist interpretation of eschatology, generally associated with Dispensational theology, and their work clearly reflects this. As Kyle says, "Lindsay contributes little to standard Dispensational eschatology. He simply packages it in an exciting format" (1998, p.119). Weber, writing in *Christianity Today*, regards Lindsay as introducing Dispensationalism, through "The Late, Great Planet Earth", to the "widest audience ever" (Weber, 1998, p.38). Based on the popularity of the Series, some three decades later, it is manifest that LaHaye and Jenkins have continued the successful promotion of the premillennial position.

Hence, the eschatological theology of the Popularisers can be categorised as premillennialist, in the mould of the Dispensationalists. Both parties hold like-minded views on eschatological issues such as a pre-tribulational Rapture, the Antichrist, the Great Tribulation, Armageddon, the restoration of Israel, and the Millennium.

3. The Problem

There is a perturbing aspect of the massive commercial success of end-time literature, as promoted by LaHaye and Lindsay. The problem is that the general impression generated by these, and other, eschatological Popularisers among the population at large is such that the premillennial (and Dispensational) approach to world eschatology is undoubtedly viewed as the predominant Christian stance on such matters, and therefore regarded as biblically authoritative.

Writing in *Christianity Today*, Chris Hall says, "What I didn't realize was that elements of Hal's premillennial perspective minus Dispensational emphases...represented a distinguished though minority perspective in the

history of Christian exegesis" (1999, p.12). Hall's view, namely, that the premillennial, futurist, perspective of eschatology is a minority one in Christendom, is in all probability in contradistinction to the opinion held by the vast majority of the general readership of the above-mentioned articles and books. This is evident from the survey conducted by Time magazine (Gibbs, 2002, p.41) which reveals that 59% of Americans "believe that the prophecies in the Book of Revelation will come true". The prophecies referred to are those as interpreted by LaHaye *et al.* A 1997 survey by the U.S. News & World Report of belief in such prophecies reveals that 44% of Americans believe that there will be a world apocalypse, but that "true believers" will be raptured to heaven prior thereto. Similarly, 49% believe in the eschatological appearance of a literal Antichrist (Hitchcock, 1999, p.ii).

LaHaye and Lindsay's literal hermeneutical approach to the interpretation of biblical prophecy, from which their premillennial (and Dispensational) views are derived, would appear to be assumed by the general readership of Time, Newsweek and other widely circulated magazines to be the legitimate, the orthodox, and possibly, the only acceptable Christian approach to understanding prophecy. Indeed, the general readers of such popular magazines and the readers and supporters of both the Left Behind series and the works of Hal Lindsay, with their uniform hermeneutical approach would, in all probability, be most surprised to learn that different interpretations of Scriptures pertaining to world eschatology actually exist among Christians. This particularly applies to those interpretations that result in an end-time scenario quite different to that propounded by LaHaye, Lindsay *et al.*

As a result of the publicity described, the influence of the literal approach to the interpretation of prophetic Scripture has been immense. Consequently, it needs to be asked whether it is correct or not that the hermeneutical approach of the Popularisers to the interpretation of biblical eschatology, and the resultant views ensuing therefrom, are scripturally sustainable. In particular, it is necessary to examine if the events associated with an alleged coming *eschaton*, such as a

pre-tribulational Rapture, the Tribulation, Armageddon, a literal Antichrist, and the Millennium, originate in Scripture. If not, then it appears that a vast number of people, many tens of millions, have been misled, no doubt inadvertently, into an understanding of eschatological events that are biblically insupportable. Should this be the case, Christianity Today would perhaps then be justified in labelling the "Left Behind" series a "seven-volume post-Rapture, Dispensational soap opera" (Maudlin, 1998, p.6) instead of, as described by Time magazine, being "based on the Book of Revelation" (Gibbs, 2002, p.40).

4. The Hermeneutical Methodology

The first step is to examine the validity of the fundamental hermeneutical approaches utilised by the Popularisers of eschatology, as exemplified by Lindsay and LaHaye, which enable them to reach their particular comprehension of certain prophetic events.

In "Revelation Unveiled", LaHaye sets out his hermeneutical rules for interpreting the Book of Revelation. At the top of his list is the following rule, "Follow the golden rule of interpretation: When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate text, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, clearly indicate otherwise" (1999, p.17). LaHaye attributes this rule to one Dr. David L. Cooper and repeats the rule in a recent work, "Understanding Bible Prophecy for Yourself" (2001, p.14). He then sums up his view by saying, "A safe rule to follow in the study of the book of Revelation is to accept the book as literal unless the facts are obviously to the contrary" (1999, p.19). Lindsay, too, rejects reliance upon an allegorical method and, instead, stresses the literal approach whereby the words have "the normal meaning understood by the people of the time in which it was written" (1970, p.165). The authors' literal interpretative stance leads them to adopt a futurist approach to the understanding of end-time prophecy for, as LaHaye comments, it "seems to me

to be the most satisfactory" (1999, p.19). Consequently, issues such as the Rapture, a personal Antichrist, the Tribulation, the battle of Armageddon and the Millennium are understood as real, literal, events, expected on earth in a future *eschaton*.

The Dispensationalist C.C. Ryrie, identifies with the literal approach when he writes, "the correct system of hermeneutics is that which may be labelled normal, plain, or literal" (1999, p.125). By "literal", the plain, natural, obvious meaning of a text is indicated. Such a reading of Scripture is referred to by Johnson as a "literal, grammatico-historical hermeneutic" (2000, pg.33). Couch explains, "When thinking of the literal, one must emphasize the 'natural', 'proper', 'obvious', and 'normal'. This is not 'letterism', which fails to recognize nuances, plays on words, hidden metaphors, figures of speech, and lamination of meanings in a word" (2000, "Principles", pg.60). In a similar vein, Tan elaborates, "Letterism (or hyper-literalism) and literalism are 'two different things'" and that "Letterism is the premature (not extreme) form of literalism" (1974, p.45). Literalism, according to these scholars, thus has far wider implications than letterism, which is merely the initial stage of interpretation with an examination of the words and letters of the text, while literalism engages the usual literary armoury used to interpret literature and to arrive at a full understanding.

5. Conclusion

The modern popularisers of eschatology have adopted a strict literal, grammatical-historical hermeneutical approach in their interpretation of prophetic texts and this approach, together with their futurist stance, results in the various end-time scenarios promoted by them. They do not appear to acknowledge the need for additional modes of interpretation, apparently regarding their approach as sufficient to arrive at a biblically based eschatological view: Whether or not such literal approach has support in hermeneutical Church history and Christianity's Jewish antecedents, or is alone sufficient in sustaining a biblically

valid understanding of prophetic texts and scenarios, is a matter of conjecture at this point. In order to obtain some clarity on these issues, an examination of radical Christian hermeneutical methodologies and the resultant conceptions of eschatological events, read together with the convictions and methods of the Church's Jewish heritage, is indicated. It is anticipated that in this way, a conclusion can then be reached as to the validity of the exegetical methods and end-time positions espoused by the modern Popularisers of eschatology, earlier referred to.

The main exegetical methods employed by the two predominant early Palestinian Jewish communities, namely, the rabbinical Pharisees and the Qumran sectaries, will undoubtedly be of much import in this regard as will be their ensuing views of the *eschaton* and certain accompanying events. Thus, relevant early Jewish writings, both canonical and non-canonical, will be examined in order to reveal the various dominant hermeneutical approaches practised by the early Palestinian Jewish exegetes, as well as their resultant eschatological viewpoints. This is in order to ascertain whether the exegetical methodologies utilised by such groups might or might not have bearing on the hermeneutical methods evident in the Second Testament. Furthermore, such an examination will be required to ascertain if the hermeneutical approaches of such groups, and consequently those of the Second Testament, have relevance to the exegetical practices of Christian scholars, especially the premillennial Popularisers, and their eschatological thought. In this regard, various end-time issues will be considered but the number and extent thereof will be limited by constraints of space.

Finally, it will also be germane to ascertain whether or not such early Jewish methods of interpretation, and the resultant eschatological convictions, have precedence in the history of the church. In so doing, it should be possible to clarify whether the eschatological sentiments of the Popularisers are a continuation of a long, honourable and scripturally sustainable heritage or, instead, are simply to be regarded as speculative and fanciful.

C. EARLY PALESTINIAN JUDAISM

1. Introduction

J.H. Charlesworth in his work, "The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament", proposes that "Early Judaism...should be the term used to refer to the phenomena in Judaism dating from around the end of the third century B.C.E. until the end of the second century C.E." (1985, p.59). Such definition is, accordingly, adopted in this study as the period mentioned also covers most accepted designations of the Second Temple Period of Judaism, generally regarded as being from 200 B.C.E. to 100 C.E. Some scholars, though, like Pate, interpret the period as extending from 539 B.C.E. through to 70 C.E. (2000, p.19). The terms "Early Judaism" and "Judaism of the Second Temple Period" will be used interchangeably herein.

Furthermore, it is of importance to note that the idea of a normative, orthodox or monolithic Judaism prior to about 70 C.E., has been discredited among scholars and is no longer regarded as an acceptable label. Charlesworth (1985, p.61) points out that the term, "normative Judaism'...is a product of nineteenth-century scholars who propounded early Jewish literature into a desired shape". The prominent Jewish scholar, Jacob Neusner, expands on this view by postulating that there was, "no single 'Judaism,' nothing to correspond to 'orthodoxy'" (1989, p.x) at such time. Essentially this means that early Judaism was not monolithic but was comprised of various and differing sects. Early Christianity was one of these sects which, as Charlesworth emphasises, "did not evolve out of a dying mother, but out of a highly sophisticated, and phenomenologically complex Jewish 'religion' and culture. Christianity was the heir of over a thousand years of traditions, both written...and oral" (1985, p.61).

As a result of the relationship between Christianity and early Palestinian Judaism, the latter's literature and hermeneutical methodologies, particularly from the Second Temple period, are of fundamental importance and relevance

to Christianity and its doctrinal convictions. This is especially pertinent in the context of interpretation of prophetic and apocalyptic texts. The extent to which Christian exegesis is founded on and related to that of its antecedent, early Judaism, and the extent to which Christian theology in the field of eschatology is influenced by early Judaism is ascertainable from an examination of the literature common to both. First to be considered, though, is the nature of the relationship of these two groups, and any commonality that they might have.

2. Judaism and Christianity

Cardinal Martini, in his essay "Christianity and Judaism: A Historical and Theological Overview", succinctly sets out the interrelatedness between Judaism and Christianity. He states, "In its origins Christianity is deeply rooted in Judaism. Without a sincere feeling for the Jewish world, therefore, and a direct experience of it, one cannot understand Christianity. Jesus is fully Jewish, the apostles are Jewish, and one cannot doubt their attachment to the traditions of the forefathers" (1990, p.19). Certainly, the Jews were the theological forefathers of Christianity and these two groups have to be studied in conjunction with each other to arrive at a deeper understanding of each.

It follows from such views that Christianity is regarded as being influenced more by Palestinian Judaism than Hellenism. Charlesworth writes, "The old - and in some circles still dominant - view of Christian origins is unacceptable. It portrayed (or portrays) Christianity as a Greek-oriented religion clearly distinct from Judaism" (1990, p.43). He argues that, to the contrary, Christianity, "developed out of many groups in Early Judaism, especially the Hillelite branch of Pharisaism, but with profound indebtedness to Jewish apocalypticism" (1990, p.42). However, this was not always the predominant belief among scholars. The noted Judaic scholar C.G. Montefiore, for instance, denied that Paul of Tarsus, a Rabbi trained by Gamaliel, of the school of Hillel, was representative of mainstream Judaism and averred instead that Paul was better understood in terms of his Hellenistic setting (Davies, 1962, p.1). Montefiore's claim received

significant attention and it was not until some time later that Davies' seminal work "Paul and Rabbinic Judaism" appeared with the conclusion and emphasis that "Paul belonged to the main stream of first-century Judaism, and that elements in his thought, which are often labelled as Hellenistic, might well derive from Judaism" (1962, p.1). Davies' work in this field is described by E.P. Sanders as "a watershed in the history of scholarship on Paul and Judaism". Sanders also highlights the finding that since the appearance of Davies' work, "One has not seen much...on Paul and Hellenism...since then" (1977, p.7). Sanders consequently concludes that the most relevant background against which Paul should be studied is Judaism (1977, p.7).

The work of more recent Jewish and Gentile scholars like J.H. Charlesworth, E.P. Sanders, D. Daube, G. Vermes, J. Neusner, and many others, reveals that Montefiore's views in this context are obsolete and are to be substantially disregarded. The prevailing view regards Paul as being strongly influenced by mainstream Rabbinic Judaism. This is not to say that Paul was not influenced at all by his Hellenistic environment but he was, and remains, predominantly Jewish, and rabbinic, in accordance with his context.

Paul describes himself in terms of his Jewish heritage, "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee" (Acts 23:6). As Davies points out, Pharisaism was the dominant movement within first-century Judaism (1962, p.9). Fischer emphasises that Paul would not have received a hearing in the Synagogues if he had not been a law-adhering Jew because "In Paul's day being a Jew was synonymous with keeping the Torah" (1985, p.219.). This appears correct since Paul often preached and taught in the Synagogues of his time as is evident from many examples in the Book of Acts. Paul was proud of his Jewish heritage and often emphasised this fact. For instance in Acts 22:3 he said, "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today". Further, in 1Cor.20, Paul made plain his adherence to the Law, "To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became

like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law". From the foregoing, it is plain that Paul, who wrote a substantial portion of the Second Testament epistles, was as Jewish as any Torah-adhering Rabbi of his day. Together with the Apostle Matthew, Paul can be regarded as the probably finest example of the Jewish character of the early Church redactors.

Braybrooke focuses on the Jewishness of Jesus himself saying, "Jesus was a faithful Jew" and "he died a Jew and not a Christian" (1990, p.43). Braybrooke finds it necessary therefore to "repudiate centuries of false teaching, (and) to seek an accurate picture of first-century Judaism and...Jesus' relationship to it" (1990, p. 43). Charlesworth's support for this perspective is clear from his comments, "It is now recognised that Jesus was a devout Jew who lived in Palestine before the Roman destruction of 70 C.E." (1990, p.53). He makes the challenging assertions that in fact Christianity "for at least forty years, from 30 to 70 C.E., was a group within Judaism" (1991, p.179). Charlesworth goes on to affirm that, "like the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes, the Palestinian Jesus movement was a distinct Jewish group which helped shape the vibrant world of pre-70 Jewish culture" and concludes, "Jesus - and the origins of Christianity - are inextricably linked with Judaism" (1991, pp.197-198). Accordingly, the trend in modern scholarship is one which emphasises that Jesus and the nascent Church members were conventionally Jewish.

3. Jewish and Christian Writings

Charlesworth postulates that as "the New Testament documents were written primarily by Jews, they should not be studied in isolation from the history of Judaism" (1990, p.53). One might add to this by saying that not only were the Second Testament documents primarily written by Jews, they were quite possibly exclusively written by Jews because Luke (the only writer suspected of possibly not being Jewish) could well have been Jewish or at least a convert to Judaism. Furthermore, the documents were written primarily for Jews as the

early Church was exclusively Jewish in membership at the time of its initial formation. And of course Jesus himself was a Jew, as were all his disciples. One can consequently agree with Osborn's strong phrase that "a non-Jewish Jesus" cannot be other than "Christian Blasphemy" (1990, p. 211). This does not imply that the non-Jewish cultures of the time, particularly Hellenism, did not have an impact upon Christianity. Nevertheless, the *Sitz im Leben* of the Second Testament redactors and the dominant influence upon them was essentially Jewish, despite claims by Bultmann and others a few decades ago to the effect that the Second Testament was "heavily influenced by the Hellenistic ideologies of the first century" (Quarles, 1996, p.458).

Although the First Testament predates the Second Testament, the former remains valid and relevant to the later Testament. (Gunneweg, 1978, p.4). In fact, it is the discovery of interpretive methodologies, principles and techniques common to both that legitimises those methods in a Second Testament context. After all, the Second Testament writings originate from a Jewish matrix and so their pre-Christian origins are highly pertinent, especially when one considers that the First Testament Scriptures were the only Holy texts initially available to the early Church and were extensively quoted by the members thereof. The First Testament remains Holy Scripture for the Church and "the New Testament (is) merely...the correct interpretation of it in light of Christ's birth, death and resurrection", as Gunneweg so pertinently points out (1978, p.5).

The interdependence of Christian and Jewish Scripture is unavoidable for purposes of biblical perspicuity. Jewish scholar, S.C. Reif, remarks, "at most points in the history of exegesis, Christians and Jews have of course confidently believed in the rightness of their own positions but have also been aware of each other's treatment of the texts...they have recognized the value of earlier achievements and have often used these as foundations for their own exegetical structures" (1998, p.149). It can well be argued, then, that the foundations of Christian exegetical methodologies lie within its Jewish heritage and the necessity of examining relevant Jewish literature germane to the First Century

era and the impact of such texts upon Christian thought, understanding and interpretation of Scripture, is clear from the foregoing. This is particularly so as regards prophetic texts and the eschatological events referred to therein.

Therefore, even though "We can live and do exegesis only in our world and time" (Cahill, 2000, p. 342), ancient exegesis from a period some two thousand years ago has immense importance for us today, being the root stock of our current beliefs and practices. This is notably the case since 1947 when the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls opened up the world of Judaism to an extent never before experienced.

4. Early Jewish Hermeneutics

A degree of polemic surrounds the definition and application of the terms, "hermeneutics", "exegesis", and "interpretation", with various proposed definitions, as pointed out by Thomas (1996, pp.243-244). In this study, these terms will be used interchangeably although it is conceded that there are some technical differences between them. All the same, it is submitted that use of the above terms in context should make the meaning and purpose clear enough. Additionally, in agreement with D.J. Moo, "the plural, 'hermeneutics'," is utilized here as it properly designates "the 'rules of exegesis'" which looked at in a wider sense, "includes theological perspective". On the other hand, "The singular 'hermeneutic' has come to denote the existentialist-oriented approach to interpretation" (Moo, 1983, p.3). Perhaps the optimal approach would be to use the term "exegetical hermeneutics" as proposed by Okure (2000, p.445), and so avoid undue criticism!

Due to the interconnectedness between early Judaism and Christianity - both arising out of a common early Palestinian Judaic heritage - an extra-biblical methodological approach to exegesis, rather than an inner-biblical one, will, it is proposed, yield far greater returns through a comparative and derivative study of Second Testament literature and that of early Judaism and its literature. This

methodological approach is supported by Longenecker who, while acknowledging the benefit of inner-biblical exegesis, states that the advantage of an extra-biblical approach is that it "recognizes cognate, extra-canonical materials as being of aid in one's attempt to understand the hermeneutical mindsets and exegetical practices on the New Testament writers" (1999, p.xx). Such an approach has been of particular benefit since the discovery and subsequent availability of the Dead Sea Scrolls with its rich source of extra-canonical literature. The approach also accords with those methods practised by early Christians for whom Jesus, the long awaited Messiah of Israel, was the starting point in their exegesis and explanation of the Scriptures, being the fulfilment of the central biblical prophecies. Support for the messianic claims of Jesus was derived not only from his testimony but, especially, from First Testament texts to which he made reference. Moule makes this same point, "The Christians began from Jesus" and they then "went to the scriptures and found that God's dealings with his People and his intentions for them there reflected did, in fact, leap into new significance in the light of these recent happenings". In this sense, says Moule, "early Christian exegesis of scripture...was a new and creative thing, albeit rooted also in an antecedent Jewish tradition" (1966, pp.57-58). The practice of extra-biblical exegesis of Scripture thus has historical precedent.

Though the Hellenistic hermeneutical method of allegory, with Philo being the prime Jewish exegete, was utilised to a limited extent in both Rabbinic and Qumranic writings of the time, compared to the *peshat*, *midrash* and *peshet* methodologies it was not of major significance in Palestinian Jewish exegesis. As Ellis comments, "allegorical interpretation is a minor element" in rabbinic exegesis (1957, p.44) with the "Mashal or parable the more frequent form" (1957, p.51). The study of parables being outside the scope of this study, focus will accordingly be on methods like *peshat*, *midrash* and *peshet*, and the *middoth*, rather than the allegorical method most popular in Alexandrian Jewish and pagan circles. However, it has to be acknowledged that Palestinian Jewish thought was to some degree influenced by its Hellenistic surrounds because

there was, not unexpectedly, an element of mutual penetration between them although the dividing line remains unclear. It should suffice to briefly examine Hellenistic influence and the allegorical interpretative method when considering Philo and his influence on the early Church.

Longenecker propounds that "Jewish exegesis of the first century can generally be classified under four headings: literalist, *midrashic*, *peshet* and allegorical" (1999, p.14). Despite neatly categorising the various dominant hermeneutical methods, Longenecker, in an attempt to classify Jewish exegetical methods for the period under discussion, acknowledges that one must search beyond any proposed codification. His reason for this is that Judaism "thinks more holistically, functionally, and practically than it does analytically" (1999, p.xxv) and this too is disparate in relation to the modern approach which emphasises the grammatico-historical method. The Jewish scholar, Halivni, also highlights the Jewish holistic attitude to interpretation stating that "*derash* may be embraced without the necessary abandonment of scriptural *peshat*" (1991, p.viii). Reif, another Jewish scholar, also understands the Jewish approach to be a holistic one because he postulates that "no clearly defined distinction is made...between what later commentators saw as the opposing systems of simple meaning (*peshat*) and applied exegesis (*derash*)" (1998, p.149). In similar fashion, Kamin, too, points out that Rabbinic thought "thinks in terms of a multiplicity of meanings embodied in Holy Scripture" (1988, p.151).

Whether applying *peshat*, *midrash*, *peshet* or Hillel's *middoth*, early Jewish exegetes always sought to draw out not only a deeper meaning from the text, but also one which had contemporary meaning and eschatological implications. Qumranian and early Christian exegetes followed the same process.

5. Conclusion

The exegetical traditions subscribed to by the three main groups under consideration, the Pharisees, the Qumran covenanters and the early Christians

have much in common. To arrive at an adequate understanding of any one group, account must be taken of the practices of other two. This accords with the view of the noted Jewish scholar, Geza Vermes, who observes, "in inter-testamental Judaism there existed a fundamental unity of exegetical tradition. This tradition, the basis of religious faith and life, was adopted and modified by its constituent groups, the Pharisees, the Qumran sectaries and the Judaeo-Christians" (Vermes, 1999, p.5). As a result, Vermes concludes that there exist "three cognate schools of exegesis of the one message recorded in the Bible, and it is the duty of the historian to emphasize that none of them can properly be understood independently of the others" (1999, p.5).

D. RABBINIC EXEGESIS IN EARLY PALESTINIAN JUDAISM

1. Introduction

Apropos the early rabbinic, Pharisaic, period and the hermeneutical methodologies of such time, Longenecker says quite categorically, "it need not be argued at any length that Judaism often took the words of the Old Testament quite literally. Rabbinic literature contains a number of examples of where the Scriptures are understood in a straightforward fashion, resulting in the plain, simple and natural meaning of the text being applied to the lives of the people" (1999, p.15). Quite so, but the fact is that while the starting point of rabbinic interpretation was always the literal, *peshat*, sense, this approach generally did not go far enough for the Rabbis when considering prophetic and non-legal texts. Their purpose was "to fuse scripture with life" (Vermes, 1973, p.229) and this meant that the Rabbis often had to contemporise the Scriptures - to make them relevant to the community's present situation - and to explain what the future held. The Rabbis desired to search out the full meaning of the text and while application of the *peshat* method was strictly utilised with regard to *halakah*, or religious law, where the plain meaning is often more obvious, application of both the *peshat* method, as a first step, and other methods such as *haggadah* were applied in areas of prophetic and non-legal texts. This will be evident below.

2. Midrash

The term "*midrash*" can be used in different ways. The following quote on *midrash* by prominent Jewish scholar, J.A. Sanders, is worth repeating, "(*Midrash* refers) to a mass of literature from the formative and classical Jewish periods as a recognizable literary genre, the tannaitic and rabbinic *Midrashim*. It is also used in the broader sense to mean the function of searching Scripture to seek light on new problems, as the Hebrew verb "*derash*" (meaning "search" or "seek") indicates. In other words, *midrash* may be used to indicate a literary form

or literary function" (2001, p.20). It is in this latter sense of literary function that the term "*midrash*" (the substantive form of "*derash*") is used herein. Bruns elaborates, "the term *midrash* derives from *darash*, meaning to 'study', 'to search', 'to investigate', 'to inquire' (1987, p.628).

Midrash is a "rabbinical concept or practice" which has great antiquity as it is "certainly as old as writing itself" (Bruns, 1992, p.104). According to Goulder, *midrash* already had a technical meaning in the Book of 2Chronicles (13:22) which mentions the *midrash* of the "Prophet Iddo and the *midrash* of the Book of Kings". The *midrash* mentioned in these texts are the "works of the Chronicler's own predecessors commenting on Kings and on which he was free himself to comment or to leave by". Goulder adds that *midrash* is in fact the "way in which our whole Old Testament grew up. The Book of Deuteronomy, for example, being a *midrash* on the ancient Israelite laws" (Goulder, 1974, pp.28-29).

In one of the earliest rabbinic works, Ben Sira (ca.180 B.C.E.), the term, "House of *Midrash*" refers to the place of "instruction in the law of God" (51:23); and in Qumran's Damascus Document (CD 20:6) the term *midrash* can "mean the 'study' of Torah" (Ellis, 1991, p.90). Martinez's translation of CD20:6 refers to *midrash* as, "interpretation of the law" (Martinez, 1994, p.46), while The Rule of the Community (1QS viii:15) scroll refers to *midrash* as "the study of the law" (Martinez, 1994, p.12). In such context the term *midrash* can be defined a "study, exposition" or "exposition, commentary" (Quarles, 1996, p.458). This understanding of *midrash* is confirmed in the Apocryphal text, Sirach (51:23), ca. 132 B.C.E., where the use of "*midras* was specifically Scriptural interpretation" (Quarles, 1996, p.459). *Midrash* can also be described as "a Jewish interpretation of scripture; more precisely, a commentary that contemporizes Scripture for current and practical situations" (Dockery, 1992, p.189).

To further complicate matters, the use of the *midrash* method has given rise to two different corpa, namely, *halakah* (variations being *halachah*, *halaka* or

alakah) and *haggadah* (*haggada* or *aggadah*) which, like *midrash*, can also be classified as literary functions. Bruns distinguishes the two by explaining that *halakah* is the giving of an account of what is at issue in a legal text, while *haggadah* relates to giving an account of a narrative, "or more accurately, any non legal text" (1987, p.628). *Halakah* thus seeks to interpret Biblical law, the *Torah*, for practical purposes while *haggadah* seeks to interpret the full and deeper meaning of non-Toranic Scripture and to make it relevant for both present and future purposes. To elaborate, *haggadah*, according to John Bowker, "not only interprets the scriptures but also illustrates it, adding details and stories which clarify the meaning of scripture and its application in the lives of others" (1969, p.48).

The resultant content of the non-legal *midrash*, *haggadah*, is the category that is of most interest for the purposes of this study for it is here that the interpretation of prophetic and apocalyptic texts is found. As an exegetical tool, *haggadah* has considerable relevance to the interpretation of such texts as it seeks to make the past pertinent, not only to the present, but also to the future. As Ellis explains, "Although the *Peshat*, or primary meaning, theoretically remained supreme, rabbinical exegesis almost exclusively applied the texts to contemporary situations by means of *Halacha* and *Haggada*" (1957, pp.40-41). This is not to say, however, that some of the other Jewish hermeneutical techniques, mentioned by Longenecker, namely, *peshat*, *peshet* and, to a lesser extent, allegory, were not generally utilised as well.

3. Peshat

The *peshat* (plain, simple, literal) reading is the first and primary rabbinic approach to interpretation of Scripture whether in regard to legal or non-legal matters. Its importance is emphasised three times in *Talmudic* (ca.200 C.E.) literature where it is stated that, "no text can be deprived of its *peshat*" (Halivni, 1991, p.52), which verifies that the Rabbis valued the plain and simple meaning of the text and regarded it as "superior to applied meaning" (Halivni, 1991,

p.198). The *peshat* sense not only indicates the literal aspect but involves the whole context of the text as “the standard meaning of the root *p-sh-t* (extension)...carries the...connotation of ‘context” (Halivni, 1991, p.52). Attention to the context of the passage assured the exegete of the correct meaning of the word or phrase to be interpreted. But the *peshat* is only the starting point in matters of interpreting predictive prophecy since a normal reading of the text could very well lead to a merely historic or preterist view of the events depicted - that is, the initial fulfilment being also the final one. Thus, in order to “*derash*”, to seek out the full meaning and possible further or additional applications, other Jewish hermeneutical principles such as *peshet*, *midrash* and allegory have an integral part to play. This is particularly so in attempting to arrive at a contemporary or an eschatological understanding, or relevancy, of such Scriptures, as Jewish interpretation of prophecy and prophetic events was never simply a prediction followed by a fulfilment.

4. Patterns of Fulfilment

The early Jews perceived prophecy as “a pattern not just prediction” (Prasch, 1999, “Final Words”, pp.20-21). This pattern displayed “multiple fulfilments” of a prophecy that indicated to them an “ultimate fulfilment.” of such prophecy would take place in the *eschaton* (Prasch, 1999, “Grain”, pp.12-13). In lieu of a more suitable phrase, “multiple fulfilment of prophecy” will generally be used herein although other terms such as “multiple application of a fulfilment” or “reinterpretation of the prophecy” might convey the same intent.

To elaborate, from a literal reading (the *peshat*) of a specific prophetic text that had been fulfilled historically and through a study of like texts, the Rabbis discerned the existence of a pattern based on other events thematically related to the foundational text. In so doing, the Rabbis justifiably took the view that, from the occurrence of these connected events, an event of similar nature will transpire in the coming *eschaton*. Fulfilments of the connected prophetic events were perceived as enhancing and strengthening the idea that an event similar

thereto will recur and have an ultimate fulfilment in the *eschaton*. In other words, a pattern of similar events indicates the form of an ultimate eschatological event.

The idea of a recurrent prophetic fulfilment was a core Jewish eschatological view arising from factors such as a faith in the divine origin of Scripture; the sovereignty of God over all time, humankind and world events; and that all time was linear, leading to God's ultimate purposes at the end of time and thus world history. Russell encapsulates this view, "God had been working from the very beginning and was working still. All the events of history were directed towards a single goal - the establishment of the kingdom of God - in which the divine purpose of God would be vindicated once and for all" (1964, p.223).

It can be said, then, that the Rabbis believed the past was certain to repeat itself because, as Russell again so aptly states, their view was "that which actually has been is now that which shall be; that which has been accomplished is that which will be accomplished". Hence, the "pattern of the past is the pattern of the future" (1964, p.231). In other words, it is from examples of past events, which themselves were determined by God, that the future, likewise determined by God, could readily be ascertained. As a consequence, foreknowledge of coming events could credibly be claimed. It is not surprising that prophetic prediction was understood as a series of events, not only as a once-off fulfilment of a prophecy. This understanding originated from application of *midrash*, in this case *haggadah*, as a *derash* was sought from the relevant Scriptures. All the same, the basis for the interpretation remained the *peshat* reading in order to ensure a binding connection with the text in the applied *derash*. The *peshat* sense was relied on to establish the context and thus ensure that the "vision of the future is anchored in the total history of salvation" (Cullmann, 1967, p.82), as perceived by the Rabbis in their *haggadic* approach.

The basis of rabbinic faith in all this was belief, founded on the Scriptures, in the fulfilment in history of God's predictive words as "Not one of all the Lord's good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled" (Josh. 21:45).

There was thus no reason to doubt that the eschatological promises of God would likewise be fulfilled because it is the "history of the past (which) is seen in the closest relationship with the events of the present and future" (Cullmann, 1967, p.82). This design is evident from the Book of Jeremiah, for example. In Jer.16:14-15, the Prophet reports the Lord's promise that He will restore the Israelites to *Eretz Yisrael* through a fresh exodus from the various nations, particularly the northern - into which they had been scattered in the Babylonian exile - and in a way which reflects the prior momentous Exodus from Egypt. This promise is repeated in Jer.23:7-8: "So then, the days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when people will no longer say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt', but they will say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the descendants of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.' Then they will live in their own land."

The Exodus theme is used as an example by Jeremiah and such theme, and the situation, described by Jeremiah can both be used as a foundation for the establishment of a pattern. And from this pattern the Rabbis would find it possible to discern the type of deliverance that the exiled nation of Israel could expect subsequent to new disasters, such as the Babylonian conquest. The first Exodus can be considered as the first, foundational event in "the pattern of a new and greater Deliverance" (Hebert, 1947, p.146). This pattern is actually suggested in the above passage from Jeremiah, namely, that from such time onwards the Exodus narrative was to be regarded as an event "to be re-enacted in the future on a more imposing scale" (Hebert, 1947, p.146), and not simply as a great but historical event without further relevance. Other prophets such as Ezekiel and Isaiah also spoke of the theme of recurrent restoration.

From such Scriptures, and in order to obtain perspicuity in relation to matters affecting Israel in the *eschaton*, the Rabbis would apply this exegetical approach, directing it to an anticipated further and final restoration in the coming *eschaton*. At such time God would once again, as shown in past occurrences,

deliver his people from exile and from their enemies, and return them to their Promised Land in the same manner as on previous occasions. To achieve their desired result, the Rabbis used *haggadah* as the hermeneutical principle, as this mode of *midrash* is concerned with the drawing out (*derash*) of meanings not only from the text itself but especially of the event depicted in such text. This led, in turn, to an understanding of the prior historic fulfilment as a prototype of an eschatological, climatic, final, fulfilment of the event in question.

Qumranic *peshet* was concerned with arriving at an understanding of the contemporary fulfilment of an ancient prophecy - an approach which F.F. Bruce refers as "this is that", a phrase taken from Peter's speech in the Book of Acts 2: 16, "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (KJV); (Bruce, 1968). Rabbinic exegesis, on the other hand, was more concerned with depicting a pattern of past events to be repeated in the future but, at the same time, not denying the original event the importance of its *peshat* - its context and historical validity - or its contemporary relevance.

The hermeneutical methods of *peshat* and *haggadah*, and *peshat* and *peshet*, in various combinations, were generally used in conjunction with one another, in a holistic manner where appropriate, to reach an understanding of prophetic texts which might appear to have had sole relevance at an earlier stage in history. Such texts were then applied to a contemporary, often apocalyptic, situation as in the case of the Qumran covenanters, or to both the current situation and the coming *eschaton*, as in the case of the Pharisaical Rabbis.

5. Hillel's Seven Middoth

The seven interpretative rules (*middoth*), formulated by Rabbi Hillel in ca.30 C.E., were also an integral part of Jewish hermeneutical methodology and used mainly in a *halakah* or *haggadah* context.

Davies takes the view that "Palestinian Judaism is not to be viewed as a watertight compartment closed against all Hellenistic influences" (1962, p.8). Nearly twenty-five years later, Brooke expresses a similar view concluding that, "Hellenistic influence was in many ways as widespread in Palestine as it was in Alexandria and Diaspora Judaism" (1985, p.8). While direct importation of the *middoth* from a Hellenistic context cannot be verified, and is highly unlikely, it may be surmised that "the correlation and terminology of the rules may go back to Hellenistic influence" (Strack and Stemberger, 1992, p.20). As mentioned earlier, the extent of such influence is a matter of polemic and it is not a topic requiring further examination here. The import of this information is that Brooke uses it as a springboard to emphasise the Hellenistic - allegorical in this case - influence on Rabbi Hillel's *middoth*. Again, the extent of such influence, if any, remains contentious. In any event, the direct use of allegory by both the Qumran sect and the Palestinian Rabbis was greatly overshadowed by their persistent use of *peshet*, *peshat* and *midrash*. Unless, of course, the *peshet* and *midrash* methods are themselves considered to be allegorical approaches - which cannot be said to be the case, as they, *inter alia*, rely on the *peshat* as a starting point. However, it is true to say that they can contain elements of allegory in their application.

The rabbinic schools of Hillel and his contemporary, Shammai, were founded in Palestine during the reign of Herod and gave rise to the Tannaite tradition. Moore explains that "The name of Hillel is associated with certain hermeneutic forms for juristic deduction and analogy which are called Hillel's Seven Rules. They are obvious principles of interpretation...which had doubtless been applied by scholars before his time but with Hillel they became a method" (Moore, 1971, pp.78-79). It is believed that they were redacted in 30 C.E. (Goulder, 1974, p.24), after a substantial period of oral tradition, as Moore asserts.

Moore emphasises that these *middoth* are only to be regarded as guidelines, "for the appropriation of scriptures" rather than rules establishing strict interpretive procedures. This, he says, is because, "In the last analysis, the rabbinic

methodology for actualizing Scripture defies codification, as it proceeds often by ad hoc, intuitive and almost instinctive approaches, developed in the exigencies of specific situations. The procedures embodied in the *middoth* should, then, be regarded not as set and established techniques, but as indications of the type of approach which was popular" (1983, pp.28-29). Moo's clarification has some weight since the major, and most prevalent, rabbinic exegetical method of the time in matters non-legal was *midrash* of the *haggadic* type. Such *midrash* enabled the Rabbis to arrive at an understanding of eschatological events which adherence to a strict code would not have allowed. It must be conceded that it may be possible to discern Hellenistic influence in the formulation (for instance, Aristotle's rhetorical guidelines) of such methods, but overall the approach was predominantly a Palestinian one. It is possible that the rules were formulated precisely to exclude the excessive allegorical usage so favoured by the Alexandrian school, for instance, and to impose acceptable methodological limitations thereon.

Early in the second century C.E., Hillel's seven *middoth* were amplified and extended to thirteen *middoth* by Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha - and much later into thirty two by Rabbi Eliezer. Kamin concludes that the thirteen principles of Rabbi Elisha, "govern the non-literal level" which, for rabbinic literature, implies the employment of *midrash*, especially *haggadah*. However, this does not detract from the traditional Jewish dictum (later redacted in the Babylonian *Talmud*) that "Scripture cannot be deprived of its immediate, primary, literal meaning" - the *peshat* - as it is to be remembered that rabbinical exegesis, rather than being analytical in nature, "thinks in terms of a multiplicity of meanings embodied in Holy Scripture" (Kamin, 1988, pp.150-151).

It is appropriate at this juncture to list and briefly describe, for later reference, Hillel's *middoth*. These rules, although codified by Hillel "were not invented (by him) but constitute a collation of the main types of argument in use at that time" (Strack and Stemberger, 1992, p.18) and probably had existence before the time of Hillel (Bowker, 1969, pp.314-315).

Bowker relates Hillel's seven rules as follows:

1. *Qal wahomer*: what applies in a less important case will certainly apply in a more general case.
 2. *Gezerah shawah*: verbal analogy from one verse to another; where the same words are applied to two separate cases it follows that the same considerations apply to both.
 3. *Binyan ab mikathub 'ehad*: building up a family from a single text; when the same phrase is found in a number of passages, then a consideration found in any one of them applies to all of them.
 4. *Binyan ab mishene kethubim*: building up a family from two texts; a principle is established by relating two texts together; the principle can then be applied to other passages.
 5. *Kelal upherat*: the general and the particular; a general principle may be restricted by a particularisation of it in another verse; or conversely, a particular rule may be extended into a general principle.
 6. *Kayoze bo bemaqom 'aher*: as is found in another place; a difficulty in one text may be solved by comparing it with another which has points of general (though not necessarily verbal) similarity.
 7. *Dabar halamed me'inyano*: a meaning established by its context.
- (Bowker, 1969, p.315).

The application of some of these rules, where appropriate, will be displayed later. Suffice to say that at this stage *middoth* #1 is further elucidated by the phrase, "from light to heavy". That is, if something was relevant at an earlier stage, for instance, then how much more relevant will it not be in the contemporary situation of the interpreter, or especially in an eschatological context. In other words, this is an argument from the less significant to the more or most significant (Strack and Stemberger, 1991, p.21).

Contemporising of ancient scripture was not a new thing - even in early Jewish circles - as the noted Jewish scholar, Jacob Neusner points out, "The exegesis

of verses of Scripture defined a convention in Israelite life even before books of holy writings attained the status of Scripture." Neusner adds the following example, "The relationship of Chronicles to Samuel and Kings shows us how within the life of ancient Israel, people read one book in the light of some other, imposing an issue important to themselves upon writings of the remote past." This hermeneutical method, he argues, was so prevalent that "Every known Judaism in ancient times, whether revealed in the writings of a sect (such as at Qumran among the Essenes), or in those of a philosopher (such as Philo), undertook to interpret verses of Scripture as part of the labor of defining the Judaism at hand, its worldview and way of life" (1986, p.89). An example from Qumran literature is to be found in the Temple Scroll (11QTemple 57:17-18). Such methodology has been practised for centuries.

6. The Targums

Another source of interest with regard to the Rabbis of early Judaism, are the Palestinian Targums ("translations" or "interpretations") found in both rabbinic and Qumranic literature and described as "free interpretations based upon midrashic methods and a concern for fulfilled prophecy" (Brownlee, 1979, p.32). Originally oral in transmission, they were later redacted at various periods.

The Targums are Aramaic interpretive commentaries on Scripture, the purpose of which was to enable the text, generally read out in the Synagogues, to be explained and commented on in the vernacular and so made meaningful to the gathered audience. Bowker explains, "There was no fear that the sacred text was being altered or mishandled, because the text had already been read out (in the Synagogue). The purpose of the Targum was to expound its meaning" (1969, p.x). The Targums contain a wide ambit of rabbinical interpretative methods that include *haggadah*. Bowker elaborates that "*haggadah* not only interprets scripture but also illustrates it, adding details and stories which clarify the meaning of scripture and its application in the lives of others". He provides the example that the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on Genesis, "usually records

haggadah interpretation" (1969, p.48). However, Waltke points out that "at Qumran...both free and literal Targums were made", in addition to the employment of other more usual rabbinic hermeneutical methods (2001, p.39). This is confirmed by McNamara (1972, p.75). But the main exegetical tool was that of *midrash* and Longenecker confirms this, "As interpretive paraphrases or explanatory translations, they (the Targumists) frequently incorporated later theological concepts and their own *haggadoth* for purposes of clarification and edification". He goes on to stress the importance of the Targums for Second Testament studies, as they "represent both Palestinian and Babylonian Jewish hermeneutics of a very early time, possibly originally coming from various pre-Christian synagogues. As such, they are of great significance to the discussion of early Jewish exegesis" (1999, pp. 8-9).

Despite some controversy regarding the dating of the Targums, Brooke argues that "At least from the point of content the Targums definitely have a place in discussion of first century B.C. and first century A.D. exegesis" (1985, pp.26-27). Vermes, discussing Paul Kahle's findings, confirms "his previous estimate of the antiquity of the Palestinian Targum, including its midrashic elements" (1973, p.4). Brooke emphasises that insofar as the method of exegesis found in the Targums is concerned, "clearly all scholars now agree that there exists such a method" (1985, pp.26-27). Bowker stresses the importance of the Targums even more emphatically, "the Targums have become startlingly relevant to the New Testament and to the study of Jewish thought at the time of Jesus" (1969, p.xi). It can similarly be said that the Targums are invaluable as they "testify to how the biblical text was interpreted in Judaism" (Chapman, and Kostenberger, 2000, p.581).

Although Qumran fulfilment type *peshet* is not prevalent in the Palestinian Targums, Gordon points out that Targum Jonathan and others do reflect some elements of contemporisation. For instance, "The view that Rome completed the Danielic quartet of world empires is certainly reflected in Targum Jonathan as also at several points in the Palestinian Targumim to the Pentateuch. Tg.

Habakkuk 3:17 reads, 'For the kingdom of Babylon shall not endure or exercise suzerainty over Israel, the kings of Media shall be killed, and the warriors from Greece shall not prosper, the Romans shall be destroyed and shall not gather taxes [rakings?] from Jerusalem'" (Gordon, 1988, p.71). Examples of this method are found in the Second Testament writings and, additionally, it can be said that this is not unlike some modern writers on eschatology for they too allege fulfilment through a reading of contemporary events from ancient prophecy.

Consequently, it can be claimed that both the literal (*peshat*) and *midrash* methods are found not only in rabbinic works and Qumranic literature but also in the Targums. Such a conclusion supports the view that, insofar as Jewish literature of early Judaism is concerned, the *peshat* and *midrash* hermeneutical methods are dominant in all major literary genres. Like other Jewish literature, the Second Testament, too, displays commonality with the interpretive methods found in the Targums. Gundry claimed "sixteen possible contacts with the targums" in the Book of Matthew alone (Goulder, 1974, p.126). Furthermore, "Matthew shows himself to be a Targumist in small ways and large", especially by apparently writing his own interpretation of scriptural events, or expanding upon Markan or Lucan passages. In so doing, Matthew simply follows the habits of earlier Targumists (Goulder, 1974, p.129).

7. The Rabbis and the Eschaton

a. Introduction.

The Rabbis took the view that events such as messianic reign, wars and tribulation, the appearance of a wicked "Antichrist" type leader, the restoration and salvation of Israel, the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple, would literally take place in the *eschaton*. Maccoby, summing up the main ideas of early rabbinic literature, writes that the Rabbis believed in a future world transformed by the arrival of the Messiah and "The culmination of history would be the

conversion of the whole world to the worship of the one God. At that time, Israelite sovereignty would be restored under its king, the Messiah, and the ideal of the Temple as a centre of worship for all mankind would be realised, with the people of Israel as the recognized priest-nation" (1988, p.47). Russell adds that the coming kingdom would incorporate the "restoration of David's line". This scenario was in essence a "picture of an earthly kingdom" which, for the most part, would be a "hope for Israel alone in a kingdom of this world" free from the "power of their enemies" (1964, p.265).

The rabbinical comprehension of eschatological issues such as those surrounding the arrival of the Messiah were deduced through application of various traditional hermeneutical methods. The starting point was always *peshat* and thereafter the *derash* followed. Upon employing the *peshat* sense to establish the initial context, the Rabbis then applied the prophetic text and relevant events referred to therein to an end-time setting. Although the events described in the various prophecies had an initial and contextual fulfilment from a reading of the *peshat* sense, the ultimate fulfilment, in their conviction, would only take place in the *eschaton*. Says Bright, "Israel's faith had always had an eschatological orientation" (1960, p.439), and this was the perspective held by the rabbinic exegetes. Therefore to arrive at an eschatological interpretation, the Rabbis employed a midrashic hermeneutical methodology, particularly the "drawing out", the *derash*, through the use of *haggadah*. It was this tool which enabled the ancient Jews to arrive at an understanding of the current and often eschatological relevance of prophetic matters, rather than the use of *peshat* alone, although this was always the primary step. Longenecker points this out, "Jewish interpreters viewed their task as one of dealing with both the plain or obvious meanings and the implied or derived meanings" (1999, p.7).

To examine the various eschatological views contained in rabbinic literature, reference also needs to be made to Jewish writings like the *Talmud*, *Mishna*, various *Targums*, *Midrashim* and other collections that were compiled in later centuries. Although they cannot strictly be called documents of early Judaism,

they are, in actuality, a vital source of rabbinical views dating from such period and beyond. These works reflect rabbinic interpretations over many centuries and are invariably based on original interpretations to which the writings and commentaries of sages from ages past have been added. Such corpa, originally only held in the oral tradition, were later subject to the redaction of the Rabbis and constitute a fine record of divergent rabbinical views over a substantial period of time. For example, the Babylonian *Talmud*, a corpus redacted in the sixth century, contains the works and opinions of Rabbis quoted from as far back as the first century B.C.E., and "the same is true for the Jerusalem or Palestinian *Talmud* and for almost all *Midrashim*" (Patai, 1979, p.344). It is therefore advisable to take cognisance of the views expressed in such works, where applicable.

b. The Rabbis and the Messiah

A widespread Jewish view of the period was that a Messiah was awaited, one who would be "the saviour of the world". In other words, a deliverer, a "messianic king who redeems the nation from foreign bondage". The writer of these quotes, Prof. J. Klausner, a prominent Jewish scholar, goes on to say that "This is an ancient Jewish idea which is by no means to be regarded as a Christian interpolation" (1977, "Messianic Idea", pp.153-178). In fact, it could be said that even from the "first century B.C.E., the Messiah was the central figure in the Jewish myth of the future" (Patai, 1979, p.xxvii). Incidentally, use of the term, "myth", is employed here in the "sense of a story possessed of a deep inner truth for those who believe it" (Patai, 1979, p.xlix). This Messiah would lead the people of Israel from exile and back into their land and their capital Jerusalem, and he would inaugurate a period of blessed peace over not only Israel but over all the peoples of the world. Such a belief is one of the "fundamental tenets of Judaism" (Patai, 1979, p.xxi) and the "dominant pattern of hope" of the Jewish people (Bright, 1960, p.442).

The type of Messiah expected, then, was a Davidic type deliverer who would defeat the enemies of Israel and institute a period of peace, ruling from the city of Jerusalem. Apart from the numerous canonical texts supporting an expected Davidic Messiah, Russell mentions that the main source among the apocryphal books is to be found in Psalms of Solomon 17 (ca.50 B.C.E.), "Behold, O Lord, and raise up unto them their king, the Son of David". Here the name "Messiah" is used as the title of the coming king" (1964, p.318). Klausner describes this Redeemer as the "messianic king" who "redeems the nation from foreign bondage" (1977, "Messianic Idea", pp.153-178). The redemption involves the whole ambit of eschatological events just as release from the bondage of oppressors necessitates a holy war, for example.

The Book of Daniel comprises an important source for rabbinical views of the Messiah and his eschatological activity, especially Daniel's description of the coming of the "Son of Man", in Dan.7:13-14. Klausner explains that not only the later *Talmudic* Rabbis but the writers of the most ancient pseudepigraphical texts, "similarly understood the prophetic 'Son of Man' as referring to the Messiah" (1977, "Messianic Idea", p.159). The Second Testament writers followed this understanding as is clear from Rev.14:14, "seated on the cloud was one 'like a son of man' with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand". And Jesus frequently referred to himself as the "Son of Man", for example in John 13:3. The rabbinic understanding of the Messiah, the "Son of man", was of a Redeemer who would inaugurate his kingdom on earth, ruling from Jerusalem after the defeat of Israel's enemies. This concept of a messianic kingdom, ruled from Zion, "a kingdom of Heaven upon earth" - derived from Dan.7:27 and other texts - was clearly understood by the Rabbis as a literal kingdom, one on earth from where King Messiah reigned. Klausner remarks that "its influence on Christianity is unmistakable" but when Christianity, "introduced a Greek element into Jewish monotheism it changed the basic concept of the Kingdom of Heaven which it had borrowed from Judaism" (1977, "Messianic Idea", p.159). Klausner's comment is interesting for, if correct, it could assist in explaining the existence of various and dichotomous eschatological doctrinal

positions. If the Jewish understanding of messianic rule on a literal earth, from Jerusalem, is allegorised in the Platonist fashion, then a door would be opened to speculative interpretations on both this and allied issues. One possible implication is the spiritual view of the messianic kingdom held by the amillennialist and postmillennialist factions which is in contradistinction to the rabbinic understanding of a literal messianic kingdom on earth, as believed by the Jews for millennia.

For the Rabbis, the messianic expectation was an imminent one - a hope which had sustained them for thousands of years. Flusser comments that "those in the Second Temple period who foresaw the End and the Redemption really believed that they were living in the generation before the End of Days, (and) there prevailed among them a general immediate messianic expectation" (1977, p.33). This is particularly so in the case of the Qumran covenanters with their apocalyptic outlook, but less so with Pharisaical rabbinicism and other sects. However, apocalyptic views were not confined to a particular, insular group but, rather, were to be found "throughout many parties" in Judaism (Russell, 1964, p.27) and this included the Pharisaical group so exceptions abounded.

c. The Rabbis and the Messianic Age

A belief in the establishment of a Messianic age inaugurated by the arrival of a Davidic type King Messiah was a prevalent view among the early Jews. The Rabbis founded their views on Scriptures like Isa.9:5-6; Isa.11:1-12; Mic.4:1-4; Jer.23:5-6; Zech.9:9-10 and Dan.7:13-14.

The Messianic age, however, would be preceded by days of "woes and afflictions" associated with King Messiah's arrival - as noted for instance in the non-canonical Ethiopic Book of Enoch (Klausner, "Messianic Idea", 1977, p.159). Thereafter a period of peace would ensue with all the "earthly promises (being) fulfilled in the days of the Messiah" (Klausner, "Messianic Idea", 1977, p.161). Klausner goes on to say that this period of messianic peace, a period of

abundance, is also described in the Syrian Baruch, and in the later tradition of the early Church Fathers, notably in the works of Papias as preserved by Irenaeus. It is here, according to Klausner, that the "Christian belief in the Millennial Kingdom of Heaven (Millennialism, Chiliaism)" arose (1977, "Messianic Idea", p.161). In making such assertion, Klausner obviously did not refer to the Christian texts, although they are somewhat later in redaction, but appears to rely on the multiplicity of references in the Book of Enoch (ca.100 B.C.E.-100 C.E.) to the figure "one thousand". For example, during the Messianic age the righteous, "will give birth to a thousand children...all that will be sown will bear a thousandfold" (Klausner, 1977, "Messianic Idea", p.161), and so forth. Similarly, Charles reveals that it is in the book of 2 Enoch (1- 50 C.E.) that "the Messianic kingdom is conceived as lasting for 1,000 years, and it is to such origin that we must trace the later Christian view of the Millennium" (1963, p.315). The apocryphal Enoch, "is probably the messianic book par excellence of the Judaism of both the Second Temple period and the two centuries that followed". Furthermore, it is in Enoch that the promises of Scripture have been "broadened and become more detailed". Furthermore, other apocryphal books, as well as the later *Talmud* and recorded *Midrash*, "do not add much to what is already contained in this unique book" (Klausner, 1977, "Messianic Idea", p.167). Thus these extracts from the book of Enoch can be regarded as a fair representation of rabbinic beliefs from this period. In any event, it is clear that the Rabbis anticipated that the messianic period would endure for a thousand years as, according to Klausner, "these descriptions are also found almost verbatim in early Tannaitic and midrashic sources" (1977, "Messianic Idea", p.161).

Pursuant to the Messiah's conquest of the enemies of Israel, he then "establishes a great kingdom in Zion that serves as the centre of the world" (Klausner, 1977, "Messianic Idea", p.171). A corresponding Second Testament Scripture is Rev.11:15. "The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever'".

These verses herald reflections of Zechariah's prophecies in Zech.9:10, "He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth". And also in Zech.14:16, "Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty". Righteous messianic rule during such period is clear too from the rabbinic work, *Pes. diR. Kahaha*, which records "in the future to come, if a man owes his neighbour something...he says to him, 'Let us go and be judged by King Messiah in Jerusalem'" (Patai, 1979, p.224).

Belief in a glorious messianic reign on earth has remained a fundamental tenet of rabbinic thought through the ages. The glorious reign would eventuate pursuant to a great and final exodic deliverance, as reflected in a pattern of similar past events, with God now finally and fully bringing his people triumphantly back to their own land. God would then "set up His kingdom over them and establish His presence in their midst, that they might wholly be His people, and He their God" (Hebert, 1947, p.148).

d. The Rabbis and Certain Events of the Eschaton

i. Introduction

The various eschatological events that the Rabbis generally associated with the time of the Messiah's arrival, and the establishment of a messianic period, incorporate many issues. These issues include a time of great tribulation, suffering, wars and battles, the salvific restoration of Israel to its Messiah together with the restoration of Israel to the land, as promised and described by God to Abraham (Gen.15:18-21). Other issues worth mentioning are the arrival of an "Antichrist": a satanic, wicked figure who would wage war against Israel and God, the rebuilding of the Temple, a resurrection of the dead, the last judgement, a messianic banquet and so on. All in all, this would eventuate in a wonderful and eternal future for the Jews, under the rule of their God.

At times of great turmoil and suffering, the Jews often regarded themselves as actually undergoing the "time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer.30:7; KJV.), which would herald in the Messiah of Israel. A contemporising of prophetic events associated with the *eschaton* took place and this was a characteristic of not only the Qumranians, but also other Jewish groups such as the Zealots in the time of the Maccabean revolt. Evidence of contemporising is seen in the rabbinic work, 1 Enoch. The writer thereof equated the biblical "Gog and Magog" of Ezekiel with their current enemies, "the Armenians, who threatened Judea in the days of Queen Salome Alexandra" and who the writer referred to as the "Persians and the Medes" (Klausner, "Messianic Idea", 1977, p.165). It is from evidence of such events, regarded as a type of "Gog and Magog" situation, that the Rabbis drew connections and derived a pattern thereby predicting a final repeat event of greater proportions in the actual *eschaton*. The method of appropriating certain Scriptures and applying them to a contemporary situation is common in Qumran texts and also occurs in a Second Testament context and, again, in modern times by the Popularisers.

ii. Tribulation

The Pharisees who awaited the coming of the Messiah expected the advent to "be preceded by the terrible calamities of the 'pangs of the Messiah'" (Klausner, 1977, "The Rise of Christianity", p.215). These times are described in the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch as, "the times of tribulation" (Klausner, 1977, "Messianic Idea", p.173). In fact, writes Klausner, "The greatest of all tribulations will befall Israel and its land during the period of the 'pangs of the Messiah'" (Klausner, 1977, "Messianic Idea", p.165). The tribulations, the Rabbis believed, would last a period of seven years (Patai, 1979, p.96), as indicated in Dan.9:27, and take the form of "awesome cosmic cataclysms" resulting in "conflagrations, pestilence, famine, earthquakes, hail and snow, thunder and lightning" (Patai, 1979, p.95). Social order and morality would deteriorate with humankind engaging in all kinds of evil leading to "internal decay, demoralisation and even apostasy" to such an extent that "people will despair of Redemption" (Patai,

1979, pp.95-96). All of these events are described in the Jewish pseudepigraphical work, *The Apocalypse of Abraham* (1st - 2nd Century C.E.), and many other rabbinic works. Amazingly similar eschatological events are described in the Book of Revelation, for instance plague (6:8; 11:6; 16:2; 16:21), famine (6:8; 18:8), earthquakes (6:12; 8:5; 11:13; 16:18), hail (8:7; 16:21), thunder and lightning (8:5; 16:18), immorality and decay (9:21; 18:2-3), and apostasy (9:20; 13:4,12).

The rabbinic views are supported by various First Testament texts which depict, for example, apostasy (Psalm 115:4-7; Dan.5:23); plagues and pestilence (Ex.9:3-6; 9:10-11 etc.), hail, thunder and lightning (Ex.9:18-25 etc.) prior to God providing a deliverer - in line with the Exodus theme running through the Bible. In the rabbinic approach to interpretation a number of these events, as described in Exodus for example, although having a legitimate historic application are indicative of, and will have, a final application in the end-times. To arrive at this conclusion, the Rabbis employed the *haggadah* midrashic method. Non-Jewish scholars, on the other hand, invariably regarded fulfilment of prophecy as a single, historic instance. This argument of a pattern derived from prior thematically similar events leading to a final event in the *eschaton*, could also apply to various events described in Revelation, some of which are mentioned above, for they too have counterparts in earlier First Testament and non-canonical texts. In line with this approach, it appears that many Exodic and related events will have final application in St. John's Apocalypse.

A fine example of the rabbinic approach is found in the Babylonian *Talmud* which, although compiled ca. 500 C.E., reflects rabbinic interpretation from centuries past and, with the Bible excepted, can be regarded as "the most important authoritative source book of Jewish religion" (Patai, 1979, p.349). This *Talmud* records earlier Rabbis as believing that "The exodus from Egypt...refers to the future, to the days of the Messiah". It is not implied that the events and circumstances of the Exodus did not have a historic, contextual and literal meaning, quite the contrary, but rather that the scenario's ultimate application

was to be realised in an eschatological setting. To again quote the Rabbis, "Not that the exodus from Egypt will be uprooted from its place, but that the subjugation by the kingdoms will be the main thing [remembered] and the exodus from Egypt will be secondary" (B.Ber.12b-13a; Patai, 1979, p.147). Here it can be noted that the Rabbis expected a miraculous redemption of Israel by a King Messiah from the suffering and tribulation imposed on them by their enemies at the end of days, "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer.30:7;KJV.), the days of "Gog and Magog" (Ezek.38-39). Such a deliverance would parallel that experienced by their forefathers in the time of the first Exodus - which the Rabbis regarded as merely a prototype of what would take place in the *eschaton*. This interpretive approach is also found in the Second Century C.E., rabbinic work, Tosefta Berakot (1:13), where reference is made to prior periods of tribulation in history, such as Israel under the "Egyptian yoke" and other sufferings, with the comment that "Israel's final tribulations" will be so severe as to "make them forget the first ones" (Bonsirven, 1964, p.224).

The midrashic application of an interpretive, haggadic, pattern of eschatological fulfilment arising from a historical biblical event is obvious from the above examples. This technique was employed by the Rabbis when faced with the interpretation of prophetic scriptures predicting events regarded by them as remaining unfulfilled, or partially fulfilled, on a initial *peshat* reading of the Scriptures.

iii. Wars and Battles

a) Introduction

The Rabbis believed that concurrent with the arrival of the Messiah, wars and battles in the heavenly realm would take place between the armies of good and evil. These occurrences would be prototypes of the eschatological wars which the Jews expected on earth. Cataclysmic heavenly scenes involving flaming stars, fire and earthquakes are anticipated (Patai, 1979, p.91). The Book of

Revelation also contains heavenly scenes involving stars (6:13; 8:12; 12:4), fire (8:5,7; 9:18; 13:13), earthquakes (6:12 etc.) and war in the heavens (12:7) which led to war on earth (12:17 etc.).

The Psalms of Solomon (ca. 1st Century C.E.) contain an interesting analogy with certain Second Testament Scriptures, regarding messianic participation in the final armageddonic battle when the Messiah shall "destroy the godless nations with the word of his mouth" (Klausner, 1977, "Messianic Idea" p.170). Similar Second Testament eschatological scriptures are from 2Thess.2:8, "And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendour of his coming" and Rev.19:15, "Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations". This issue is also mentioned in 4Ezra (ca.70 C.E.) where the Messiah, "shall smite the land with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked" (Klausner, 1977, "Messianic Idea", pp.178-179). All of this harkens back to the prophetic words of Isa.11:4, "with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked" and Job 4:9, "At the breath of God they are destroyed; at the blast of his anger they perish". Here again we note rabbinic eschatological application of earlier prophecies through both a historic, in the first instance, and a *haggadic* approach.

b) Gog and Magog

In rabbinic comprehension, the wars of "Gog and Magog" as described in Ezek.38 and 39, act as the forerunner to the ultimate eschatological wars which are expected to eventuate in the time of the Messiah when God will punish the armies of the gentiles who surround Jerusalem to destroy the Jews, an occurrence mentioned in Zech.12:2-9.

In the Book of Jeremiah, the prophet predicts great destruction coming from "a nation from the north" (Jer.50:3) and although this prophecy can be regarded as having been fulfilled in the Babylonian conquest of Judea, Ezekiel writing shortly

thereafter considered the prophecy to have eschatological and not only historic connotations. Thus Ezekiel, in his prediction of similar destruction coming from "Gog and Magog" (Ezek.39:1,6 etc.), regarded Jeremiah's predictions of destruction as a prototype with eschatological application and not only a historic one. Lindblom observes that despite Ezekiel being aware of the fulfilment of Jeremiah's predictions in this regard, he considered such predictions "still pending" and thus they "were taken up in his eschatological view". Consequently, Ezekiel believed that these things would "come to pass in the final restoration of the Israelite state in the age to come" (Lindblom, 1962, p.398).

When such a disastrous event again occurred, in 70 C.E., the Rabbis continued to argue that the "Gog and Magog" prophecies were, nevertheless, ultimately directed towards the *eschaton*. This was a reading often derived from the texts themselves and was in keeping with the rabbinic *haggada* hermeneutical approach due to the fact that "the earlier prophecies are seen to have been fulfilled gives strength to the expectation that the later ones will be speedily filled also" (Russell, 1964, pp.184-185). Support for this contention is found in Ezek.38:8, as the phrase, "After many days...normally expresses an indefinite time period" and it is "sometimes used...to reach as far as the end times" (Barker and Kohlenberger, 1994, p.1336). Similarly, the phrase, "In days to come" from Ezek.38:16, "tends to fix this invasion at the end times, for this phrase normally refers to Israel's final restoration to the messianic kingdom and Messiah's reign" (Barker and Kohlenberger, 1994, p.1336).

Rabbinic understanding of a further eschatological application of Ezekiel's predictions finds further support in the Targum Yerushalmi where it is written that "In the End of Days, Gog and Magog and their armies will fall into the hands of King Messiah" (Patai, 1979, p.146). The Targum, verifying Ezekiel's description in Chapter 39:9, predicts that, "for seven years the Children of Israel will light fires from the shares of the weapons" (Patai, 1979, p.146). Further, we read in the Exodus Rabba that the downpouring of wrath from the heavenlies, as

described in Ex.9:18, is expected again in the final days as "there will be like it in the time to come...in the days of Gog and Magog" (Patai, 1979, p.148). Still further evidence is provided in the Bemidbar Rabba 13, which states that Ezek.39:2 has messianic application (Edersheim, 1993, p.1007).

Interestingly, certain Rabbis held the view that, "Gog and Magog would come against Israel in the future to come three time" (Midrash Tehillim, PS.119; Patai, 1979, p.150). Many modern premillennial scholars also hold to a view that there will be three main eschatological battles, the first being a battle led by Gog in which God defeats the armies allied against Israel (Ezek.38:18); the second when Christ defeats the armies of the Antichrist, Armageddon (Rev.14:14-20; 16:12-16; 19:19-21 etc.); and the final battle, Satan's revolt against Christ at the end of the millennium (Rev.20:7-11); (Hitchcock, 1999, pp.73-74).

In interpreting these Scriptures, the Rabbis referred to God's deliverance of his people in the Exodus saga and the Babylonian exile, and expected that in the times of "Gog and Magog" he would do likewise. In the Zohar, for instance, the Rabbis wrote in that in such times, the words of Ex.15:7 would apply, "In the greatness of your majesty you threw down those who opposed you. You unleashed your burning anger; it consumed them like stubble" because such Scripture "refers to the time when the Messiah comes, so that this song is a song for all eternity" (Patai, 1979, p.153). In rabbinic understanding, then, "the only war which will not lead to another servitude is that of 'Gog and Magog'" for according to Zech.14:3, "the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle" (Bonsirven, 1964, pp.224-225).

To arrive at these conclusions, the Rabbis utilised traditional hermeneutical methods such as *peshat* and *haggadah*.

iv. The "Antichrist"

The Rabbis believed that in the *eschaton* the armies determined to destroy Israel and the Messiah - as exemplified by the forces of "Gog and Magog" of Ezek.38-39, hermeneutical predecessors of comparable end-time armies - would be led by an evil king whom they referred to variably as Harmalet and Tarmila (Sefer Eliyahu; Patai, 1979, p.152), and Armilus (Targum to Isa.11:4; Patai, 1979, p.156). Such a person was based on descriptions taken from texts such as Dan.7:8; 8:23; 9:26-27; 11:36 and Gen.3:15; Jer.4:5-7ff. (the "destroyer of nations") and Ezek.21:25-27 (the "wicked prince of Israel").

Typological precedence for an eschatological leader like Armilus, who is intent on destroying the Jews, is found in the likes of the King of Assyria (Isa.10:5,12ff.) and the King of Babylon (Isa.14:4) as both of these kings were responsible for the defeat and exile of the Jewish nation. Further types to be considered include Pharaoh (Ex.1:22); Adoni-Zedek with his allied armies (Jos.10), and Gog of the land of Magog (Ezek.38-39). In 2Baruch 40:3, "a final conflict is depicted between 'my Messiah' and the 'last ruler'" (Charlesworth, 1985, p.115), the latter being yet another description of the eschatological evil leader. Possibly the finest example of a wicked ruler whose likes will appear again in the *eschaton* is Antiochus Epiphanes (died 163 B.C.E.), the King of Syria who attacked Jerusalem, desecrated the Temple, instituted pagan cults, and who made a determined effort to "exterminate Judaism" (Cross, 1958, p.64), and the Jewish nation. His exploits are recounted in the Books of the Maccabees.

The "antichrist" character of the evil end-time leader is emphasised in an undated Manuscript from Yemen - now located in the Cambridge University Library - which reads, "in his days will rise up a false Messiah, a speaker of lies and emptiness and deceit...and many people will go astray after him" (Patai, 1979, p.162). The first and second "Beasts" of Revelation echo such a false Messiah and although the "expression 'Antichrist' first appears in Christian

writings the idea is to found in earlier Jewish apocalyptic works" (Russell, 1964, p.191), notably the Book of Daniel.

Based on past events and characters, taken from various texts as examples of an ongoing pattern, the Rabbis endeavoured to comprehend the format of eschatological events. They could therefore firmly believe that "a wicked king will arise, and his name of Armilus...and he goes up against Jerusalem and wages war there...and King Messiah will sprout up there...And he will blow upon that wicked Armilus and slay him" (Nistarot Rabbi Shim'on ben Yohai; Patai, 1979, p.160). Each antagonist who previously came against the Jews was unsuccessful in eliminating them, as will be the wicked ruler in the mould of "Gog and Magog", in the *eschaton*.

v. The Temple

A similar belief prevailed amongst the Rabbis regarding the rebuilding of the Temple in the *eschaton*. Although the Temple had been destroyed on prior occasions, it had been rebuilt each time until the destruction of 68-70 C.E.

Relying on Ezekiel's descriptions of the Temple in Chapter 40ff., and other Scriptures such as the Book of Zechariah, the Rabbis anticipated the rebuilding of the Temple in the *eschaton*. They remembered that in the past Solomon, Zerubbabel and Herod always rebuilt the Temple after its destruction and so a final Temple was expected. Of course, Herod's Temple was still standing at the time prior to the Roman destruction in 68-70 C.E. but, even so, it was inconceivable to the Rabbis that a Temple would not be in place at the time when the Messiah arrived in Jerusalem to sit on King David's throne. Even if the Temple were destroyed again, in rabbinic view it would nevertheless be rebuilt for Messianic purposes. The rebuilding of the Temple was a pattern derived from the past which would be repeated in the end-times, for the prevailing belief was that "Once the kingdom of heaven over the earth is established his (the Messiah) active role has come to an end, and nothing more is left for him than to

sit on David's throne in Jerusalem" (Patai, 1979, p.190). This belief finds support in apocryphal works like 1Enoch (ca.150 B.C.E.), 4Ezra (ca.70 C.E.); 2Baruch (ca.1st Century C.E.) with the latter text recording, "After a little time the building of Zion will be shaken in order that it may be built again" for "it must be renewed in glory, and perfected for evermore" (Patai, 1979, pp.220-221). The Book of Jubilees also contains the idea that "In the days of the Messiah...The Temple of God will be raised aloft in Jerusalem on Mount Zion" (Klausner, 1977, "Messianic Idea", p.168).

In rabbinic thought it was imperative that the Temple exist in the days of the King Messiah as such existence was an integral element in their belief that the nation of Israel would be restored soteriologically and to their land. Evidence for the continued existence of the Temple was deduced from a pattern of past events in accordance with the *haggadah* hermeneutical method.

vi. Restoration

The restoration of Israel as a nation to their land and to their Messiah remained the primary hope of the Jews. The two aspects of the restoration are inextricably linked since the "land of Canaan and the people of Israel were called the 'inheritance of Yahweh' (1Sam.26:19; 2Sam.21:3; 1Kings 8:36) or His 'possession' (Josh.22:19; 2Chron.20:11)" (Kaiser, 1978, p.125).

The hope of restoration has been recorded and maintained by the Jewish people through millennia past. The gathering together of the Jewish people, the *Qibbutz Galuyot*, in the messianic age is "one of the great themes of the Messianic legend" (Patai, 1979, p.181). More than being just a "great theme", the day of restoration was actually held to be of such importance to the Jewish nation that only the great day when the Law was handed down to them by Moses is comparable in significance. As an illustration of this conviction the Palestinian document, *Pesiqta diR. Kahana*, emphasises that "The day on which

the exiles will be ingathered is as great as the day on which the *Torah* was given to Israel on Mount Sinai” (Patai, 1979, p.185).

The hope still continues after many centuries as the Jews still faithfully pray thrice daily for such restoration. This is manifest from their daily prayer, the “Eighteen Benedictions”, the Amidah, contained in the Seder Avodat Yisrael, and which relates to the coming of the Messiah. Such prayer was redacted by Rabbi Gamaliel ca. 70 C.E., who is regarded as “the grandson of Gamaliel, a Pharisee in the council of the temple who is mentioned in Acts 5:34, in connection with the trial of Paul” (Neusner, 1977, p.670). Two of the prayers contained therein are pleas for, firstly, the restoration of the Jewish people to *Eretz Yisrael*, “lift up a banner to gather our exiles, and gather us from the four corners of the earth”. Secondly, a plea for the Jews’ redemption by the Messiah, “redeem us quickly for the sake of Thy name, for Thou art a powerful Redeemer” (Patai, 1979, p.321). The two pleas are inextricably linked because restoration to the land without messianic redemption and presence would make any restoration incomplete. In Jewish belief, restoration has to be one of “the Community of Israel (back) to God” (Patai, 1979, p.181) in the land of their forefathers, as promised them by God. This persuasion is also confirmed in the Deut. Rabbah, where in response to the phrase from Deut.30:3, “The Lord shall return your captivity”, the rabbinic comment is that, “It is not said, ‘Will bring you back’ but ‘will come back’, that is, he will come back with you” (Patai, 1979, p.185).

a) To *Eretz Yisrael*

The Jewish hope of the regathering of Israel to their promised land, *Eretz Yisrael*, is well recorded in rabbinic commentary and is based on Scriptures such as Jer.29:14; 30:3; 32:44; Ezek.11:17; 20:41-42; 36:24-30; 37; 39:28; Zech.8:1-8, 23; 10:8-12; 12:10; 14:16-21, Deut.30:3, Hag.2:6-9. The Book of Deuteronomy, for instance, contains at least twenty five references where “the land was called a gift from Yahweh” (Kaiser, 1978, p.125) which they would “one

day 'possess' and 'inherit'. The latter pledge is repeated sixty-nine times by the writer of Deuteronomy (Kaiser, 1978, p.124). It should be noted that return to the Promised Land is often described "simply as return to Jerusalem" (Gowan, 1986, p.10).

Especially since the Babylonian exile, the commencement of the so-called, "times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24), Israel's experience is one of never quite having entered into the fullness of the land. The hope of the Jews thus remained one of restoration to the fullness of the Land, under their own control, since Israel's "destiny vis-à-vis the land is always on the move towards fulfilment: from (the) promise to the security...and its faith can be organised" (Brueggemann, 1978, pp.13-14) around this journey.

Rabbinic writings reflect a view that God's promises in this matter remained unfulfilled despite elements of earlier, historic, restoration. For example, the promise of return in Ezek.39:28, according to the rabbinic view as set out in the *Even Bohan*, was that such a return "has not been fulfilled for in the time of the Second Temple, only 42,360 returned, as explained in the Book of Ezra (Ezra 2:64)" (Patai, 1979, p.333). This comprehension is arrived at through a *peshat* reading of the underlying covenant which God made to Abraham in Gen.12:1-7, confirmed in Gen.15:18 and reiterated by God to Abraham's' descendants Isaac (Gen.26:3), Jacob (Gen.28:4) and Joseph (Gen.50:24).

Unlike the early Church Fathers who adopted an allegorical reading of God's promises to Israel, and which led to a supersessionist view of the relevancy of the Jews and sometimes of the *Tanakh* itself (cf. Marcion's statement that the First Testament should be excluded from the canon), the Rabbis always stressed the importance of the *peshat* sense. Writing about God's covenant with Abraham in Gen.15 confirming the promise of the land, Kaiser says that "Yahweh made a covenant to give to Abraham and his seed the whole land" and this blessing was not to be, "spiritualised or transmuted into some type of heavenly Canaan of which the earthly Canaan was only a model" (1978, p.90).

Kaiser's approach is to be contrasted with that of Von Rad who "stands for a high degree of spiritualization" in these matters, and who, in his commentary on the Book of Genesis, takes a firm christocentric view of the land issue. For instance, he reflects on how Abraham, Isaac and Jacob might "become heirs of this promise". He then answers that fulfilment of the promise to them takes place through their demise and burial in the Promised Land since then "they are no longer strangers" as they "die within the promise". Von Rad goes on to conclude that the "ancients were right when they saw in the land promised to their fathers a shadow of the new life in Christ, which for us is 'hid with Christ in God' (Col.3:3)" (1961, p.42). Partial fulfilment is found in the Patriarchs but the fullness thereof only in the Church, according to Von Rad, who goes beyond legitimate typology. Typology can of course be a useful exegetical tool when not denigrating the validity of the literal, historical context, which is obtained through application of the *peshat* method. Even Philo, for all his allegorical tendencies followed traditional rabbinic practice in holding to a literal view of the "establishment of a Messianic Kingdom of temporal prosperity, and even to a Messiah" (Charles, 1963, p.313). It was not rabbinic practice to allegorise away God's irrevocable promises to the Jews, or even the conditional Mosaic promises, for such an approach never formed part of their hermeneutic, and this attitude has been maintained by them through the millennia. The Qumranians, too, held to a strict literal view of God's covenants with, and promises to, Israel.

The Rabbis' understanding of restoration is based on, firstly, a *peshat* reading of relevant Scriptures, such as those listed above. It is, secondly, based on the utilisation of the traditional exegetical practice of viewing thematically similar events from the past as a pattern leading up to a final eschatological fulfilment in a reinterpretation or recapitulation of such events. Accordingly, in the case of Israel's restoration to the land, this is maintained through an interpretation of previous post-exilic restorations, as recorded in Scripture, such as the entry into the Promised Land after the exile in Egypt, the return after the Babylonian captivity - which according to Bright, Second Isaiah (in Chapters 43,48 and 52)

regarded as "a re-enactment on a yet vaster scale of the constitutive events of Israel's history" (1960, p.337).

Fulfilment of this hope in the *eschaton* is thus based on a *haggadic* pattern of similar restorations in the past, founded first and foremost on a literal reading of God's covenantal promises to Israel. As Bright says, "the pattern of promise and covenant embedded itself in the Israelite mind" (1960, p.93) and this is reflected in rabbinic understandings of various scenarios in the coming *eschaton*.

b) To the Messiah

Aspects of the Restoration of the Jewish people to their Messiah are incorporated under various headings above. Suffice it to say that one of the basic passages supporting the Jewish hope for eschatological messianic redemption is found in Isa.9:2-7 which promises a Messiah reigning for eternity on David's throne in an era of peace, justice and righteousness. This is to be read with the promise of a new covenant in Jer.31 as the phrase, "At that time' (Jer.31:1), refers directly to the phrase 'in the end of days' of Jer.30:24" (Alexander, 1998, p.171) when the restoration of the people back to their Messiah would eventuate.

That the Rabbis understood the certainty of this restoration is beyond dispute since examples abound. As a case in point, it is recorded in the Psalms of Solomon that, "From the north they come in the gladness of their God, from the isles afar off God hath gathered them" (Klausner, 1977, "Messianic Idea", p.170). Likewise in the Shemoneh Esreh, "And to Jerusalem, thy city, return in mercy and dwell therein, as thou hast spoken; rebuild it soon in our days as an everlasting building and speedily set up therein the throne of David" (Buck, 1966, p.529).

vii. Summation

The Jews of the day believed that God's promises, as recorded in the prophetic texts, were true in every respect and would be realised literally as recorded. For them, "it was inconceivable that the promises should not be fulfilled and the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth should not arrive. All Jewish groups believed this implicitly" (Klausner, 1977, "Messianic Idea", p.185). The only matters of polemic appear to be the actual time of occurrence, and the manner of fulfilment, of the various Scriptural prophecies.

8. Conclusion

As reflected through their literature, which was a redacted result of centuries of oral tradition, Jewish sages used traditional hermeneutical methods that had their origin in antiquity. The foremost of these methods were *peshat* and *midrash* (under which category, *haggadah* and the *middoth* are included) which lie "at the nerve centre of rabbinic interpretation" (Halivni, 1991, p.ix). The interpretation of the *Tanakh*, and of later rabbinic compilations such as the *Talmud*, was of fundamental importance to the Jews in their desire to understand the Holy Scriptures. This was a task these sages took very seriously indeed. Since an understanding of the Scriptures was of paramount significance for the Jews, affecting not only their praxis but providing the foundations of their hope, Halivni's assertion that "Exegesis is the religious pipeline of Judaism" (1991, p.ix) has to be conceded.

Subsequent to the application of these hermeneutical methods, the Rabbis maintained a strong belief in a literal, messianic kingdom on earth. The kingdom would be inaugurated by the promised arrival of a victorious, Holy, Davidic, King Messiah, restoring Israel and redeeming its people pursuant to a time of immense turmoil, wars and tribulation, as exemplified by past, similar events. All the Jewish groups, whether the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, the Qumranic community (if different from the Essenes) or the Zealots (who desired an

immediate Kingdom) and others, undoubtedly understood the messianic Kingdom in this sense. Interestingly, Klausner submits that without this conviction, the Second Temple would not have been built (1977, "Messianic Idea", p.186), as the Jews awaited a Messiah who was to rule from Jerusalem. Although the rabbinic sentiment regarding messianic arrival and rule was one of longing and expectation, such expectation did generally not have the same degree of imminency that was a hallmark of the apocalyptic Qumran community.

E. THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS AND THE QUMRAN SECT

1. Introduction

The literature of Qumran covenanters, a Jewish religious and apocalyptic sect active during the period of early Palestinian Judaism, is an important source of commentary and, especially, interpretative methodology, during the Second Temple period - a period "immediately preceding or coinciding with the birth of Christianity" (Vermes, 2002, p.210).

The designation "Dead Sea Scrolls" refers to various documents found at some nine sites at or near the Dead Sea precinct within the same time period, 1947-1956. Of these, the Qumran documents are the most momentous. Texts found among the Scrolls include the Old Testament books (excluding Esther), and "apocryphal and pseudepigraphical works, commentaries on the prophets and writings about the Dead Sea Scrolls community itself" (Pate, 2000, p.37). As a genre, these works can loosely be classified as "the Testimonia, the Peshet and the rabbinic-type compositions" (Vermes, 1989, p.495). It is to be noted that the terms "Dead Sea" and "Qumran" will be used interchangeably herein. Also, use of the term "sectaries" or "sect" in relation to the Qumranians does not denote an agreement with the view that propounds the existence of a monolithic or normative early Judaism. Recent research has discredited these terms and concepts. Instead, the Qumranians, like the early Church, are both "examples of the diversity that existed in Judaism before 70 C.E." (Charlesworth, 1992, p.8). It is with this understanding that such terms are applied in this study.

2. The Qumranians and Early Christianity

a. Introduction

The exegetical methodologies found in Qumranic literature share a common heritage with those noticeable in rabbinic and early Christian writings. This is

especially so in the case of prophetic and apocalyptic matters. Geza Vermes concludes that the Scrolls, "constitute a valuable yard-stick for the study of the development of exegesis among the Palestinian Jews" (1983, p.111). Not only are the Scrolls of assistance in determining the various methods of Jewish exegesis but also in highlighting the exegetical methods manifest in Christian writings, particularly the Second Testament. The same applies to the Qumranian comprehensions of eschatological issues which ensue from the application of their particular hermeneutical stance. Consequently, it may validly be asserted that these documents, "have made a notable impact on our understanding of nascent Christianity" (Vermes, 2002, p.210).

In his study on the intertextuality of Qumran and Second Testament literature, Brooke - while admitting that there is, naturally, a distinctiveness in each corpus of writing - states that the Dead Sea documents certainly show, "that much in the New Testament is the common stock of eschatologically oriented first century Palestinian Judaism" (Brooke, 1998, p.57). The commonality between the Qumran and Second Testament literature arises from their joint origins in Palestinian Judaism and so it is not striking that examples of *peshat*, *midrash*, the *middoth* and *raz-pesher* are found. The latter hermeneutical method is regarded as "the chief characteristic" (Vermes, 1989, p.504) of Qumran interpretation.

The literature of the Covenanters, both canonical and extra-canonical, reveals their hermeneutical principles and their resultant convictions. The impact of the Scrolls on early Christian writings is, not remarkably, a matter of much polemic but it can be said that the impact, if any, flowed from the Qumranian to the Christian writings and not vice-versa as "the Scrolls generally predate Christianity" (Vermes, 2002, p.214). Although Qumran literature and early Christian writings can certainly assist in "shedding light on one another" it cannot be said, for example, that the Second Testament is "directly dependant on the Dead Sea Scrolls" (Vermes, 2002, p.217). This is a particularly important issue when considering the claims of scholars like Thiering and Eisenman. Thiering

identified the Qumran leader, the Teacher of Righteousness, as being John the Baptist (1979, p.210) while Eisenman, on the other hand, claimed that the Teacher of Righteousness was in fact James, the brother of Jesus, asserting that "the two are...identical" (1996, p.351). The implications of such claims are obvious. However, Thiering and Eisenman's claims have now been totally discredited through, inter alia, the carbon testing and palaeographical dating of the scrolls "largely to the second and first century B.C.E" (Vermes, 2002, pp.218-219). There is thus sufficient proof that the Scrolls were written some time prior to the appearance of the Baptist, James, and Jesus. There can therefore be no negative implications for Christianity arising from the Scrolls. Quite the contrary, as comparing the two communities through their differences and similarities throws light on and leads to a deeper understanding of each.

While there are many similarities in theology and praxis between nascent Christianity and the Dead Sea community, it has to be conceded that serious differences do exist. It is therefore safer to regard them as simply two sides of the same coin, different in appearance in many ways but with a common heritage or root, namely, Palestinian Judaism, rather than to read into their culture, literature and beliefs a direct dependency either way. This is a view supported by Vermes for he rejects claims that they are either identical, with Jesus being the Teacher of Righteousness for example, or that Christianity "is an off-shoot of Essenism" (1982, p.211).

b. Common Characteristics

An understanding of hermeneutical affinities in the literature of these two communities will be enhanced by first noting certain mutual fundamental characteristics. Aspects worth considering are, firstly, that both groups lived in Palestine prior to the destruction in 70 C.E. of the Temple and Jerusalem. Secondly, both "were of the same race (and both) were devout and religious Jews who observed the Torah" (Charlesworth, 1992, p.8). Thirdly, ideologically speaking, both sects understood the Scriptures to be God's word, true in every

respect; that all predictions, prophecies and exhortations contained therein were veracious and would ultimately be realised; that time was linear, leading to an *eschaton*; and that the world was created by God who had determined the exact manner and time of fulfilment and termination. This information was ascertainable from the prophetic Scriptures and was interpreted by the leader of each respective group. In the case of the Qumranians, this person was the Teacher of Righteousness who was regarded as the sole vehicle for interpreting the Scriptures and the revelation of God's plans contained therein. In the case of the Christians, a comparable figure was Jesus, the Messiah. Consequently, both communities considered that only they really understood the true meaning of the Scriptures (Charlesworth, 1992, p.11). Fourthly, both groups "affirmed the continuation of prophecy" (Charlesworth, 1992, p.12) and so regarded themselves as the final generation, living at a time when the arrival of the long awaited Messiah, God's deliverer, was imminent. The deliverer would inaugurate the *eschaton* which would involve issues such as the soteriological restoration of the community, a time of great suffering and tribulation, including eschatological war resulting in the defeat of their enemies, and so forth. The Messiah's arrival would also denote the end of the world as they knew it and would usher in a messianic age of peace with, for example, the building of a new Temple. Fifth, both sects, holding firm sentiments that they were God's elect, believed that "God had come to dwell with them, as he had once dwelt in the temple" (Neusner, 1977, p.669). A difference here is that the Qumranians sought to replace temple worship through the living of holy, perfect, lives in fulfilment of *Torah* and other pious deeds, while the Christians regarded the final sacrifice as having already taken place through the death of Jesus, their High Priest (Heb.8:1), and that they, the Church, were the new Temple of God (1Cor.3:16). The Qumranian's view was that due to corruption at the Jerusalem Temple, "the presence of God had left Jerusalem and had come to the Dead Sea" (Neusner, 1977, p.668) and so God's presence now resided in them, the new community of God. In this particular aspect, both sects imposed a spiritual interpretation of the Temple.

Although both groups held apocalyptic convictions, this was less emphasised in the Christian context as the arrival of Jesus signified a partly realised eschatology whereas the “faith of the Covenanters was still primarily looking toward the *eschaton*” (Patte, 1975, p.229) – which they understood to be imminent. The presence of the Teacher of Righteousness confirmed this as he was, at the very least, an eschatological prophetic figure in the eyes of the Qumran Community. Nonetheless, both sects believed that they were the chosen generation, that they were the “Sons of light” - an appellation found in Qumran texts (Community Scroll and War Scroll) and the Second Testament (John 12:36), and that they were living at the dawn of the *eschaton*, if not already in the commencement thereof.

3. The Teacher of Righteousness

The Teacher of Righteousness was the focal point of the Qumranian community. It was he, as the designated interpreter of the various prophetic texts, who would allocate through *peshet* interpretation importance, significance and contemporaneity to such texts. The Teacher of Righteousness was of such fundamental significance to the community that it can validly be said the “Qumranian movement cannot be adequately accounted for apart from the Teacher of Righteousness” (Bruce, 1966, p.151). This is manifest from the Habakkuk *Peshet* (1QpHab.vii:4-5) where the Teacher of Righteousness is described as the person “to whom God has disclosed all the mysteries of the words of his servants, the prophets” (Martinez, 1994, p.200). While not much is known about this “Teacher of Righteousness”, it was believed that he alone was endowed with divine insight to interpret (*peshet*) the mysteries (*raz*) of the texts in light of the situation at the time. In other words, only he could contemporise the ancient prophecies. This belief is typical of apocalyptists, as they, “believed that they had been raised up by God to make known (the meaning of prophecy) to their people” (Russell, 1964, p.181).

4. Raz-Pesher

a. Introduction

A chief characteristic of the Qumranians is their use of an exegetical principle, the modern label for which is "*pesher*". Through application of this principle, "the sense of the prophecy is revealed by its fulfilment. In the New Testament sphere, one speaks of the realisation of Messianic prophecies" (Vermes, 2002, p.215).

Pesher ("solution" or "interpretation") resembles *midrash* in that the text is made pertinent to the exegete's situation but, in contrast with *midrash* where a future application is intimated in addition to a possible current reading and the historic context, in *pesher* usage the text is "related to one moment only, a moment thought of as occurring near the end of time" (Bruns, 1987, p.634). The reason for this is that the Qumranians generally ignored the historical, literal (*peshat*) context of the prophetic scriptures, preferring to "atomise" them - applying them out of their historic context and then to their own situation - a pending *eschaton* - for "it is in this situation, and not in the natural sequence of the text, that logical coherence is to be looked for" (Bruce, 1966, p.77).

Brownlee suggests that in classifying an interpretation as *pesher*, there is an assumption that, "everything the ancient prophet wrote has a veiled, eschatological meaning" and, at times, this might entail imposing a rather, "forced or abnormal construction of the biblical text" (Goulder, 1974, p.132n). The means for the revelation of the mystery (*raz*), the "veiled, eschatological meaning", was the interpretation (*pesher*) of the text by the sect's Teacher of Righteousness, who alone could declare of the ancient text, "this is that". The focus on the eschatological import of the text was a typical apocalyptic strategy because ancient prophecies were reinterpreted "in the sure belief that their true meaning was to be found within the context of the end time" (Russell, 1964, p.185).

Longenecker points out that *peshet* should really be referred to as "*raz-peshet*" (1999, p.24), in order to include the interpretative aspect pertaining to the revelation of the mystery. This is not the end of the matter as it is a moot point whether or not *peshet* should be identified with *midrash* as the main Qumran exegetical principle. Certain scholars support a classification that *peshet* is actually a sub-genre of *midrash*, while others "deny the appropriateness of the classification" (Strack and Stemberger, 1992, p.258). In any event, argues Moo, the differences between *midrash* and *peshet* exceed any similarities in their techniques (Moo, 1983, p.51). Longenecker provides a possible solution to the debate when he reveals that although the term *midrash* is used in exegetical contexts in the Qumranic literature such usage, "seems to have the non-technical meaning found in the earlier rabbinic writings" (1999, p.24). On the other hand, Brooke, in his study of 4QFlorilegium, finds firm examples of rabbinic *midrash* and argues that other scholars have already labelled such examples as *pesharim* and, "as a result it has often been argued that these Qumran writings stand outside the literary traditions of *midrash*." He thus proposes the term, "Qumran *midrash peshet*" (1985, pp.140-159). However, Burrows retorts that perhaps "too much has been made of this question" (1955, p.211) and this appears to be the case. Suffice it to state that in regard to the polemic surrounding the *midrash-peshet* nomenclature issue, the understanding of *peshet* as a hermeneutical method in this study will be in agreement with Longenecker who labels *peshet* as *raz-peshet* (1999, p.26), and will be referred to interchangeably as either *peshet* or *raz-peshet*.

While *peshet* is the principle hermeneutical technique for which the Qumranians were noted, this does not exclude the existence and their use of other methods such as allegory, *midrash*, and *peshat* when appropriate. The sect's predominant method remains *peshet*, however, and it is the widespread use thereof that is a distinguishing Qumran characteristic. The Covenanters use of *peshet* as the dominant hermeneutical characteristic of their community enabled them to see themselves as the eschatological people of whom the prophets spoke, albeit in veiled and mysterious terms. The Teacher of Righteousness

was appointed by God to reveal these mysteries, the *raz-pesher* - only he having the necessary divine insight to do so - and such revelations were regarded as peculiar to them. Eschatological revelation through use of *pesher*, a hallmark of the sectaries, is also found in Second Testament texts.

b. Pesher, the Scrolls and Early Church Writings

Some general remarks on the mutual use of *pesher* by the Qumranian and the nascent Church are called for. In common was the belief that the future or eschatological meaning of the ancient text was the more apposite one. In the case of the Qumranians, they went even further and often ignored the *peshat* sense since they appropriated the meaning of the passage - divorced it from the original context and ignored the *Sitz im Leben* of the prophet. They then applied the passage to their situation as they regarded themselves as God's chosen ones, living in the time of fulfilment. In other words, they "looked on these selected passages as being exclusively concerned with them" (Longenecker, 1999, p.24). Reinterpretation of prophecy in this manner was not uncommon among apocalyptists (Russell, 1964, p.183) but, like the Pharisees, reverence for Scripture was of great importance (Russell, 1964, p.26). Consequently, interpretation of prophecy was, in the main, based upon a deep reflection of scripture rather than on non-biblical tradition (Russell, 1964, pp.184-185), despite a subjective interpretative element being apparent on occasion. Again, common to the apocalyptic tradition was the element of imminency and so the Qumranians consistently interpreted the Scriptures "from the perspective of imminent apocalyptic fulfilment" (Longenecker, 1999, p.25). One could add, "in and through their community".

While *pesher* was used by the Qumranians as the primary and dominant interpretative tool (although there are commentaries where they appear to use some *midrash* as well), in early Christianity the Apostolic writers, and Jesus himself, used all of the hermeneutical strategies listed earlier, namely, *peshat*, *midrash*, the *middoth*, *pesher* and to a lesser extent, allegory. Of these, *pesher*

was particularly important to the early Christians since they understood Jesus to be the fulfilment of the Messianic prophecies and thus the starting point of their theology – that is, they adopted a Christocentric perspective. The Qumranian starting point was the interpretation by the Teacher of Righteousness of ancient prophecies, particularly from the Book of Daniel, and the identification of such predictions with their current circumstance. Additionally, for both communities, not only were obviously prophetic texts reapplied to accommodate their eschatological outlook but even texts not generally recognised as predictive. Accordingly, “whether the quotation or citation is actually a prophetic word or not (did) not really matter (as) everything is potentially prophetic” and thus “practically every book of scripture would be available for reapplication” (Freedman, 1998, p.49). In the case of the Qumranians, it was the Teacher of Righteousness who authoritatively revealed the “secret” intent of the text to the community just as it was Jesus who revealed the true meaning of the ancient Scriptures and made them relevant to the early Christians. Needless to say, the interpretations imposed by these two Leaders on the same texts vary substantially from each another.

c. Peshar, the Scrolls and Early Christian Writings: Some Examples

The Qumran Scroll of Habakkuk refers to the, “Chaldeans or Babylonians as the ultimate foe”. Vermes says, “we must substitute for them the Kittim or Romans” (2002, p.215) for it was the Romans (as the oppressors of the sect, some 500 years after the Chaldeans) who, in the eyes of the Qumranians, fulfilled the Habakkuk prophecy. “Kittim” was a code word for the Romans “which is also used in the War Scroll (Collins, 1998, p.27). The *peshar* to this pericope confirms this interpretation. Hence it is in the contemporary fulfilment (in light of current events) that the prophecy is understood. This reading back into the ancient prophecy of a contemporaneous situation by the Teacher of Righteousness, revealing the *raz* - the mystery of the text - is something which the Qumranians have in common with early Christians as they too applied this technique to reinforce their christocentric perspective and agenda.

In a Second Testament context, an example of this kind of fulfilment approach to the interpretation of Scripture is the prophecy of Hosea 11:1, "Out of Egypt I have called my son" in which, of course, God is referring to Israel. However, there is in the gospel of Matthew a *peshet* of the Hosea Scripture whereby fulfilment thereof is to be found in Jesus coming out of Egypt as a young child. Matthew writes, "And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet" (Matt.2:15). Here Matthew imputed an eschatological meaning to the ancient text. Vermes points out a strikingly similar use of *peshet* by both the Qumranians and Paul of Tarsus in their respective interpretation of Habakkuk 2:4, "but the righteous will live by his faith". The Qumran covenanters understood this Scripture, "in the sense that the righteous must believe in the words of the Teacher of Righteousness" while, for Paul, "the same words apply to the Christians who live through their faith in Jesus" (Vermes, 2002, p.216). Indeed a germane example of the resultant meaning derived from an application of *peshet* by two individual Jewish sects.

In these brief examples we see fulfilment *peshet* at work in the literature of both sects in much the same way, thereby emphasising hermeneutical affinity between the two groups.

5. The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Eschaton

a. Introduction

The Qumranians expected "the end of the world very soon" (Burrows, 1955, p.210). This sense of imminence is reflected in their literature, for example in the Habakkuk commentary (1QpHab.vii), verses 7-10, which read, "the final age...definitely has to come and will not delay" (Martinez, 1994, p.200). Arising out of this conviction of an imminent *eschaton* - in which they would play a pivotal role - and their use of *raz-peshet* as the means to gain comprehension of their contemporary situation from ancient texts, the Qumran community formed firm positions of the inevitability of diverse events allied to the coming *eschaton*.

It is in Qumranic literature such as the War Scroll; The Rule of the Congregation; the Description of the New Jerusalem (2Q4[2QNJar]); 4QFlorilegium and 4QTestimonia that the various eschatological scenarios of the community are recorded. These last-day scenarios include "the last war and the ensuing peace...the different messianic characters, the composition of the eschatological community, the new Jerusalem and the new Temple etc." (Martinez, 1994, p.94).

The sect believed that they were the true, obedient Israel (hence the "Damascus" scroll) and that various eschatological prophecies - especially from the book of Daniel - were to be fulfilled in their time and in them. And in order to prepare for the imminent *eschaton*, an event they awaited with great anticipation, the community strove to obey the *Torah* (as seen from the "Manual of Discipline" scroll) and isolated themselves from non-members as far as possible in an attempt to avoid corruption. This was especially so as a result of their perception that the Herodian Temple had become corrupt, as is evident from the "Temple" scroll.

b. The Messianic Age

That the Covenanters believed in a coming messianic epoch - a period eventually resulting in blessed peace - is firmly accepted by scholars. Brooke (quoting J Licht), says that the community believed that such a period would first include a "period of active struggle against the forces of evil" before the establishment of "the ultimate future of full eschatological peace" (Brooke, 1985, p.176). The War Scroll (1QM [+1Q33]1:8-9) reflects their understanding of this period, "in the time of God, his exalted greatness will shine for all the eternal times, for peace and blessing, glory and joy, and long days for all the sons of light" (Martinez, 1994, p.95). The establishment of a messianic kingdom, would, in the eyes of the Covenanters, eventuate in God's restoration of Israel (they being the true Israel of God) to its previous pre-eminence as the chosen people of God and the destruction of their enemies. Since the ruin of Jerusalem and

their subsequent Exile in Babylon, the enduring hope of Jews was a return to their God, their land and their city of Jerusalem in power, fullness and rule with God's presence, the *shekinah*, in the Temple. A Messiah sent of God, in the mould of David their great warrior-king, was the means for bringing about such restoration. However, their understanding was that restoration was contingent upon their Toraitic obedience thereby enabling God to invoke the Mosaic covenantal blessings of Deut 30:1-8 and thus the cancelling of all the curses imposed upon them through their disobedience. Pate elucidates, "As a rule, Jewish writings of the Second Temple period espousing the hope of Israel's restoration, that is, the replacement of the Deuteronomic curses with the covenantal blessings, express two convictions. First they are nomistic in orientation, as Israel's restoration will come about only when it sincerely obeys the Torah. This tenet is held in both Palestinian Judaism and in Diaspora Judaism". The second conviction mentioned by Pate is that of "particularism: the Jews expected one day to rule the nations" (Pate, 2000, pp.27-28). The Qumranian view of the messianic age is indicated in the War Scroll which reveals the phrase, "Kingdom of Israel on earth" (1QM 17:7-8), (Collins, 1997, p.87). The messianic kingdom was anticipated to be one of peace, justice and righteousness - the concept for which stemmed from First Testament prophetic texts by way of a *peshet* by the Teacher of Righteousness indicating the applicability of relevant ancient prophecies to the community's position as the true Israel. For instance, 4Q174 (5:3-6:1-3), contains a *peshet* on Isa.65:22,23 - a text describing a blessed age - in respect of which the *peshet* reads, "The meaning concerns the last days" (Wise, Abegg, and Cook, 1996, p.228). The Isaiah passage well describes the Sect's view of their role and status in the messianic age. For example v.23 reads, "they will be a people blessed by the LORD".

c. The Messiah

That the Covenanters expected an anointed, salvific, Messiah at the time of the *eschaton* is clear from, for example, 4Q174 (3:10-13) where the *peshet* to the

passages of 2Sam.7:11c, 12b,13b-14a ("The Lord declares, 'I will raise up your offspring after you, and establish the throne of his kingdom forever'") states that "This passage refers to the Shoot of David, who is to arise...in Zion in the last days" and who "shall deliver Israel" (Wise, Abegg, and Cook, 1996, pp.227-228).

The issue of an eschatological Messiah is one of much polemic. Some documents, for instance 4Q252, are suspected of disclosing the expectation of one Messiah. Such Messiah would be a Davidic type as mentioned in 4Q174, above. However, the Scrolls generally refer to two awaited Messiahs - an Aaronide, "the messiah of Aaron" (CD.xii:23); and a Davidic, "A star moves out of Jacob, and a sceptre arises out of Israel" (CD.vii.18-20). Both are frequently referred to in combination with one other, for instance, "until there arises the messiah of Aaron and Israel" (CD.xiv:19); (Martinez, 1994, pp.38-44). But other texts, such as the Rule of the Community, even mention three Messiah-type eschatological figures, "until the prophet comes, and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel" (1QS.ix:11); (Martinez and Tigchelaar, 1997, p.93). Diverse views existed among the Covenanters on this topic, and so, too, among modern scholars especially as to the type and titles of the various messiahs. Even so, a Davidic Messiah of sorts was expected, probably in combination with one or more such end-time personages. It is likely that the sect regarded the Davidic Messiah as being of divine origin, the firstborn son of God. This is seen in 4Q369.2:6-8, "and You appointed him as your firstborn Son. There is none like him...the crown of the heavens and glory of the clouds You have placed on him" (Wise, Abegg and Cook, 1996, p.329).

The Messiah's arrival would soteriologically affect only the Qumranians for, in their view, they alone were the true people of God. Brown submits that the, "sectaries of Qumran adopted and adapted the traditional belief that God would ultimately raise up a warrior from David's line to deliver Israel, but in their mind the true Israel was the Qumran community which alone was faithful to God's commands" (1969, p.43). This is corroborated by Kimelman who avers that, "Column 5 of 4QpGen(a) expresses hope for a Davidic messiah based on the

everlasting validity of the Davidic covenant" (1997, p.316). As passionate adherents to Scripture, the actual Word of God, the Covenanters firmly believed in the continuing validity of God's covenants with Israel which they, the true people of God, represented. Furthermore they believed that the covenant had applicability only to them as they, exceptionally, were "members of the new covenant" (Martinez, 1994, p.lii). The early church similarly considered themselves to be partakers of the "new covenant" through their Messiah, Jesus (Luke 22:20; 2Cor.3:6). Both the Qumranian and Christian sects allocated the eschatological promise of Jer.31:31 to their select community.

Comparing the messianism of Jesus Christ and that of the Qumran type Messiahs is "almost impossible", asserts Brown. Brown goes on to conclude, "in the question of messianism, taken alone and strictly understood, Qumran is not noticeably closer to Christianity than are the other branches of late Judaism" (1969, p.44). While Brown might have a valid point, and there does appear to be substantial variation in the texts on this point - probably justified as the documents were written over a period of some two hundred years - this does not detract from the fact that, as in Christian understanding, an eschatological, anointed, salvific, Davidic type Messiah who would rule with justice and institute everlasting peace, was expected. This expectation was an integral part of the Covenanters' belief system. Atkinson supports such a view as in his study of the Psalms of Solomon and other Qumran texts, he concludes that certain passages do delineate a Messiah who is a Davidic king (cf. 4Q161; 4Q174; 4Q252; 4Q285); a warrior (cf. 4Q161; 4Q174; 4Q252; 4Q285), and a righteous ruler (cf. 4Q174; 4Q252). He continues, "These descriptions closely parallel the Messiah of Ps.Sol. 17, who is also portrayed as a Davidic king (17:21), and a violent military figure (17:22-25) who is to exercise righteousness (17:26)" (Atkinson, 1999, p.458).

Perhaps Starcky's view clarifies the matter. He submits that Qumran messianism should, "be seen in two phases, subdivided into four periods" (Brooke, 1985, p.201) as this would account for the development of a messianic

theme over a substantial period of time which led to the diverse views of the Community, as found in documents on this topic. The important aspect of Starcky's view is that the final period of phase two is "the rebirth of the traditional concept of the Davidic Messiah at about the same time as Jesus" (Brooke, 1985, p.202). As an example, the Scroll, 4Q246 (1:1-2:9), known as the "Aramaic Apocalypse" or the "Son of God Text" reveals a heavenly Messiah, a Davidic type, who will be sovereign over the earth, resulting in an age in which it can be said, "But your son shall be great upon the earth, (and all peoples) shall make (peace with him), and they shall serve (him). (For) he shall be called (Son of) the great (God), and by his name shall he be named. He shall be hailed Son of God...and they shall call him Son of the Most High...his kingdom (shall be) an everlasting kingdom, and all his ways (shall be) in truth, He shall jud(ge) the land with truth, and everyone shall make peace" (Evans, 1997, p.94). Certain Second Testament Scriptures dealing with the Messiah issue have strikingly conspicuous similarities with the above Qumran text, particularly the pericope of Luke 1:32-35. Brown's categorical statement possibly needs to be reconsidered in light of such passages.

It is manifest from the foregoing that the Qumran scrolls variably mention a royal and a priestly Messiah as well an eschatological type prophet figure. Pfeiffer condenses the issue and highlights its relevance to Christianity by saying, "The Qumran expectation of an eschatological prophet, a Messiah of Aaron and a Messiah of Israel finds, in Christian teaching, a perfect fulfilment. All of these functions...find expression in the historical Jesus who, in His own person, serves as the perfect Prophet, Priest, and King" (Pfeiffer, 1969, p.125). In conjunction with the arrival of the Messiah, the Covenanters expected to undergo the whole ambit of eschatological experience, as will become apparent below.

d. The Tribulation

According to Licht, the Covenanters believed in a "coming period of active struggle against the forces of evil" (Brooke, 1985, p.176) which was part of the scenario linked with the Messiah's arrival and which would entail great suffering for the community. This period of severe stress is referred to in Daniel 8:19 and 11:36 as "the time of wrath"; in Dan.12:1 as, "a time of distress"; and in Jeremiah 30:7 as "Jacob's trouble" (KJV). Reference to such time is found also in various Dead Sea documents, for instance, CD.i:5, "at the moment of wrath" and CD.xx:15, "in this age of wrath" (Martinez, 1994, pp.33-46). The sect's interpretation, the *peshet*, on relevant texts indicating that the community will undergo testing and trials in the imminent *eschaton*, can be exemplified by the comments found in 4Q177, where the *peshet* to Ps.6:1-4 ("great torment"), states, "this is a time of tribulation" (v.13). Similarly, in various fragments to 4Q177 (verses 9-10), where in response to the words of Ps.13:1-2 ("How long shall my enemy exult over me"), the official *peshet* reads, "This refers to the inner endurance of the men of...in the last days...to test them and to purify them" (Wise, Abegg, and Cook, 1996, pp.234-235).

Due to persecution, hostility and discrimination against the sect by Temple authorities and religious groups like the Pharisees, together with the sect's view of the Hasmonean order as "a government of apostates that ultimately takes its orders not from God but from Belial, the sect's version of Satan" (Marcus, 1996, p.4), the Qumran community perceived that they were already experiencing, to some initial degree, the woes yoked to Messiah's imminence. Furthermore, Pate, referring to 4QFlorilegium (1-3.1:18) in which reference is made to Psalm 2:1, states that the "passage pronounces judgement on the enemies of Israel, which includes all non-Qumranian Jews, because they oppose the Essenes, the elect of God in the last days." He continues, "4QFlorilegium (1-3:2;1-4:7) expands on this concept of the persecution of the Essenes in the end times, a period called the age of Belial, that is, the messianic woes" (2000, p.104). Pate also draws parallels between certain Dead Sea documents and Second

Testament Scriptures found in Johannine literature with regard to the period of messianic tribulation. He refers to the following documents: 1QH 3:7-10; 5:30; 7:20-21; CD1:5-11 and links them to the following Second Testament Scriptures: Jn.15:18-16:11 (cf. 1Jn. 2:18); Rev.6-18. (Pate, 2000, p.217).

e. Wars

Allied to the tribulation which heralds the arrival of the Messiah and the establishment of the messianic kingdom, is the holy eschatological war between Israel and its enemies. This holy war would be "very hard and of cosmic proportions" and victory by one side over the other would hang in the balance "until God's decisive intervention" (Licht, 1977, p.144). Licht adds that this view is apparent from the War Scroll (1QM). The coming war is also noted in the *peshar* to 4Q174 (verse 9), where in explanation of Ps.2:1-2 ("Why do the nations conspire...against the Lord and his anointed"), the *peshar* reads, "The meaning of this is that the nations shall set themselves...against the chosen of Israel in the last days" (Wise, Abegg and Cook, 1996, p.228). The Aramaic Apocalypse, 4Q246, forecasts that "great oppression will come upon the earth and great slaughter in the city" (1:4-5); (Martinez, 1994, p.138).

The covenanters saw themselves as the true Israel, and adopted the appellation "the Sons of Light" who would engage in battle the "Sons of Darkness" which included all those not of their community, Jews and gentiles alike. They expected to participate in this war, aided by God, and so defeat their enemies and usher in the new age, for "the God of Israel and the angel of his truth assist all the sons of light" (1QS.iii:24-25); (Martinez and Tigchelaar, 1997, p.77). The Covenanters saw the period of war as lasting some forty years and this is clear from the Damascus Scroll, "From the day of the death of the one who teaches the Community until the destruction of all the men who returned with the 'man of lies' is about forty years" (CDxx(b).14-15); (Pryke, 1969, p.52). The duration of this period of battle is therefore relatively explicit unlike the Christian

interpretation of the duration of Armageddon and other end-time wars for which no specific time period has been estimated.

The Covenanters belief in the imminency of an eschatological war which would usher in the messianic age is, according to Collins, a characteristic "typical of the sect" (Collins, 1997, p.86). In preparation for such event, the Qumranians went so far as to prescribe regulatory rules of conduct to govern their participation. This is manifest from the War Scroll where the war is described in detail. The war is also alluded to in the "*Pesharim*, the Thanksgiving hymns, the Community Rule, and other texts" and Collins also mentions its inclusion in the *peshar* on Isaiah (4QpIsa); (Collins, 1997, p.86). The War Scroll is the primary document in this regard for it is here where much of the available information regarding the eschatological battle and its outcome is set out. To exemplify, in relation to the destruction of the Qumran enemies, 1QH.iii.34-36 says "For God shall thunder forth his loud rumblings, and his sacred dwelling shall thunder with the truth of his glory. The heavenly host shall give their thunder and the world's foundations shall stagger and tremble. The war of the heavenly warriors shall devour the earth; and it shall not return before the destruction, which shall be endless and indescribable" (Pryke, 1969, p.55). In these descriptions, elements of the final eschatological battle related in Second Testament canonical writings, which, as interpreted by later Christians, give rise to modern day armageddonic scenarios, are evident.

The Covenanters also understood that the end of the world, ushered in by the eschatological tribulations and battles would be cataclysmic, "where torrents of fire will destroy all life on earth and the material world will dissolve while the armies of heaven complete the work of destruction. The picture in the writer's mind (ie., the Hymns of Thanksgivings Scroll) seems to be one of a universal conflagration accompanying or following Armageddon" (Black, 1969, p.105). An obvious correlation with the Second Testament Scripture, 2Peter 3:5-7. The eschatological war is thus a notable theme in the Qumran writings and adjunct

to this is the Qumranian notion that they were the, "last generation, just prior to or at the beginning of the great messianic war" (1QM); (Pate, 2000, p.220).

f. Apostasy and the "Antichrist"

The Covenanters anticipated that they would be faced with an eschatological "Antichrist" of sorts - an evil person who would attempt to lead them astray and destroy them as well as their Teacher of Righteous, who is possibly considered in the Habakkuk Commentary to be a Messianic type figure. Material Qumran references to a coming apostasy and an eschatological, evil, "antichrist" type figure include the following, "they were unfaithful in forsaking him" (CD.1:3); "when the scoffer arose, who poured out over Israel waters of lies and made them stray" (CD.1:14-15); "the man of lies" (CD.20:15); "Belial", the satanic leader of the "sons of darkness" (1QM.xvi:11); "the wicked priest" (1QpHab.i;13); (Martinez, 1994, pp.33-111). Comparative Second Testament Scriptures on these topics include Rev.6:2; 13:1-18; 17:8-13; 1John 2:18-19; and Matt 24.10.

The sect obtained their comprehension of such events from *peshet* interpretation of various First Testament and related literature. For instance, in the Habakkuk commentary (1QpHab.xi.4-8), the *peshet* comments in respect of Habakkuk 2:15 (where reference is made to one who leads others astray), that "Its interpretation concerns the Wicked Priest who pursued the Righteous Teacher to consume him with the ferocity of his anger" (Martinez, 1994, p.201). Likewise in 1QpHab.x:9, in relation to Hab.2:12-13, the *peshet* reflects that "The interpretation of the word concerns the Spreader of Deceit, who has misdirected many" (Martinez, 1994, p.201). Finally, the *peshet* of Habakkuk 2:5-6 is provided in 1QpHab.viii:3-13 with the comment, "Its interpretation concerns the Wicked Priest who is called by the name of loyalty at the start of his office. However, when he ruled over Israel his heart became conceited, he deserted God and betrayed the laws for the sake of riches" (Martinez, 1994, p.200). Slomovic comments on this interpretation by saying, "The general idea of the *peshet* is apparent. The Wicked Priest, after a period of enjoying a reputation for truth,

grew arrogant and betrayed God and his precepts for the sake of wealth" (Brooke, 1985, p.289). Indeed a fitting description of the later Christian understanding of "Antichrist".

g. The "Two Witnesses of Revelation 11"

There is support for the proposition that the Qumran covenanters thought of their Teacher of Righteousness as a Messiah figure - not a Davidic Messiah, to be sure, but a priestly one or at least an eschatological prophet. For this to happen he would have to be resurrected in the final days. Pfeiffer's view is that "in the thinking of the Qumran sect, the Teacher of Righteousness may return as the priestly Messiah". He adds that this should not be surprising as resurrections in Jewish literature were not unheard of since there exist "Jewish traditions that righteous men of the past may come back to earth during the Messianic Age" (1969, p.124). Pfeiffer provides evidence for this by reference to a later Talmudic Baraita which records that, "In the age to come, the son of David (ie., the Messiah) will be in the middle with Adam, Seth, and Methuselah on his right, and Abraham, Moses, and Jacob on his left" (1969, p.125).

Second Testament similarities can be noted from Matt.17:3 when Jesus was transfigured on the mountain, "Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus". Further evidence of faith in resurrection is seen in Matt.20:21 when the mother of the two Zebedee brothers requested of Jesus that he "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom" (Pfeiffer, 1969, p.125). Apart from a possible resurrection of the Teacher of Righteousness, Qumran literature provides evidence for resurrection in Fragments 2 and 4 (col.2) of 4Q521 (v.12), where the Lord "shall revive the dead, He shall send good news to the afflicted". In like manner, Frag.7 and 5 (Col.2) reveal in verses 8-10, "He shall open graves and so commit your works" (Wise, Abegg, and Cook, 1996, p.421). Clearly it cannot be said that the Covenanters expected the two witnesses of Rev.11:3, but

precedent for the Second Testament view of literal, resurrected eschatological witnesses can be found in early Qumran theology.

h. The Temple

Qumran theology reflects a belief in the establishment of an eschatological Temple. This is set out in the Temple Scrolls (11Q19 and 11Q20). This temple is not eternal but will be replaced by a Temple created by God himself in the eternal era. The Temple is thus for use in the messianic age. Column 29 (verses 9-10) of the Temple Scroll states, "they shall be my people and I will be theirs...I shall sanctify my temple with My Glory...until the Day of Creation when I Myself will create My temple; I will establish it for Myself for everlasting in fulfilment of the covenant that I made with Jacob at Bethel" (Wise, Abegg, and Cook, 1996, p.469).

The Qumran understanding of the necessity for an end-time Temple was obtained from a *peshet* reading of Scriptures such as 2Sam.7:10-11 in respect of which the comment from 4Q174 (3:2-3) is, "This 'place' is the house that they shall build for Him in the Last Days, as it is written in the book of Moses: 'A temple of the Lord are you to prepare with your hands'" (Wise, Abegg, and Cook, 1996, p.227). It is in consequence of such Scriptures and their respective *peshet* that the Qumranians were convinced that a Temple was required in the era of the Messiah. Hence they compiled the Temple Scroll.

6. Conclusion

The documents of the Qumran community throw much light not only on exegetical practices but also on Jewish sectarian theology, praxis and apocalypticism of the Second Temple period.

The hallmark of the Qumranians in attempting to comprehend ancient texts is their use of *peshet* as a hermeneutical tool. It is the use of *peshet* that gives rise

to Qumranic positions on various eschatological events, much in the same way as rabbinical notions of such events are ascertained through their use of, predominantly, *peshat*, *haggadah* and the *middoth*. It therefore remains to examine whether or not the exegetical heritage of the Rabbis and the Qumranians was utilised in the early Church writings, namely the Second Testament, since such writings were compiled within the *milieu* and the matrix of early Palestinian Judaism.

F. EARLY JEWISH HERMENEUTICS AND THE SECOND TESTAMENT

1. Introduction

The Second Testament texts are a reflection of the cultural and religious milieu out of which they arose, such milieu being the exegetical heritage of early Palestinian Judaism. As a result, the redactors of the Second Testament would have utilized the literary, philological and homiletical traditions, methodologies and practices prevalent in their time and setting.

Apropos the Apostle Paul, for example, Martini points out that a "new view of Paul has begun to emerge. Paul, like Jesus, is now portrayed as very Jewish" (1990, p.47) and a product of, "Palestinian rather than a Hellenistic Judaism" (Ellis, 1957, p.82). Paul's approach to the interpretation of Scripture reflects early Palestinian Jewish rabbinic influence and so it can rightly be said of him that his, "Reading habits, methodology and hermeneutical norms were firmly implanted by his parents, his synagogue and, most of all, his teacher in rabbinics - Gamalief" (Ellis, 1957, p.38). It was under the tuition of the latter that Paul was, "thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers" (Acts 22:3). Hence, it is to be anticipated that Paul's writings reflect considerable use of the interpretative "methodology found in rabbinical and other literature" (Ellis, 1957, p.135). Although Paul's conversion to Christianity compelled him to adopt a strong messianic and christocentric perspective, the influence of his rabbinic training, "on his style and dialectical methods is quite apparent" even after his conversion (Ellis, 1957, p.54). This applied also to Paul's hermeneutical methodology even if, "he culled and moulded them to a Christological understanding of the Old Testament" (Ellis, 1957, p.82). A similar argument applies to Jesus himself as he was referred to as "Rabbi" by his Disciples (Jn. 1:38 etc.) and the Pharisees (Jn. 3:2). This designation was to be expected for in his teaching Jesus used, "exegetical formulas and methods found in the Old Testament, at Qumran and in rabbinic writings" including the *middoth* codified by Hillel (Ellis, 2000, pp.29-30). It is not surprising that extensive application of Jewish hermeneutical methods,

in vogue during the period of early Judaism, is apparent in the writings of the Second Testament. The Apostolic writers, according to Stanley, "drew most of their argumentative methods from contemporary rhetorical practice" (1997, p.18).

The whole focus of the Second Testament redactors was the explanation of Jesus' ministry in light of the First Testament prophetic texts and events and this is manifest in their employment of traditional early Palestinian Jewish hermeneutical methodologies - exegetical tools eminently suited to such a task.

2. The Second Testament and Rabbinic Hermeneutics

a. Peshat

i. Introduction

The Second Testament writers, and Jesus himself, placed importance on the *peshat* sense of the text: the plain, literal meaning in its historical context. The *peshat* sense served as a basis for the application of other rabbinic hermeneutical methods, such as *midrash* and was also the foundation for Second Testament use of Qumranian type *peshet*.

ii. Paul

Paul's exegetical methods "might be termed 'grammatical-historical plus'" (Ellis, 1957, p.147). Unlike the Qumranians in their use of *peshet*, Paul does not ignore the historical context of the text, nor does he disregard the plain and normal reading of the text. For Paul, the "grammar and the historical meaning are assumed" and accordingly, "Pauline exegesis, in its essential character, begins where grammatical-historical exegesis ends" (Ellis, 1957, p.147). Such is the rabbinic use of *peshat* as the historical context is of utmost consideration in understanding scripture and the foundation for further *derash* - the search for a

deeper, contemporary and eschatological meaning. There is little doubt that for Paul, the *peshat* sense was generally the starting point of his exegesis as “to determine the proper meaning of a text one must not only select the proper grammatical possibility but also fit it into a proper interpretation of Old Testament history as a whole” (Ellis, 1957, p.148). This is especially so as regards prophetic texts, since Paul allocates to the text a “wider meaning than its immediate historical application” (Ellis, 1957, pp.147-148). The same sentiment applies to the events related in these texts as in Paul’s view, “significance does not lie merely in the event but in the meaning of the event for its later fulfilment” (Ellis, 1957, pp.147-148). It is in the eschatological (and messianic) application of the ancient text that the true meaning of the text is expressed for Paul. Nevertheless, Paul still pays high regard to the *peshat* sense of the text and frequently exegetes from the plain meaning of the text without employing *haggadah*. This is particularly so in matters of praxis. For example, Rom. 3:4, where Paul quotes and endorses the ethic of Ps.51:4. Likewise in Rom.13:9 where Paul quotes the 5th to the 10th Commandments which apply to various situations involving ethical and moral behaviour and where he concludes with an all-encompassing directive, “Love your neighbour as yourself” (Longenecker, 1999, pp.98-99).

The importance of *peshat*, as indicative of the historical context, was the basis for the prevalent Second Testament use of typology which regards the Scriptures as “historic accounts from whose literal sense the meaning of the text arise” (Ellis, 1991, p.106). Typology has strong links to *midrash* and *peshet* of which it is simply a limited manifestation, applying a historical account to a contemporary (and, ultimately, eschatological) setting in a way similar to that employed by the Rabbis and Qumranians.

iii. Jesus

Jesus also recognised the validity of the *peshat* sense and is portrayed in the Gospels as, “interpreting Scripture in a literalist manner” (Longenecker, 1999,

p.50). Like Paul, this usage is predominant in fundamental ethical and moral issues. For example, in Mark 12:29-30, Jesus indicates the imperative for pleasing God by quoting the *Shema* of Lev.19:18, "Love your neighbour as yourself". Longenecker points out many examples of Jesus "using Scripture in a straight forward manner" (1999, p.51), with only slight variations from the First Testament texts. This is seen in his confrontations with the Pharisees when, disapproving of their behaviour and attitudes, Jesus quotes directive texts to contradict them. Examples are seen in Mark 7:10 and Matt.15:4 where Jesus confirms the plain, literal meaning of Exod.21:17, "Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death". No further interpretation of the First Testament text was needed in such circumstances as the *peshat* meaning was clear and unequivocal.

iv. Peter and James

The Epistles of Peter and James display many examples of the use of a *peshat* application of Scripture. This is not exceptional because James is expected to reveal significant use of *peshat* as his letter is "a series of ethical exhortations, and so could be expected to highlight the *halakhic* portions of Scripture and to lay stress on a literalist hermeneutic" (Longenecker, 1999, p.180). The salient aspect of James' letter is that his consideration of First Testament texts, predominantly from the Pentateuch and Proverbs, is "consistently literal throughout" (Longenecker, 1999, p.180). For instance, James 2:8, 2:11, 2:23, are exhortations to literally obey scriptural injunctions. James' epistle reveals many instances of the *peshat* method.

Peter's letters, likewise, contain many examples of a *peshat* approach. For instance, in 1Pet.1:16 he introduces his point by firstly asserting the underlying authority of the First Testament text, "it is written". In other words, Peter emphasises the plain sense of the scriptural imperative to be understood and acted upon literally, "for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy". In 1Pet.3:10,

he quotes Ps.34:12-16, endorsing the *peshat* meaning and encouraging a literal application of the praxis.

b. Midrash and Hillel's Middoth

i. Introduction

At the outset it must be clarified that the term *midrash* is not used here in the sense of "*midrash* criticism", an approach which, according to Quarles, "examines New Testament narratives for parallels with other (generally Old Testament) texts and asserts that these parallels betray a literary dependency" (1998, p.1). If the idea of dependency is then accepted, the Second Testament would necessarily have "borrowed" the narratives from previous texts and such an occurrence would deprive them of contextual veracity in their own right. On the contrary, *midrash*, as used by the Rabbis, is always scripturally and historically based because their interpretative approach commences from a *peshat* reading with its emphasis on the context. In fact, to suggest that in his use of *midrash*, the Rabbi was inventing an interpretation, or part of it, would be considered "blasphemy" as "the very derivation of the word *midrash* would seem to him the guarantee that he was digging for what was there before" (Goulder, 1974, p.30). The Rabbis believed in the inerrancy of canonical Scripture, that every word and event was important and true in every respect, and that the Scriptures were the word of God. *Midrash* and other interpretive methods were founded on this understanding and therefore when the use of *midrash* is discussed in a Second Testament context, it is on the basis that the Second Testament events and texts, which are subject to the midrashic extrapolation, are regarded as historically true in every respect. There are strict parameters on the application of *midrash* and any other rabbinic interpretive method, for "*Midrash* says what Scripture says" and cannot legitimately be divorced from the original context. It can therefore be said that Scripture "defines the permissible limits of *Midrash*, and by implication, of all interpretation" (Neusner, 1989, p.264). Accordingly, Second Testament Scriptures such as 1Cor.10:6 & 11 and

Rom.15:4, testify to the veracity of First Testament texts and events, in the view of the Second Testament redactors, and are not detached from their original *peshat*.

Regarding the *haggadah* aspect of *midrash*, it must nevertheless be asked if this method is at all salient in the Second Testament and thus a legitimate tool for use by future generations of Christian scholars. Gerhardsson is adamant that the early Church used all the hermeneutical strategies of early Judaism. Referring to Acts 17:11 where the Bereans, "searched the scriptures daily" (KJV), he postulates that, "This study of the scriptures was, formally speaking, *midrash* exegesis, similar in principle to that carried out by the Rabbis, the Qumran sect and the Apocalyptic groups". He also submits that in matters of such midrashic interpretation, "most of the gospel material is *haggadic* material" (Gerhardsson, 1961, pp.333-351). Of course, the main difference between Christianity and the Jewish groups is that the early Christians interpreted the Scriptures in light of Jesus' teachings and the events of the resurrection. Nevertheless, the Jewish practice of *haggadah midrash* continued in the early Church .

Haggadah expanded on the *peshet* fulfilment method by first acknowledging the veracity of historic fulfilment of the contextual prediction, the *peshat*, and then through a pattern derived from thematically connected texts and events in the past, applied the import of the event to not only a current situation but to the coming *eschaton*. Rabbinic interpretation of predictive prophecy was never the application of a once-off fulfilment, that is, a historic application only. Rather, the Rabbis understood the original prophecy as a prototype for a pattern of related events leading up to an ultimate eschatological fulfilment. The Christians also employed this approach, which Paul encouraged - as is evident from 1Cor.10: 6 & 11 and Rom.15:4, where events of the past are presented as examples for the present. As Dodd puts it, "the mighty hand of the Lord is to be seen in events of the remote past, and will again be seen in the future" (1936, p.196). Paul affirmed the acceptability of this approach for "fully sixty percent of (his) biblical

quotations were adapted in some way to suit their present context" (Stanley, 1997, p.19), which was, from Paul's perspective, an eschatological one.

ii. Jesus

Jesus used a midrashic method during the temptation he faced in the wilderness (Matt.4; Mk.1; Luke 4) for he responded to Satan by three times quoting from the Book of Deuteronomy, with each such quotation based on the same theme, namely, the temptations and testing of the Israelites during their desert wanderings (Stegner, 1997, p.103). In this situation, Jesus used *haggada* through the appropriation of Scriptures germane to an ancient context and contemporised them by application to his current situation. Jesus thus indicated the existence, and relevance, of a pattern based on the thematic connection of past events with a current context.

The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness is of eschatological import, he being the Messiah and the inaugurator of the messianic age. Dodd labels the story of Jesus' ministry a "realized apocalypse" (1936, p.212). The assertion of eschatological application finds support in the Dead Sea Scrolls because it is there that "the term 'wilderness' was "understood eschatologically" and it also "designated the devil's primary area of activity", signifying a "place and time of testing" (Stegner, 1997, p.106). Just as the Israelites were tested in the wilderness, so too was Jesus and so to will Believers be, it is argued, at the time of the Antichrist and the Tribulation. The time of testing was a prelude to entry into the Promised Land. Just as the Israelites anticipated entry into the literal Promised Land, so Jesus anticipated entering his Promised Land, figuratively speaking, in terms of his mission. Obviously a further application of this theme, and pattern, would be the wilderness that Adam and Eve found themselves in subsequent to failing God's test in the Garden. In so doing, they were rejected from the "Promised Land" of the eternal Eden. In connecting these events thematically, and together with the eschatological implication, it can be ascertained that Jesus applied a rabbinic *haggadah* approach. The *peshat*

sense is clearly recognised: the literal, historic context in Deuteronomy (and other Scriptures such as Ps.78:18ff.) not being denigrated thereby excludes a *pesher* appellation. 'Although the events are "drawn out" (the *derash*) to connect them, and hence provide contemporary relevance, the historical veracity of the fundamental texts has not been sacrificed. There is thus an association of ideas which has as its starting point an authoritative pericope. This is typical of *midrash*.

Furthermore, an application of Hillel's *middoth* - the first four rules appearing apposite - can also be identified in this example:

1. *Qal wahomer* - just as the text, and the event - the testing through temptation - applied in the case of the Israelites (God's chosen "son"), then "how much more" this will not be important and relevant in the context of the temptation of the Messiah of Israel (the Son of God)?
2. *Gezerah shawah* - the parallels, the analogy, between the situations and texts are evident.
3. *Binyan ab mikathub 'ehad* - the issue of temptation and testing is found in all the circumstances, namely, as described in Deuteronomy (Ch. 8 & 13) and the Gospels (Matt.4 and Luke 4), and so the "consideration found in any one of them applies to all of them" (Bowker, 1969, p.315).
4. *Binyan 'ab mishene kethubim* - here the family of ideas, the theme, is built up from two earlier passages and once the principle is established by relating the two, such principle can then be applied to the third, or any further, relevant passages.

Although there are many other issues involved in this topic - which go beyond the limited purpose of this study - the use of early Jewish hermeneutical methods, *peshat*, *pesher*, *haggadah* and the *middoth*, can be noted.

The above are not the only examples of Jesus' use of Hillel's exegetical rules as in Matt.12:11f., *middoth* #1, "from light to heavy" is seen in the phrase, "How much more valuable is a man than a sheep". This is also evident from Luke

12:24. *Middoth #2*, the “argument from analogy” is noted in Mark 2:25-28 and Luke 6:3-5, for just as David acted contrary to *Torah* in eating the “Bread of the presence” - due to the greater importance of the King’s life, in like manner Jesus is “Lord of the Sabbath” (Luke 6:5). *Middoth #3*, the “construction of a family from one passage”, can be noted in Luke 20:37f., read with Exod.3:6,12. *Middoth #7*, “an interpretation of a word or a passage derived from its context”, can be seen in Matt.19:4-8 (Ellis, 1991, pp.130-132). Longenecker, too, provides many such examples of Hillel’s rules in Jesus’ teachings (1999, p.53f.).

Accordingly, it is obvious that, “Jesus was accustomed to preach like a Pharisee, interpreted Scripture...and quoted chapter and verse...like a Pharisee” (Klausner, “The Rise of Christianity”, p.232), for in the sayings of Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels, “there is not a single maxim whose parallel cannot be found in the ancient Hebrew writings” (Klausner, 1977, “The Rise of Christianity”, p.255). Such Second Testament use of early Jewish exegetical methodologies is not unexpected because Jesus and the Second Testament redactors “were working exclusively with Jewish exegetical traditions, Jewish methods of exegesis, and more importantly, the Jewish Bible of the time” (Stegner, 1997, p.109).

iii. Matthew

Matthew’s use of Scripture frequently goes beyond the *peshat* reading of Scripture, and employs *midrashic haggadah* which is to be regarded as a form of Scriptural interpretation rather than as a genre of literature with non-historical elements (Quarles, 1996, p.462). This was the accepted understanding of *haggada* in apostolic times as the rabbinic mode, acknowledging *peshat* as the foundation for valid interpretation of scripture, was continued by the Second Testament redactors and Jesus. Therefore it is clear that the Second Testament is “filled with *midrash* in this historic sense of the term” (Quarles, 1996, p.463). The redactors adopted a christocentric focus and used *haggadah* to emphasize this.

In his study of the Gospel of Matthew, Goulder argues that Matthew was a Jewish Scribe, an allegation supported by "the thoroughly rabbinic manner in which he sets out his book" (1974, p.24). Goulder provides examples of various rabbinic exegetical methods in the first Gospel, including Matthew's use of Hillel's *middoth*. In particular, the first rule, *Qal wahomer* - from "light to heavy", often indicated by the phrase, "how much more" - is common in Matthew's redaction and found, for example, in Matt.7:11, "If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, *how much more* will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!" Also in Matt. 12:12, "*How much more* valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (my italics) (Goulder, 1974, p.25).

Further examples of Hillel's influence are found in Matthew's use of the fifth *middoth*, *Kelal upherat*: the "general and the particular". In other words, once the general position has been established then a relationship with particular cases can be made. This is evident from Matt.7:12 wherein is noted the golden rule which, "expressed in other words the two Great Commandments from which all else hang" (Goulder, 1974, p.25). Finally, sufficient for our limited purposes but by no means exhaustive, the "most typical of all perhaps is the rabbinic habit of glossing interpretations" which is "exceedingly frequent in Matthew" and appears, for example, in Matthew's apparent interpolations to "Mark's Cornfield and Withered Hand and other passages" (Goulder, 1974, p.25) - assuming that, in fact, Matthew did write midrashic expansions of Mark, as Goulder proposes (1974, p.32).

The use of *midrash haggada* in the area of the prophetic is evident from many examples in Matthew where the Scriptures referred to are applied, as fulfilled in, and meaningful to, the situation of his day. The attaching of past scriptural texts and events to current beliefs in a "this is that" fulfilment type approach is quite legitimate and common in early Jewish hermeneutical practices, as we have argued above, for the main purpose, "of all Jewish exegesis (is to) fuse scripture with life". More than this though, the practitioners of early Jewish exegesis were

always conscious of adhering to “the letter of the Bible yet anxious to respond to contemporary needs” (Vermes, 1973, p.229) and this is the objective noted in Matthew’s use of rabbinic hermeneutical methods such as *haggada* and *pesher*.

iv. Paul

Paul used rabbinic methods extensively. For example, Hillel’s rules are discerned in 2Cor.3:7-11 where *middoth* #1 is indicated by the phrase, “how much more” - in relation to the glory of the ministry of the Holy Spirit compared to the glory reflected by Moses when he came down the mountain with the Law in Exod.34:30. *Middoth* #2, is seen in Rom. 4:3,7 which is analogous to the righteousness attributed to Abraham in Gen.15:6. *Middoth* #4, the “general principle from two verses” is seen in 1Cor.9:9, regarding the right of ministers of the Gospel to receive payment, and which is compared to the right of the temple workers in Deut.18:1-8 to receive a livelihood and to the necessity of feeding the ox which is “treading out the grain”, in Deut. 25:4. *Middoth* #6, the “inference from an analogous passage” is patent from Gal.3:8 where, through the Messiah, Gentiles would be blessed, in accordance with analogous texts in Gen.12:3 and Gen.22:18. An example of *middoth* #7, an “interpretation from the context” appears from the conclusion drawn in Rom.4:10f., where in an earlier context, that of Gen.15:6, Abraham was considered righteous even prior to his circumcision as recounted in Gen.17:10f., through his faith in God. In this manner, Believers in the Messiah can also be regarded as righteous, though uncircumcised, through their faith in him.

c. Allegory

The allegorical method, observes Gunneweg, is “not Israelite or Jewish, and unlike typology it is not even Christian, but Hellenistic in origin” (Gunneweg, 1978, p.32). However, there are Second Testament Scriptures which have elements of allegory and, of course, the Book of Hebrews contains much of what may arguably be labelled allegory. Gunneweg brings attention to certain

passages which possibly can be regarded as allegorical, namely, 1Cor. 5:6-8, Gal.3:6, 1Cor. 10:4, 1Cor. 9:8-10 and so forth, but emphasises that Paul's allegorical interpretations are "only applied to certain points, and with the exception of Gal.4:21-31, is only connected with individual features" (1978, p.33).

It can be concluded, then, that compared to Philo and other neo-platonist users, "Paul's use of allegory is very minor and its character altogether different from that of Alexandrian writers" (Ellis, 1957, p.53). This view finds support in Cullmann's opinion that "pure allegory does not accord with the essence of the New Testament" and is found in "very few passages" (1967, p.133).

3. The Second Testament and the Dead Sea Scrolls

a. Introduction

The Jewish sense of imminence was, "part of the popular messianic hope of the day" (Russell, 1964, p.263) and this was also a characteristic of both the Qumran and the Christian communities.

The Qumranian and the early Christian communities were both apocalyptic sects who lived with a sense of imminence. This imminence was the expectation of the inauguration of the messianic age and belief in the various eschatological events accompanying such an age. In the case of the Christians, however, such sense of imminence incorporated the tension of living in a partly realized eschatology - what Cullmann, supporting Kümmel's understanding of Christ and the Kingdom (Kümmel, 1957, p.105ff.), calls the "tension between the decisive 'already fulfilled' and the 'not yet completed', between present and future" (1967, p.172). In the Christians' view, the Messiah had arrived but the expectation remained of various tumultuous eschatological events relating to the setting up of the messianic kingdom. In other words, the Christians believed they were living in the final days of God's plan for the world, as they knew it, and the period

of King Messiah's rule on earth in fullness was about to be actualised. Second Testament figures like John the Baptist held a similar view.

To support their respective views, suitable First Testament prophetic texts were appropriated by each sect and applied to themselves and their situation. In this context, concludes Freedman, the, "methods used by the New Testament writers correspond very closely to what we find at Qumran; only the details vary" (1998, p.54). Like the Qumranians who also compiled their own literature, for example the Damascus Document, the converted Jewish writers who accepted Jesus as the Messiah, authored documents setting out their particular history and theology. A strategy common to both groups was that they searched the First Testament for proof-texts in support of their ideology but the use of such proof-texts often resulted in interpretations which differed from the traditional rabbinic understanding of the text for although the "words are mainly the same...the meaning and sense are often quite different" (Freedman, 1998, p.56).

It is in the area of prophecy where the two sects are more closely aligned than in any other field. Bruce has this to say, "at Qumran, as in the early church, they (the prophets) were allowed to speak in their own right, and the theology of the two movements is very closely bound up with their respective principles of prophetic interpretation" (Bruce, 1966, p.149). So, in a way comparable to the Qumran community which regarded ancient prophetic Scriptures as fulfilled contemporaneously in them, the early Christians also believed that certain prophecies were fulfilled through them and in their own time. This is evident from Scriptures such as Acts 2:16f.; Matt. 12:28; 2Cor.5:17; 1John 2:8.

The early Christians therefore firmly believed that as a result of the fulfilment of prophecies found in Jesus the Messiah, they were living at a time of eschatological fulfilment. This much is evident from Peter's speech in Acts 2:14-21 where he firmly identifies the "last days", prophesied by Joel, with the present time. Ergo, Christians clearly believed that they were living at a time when the Messianic age was about to come in fullness and they used various Jewish

hermeneutical methods, including fulfilment *peshet*, to provide evidence for this belief.

b. Peshet

i. Introduction

The hermeneutical methods employed by the Second Testament redactors, and Jesus himself, argues Stanley, include the use of proof-texts from the First Testament to validate or at least exemplify the Second Testament position on certain matters. He comments that such usage of Scripture is noticeable in that "the authors simply assumed that these Jewish texts spoke directly to the needs and circumstances of their Christian audience" (Stanley, 1997, p.18). This is to be expected as the Second Testament writers endeavoured to show that the Christian faith is a fulfilment of the First Testament prophetic texts concerning the Messiah. The appropriation of supporting Scriptures in this manner has precedence in the methodology of Qumran fulfilment *peshet*. The Covenanters, like the Christian community, applied the Scriptures to their own situation. Both groups were apocalyptic in outlook and took the view that the end was imminent. It is therefore imperative when assessing the message of the Second Testament "to take eschatology into account in the form of an expectation of an imminent end" (Cullmann, 1967, p.147).

Differences, however, did exist between the two sects. For example, the Christians held to a christocentric view - Christ being the fulfilment of messianic prophecies - while the Covenanters relied on the contemporising of Scripture and the application thereof to their own situation by the Teacher of Righteousness. To apply such prophetic texts to their own situations, both sects used the *peshet* method of interpretation. Such method is indicated when, "the sense of the prophecy is revealed by its fulfilment...and in the New Testament sphere, one speaks of the realisation of Messianic prophecies" (Vermes, 2002, p.215). So what Stanley calls "a highly subjective enterprise", namely, taking,

"words of the prophets (which) were said to have been written not for their own day, but for the 'time of the end'" (1997, p.18) and applying them to a contemporary situation was not unusual. Instead, it was simply the use of *peshet* - the Jewish interpretive method popular amongst the Qumranians.

The Second Testament writers, then, used *peshet* in the manner of the Qumranians, relating the text eschatologically to their situation, "as prophecy of the fullness of time" (Bruns, 1987, p.634).

ii. Matthew

Among the Second Testament writers, Matthew is probably the most significant user of the *peshet* interpretative method. In this respect, Matthew is much like the Qumranians. Pate reinforces this perspective, "since the discovery of the Qumran documents", Matthew is to be considered "the most celebrated example of that interpretive method in the New Testament" (2000, p.85). In his utilisation of *peshet*, Matthew edified "his readers by aligning prophecy with fulfilment". More often, though, "he aligns fulfilment with prophecy" (Goulder, 1974, p.129). This is typical of the *peshet* method found in abundance in Qumran literature.

The use of *peshet* by the Qumranians and Matthew is especially noticeable in the context of their respective theologies pertaining to the restoration of Israel. Indeed it can be argued that "the key hermeneutical technique employed by the Essenes and Matthew" for such purposes is *peshet* (Pate, 2000, p.85). For instance, the Qumran Rule of the Community (1QS) quotes Isa.40:3, "As it is written: 'In the desert, prepare the way of (blank), straighten in the steppe a roadway for our God'" and interprets it (the *peshet*) as follows, "This is the study of the law which he commanded through the hand of Moses, in order to act in compliance with all that has been revealed from age to age, and according to what the prophets have revealed through his holy Spirit" (8:14-16); (Martinez, 1994, p.12). Scroll 1QS:8 (verses 12 and 16) apply this prophecy to the members of the Qumran community for they are God's true people, "in the

desert, preparing the way". Adopting Qumranic *peshet* in a parallel manner, Matthew in 3:3, eschatologically interprets the Isaiah pericope as applying to John the Baptist ("This is he"), the one "in the desert, preparing the way" for the Messiah, Jesus. Both sects thus considered that, "the restoration of Israel had begun" (Pate, 2000, p.95), as they each regarded themselves to be the true Israel preparing for the Messiah by being obedient to God's laws as prophesied by Isaiah, whose words they regarded as applying solely to them.

The Gospel of Matthew contains fine examples of fulfilment not only in relation to Israel but to the fulfilment of all messianic prophecies appertaining to Jesus Christ, thus applying such texts to a contemporary context. Neusner submits the following Scriptures as examples of Matthew's belief in Jesus Christ as the fulfilment, in his *Lebenswelt*, of messianic prophecies: Matt 1:18-23 ("All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet"); Matt 2:1-6 ("for this is what the prophet has written"); Matt.2:16-18 ("Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled"); Matt 3:1-3 ("This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah"); (Neusner, 1986, pp.90-91)

Matthew also employs a typical *peshet*, "this is that", method in Matt.2:13-15 in which he imputes fulfilment of Hosea 11:1 to Jesus, both situations being extensions of the Exodus theme. Given that Matthew believed, like the other Disciples and early Christians, that they were living in a time of eschatological and apocalyptic fulfilment, it should come as no surprise that Matthew saw in Jesus the fulfilment of ancient messianic prophecies. Matthew then contemporised relevant Scriptures to bring imminency to historic prophetic events, the eschatological actualisation of which he was witnessing.

A discussion of *peshet* type interpretation in Matthew would not be complete without mentioning the work of K. Stendahl in this field. Although "The School of St. Matthew" has become a classic text, some scholars disagreed with Stendahl's conclusion that the "Matthaean type of midrashic interpretation closely approaches what has been called the *midrash peshet* of the Qumran

sect" (Stendahl, 1968, p.35). However, recent scholarship has given support to Stendahl by arguing that Matthew does in fact practice, "*peshet* hermeneutics as espoused by the covenanters" and that the two sects are connected, "in terms of the way those writers adapt and apply the Old Testament to their communities, perceived by them as eschatological in scope" (Pate, 2000, p.86). It is the Habakkuk Commentary, in particular, that leads Stendahl to regard Matthew's citations as having strong Qumranian hermeneutical influence for just as Matthew relates fulfilment by Jesus through his appearance, words and actions, so the Scroll relates fulfilment of prophecy through the "events which occurred with the Teacher of Righteousness and the community he gathered together and founded around himself" (Stendahl, 1968, p.191). The interpretative method used to convey such fulfilment is *peshet*.

iii. Jesus

Perhaps the most conspicuous use of *peshet* in the Second Testament is found in Luke 4:16-21 when Jesus claims to be the messianic fulfilment of Isa.61:1-2. Jesus also claims fulfilment of the prophecies in John 5:39-47 and so too on the road to Emmaus when, "beginning with Moses and all the Prophets (Jesus) explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). In these examples, Jesus imputed fulfilment of the prophecies to himself thus emphasising the eschatological, and contemporary, nature of these historical prophecies.

As Bruns so aptly states, "the basic hermeneutical principle of *peshet* interpretation is that Scripture makes sense, not by opening inwardly to an intention that lies behind the text, but by laying open (in front of itself or into its future) a possibility which the community takes upon itself to actualise or fulfil in terms of action, that is, in its forms or way of life" (Bruns 1987, p.635). In the Christian context, it could be said that "Jesus stands in front of the Scriptures...answering to them and to a form of life that they project" (1987,

p.635) and this realisation of the fulfilment of prophecy was accepted and acted upon by his followers and the subsequent Christian community.

Longenecker provides many pertinent examples of Jesus' use of the *peshar* method (1999, pp.54-57ff.), particularly where Jesus interprets the *raz*, or mystery, regarding the fulfilment of Scripture in a manner similar to that of the Qumranic Teacher of Righteousness. These examples are found in:

- a) Mark 12:10; Matt.21:42 and Luke 20:17 when Jesus alludes to Isa.5:1-7 and Ps.118:22-23.
- b) Mark 14:27 and Matt. 26:31 when Jesus quotes Zech.13:7.
- c) Matt.11:10 and Luke 7:27 (cf. Mark 1:2-3) when Jesus applies Mal.3:1 and Isa.40:3 to John the Baptist.

So prevalent is the *peshar* method in the teachings of Jesus that Charlesworth goes so far as to assert that "to enter into the world of the Dead Sea Scrolls is to become immersed in Jesus' theological environment" (1991, p.186). Whether or not such a claim can be sustained in all its implications is a matter of polemic but extensive use of Qumranic *peshar*, whether in regard to fulfilment of prophecy or revelation of the *raz* of Scripture, is certainly evident in the redacted words of Jesus.

iv. Paul

In a manner reminiscent of the Qumran Teacher of Righteousness, Paul revealed the "mysteries", the *raz*, of the First Testament in the light of his christocentric approach. To exemplify, in Rom.16:25f. he undertook to reveal the mystery of the Gospel, long "hidden" in earlier texts, such mystery being the Gentiles' inclusion in the Israel of God. This *raz-peshar* type approach is also noted in 2Cor.3 where Paul emphasises that the Gospel has been hidden from the Jews like a "veil" (2Cor.3:14) which can only be removed, and cognition thereby received, through faith in Jesus the Messiah. In so acting, Paul considers himself a transmitter "of divine mysteries" (Ellis, 1991, p.119) like the

Teacher of Righteous to whom, "God has disclosed all the mysteries of the words of his servants, the prophets" (1QpHab.vii:4-5); (Martinez, 1994, p.200).

Although the Second Testament records Paul as revealing divine mysteries and in this regard acts in a similar manner to the Qumran Teacher, Jesus is actually a superior analogy to the Teacher, as regards revelatory matters. Nonetheless, Paul has much exegetical commonality with the Qumran Teacher. Acts 13:16-41 provides many examples of Paul's use of Qumranic *peshar* fulfilment type exegesis. In verse 23, for instance, he confirms that Jesus is the fulfilment of God's promise of an eternal Davidic Messiah. Likewise in verse 27 Paul points out that Jesus fulfilled the predictions of the prophets regarding the reception and fate of the Messiah; and, similarly, the promised resurrection is fulfilled in verses 30-37, and so forth.

Paul clearly applied both the fulfilment and the *raz* aspects of the Qumran *peshar* method in his teachings to highlight his faith in the fulfilment and revelation of prophecy through and in Jesus the Messiah.

v. Summation

The use of *peshar* as a hermeneutical method in the Second Testament is evident in not only the words of Jesus but also, for instance, in the writings of Paul and the Gospels of Matthew and John. Ellis points out that in their use of *peshar*, the practitioners basically created "ad hoc interpretations" (Ellis, 1957, p.149) through reinterpretation of the texts to suit the Second Testament context. This is precisely the approach adopted by the Qumran Teacher of Righteousness in his quest for a contemporaneous application of ancient prophetic texts.

It was the need to find guidance in a current situation which characterised much of Jewish exegesis. The *peshar* method was well suited to a such task, enabling the exegete to directly apply prophetic Scriptures from a prior context to a current situation. The Jews believed that God's word was always relevant for the

various circumstances encountered throughout life, and the Second Testament writers followed this conviction by also applying ancient texts to their particular circumstance. Without delving further into this issue, it is perhaps sufficient to agree with Reif that, "the *peshet* method recorded among the Judean scrolls testifies to a Jewish belief in the eternal message of the Bible and a need to find guidance for today in the divine message of yesterday" (1998, p.148). The same sentiment applies to the early Christian interpreters and their redactors.

4. The Second Testament and the Eschaton

a. Introduction

The apostolic writers of the Second Testament understood from the First Testament prophetic Scriptures that the *eschaton*, with all its dramatic events, was associated with the arrival of the Messiah. So, with the advent of Jesus, they considered themselves to be living at the commencement of such a momentous period.

It was an accepted concept among the Jews that the ancient Scriptures, "pointed to the Messiah and the Messianic Era" (Ellis, 1957, p.135). Therefore it was in the Messiah and the age inaugurated by him, that the Jews placed their hope, for during such age, the Messiah would reign on earth thereby ensuring eternal justice and peace. This period would be preceded, however, by a time of great turmoil, war and other tumultuous eschatological events.

b. Paul

It is pertinent to consider the basis on which Paul made his sundry declarations pertaining to teleological events. He does not claim to have received direct supernatural revelations (despite admitting to a sneak preview into the heavenlies, mentioned in 2Cor.12:2) that no one else received - for this would be a form of gnosticism - but, instead, it appears that he discerned the

connection of First Testament prophetic texts to future events, including the advent of Jesus. For instance in 1Cor.15:23-28 and 1Thess. 4:16ff., he sets out an exact sequence of eschatological events of resurrection. Weiss propounds that Paul is aware of coming events because the "course of things to come has long since been firmly established; everything is foreseen and determined, and Paul is acquainted with the apocalyptic writings or traditions in which all of this is given" (1937, p.434). Thus, for Paul, such events are to be explicated not by means of a vivid imagination but, rather, through nothing less than Scriptural texts disclosing, "prophetic predictions of the End" which "certainly must be fulfilled" (Weiss, 1937, p.434). These predictions are based on ancient precedent for Paul derived his views on the resurrection, mentioned in the above two passages in 1Corinthians and 1Thessalonians, on Scriptural authority. This is evident from 1Cor.15:3, where he sets out the historic foundation for resurrection, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" and follows it with the conclusion that if resurrection was not an event sanctioned by ancient Scripture then, "then not even Christ has been raised" (1Cor.15:13). So, in a manner commensurate with that indicated in the past through the Prophets, Paul believed a corresponding event would be repeated - having its final fulfilment, in the *eschaton*. The resurrection was one such event. Texts indicating examples of resurrection in the past include Ezek.37 (Ezekiel's dry bones), and an extract from a lost Greek book, dating from 150 B.C.E., quoted in 2Maccabees, in which a future resurrection is mentioned. Resurrection, related to the time of the Messiah, is found in 2Baruch (early first century C.E.), "when the time of the advent of the Messiah is fulfilled...Then all those who have fallen asleep in hope of him shall rise again" (Patai, 1979, p.199) and in Qumranic Scrolls such as 4Q521, "he shall revive the dead" (Wise, Abegg, and Cook, 1996, p.421). According to Patai, and as is clear from rabbinic literature, the Jews' "belief in Resurrection in the Messianic days became a basic tenet" (1979, pp.197-198). Of course, in Acts 23:8 it is recorded that the Pharisees believed in the resurrection. In Matt.22:31, John 11:24, and others, the fact of a future resurrection was long considered a certain event. Paul viewed these earlier

events as Scriptural precedent which then enabled him to validly forecast a repeat occurrence in the *eschaton*.

Furthermore, in Rom.5:11-20, Paul refers to the implications arising from Adam and his actions. Then, using the typical rabbinic *haggadic* strategy of connecting historic events with a future occurrence, he discerns a pattern, coming to the conclusion that, just as happened in the past with Adam would again happen in the *eschaton* with Jesus, except, of course, with a reverse effect.

Paul's presupposition was that events from the past are to be regarded as prototypes for the future. This approach is also seen, for example, in 2Thess.2:5 regarding the "man of lawlessness", the Antichrist. There are numerous examples from history where a person has acted in ways similar to that predicted by Paul for the future Antichrist. Paul's predictions derive from a past pattern found in, for instance, Daniel Chapter 7. Paul's presupposition should not be regarded as striking for he himself declares in 1Cor. 10:11 that, "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come". Here, he makes it plain that historic events occurred as indicators of what was to come in the *eschaton* as both the past, the present and the future are all inextricably linked, being part of a divine plan, and so "the past can be 'presented' in the present" (Cullmann, 1967, p.86), and again validly projected into the future.

According to Cullmann, there is a tendency to discount the importance of the actual, historic, event recounted in a plain reading of the text vis-à-vis the prophetic revelation to be derived from such text. The reason for stressing the importance of the actual event related in the passage is that the prediction generated therefrom is inextricably yoked to the event and generally does not have import apart from the event. The event is the *sine qua non* of the prediction, setting the foundation for the prediction and for the pattern of the anticipated eschatological or contemporary event based thereon. Cullmann confirms that as "the event is usually communicated only in connection with the

revelation about it, there is a temptation to underestimate the role of the event" (1967, p.90). The result of this is that events like Pharaoh's attempt to destroy the Jewish nation through murder of the young boys (Exod.1:22); Herod's attempt to kill all Jewish children under 2 years of age (Matt.2:16); Haman's plot to destroy the Jews (Esther 3:6); Antiochus Epiphane's desecration of the Temple and his attempt to eradicate Judaism, similar behaviour by Caesar Augustus, Caligula (40 C.E.) and so forth, are all connected and provide the foundation, by adding weight, significance and clarity, to the expectation of an eschatological event similar in type, as described by Paul in 2Thess.2:5 and also by Jesus himself in Matt.24:15, and other texts. This *haggadic* mode of exegesis is typical of rabbinic interpretation where accentuation is placed not so much upon the text as upon the event recounted therein. Similarly, Cullmann states that the event "to which the prophet must be an eyewitness" must first be distinguished. Thereafter the "revelation of a divine plan being disclosed in this event to the prophet" must be considered. Together, the first two aspects can be regarded as the *peshat* sense because the literal meaning of the prophet's utterances coupled with the event in history, the context, make the meaning plain. To then identify a possible pattern, the "creation of an association with earlier...revelations imparted to other prophets" (Cullmann, 1967, p.90), must be utilised, followed by, finally, a "reinterpretation" or "recapitulation" of the revelations to arrive at a final application thereof relevant to the contemporary circumstance of the exegete and/or to the *eschaton*.

Haggadah methodology, as practised by the Rabbis, was of this ilk and it cannot be considered unusual that Paul used this method. The difference between this method and that practised by apocalyptic groups such as the Qumranians, is that they did not have "the connection with salvation history which is so characteristic of biblical eschatology in the Old and New Testaments" (Cullmann, 1967, p.80). Unlike the Qumran sect, the methods of the Rabbis never ignored the *peshat* sense in their use of *haggadah*, and always based the interpretation firmly on the context of the original, historic event before discerning a pattern with later eschatological reinterpretation and usage. Paul

thus has warrant for proclaiming the sequence of an eschatological resurrection as set out in 1Cor.15:23-28, 1Thess.4:16ff., and in other texts and the events mentioned therein - such as the coming "man of lawlessness" in 2Thess.2:3 - for these, and other events of the *eschaton*, are "determined primarily by (their) connection with historical events" (Cullmann, 1967, p.147), in the ancient rabbinic fashion.

Finally, Paul applies the rabbinic *haggadah* method of interpretation in his use of the Exodus theme in 1Cor.10 to show a pattern of deliverance and restoration to the Promised Land. Here Paul draws an analogy with the "forefathers" who came out of Egypt delivered from Pharaoh's hand. In the same way, he points out in 1Cor.10, Believers in Christ (himself "the Promised Land") have also been delivered from "Egypt", a symbol of the world, and from "Pharaoh", a symbol of Satan. The deliverance of the "forefathers" is to be an example for Believers (1Cor.10:6). Paul bases his analogy on this example which reflects a pattern of past historic exodic events such as when Abraham came out of Egypt (Gen.13:1), the Exodus proper (Exod.3;10ff.) and when Jesus came out of Egypt (Matt.2:13). In this rabbinic manner of exegesis, Paul discerns from the Scriptures a final, eschatological application of the prophetic event.

c. Mark

The Gospel of Mark portrays substantial use of *haggadah midrash*. Miller and Miller in their examination of various Markan passages indicate extensive use of *midrash*. They conclude that such passages reflect "midrashic sources which could explain (their) origin...going back to historical events" (1990, p.385).

Mark's use of *midrash* is especially distinct in the so-called "little Apocalypse" of Chapter 13 where many eschatologically awaited events are related. For example in 13:4ff., the Disciples requested that Jesus indicate when and how the eschatological destruction of the Temple, to be accompanied by much tribulation (13:7ff.), would occur. It is submitted by Miller and Miller that Mark

based his account of the coming tribulation on a *midrashic* approach arising from texts such as Daniel 12:1 (in which wars are predicted, "a time of distress") and Jer.14:13-16, (which also condemned false prophets as Jesus likewise did in Mark 13:6) which predict famine, war and so on. Additionally, Mark 13:8 contains, "nearly direct quotations from 2Chron.15:6 and Isa.19:2" (Miller and Miller, 1990, pp.300-301). There are also references to tribulation and apostasy in Dan.8:24, 4 Ezra 5:1f., and Enoch 91:7 (Manson,1949, p.241).

Mark 13:9ff. and particularly 13:14, reflect Mark's further use of a *midrashic* approach by again building on previous, historic events and connecting them to a expected future occurrence in the *eschaton*, as "the abomination that causes desolation" is a direct reference to Daniel 11:31. If the Book of Daniel was written after the destruction caused by Antiochus Epiphanes (died 163 B.C.E.), a date which many scholars support, then further credence can be given to the connection of a past event explicitly depicting events which would transpire in the *eschaton*. Even if the Book of Daniel was written at the time of the Babylonian exile (ca.586 B.C.E.), Antiochus Epiphanes, or a similar type, was prefigured therein, with such a figure to again make an appearance in the *eschaton*, as Jesus predicts and Mark records.

In his use of *haggadah*, Mark builds on a pattern originating in past events and links them to an expected eschatological event of a similar nature in the traditional hermeneutical manner of the Rabbis.

5. Conclusion

The degree to which biblical interpretation in the Second Testament writings reflect the influence of early Palestine Judaism and its exegetical heritage is quite arresting. Examples of the extensive use of traditional rabbinic and Qumranic hermeneutical methods such as *peshat*, *midrash*, *peshet* and the *middoth* are prevalent throughout the Second Testament, with Longenecker

observing that the use of "Hillellian exegetical principles as *Qal wahomer* and *Gezerah shawah*" (1999, p.189) abound.

It is fair to assert, then, that the Second Testament redactors used traditional rabbinic hermeneutical methods, including the extensive quoting of First Testament Scriptures and the drawing on texts outside of the Canon, to give credence to their claims. Also, the *peshet* interpretative method of the Qumran variety was a convenient tool for Second Testament redactors in pointing to Jesus as fulfilment of prophecy while Paul, like Jesus, as a revealer of mysteries, "*raz*", exhibited a unique *peshet* approach in the manner of Qumran's Righteous Teacher. However, the main point of departure between rabbinic and Qumranic exegesis on the one hand, and the Christian on the other, is the christocentric hermeneutic adopted by Jesus and the redactors. Still, the strategies employed by the Christians in arriving at such a focal point have similarities in Qumranic literature where the Teacher of Righteousness, like Jesus himself, takes "centre stage" as revealer of the *raz*, the interpreter of Scripture and one who is arguably regarded as a messianic figure. None of this should be considered remarkable as the Second Testament was compiled within a Jewish matrix and the Jewish background of the writers with their Palestinian perspectives and presuppositions plainly manifests itself in their literature. Hence it can be declared that the traditional Jewish interpretive techniques employed by Jesus and the early Christians in their use of the First Testament are the "foundation and the key to any legitimate contemporary expression of Christianity" (Ellis, 1991, p.157).

Although these techniques originate from an early Palestinian Jewish exegetical heritage, and despite the overwhelming evidence of extensive Jewish exegetical application by the Second Testament redactors and Jesus himself, once the Church became predominantly Gentile, numerically speaking, the nexus with its Jewish traditions and heritage soon diminished. The same conclusion applies to the recognition of the First Testament as central to the message of Jesus and the apostolic writings of his disciples. Severance of the church from its Jewish

heritage is apparent from the exegetical practices of the leading early Church Fathers. The Fathers adopted pagan Hellenistic practices to reinforce their christocentric focus, rather than relying on the same early Palestinian Jewish hermeneutical methodologies employed by those whose writings and message they were endeavouring to interpret and to propagate.

G. THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS

1. Introduction

The early Jews believed in the advent of a Davidic Messiah who would inaugurate his Kingdom on earth. The early Christians likewise anticipated that the Messiah would establish his rule on earth - the Disciples asked Jesus in Acts 1:6, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" It was clear to them that Jesus, as the expected King Messiah, had come to launch the Kingdom in fullness. The only issue was when this would eventuate.

Although the early Christians, like the Jews, believed in an imminent and earthly messianic kingdom, there later developed a stage in Christianity when belief in a literal kingdom was replaced, in the main, by a belief in a spiritual, figurative kingdom. Klausner summates this situation, "By reason of foreign influence, however, it (Christianity) sought the messianic Kingdom of God in a way other than that of Judaism. While early Jewish messianism is firmly rooted in this world, in earthly life, even in the 'new world' of the days of the Messiah, Christian messianism is a 'kingdom not of this world'. The two religions, both of whose roots are grounded in the prophets of Israel and their messianic promises, were destined not only to separate one from another but to oppose each other" (1977, "Messianic Idea", p.186).

2. Hellenistic Allegory enters the Early Church

a. Introduction

Material reasons for the separation of the two religions include an anti-Semitic and anti-Judaic attitude by many of the leading early Church Fathers who concluded that God had rejected the Jews. This conclusion was based on the Fathers' interpretation of events like the destruction of Jerusalem, the Temple and the dispersion of the Jews from their Promised Land, from which they

deduced that, in God's economy, the Church had replaced Israel - a so-called "replacement theology" (also known as "supersessionism"). Not only did the Church regard itself as the true people of Israel, the Church appropriated unto itself the role as sole interpreter of the Holy Scriptures, including First Testament texts. The Church's view was that consequent upon the Jews' "blindness and inability to understand their Scriptures, the Scriptures belong to the Christians who alone can properly interpret them". This was especially so since the Spirit of God was "now resident in the new community of faith" (McDonald, 1993, p.239). Early Church Fathers worth mentioning for their anti-Semitic and anti-Judaic polemic include Cyril of Alexandria, Augustine, Ambrose, Ignatius, Melito, Tertullian and Cyprian (McDonald, 1993, pp.217-218).

It is a simple step from the expression of supersessionist attitudes to the rejection of everything Jewish appertaining to the Scriptures, including the "more literalist hermeneutic of Palestinian Judaism" (McDonald, 1993, p.229). McDonald opines that when citing First Testament texts, the early Fathers interpreted such texts primarily with an "allegorical and typological hermeneutic" (McDonald, 1993, p.229), albeit not exclusively. Through the employment of these interpretative tools - which led to a figurative ("spiritual") reading - the early Church appropriated unto itself all of God's covenants and promises made to the Jews, as recorded in the First Testament. It has to be conceded, though, that the early Fathers' intentions were generally commendable on this point as they adopted a strong christocentric view of the Scriptures - but it was at the expense of traditional hermeneutical methods originating from within the Church's Jewish heritage.

The Fathers adopted an allegorical hermeneutical approach not only as a result of their christocentric perspective of Scripture, but also of their superficial understanding of Paul's emphasis on the spiritual sense versus the letter of the Law. Paul's letter to the Church at Rome (2:25-29; 7:1-7) and his Second Corinthian letter (2Cor.3:6) record his view on this dichotomy. In addition to classifying the Jews as a "disobedient and obstinate people" (Rom.10:21) in

rejecting Jesus as the Messiah, the Fathers were convinced that it was the Jews' "bondage to the 'letter of the law' (literal method of interpretation)" (McDonald, 1993, p.231), that prevented them in ascertaining from the Scriptures that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. It is not exceptional, then, that the Fathers asserted, "only by a 'spiritual' (allegorical) interpretation of Scripture could the true revelation of God be discerned" (McDonald, 1993, p.231). This position was true of many prominent early Church Fathers, for example Origen and Athanasius, who "used Paul's letter/spirit antithesis to support their allegorical method" (Gleason, 2000, p.469). The allegorical interpretative method has severe shortcomings since it is, as well stated by McDonald, "controlled by only the imagination of the interpreter and offers no advance in interpretation nor any means of verifying the interpreter's conclusions" (1993, p.231). It is thus disconcerting to note that the majority of early Church Fathers, and their successors, adopted such an approach.

That a separation had to take place was patent, since the Christians and Jews were divided fundamentally not only in their theology but also in their hermeneutical methodology, and this showed in their polemic. Consequently, the Fathers, in the main, rejected the Jewish and adopted the Hellenistic approach to exegesis, namely, an allegorical, Platonic interpretive methodology. The latter methodology was especially noticeable in the early Church at Alexandria which was strongly influenced by the "Platonic tradition of philosophy, (which) beginning in the Graeco-Jewish period was taken into the Christian system of thought" (Cross, 1958, p.35). In the result, the Church's exegesis became strongly biased towards, "mystical and allegorical exposition" (Cross, 1958, p.35). Such approach was in sharp contrast with the "literal and historical method of Antioch" (Cross, 1958, p.35) where the Church was more inclined towards a literal, *peshat*, hermeneutical stance. In the event, it was the Hellenistic tradition of exegesis that "gave rise to the Christian hermeneutic" (McDonald, 1993, p.231).

Another reason for the rejection of Jewish hermeneutical methodologies by the early Fathers was their understanding of Paul's reference in 1Tim.1:4, to "myths and endless genealogies". Titus 1:14 clearly describes the issue as "Jewish myths" and it is most probable that the Fathers understood Rabbinic *midrash haggadah* as a genre or corpus of "creative historiography that produces theological tales with little or no connection to actual history" (Quarles, 1996, p.457). In other words, the Fathers no doubt considered rabbinic methods, and their resultant corpa, to be equated with the so-called "myths" in Paul's Epistles. Instead a proper understanding of *haggadah* would be as a traditional and legitimate exegetical method, an activity, of scriptural interpretation which was extensively used in Jewish circles, and which was also evident in the literature of the Apostolic redactors and in the reported words of Jesus himself. That the traditional Jewish hermeneutical methods were equated with Paul's reference to "myths", and accordingly rejected, is acknowledged by Quarles who comments, "this was the view of many of the early Church Fathers in both the east and the west" (Quarles, 1996, p.464). It is comprehensible, therefore, that the Fathers rejected anything to do with Jewish "myths" including the exegetical methods giving rise to such corpa. But in their misunderstanding of the issue, the Fathers also rejected the means to interpret large segments of Scripture, particularly in the areas of the prophetic, which would remain beyond their comprehension with the limited exegetical tools that they did retain.

b. The Two Schools of Exegesis

Two main schools of exegesis developed at this time, namely, the allegorical biased school based at Alexandria and the school in Antioch which favoured a more literal approach. The main differences between the two schools is summed up by Guillet, who notes that the school at Antioch "retains the prophetic aspect of the typology of the Old Testament while Alexandria retains its symbolic aspect and spiritual content" (Guillet, 1999, p.187). However, Patapios points out that the degree of dichotomy between the two approaches "depends very much on which Scriptural text is being examined" (Patapios, 1999, p.196). Possible

reconciliation of the two views notwithstanding, a difference there certainly was and such difference resulted in the Alexandrian school - strongly influenced by the Jewish Hellenist Philo - being "no longer (linked) with a living Jewish tradition" (Van Der Hoek, 1999, p.87). Greek, rather than Jewish, interpretive approaches were adopted at Alexandria, and this had the effect of estranging the most influential early Fathers even further from the Church's Jewish roots.

The rise of an allegorical approach in the early Church also appears to have been a reaction to the Church's "struggle against Gnosticism and other heresies". So dominant became the subsequent allegorical approach that it could be said the "allegorical interpretation of scripture, in accordance with the Alexandrine pattern, almost became a dogma" in the early Church (Gunneweg, 1978, p.40). The allegorical method arose out of pagan, Hellenistic philosophy - the Platonic rejection of the material (the carnal) sense, and placed emphasis on the spiritual sense. This was this method that became the normative early Church approach to scriptural interpretation - the net effect being almost an elimination of Jewish exegetical tradition, particularly of the literal method.

Notable apostolic and early Church Fathers (with few exceptions) parted at an early stage from not only traditional early Jewish exegetical methodology, and the similar methods employed by Jesus and the Second Testament redactors, but also from a comprehension of the legitimacy and significance of the First Testament itself. As an example, it can be said that the great Augustine, "would remain allergic to Jerome's enthusiasm for the 'Hebraic truth' of Scripture" (Kannengiesser, 1998, p.27). Augustine further alienated himself from the Church's Jewish heritage in the matter of hermeneutics by adopting a policy of only following, "the traditional rules in the church", which certainly did not include the traditional Jewish approaches (Kannengiesser, 1998, p.27). These traditional rules were exemplified by Augustine's enthusiasm for the work of his predecessor Ambrose whose, "application of an allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament based on St. Basil's sermons now had a message for him

(Augustine). It was (thus) not necessary for a Christian to believe literally in all the crudities of the Old Testament" (Freund, 1965, p.200).

c. The Influence of Philo

The main proponent of the allegorical approach - the *sensus spiritualis* - was the Alexandrian Jew, Philo (ca. 20 B.C.E.- 50 C.E.). Philo's interpretive methodology sought to interpret Scripture "in the light of philosophy" (Shotwell, 1965, p.99) and such methodology was subsequently followed by many of the most influential Church Fathers, in particular Origen, Clement, Ambrose and Augustine. The first two persons mentioned were strong supporters of Philo since they "used his biblical interpretations and followed his Platonic ways of thinking" (Van Der Hoek, 1999, p.79).

Philo's interpretative stance arose out of his philosophical worldview. It can therefore surely be said of him that "the more philosophical the interpretation was, the more radical it was, and the more influenced by the inclination to read the Bible...as metaphors of intellectual situations and abstract concepts" (Eran, 2001, p.137). Philo can be regarded as the "fountainhead of...allegorical interpretation, (who) exercised great influence on the Fathers and on the Church tradition of exegesis generally" (Hebert, 1947, p.274). This influence was quite a negative one ultimately, as Philo relied on "notions taken from the Greek philosophers" (Hebert, 1947, p.275) in his interpretation of the Scriptures. Even worse, according to Hebert, Philo was an apostate Jew and to a substantial extent "the basis of his teaching did not lie in the Old Testament at all" (1947, p.275). Hebert provides an example, drawn from J. B. Lightfoot's commentary on the Book of Galatians, where he points out that Philo totally discounted a historical meaning applicable in relation to the Patriarch Abraham, regarding him solely as a type, "a symbol of the individual man" (1947, p.275). Lest Philo be regarded as absolutely redundant in an examination of Palestinian Judaism, it has been proposed that he nevertheless, "often conveys ideas that relate closely to Palestinian Jewish thought" (Chapman and Kostenberger, 2000, p.602).

Possibly so, but he certainly did not embrace traditional early Palestinian Jewish hermeneutical methods.

Arguably, Philo's influence "on early Christian exegesis can be most easily detected...in the allegorical approach to the problem of circumcision". Philo's approach to the interpretation of the covenantal ritual of circumcision, arising from an analysis of Genesis 17, was strongly allegorical. In fact a claim can be made to the effect that an allegorical approach to such topic in the early Church was "commonly taken up almost in its entirety, beginning with Origen of Alexandria" (Thompson, 1995, p.240-241). So, in a short span of time and right from the beginnings of the time of the early Church Fathers, Philo's allegorical interpretational method, "became an accepted form of Biblical exegesis in the Christian Church" (Cross, 1958, p.1066), and this was particularly so as a consequence of the influential writings of Origen. Apart from Origen, many other patristic commentators also adopted an allegorical approach including Ambrose - who applied "a well known Platonic and (Philonic) allegory to circumcision" - and Augustine, Chrysostom and Cyprian. This is not to say that these Fathers only employed allegory as some added a more typological, while others a christological, perspective (Thompson, 1995, pp.242-243).

d. Origen

Origen, a prominent Church Father and dedicated allegorist, was regarded as the "greatest figure in the Christian Church between Paul and Augustine" (Frend, 1965, p.85). Origen was a vast power in shaping the theology and hermeneutics of the nascent Church and he remains "acclaimed as the founder of biblical criticism in the church, the most influential Christian interpreter of Scripture and the founder of systematic theology" (Kannengiesser, 1998, p.6).

Origen's exegetical method, Frend says plainly, was "based on allegory" and so for Origen, "All things, even the simplest in the Bible, reflected the real and spiritual order beyond the visible world. It was the duty of the exegete to find the

clue to this spiritual truth in a given text " (1965, p.92). So insistent was Origen on the legitimacy of the allegorical method that he "condemned the Jews for their blindness to the truth of Scripture that resulted from their use of a literalist interpretation" as such method resulted in them being left both "carnal and unable to praise the Lord" (McDonald, 1993, p.231). Origen's anti-Judaic sentiment and the rejection of the Jews' hermeneutical methodology led him to regard the Jews as redundant in God's economy and to the conclusion that the promises and covenants of the First Testament were to be spiritualised in favour of the Church.

Origen's preference for the *sensus spiritualis*, and his general disregard for the literal approach to interpretation had vast implications in his time. His hermeneutical stance was emulated by scores of subsequent scholars. Kannengiesser reveals that Origen's "accomplishment radiated over all the provinces of the empire" (1998, p.7). Additionally, Origen's influence extends into the modern era, as his "genius continues to influence spiritual exegesis in Roman Catholic and Orthodox theology" (Morgan, 1998, p.125). Furthermore, in respect of prophetic texts, Origen's work, like that of Augustine, continues to have influence in certain Protestant circles.

e. Augustine

Augustine was, and remains, an extremely influential Father who clearly "put the spiritual sense above the literal" (Smalley, 1964, p.23), although he did acknowledge the importance of the literal sense on occasions. In his work, "The City of God", for example, Augustine applies a blatant allegorical interpretation to the "thousand years" of the messianic period mentioned six times in Rev.20. Regarding the latter, Augustine understands the thousand years as part of the current world time span, reckoned to be six thousand years with no defined literal millennium. However, he also believes that the thousand year period represents an indeterminate but perfect period of time. His view is that St. John meant the thousand years to be "the last part of the millennium — the part, that

is, which had yet to expire before the end of the world—a thousand years”. Augustine’s latter interpretation is that John “used the thousand years as an equivalent for the whole duration of this world, employing the number of perfection to mark the fullness of time” (Schaff, 1889, Vol.2, p.903). It was this allegorical interpretation of John’s millennium that gave impetus to the amillennial view which “would limit the achievement of the Old Testament prophetic hopes and the fulfilment of Rev.20:1-6, to spiritual categories within the church” (Payne, 1973, p.58).

Apart from his Philonic leanings, Augustine provides a further clue to his rejection of the literal approach to interpretation when he discusses the issue of those who believe in a literal millennium and a literal messianic banquet (Rev.19:9). It appears that Augustine’s stance might be considered an over-reaction to, and an antipathy towards, those literalists who anticipated a gross carnal millennial feast where they would be “furnished with an amount of meat and drink such as not only to shock the feeling of the temperate, but even to surpass the measure of credulity itself” (Schaff, 1889, Vol.2, p.902). Augustine comments that “such assertions can be believed only by the carnal” and he somewhat unfairly categorises all those who believe in such an event as “Millenarians” (Schaff, 1889, Vol.2, p.902). In this context, Augustine along with other patristic writers adopted an allegorical stance partly in reaction to a forced letterism of the Scriptures.

A further example of Augustine’s allegorical approach is evident from his interpretation of Rev.20:3 and the casting of Satan into the “abyss”. Here, too, Augustine imposes a highly spiritualised meaning saying that, “By the ‘abyss’ is meant the countless multitude of the wicked whose hearts are unfathomably deep in malignity against the Church of God” (Schaff, 1889, Vol.2, p.903). To arrive at such a speculative interpretation, it is obvious that Augustine did not adhere to any objective parameters - such as a literal reading - in his application of an allegorical approach. Further, it appears that Augustine supported a supersessionist view for he “advanced the so-called ‘theory of substitution’

whereby the New Israel of the Church became a substitute for ancient Israel" (Martini, 1990, p.20). This view led to immense exegetical complications especially in the area of prophetic texts which were then, of necessity, interpreted spiritually.

Such was the exegetical stance of Augustine, the "most important theologian for the entire (thousand year plus) medieval period and on to the sixteenth century" (Hagen, 1994, p.3).

There are many other leading Church Fathers who likewise adopted an allegorical approach to interpretation of the Scriptures, particularly prophetic and First Testament texts. The allegorical method is seen, for instance, in the writings of "Jerome, Julian of Toledo, Gregory the Great...(where) literal interpretation of the Bible, and especially of Daniel and Revelation, quickly faded" (Demy and Ice, 1995, p.309).

f. The Antiochene School

The main supporters of the Antiochene school, which adopted a more literal approach to interpretation compared to the Alexandrians, include Diodore, reputed "the most distinctive theoretician of the Antiochene school of exegesis". Diodore emphasised the "need for philological and grammatical analysis in strong opposition to Alexandrian allegorism" (Kannengiesser, 1998, p.14). Others in this category would be Theodore, a pupil of Diodore (both of whom were charged as heretics which entailed the compulsory destruction of their literary work) who, with his brother, Polychronius, "confirmed the literal meaning" and "refused any allegorical explanation" (Kannengiesser, 1998, p.14). Still others worth mentioning at this point are Chrysostom, Theodoret and, much later, Nicholas of Lyra, the latter being regarded as one of the "most influential biblical exegetes in the later middle ages" and who was mainly known for his "literal approach to biblical exegesis and his extensive use of Jewish interpretation" (Patton, 1998, p.116).

Chrysostom's exegesis of the Scriptures constituted a fine representation of the Antiochene school, his work being "characterised as logical, literal, sober, restrained, commonsensical, grammatical, detailed and historical" (Mitchell, 1998, p.31). The noted Church Historian, Schaff, describes Chrysostom's exegetical approach as one which "comes very near to what we now call the grammatico-historical exegesis". Schaff then comments that such an approach "is the only solid and sound foundation for any legitimate use of the Scriptures" (Schaff, 1889, Vol.9, p.35). In contrast, the adherents of the Alexandrian school, emphasised the allegorical, the symbolic, the so-called spiritual meaning of the text, thereby generally ignoring the grammatical, the historical meaning - which of necessity incorporates the context of the text, in their pursuit for an alleged deeper meaning.

g. Justin Martyr

Justin Martyr (ca.100 CE - 167) has rightly been labelled "the first great Apologist of the Church" (Shotwell, 1965, p.1), expounding Scripture not only for the pagan community in which he found himself but also in order to persuade the Jews of Jesus' messianic claims and the resultant fulfilment of prophecy. Accordingly, Justin appealed to the Jews using rabbinic exegetical methods and to the pagans, applying Philonic principles - insofar as they did not blatantly contradict his christocentric interpretative practices. Although his work does reflect some Philonic influence, in the main "Justin followed the rabbis more closely" (Shotwell, 1965, p.100), applying, for instance, Hillel's *middoth* and a *peshat* approach when it suited his exegetical purposes.

Even though Justin employed some rabbinic interpretative methodology, this was subservient to his strong christocentric approach to exegesis, particularly evident in his use of the Epistles as "guides to the correct interpretation of Christian tradition" (Shotwell, 1965, p.23). His use of the First Testament was likewise used primarily as a source of proof-texts to promote his christocentric views and objectives. For instance, in his work First Apology (1Apol.xxxii), he

quotes Gen.49.10 and interprets the verse, "The sceptre will not depart from Judah...until he comes to whom it belongs", by saying that such words are literally true as "the Romans did not start to rule over the Jews until Christ came". As Shotwell retorts, "Justin allows his enthusiasm to get the better of his knowledge of history, if he had any" (1965, p.30). Here, Justin's enthusiasm for a christological application overwhelmed his desire for a true literal interpretation, which includes the historical context of the text.

In attempting to depict the fulfilment of prophecy, Justin occasionally used allegory. However, it appears that his use of allegory is more slanted towards rabbinic *midrash* than Philo's allegorical method since the rabbinical methods arguably remained the greatest influence on Justin's First Testament exegesis. Rabbinic *midrash*, particularly *haggadah*, can have allegorical elements although the literal sense, the *peshat*, is the starting point thus ensuring that the method is always grounded in Scripture. Justin's employment of *midrash* as a legitimate exegetical technique was a typical rabbinic approach and so perhaps Shotwell is correct in claiming that Justin "knew and used *haggadic* material in exactly the same way as the rabbis" (1965, p.114).

According to Shotwell, Justin employed Hillel's exegetical rules since there is "substantial agreement between the methods of Justin and the rules of Hillel", into which categories "the interpretations of Justin did seem to fall quite naturally". Hence, there is support for the contention that Justin used "the rules of Hillel as some of his basic guides in the interpretation of the Scriptures" (Shotwell, 1965, p.93). Justin's application of Hillellian *middoth* #5, *Kelal upherat* - the general and the particular - appears from Dial.cxix.4, xix.3 and "chapters xxi-xxix of the Dialogue" (Shotwell, 1965, pp.32-33). Use of *middoth* #1, *Qal wahomer*: "from the minor to the major", is evident in Dial.xcv.1 and cxli.3 (Shotwell, 1965, pp.33-34).

Additionally, Justin applied a Qumran *peshet* fulfilment type approach in his desire to promote the christological view of Scripture as he frequently ignored

the context of the text, applying the significance thereof to Christ in the same manner that the Qumranians applied the import of the prophetic text to themselves. For example, Justin quotes Isa.65:2, "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts" (KJV), and detaches it from any historical context, applying it solely to Christ and the crucifixion (Roberts and Donaldson, 1867, Vol.1, p.316). Shotwell is of the same view, averring "Justin was not concerned with the meaning of the Scripture for the people to whom it had actually been written" as he was only interested in the value of Scripture as a "witness to Christ" (1965, p.8). Detachment from the *peshat* sense, the "atomising" of Scripture, is typical of the *peshet* method.

Abandonment of the context is evident in Justin's treatment of prophetic texts generally, as he used such texts to support a christocentric interpretation. For him, the "original context and meaning were unimportant" (Shotwell, 1965, p.31). Justin's single prediction and fulfilment approach to the interpretation of prophecy resulted in a historicist or preterist interpretation, never, it seems, a futurist one even in respect of predictions patently remaining unfulfilled. This was quite unlike the method practised by the early Rabbis who respected the *peshat* - the context - and adopted a futurist view of prophecy.

So here we have a Church Father who, as is apparent from his works, was exposed to and influenced by Jewish hermeneutical methods. However, his application of such methods was somewhat restricted as he "tried to be all things to all men". In so doing, he "approached the Greek world with the (Philonic) concept of the Logos, and the Jewish world with rabbinical interpretation" (Shotwell, 1965, p.116) - not a combination designed to add perspicuity to the interpretation of Scripture. Nonetheless, Justin was a highly influential Apostolic Father whose apologetic material was later utilised by Origen, Irenaeus, Tertullian and others. Justin gave credence to Philonic, and thus Platonic, exegetical persuasions albeit interspersed with some rabbinic strategies. Given the extensive use of allegory by so many influential early

Fathers, it is not remarkable that Hellenistic interpretative tendencies became part of the Church's hermeneutical arsenal at an early stage.

h. Other Fathers

The last Fathers of the Church included Gregory the Great and Isidore of Seville (died 636). Both of these perpetuated the dominance of the allegorical approach to interpretation, although a few exegetes kept the literal approach alive. Allegory continued to be the overwhelmingly dominant method right up to the Reformation, where some correction took place.

i. Summation

Scriptural truth, particularly in regard to prophetic texts during this period, then, remained substantially hidden in the orthodox dogma of the church. The corpus of dogma was a result of the interpretive methodologies employed by the exegetes of the time. Gunneweg observes that "dogma and allegory are like a veil which conceals the true meaning of scripture" (1978, p.42) and he is correct in this assessment for in the dogma was hidden the means - the interpretive method - of compiling such dogma, and the understanding of Scripture. In the event, the resultant and accepted interpretation of the Scriptures, the dogma, perpetuated the fundamental errors upon which it was based. No external, objective or literal exegetical technique was able to manifest itself in such an environment.

3. Early Church Fathers' Views on Certain Eschatological Events

a. Papias

Papias (ca. 70-140 C.E.) is a notable source of information about "Christ's promise of a millennial kingdom of happiness on earth, a promise in accord with the earthly Messianic message contained in the extra-canonical Hebrew

Scriptures and the Talmudic and midrashic barayot" (Klausner, 1977, "The Rise of Christianity", p.190). Indeed, Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, must be regarded as an authoritative source of patristic information on the millennium issue since he was directly acquainted with the Apostle John. The works of Irenaeus and Eusebius contain references to Papias and sections of his writings, in which works he is described as "Papias of Hierapolis, the illustrious, a disciple of the apostle who leaned on the bosom of Christ, (Roberts and Donaldson, 1867, Vol.1, p.283)". Irenaeus elaborates that Papias "was a hearer of the Apostle John, and was on terms of intimate intercourse with many who had known the Lord and His apostles" (Roberts and Donaldson, 1867, Vol.1, p.278).

Papias was of the opinion that "there will be a millennium after the resurrection from the dead, when the personal reign of Christ will be established on this earth" (Roberts and Donaldson, 1867, Vol.1, p.282). This, then, is the view of the millennium issue from a respected Apostolic Father - Eusebius speaks of him as "a man most learned in all things, and well acquainted with the Scriptures" (Roberts and Donaldson, 1867, Vol.1, p.278) and who was personally known to John, whom he heard teach. As a result of this relationship, Papias' understanding of the millennium must be of weighty persuasion. The millennium is clearly described by Papias as a literal one thousand year reign of Christ on earth to take place "after the resurrection from the dead" - which can only be a reference to the first resurrection described in 1Thess.4:14-18. The first resurrection is generally identified with the Rapture by premillennialists and others.

b. Irenaeus

It appears that the respected Irenaeus (ca.130-200 C.E.) also took a literal view of certain eschatological issues as he believed in a literal Antichrist, one who would rule on earth, in his view, for the forty two months of the tribulation as described in the Book of Daniel. Irenaeus rejected an allegorical interpretation of these events, averring that they would take place literally, writing that "If,

however, any shall endeavour to allegorise [prophecies] of this kind, they shall not be found consistent with themselves in all points" (Roberts and Donaldson, 1867, Vol.1, p.1128). Irenaeus' use of a literal interpretative approach, and his futurist view of prophecy, is clear from his descriptions of the Antichrist whom he says is "lawless" and who persuades men that "he himself is God" (Roberts and Donaldson, 1867, Vol.1, p.1105). He goes on in this fashion saying that the Antichrist will rule "for three years and six months, during which time, when he comes, he shall reign over the earth...and sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom" (Roberts and Donaldson, 1867, Vol.1, p.1118). In the same way, Irenaeus refers to the "resurrection of the just, which takes place after the coming of Antichrist, and the destruction of all nations under his rule" (Roberts and Donaldson, 1867, Vol.1, p.1129) - a perspective derived from a interpretative approach parallel to that employed by Papias.

It is patent from the above extracts that Irenaeus held literal interpretations of a messianic age on earth, the Antichrist, an eschatological Temple in Jerusalem and, possibly, a premillennial Rapture. This is not surprising since Irenaeus, "listened to the teaching of Polycarp...who in turn had heard the teaching of John" (Ferguson, 1988, p.44), the writer of the Apocalypse. Polycarp (ca. 69-155 C.E.) himself "a leading Christian figure" was highly regarded as a "staunch defender of orthodoxy" (Cross, 1958, p.1088).

These three figures, Irenaeus, Papias and Polycarp, all held correspondingly alike views of eschatological events, in particular a future, literal millennium as described by John six times in Rev.20. Such views were obtained through employment of a literal approach to interpretation. It can only be assumed that these literal views were acceptable to many elements of the Church at the time.

c. Justin Martyr

In the same vein, Justin Martyr, when questioned on this topic by Trypho, a Jew, answered that he believed in a literal millennium with Christ reigning in a restored Jerusalem after the resurrection. Justin was recorded as saying, "I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, [as] the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare" (Roberts and Donaldson, 1867, Vol.1, p.460). Justin confirms that his interpretation of John's one thousand years of Rev.20 was that of a literal earthly reign of Christ. In this regard, Justin recalled that "John, one of the apostles of Christ...prophesied, by a revelation that was made to him, that those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem" (Roberts and Donaldson, 1867, Vol.1, p.461). The implication that can be drawn here is that since Justin takes a literal view of Ezekiel's prophecies regarding a restored Jerusalem (Ezek.36-37 etc.), so he would likewise have believed in the construction of an eschatological Temple (Ezek.40-46), for example. In this context, then, Justin certainly adopted the Jewish *peshat* approach to the interpretation of prophetic Scriptures. He also took a futurist view of the texts mentioned, accepting that they remained unfulfilled until the final days of the *eschaton*, which view was contrary to the prevailing historic and allegorical views adopted by the majority of his contemporaries.

d. Commodianus

There were many other Fathers who like Irenaeus, Papias and Justin, adopted a literal view of eschatological events. One such figure was Commodianus (ca.240 C.E.), a Bishop from North Africa, whose writings reveal a belief in, for example, a literal, earthly reign of Christ and an eschatological Antichrist. This assertion is deduced from Commodianus' writings about the people who resist the Antichrist during the Tribulation and who would later be resurrected to live during the millennial reign of Christ on earth. He comments, "the men of nobility under the

conquered Antichrist, according to God's command living again in the world for a thousand years" (Roberts and Donaldson, 1867, Vol.4, p.430). Commodianus also mentions those who, at the end of the millennium, rebel with Satan (now released - Rev.20:3,7-9) and who will thus perish, as "They who make God of no account when the thousandth year is finished shall perish by fire" (Roberts and Donaldson, 1867, Vol.4, p.430). According to such views, Commodianus can be regarded as "a Chiliast" (Cross, 1958, p.317).

e. Hippolytus

Bishop Hippolytus (ca.170-236 C.E.), considered "the most important 3rd century theologian of the Roman Church" (Cross, 1958, p.641), writes clearly about a literal eschatological Antichrist, the rebuilding of the Temple and the Two Witnesses of Rev.11. The Antichrist, he says, "will persecute the righteous" and then when he is "elevated to his kingdom, he will marshal war". Thereafter the Antichrist will "build the temple in Jerusalem...and give it over to the Jews" (Roberts and Donaldson, 1867, Vol.5, pp.512-513). Hippolytus identifies the Two Witnesses of Rev.11 as Enoch and Elias - who will proclaim, "to all the world the advent of Antichrist, that is to say, for a "thousand two hundred and sixty days clothed in sackcloth". From Chapter 11 of Revelation he quotes in support of his literal interpretation, "'And if any man will hurt them, fire will proceed out of their mouth' (Rev.11:5), and devour their enemies" (Roberts and Donaldson, 1867, Vol.5, p.510). Here again we see evidence of a literal and futurist view of prophecy.

Hippolytus differs from others exegetes of the time since he provides, in his comments on the Book of Daniel ("The Interpretation by Hippolytus (Bishop), of Rome on the Vision of Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar, Taken in Conjunction"), and his writings on the Antichrist ("Dogmatical and Historical treatise on Christ and Antichrist") - in which cognisance is taken of other relevant prophetic texts - a comprehensive eschatological framework of events. Hippolytus emphasises that the events described therein will literally take place, "When the times are

fulfilled, and the ten horns spring from the beast in the last (times), then Antichrist will appear among them. When he makes war against the saints, and persecutes them, then may we expect the manifestation of the Lord from heaven" (Roberts and Donaldson, 1867, Vol.5, p.367). As Nichols points out, Hippolytus is to be complimented for his strict adherence to Scripture in interpreting end-time events, as his "weaving of these texts results in a detailed eschatological scenario that is drawn 'from Scripture itself'" (2001, p.79). The latter phrase, "from Scripture itself" is a repeat of Hippolytus own words (Roberts and Donaldson, 1867, Vol.5, p.453). This literal reading of prophetic texts is in contradistinction to the allegorical approach of other prominent Church Fathers like Augustine. Nichols observes that "On these areas Hippolytus greatly differs from Augustine" (2001, p.79). However, Augustine's influence far outweighed that of Hippolytus whose views had minimal overall influence.

f. Victorinus and Lactantius

The writings of Victorinus (died 304 C.E.), Bishop of Poetovium, mention a literal Antichrist and a literal temple, "He shall cause also that a golden image of Antichrist shall be placed in the temple at Jerusalem" (Roberts and Donaldson, 1867, Vol.7, p.729). He also firmly held to a literal interpretation of the "thousand year reign of Christ" of Rev.20 (Simonetti, 1994, p.97) and this is apparent from his commentary on the Book of Revelation which revealed "chiliastic ideas" (Lietzmann, 1950, p.179).

Lactantius (260-330 C.E.), in like manner, mentions the Antichrist, wars and Tribulation, "Now this is he who is called Antichrist...and shall fight against the truth...and shall often renew the war...(and) he shall at length pay the penalty of his crimes" (Roberts and Donaldson, 1867, Vol.7, p.442). He also believed in "a millennial sabbath-year with Christ ruling over the earth" and a last and final battle "in which all evil is destroyed" (Lietzmann, 1950, p.177). Lactantius' view of issues pertaining to the Millennium, as set out in his Institutes, were not confined to him alone. Such matters, says Lietzmann, were "among the traits

characteristic of western Christianity, faithfully preserved for centuries as part of the fund of ideas coming down from the first ages" (1950, p.178). Nonetheless, the overall impact of such views was overshadowed by the allegorical approach of the more influential Church Fathers.

g. Cyril of Jerusalem

Cyril (ca.315-386 C.E.), Bishop of Jerusalem, describes a literal Antichrist, eschatological wars, tribulation and a Temple, "this aforesaid Antichrist is to come when the times of the Roman empire shall have been fulfilled, and the end of the world is now drawing near". Such Antichrist will "seateth himself in the temple of God" (Schaff, 1889, Vol.7, pp.274-276). To avoid any suggestion that such Temple is a spiritual one or that it refers to Christians - regarded as the new Temple of God (1Cor.3:16) in official Church views prevailing at the time - Cyril emphasises, "What temple then?... the Temple of the Jews which has been destroyed. For God forbid that it should be the one in which we are!" He goes on to intimate that the Antichrist, in order to appeal to the Jews, will promote himself as their long awaited Messiah. Furthermore, he will build their Temple again as he, "desires to be worshipped by the Jews, (and) he will make great account of the Temple, that he may more completely beguile them; making it supposed that he is the man of the race of David, who shall build up the Temple which was erected by Solomon" (Schaff, 1889, Vol.7, pp.274-276). Cyril also held a literal view of an eschatological tribulation which period "shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation upon earth" (Schaff, 1889, Vol.7, pp.274-276).

Cyril was one of the few Fathers who adopted a literal and futurist approach to the interpretation of prophetic texts, much like the early Rabbis, but unlike most of his more influential contemporaries.

4. Conclusion

There were some prominent early Fathers who did believe in a literal Antichrist, a literal messianic reign of a thousand years, and so on, despite the prevalence at the time of the allegorical approach to interpretation. However, the literal approach was the exception rather than the rule as the most influential Fathers adopted an allegorical interpretative approach to prophetic texts, usually averring a historic fulfilment of such texts.

The dominance of the allegorical approach during this period was advanced by the destruction of much of the corpa of Fathers like Diodore, Theodore and Victorinus. This destruction was a consequence of the Church's condemnation of these Fathers on the grounds of heresy - invariably due their millenarianistic stance. As a result, Fathers whose works remained extant - mainly those of the Alexandrian school - became highly influential and so the dominance of the allegorical approach to interpretation was perpetuated right into the Middle Ages and beyond.

H. THE MIDDLE AGES

1. Introduction

The dominant hermeneutical movement of the early Middle Ages was that of the allegorical school, an inheritance from Philo, the Alexandrian exegetes and the majority of the prominent Church Fathers. Adherents of the Antiochene approach, on the other hand, "failed to penetrate the Latin (Middle Ages)" and this "had as much significance in a negative way as the success of the Alexandrians" (Smalley, 1964, p.14). It was this failure, caused by a number of incidental reasons, that created an opportunity for the allegorical approach to flourish from the time of the Early Fathers right into the Middle Ages. Such expansion was based not on scriptural or exegetical merit, but rather on the vacuum in this field created by the substantial demise of the literal school.

The vast majority of Christian exegetes at this time adhered to an allegorical and figurative approach to interpretation of Scripture – a method so popular with earlier Fathers. Nevertheless, a minority of scholars did remain faithful to the exegetical principles adopted by the early Rabbis, the Second Testament redactors and those of the Antiochene school. Research into Jewish biblical exegesis in the 11th to 13th centuries, reveals categorically that "one can distinguish clearly between literal and applied meanings, some exegetes going further than others in rejecting anything that is not pure *peshat*, or simple sense" (Reif, 1998, p.151). The view that early Jewish interpretative techniques still had a following, albeit rather limited, during this period is upheld by Rabbi M. Signer. Signer supports current "scholarly consensus" that "significant developments occurred in the realm of biblical exegesis during the eleventh and twelfth centuries in both Jewish and Christian communities" (1993, p.203). This was due to a fresh emphasis on the plain or simple meaning of Scripture, the *sensus literalis*. Such developments were, no doubt, much encouraged by the interaction between Jewish and Christians scholars at the time since the "Christians invited Jews to monasteries in order to determine the proper text of

scripture, or in order to derive the appropriate definition of a biblical phrase” (Signer, 1993, p.203). After centuries of neglect, a fresh appreciation for Jewish views and exegesis emerged among a select number of Christian scholars and this led to a renewed interest in rabbinic exegesis, especially the plain or ordinary (*peshat*) sense and the consequent literal meaning of Scripture.

All the same, the influence Jewish sages had during this period remained restricted to a limited circle of scholars since the official Church views remained unstirred. For instance it is recounted that Jean Gerson (died 1429), Chancellor of the University of Paris, “asserted (with ostensible support from Thomas Aquinas) that *sensus literalis* is only what the Church, as the official, authoritative interpreter of Holy Writ, declares it to be” (Halivni, 1991, p.5). Such a view is to be distinguished from rabbinic exegesis of the time that affirmed the importance of the *peshat* sense, thus maintaining the integrity of the text to be interpreted. The Church, on the other hand, regarded hermeneutical principles as not only subservient to official dogma, but had the task of reinforcing the dogma. So, insofar as the Church was concerned, if the “surface meanings (of the Scriptures) were not truly consistent with its theology, (it then) allegorised their meaning” (Halivni, 1991, p.6).

2. The Influence of Certain Jewish and Christian Scholars

a. Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac (Rashi)

One of the most consequential Jewish scholars of this time and regarded as “the greatest figure of the era” (Roth, 1972, p.324) was Rashi (Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac, 1040-1105), based in Troyes, France.

Rashi was influential not only among the Jewish scholars of his time but among certain Christians as well, as his views “informed and edified many generations” (Reif, 1998, p.151). His approach to exegesis was substantially that of his Jewish predecessors since he placed great emphasis on the *peshat* sense as a

starting point, prior to embarking on *haggadic* and *halakhic* applications, where appropriate. One of the distinguishing features of Rashi's hermeneutical stance was his "attempt to distinguish contextual from applied interpretation, and in this way to distinguish between *peshat* and *derash*" (Reif, 1998, p.151). This approach was actually taken much further by his grandson, Rabbi Samuel ben Meir ("Rashbam", 1080-1160), but, was, nonetheless, not only in accordance with early rabbinic practice but a re-emphasis and a recapturing of early Jewish hermeneutical practice. Certainly, Rashi's insistence upon the importance of the *peshat* sense as a first step to interpretation was contrary to the allegorical trend dominant at the time.

Although Rashi firmly subscribed to the view that "a verse must not be distorted to surrender its literal meaning and plain sense" (Shereshevsky, 1982, p.65), he also made it clear that both *peshat* and the *derash* were necessary in the interpretation of Scripture and both were to be used in conjunction with one another. In practice Rashi followed early Jewish holistic exegetical tradition, applying both methods where appropriate as a "satisfactory commentary required a synthesis of both" (Shereshevsky, 1982, p.65). This is manifest from Rashi's comprehensive commentary on the *Tanakh* which is considered to be "a harmonious blend of *peshat* and *derash*" (Roth, 1972, p.324).

Still, Rashi paid particular attention to the literal meaning as derived from the use of a word in its context as he wished to remain faithful to the text. It was only when he was unable to "discover any meaning in the literal text" that he admitted the "verse would have to be interpreted in a non-literal meaning" (Shereshevsky, 1982, pp.65-66). Rashi's emphasis was thus primarily on the *peshat*, failing which he reverted to a non-literal strategy, although it was undoubtedly rare that no critical meaning was obtained from the *peshat* sense in the first instance.

Rashi's attention to the literal sense was an approach maintained by Rashbam, his Grandson, who admirably "committed himself to pursuing the 'absolutely

literal meaning of the text' and concerned himself with words, context and style rather than the rabbinic message" (Reif, 1998, p.151).

b. Rabbi Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam)

It was at this time that certain Christian scholars took an interest in the Jewish perspective of scriptural interpretation and commentary. According to Reif, "There is undoubtedly a mutual influence between his (Rashbam) exegesis and that of some of the Christian mediant orders of his time, apparently the result of personal exchanges" (1998, p.152). This statement is fortified by the fact that the city of Troyes, some 90 miles from Paris, was one of the "principle abodes of Jewish learning" and consequently the city "acquired fame as the seat of the French school of Bible exegesis and Talmudic commentators" (Shereshevsky, 1982, p.60). By and large, the medieval Jewish scholars at Troyes, and other centres, strived to maintain their Jewish exegetical heritage since they continued to receive "many of their Bible interpretations direct from the Holy Land". This "bond still existed in the days of Rashi" - no doubt also continuing in the time of Rashbam and his successors (Shereshevsky, 1982, p.63). As a result, ancient rabbinic exegetical methods continued to be studied, and applied, at this time at Troyes and beyond.

Regardless of his emphasis upon recapturing the literal sense, upon which he was "most insistent" (Halivni, 1991, p.27), Rashbam did not exclude *midrash* and other early Jewish exegetical methods as acceptable and necessary interpretive techniques. This was because he well understood the Jewish holistic approach to interpretation. Kamin recounts Rambam's view that "the literal and non-literal senses are not alternative senses. Both senses co-exist simultaneously as meanings of the same texts. Each sense is independent of the other. One sense is not built upon the other, both are derived directly from the text, each according to its own rules" (Kamin, 1988, p.143). So, where appropriate, multiple approaches were adopted by Rashbam in accordance with early rabbinic methods, as such strategy was designed to extract the maximum

meaning from a text, depending on the situation. In the application of *midrash haggada* for instance, the literal sense was the start and the applied application could then be drawn out (the *derash*) therefrom where suited, but always based on a literal, not an allegorical or spiritual, foundation. In this way, the integrity of the text was maintained. In Kamin's words, by allocating "an independent yet coexistent realm within a two fold pattern, Rashbam could concentrate on the literal meaning...in its historical and literal context without endangering the truth and validity of Rabbinic exegesis" (1988, p.143) - in the tradition of his rabbinic forefathers.

c. The Victorines

Rashbam's contemporary, Hugh of the St. Victor Abbey, in Paris, Northern France, was at the time also promoting a literal approach to the interpretation of Scripture - a *sensus literalis*. Hugh's primary hermeneutical focus can be described as "a commitment to the historical-literal exposition of scripture" (Moore, 1998, p.261).

As with the Jewish scholars, Hugh regarded the literal sense as merely the fundamental starting point of exegesis as "After laying the foundation by mastering the literal sense one could then pass on to the moral or allegorical senses" (Signer, 1993, p.206). Patton holds a like view, opining that Hugh's work exhibits "a stress on the literal-historical meaning of scripture" though "not in place of the allegorical but as a foundation and a guide to it" (1998, p.110). Hugh thus regarded the *sensus literalis* as a necessary and imperative first step in the exegetical process without minimising the legitimacy of any ensuing steps. Hugh's determination to restore the somewhat lost emphasis on the literal meaning of Scripture was undoubtedly an attempt to counter the prevailing allegorical approach to exegesis of the Christian Church at such time. Represented by Hugh initially, the Victorines were instrumental in recovering an emphasis on the literal method and took as their starting point a view that the Bible was essentially "a literary product" to be approached "like all literature"

(Ocker, 1999, p.337). The Victorines' approach to interpreting the Bible was that it had to be read, in the first instance, with the plain, literal sense in mind. Beryl Smalley, in her classic text, "The Bible in the Middle Ages", reports an occasion when Hugh criticised a contemporary's allegorical approach to the interpretation of Isa.4:1 by saying, "Lo! You have expounded spiritually and you do not understand what it means literally. But the prophet could mean something literally too by these words" (Smalley, 1964, p.94). This pericope is intriguing for not only does it reveal Hugh's criticism of an allegorical approach to the passage, it also emphasises his view that a literal reading should not be ignored as it may very well be the means of ascertaining the true meaning without requiring the employment of further methods. His words imply also that even a prophetic text can be understood literally. Similarly, in Hugh's prologue to the Book of Ecclesiastes, he wrote, "All scripture, if expounded according to its own proper meaning (the literal), will gain in clarity" (Smalley, 1964, p.100).

It is a matter of record that Jewish scholars influenced Hugh in his emphasis on a literal approach. His successor at St. Victor, Andrew, mentions that Hugh "learnt the literal sense of the Pentateuch from the Jews" (Smalley, 1964, p.102). But more than just following the Jewish emphasis on the literal approach, it appears that Hugh might also have employed other Jewish hermeneutical techniques, such as *midrash*, since the explanation he provides in respect of Joel 1:15, is "typically Midrashic and does not seem to be quoted from any known Christian source" (Smalley, 1964, p.103). There exist sound reasons, therefore, to accept that Hugh was materially influenced by Jewish scholars of the time, such as Rashbam.

It was the efforts of, in the main, Rashbam, Hugh and Andrew of the St. Victor school that reclaimed and restored, to some degree, a *sensus literalis* to twelfth century France as these were the scholars who "championed the lost honour of the literal sense" (Kamin, 1988, p.142). Still, such view remained a minority one and had express limitations in its application for the scholars remained bound by their *Lebenswelt*. Hugh's work on recovering the emphasis of the literal sense

was significant, and other scholars like Andrew and Richard of St. Victor, Abelard, Thierry of Chartres, Peter Comestras and Herbert of Bosham in England continued this work. Nonetheless, Hugh presented "his hermeneutical concept within the Christian allegorical approach to scripture" (Kamin, 1988, p.146). The Hellenistic influence of allegory still maintained its strong grip on medieval Christianity during this period as even the "most soberest scholarship of the middle ages derived its permit and its direction ultimately from Alexandria" and its allegorical heritage (Smalley, 1964, p.12).

Notwithstanding the similarities between Rashbam and Hugh of St. Victor in this arena, the contrast between the Jewish rabbinic approach and the prevailing Christian one remained quite noticeable since "Rashbam presents his (hermeneutical concept) within the Jewish non-allegorical approach" (Kamin, 1988, p.146). On the other hand, the Victorines operated in the milieu of the Catholic Church and its predominantly allegorical approach to Scripture which resulted in a sacramental dogma that soon became orthodox. Despite operating in such a milieu, and during a period that witnessed the commencement of substantial anti-Semitism, Hugh attempted to recapture important exegetical principles originating in the Church's Jewish roots. To effect this, Hugh not only endeavoured to learn Hebrew, but also used Jewish ideas in his work (Patton, 1998, p.109). In so doing, Hugh can be considered a pioneer of his time.

In the area of prophecy, however, the St. Victor school, while acknowledging the validity of a literal and historic sense at first reading, regarded the allegorical or mystical sense as the most appropriate method to be employed. This failure to break through the allegorical landscape so prevalent at the time, led Victorine authors Hugh and Andrew to scorn Jewish literal interpretations of prophetic texts and the eschatological events perceived therein. For example, they denigrated the Jewish belief in their "restoration to the land of Israel or the rebuilding of their Temple in Jerusalem" as nothing but a "naive and misdirected" hope (Signer, 1993, p.210). This was due to the Victorines' belief that prophecy

had to be “fulfilled within the biblical framework, not as eschatological predictions of comfort or restoration” (Signer, 1988, p.93).

The Victorines - Hugh and Andrew in particular - can be commended for their attempts to recover the literal approach to interpretation. When it came to considering prophetic texts and events, however, they applied their *sensus literalis* from a historicist viewpoint with fulfilment of the Scriptures being found in Christ - a wholesale christocentric view of prophecy entailing the spiritualising of all issues in order to accommodate the centrality of Christ. They applied this strategy also to First Testament texts. Unlike the Rabbis, they did not engage in a futurist view on, for example, issues which would have had doctrinal and eschatological implications for the Jewish nation.

So, again, it was left to Jewish scholars to faithfully maintain ancient Judaic interpretive approaches. This they did as the period (11th-14th century France) revealed “a remarkable blend of the latest developments with the best of rabbinic learning” (Reif, 1998, pp.152-153). It was the Qimhi (“Kimchi”) family who best represented the field of Jewish biblical exegesis, as they “were all devoted to literal interpretation, to careful linguistic analysis, and to the kind of exegesis that could challenge the dominant Christian use of the Hebrew Bible in their day” (Reif, 1998, pp.152-153). Although their exegetical methodology placed strong emphasis on the *peshat* sense they did not ignore the necessity of employing *haggadah* when suitable. In this, the Qimhi family (particularly David) acted in a typically rabbinic fashion since they “based themselves on precursors” (Roth, 1972, p.325). The overall influence of such scholars during this period, however, remained slight.

d. Nicholas of Lyra

Apart from impacting the Victorines, the work of Rashi also had a profound later influence upon the fourteenth-century Christian scholar, Nicholas of Lyra, who was regarded as “one of two important points in the appearance of Jewish

commentary in Christian sources" (Signer, 2000, p.153), the Victorines being the other.

Nicholas' use of Jewish source material - for example his dependence upon Rashi's commentary on the Book of Ezekiel as a foundation for his own studies on such book - enables Rabbi Signer to label him a "precursor of modern biblical studies" (2000, p.152). Nicholas' reliance on Jewish input is confirmed by Shereshevsky when he postulates, "it is commonly acknowledged that the foremost Christian beneficiary of Rashi's commentary was the French Franciscan Bible Commentator Nicholas de Lyre" who actually mentions Rashi by name, "Dicit hic Rabbi Solomon" at one point (Shereshevsky, 1982, pp.2-3).

Emulating the Victorines in this regard - and despite being influenced by Jewish scholars of the time - Nicholas' support for the literal sense of Scripture floundered in the area of prophecy. The reason being that Nicholas persisted with a historical view even when faced with, for example, a Jewish commentary on Ezekiel's description of an eschatological Temple in Chapters 40-48. Unlike Rashi's literalist interpretative stance on such text, Nicholas concocted a convoluted interpretation of the Temple in order to support his historicist approach. Here he clashed with the Jews who, even in his time, still understood Ezekiel's vision literally as a prophecy "about the time of the Messiah when the temple and the city of Jerusalem will be rebuilt". The Jews said of the Messiah that he, "will be a man, a pure prophet who will be holier than Moses, who will reign over all the nations" and who will "rebuild the city and the Temple just as it is described here (i.e., in Ezekiel)" (Signer, 2000, p.166). In order to refute such futurist views, Nicholas employed a historicist view and adopted a spiritual interpretation of the events depicted in Ezekiel, relating them to the Church with its sacraments, prayer and so forth, to accord with his use of "the four senses" of interpretation. This enabled him to "provide the spiritual correlation to the careful foundations of history which (he) had constructed" (Signer, 2000, p.169). It was through such manner of interpretation that the Church maintained its supersessionist doctrines.

All the same, Nicholas remained influential not only in his time, but for generations thereafter as his literal-historical hermeneutical approach was adopted by the later Reformers who, like him, continued to utilise a literal interpretation, at the initial level, and a spiritual, allegorical interpretation at the next. The contrast with Jewish scholars of the time, who invariably adopted a futurist view of prophetic texts after acknowledging the importance of the *peshat* context - as is seen from Rashi's comments on the Book of Ezekiel - is rather marked, and this dichotomy persisted with later generations of scholars.

e. Cajetan et al

In sixteenth century France, certain scholars such as Cajetan, Erasmus and Smyth continued to emphasise a focus on the text, advocating a "*sensus literalis* in their exegetical work" (Lowe, 2001, p.23). This objective, contextual approach was in contradistinction with that prevailing at the time which instead emphasised the allegorical method of exegesis, leading to a personal, subjective, interpretation. According to Smyth, only the text "brings the faithful to the meaning" (Lowe, 2001, p.23). But yet again, Smyth's application of such approach to prophetic texts was no different to that of the majority of his predecessors.

f. Summation

The Jewish approach, with its emphasis on the importance of the *peshat*, had, in essence, not deviated much from its traditional hermeneutical stance through the ages. This approach was quite unlike that of the usual Christian scholar who, from the time of the early Church Fathers, remained fundamentally focused on the allegorical sense over the literal. It was only during the "course of the sixteenth century (that) the literal interpretation of the text slowly superseded the other three senses" (Lowe, 2001, p.23). The other three senses emphasised by Christian exegetes at this time were the allegorical, the anagogical and the moral (Lowe, 2001, p.23). This change, as shall be noted, did not include

application of the *sensus literalis* to prophecy. The schism with Jewish exegetical practice thus persisted.

3. Views in the Middle Ages on Certain Eschatological Issues

a. Introduction

Interpretation of texts pertaining to eschatological matters during the Middle Ages varied in accordance with the interpretive approach adopted by the exegetes. Consequently, those who continued to hold to a predominantly allegorical approach, would not have defended a literal interpretation of eschatological texts. A possible exception would be a literal view of Second Testament Scriptures relating directly to Christ's parousia.

The official Church position dominated early and middle medieval times. Hence, the interpretation of end-time texts and events remained founded on allegorical, spiritual and symbolic interpretive approaches. Such approaches had their origin in centuries past as "by the fifth century, the (allegorical) influence of Origen and Augustine had caused the belief in a literal millennial kingdom to disappear" (Grendron, 1996, p.143). Nonetheless there were some scholars, especially those influenced by Jewish exegetes, who maintained a somewhat literal approach to prophetic texts, leading to, for instance, a belief not only in the imminency of the *eschaton* but also in a personal, eschatological Antichrist and related events.

b. Norbert of Xanten

In a letter dated between 1124 and 1128, addressed to Geoffrey of Chartres regarding Norbert of Xanten's views on the Antichrist's imminent arrival, Bernard of Clairvaux writes, "When I asked him (Norbert) what he thought about the Antichrist, he declared himself quite certain that it would be during this present generation that he would be revealed" (Flanagan, 2000, p.58). The Antichrist

that Norbert referred to was not simply a generic antichrist, many types of which have been expected, and many people have been identified with, over the years, but instead, Norbert was expecting a literal, eschatological persona whom he understood to be "a Jew born of the tribe of Dan, raised in Babylon and finally, having killed Enoch and Elijah, meeting his own death on the Mount of Olives." (Flanagan, 2000, p.61). Such an interpretation - the belief in a personal Antichrist of the type described in John's Epistles, 2Thess.2:3, the Books of Daniel, Revelation and others - could only have been derived from a strictly literal and futurist interpretation of the relevant Biblical texts. In addition, in the case of the identity of the two witnesses of Rev.11, for example, some inspired speculation must have been employed based, though, on earlier scriptural precedent taken from Gen.5:24 (read with Heb.11:5) and 2 Kings 2:11.

c. Bernard of Clairvaux

Although it cannot be claimed that Bernard of Clairvaux was a fervent supporter of a literal approach to the interpretation of Scripture, he did not, in the opinion of Flanagan, "reject outright what Norbert had to say about the Antichrist" (Flanagan, 2000, p.58). Perhaps this was due to the fact that he generally commenced his studies with "a plain, unadorned, historical sense of Scripture" (Tamburello, 1998, p.92) which would have led to a normal, literal reading of the relevant Scriptures describing the Antichrist. Bernard's statement that the "Antichrist is either at hand or near" (Flanagan, 2000, p.62), indicates his belief in at least one literal, imminent, major eschatological event associated with Christ's return.

Following the view of Augustine that time was linear and finite, the eschatological atmosphere of the early twelfth century was one in which the end of the world was understood as fast approaching (Flanagan, 2000, p.59). Consequently, various disasters could be expected as part of this inevitable process, "the penultimate one of which would be heralded by the arrival of the Antichrist...(who) would lead a final persecution of the church". This would be

followed “after an indefinite interval, by the return of Christ in glory” (Flanagan, 2000, p.59). Belief in the approaching *eschaton* and, as an associated part thereof, in a personal Antichrist, was an acceptable, albeit minority, view at the time. But more than simply believing that “the end was neigh” at some distant future time, it appears that certain scholars held to an apocalyptic view perceiving that they were the last generation, and that the *eschaton* was upon them. This conclusion is derived from Norbert’s apparent belief that the Antichrist was already on earth and would be revealed “during this present generation”. To arrive at such a view, Norbert subscribed to a sense of eschatological imminence and the current fulfilment of prophecy, characteristic of the Qumranians. No doubt he was not the only person during this period to hold such an apocalyptic view.

d. Brother Dolcino

A fourteenth century (1316 C.E.) text, “The History of Brother Dolcino”, dealing with the eschatological views of the leader of an apocalyptic sect, the “Apostolic Brethren”, is an interesting source of views on a pre-tribulational Rapture and other topical eschatological events during such period. It is worth quoting from a translation of this text:

“And that the Antichrist was coming into this world within the bounds of the said three and a half years; and after he had come, then he (Dolcino) and his followers would be transferred into Paradise, in which are Enoch and Elijah. And in this way they will be preserved unharmed from the persecution of Antichrist. And that Enoch and Elijah themselves would descend on the earth for the purpose of preaching (against) Antichrist. Then they would be killed by him or by his servants, and thus Antichrist would reign for a long time. But when the Antichrist is dead, Dolcino himself, who then, would be the Holy Pope, and his preserved followers, will descend on the earth, and will preach the right faith of Christ to all, and will convert those who will be living then to the true faith of Jesus Christ” (Gumerlock, 2002, pp.354-355).

Gumerlock emphasises that the Latin word used for transfer was "*transferrentur*, the past participle of which is *translatum*, "from which is derived a common English synonym for the rapture, the 'translation'" (2002, p.357). This translation was not a partial one but is instead to be understood as a Rapture of the whole Church, and an imminent one at that. The use of the word "preserved" is indicative, argues Gumerlock, of the Rapture's purpose in preserving the Saints from the persecution - the tribulation - of the Antichrist until his death whereafter they return to earth, "so that they will be privileged to participate in the earthly kingdom after the tribulation" and thus "play a reading role in seeing that the whole earth becomes filled with the knowledge of the Lord" (2002, pp.357-358). A number of interesting issues are raised in the above pericope. For instance there is a clear reference to a Rapture - a pre-tribulational, supernatural avoidance of persecution conducted by the Antichrist much in line with the view of the later Popularisers. Indicated also is a return to earth for evangelistic purposes presupposing belief in a literal messianic age.

These issues reflect a literal approach to the interpretation of prophetic texts as, "from every indication, the aforementioned paragraph in "The History of Brother Dolcino" seems to be a report of Dolcino's exegesis of Revelation 11" (Gumerlock, 2002, p.359). Specifically, this group interpreted the events of Rev.11 and 1Thess.4:17 quite literally, and with a futurist perspective. For instance, in Rev.11:7, the Beast is identified as a literal, personal, eschatological Antichrist while Rev.11:3-11 is also taken literally - to such an extent that a speculative identification is made of the two witnesses by associating them with the Biblical characters, Enoch and Elijah. Apart from the obvious supersessionist claims in Dolcino's scenario - the leading evangelistic roles of those mentioned in Rev.7 and 14, the 144,000, would, like the two witnesses of Rev.11:3, be Jews in any consistent literal interpretation - this sect identified themselves as literally having certain, elect, eschatological roles. But, intermingled with a literal and futurist approach, appears to be the use of a Qumranic *raz-pesher* type interpretative method whereby the sects' "Teacher of Righteousness" imposes a "this is that" reading of the texts - revealing the "mysteries" of the text, it could

be said. This has the effect of allocating to the sect and its members various roles in the eschatological scenario not manifest through a normal reading.

A further observation is that this group was apocalyptic in outlook with a firm belief in the imminence of the Tribulation, the arrival of the Antichrist and their subsequent translation to "Paradise" and later participation in a messianic age on earth. Elements of fulfilment type *peshet* are also obvious here as it is claimed that this group, the Apostolic Brethren, was the true Church and that they "would play a leading role in seeing that the whole earth becomes filled with the knowledge of the Lord" (Gumerlock, 2002, p.358). For this sect, the events of their time, namely, "the political and ecclesiastical affairs in Italy" were indicative that "the end of the world was near" (Gumerlock, 2002, p.356). Due to their belief that they were the true Church, the true Israel of God, they anticipated that the eschatological prophecies of Scripture would be fulfilled through them and in their time – as per the convictions of the Qumran covenanters.

Although it cannot be alleged that the views of Brother Dolcino and the Apostolic Brethren constituted the dominant eschatological perspectives on such issues in the later Middle Ages, Gumerlock rightly avers, "such teaching did not occur in a vacuum and that others besides Dolcino were aware of it" (2002, p.361). It can be argued, though, that these views of eschatology, including the Rapture - in fact a pre-tribulational one - the Tribulation, the Antichrist and a messianic age, did not only exist in isolation at this time. This contention finds support in the views of one Frederick of Brunswick, in the late fourteenth century, who also expected to be raptured up to meet the Lord and then, at a later stage, to return to earth to live for the millennial period of a thousand years (Gumerlock, 2002, p.362).

e. Pseudo-Ephraem

Mention must be made of the work of Pseudo-Ephraem, in particular, "On the Last Times, the Antichrist and the End of the World", which work is estimated to have been written sometime between 565-627 C.E. In such document, clear reference is made to a pre-tribulational rapture, "All the saints and elect of God are gathered together before the tribulation, which is to come, and are taken to the Lord" (Gumerlock, 2002, p.351). The document also indicates faith in the imminent return of Christ to Rapture his Church, an event to be followed by Christ's Second Advent with a specified period of time, namely three and a half years, interrupting the two events. A literal Antichrist is mentioned and this person, acceptable to the Jews, will be worshipped in the new Temple which he will cause to be built in Jerusalem for such purpose. The document states further that the purpose of the Rapture will be to "remove the church from the world before the tribulation", the latter event to persist for 1,260 days whereafter the Antichrist will be overcome by Christ (Demy and Ice, 1995, p.317).

The Pseudo-Ephraem document exhibits a strong literal interpretation of eschatological texts much in line with modern premillennial interpretations. As such it is a confirmation of the somewhat limited continuity in some quarters during this period of the literal exegesis of eschatological texts read with a futurist perspective.

f. Maimonides and other Jewish Sages

The prominent medieval Jewish sage Maimonides (1135-1204), confirms that the Jewish view of eschatological events is not based merely on man's tradition as "the sages (do not) have a tradition about these things". Instead "it is, rather, a matter of interpretation of the Biblical verses" with such interpretation being founded on "the plain meaning of the words of the prophets" (Patai, 1977, p.325). Maimonides stressed the importance of the *peshat* sense without, though, denigrating the necessity of the *derash*. This approach accords with the

rabbinic view which, unexceptionally, was that there is “room for *derash* alongside of *peshat*” (Halivni, 1991, p.81). In the event of a conflict between the *peshat* and *derash* sense, Maimonides followed his policy of not permitting a deviation from the *peshat* reading, since “his exegetical conscience did not allow him to violate the *peshat*” (Halivni, 1991, p.84).

Consequently, arising from such an approach, Maimonides’ held to a literal and futurist interpretation of various end-time issues. For instance, he believed that the “King Messiah will arise in the future and will restore the kingship of David to its ancient condition, to its rule as it was at first. And he will rebuild the Temple and gather the exiled of Israel” (Patai, 1977, pp.324-5). Maimonides understood that in the *eschaton*, the Messiah would reign on earth, restore to himself the people of Israel and rebuild the Jerusalem temple. Further, he regarded Ezekiel’s “Gog and Magog” wars to have eschatological import and fulfilment although an initial fulfilment of such prophecy had probably taken place in antiquity. Maimonides concludes that at the “beginning of the days of the Messiah, there will be the war of Gog and Magog” (Patai, 1977, p.325).

Similarly, in the Rabbinic work, *Even Bohan* (1385), the wars with Gog and Magog were also regarded as having eschatological operation as it is there written, vis-à-vis Ezek.38:22, that “this has not yet been fulfilled” (Patai, 1977, p.333). Belief in the restoration of Temple worship, after the final battles - from a plain reading of Zech.14:1,2,9,16 - was also maintained in this document since “all the nations will come to wage war against Jerusalem” and “every year they will go up to worship Him” and “celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles” (Patai, 1977, pp.337-338).

Lastly, Grimmelshausen’s writings of 1672 contain a fine summation of “actual seventeenth century German-Jewish Messianic beliefs”. These beliefs include a literal reign on earth by a King Messiah, the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, and restoration to the fullness of *Eretz* Israel as promised by God in Gen.15 (Patai, 1977, pp.339-340). Not only are such views indicative of rabbinic

interpretations during this period, they also accord with rabbinic convictions of past centuries.

Unlike the Christian scholars, in their use of early Jewish hermeneutical methods, Maimonides and the other Jewish scholars interpreted Scripture according to the ancient tradition of their rabbinic forefathers, a tradition they maintained through the "dark ages" of biblical exegesis.

4. Conclusion

Apart from those medieval Christian scholars supporting a literal reading, as discussed above, there were, no doubt, others of similar views despite the dominance of the allegorical interpretative approach at the time. Those scholars that did regard the allegorical approach to interpretation as "ultimately a poor foundation for scriptural exegesis" (McDonald, 1993, p.232), and who instead emphasised the literal sense, relied primarily on early Jewish exegetical methodologies such as *peshat*, albeit probably unknowingly. It is clear, though, that some Christian scholars were directly impacted by the Jewish sages of the period who had retained their traditional exegetical tools despite the dominance of Christian allegorical hermeneutics, the latter actually having "little effect on the Jews from the Palestinian tradition" (McDonald, 1993, p.232). Instead, to some degree, the reverse effect occurred.

Overall, though, the allegorical approach to scriptural interpretation, sanctioned by the Church, remained the predominant one throughout the Middle Ages period. However, a comprehensive, but still partial, recovery of the literal sense did take place in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries except in the area of prophecy where little change occurred. Controversy surrounding the interpretation of prophetic matters continued into the Reformation and beyond.

I. THE REFORMERS

1. Introduction

One of the distinguishing marks of the Reformation was that it "brought back scripture from the periphery to the centre of the church and theology" (Gunneweg, 1978, p.46).

However the focus on *scriptura sola* by the Reformers had its own trials because it exposed anew long dormant "questions of proper interpretation" (Gunneweg, 1978, p.46). An examination of biblical hermeneutics was an inevitable consequence of the focus on Scripture itself. This focus was in contrast to the normal emphasis on, and unquestioned acceptance of, traditional Church dogma derived from centuries of sacramental priority, the suspect hermeneutical foundations of which dogma had long remained unchallenged. Hence, it was inevitable that "if scripture came to occupy a central point, then the hermeneutical problem inevitably acquired fundamental significance" (Gunneweg, 1978, p.46) for the Reformers.

The main purpose, then, of the thrust for change in this area by the Reformers was an attempt to recapture the plain meaning of Scripture. To do this the Reformers emphasised that Scripture could only be interpreted by Scripture alone, *scriptura sacra sui ipsius interpres* - Scripture being its own interpreter. The Reformers' success, however, was limited in its application as a result of the continual dominance of the allegorical approach, which approach was instrumental in the compilation of the sacramental dogma. The dominance of such method had been perpetuated through the early and middle medieval periods and continued into the sixteenth century. This was especially the case in the application of the method to prophetic matters.

With such a heritage, it is not startling to realise that even Luther remained "convinced of the justification for and necessity of allegorical interpretation"

(Gunneweg, 1978, p.48). As commendable, and necessary, as Luther's proposed changes were, they remained limited in application. Gunneweg emphasises that Luther's "immediate rejection of scholastic methods and his totally new understanding of the task of theology and the nature of the Church...did not lead to an increasing attention to the literal sense. Even at a later stage, Luther made lavish use of the allegorical method" (1978, p.48). Lohse proposes a contrary view to the effect that Luther might initially have adhered to the four-fold sense of interpretation, traditional at the time, but he rejected this approach at an early stage and thereafter fervently adopted a literal method. Lohse writes, "if in his early lectures Luther could often stress the four-fold meaning of Scripture, the literal sense soon became authoritative for him" (1999, p.190). It is probable, however, that Gunneweg's findings reflect the correct situation as the Reformers were rather disappointing overall in retaining the use of allegory in circumstances where it would have been appropriate to return to an application of the literal reading of Scripture. Even Lohse concedes that Luther, "particularly in his sermons and even later...could at times still employ allegory". Lohse does qualify his finding by adding that after the Indulgence controversy, Luther "all but surrendered this traditional method of exposition" (1999 p.190). As is noted further on, this is not quite correct for Luther actually retained allegory as his main tool in dealing with prophetic texts, in particular.

Thompson also supports Gunneweg's assertion that the Reformers employed allegory despite their stated aversion thereto, and takes as an example the way in which the Reformers approached the interpretation of the First Testament rite of covenantal circumcision, found in Gen.17. Here Thompson opines that although the Reformers were reputed to have replaced the allegorical tendencies of the time with a fresh emphasis on a literal approach, "an examination of several Protestant commentaries on Genesis yields first of all one striking discovery, namely, how little the landscape has changed" (1995, p.248). In this context, foremost Reformers like Vermigli also continued with the allegorical exegetical method that he derived from Augustine. Furthermore,

Vermigli "for good measure adds all the allegorical and typological arguments found in Ambrose" (Thompson, 1995, p.248). Zwingli was, likewise, another allegorist who was also "surely indebted to Ambrose, for he is satisfied to allegorise fleshly circumcision into 'spiritual' circumcision" alleging that it, "signifies that the passions have been amputated from the heart" (Thompson, 1995, p.248). John Calvin himself was not immune to allegorise here as his exegesis "follows traditional lines, though he is careful to frame his argument not as an allegory but in terms of 'sign' and 'analogy' (Thompson, 1995, p.248).

The allegorical view taken by the Reformers of First Testament ritual circumcision is in contradistinction to the literal rabbinic reading of Gen.17:12 and Lev.12:3. In a fifteenth century Hebrew manuscript in the British Library, describing the days of the Messiah's arrival, it records that at such time "The commandment of circumcision which God gave us will be observed for all generations" (Patai, 1977, p.329). The Jews simply adhered to a plain reading of the texts.

Although there are some exceptions, the interpretive stance taken by many of the leading Reformers regarding the issue of the First Testament covenantal circumcision rite, as an example of their hermeneutics, is well recorded by Thompson whose research reveals, not surprisingly, that the hermeneutical situation remained substantially unaltered from the days of the Church Fathers. He observes that the "traditions of allegory, typology, and symbolism which surrounded circumcision for the Church Fathers and sustained the medieval commentators do not lose all that much force for sixteenth-century exegetes" (Thompson, 1995, p.254). He goes on to conclude, rather emphatically, that from the perspective of exegetical methodology on this particular topic from Genesis 17, "one might never suspect that there was, in fact, a Reformation" (Thompson, 1995, p.255). Taking into consideration that Thompson's study was limited to a singular topic, it can still be regarded as a convincing and objective indication of the fundamental hermeneutical stance adopted by many leading Reformers. Hence it appears undeniable that the patristic tendency towards an

allegorical approach was sustained and continued by scholars right through to the time of the Reformers who themselves were disinclined to follow through on their aims of emphasising *sola scriptura* consistently in all areas of exegesis, "regardless of how much these readings strayed into allegory, moralism, or dubious typology" (Thompson, 1995, p.255).

Lack of consistency, as seen in this department, is probably the characteristic of reformatory exegesis in general. In this respect, Erasmus is another example of the time for he "combined an affinity for allegory with a scrupulous concern for the literal meaning" (Carrington, 1997, p.5). The net effect of an approach like that practised by Erasmus was to pay only superficial attention to the literal sense before indulging in the allegorical mode so acceptable at the time. Therefore Thompson's jolting conclusion that only "traces of the Reformation's supposed predilection for 'literal' exegesis" (1995, p.255) have been found, finds support in the writings of the Reformers themselves.

2. The Reformers and Prophecy

a. Introduction

The Reformers failure to follow through with a consistent *sensus literalis* led to serious problems for them in the area of prophecy. It is unremarkable to note that the interpretation of a Second Testament eschatological text like Revelation, and First Testament texts like Zechariah, Daniel and Ezekiel, remained a mystery to the likes of Luther and Calvin. When faced with such controversial prophetic texts, Luther and Calvin's solution was to revert to the hermeneutical stances inherited from the time of the early Church Fathers. In the result, they allegorised much of the First Testament including God's covenants with, and promises to, the Jews which, according to the Rabbis, were to be literally fulfilled in the *eschaton*.

In line with the views of the Church Fathers, the Reformers considered the Jews redundant in the economy of God, with the Church as the new people of God having appropriated such promises. Luther's supersessionist views, and his anti-Judaic sentiments, were made quite clear in three treatises, one of which, "About the Jews and their Lies", was a result of a "rabbinic attack on Christian interpretation of the Bible" (Wallmann, 1988, p.157). It is quite understandable that the Jewish scholars of the time were perturbed by the Reformers' supersessionism since this made the Jews a justifiable target for anti-Semitism, in the view of the Reformers. And so this proved to be the case, for Luther wrote in the treatise that "one should burn their synagogues and their schools...one should take their Talmud and their prayer books away from them, forbid their Rabbis to preach" (Wallmann, 1988, p.157), and so forth. It is comprehensible, then, that Luther regarded the First Testament as redundant, holding the view that the "Old Testament begins and ends in time" and that the Second Testament takes precedence over the First "because it is the oldest (eternal)" (Hagen, 1994, p.17). In conjunction with such a position, Luther proceeded to spiritualise the First Testament in favour of the Church.

In this area it can be said of the Reformers that, "no progress has really been made beyond allegorical interpretation" (Gunneweg, 1978, pp.53-54) and this is particularly so in the case of prophetic texts, the interpretation of which remained firmly confined to a spiritual appropriation by the Church.

b. Luther and Prophecy

Martin Luther's basic approach to prophetic texts of the First Testament was that the prophecies therein were fulfilled historically and therefore any eschatological implications arising therefrom were to be figuratively applied to Christ and the Church. In so doing Luther remained "part of a late medieval trend to highlight (once again) the christological meaning of a text" (Hagen, 1998, p.217). In itself such a statement is laudatory as the early Second Testament redactors adopted a similar approach, but Luther took this strategy too far by averring that,

"everything which is outside of Christ is vanity" (Ebeling, 1993, p.150). This approach enabled Luther to justify ignoring the literal sense as a fundamental exegetical starting point.

Luther's consequent disregarding of the contextual application of First Testament promises and prophecies cannot be regarded as reformatory progress and was, in fact, retrogressive in comparison to the work done by previous scholars like the Victorines. Hagen attempts to attenuate the import of Luther's use of allegory by submitting that he "used allegory, not to establish doctrine but to embellish it" (1998, p.217). This conclusion is untenable as Luther clearly formulated doctrine, perhaps unconsciously, in the pronouncement of his conclusions on various issues. Such findings, and the consequent doctrine resulting from an application of Luther's allegorical stance, were regarded at the time and for many centuries later, as indicative of the orthodox Protestant position. In some circles this position persists today.

Despite Lohse's contrary observations, Luther remained attached to the allegorical approach. In Luther's view such approach was necessary to enable him to deal with sundry issues arising out of the First Testament. In this regard, Luther persisted with a christological perspective (which he also used in relation to the Second Testament) which led to his sentiment that "only the Christians, as opposed to the Jews with their sinful misunderstanding and lies, can understand the Old Testament properly as a Christian book" (Gunneweg, 1978, p.53). Gunneweg comments that this "conviction is a prejudice which can only be justified by a persistent refusal to accept the literal sense" (1978, p.53) with Luther's rationale being, "the spirit rejects literal things, which are only shadows of truth" (Ebeling, 1993, p.150).

When Luther did promote the literal sense, it was in the manner of Faber Stapulensis (ca.1455-1536), a scholar who had the "greatest impact on Luther's method of interpretation" (Gleason, 2000, p.476). Stapulensis' method differentiated between the "literal historical sense" of the text and the "literal

prophetic sense" (Gleason, 2000, p.476). In essence the differentiation amounted to a sidelining of the historical context and a focus on the "prophetic". By "prophetic", Luther and Stapulensis meant that the text made "forward reference to Christ" and was to be considered "literal because it was the intention of the prophet and of the Holy Spirit speaking in him" (Gleason, 2000, p.476). This apparent dichotomy was, in the event, an opportunity to again promote Luther's avowed christocentric view of all First Testament texts without blatantly rejecting the historical sense. The net result of such approach was a devaluation of the literal, historical, context which Luther instead regarded as the prophetic sense, pointing to Jesus.

Although Luther and the Reformers attempted to restore the importance of the literal sense through their emphasis on *sola scriptura* and the application of the grammatical-historical interpretive approach, they did not appear to extend this approach to prophetic texts. The grammatical-historical method was certainly useful in recovering fundamental doctrine, and to discredit official dogma, but certain Reformers, like Luther, failed to apply such method consistently throughout the Canon. Thus when approaching prophetic texts like the Book of Revelation, they forthwith reverted to the traditional allegorical method, *sensus spiritualis*, of their exegetical predecessors. It is not surprising to learn that Luther avoided compiling a comprehensive commentary on such a text and, in fact, questioned the validity of the Book being included in the Canon (Vial, 2002, p.35). Likewise, Calvin never compiled a commentary on the Book of Revelation. Muller points out that Calvin "preached, lectured and commentated his way through nearly the entire Bible, omitting only Revelation from his work on the New Testament" (Muller, 1998, p.133). Calvin's fellow Reformer, J.H. Bullinger, also did not write a formal commentary on Revelation despite writing one on every other Second Testament book (Muller, 1998, p.134).

So, then, in the case of Scriptures that Luther regarded as prophetic, he forthwith engaged in the allegorical method without first applying or considering the literal, the grammatical-historical approach. The reason for this is that, in his

view, application of the literal method in regard to prophetic texts did not make sense to him as such texts should be spiritualised in favour of the Church. Prophetic matters, in accordance with his christocentric views, had to be viewed spiritually and thus interpreted allegorically. As Boehmer emphasises, "the literal or grammatico-historical sense is...not applied at all in his lectures on the Psalms, for to him the Psalms comprised a prophetic book and hence every Psalm referred directly to Christ" (1946, p.122). Luther therefore berates those who "in following the rabbis, do not expound the Psalms prophetically but historically" (Ebeling, 1993, p.452), thereby totally ignoring the *peshat* sense. It can be gathered that Luther adapted his interpretation of the Scriptures to suit his christological agenda. This assertion is also noticeable from his treatment of John's Apocalypse which "only proves useful when it serves the agenda which the Reformer applies when reading it", as this Book, "in its original state...was not" helpful to him (Vial, 2002, p.38). Luther paid scant attention to the Apocalypse, being unable, no doubt, to find a suitable hermeneutical method to comprehend it. Clearly, in order to appropriate First Testament literal promises and predictions for the benefit of the Church, Luther ignored the plain sense of Scripture, and the context of the passage, instead implementing the traditional *sensus spiritualis* method as his predecessors had done for centuries.

In certain respects Luther remained encapsulated in the medieval past, not freeing Scripture from the bondage of allegorical interpretation to the extent proposed. Like many others of the time, Luther can be regarded as "part of the medieval trend to call for a return to the letter of text and then in practice to go on and find other senses of meaning" (Hagen, 1998, p.217). Such inconsistency is particularly noticeable in the area of prophetic texts.

c. Luther and the Eschaton

Luther's understanding of the *eschaton* and associated events like a literal, personal, Antichrist, reflected his *Lebenswelt*. In his approach to these issues, Luther "owed much to the waning medieval period" and this is especially so

early in his career where "influences from the later Middle Ages are detectable" (Lohse, 1999, pp.325-326).

Luther firmly believed that he was living in the end-times although he refused to predict a timeline for culmination, despite pressure to do so by his supporters. Luther's understanding of an eschatological Antichrist, though, like his approach to prophetic texts generally, was typical of the Reformers. The reason being that although Luther regarded the Pope as the Antichrist, this was more a cognisance of the Pope in his representative capacity of an evil system, than as the anticipated Antichrist of the *eschaton*. "The Pope is the spirit of the antichrist" he said (Lohse, 1999, p.334). To arrive at such an interpretation Luther, in accordance with his usual approach to such matters, allegorised the prophetic texts dealing with the arrival of a literal, eschatological Antichrist, mentioned in, for example, Daniel 9:27, 2Thess.2:3-4 and 1John 2:18. There are two main factors which led Luther to believe the time of the *eschaton* was at hand. The first was the presence of the Pope, understood as Antichrist, as defined above. The second factor, apparent from his commentary on the Book of Daniel, was the conclusion that "almost all the signs which Christ and the apostles Peter and Paul announced, have now appeared...It is certain that everything is coming to an end" (Lohse, 1999, p.335). Without enumerating and examining these signs in detail, it can be deduced that Luther subscribed to a spiritual view of such signs, evident by his imputation of fulfilment thereof to the Church, as it existed in his time. For example, in the Olivet discourse of Matt.24, Jesus speaks of the signs of the end of the age and indicates an expectation of wars (v.6 & 7), apostasy (v.10), a time of great suffering (v.21) and the appearance of the Antichrist - Daniel's "abomination that causes desolation" (v.15). It is this latter sign in particular that led Luther to state that the, "last day must be at hand" (Lohse, 1999, p.335) as in his view, the arrival of the Antichrist on the world stage, especially his seat on the "throne" of God (which Luther interpreted as the Pope ruling the Church), was the determining factor. In arriving at such an interpretation, Luther consistently adhered to his allegorical tendencies in prophetic matters.

In the same vein, Luther's view of the millennium, described in Rev.20 for example, was also an allegorical one. Luther believed that such an event had reference only to "the history of the Church" (Lohse, 1999, p.334) and not to any future messianic reign since the present age was the time in which such prophecies were being fulfilled. Of course, as Lohse points out, Luther's belief that these events have fulfilment in the time and history of the church, "removes any biblical basis from speculation about a thousand-year reign prior to the last judgement" (1999, p.334). Here again, Luther remained bound by the interpretive stances of the past as with such interpretation "Luther followed Augustine, who also interpreted this text of the time of the church" (Lohse, 1999, p.334).

Notwithstanding Luther's avowed aim of restoring the pre-eminence of the literal sense of interpretation, it appears he frequently resorted to, and relied upon, an inherited and traditional allegorical approach, especially in circumstances concerning prophetic texts. As Hagen so aptly quips, "You can take the boy out of the monastery, but you cannot take the monastery out of the boy" (1994, p.16).

d. Calvin and Prophecy

Calvin harshly criticised the use of allegory in the interpretation of Scripture. However, he was somewhat incongruent when it came to prophetic matters, his view being that if "there has been no historical fulfilment of the promise, one should look for a fulfilment that is not literal" (Puckett, 1998, p.176). In other words, one should seek an allegorical meaning and this he did by imputing to Christ and the Church a figurative fulfilment of the prediction. This strategy gives rise to great opportunity for the imposition of a non-literal interpretation over much of Scripture containing prophetic texts.

e. Calvin and the Eschaton

On the subject of Calvin's designation of the Pope as Antichrist (described in Dan.9:27 and 2Thess.2:4) he writes, "Daniel and Paul foretold that Antichrist would sit in the temple of God...(and) we regard the Roman Pontiff as the leader and standard-bearer of that wicked and abominable kingdom. By placing his seat in the temple of God, it is intimated that his kingdom would not be such as to destroy the name either of Christ or of his Church" (Calvin, 1996, p.1085). Here Calvin ignores the literal sense, instead imposing an allegorical interpretation on the Temple (mentioned in Daniel 9:27 and 2Thess.2:4) and identifying the Pope as the Antichrist since he occupies the "throne" in God's Temple, by which Calvin means the ruling of the Church. Calvin equates the Church with a spiritual temple (1Cor.3:16) thereby denying the possibility of a literal, eschatological Temple as described by Ezekiel. In Calvin's view, such prophecy was fulfilled spiritually in the Church and in his own time. He arrives at this interpretation by understanding Antichrist's reign from his seat in the Temple as a reign which is "more over souls than bodies, a tyranny set up in opposition to the spiritual kingdom of Christ" (Calvin, 1996, p.1172). Calvin's allegorical approach enables him to regard the Pope as holding this position of rule over the Church. No doubt it has such a dimension, but again, no allowance is made for a *peshat* reading with its literal emphasis on these issues. In his commentary on 2 Thessalonians (pp.403-404), Calvin further spiritualises Scriptures detailing with the Antichrist by averring, "the name Antichrist does not designate a single individual, but a single kingdom, which extends throughout many generations" (Miller, 1992, p.7), despite earlier identifying to the Pope as the Antichrist. A loose reading indeed of texts like Daniel 9:27, 2Thess.2:3-4 and 1John2:18.

Calvin's view of the millennium was, again, a spiritual one - a *sensus spiritualis* - as in prophetic matters he systematically ignored his stated emphasis on the *sensus literalis* to establish doctrine. In his discussion of the first resurrection mentioned in Rev.20:6, Calvin notes that "Chiliasts arose, who limited the reign of Christ to a thousand years". He retorts that this "fiction is too puerile to need

or to deserve refutation" (Calvin, 1996, p.1024). Calvin's perception was that the Chiliasts were in error as the "Apocalypse from which they undoubtedly drew a pretext for their error, does not support them" (McNeil, 1960, Vol.2, p. 995). Calvin could not accept a literal reading in this context since it did not accord with his understanding of an eternal blessed state for the Church, as "the number 'one thousand' [Rev.20:4] does not apply to the eternal blessedness that awaited the church" (McNeil, 1960, Vol.2, p.995). On the contrary, Calvin avers that actually "all Scripture proclaims that there will be no end to the blessedness of the elect" (McNeil, 1960, Vol.2, p.995). He continues with a remark that those who "assign only a thousand years to the children of God to enjoy the inheritance of future life, observe not how great an insult they offer to Christ and his kingdom" (Calvin, 1996, p.1025). A spiritual "millennium" of indeterminate but infinite length was Calvin's solution to the view of those Chiliasts who drew upon a literal interpretation of a thousand year reign of Christ on earth and the events described in Rev.20. This view is also clearly discernible in Calvin's commentary on, for example, Daniel 7:27 with his comments that, "this vision ought not to be explained of the final advent of Christ, but of the intermediate state of the Church. The saints began to reign under heaven, when Christ ushered in his kingdom by the promulgation of his Gospel" (Miller, 1992, p.208). No millennial reign by the saints is contemplated at the time of the defeat of the Antichrist in the *eschaton* since they reign already, in a spiritual fashion, according to Calvin.

Calvin similarly held to a *sensus spiritualis* approach apropos prophecies predicting the eschatological restoration of Israel, soteriologically and to their land. His view of the prophecies of Isa.35:10; 52:1ff.; 60:4ff.; Isa.62, and of various Psalms, was that "these things cannot properly apply...to the earthly Jerusalem, but to the true homeland of Believers, that heavenly city" (McNeil, 1960, Vol.1, p.452). To be sure, on one level a spiritual application to the Church could be considered but that should not detract from the necessity of imposing, in the first instance, a literal interpretation to the eschatological fulfilment of the prophecies. For instance, with regard to Isa.60, Ironside comments that this

chapter recounts the Lord "restoring Israel to himself and bringing them all into the blessing of the Abrahamic covenant", not only the Church. Of verse 7, he says, "till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth", and of other verses in the chapter which speak of restoration, Ironside says that the "days shall be when all this will be fulfilled. The words hardly need comment - they are so clear, so plain" (1952, pp.347-348). Likewise, in a discussion of the physical (that is, to the fullness of the land) and soteriological restoration of Israel, Walter Kaiser includes Isa.62:4 in support of his contention that this will literally take place as promised in Gen.15:18-21 (1998, p.224). Kaiser elsewhere states that even though there is a spiritual application to the Church, there still "remains an expectation of a future inheritance which will conclude God's promise with a revived nation of Israel". It cannot be implied, he argues, that "national identities or promises were likewise obviated" (1978, pp.268-299).

Calvin's denigration of the contextual validity of First Testament covenants, promises and prophecies outside of Christ and the Church harkens to the days of certain early Church Fathers. These Fathers, like Marcion, regarded the First Testament as obsolete vis-à-vis the Second and proposed that it should be rejected in *toto* (Froehlich, 1984, pp.10-11). Calvin's exegetical predecessor, Origen, likewise attempted to deal with this issue by simply ignoring the context and any literal application, instead applying an allegorical interpretation. In dealing with certain narratives arising out of the First Testament, Origen writes that the reason why there exists an "erroneous apprehension of all these points on the part of those whom we have mentioned above, is no other than this, that holy Scripture is not understood by them according to its spiritual, but according to its literal meaning" (Roberts and Donaldson, 1867, Vol.1, p.677). Origen continues in the same vein, emphasising that the spiritual interpretation is supreme in ascertaining the meaning of biblical mysteries especially in prophetic matters, which do not allow for a literal approach, as the "prophetic style is allowed by all to abound in figures and enigmas". Therefore when dealing with John's Apocalypse it is the "hidden" meaning, an "inner divine sense", which must be sought through the Spirit, for "if one now were to read the revelations

which were made to John, how amazed would he not be that there should be contained within them so great an amount of hidden, ineffable mysteries, in which it is clearly understood, even by those who cannot comprehend what is concealed, that something certainly is concealed" (Roberts and Donaldson, Vol.1, 1867, p.678). These import of these words was followed almost exactly by Calvin, Luther and others of the same tradition who remained convinced that such "inner divine sense" was all that should validly be sought in interpreting prophetic texts like the Book of Revelation, and even First Testament narrative passages.

The term, "selective hermeneutics" is an apt description of Calvin's exegetical stance. On the one hand Calvin disparages allegory as being of little assistance in arriving at a correct interpretation. He says with scorn, "as if allegories were of much avail in confirming any doctrine" (Calvin, 1996, p.655) for such allegories, he continues, "ought not to go beyond the limits set by the rule of Scripture, let alone suffice as the foundation for any doctrines" (McNeil, 1960, Vol.1, p.339). Here, Calvin insists that interpretation should not easily extend beyond the written word, with the scholar "carefully considering how far interpretation can be permitted to go beyond the literal meaning of the words" (Calvin, 1996, p.398). Yet, on the other hand, he develops, for example, the doctrine of a spiritual reign of Christ in respect of the thousand years of Rev.20, and treats in the same way other matters like the Antichrist and the Temple, mentioned above, as well as most First Testament narratives and prophecies. It is not difficult to comprehend, therefore, how the postmillennial and amillennial doctrines pertaining to the Millennium, as well as the spiritualising of other prophetic and First Testament narrative issues, emanated from the allegorical interpretations of Calvin despite his avowed intentions to the contrary.

Calvin failed to rid himself of the traditional exegetical practices persisting at the time and to so rise above the milieu in which he operated. It is therefore to be expected that he adopted a historical fulfilment approach to First Testament prophecies, on the one level, and a spiritual fulfilment thereof in the Second, on

another. This is understandable as a result of his emphasis on the Second Testament as a spiritual Testament (Calvin, 1996, p.471). In light of such an approach, it follows that Calvin resorted to allegorising the prophetic passages of the Book of Revelation, and other Second Testament passages as well.

f. Summation

It appears that the Reformers, by and large, ignored the work of earlier exegetes such as those of the St. Victor school, and especially the work of Rashi, Rashbam and other Jewish scholars. Reformers like Luther and Calvin generally disregarded the traditional Jewish interpretive techniques practised by not only Jewish scholars for centuries but also by Jesus and the Second Testament redactors. This shortcoming is particularly noticeable in the Reformers' approach to prophetic texts for instead of adopting a holistic approach, and taking the literal sense as a starting point, and as a basis, before attempting to ascertain any deeper meaning, they forthwith applied an allegorical approach to the texts. It appears that the Reformers reserved application of the grammatical-historical hermeneutic only to non-prophetic texts of the Second Testament. For the rest, the First Testament and the prophetic passages of the Second Testament, they by and large applied a *sensus spiritualis* method. Such practice inevitably resulted in a preterist or historicist reading of prophecy, with no place for a literal and futurist interpretation.

It appears that the Reformation period did not, as far as can be ascertained, give rise to Jewish scholars in the mould of Rashi, Rashbam, David Qimhi and others. Such scholars would hopefully have been able to pollinate conventional exegetes of the time, bringing to them a fresh perspective and emphasis of the literal sense, as employed in early rabbinic hermeneutics. Still, this period, insofar as Jewish sages are concerned, "ought not to be characterised as a period of regression with respect to commitment to *peshat*...for the commitment was there, but the talent was not" (Halivni, 1991, p.28). This is not to suggest,

however, that there was a “rupture with the *peshatist* tradition” (Halivni, 1991, p.28), only that there was a lack of prominent exegetes of such school.

So the struggle concerning the interpretation of prophetic texts and issues such as a literal messianic kingdom on earth, the Antichrist, eschatological wars and tribulation, restoration of Israel to Palestine in fullness of First Testament promises and so forth, continues to this day in many Reformed, Catholic and Orthodox circles. The Jews do not appear to have this problem, nor do other exegetes who rely on the literal, *peshat* method as a hermeneutical foundation to the employment of other Jewish methods like *midrash*, *peshet* and the *middoth*.

3. Conclusion

To be fair to the Reformers, they were primarily engaged in a theological struggle concerned with recovering correct scriptural doctrine, free of sacramental dogma. For instance, Vial states that Luther’s focus was the “justification of the believer...and the holiness of the church” (2002, p.39). While the Reformers did introduce and apply the grammatical-historical principle to attain these goals, when it came to prophetic texts, however, they either ignored such texts or applied a spiritual interpretation, resulting in much confusion which has been perpetuated to this day even in some Protestant circles. The Catholic Church, though, continued (and still continues - especially through use of the *sensus plenior*), with the allegorical tradition in its exegesis of prophetic and First and Second Testament texts.

It can be said, then, that the Reformers did not go far enough in eradicating the dominance of the allegorical interpretative method, and other undesirable exegetical traditions of the past, from the church wherever appropriate. The milieu of the Reformers remained in essence that of their predecessors and therefore, “Reformation exegesis cannot be understood apart from a sense of the relative continuity of development of exegesis from the patristic period to the

eighteenth century" (Muller, 1998, p.127). Muller's conclusion is perceptive as despite the excellent changes wrought by the Reformers in other areas, their exegetical methodology concerning prophetic matters, and certain First Testament passages, remained relatively unchanged from the days of the early Church Fathers. This finding is sustained by Hagen's remarks that the early Reformers, in their struggle for purity of doctrine, "fought...on the basis of Scripture and the Fathers" (1994, p.15).

To conclude, although the Reformers brought about much needed doctrinal change to the Church, they failed overall to reach their desired aims of scriptural perspicuity, notably in matters prophetic and those related to First Testament texts.

J. ON TO THE 21ST CENTURY

1. Introduction

The Reformers were successful in recapturing, to some degree, the importance of the literal sense in their focus on Christian doctrine. In so doing, they overcame centuries of sacramental dogma which had long obscured the perspicuity of the Scriptures. This situation had arisen through the influence of leading Church Fathers such as Origen and Augustine, and others of the Alexandrian school, with their emphasis on the allegorical approach to the interpretation of Scripture.

The work of the Reformers in restoring the *sensus literalis* to its proper place has "guided most university theology, medieval and Reformation and modern" ever since (Morgan, 1998, p.125). The restoration of the *sensus literalis* has had significant subsequent impact as "Christian doctrine depends on the literal sense" (Morgan, 1998, p.125). The literal - the grammatical-historical - method has thus become established as the pre-eminent method in biblical exegesis in modern times and all the major Protestant movements stress the priority of this method. C.C. Ryrie opines that in this area, "there is no disagreement over the fundamental rules of interpretation" (Tan, 1974, p.58). So widespread is acceptance of this method that to identify the major scholars who subsequently adopted it would be to "name most of the great exegetes from Reformation times until now" (Ramm, 1970, p.59).

Nonetheless, in the arena of interpreting prophetic and First Testament texts the shortcomings of Reformer's hermeneutical methods remain evident in the methods adopted by subsequent exegetes. It is here that extensive disagreement does persist for in spite of the recapture of the *literal* sense in other applications, the *sensus spiritualis* still reigns supreme in the interpretation of prophetic matters. The allegorical method has retained its popularity with the majority of post-Reformatory scholars through their continued and exclusionary

emphasis on Jesus as the fulfilment of all prophecy - a historic christocentric view. Part of the problem, it seems, is that such scholars have adopted and adapted every aspect of the Bible to their christocentric focus instead of recognising that there remain issues requiring interpretation that are incidental to Christ and his return. Examples of these issues are the restoration of Israel to its land, the rebuilding of the Temple, the Tribulation and the Antichrist.

Be that as it may, an allegorical and christocentric approach to prophetic texts remains dominant in most Protestant and Catholic circles. This approach results in a historic or preterist view of prophetic texts, and the events described therein, which might otherwise have had a futurist import. In Protestant circles particularly, exceptions do exist and this is notable among those Evangelicals adhering to a premillennialist persuasion who consistently apply the literal method, even in matters concerning the prophetic. It is quite evident from Christian exegetical emphasis whether on the literal or the allegorical sense, that modern Christian biblical scholarship by and large has "almost totally ignored the very existence of Jewish exegetical tradition" (Rendtorff, 1993, p.17). Evidence of this view reveals itself in the continuing predominance among Christian scholars of the allegorical approach in respect of the interpretation of prophetic and, in some cases, First Testament texts.

Among Jewish scholars, though, the situation is somewhat different as the use of *peshat*, *haggadah*, *peshet* and Hillel's *middoth* have been consistently directed to the interpretation of prophetic texts since the times of early Judaism and the nascent Church. This is so even in the case of Messianic Jews - those Jews who have accepted Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, as their Lord and Saviour - for they, like Orthodox Jews, continue to employ the exegetical tools of their forefathers.

2. Orthodox Judaism and Eschatology

Modern Judaism is comprised of three main branches: the Reform, the Conservative and the Orthodox. Of the three, it is the latter group that continues to reflect the eschatological beliefs and to practise the hermeneutical principles of early Palestinian Judaism.

The modern Orthodox rabbinic views of eschatology are basically those as set out in earlier rabbinic compilations such as the various Targums, the two Talmuds, Midrashim and so on - corpa which incorporate redacted oral traditional interpretations and commentaries on biblical literature from earliest times. Some of these views have been mentioned earlier herein (*infra*, pp.30-51). Persistent adherence through the centuries to the eschatological views and the hermeneutical principles contained in ancient rabbinic texts is a characteristic of Judaism. Hence, the views among Orthodox Rabbis today vary little, if at all, from those of their forefathers, individual differences excepted, and it can be asserted that "there is a certain thread of continuity running through traditional Jewish exegesis" from early to modern times (Berlin, 1997, p.173).

Orthodox Jews have a high regard for Scripture which they regard as "the inspired word of God (and) they interpret it literally" (Stern, 1991, p.89). It is not striking to note that among such group, and most Conservatives, the "common 20th Century view of Messiah...is one who will usher in the coveted peace on earth that mankind has longed for since ancient times" (Frydland, 1993, p.1). Furthermore, this Messiah will "cataclysmically institute the kingdom" (Goldberg, 1983, p.93), an event which will establish a period of universal peace, righteousness and judgement with the Messiah literally ruling from Jerusalem, just as their predecessors believed. The Orthodox, and some Conservative, groups thus place "strong emphasis" on a coming Messianic age (Goldberg, 1983, p.101) with a restoration of the nation of Israel to the fullness of their Promised Land (Gen.15:18) and soteriologically to their Messiah (Jer.31:34). This emphasis is to be expected since they continue to hold to the interpretation,

and base their views on the fact, that God made unconditional (apart from the Mosaic) and irrevocable covenants and promises with their ancestors, in particular Abraham (Gen.17). These covenants, they believe, "remain in force to this day" (Goldberg, 1983, p.109).

The views of the Orthodox Chabad Lubavitch movement are an indication of modern rabbinic attitudes to the Messiah and a literal, futurist approach to interpretation of prophetic texts. Rabbi I. Rubin, Director of Chabad in New York, comments that expectation of the Messiah ("Moshiach") is one of the "13 Fundamental Jewish Principles" and whose arrival is imminent. The Jewish view in this respect being that, "I believe in the coming of the Moshiach each day, and even if he will tarry, I wait for him". Rubin further opines that the Messiah will be "a human descendant of King David, committed to all the Torah, (who) will gather all Jews to Israel, rebuild the Temple and bring universal peace" (Rubin, 2001)

Furthermore, Orthodox Jews take the position that associated with the coming Messianic age are eschatological events like wars and tribulation, both of which amount to a period of "terrible conflagration on earth". This period would result in the Jewish nation crying out for the Messiah, as recorded in Zech.12:10 - a Scripture which "has always been regarded as a Messianic passage" (Goldberg, 1983, p.113). Such position correlates to those held by earlier Rabbis, namely a literal futurist view of the whole ambit of eschatological events including the issue of an eschatological Temple, described in Ezekiel. Rabbi Chaim Richman of The Temple Institute in Jerusalem, an Orthodox organisation dedicated to rebuilding the Temple, explains that the Rabbis have long held to a sentiment that the Temple needs to exist at the time of the Messiah. He quotes from Ma'aser Sheni 29, "The Holy Temple will in the future be re-established before the establishment of the kingdom of David" (Richman, 2001). Richman also finds support for this conviction in the works of Maimonides, the great Medieval Jewish sage who comments that as prophesied by Ezekiel, the Temple will be rebuilt in the future and accordingly, "Israel's Divine obligation to rebuild the Holy

Temple remains a constant and unchanging factor in the nation's life, throughout every generation" (Richman, 2001). On this basis, the Temple Institute has commenced construction of the various sacred vessels required for Temple worship and sacrifice, many of which are now complete and available for service.

The Temple issue has become quite pressing for the Temple Institute, the reason being that in the view of the presiding Rabbis the current turmoil in the Middle East is an indication that the eschaton is imminent. Richman explains that "these are the days of the struggle for Jerusalem, the days that the prophets saw coming, when Jerusalem would become the "troublesome stone" and the "cup of trembling" (Richman, 2001). He continues in this vein, "we are certain that the day when the redemption will be complete and when G-d's House will be re-established in Jerusalem, is not far off" (Richman, 2001).

These views clearly contain a strong sense of urgency, like that held by the Qumranians and early Christians. The perception of imminence further incorporates the belief that the predicted wars of Gog and Magog will soon take place. Such sentiment is also mentioned by Gershon Salomon, leader of Jerusalem's "Temple Mount and Land of Israel Faithful Movement", an Orthodox group with objectives analogous to those of the Temple Institute. Reflecting on a mass meeting of 500,000 Israelis on January 8, 2001, "in front of the Temple Mount and the Jaffa Gate of the Old City of Jerusalem", who together, "swore faithfulness to the Temple Mount and Jerusalem", Salomon anticipates that "we shall pass through difficult events including the Gog and Magog war that everyone in Israel feels will soon come about. These are the birth pains of redemption and the G-d of Israel promised that He would fight for Israel as in the days of battle and defeat all the enemies" (Salomon, 2001).

The import of this is that Orthodox Rabbis and Jewish religious groups today appear to continue the employment of those hermeneutical tools that their predecessors in the days of early Judaism used. Christians, on the contrary,

whether modern or those of an earlier age, have generally shown a "disregard of the Jewish exegetical tradition" (Rendtorff, 1993, p.19). Continuance of the ancient Jewish exegetical methods is seen, for instance, in the rabbinic belief in a literal eschatological Temple as predicted by the prophet Ezekiel. This view is supported by earlier Rabbinic views, as redacted in various Judaic compilations, also arrived at through application of not only the *peshat* reading but also the employment of a *haggadic*, pattern-type exposition, examples of which are provided earlier herein (*infra*, pp.30-51). Suffice it to say here that employment of *haggada* is obvious from the pattern of "Gog and Magog" (Ezek.38-39) conflicts being directed to a current and an eschatological situation, despite having earlier applications, or fulfilments, notably in the original *peshat* context - probably at the time of the Babylonian destruction (ca.586. B.C.E.). This contemporaneous application, showing concern for "the readers of its own times", is a characteristic of *haggadah* (Berlin, 1997, p.177). The use here of another early Jewish exegetical tool, Qumranic type fulfilment *peshet*, is evident from the imputation of ancient prophecies predicting times of turmoil preceding the arrival of the Messiah to a current situation.

In the Jewish context, then, continuous adherence through the ages to traditional hermeneutical principles has resulted in a consistent and long-standing comprehension of eschatological events, affirmed even in this modern era. The same conclusion cannot be directed to the modern Church which has significantly lost touch with most of the interpretative principles it inherited from its Jewish antecedents and which remain conspicuous in the works of the Second Testament redactors and in Jesus' teachings. As a consequence, differing hermeneutical principles with ensuing, vastly divergent interpretations of eschatological scenarios (the polemical issue of Jesus' messianic claims excepted), have persisted between Jewish and Christian groups through the centuries, including the present. The Jewish convictions will undoubtedly continue to remain at odds with the allegorical Christian approach to prophetic texts, as has been the situation for some 2,000 years, because the Jews "cannot accept Christian spiritualization of Israel's teaching and commandments" (Falk,

1988, p.201). The *peshat* sense, the plain, literal reading of prophetic texts, is never disparaged by the Jews and this is seen, for instance, in their consistent view of an earthly messianic reign, as "God enters into celestial Jerusalem only after having entered into the terrestrial one" (Falk, 1988, p.201). The hermeneutical approach of the early Jews remains the approach of Orthodox Jews to this day.

3. Messianic Judaism and Eschatology

Modern times has witnesses a dramatic rise in the Messianic Jewish movement, to such an extent that "Messianic Judaism could very well become another major Jewish denomination, along with the Conservative, Orthodox (and) Reform" (Goldberg, 1983, p.181). Thomas reports that in 1967, "there was not a single Messianic Jewish congregation in the world, and only several thousand Messianic Jews worldwide". But by 1998, he continues, the situation is strikingly different as "over 350 Messianic Jewish congregations - 50 in Israel alone - dot the globe" (1998, p.63).

Messianic Judaism creates an interesting situation vis-à-vis hermeneutical methodology, the interpretation of prophetic texts and ensuing perceptions of eschatological events. Although accepting that Jesus is the promised Messiah of Israel - with the resultant christocentric focus as regards messianic texts - Messianic Jewish scholars today, in the main, faithfully continue to apply traditional Jewish hermeneutical methodologies in their approach to the interpretation of Scripture, including prophetic texts of both the First and Second Testaments. And they do so to an even greater extent than most non-messianic Jewish scholars and Orthodox Rabbis. This applies notably to the latter group whose main source of reference is no longer the Holy Scriptures, the *Tanakh*, but medieval *corpa* reflecting various interpretations, opinions and commentaries of earlier Jewish sages. Still, Messianic Jews do "value the...teachings of the rabbis that reflect Scripture" for they concede that some

rabbinic traditions can be regarded as "rich and meaningful" (Shenk, 2001, p.406).

Messianic Jewish application of ancient Jewish hermeneutical methods is exemplified by the exegetical practise of Dr. A. Fruchtenbaum. Fruchtenbaum is a prominent Messianic Jewish scholar whose publications are highly regarded particularly, "Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology", a work which, according to Stern, "no serious student of eschatology or God's people should ignore" (1991, p.120n). Fruchtenbaum's views are indicative of those held by modern, mainstream, Messianic Jews in that he adheres to a literal and futurist interpretation of prophetic texts having eschatological operation. For instance, as a result of his hermeneutical stance Fruchtenbaum deduces from the Scriptures a clear distinction between Israel and the Church in God's economy. Fruchtenbaum also holds to a literal view of other end-time issues such as the Messiah's return and accompanying eschatological events like the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple, the great Tribulation, the ministry of the 144,000 Jews on earth (Rev.7), a personal Antichrist, a pre-tribulational Rapture (1996, pp. 767-770), restoration of Israel to their Messiah and to their Land (1996, pp.791-799ff.), and a messianic age of 1,000 years duration (Rev.20). A prime purpose of the messianic age is, he believes, "to fulfil literally the unfulfilled elements of the unconditional Jewish covenants" (1996, p.856), which covenants remain relevant and applicable to the Jews, as promised by God. The distinguishing feature of these events is that they have been arrived at through a literal, futurist interpretation of the texts. Fruchtenbaum says that, as in the case of Ezek.40:5-43:27 regarding the rebuilding of the Temple, "it is impossible to make any sense of this passage if it is to be allegorized away" (1996, p.810). He further observes that the "safest way to gain understanding" of prophetic passages is "the literal approach" (1996, p.810).

Fruchtenbaum's views, like that of other Messianic scholars, comes about through a stress upon the importance of the *peshat* method as an initial step to the interpretation of prophetic texts. Fruchtenbaum elaborates on the Jewish

manner of the interpretation of prophetic passages, examples of which he says are found in the Second Testament's use of First Testament texts. For instance, he labels the first approach, "literal prophecy plus literal fulfilment" (1996, p.843) and refers to Matt.2:5-6 which quotes Micah 5:2. Here, Fruchtenbaum emphasises the importance of the *peshat* - the literal context - since the prophecy of Micah 5:2 is to be understood literally and this is confirmed by its literal fulfilment in Matt.2:5-6. He then uses the passages from Matt.2:15 and Hosea 11:1 to show again the importance of the *peshat* which refers to an actual, literal, historical event - the Exodus when Israel came out of Egypt (1996, p.843). The linking of this event with subsequent thematically comparable events of Jesus coming out of Egypt is an application of rabbinic *haggadah*, which Fruchtenbaum labels, the "Law of Recurrence" (1983, p.5). This hermeneutical technique finds supported in the exegetical methods of another leading Messianic scholar, J.J. Prasch, who uses the same texts as an example of a *midrashic* approach, "where a pattern of events replays the same theme repeatedly". Prasch considers this example from the Second Testament to be consistent with "the ancient Jewish concept of prophecy" which is perceived as a "pattern not just prediction" (1999, "Final Words", pp.20-21) with "multiple fulfilments" leading up to an "ultimate fulfilment" in the *eschaton* (1999, "Grain", pp.12-13). He concludes that, as with the exegetical manner of the ancient Rabbis, even today in order to gain an understanding of "what is going to happen in the future, you look at what did happen in the past" (1999, "Grain", p.14).

Prasch holds views of end-time events corresponding to those held by Fruchtenbaum. Prasch derives these views from a *midrashic* approach to First and Second Testament prophetic passages. He thus adheres to a literal view of the Antichrist, the Rapture, the Tribulation, a rebuilt Temple (1999, "Grain", pp.76-108), wars, famine, earthquakes and so on (1999, "Grain", p.116). Prasch strongly criticises the Christian perception that "Israel was spiritualised in the Church", and instead firmly subscribes to a literal, earthly messianic reign of Christ for the 1,000 year period described in Rev.20. He further comments in

this regard that, "if there is no millennium, Jesus is not the Messiah of the Jews. And if he is not the Messiah of the Jews, neither is he the Christ of the Church" (1999, "Grain", p.113). Apropos the eschatological restoration of the Jews, Prasch points out that the question raised in Acts 1:6-8 does not imply that the kingdom was to be restored to the Church but, rather, to be literally restored to Israel. He says that any contrary view is to be regarded as an element of "replacement theology" (1999, "Grain", p.113), a practice which spiritualises such issues.

Not only contemporary Messianic Jewish scholars hold such hermeneutical and eschatological views since these views have been consistently followed by converted Jews through years past. An example is David Baron (1855-1926), who was born into a strict Orthodox home and instructed in rabbinic ways (Couch, 2000, "Calvinism", p.120). After his conversion Baron published a number of books in which his eschatological stance was always recorded as premillennial, derived from a literal and futurist view of texts he considered had teleological application, as is typical of Messianic Jews. As a case in point, in his commentary on the Book of Zechariah (first published in 1918), he states that he is aware of many other Christian commentaries on the subject but almost all of them are "vitiating by the allegorising principle of interpretation by means of which all references to a concrete kingdom of God on earth, a literal restoration of Israel, and the visible appearing and reign of Messiah, are explained away" (Baron, 1981, pp.vi-vii). Baron also believes in literal end-time tribulation, wars, apostasy and the return of the Messiah who shall literally stand on the Mount of Olives, as per Zech.14:2, a time when the Jews will be soteriologically restored to their long awaited God (1981, pp.6-7,492) and to their land in fullness (1981, p.39, 492). In this latter context, Baron comments that "just as the scattering of Israel was literal, so the gathering also will be literal" (1981, p.372). He also believes in an eschatological Temple (1981, p.204), a personal Antichrist (1981, p.494) and so forth. Baron discerns in Zechariah's prophecy (Ch.2) about the coming restoration, a pattern based on the earlier events mentioned in Jeremiah (51:6,45) and Isaiah (52:11; 48:20) which he sees as having eschatological

import as they “link the last great judgement of Babylon with the final deliverance and salvation of Israel” (1981, p.71). Again, the typical rabbinic approach to prophecy from an invoked *haggadah* is evident through Baron’s thematic recapitulation of earlier events and the connecting of them to a further, equivalent text, and the events described therein, thereby reinforcing the validity of a later recurrence and an ultimate application and fulfilment of the event in the coming *eschaton*.

Adolph Saphir (1831-1891), another prominent Messianic Jewish scholar, also holds convictions of a literal millennium inaugurated by the advent of the Messiah. In Saphir’s commentary on “The Lord’s Prayer” from Luke 11:2ff., Matt.6:9ff. etc., he states that the petition, “your kingdom come” (Matt.6:10), refers “primarily and directly to the Messianic kingdom on earth, of which all Scripture testifies” (1984, pp.183-185). Saphir emphasises that all the promises given to the Patriarchs “will yet be fulfilled on earth” and so Israel is not to be regarded merely as “a type of the Church, but has a future before it” (1984, pp.183-185). Saphir takes a literal view of all the usual eschatological events which Messianic Jews associate with the Messiah’s advent such as the Antichrist, wars, the restoration of Israel to their land and their Messiah, and so on (1984, pp.199-203). Decrying the abandonment of a *peshat* and other Jewish interpretative approaches to Scripture by the Church, he explains that “as the pagan element entered the Church, the Jewish scriptural element disappeared” (1984, p.187), a situation the Reformers failed to completely remedy.

There are certain fundamental tenets of eschatological theology that Messianic Jews, without known exception, never compromise on despite diversity in other areas. For example their belief in:

- The eternal validity of God’s covenants with the Patriarchs - the covenant with Abraham “is seen as unconditional” (Shenk, 2001, p.413).
- The visible advent of the Messiah to Jerusalem.
- A literal messianic age on earth for a 1,000 year period (a premillennialist view [Samuelson, 2000, p.169]) which period alone will bring peace.

- The two-fold restoration of Israel: to their land - they interpret the Bible as literally "giving the Jewish people an eternal right to land ownership" (Shenk, 2001, p.413), and soteriologically to their Messiah.
- A clear distinction between Israel and the Church in God's economy.

As regards the latter issue, Shenk avers that "Messianic Judaism believes in a crucial role for Israel now and in the future" for God does have such a plan for Israel (2001, pp.407-408). Shenk considers the eschatological, two-fold restoration of Israel another fundamental conviction because "Israel as a people and the land of Israel are inseparable in the divine purpose", this being a "focal point of New Testament expectation". The hope of restoration is centred in Jesus the Messiah as he "affirms and clarifies" it (2001, pp.407-408). In fact, a 1998 survey conducted in Israel among Messianic Believers revealed that, "95 percent are of the opinion that the Bible clearly promises the land to the Jewish people" and likewise, "the eternal validity of the promises of the land to the Jewish people is not questioned" (Skjott, 1998). The results show, then, that "there is very little uncertainty or disagreement with the statements that the Bible teaches that the land is for the Jewish people forever" (Skjott, 1998).

Apart from Fruchtenbaum, Prasch, Baron and Saphir these convictions are evident in the works of, to name but a few other Messianic Jewish scholars, Goldberg (pp.105-118), Frydland (pp.19, 77), Shulam (1997, pp.325-329; 379-381), and Stern (pp.99-120). Stern also emphasises the traditional rabbinic approach to interpretation of Scripture and accepts that the Second Testament redactors used such exegetical techniques (1991, pp.106-107).

Fundamentally speaking, the Messianic Jewish view is that in the manner in which all the prophecies surrounding the first advent of Messiah were fulfilled literally, so the prophecies regarding the Messiah's return will likewise be fulfilled literally. The eschatological events predicted in many of these prophecies are mentioned above so suffice it to crystallise the Messianic Jewish position by stating their prime belief to be, "the day will come when Israel as a nation will

accept Messiah Jesus and the Word of God will go out from Zion. Messiah will rule from Jerusalem" (Shenk, 2001, p.408). These convictions are arrived at through employment of traditional Jewish exegetical methods like *peshat*, *midrash* and *peshet* practised for generations by their forefathers, the early Rabbis.

The similarity of the hermeneutical and eschatological views subscribed to by modern Messianic and Orthodox Jews on the one hand, and early Jewish sages, on the other, is quite remarkable. The formers' consistency in employing ancient, traditional, exegetical methodologies also followed by Jesus and the Apostolic writers, reflects unfavourably upon most subsequent Christian scholars. The consequent comprehension of eschatological events by the majority of Christian scholars is quite unlike that held by Jews, whether Messianic or Orthodox, who employ the hermeneutical methodologies of their ancient Jewish predecessors.

4. Eschatology and the Popularisers

a. Introduction

Modern eschatology is today comprised of many divergent views depending on the theological stance adopted. Among Protestants, it can be said that while Evangelical Covenantal scholars apply the literal, grammatical-historical approach to Scripture generally, this is not the case in matters of the prophetic where an allegorical stance is still favoured. On the other side, Dispensationalists avow that they consistently follow a literal hermeneutic whether dealing with prophetic or non-prophetic texts. In the result, it can be observed that, generally speaking, Covenantal theologians hold to either a postmillennial or an amillennial eschatological position in contrast to those of the Dispensational school who embrace a premillennial stance. Messianic and Orthodox Jews, like the sages of the Second Temple period, similarly adopt a premillennial view.

The modern Popularisers of eschatology embrace a premillennial theological position, in line with that prevalent in the Dispensational school. It is said of Hal Lindsay, for example, that his system of eschatology is "typical of mainstream dispensationalism" (Ice, 1996, p.242).

b. Hermeneutics and End-time Events

i. Introduction

The Popularisers subscribe to a literal hermeneutical stance in their interpretation of Scripture whereby each word is given the "same meaning it would have in its normal usage" (Ryrie, 1996, p.94). Such approach is also "called the grammatical-historical method" and is a "fundamental assertion of dispensational hermeneutics" (Ryrie, 1996, p.94). Not only is the literal method a *sine qua non* of Dispensationalism it is also one of the two fundamental tenets of a premillennial approach to eschatology, the other being "a distinction between Israel and the Church" (Hayes, 1996, p.311).

LaHaye confirms his support of the literal approach, and his futurist, dispensationalist, premillennial view, in his commentary on the Book of Revelation, which Book, he avers, must be accepted "as literal unless the facts are obviously to the contrary". He rejects a "spiritual" interpretation of the book as it leads to an amillennial or a postmillennial view, both of which he regards as promoting "a most untenable position" (1999, p.19).

Consequent to adherence to a literal hermeneutical approach to prophetic texts, the Popularisers embrace a premillennial conviction of eschatology. This view is also in accordance with their Dispensational leanings as "all dispensationalists are premillennialists" (Couch, 1996, p.9). Not only can the Popularisers be classified as premillennial in their stance, but also "pre-tribulational and futurist that sees a future for national Israel" (Ice, 1996, p.106). The Popularists support all the usual tenets of Dispensational eschatology including end-time events

such as "the rapture of the Church, the restoration of the Jews to their promised King and kingdom" and so forth, for they believe that God has "laid out a plan for end time events" (Couch, 1996, p.10). This view is plain from popularist literature with Lindsay unequivocally stating, "we are 'premillennialists' in viewpoint" (Lindsay, 1970, p.165).

Neither Dispensationalists generally, nor the Popularisers in particular, acknowledge the necessity of a hermeneutical method other than the plain, normal, literal, grammatical-historical approach, even in the area of prophecy. The literal, grammatical-historical method by its very definition indicates a cognisance of the author's intentions as application of this method "is an attempt to give the same meaning to a word as the author who wrote the passage". By implication, it further means to "never seek to read any other meaning into a passage" (Towns, 1996, p.318). Ramm states that "Biblical interpretation has as its goal to discover the original meaning and intention of the text" (Ramm, 1970, p.115) and this implies the original intent of the Author in his historical setting since "the text must be taken at face value" (Ryrie, 1996, p.95). In the grammatical-historical definition, then, a text's meaning is limited to that determined by its original context, which the plain meaning of the words, the grammar, would indicate. This approach corresponds to the *peshat* method employed by the early Jewish Rabbis.

However, for the early Rabbis, the *peshat* sense was always regarded only as a necessary first step in the interpretation of prophetic passages. So to impute an application of the substance of the historic text to a current situation, and especially to an eschatologically relevant ultimate context, the engagement of further, additional, methods would be necessary. In the case of the early Jewish sages and their exegetical successors, these further methods included *haggadah*. *Haggadah* was an essential exegetical tool in the holistic rabbinic attitude to Scripture which required the Rabbis to seek the *derash*, the deeper meaning embodied in the text, which would enhance the *peshat* sense because "rabbinic thought does not draw a distinction between literal and non-literal

meaning". Rather, it thinks "in terms of a multiplicity of meanings" (Kamin, 1988, p.151). As will become evident, the Popularisers would be able to substantially strengthen their comprehension and justification of a number of end-time issues, reached through use of the literal, grammatical-historical sense, by following the practices of the early Rabbis.

The works of the Popularisers reflect many glaring interpretative shortcomings that no acceptable hermeneutical device could warrant. For example, LaHaye and Lindsay's allocation of eschatological significance to modern day technology (Lindsay, 1973, pp.110,131; LaHaye, 2001, p.216ff.), Lindsay's failed predictions of Christ's return which he expected to occur in 1988, and the Rapture, anticipated in 1981 (Lindsay, 1970, p.43). These kind of fanciful matters aside, focus will instead be directed to the Popularisers' main eschatological issues which include the pre-tribulational Rapture, the Millennium and, to a lesser extent, the end-time wars of "Gog and Magog".

ii. The Rapture

The pre-tribulational Rapture issue is a seminal one for Dispensationalists and, therefore, the Popularisers. Although this issue constitutes a foundation stone of the Populariser's eschatological theology, the literal hermeneutical approach that they advocate in support of their position, provides scant rationale for such belief. On the contrary, significantly more credible justification would result through the use of *haggadah* and other rabbinic hermeneutical methods.

LaHaye frankly admits that the various reasons he provides for faith in the pre-tribulational Rapture are individually insufficient to derive a Rapture doctrine of the Church (1999, p.100). However, he says that when the reasons are taken together, namely, the scriptural passages in Rev.4:1-2 and 1Thess.4:13-18; the lack of mention of the Church in chapters 6-18 of Revelation (an argument from silence); and the identification of Israel from chapters 4-18, then, he concludes, "we are inclined to believe that this inference can rightly be made" (1999, p.100).

He does later include other Scriptures like John 14:1-3, Titus 2:13, 2Thess.2:1-12 and 1Cor.15:50-56 as supporting his view (2001, p.93). All the same, there is little authority on a literal reading of the Second Testament passages provided, for supportable faith in a Rapture - an event they regard as independent of the Second Coming and whereby the Church is taken up to the heavens for the seven year period of the Tribulation, which in the meanwhile would be taking place on earth, and then returning to earth with the Lord at his second advent.

LaHaye refers to the events described in Acts 8:39 and 2Cor.12:2-4 to further support his Rapture position. In these two Scriptures he avers that a Rapture-like event is depicted when "the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away" (Acts 8:39). He similarly relies on 2Cor.12:2-4 when Paul was "caught up" to the heavens. LaHaye points out that the basic Greek word in such passages is "*harpazo*" which he says means, "to snatch away". These two events are accordingly indicative of the manner in which God will "snatch" the Church away in the Rapture (LaHaye, 2001, pp.34-35). LaHaye's argument is rather tenuous for many reasons but particularly in the way he has presented it since he attempts to establish a doctrine by attempting to connect the use of a similar word in dissimilar contexts. This is exceptionally the case here for Paul was unsure if he experienced a vision or was actually "caught up" to the heavens bodily. Phillip too, was not "snatched" bodily to heaven but to another earthly locale - Azotus (Acts 8:40). Furthermore, both of these situations are incongruous with LaHaye's pre-tribulational scenario for neither of them depicts a "rapture" in order to avoid wrath of any kind.

The use of a *haggadah* approach may be of some assistance here especially when depicting a pattern of similar events which accord thematically with the principle attempting to be established. Discarding, for the time being, the two Scriptures LaHaye relies on, a pattern is nevertheless evident from thematically related passages like Gen.5:24 and 2Kings 2:11 in which God transported, and no doubt translated, Enoch and Elijah to heaven. A further related passage, and most appropriate one, is of course when Jesus himself was bodily transported to

heaven in Acts 1:9, he being the prototype for Believers. Employing the rabbinic hermeneutical tool of *haggadah*, a pattern may be observed from these related events because the manner in which God has acted in the past indicates that God can likewise translate or rapture the Church at the appropriate, future, eschatological moment.

Other rabbinic exegetical tools like Hillel's *middoth* are also useful in this situation. For instance, the first *middoth*, "*Qal wahomer*", namely, from "light to heavy", reinforces the Rapture concept, because if earlier men of God, and Jesus himself, were transported at expedient moments "how much more" would such occurrence not be proper for the Church of God at the time of Tribulation. *Middoth #4, Binyan ab mishene kethubim*, the "building up a family from two texts" (Bowker, 1969, p.315) also helps to depict the validity of the Rapture position inasmuch as a "family" of such events can be "built up" from these passages, thereby establishing a principle which can then be implemented to other passages, supporting an ultimate Rapture scenario.

iii. Pre-tribulation Escape

Focusing on the pre-tribulational aspect of the Rapture, LaHaye's argument solely from a literal reading of Second Testament texts is again rather tenuous. The Scriptures he relies on are Luke 21:36, 1Thess.5:1-9, Rev.6:17, 1Thess.1:10, Rev.3:10, Matt.24:44, and 2Thess.2:3 (2001, pp.90-91) which passages add neither clarity nor veracity to LaHaye's pre-tribulational Rapture proposal.

Nevertheless, a pre-tribulational Rapture position does find some credence when the *haggadah* interpretative tool is used to support the deliverance aspect of the Exodus theme described in Exo.14. The manner in which God delivered the Israelites - the Church's spiritual ancestors - from Pharaoh's wrath by "snatching" them away as recounted in the Book of Exodus, linked to the way that Christians, being in Christ, have also come out of "Egypt" - a symbol of the

world - in 1Cor.10, having been delivered from God's wrath to be poured out on the unrepentant in the final judgement, leads to the proposition that Believers will likewise be delivered from God's wrath in the great Tribulation, referred to in Revelation 15-16.

It is interesting that the "Song of Moses" which was sung (Exod.15:1ff. & 21) after rescue from Pharaoh's vengeance, and the wrath God inflicted on the Egyptians, is also sung in Rev.15:3 by the faithful who had likewise been rescued from wrath. Reinterpretation of the Exodus passage reinforces the view that the deliverance aspect of the Exodus pattern has an eschatological application (Prasch, 1999, "Grain", pg.14). Additional reinforcement of the pattern is manifest in the various forms of judgements poured out on Pharaoh, which forms are eschatologically recapitulated in Revelation 6-19. The pattern of deliverance from wrath can be even further developed with reference to Lot and his family in Gen.19 (cf. Luke 17:20-36), when the righteous escape from God's punishment poured out on Sodom and Gomorrah. In a similar manner, all the righteous on earth escaped judgement when Noah and his family embarked on the Ark in Gen.7-8 (cf. Luke 17:20-36).

Ergo, the doctrine of an eschatological Rapture finds support through use of a *haggadic* interpretative approach whereby a pattern of thematically connected and recapitulated events is conspicuous. This pattern reinforces a view in which the Church, the righteous of God, escapes tribulational wrath as referred to in Revelation. As a result it may be proposed that the Rapture, together with the Resurrection, is the ultimate application of the deliverance theme as it has its final fulfilment in the *eschaton*. This conclusion is supported by the observation, also derived from the above pattern, that God does not destroy the righteous with the wicked when his judgement is poured out. And it is further reinforced through the application of some of Hillel's *middoth*. For instance, the first *middoth*, *qal wahomer*, namely, "what applies in a less important case will certainly apply in a more general case" (Bowker, 1969, p.315) is relevant here, for the various examples of deliverance from wrath provided above - being "less

important" cases - would indicate that deliverance from wrath "will certainly apply" in the more critical, eschatological, ultimate, context. In other words, "how much more" will the principle not apply in the *eschaton*. The fourth *middoth*, *binyan ab mishene kethubim*, namely the "building up a family from two texts; a principle is established by relating two texts together; the principle can then be turned to other passages" (Bowker, 1969, p.315) can be used to establish, and support, a doctrine of the Rapture from the principle of being "snatched away" (*harpazo*), as indicated in Acts 8:39 and 2Cor.12:2-4, two texts which "build up a family" and so give credence to an ultimate Rapture scenario in the *eschaton*. The fifth *middoth*, *kelal upherat*, namely, "the general and the particular; a particular rule may be extended into a general principle" (Bowker, 1969, p.315) can be used to arrive at a conclusion that the particular situations of Lot and Noah, for instance, being delivered from God's wrath, can also be extended into a general principle of God's people evading wrath through his supernatural intervention.

This argument supports another aspect of the *qal wahomer middoth* for, if what applied in the "lesser" instance of Lot and Noah evading wrath, then "how much more" will it not apply in an eschatological setting with the Church of God to be rescued from the Tribulation. So too, a "family of ideas" can be built up using the two examples of the deliverance of Lot and Noah from wrath. This is an occurrence of *middoth* # 4, *binyan 'ab mishene kethubim* - whereby "the family of ideas, the theme, is built up from two earlier passages and once the principle is established by relating the two, such principle can then be directed to the third, or any further, relevant passages" (Bowker, 1969, p.315). Once the principle has been established from the examples of Lot and Noah, it can well be addressed to the supernatural escape of the Church from wrath in the coming eschatological Tribulation.

Finally, it is clear that similar arguments can be invoked to support the Popularisers' sentiments of the inevitability of Tribulation in the *eschaton*, as the

wrath escaped from is that of the great Tribulation to be endured by the unrighteous.

iv. The Messianic Age

Probably the second weightiest eschatological issue for the Popularisers, after the pre-tribulational Rapture, is their belief in a literal, messianic reign on earth for the one thousand year period mentioned in Rev.20. The Popularisers derive their position from a literal and futurist reading of the Revelation text, a practice which has received much criticism not only in modern times but throughout the history of the Church, including from many leading early Church Fathers, as is discussed herein and which remains a polemical minefield. All the same, such literal view, and the consequent perspective of end-time events, does in many instances have precedence in rabbinic literature, and, to a lesser extent, in Church history.

To be sure, apart from a *peshat* reading of the relevant First Testament passages, the early Rabbis derived their views through a *haggadic* approach to the issue. Thus, through *derash*, "digging deeper", it would have become patent from, *inter alia*, their Festal Calendar that the coming messianic age was depicted therein.

Of the Festivals listed in the Calendar, one of the most material was *Succot* ("*Sukkoth*"), translated "Tabernacles" or "Booths", referred to in the Bible and the *Talmud* as "The Festival" (Edidin, 1940, p.70). *Sukkoth* (Lev.23:34-43). *Sukkoth* was a festival of thanksgiving for the ingathering of the harvest, particularly Olives (Buck, 1966, p.8) from which Oil was extracted. Oil has messianic implications as the term, "Messiah", means the "Anointed One" (Dan.9:25-26), and Oil was used for anointing the High priest and for other Temple worship activities. In a Christian setting, the symbolic act of anointing by Oil, of which Olive oil was the base, "is richly associated with Jesus the Messiah (Heb.1:9)" (Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, 1998, p.604). All this pointed to the "final harvest

when Israel's mission should be completed, and all nations gathered unto the Lord" (Edersheim, 1980, p.269), that is, the Anointed One.

The more pertinent aspect of this Festival, though, is the fact that it was associated with "the journey through the wilderness from Egypt to the Promised Land" (Buck, 1966, p.554) and thus the Exodus. God instructed the Israelites to live in booths for seven days during this Festival period, "so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God" (Lev.23:43), and this was to be "a lasting ordinance for the generations to come" (Lev.23:41). The Jewish scholar, Edidin, suggests that remembrance of this Festival was particularly strong during the Babylonian exile when the exiles "yearned for the homes and harvest booths of their fathers and grandfathers in Palestine", remembering also the journey of their ancestors from "the lands of slavery to the Promised land" (1940, p.71). The same argument would apply during the later Diaspora. The hallmark of this Festival was a focus on the longing by the Jews for a permanent home, the Promised Land, acknowledging that anything else is simply a temporary "booth" until the time of refreshing, the harvest, with the ultimate relevance being their ingathering and restoration to the Land and their God. So, this Festival anticipates the messianic age when the Jews can permanently enter the Promised Land in fullness under the reign and rule of their Messiah as, in rabbinic view, it is the only Festival still to be celebrated in the end-time - after the Tribulation, when the Messiah arrives and establishes his kingdom on earth. This is emphasised in the words of the prophet Zechariah, "Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles" (Zech.14:16). Edidin says categorically that, in this verse, Zechariah is "referring to messianic times, when all the nations of the world will live in peace and worship one God" (1940, p.73).

Even in this modern age, many Jews adhere to the instructions of Leviticus 23 pertaining to this Festival, for it "recalls not only the life in the desert and the

harvest booths, but also twenty centuries of wandering over the wide world" (Edidin, 1940, p.75) searching for a home, the Promised Land, where they could live in peace and security unlike living in foreign lands and booths where "one does not feel safe" (Edidin, 1940, p.75), as also lamented by the Psalmist (Ps.137). Although Edidin's words were written prior to the establishment of Israel in 1948, the desire of the Jews for a home has implications stretching beyond than the establishment of Israel, the traditional home of the Jewish nation, for even there, in this day, the Festival is celebrated, as mandated in Leviticus. The reason is that the Festival heralds the messianic age, not simply a return to *Eretz Yisrael*, which is only a part of the restorative process of the Jews to their Land. The climatic application of the Festival is the soteriological restoration of the nation to their Messiah, in the fullness of the land promised to Abraham. Only at such time will dwelling in Booths no longer be necessary since the wanderings will be over, the Messiah would have arrived and be dwelling in their midst. The Jews would then be in the ultimate, and final, Promised Land in all its aspects.

Support for a messianic application of the Festival of Booths can also be noted in a Second Testament context. In the scene with Jesus, Moses and Elijah on the mountain, Peter assumed that the messianic age had come finally as he proposed to erect "three shelters — one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah" (Matt.17:1-4). These "shelters" were actually "tabernacles", a description used in the King James Version and derived from the Greek word, "*skene*" which is used, according to Vine, "of (a) tents as dwellings (Matt.17:4 etc.); (b) the Mosaic Tabernacle" (Vine, 1981, p.103). Peter's desire to construct the Booths indicates his conviction that God would again dwell with his people and so he wanted to partake in this, making the assumption that the final, Davidic, aspect of the Messianic age had commenced. Peter's sentiment was derived from his employment of a typical *peshet* like fulfilment interpretation, a "this is that" scenario, as he was convinced that the arrival of Moses and Elijah on the mountain with Jesus was the eschatological fulfilment of *Sukkoth*, hence the need for Booths.

The same *peshar* fulfilment approach was applied on "Palm Sunday" (Mark 11:8-10). Here Prasch comments that the same misapprehension was arrived at by the Jewish people when the crowd "began to celebrate the Feast of Passover as if it were the Feast of Booths" (1999, "Final Words", p.35), exclaiming, "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" and, "Hosanna in the highest!" (Mark 11:10) and spreading branches for the Messiah (v.8). The "waving of the palms and branches" (Barker and Kohlenberger, 1994, p.159) is a distinctive feature of the Booths Festival, not the Passover. The branches were also used to "make the booths" (Barker and Kohlenberger, 1994, p.159), described in Neh.8:16-16. This practice continues into the modern era for Palms "occupy no less a place in *Sukkoth* festivities today than in ancient times" (Edidin, 1940, p.75).

The method of celebrating the Booths Festival has been a constant pattern for some 3,500 years and the Jews anticipate it to be recapitulated in a final application in the *eschaton* - its correct Davidic context unlike the premature "Palm Sunday" celebration (Prasch, "Final Words", 1999, pp.35-36). This is evident from Zech.14:16 and also from Rev.7:9, where John describes "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands". At such time, the *peshar* interpretation may rightfully be applied, as "this" - the eschatological celebration with Palms before the victorious Davidic Messiah - is "that" - the *Sukkoth* Festival as celebrated by the faithful for millennia past.

Although the Rabbis hold to a persuasion of a coming messianic age, they do not specify the duration of such period, although some speculation has been indulged in. This lack of clarity is not surprising as only in a Second Testament context is a period mentioned, namely in Rev.20, and therefore, generally speaking, only Christians and Messianic Jews specify the duration of such period. For instance, Chumney comments that the Booths were to be built "to teach and understand the thousand-year millennial reign of the Messiah, the

Messianic Age" (1994, p.161). Prasch also refers to this period as "the millennial kingdom" (1999, "Final Words", p.35). In any event, the construction of Booths for the Festival symbolises the time past when God did "tabernacle" with his people and also indicates a future time when God will again "tabernacle" with his people in the *eschaton*.

The eschatological messianic application of the Festival is further supported by the pattern developed from the use of the number "seven". Various verses in Leviticus 23 mention the number seven and its multiples many times. For instance, the Festival is to take place in the "seventh month" (v.34); offerings are to be made for "seven days" (v.36); the Festival itself to be celebrated for "seven days" (v.39); the people are to rejoice for "seven days" (v.41), and to live in booths for "seven days" (v.42) and so on. This pattern of "sevens" has messianic implications since the number seven is connected to the Sabbath which is "seen as a picture of the Messianic Kingdom" inasmuch as the "Sabbath (*shabbat*) falls on the seventh day of the week" (Chumney, 1994, p.167). For the Jews, the Sabbath denoted not only a prescribed period of rest, but also indicated an eternal period of rest in the time of the kingdom reign of the Messiah.

The concept of rest has a long history, starting in Gen.2:2, when God rested on the seventh day "from all his work" and "blessed the seventh day and made it holy" (v.3). In a biblical context the number seven denotes "completeness or totality" and is the "most important" of numbers carrying symbolic meaning (Ryken *et al*, 1998, p.774). Seven is mentioned over fifty times in the Book of Revelation, a Book that deals with the climax, the completion, of world history. Suffice it to say that completion and rest, indicated by the number seven and the Sabbath, finds its fulfilment in the messianic age which is also symbolised by "the Sabbatical year" (Shenk, 2001, p.407). The Festival of Tabernacles typifies the future expectancy of this period. This is especially so as, typologically speaking, the Festival is the only "type in the Old Testament which has not yet been fulfilled" (Edersheim, 1980, p.287).

There is a pattern to be observed from the scriptural principle of God "tabernacling" with his people. This pattern is manifest, for instance, in the "tent of meeting" (Ex.39:32ff., Acts 7:44; Heb.9:2-8) where God would meet with his people, a place where his presence was indicated. The same applies to the "Holy of Holies" in the Temple of Solomon (1Kings). The pattern of God dwelling with his own continues into a Second Testament context, *vide* John 1:14, 1Cor 3:16, Eph. 2:21, Rev.3:12 and others. Support for an eschatological fulfilment of the pattern of divine dwelling ("*mishkan*") is evident from God's declaration that he will again live with his people in Amos 9:11 (cf. Acts 15:15-16), a prophetic passage with eschatological relevance.

The ongoing pattern of seasons, harvests, wanderings, temporary booths, the number seven and its multiples, and God's dwelling with his people (seen in both the First and Second Testament Scriptures), therefore indicate an expectation of an ultimate, eschatological fulfilment of both an eternal "Sabbath" rest and a great soteriological harvest in the messianic age. This remains the expectancy of the Jews as the nation of Israel continues to celebrate the Festival, including the construction of fragile Booths - indicative of their temporary, incomplete, situation albeit in a portion of their own Land. Additionally, observation of the Sabbath also continues. Messianic Jews likewise continue to celebrate the Booths Festival since such activity is regarded as "appropriate Jewish heritage" and "connected with Scripture". They regard the Festival as pointing to "fulfilment in Messiah" (Shenk, 2001, p.406).

In sum, the Premillennialists would find significant support for their reading of a future, literal, messianic age through the application of Second Temple period Jewish hermeneutical methods to various relevant First and Second Testament Scriptures, for instance Lev.23 (the Festival of *Sukkoth*) as read with Rev.7:9 and Rev.20:4-6.

v. Gog and Magog

Concerning the "Gog and Magog" situation referred to in Ezek.38-39, LaHaye simply comments that "Chapters 38-39 contain the abortive attempt of Russia to come down against Israel in the latter days just prior to the Tribulation" (1999, p.341). Lindsay's conclusion, also from a literal view of the texts, is similar, namely that "Russia will arm and equip a vast confederacy. This powerful group of allies will lead an attack on restored Israel" (1970, p.60). Lindsay confirms this view in his commentary of the Book of Revelation for, with reference to Ezek.38:14-17, he avers that there will be an "invasion against Israel and the Middle East by Russia (called 'the king of the North')" (1973, p.233).

Such a comprehension cannot easily be reached through a plain reading of the texts, as firstly, the relevant verses in Ezekiel do not unequivocally support the conclusions reached by LaHaye and Lindsay. Secondly, the historical context does not necessarily support these conclusions since it is a moot point among scholars whether the events described by Ezekiel have had a historic fulfilment or not. And if they have been fulfilled in a historic context, then support for LaHaye and Lindsay's futurist conclusions, like that of other Popularisers of this form of eschatology, cannot be found through only a literal reading of Scripture.

The use of a rabbinic *haggadah* approach to eschatological events, namely viewing prophecy as a pattern which is recapitulated, having multiple fulfilments, each one supporting the occurrence of an ultimate eschatological event, would assist in sustaining the interpretation arrived at by the Popularisers. Such a pattern can be derived from prior events described, for instance, in the Book of Jeremiah, where great destruction coming from "a nation from the north" (Jer.50:3) is predicted - and which was fulfilled in the Babylonian conquest - and Zech.12:2-9, where the armies of the Gentiles destroy Jerusalem, which event could be interpreted as having fulfilment in the Roman destruction of 68-70 C.E. Further mention of the enemy from the north is made in Dan.11. The dating of the Book of Daniel is a polemical issue as many scholars aver it was written in

relation to the destruction caused by Antiochus Epiphanes (d.163 B.C.E.) in the Hasmonean period. Other scholars contend that it was written during the time of the Babylonian exile (586 B.C.E.). Either way, the events depicted therein reinforce a pattern of destruction coming from the north, whether fulfilled ca.586 or 163 B.C.E. or even if remaining unfulfilled - the view of futurists - still strengthens this pattern which is expected to have a final application in the *eschaton*.

It was the rabbinic view that the wars of "Gog and Magog" as described in Ezek.38 and 39, act as an indicator of the ultimate eschatological wars which were expected to eventuate in the time of the Messiah. At such time God would punish the armies of the Gentiles which surround Jerusalem in order to destroy the Jews. This occurrence is also mentioned in Zech.12:2-9.

The Popularisers would find themselves on firmer hermeneutical ground if they applied a midrashic interpretative method to the "Gog and Magog" scenario. For instance, through use of such method a pattern could be discerned whereby the destruction described in Ezek.38-39, and referred to in Jeremiah, Daniel and Zechariah, describe what was to be expected in the situation mentioned in Rev.16:12-16. This would be preferable to simply elaborating on the Revelation scenario through the imputing of the events in Ezekiel as an expansion or direct elaboration. A literal reading of the Revelation event only provides limited information which would be well enhanced through examples from past such events as described by the prophets Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Daniel and Zechariah. This would be possible by application of the *haggadah* approach. Also, the use of a "this is that" *pesher* - fulfilment type approach between the events described in Ezek.39:17-22, and Rev.16:12-16, would be more convincing to reach an eschatological application of the texts than the narrow grammatical-historical tool which is not of much assistance in this regard.

In like manner, the identification of Russia and other countries from the Ezekiel text, taken as part of the tribulational wars of Rev.6 (LaHaye, 1999, p.143;

Lindsay, 1970, p.60; Lindsay, 1973, p. 233), is highly suspect on a number of points, the main criticism being that a literal reading does not support such identification. Although, when applying a *haggadah* approach to a number of thematically connected texts, an identification of the fierce enemy of Rev.6:1-2 as originating from the north becomes possible as a pattern emerges: just as the destruction was predicted to come upon Israel from the north in Ezek.38:15 and 39:2; and in Jer.4:6, 6:1,22; also in Isa.41:25 and in Dan.11:40 and other texts, it is possible to deduce that in the *eschaton*, the destructive force mentioned in Rev.6:1-2 could also come from the north - whatever country or nation that might transpire to be. Additionally, Hillel's *middoth* #4, "*binyan ab mishene kethubim*: building up a family from two texts" might also be of assistance here as the Ezekiel and Daniel texts, for instance, taken together establish a principle which can be turned to other texts including Rev.6:1-2. No hermeneutical or exegetical tool can validly identify the enemy as Russia. However, the use of *haggadah* and Hillel's rules can at least support the claim that the enemy will probably originate from the north, something which use of the literal method alone, when applied to the Revelation passage, cannot validly do.

5. Conclusion

Generally speaking, the Rabbis of Orthodox Judaism continue both the exegetical practices and the eschatological convictions of their early Palestinian predecessors. Messianic Jews similarly continue to employ the hermeneutical methods of early Judaism. In the result, Messianic Jews hold eschatological convictions correlating to those of their Orthodox counterparts although such views (originating from First Testament passages) are elucidated, modified and expanded by the texts of the Second Testament - as was the purpose thereof.

Messianic Jewish scholars certainly add an interesting and meaningful dimension to not only Orthodox but also Christian views of Scripture since they attempt to reflect the biblical perspectives of the early Church. Daniel Juster, leader of the Union of Messianic Congregations, describes Messianic Jews as

being "closest in viewpoint to the disciples" who "practised their Jewish heritage as part of their life in Yeshua", as Messianic Jews do today (Samuelson, 2000, p.161). Moreover, Messianic Jews follow traditional Jewish hermeneutical practices which they apply to both First and Second Testament texts. Consequently, being relatively free of traditional Church dogma and the confusion usually attached to Christian exegetical methodologies, as well as the fanciful speculations of medieval rabbinicism, Messianic Jews arrive at eschatological viewpoints which undoubtedly reflect more closely those held by Jesus, the Second Testament redactors and the nascent Church, than the interpretations proposed by most subsequent Gentile exegetes.

When applying a *peshat* method alone, Messianic Jews do reach remarkably similar conclusions to Christian Premillennialists on many eschatological issues, and this is manifest in their works on such topics. To exemplify, on a *peshat* reading of the seminal texts referring to the Abrahamic and other covenants, the Messianic Jews hold strong convictions on God's ongoing plan for, and the twofold restoration of, Israel in the *eschaton*. The Popularisers, too, reach a similar conclusion on this issue through reliance on the grammatical-historical approach. However, on issues like a pre-tribulational Rapture, the Messianic age and the wars of "Gog and Magog", the Popularisers struggle to validate their conclusions without the additional application of traditional early Jewish hermeneutical tools, which tools they fail to employ. The Messianic Jews do not have this problem since their use of ancient exegetical tools generates substantial justification for their convictions.

Hence, only through the application of early Jewish hermeneutical methods like *peshat*, *haggadah*, *peshet* and Hillel's *middoth*, can views like a pre-tribulational Rapture of the Church, the messianic age, eschatological "Gog and Magog" wars and so forth, find some credible support in Scripture. The same results cannot be claimed from an application of the grammatical-historical approach alone, a method favoured by most Christian scholars and particularly the Popularisers, today. It is thus equitable to say that knowledge of Jewish views of

Scripture in general, but especially those derived from a Messianic Jewish perspective, are essential for Christians to properly understand eschatological issues, given the Church's roots. Such knowledge should include an understanding of the eschatological implications of the Jewish Festival Calendar, a prime purpose thereof being that "God wanted the Jews to recall the times He delivered and provided for them in the past in order that they might have faith in Him to provide and deliver them in the future" (Prasch, 1999, "Final Words", p.29).

In the result, much of the eschatological scenario promoted by the Popularisers does not find significant support through the application of a grammatical-historical hermeneutical approach alone. Such method, with its patent limitations, should be considered merely a first, albeit crucial, step in the exegetical process - a strategy followed by Jews, with their stress on *peshat*, for millennia. It may be concluded that in light of the foregoing, the Popularisers, and other Christian scholars, would undeniably obtain indispensable exegetical assistance through the use of traditional, early Jewish hermeneutical techniques, not only in justifying their eschatological convictions but also in the formulation of such convictions.

K. CONCLUSION

The seminal questions, which resound from this study, are - in no particular order - first, whether or not early Palestinian Jewish hermeneutical methods are evident in a Second Testament context. Second, whether or not these methods can, and should, therefore be applied in the interpretation of Scripture subsequent to the times of early Christianity and into this day and age. Third, whether Christian, and Jewish, eschatological history reflects any of these convictions and, fourth, whether or not the hermeneutical methods engaged by the so-called Popularisers sustain their eschatological convictions.

It has been argued herein (*infra*, pp.74-100) that abundant evidence is available from the Second Testament to support the contention that the exegetical practices of early Judaism were utilised by Jesus and the apostolic writers. Constraints of space restricted the study to an examination of only some of the examples found in the teachings of Jesus and in the writings of the Apostles Matthew, Mark, Peter, James and Paul. From this examination it became manifest that the use of early rabbinic exegetical tools such as *peshat*, *midrash* - with a focus on *haggadah* rather than *halakah* - and Hillel's *middoth*, was common in the Second Testament context. Furthermore, a typical Qumranic implementation of *raz-pesher* was widespread in this context. It is submitted that such findings are consistent with the realisation that the Bible is a Jewish document, compiled within the early Palestinian Judaic milieu and reflecting an existing tradition. Proof of the existence of such tradition arises from the fact that the tradition must have been extant in order to be redacted. The redaction resulted in a record of, *inter alia*, the interpretative heritage of the nascent Church. In the result, the clear and widespread application in the Second Testament of traditional hermeneutical methods can serve not only as a justification for the use thereof by subsequent Bible exegetes, but as a forceful precedent which if ignored or repudiated will undoubtedly lead to a mere superficial comprehension of weighty Biblical issues or, possibly, even non-biblical views. Presented with evidence of Second Testament application of

traditional early Jewish exegetical practices, the onus must surely shift to the modern scholar to demonstrate why the methods employed by Jesus and the Apostolic writers are not pertinent to modern biblical interpretation. All the same, there appear to be few Christian scholars who can provide valid reasons for failing to use the traditional hermeneutical methods employed in the Second Testament context.

An example of this contention is R.N. Longenecker, who in his work, "Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period", provides substantial evidence of Second Testament use of early Jewish hermeneutical methodologies. Longenecker concludes that "the exegesis of the New Testament is heavily dependent on Jewish procedural precedents" (1999, p.187). Evidence for this is derived through the patent use by the earliest Christians of the "many exegetical conventions that were common within various branches of Judaism in their day". Longenecker also points out that the Apostolic writers felt free to use such conventions because "they looked to Jesus' use of Scripture as the source and paradigm for their own use" (1999, p.187). It is therefore quite incongruous to note that Longenecker, in his conclusion, remains firmly committed to "historico-grammatical exegesis" alone, his rationale being that "our commitment as Christians is to the reproduction of the apostolic faith and doctrine, and not necessarily to the specific apostolic exegetical practices" (1999, p.198). The obvious inconsistency of this view is that it was only through the application of the early Jewish hermeneutical practices engaged by Jesus and the Second Testament writers, as amply testified to by Longenecker himself, that the Christian "faith and doctrine" as set out in the Second Testament, was deduced and redacted.

Yet again, it is not totally unexpected to have to distinguish the usual Christian approach, exemplified by Longenecker in his concluding remarks, with the hermeneutical approaches propounded by Jewish scholars, of both Orthodox and Messianic persuasions. In a paper presented at the Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, Jewish scholar, A. Berlin, astutely

observed that "for most of the twentieth century, traditional Jewish exegesis has had little or no place in academic biblical scholarship because it did not appear to contribute to the scientific understanding of the Bible" (Berlin, 1997, p.173). This is precisely the point since Christian scholars, in their preoccupation with a scientific approach to biblical exegesis - perhaps a form of neo-scholasticism - have ignored not only the hermeneutical techniques of the nascent Church, but also the Church's Jewish heritage. A reason for this, according to Berlin, is that the "modern academic study of the Bible has been largely a Christian enterprise" (1997, p.174). Berlin's reason has many implications and added thereto can be anti-Semitic and anti-Judaic attitudes by Christian scholars, whether conscious or not. In fairness, though, it can be agreed with Berlin that "by the middle of the twentieth century the slighting of traditional Jewish exegesis was not...as much a result of prejudice as of ignorance" (1997, p.174). Such ignorance often amounted to a conscious rejection of any method that, in the opinion of scholars, was not scientific enough in approach and which did not employ the most recent scientific information and methodologies. Berlin is not surprised by this rejection since "traditional Jewish exegesis made no pretence of being academically objective and religiously neutral" and, thus, such an exegetical approach was quite unsuitable in "the eyes of modern scientific scholars" (1997, p.175). Berlin sums up by postulating that "all of these factors - the ignorance of traditional Jewish exegesis, the irrelevance of it, and the psychological discomfort with it - acted in tandem to reduce or eliminate the presence of traditional Jewish exegesis from the academic study of the Bible" (1997, p.176). These are unpalatable, but necessary, truths requiring consideration by Christian scholars.

It is not only the Jewish scholars who allege that Christians have regarded early Jewish exegesis as redundant as Rendtorff, a Christian himself, in his address to the Eight World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, also admits that "Modern Christian biblical scholarship has almost totally ignored the very existence of Jewish exegetical tradition" (1993, p.17). This situation, Rendtorff observes, is "the case even today" since the "vast majority of Christian biblical scholars have never so much as glanced at a rabbinic text" (1993, p.18). Like

Berlin, who asserts that the history of biblical interpretation does not appear to be of major importance for Christian scholars (Berlin, 1997, p.175) insofar as continuity and implementation thereof is concerned, Rendtorff opines that the attitude of Christian scholars is, by and large, such that they "proceed as if the interpretation of the Bible had begun only in the nineteenth or at best eighteenth century". Rendtorff adds that these scholars take little cognisance of the "continuity of biblical tradition" (1993, p.18), which tradition was reinforced by Jesus and the Apostolic writers. Consequently, the question posed by Jewish scholar, C. J. Reif, namely, "whether all that is modern is necessarily more scholarly than the learning that precedes it" (1998, p.155), demands some serious reflection in view of the predominant Christian attitude to traditional Jewish exegetical methods.

Rendtorff proposes that the use of traditional Jewish exegetical methods by Christian scholars at this time would have more effect if "demonstrably useable results" could be established (1993, p.21). There is much sense in this proposition for should the evident use of early Jewish hermeneutical practices by Jesus and the apostolic redactors not be regarded as constituting sufficient justification for implementing such practices in the present era, then evidence of "useable results" arising from current application of such techniques must surely be persuasive. Applying this proposition to the eschatological scenarios promoted by Popularisers, it can be said that the grammatical-historical method relied upon by them to support their interpretation of relevant prophetic texts and events, has been shown to be rather inadequate, in certain issues, for such purpose (*supra*, pp.170-187). However, through the use of traditional Jewish exegetical tools like *peshat*, *peshet*, *haggadah*, and various *middoth* of Hillel, the Popularisers' belief in issues like a pre-tribulational Rapture, the Messianic age, end-time wars and tribulation, have received some credibility. In such circumstance, at least, "useable results" have been established. But it is not only the practical benefit of Jewish methods that should justify the implementation of these interpretative tools as the prime reason is, without doubt, the consistent

use and verification thereof by sages for some 3,500 years including the early Apostles and Jesus himself, as is verified herein (*infra*, pp.74-100).

While Rendtorff does not propose that the "results of modern biblical studies in general" be disregarded, he does suggest that knowledge of rabbinic methods of interpretation can assist scholars to be cognisant of "the completely hypothetical character of all our critical theories". Through such awareness, an open mind is indicated in order to receive "unexpected insights into the meaning of biblical texts" (1993, p.24). This will create an opportunity for a more favourable attitude towards, for instance, the "midrashic exegetical method" which "takes the Bible as it is, and asks about interrelationships between different texts" (Rendtorff, 1993, p.24) in the manner exemplified by a *haggadah* pattern type exegesis in relation to prophetic texts.

Reformed scholar B. Ramm, poses the question as to whether or not "prophetic literature (should) be interpreted by the general method of grammatical exegesis", or whether some other "special principle" is required for this. Such question, he avers, is the "real issue in prophetic interpretation among evangelicals" (1970, p.244). Ramm does mention that according to Girdlestone, "much of the prophetic description of the future is in the language of past, historical events" and so a current situation or a predicted eschatological one would be an "analogue" of the original situation. For instance, "destructive judgement finds its type in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; great deliverance is paralleled after the deliverance of the exodus" (Ramm, 1970, p.247). Despite mentioning Girdlestone's view - which appears to have elements similar to that of early rabbinic *haggadah*, and with obvious benefits in elucidating prophetic texts, Ramm concludes, notwithstanding, that prophecy is to be interpreted "literally unless the implicit or explicit teaching of the New Testament suggests typological interpretation" (1970, p.266).

A literal reading of Scripture is a vital first step in exegesis, as emphasised herein, but explication of prophetic texts can be assisted only to a limited degree

in the manner proposed by Ramm. This is clear from the attempt of the Popularisers to rely solely on such method.

On the other hand, Messianic scholar, J.J. Prasch, firmly rejects the Protestant hermeneutical attitude with its primary (and often sole) reliance on the grammatical-historical method with its strict limitations. These limitations, imposed for good reason in the interpretation of Scripture generally, include the rationale that "there are many applications of a scripture but only one interpretation" and so, "if the plain wording of scripture makes sense, seek no other sense". Ramm embraces these limitations, through his support of the grammatical-historical method alone, even in the interpretation of matters prophetic. However, Prasch rejects the dominance of this method in matters pertaining to prophetic texts as the literal sense is, without doubt, an important initial step in the exegetical process but it is not a sufficient method, generally speaking, to fully comprehend prophetic texts. The Jewish approach, on the contrary, "looks at prophecy not as prediction" only, but instead as a "pattern of multiple fulfilments" (Prasch, 1999, "Grain", p.14). Consequently, Prasch endorses the employment of traditional early Jewish hermeneutical methods due to their relevance, and indispensability, to the interpretation of prophecy. Prasch sums up his view on the interpretation of prophetic issues by stating that "it takes the wisdom of the ancients to really understand these things...not the wisdom of the 16th century but the wisdom of the first century" (1999, "Grain", p.14).

These contrasting views of a respected Protestant and a leading Messianic Jewish scholar with regard to the interpretation of prophecy, exemplify the polemical situation current among scholars today vis-à-vis this topic.

In light of the Church's exegetical heritage in early Judaism and the patent use of early Jewish hermeneutical methods by Jesus and the Second Testament redactors, the conclusion has to be reached that the traditional Christian grammatical-historical method, with its foundations in the Reformation, can be

regarded as insufficient *per se* for the interpretation of matters prophetic. The approach of Jewish scholars who adhere to the traditional exegetical methods of early Judaism are to be preferred over those scholars who promote the grammatical-historical method as alone adequate for the interpretation of prophetic texts because, as Prasch so sharply points out, "the Apostles did not handle the scriptures according to Protestant grammatical-historical methods" (1999, "Grain", p.12).

It is significant to note that the premillennial stance of the Popularisers, and most Dispensationalists, also finds support among Jewish scholars. Prasch concludes that "a Jewish understanding of eschatology can allow for nothing but premillennialism" (1999, "Grain", p.113). As observed earlier, Jewish eschatological comprehension of issues like the Messianic age, Tribulation, end-time wars and so on are derived from their interpretative stance. The Christian Popularisers, relying solely on the literal approach cannot, in many instances, find suitable support for their views which can often be credibly justified through application of traditional Jewish hermeneutical methods, as has been shown earlier. The use of early Jewish methods in this field, as adopted and recorded by the Second Testament redactors, thus has clear relevance in the modern (and post-modern) era and it is to the detriment of biblical perspicuity that most Christian scholars fail to consider these methods.

In sum, it appears that there exists in current Christian circles a rather pathetic state of affairs, generally speaking, with regard to application of traditional Jewish hermeneutical methodologies, as recounted by Berlin and Rendtorff. Such a situation is the fruit of consistent rejection, throughout the centuries, by Christian scholars of Jewish hermeneutical methodologies, and by implication, the Church's Jewish heritage. The cause, ironically, is a result of the successful propagation of the Gospel into the nations for, as Vermes declares, "Christianity, once it moved out of the restrictive Jewish sphere of Palestine, first became cosmopolitan counting both Jewish and Gentile members, and very soon, altogether ceased to be Jewish" (2002, p.214). This great tragedy, the

separation between the Church and the Jewish people as developed over the last 2,000 year period can, rightly, be classified as "the worst schism in history" (Stern, 1991, p.47). The schism is plainly observed from the predominant attitudes of the Church through the past centuries in, not only their anti-Judaic (and to a lesser degree, anti-Semitic) bias but through the rejection, or the ignoring, of traditional Jewish hermeneutical methods and practices which were endorsed by Jesus and the apostolic redactors. Consistent with a supersessionist resolve, the Church primarily adopted the allegorical approach to exegesis until the Reformers brought some correction. Still, such correction did not extend to matters prophetic, in which area the dichotomy between Jewish and Christian hermeneutical methods and thus ensuing eschatological views, persists. Even so, examples of Christian scholars who did attempt to maintain a connection with the Church's Jewish roots in the arena of hermeneutics, and other areas, are evident through the centuries but such scholars were a small minority - mere "voices in the wilderness" it might be said. These scholars, by and large, through the use of a literal approach, much like *peshat*, as well as using other early Jewish methods, invariably held to a premillennial eschatology with attendant views of the restoration of Israel and other end-time issues commonly observed in the literature of premillennialists at this time. Just as can be seen today - with the similarity in eschatological views between Messianic Jewish scholars (and Orthodox Jews, to a lesser extent) and Christian premillennialists - so there has existed through the ages past, similarities in end-time viewpoints between early Jews, rabbinic Jews and the Christian scholars who faithfully maintained a relationship with early Jewish exegetical practices. Generally speaking, though, consistency through the millennia in exegesis and comprehension of prophetic texts is a hallmark of Jewish scholars, whether Rabbinic, Orthodox or Messianic. Only in certain instances can the same observation be applied to Christian scholars, and then, again, to a limited extent.

It does appear that Church's acknowledgment of its Jewish heritage, and thus Jewish exegetical methods and comprehensions of Scripture, is at long last

showing some signs of change. According to Berlin, a "greater openness to religious diversity has made Christian Bible scholars more receptive to Jewish exegesis". Therefore, the "hegemony of the historical-philological model has crumbled and with it the notion that this was the only way to study the Bible" (Berlin, 1997, pp.176-177). Needless to say it will be some substantial time before the traditional hermeneutical methods of early Judaism, the exegetical predecessors of the Church, find their rightful place in Christian Biblical interpretation. When such an event does eventuate, if at all, the Church will benefit enormously from employing these methods as "the traditional exegetes were exquisitely close readers of the text, and it is this, more than anything else, that we can learn from them" (Berlin, 1997, p.182).

Rendtorff likewise supports the view that some change is apparent since Christian scholars are becoming more aware of the Church's Jewish heritage and are, ergo, "studying the interpretation of the Bible as it is found within the continuum of Jewish history" (1993, p.21). Hopefully, this will result in a new receptivity to early Jewish hermeneutical methods as in many quarters, comprehension of Scripture radically different to those held previously will surely ensue. The need for such a shift can be considered to be of fundamental import for the Church since the way in which the apostolic writers interpreted the acts and teachings of Jesus and the prophets, and Jesus' own explication of his teachings and the Scriptures "is the foundation and the key to any legitimate contemporary expression of Christianity" (Ellis, 1991, p.157). But for the Church as a whole to recognise the fundamental importance and inextricability of its Jewish heritage, is a process that requires a momentous change of heart for, as Osborn so uncompromisingly stresses, "It was and remains a consummate offence to human pride that in order to be God's people the church must identify with God's chosen people, whom other peoples and nations can but recognise as 'despised and rejected' and especially with their Messiah. Nothing better serves human and ecclesial pride and resists this humiliation than the lie that separates Jesus as Lord and Saviour of the church from the Jews and their messianic hope. This self-deception allows the Church to imagine itself to be a

free, independent, self-conscious institution of salvation that can boast of itself over the root in which it lives and without which it has no life" (1990, p.234).

Finally, it is clear that there are certain eschatological issues promoted by the Popularisers that cannot be regarded as biblically sustainable irrespective of the hermeneutical method employed and which can be considered speculative. It can be argued, no doubt, that such issues, and perhaps the whole or much of the eschatological scenarios proposed by the Popularisers have been deduced in the same manner as the early Apocalypticists often derived their eschatological scenarios, namely, from non-traditional sources. That is to say subjective, rather than objective sources - the distinction between the two was not of great moment for such visionaries (Russell, 1964, p.162), both sources being acceptable. In such an event, it could be proposed that the end-time scenarios of the Popularisers carry little weight. The Book of Revelation is a fundamental text for the Popularisers and this Book is a prime example of an apocalyptic work (Russell, 1964, p.35). It has to be conceded that Revelation does contain many "familiar features of Jewish apocalyptic" (Russell, 1964, p.35) and was itself redacted from a vision (Rev.1:10-11), like some earlier apocalyptic texts. However, Revelation does have numerous links to First Testament passages as well. Nonetheless its apocalyptic connotations do not diminish the Book's importance, or canonical status, nor the validity of eschatological comprehensions properly derived therefrom. If this were the case then many other prophetic canonical texts, and views founded thereon, would likewise have to be considered suspect. For instance, much of the seminal prophetic text, the Book of Daniel, was likewise founded on redacted visions, as were many other biblical passages. But irrespective of the manner of reception of the Book of Revelation and other canonical prophetic works and texts, they have to be interpreted according to the normal rules pertaining to any literary work, namely, the literal sense in the first instance. The importance of the literal sense is highlighted in this particular issue for if a text cannot be substantially understood through the application of an initial, literal, reading then its relevance must be considered dubious. In the case of the Book of Revelation, despite the use of

symbols (which are generally explained therein) and visionary origins, a literal interpretative approach clearly reveals many pertinent eschatological matters including, for instance, a messianic age of one thousand years (Rev.20:6ff.). Further exegetical tools can then be applied, as discussed herein. In the result, eschatological scenarios, whether derived from traditional methods or even non-traditional apocalyptic sources, must be compiled through the employment of acceptable exegetical methodologies. Certain end-time issues promoted by the Popularisers cannot be considered biblically sustainable, exegetically speaking, whether based on non-traditionally or traditionally derived prophetic texts, but this does not apply to all the issues.

Even though certain aspects of the eschatological scenarios proposed by the Popularisers might be difficult to justify exegetically irrespective of the hermeneutical methods applied, a few issues like the Messianic age do find support in Scripture through application of the literal interpretative method alone. However, these issues and others like the pre-tribulational aspect of the Rapture, the Rapture itself and the wars of "Gog and Magog", can be more substantially justified, and understood, through the employment of early Jewish hermeneutical methods like *peshat*, *haggadah*, *peshet* and Hillel's *middoth*. Consequently, with the exception of those relatively minor issues which appear to be somewhat imaginative rather than biblically based, many of the substantive eschatological issues promoted by the Popularisers can be regarded as biblically supportable but only, it seems, as a consequence of the application of early Jewish interpretative methodologies. The literal hermeneutical method employed by the Popularisers has relevance only as an initial, limited, step in the exegetical process of interpreting prophetic texts and can be considered insufficient in attesting to all the eschatological scenarios created by them. Despite much polemic to the contrary, it is therefore apparent that the traditional hermeneutical methods of ancient Jewish sages still have a vital part to play in the interpretation of prophetic texts, even in these modern times - as has been demonstrated in this study.

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