The relevance to NT exegesis of identifying whether the source of an OT quotation is the Greek or Hebrew text is finally demonstrated in chap. 5, "The Impact of the LXX on the NT." The material in this chapter is McLay's most original and demonstrates the exegetical relevance of examining the LXX/OG context when interpreting a NT text that quotes the Greek OT, not the Hebrew. McLay's discussion of the influence of OG Jonah 2:1, quoted in Matt 12:40, on the interpretation of Matt 16:16-18 and 27:51b-53 illustrates the value of understanding the context of a quotation in its Greek source text and how that context shaped the NT writer's thought even beyond the function of the explicit quotation. As McLay points out, it is a methodological flaw to assume the Hebrew text as the background against which the NT passage should be understood, if in fact it was the LXX/OG that the NT writer had in mind—and especially where the Greek OT is different from the Hebrew. Using the correct source as the background offers new exegetical data, as McLay demonstrates in his analysis of Matthew's resurrection theology in light of the Greek Jonah.

Determining when a NT writer used the Greek OT as his source and interpreting the NT text against that background is essential for sound exegetical method. However, McLay's claim that "the Greek Jewish Scriptures had a significant impact on the theology of the NT writers" (p. 137, emphasis added) needs further definition of the word "significant." The LXX/OG background of a passage may open up new understanding of a particular verse, but it is doubtful that the impact of the Greek OT on NT exegesis would substantially change the content of NT theology overall. McLay's discussion of the phrase "gates of Hades" in Matt 16:18 as a metaphor for death rather than a reference to demonic forces illustrates this point.

McLay objects to the hegemony of the MT in NT scholarship claiming, "The allegiance that has been shown toward the MT by scholars despite the evidence of other witnesses is similar in many ways to those who regard the King James version as the only trustworthy English translation" (p. 109). He does not, however, seem to recognize, much less address, the theological questions that might give scholars with an evangelical doctrine of Scripture pause. He does address the issue of canon, but his claim that "the use of the Greek Jewish Scriptures by the NT writers is itself a lethal argument against the view that there was any type of fixed 'canon' of Jewish Scriptures in the first century C.E." (p. 144) is quite an overstatement that deserves to be challenged.

This writer agrees with McLay's contention that NT studies would benefit from a greater appreciation of the Septuagint's distinctive contribution to NT exegesis. Hopefully, McLay's book will move its readers in that direction.

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relevant experience: his early monograph on The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History (1981) and commentaries on First and Second Kings (1987) and Joshua (1997). A short introduction sketches the didactic language and structural complexity of the book (pp. 2–4), its theological unity and compositional development (pp. 4–9), and its theological themes (pp. 9–12). Translation, notes on text and translation, and commentary follow in 37 portions.

The translation is fresh and clear, and the notes provide some excellent alternate formulations. There is helpful attention to wordplay: mws' (“what comes out [of the mouth of Yahweh]”) in 8:3 plays on msōh (“command”) in 8:2, 6 (p. 112) and mswr (“from the rock”) in 8:15: is at least assonant with mšrym (“Egypt”) in the previous verse (p. 114). And yet this reader would have preferred a more literal rendering of the Hebrew in a commentary of this sort, as a first step toward introducing the reader to the dynamics of the Hebrew text. Why vary the rendering of ʿbd Piel from “destroy” (12:2) to “make perish” (12:3) within the very same passage, and especially when “incessant repetition” has been noted at the outset as a feature of the rhetoric? Some muddle appears to stem from concern to use inclusive language. “Kinedred” (as explained on p. 15) is used widely for “brother[s],” and yet “brotherhood” and “fraternal” have to survive (p. 214). The ḫw (“fathers”) become “ancestors” in 5:3 (although Nelson then must point out [p. 79] that this “refers to the previous desert generation, not to the patriarchs”) but reappear in 5:9 as “parents”—so losing an echo heard in the Hebrew. The note (p. 75) on the puzzling vocalization of tbdm earlier in the same verse, which he renders “serve” (p. 73), seems misleading: if the pointing is tendentious Hophal rather than anomalous Qal, the sense will be the unwilling passive “be brought to serve,” rather than Nelson’s “make yourselves servants of,” which appears to require a reflexive form. The latter part of “each what is right according to personal opinion” (12:8) is acceptably free, and yet the “all” in kl-hySr is not represented. ʿ with impf. often represents an absolute prohibition; but does ʿ twkl (normally “you shall not be able”) mean “do not dare” (p. 223)? I take just one further example: I suspect that Nelson, like many others, has been overinfluenced by the narrative in Samuel in his rendering of Deut 17:15, “you may certainly set a king over yourself.” The NEB’s “you shall appoint” and, even better, Craigie’s “you shall indeed appoint” do much better justice to the emphatic ūm īṣym. The initiative may have to come from Israel, but Moses is quite clear what the divine response will be: a straight affirmative, although within limits.

Nelson’s introduction states the broad consensus on Deuteronomy very clearly. It is unified but with manifest signs of disunity; elements of the law code at its heart are revisions of similar material in Exodus; the narratives at beginning and end (Deut 1–3; 31:1–8; 34:1b–6) derive from the Deuteronomistic Historian; the poems at the end (chs. 32–33) belong to a late stage in the development of the book; ch. 4 is also late; successive layers of redaction are visible even in primary materials (Deut 6–11, 12–26, 28). He finds the origins doubly anchored in the first three-quarters of the seventh century B.C.E. (p. 6), in an originally clandestine movement, such as led to the assassination of Amon (p. 7), who ruled between Manasseh and Josiah. The first anchor is attached to the “ideas and language from the Assyrian loyalty oath (notably the
Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon, 672 B.C.E.)." The second is lodged in the reform of Josiah (622 B.C.E.): the report in 2 Kgs 22–23 has parallels in accounts of miraculous discovery; but the fact that it also reflects interests that are not shared with Deuteronomy suggests that the author did draw on a historical source. And yet neither of these anchors seems entirely secure. Nelson sketches (p. 168) but does not discuss Veijola’s view that the influence of the Assyrian treaties "should be traced to the polemics of the exilic period." (An attractive feature of this commentary are the many crisp footnote summaries of scholarly opinion.) Then his own account of 2 Kgs 22–23, (a) that the report has links with miraculous discoveries of documents and (b) that its historical rootage is guaranteed by what is not of concern to Deuteronomy, adds up to an odd case for the tie between Deuteronomy and Josiah’s reform as being historical. At best he seems to have established that the backdrop for the production of Deuteronomy points no further back than the seventh century. However, a great deal of the evidence he has assembled suggests that the decisive action on stage belongs in a later period.

Nelson appears to have moved on from his early work on double Deuteronomistic redaction. The production of Deuteronomy is pictured here as a mix of gradual multilayered development and occasional (resumptive?) reshaping. Both narrative and law have a complex relationship with the books of Exodus and Numbers. The report in the first three chapters depends on Numbers (against Van Seters). The Decalogue in Deut 5 depends on Exod 20. But there is two-way influence between Exod 23 and Deut 7 (p. 98); and Exod 32:7–14 appears to depend on the 2nd-pers.-sing. narrative that makes up Deut 9:12–14, 26–29, while the supplementary 2nd-pers.-pl. narrative is dependent on various texts in Exodus (p. 120). As for Deut 7:6, it "is related in some way to Exod 19:5–6" (p. 100). While the complexity of such inner-Pentateuchal links is explored, there is notably less attention paid to connections between what the following narrative books have to say about judge, king, priest, and prophet and the "constitutional proposals" in Deut 16–18. (A "subject" of Her Majesty finds something very "US of A" in Nelson’s constitutional talk of "checks and balances" [p. 213] and a responsible "citizenry"!)

Readers will have a great deal to learn from this translation and commentary. Nelson puts us in touch with much of the most reliable and most interesting research on Deuteronomy (although there is no mention of Polzin, Moses and the Deuteronomist, 1980) and, more important, with the resources and the complexities of the book itself. He finds the book to be less monolithic than it first appears and, if he does not give us a fully consistent account of its origins and structure, that may be because one cannot be given.

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