

The Use of Scripture in Philippians
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I should begin by confessing that I was and still am a huge fan of Richard Hays' *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*. I found his readings compelling, often resolving textual conundrums, and/or opening new vistas for thinking about familiar texts. It is one of those books that changes the shape of conversations. We can think of the connections between Paul's letters and the OT in significantly richer, deeper and more comprehensive ways as the result of this book.

At the same time, and perhaps because of Richard's work, one is forced to ask questions such as: "Could the Christians in Corinth or Galatia who first received Paul's letters have seen these connections, heard these echoes?" "Did Paul intend these letters to be read in such richly allusive ways?" "If one answers, 'no,' to these questions, does that change the way we evaluate such readings?" I am not the first to raise questions along these lines, nor do I think there are single definitive answers to them.¹

We are largely ignorant of how Paul's letters were actually received by their original audiences. We can make judgments about levels of literacy, access to the text of the LXX in its various forms, oral performance and other general areas. Even here, however, our information is very spotty. Were these texts heard multiple times? Heard once and then studied by some? What sort of Scriptural catachesis went on in these first Christian communities? What role did those delivering these epistles play in the interpretation of the epistle? We really know very little of how often these letters were read in their respective congregations and how those occasions were paired with periods of hearing and studying the OT.²

As one ponders these questions, the one thing that becomes clear is that a phrase like "the original audience of the epistle," is really a heuristic fiction. It does some useful hermeneutical work for us and we should not abandon it altogether. Nevertheless, we are not in a good position to speak authoritatively about the ways in which the first recipients of Paul's letters engaged those epistles or the OT over time. We can make some speculations, but we need to recognize how speculative that work really is.

As a result, when it comes to discussing the use of Scripture in Philippians or any other letters it is evident that we need to be quite clear about two related sets of issues. The first concerns the various connections one might draw between Paul's letters and the OT and how they are made. The second set of issues concerns the status of those connections. That is, for whom might these connections have been evident and why? Clarity with regard to each of these matters will

¹ See, for example, the essays in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, edited by C. Evens and J. Sanders, (Sheffield: JSNT Press, 1993) along with Hays' response. Also the incisive article by C. Stanley, "'Pearls Before Swine' Did Paul's Audiences Understand His Biblical Quotations?" *NovT* XLI (1999) 122-44, and his subsequent monograph, *Arguing With Scripture: The Rhetoric of Quotations in the Letters of Paul*, (New York: T&T Clark, 2004).

² See Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, (New Haven, Yale UP, 1995) and J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of Good News: Isaiah and Paul "in Concert,"* Leiden: Brill, 2002), 33-36 for a discussion of the various components that would go into an congregation's engagement with a pauline letter.

substantially enhance our abilities to evaluate various interpretive work that goes under the very general heading of “the use of Scripture in...”

One may be tempted to offer a taxonomy of possible answers to these questions. I think that would be a mistake. Moreover, even if I wanted to do this, I do not have the ability and it would go well beyond the scope of my assignment for today. Instead, as a way of illustrating a variety of ways in which one might address questions of the use of Scripture in Philippians, I would like to examine three different passages in Philippians where scriptural texts are either cited or stand in the very near background, though in different ways. In doing this I will aim to be quite clear about who might be expected to see these connections or hear these allusions.

As you will all know, finding three Scriptural citations or allusions in Philippians is hard work. Unlike many of his other letters, Paul does not engage in an ongoing discussion with Scriptural texts in Philippians. He does not address prophecies or promises that are apocalyptically fulfilled in Christ. There are no ongoing dialogues with the law about the status of the law. So, we must admit that in some respects Philippians may prove to be anomalous with regard to the Pauline corpus. Nevertheless, the paucity of references may help me to remain as clear as I can be.

The first text I want to look at is Phil 2:10-11 and its use of Isa 45:23. Phil 2:10-11 explains both the purpose for which God exalted the obedient humiliated Christ and the gift that God bestows on Christ. The purpose of God’s exaltation of Christ is that “at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow.”³ The image of bowing the knee seems to be taken from Isa 45:23. In the context of Isaiah and also here in Philippians, it signifies the recognition of authority, and it is a way of offering homage to God in the case of Isa. and Jesus in the case of Philippians. In Rom 14:11 Paul quotes directly from Isa.45:23 to support his claim of God’s universal rule and subsequent judgment of all things. In this respect it is interesting to note that the authority and power Paul attributes to God in Romans he here attributes to Christ by invoking the same OT text.

Philippians interrupts the direct citation of Isa 45:23 with the phrase “in heaven and earth and under the earth.” This addition, however, is clearly in line with the sentiments expressed in Isa. 45:23. The acclamation of Philippians then continues with Isa 45:23, announcing in 2:11 that “every tongue will confess” that Jesus Christ is Lord.

The language from Isa.45:23 is interwoven into 2:10-11 without any direct reference to Isaiah such as you find in Rom 14:11. Moreover, the passage is intelligible apart from recognition of its connection to Isaiah. A reader or hearer of Philippians can in some sense understand the passage without knowing anything about Isaiah. Still, there are at least three perspectives from which one can ask further questions about this text.

The first perspective is Paul’s. Since we know that Paul already is familiar with this text, we are safe in assuming that he either recognized the allusion, if the text is preformed material, or made

³ I have translated the Greek preposition *εν* with the English “at.” The exact function of this preposition is often debated. Does it refer to the object of worship or the medium? The LXX usage would suggest that worship “in the name of” God is worship offered to God (1Kgs 8:44; Pss 43:8; 62:5 104:3). See also Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 145.

the allusion himself.⁴ In this respect it is not crucial to distinguish whether Paul wrote or quoted the text. Given that, one could argue that Paul made the allusion simply for the joy of making it, but did not imagine anything beyond employing a nice turn of phrase. If this is the case, we have to say that Paul was extremely fortunate because the invocation of Isa 45:23 invites readers familiar with Isaiah to see the story of Christ narrated in 2:6-11 in the light of the larger context of that part of Isaiah and the fit seems to be particularly useful for advancing Paul's overall argument in Philippians. God's vindication and exaltation of the obedient, suffering Christ is in line with the vindication of the suffering obedient servant of God in Isa 40-55.⁵ Recognizing this further enhances Paul's argument that should the Philippians adopt the patterns of thinking, feeling and acting displayed to them by Christ (among others) even in the midst of hostility and suffering, God will vindicate that obedience in ways analogous to God's vindication of Christ.

At this point, it is important to introduce a further distinction when looking at the allusion to Isaiah 45:23 from Paul's perspective. When looking at matters from Paul's perspective it is important to try to distinguish authorial motives from an author's communicative intentions⁶ "That is to say, one ought to distinguish between *what* an author is trying to say (which might be called a 'communicative intention') and *why* it is being said (which might be called a motive)."⁷ An author might write from any number of motives: a desire for fame and fortune, hopes of acquiring tenure; from a deep psychological need for self expression etc. There may well be motives as work of which an author is not fully conscious. In order to uncover an author's motives, analysis of her texts is never enough. Moreover, a desire to uncover authorial motives will generally be very difficult to fulfill. In the case of ancient authors an interest in motives will be almost totally frustrated by our lack information.

Alternatively, one need not attend to an author's motives in rendering an account of her communicative intentions. Instead, such an account requires attention to matters of semantics, of linguistic conventions operative at the time, and of implication and inference to name just three. In dealing with biblical writers attention to these matters is inescapably historical. Indeed, in many respects the practices required to display an author's communicative intentions will be familiar to biblical critics even if they do not characterize their work as offering an account of an author's communicative intention.

Accounting for an author's communicative intention does not depend on having textually mediated access to an autonomous, aware, authorial self. In fact, in the case of the Bible, it probably does not require the identification of a specific historical character as an author. Rather, in the case of Paul, for example, it depends on a knowledge of Greek and the linguistic conventions operative in the first century; an ability to detect and explicate allusions, indirect references, implications and inferences; a measure of familiarity with the set of social conventions of which letter writing is a part. The precise ways to mix and match all of these considerations will always be matters of argument and debate. For example, there is no set

⁴ Although I argued in *The Story of Christ in the Ethics of Paul*, (Sheffield: JSNT Press, 1990) ch. 2, that most of the claims about the life of this text prior to its incorporation into Philippians is little more than unsubstantiated speculation, I am willing, for the sake of argument, to at least grant that possibility here.

⁵ See Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified*, and Brian Dodd book, who argues that Paul has all of Isa 40-55 in mind here.

⁶ This distinction is initially made by Quentin Skinner (1971). For biblical scholars this notion is expertly articulated by Mark Brett (1991b). In what follows I am largely indebted to Brett's work.

⁷ Brett, "Motives and Intentions," 5.

formula or method that will reveal when one should rely more heavily on semantics than on social conventions or on possible OT allusions. In fact, the great majority of interpretive arguments among biblical scholars can be cast as arguments about how to weigh and evaluate the role of these pieces of evidence. A great number of factors can determine the outcome of these arguments, but they are not dependent upon an accounting of Paul's motives even if we could know them.

If we are primarily interested in what Paul aimed to communicate we have good reason here to suggest that the invocation of Isa 45:23 invites readers/hearers of Philippians to deepen their understanding of Paul's argument by finding that despite the suffering they might incur through their obedience, God's servants have always found God to be faithful.

I want to come back to Paul's perspective in a moment with regard to another issue in this text. Before that, however, I want to look at this text from the perspective of the Philippians who received this letter from Paul. I think that both 2:10-11 and the argument of the epistle as a whole are intelligible without recognizing the reference to Isa.45:23. Moreover, early recognition of this allusion would have required a fairly high level of familiarity with the text of Isaiah. I think we are probably justified in thinking that few if any in the church in Philippi had such familiarity. Alternatively, if only one or two members of the congregation caught this allusion the first time they heard the epistle could they not have noted it to the others? Even if nobody initially heard the allusion, might it not be the case that further engagement with Isaiah and/or Philippians have brought this allusion to the surface of their understanding? These possibilities seems plausible to me, but we must admit that we really do not know very much about how the Philippians or any other congregation engaged Paul's letters or the texts of the OT over time.

This leads me to suggest that although the phrase, "the original audience," might be a useful way of talking about how a group familiar with the relevant social and linguistic conventions would have understood a word, phrase or text, it is not really all that helpful in historically reconstructing how a specific group of Christians received, engaged and interacted with a Pauline letter over time. Given that, how might we make judgments in these matters?

Of course, provisional judgments about literacy levels and access to texts can be helpful here.⁸ These considerations may set some useful parameters of plausibility, but they cannot, however, tell us anything about the interactions between the members of a specific Christian community in the first century relative to any particular text.⁹

We may get some general help here from other parts of the NT. For example, Luke tells us that the resurrected Christ opened the hearts/minds of the disciples so that they could understand the Scriptures. I do not think this implies that they simply were infused with all understanding in an instant. Rather, I take it to mean that their engagement with Scripture was enhanced and Spirit directed. Whether one believes this or not, the idea presumes that the disciples were engaged with Scripture both before and after the death of Christ. The story of Philipp and the Ethiopian in Acts 8 presents a picture of an early disciple who had a facility with Scripture. At the very

⁸ See Gamble, *Books and Readers*, ch 1.

⁹ Wagner, 36-37 wonders if reading Paul's letters might have provoked some members of his congregations to become fluent in their knowledge of Scripture. Further he wonders if only one or two members of a congregation had the requisite scriptural knowledge to grasp Paul's allusions would they not be in a position to instruct others?

least one would have to say here that Luke did not find such a prospect implausible. The members of the synagogue in Berea “studied the Scriptures” (Acts 17:10-13). Timothy is instructed to study to show himself approved (2Tim 2:15). Further, if we can extrapolate from the role that the Genesis stories of Abraham play in the argument of Galatians, there is some basis for thinking that the congregations in Galatia were engaged with this part of Genesis from at least two different perspectives. Finally, and more specifically, we know that by the early third century Origen clearly notes the connection between Isa.45:23 and Phil.2:10-11.¹⁰

At best, these are shards of evidence from which one can only draw tentative inferences and very limited conclusions. I will venture a few here: By the time of Origen there is evidence of a developed theological culture within which at least some Christians are able to recognize, appreciate, and even develop further the sorts of allusions, reference and connections that Paul is able to make. Indeed, these skills would have been part of the education provided by a γραμματικός.¹¹ We can assume that churches from Paul’s day to Origen’s began to develop this theological culture over time. We should also assume that this development would have been sporadic, uneven and influenced by a host of social, material and political factors. In short, it would be difficult to work backward from the development of the theological culture evident at the time of Origen in order to speak with much confidence about the beginnings of such a culture within the Pauline churches. Nevertheless, I would propose that the more advanced one imagines this development to be, the more likely that community is to be able to see or hear Paul’s allusions.

We must admit that we have very little to go on when it comes to making judgments about how the Philippians, or any other Pauline church would have engaged one of the apostle’s letters. Our limited abilities in this respect may indicate that making judgments about the use of Scripture in Philippians from the perspective of the letter’s original audience is going to be one of the least interesting and fruitful avenues to pursue.

The third perspective from which to examine the allusion to Isa.45:23 in Phil 2:1-11 is from the perspective of much later readers. Unlike a concern with the perspective of the Philippians, contemporary interpreters can make easy recourse to the texts, recognize and even develop upon interconnections and allusions. Such an interpretive approach may, but need not, be concerned with the historical questions about what Paul might have known and intended or what the original audience may have been capable of understanding and recognizing. As long as interpreters following this path are clear about what they are doing it is relatively easy to evaluate such work.

The overwhelming majority of contemporary readers of Scripture, by virtue of their Christian convictions, tend to adopt some form of this approach. Moreover, because they treat Scripture as a whole, Christians will interpret Scriptural texts in ways that play off of, inform, illumine and regulate each other. At their best, Christians interpret Scripture in ways that enable them to fulfill aims that are larger and more complex than simply interpreting a text.¹² In this light it is

¹⁰ Origen, *On Prayer*, 31.3.

¹¹ See the discussion in L. Ayres, *Nicea and its Legacy* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), 20-40.

¹² In the liturgy of the Word for Palm Sunday, Isa 45:21-25 and Phil 2:5-11 are the readings for Episcopalians, but not in the RCL which pairs Phil 2:5-11 with Isa 50:4-9. Although there are no direct textual links between these two texts I would argue that the echoes between from Isa 50 to Phil 2:5-11 connect with the argument of Philippians as a whole at least as well as better than those from Isa 45:23.

not surprising that interpreting Scriptural texts, including all of their connections and allusions, might shape and be shaped by factors questions and concerns that would not and could not have been known to Paul or the Philippians.

Here is an example of such a situation, with regard to Phil 2:10-11 and Isa 45:23: In the immediate context of Isa 45:20-25, Yahweh asserts superiority over all other gods. Only Yahweh can save, “I am God and there is no other.” Thus, when Israel and the nations recognize this superiority, “every knee shall both and every tongue confess.” By connecting this language and imagery to Jesus in Phil 2:10-11, by ascribing to Jesus the name κύριος, Paul is, as Richard Bauckham says, including Jesus within the identity of the one God of Israel. From Paul’s perspective it appears that he wants to emphasize that willed self-emptying and obedient suffering are elements of God’s identity.¹³ This is an important claim. Moreover, it fits well with the overall argument of Philippians.

These claims, however, also raise some troubling questions for subsequent generations of readers. Arguing that these texts include Jesus within the identity of the one God of Israel without at the same time abandoning a commitment to the singularity of God, puts a set of questions on the agenda of subsequent readers about how to relate the Son and the Father (and eventually the Spirit) to each other without compromising their divinity or the singularity of the godhead without ever resolving them. Indeed, we don’t have any evidence that Paul or any of his contemporaries reflected on what appeared to subsequent readers as a serious tension. Nevertheless, for subsequent Christians committed to the whole of Scripture, Paul’s claims in Phil.2 along with other claims, such as those of John 1 raised the issue of how to properly order and organize Scriptural discourse about God, Christ and the Spirit. At their heart, 4th and 5th century arguments about Trinitarian doctrine were both deeply Scriptural and could not really have been imagined by Paul or the Philippians. Even though Paul and the Philippians could not have imagined the debates leading up to Nicea or many other subsequent debates, it was imperative for Christians to engage in those discussions. Thus, there are times and occasions when Christians will need to draw connections between Scriptural texts that those texts authors and audiences could not have made themselves.

My point in all of this is both to note one of the few Scriptural texts that plays some sort of direct role in the letter to the Philippians and to note the importance of distinguishing these three perspectives from each other in order to properly understand and evaluate the claims that one might make about the use of Scripture in Philippians.

As I indicated at the outset, there are two other OT texts that I want to examine. Having already laid out some of the theoretical issues, I will not rehearse them all again with regard to each text. The next text is the use of part of Job 13:16 in Phil 1:19. In 1:18 Paul ends his discussion of various types of preachers with an expression of joy. Most commentators note that 1:18a closes off one thought and 1:18b begins another. Nevertheless, the future tense of the verb in 1:18b is connected to the rejoicing in 1:18a as well as introducing 1:19. In 1:18 we learn that the imprisoned Paul rejoices now in the fact that the gospel is proclaimed despite the motives of some of the proclaimers. Further, he commits himself to continued rejoicing into the future. This commitment is based on a certain knowledge that Paul has. The two subsequent clauses,

¹³ See R. Bauckham, “The Worship of Jesus in Philippians 2:9-11,” in *Where Christology Began*, ed. R.P. Martin and B. Dodd, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998) 128-132.

one here in v. 19 and one in v.20, each introduced by ὅτι, explain the basis for this knowledge. The first clause is a verbatim quotation from the LXX of Job 13:16, “This will result in my salvation.” As with the connection to Isa 45:23 in 2:10-11 Paul does not introduce this quote with any of his standard phrases. The text is perfectly intelligible to anyone who does not know Job 13:16. As Hays, notes, however, for someone who does pick up and identify the quote there are some “intriguing resonances.”¹⁴

In Job 13 Job is in the midst of defending his integrity in the light of his “friends” accusations that his lamentable situation is the result of some hidden sin in his life. He claims in 13:16 both that he will ultimately be vindicated before God and that those who have spoken falsely will not be welcomed into God’s presence. [See also 13:7 “Do not all speak before the Lord? But you speak before him falsely.” Hays, *Echoes*, 22] In 13:18 Job again proclaims that his judgment is near and he “will be shown to be righteous.”

In Phil 1 Paul recounts his situation in prison. He is there because of his convictions about Christ and his obedience to his apostolic mission. Hence, his suffering is not the result of sin, but of his obedience. His discussion of those who preach from false motives indicates that such preaching is taking place in part to increase the pain of his imprisonment. Thus, those who should have been his friends have been acting from false motives. As Hays notes, Paul takes on Job’s voice, “to affirm confidence in the favorable outcome of his affliction; thereby, he implicitly transfers to himself some of the significations that traditionally cluster around the figure of Job.”¹⁵ This clearly indicates that Hays is interested in Paul’s perspective.

If that is our interest, too, there are further reasons for thinking that Paul’s communicative intentions reflected an appreciation of the deep connections between Job and him implicit in the use of Job 13:16 in 1:19. The quotation from Job seems to indicate that Paul sees his situation as analogous to Job’s. This analogy of situations helps to generate and sustain in Paul a similar sort of hope to that which Job expresses in 13:16. Given that Paul’s admonitions to the Philippians depend to a large degree on the Philippians’ abilities to see the similarities between their situation, on the one hand, and Paul’s situation (cf. 1:29-30), the story of God’s activity in Christ (cf. 2:5-11), and the actions of Timothy and Epaphroditus (cf. 2:19-30), on the other hand, we might well take this allusion to Job as one further example of the patterns of judgment and perceptual habits which Paul wishes to see formed in the Philippians. The fit between this account of Paul’s use of Job and the rest of the argument of the epistle further strengthens Hays’ assertions about Paul’s perspective.

When it comes to addressing the question of whether the Philippians would have detected these connections, we are basically in the same place as we were with Isa 45 and Phil 2. If you imagine largely unformed readers getting only one opportunity to see or hear an allusion, then you really should answer that such readers would not have picked up the allusion. If you imagine fully catechized readers who were well advanced in developing the theological culture that marks at least some in the 3rd century, then you probably are not accurately imagining the church in Philippi anytime in the first century.

¹⁴ Hays, *Echoes*, 21-24

¹⁵ Hays, *Echoes*, 23

Even if it is unlikely that the Philippians would have picked up the allusions surrounding the quote from Job 13:16 it is a separate matter from whether Christians today should allow these texts from Job to resonate in their ears when they listen to or read Philippians. One must say that Christians should read Philippians in the light of all of Scripture without, at the same time, determining in advance what that entails for the interpretation of any text. In this case, where there is a direct quotation from Job in Phil 1:19 and when attention to the larger context of Job can provide a theologically edifying context in which to read Philippians, Christians would be unwise willfully to cut themselves off from such edification.

So far, I have looked at two passages from Philippians where one might argue that specific texts from Scripture are invoked in fairly direct ways. The ways in which one understands, evaluates and even develops the connections between Philippians and these OT texts must in the first instance depend on clarity with regard to one's interpretive aims. I now want to examine a slightly longer passage in Philippians and its connections to a wider complex of OT texts. Even here, it is still important to be clear about one's interpretive aims.

I want to examine Phil. 2:12-18. I will not offer an extensive account of the whole of this passage. Instead, I will summarize in order to devote more space to those verses that seem to connect to a complex of OT texts. Paul begins this section with a call to obedience. Paul recalls his prior relations with the Philippians to encourage them to adopt his way of understanding the relationships between the suffering that may come one's way as the result of freely willed obedience to God, and God's faithfulness toward and ultimate vindication of that way of life. In addition, Paul assures the Philippians of God's continued care and activity amongst them.

Then, in 2:14 he adds that the Philippians should "do all things without grumbling and foolish reasoning." The key allusive phrase here is "without grumbling." The only other time Paul uses this phrase is in 1Cor 10:10 where he cites the grumbling of the Israelites as a negative example to be avoided by the Corinthians. The Greek terms, γογγυσμός/γογγύζω appear a number of times in the LXX for Israel's grumbling against God and Moses.¹⁶ Although there seems to be some textual clues that Paul aims to allude Israel's practice of grumbling in the wilderness, this allusion is a puzzle for modern commentators because it does not seem to have any direct application to the Philippians in the same way it does for the Corinthians.¹⁷ In the case of 1 Cor it is quite clear that Paul interprets the current life of the Corinthian church in the economy of salvation through the positive and negative examples of God's dealings with Israel in the desert. In Philippians it would appear that Paul engages in a similar activity. He interprets the movements of God's drama of salvation in a way that allows him to draw analogies and spell out implications for the common life of the Philippians. In the case of 2:14 the analogy would look something like this: When faced with political and material hardship and opposition, the Israelites grumbled, doubting that God (through Moses) had led them thus far and would lead them out of their present difficulties. It is precisely this attitude that Paul seeks to frustrate throughout Philippians. In 2:13 he reiterated his conviction that God has and will continue to work in the lives of the Philippians. The Philippians, therefore, are to avoid the response of the

¹⁶ Exod 16:7-12 (six times); 17:3; Num 14:27-29 (three times); 16:41; 17:5 (twice); 17:10

¹⁷ Some point to the fact that Paul elsewhere addresses internal dissention in the Philippian congregation (4:1-3) to suggest that, rather than alluding to grumbling against God, Paul is using this term to talk about internal dissent. The language of 4:1-3, however, is different. Moreover, such a suggestion seems deaf to the LXX overtones of grumbling.

Israelites when they are in a similar situation. By alluding to the Israelites' grumbling in the desert, Paul is not seeking to counter present behavior as much as possible responses to events in the near future.¹⁸

Avoiding "grumbling and foolish reasoning" will enable the Philippians to be "blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which, they shine as lights in the world." The conjunction of the terms "blameless," "innocent" and "without blemish" gives the very clear impression that Paul is describing the final end toward which God is moving the church at Philippi. Paul is looking forward to that time when God's ultimate "good pleasure" is brought to fruition in the Philippians, to that time when the purposes for which God first called them are achieved. Moreover, Paul contrasts this holiness toward which God is moving the Philippian Christians with the crookedness and perversity of the present age. On its surface, then, this verse indicates that by avoiding grumbling and foolish reasoning, the Philippians will be brought to that state of holiness for which God called them in contrast to the pagan society around them.

Beneath this surface, however, the clause "children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation" appears to echo Deut 32:5 with some rather interesting results. While the syntax of the LXX of Deut 32:5 is obscure, the general thrust of the passage is clear.¹⁹ Israel has failed to perceive God's economy of salvation; they have failed to attend to God's saving deeds and their implications. Hence, in their foolishness, they have ultimately sinned against themselves. Thus, they have become a crooked and perverse generation (cf. Deut. 32: 1-14). If Paul's communicative intention is to allude to these verses, his point is not to claim that the church in general and the Philippians in particular have replaced Israel.²⁰ Rather, as in 2:14, he invokes the negative example of Israel as something for the Philippians to avoid if God's best purposes for them are to be fulfilled. Unlike Israel, the Philippians should attend wisely to God's economy of salvation. In doing this, they will both avoid grumbling and foolish reasoning and become holy and blameless children of God in the midst of those who do not rightly recognize and understand God's mighty acts of salvation.

The next two clauses (which actually run into the beginning of v16) further display the Philippians' position in a "crooked and perverse generation."²¹ Paul claims that in the midst of this corrupt generation the Philippians "shine as lights in the world." This image fits with several others throughout Scripture where the people of God are spoken of as lights in the midst of an unbelieving world. In Isa 42:6 and 49:6 redeemed Israel shines as a light to the Gentiles, drawing them to God. These same verses are glossed by Simeon in Luke 2:29-32 to prophesy

¹⁸ Chrysostom seems to be on the right track in taking this passage as a warning about future possibilities rather than a direct admonition about current realities. He rightly contrasts the situations of the Corinthians, where grumbling is real and the allusion to the Israelites is direct and explicit, with the Philippians, where grumbling is a possibility to be avoiding and the allusion is, correspondingly, less explicit, *Homily 6*.

¹⁹ A wooden translation of the LXX might read, "They sinned not against him, children of blemish, a crooked and perverse generation." See Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 156-7 for a discussion of this passage.

²⁰ Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 157 rightly sees that Moses is neither claiming that God has disowned Israel nor is Paul claiming that the church has replaced Israel.

²¹ I am following Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 159, Fee, *Philippians*, 246-7, Gnilka, *Philippenerbrief*, 153, and O'Brien, *Philippians*, 297 who connect the participle "holding fast" in v16 with the finite verb "in order that you might be" in v15.

the blessings that come to both Israel and the Gentiles through Christ. In Acts 13:47 Paul and Barnabas quote Isa 49:6 to justify their mission to the Gentiles.

In their respective commentaries on Philippians, both Fee and Bockmuehl make the interesting suggestion that this clause in 2:15 echoes Dan 12:3 where, in an apocalyptic vision of the resurrection, Daniel is told that “those with understanding shall shine like the brightness of the heavens.” And “Those who strengthen my words will be like the stars of heaven forever.”²² If we take this allusion seriously, the Daniel text further supports Paul’s claims that those who manifest the proper understanding of God’s saving activity will be brought to their proper end. Further, the phrase, “holding fast to the word of life,” at the beginning of v16, might be seen as an explication of “strengthening the words” of God in the second part of Dan12:3.²³

If we are look at this from Paul’s perspective it would appear that in these verses Paul has been concerned with keeping the Philippians from following the negative example of Israel in the desert, of misreading the signs of God’s activity and, thereby, falling to “grumbling.” The aim of avoiding this situation is so that God can lead the Philippians to their true end, holiness. In the course of reaching this end, the Philippians will shine in the midst of an unbelieving and hostile world as they order their common life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (remember this whole section is an outworking of 1:27). The Philippians will hold fast to the word of life as they obediently work out their salvation. More specifically, given that the vocabulary around grumbling seems so closely tied in the LXX to Israel in the desert and given that Paul uses the trope of Israel’s grumbling in 1Cor, we are probably justified in assuming that Paul was also thinking along these same lines with the Philippians. In addition, both the specificity of the vocabulary and the relatively secure fit between the aims of Deut 32:5 and Paul’s larger argument in Philippians, would also support the judgment that Paul intended to allude to Deut. 32:5 in Phil 2:15.

I think the connections to Isa 42:6 and 49:6 and Dan 12:3 are less immediately evident. The image of shining as a light in the midst of darkness seems to be relatively widespread. In addition, the vocabulary does not help tie the Philippians verse to any particular OT text or texts. Further, the apocalyptic context of the OT texts seems rather different from that of Philippians. This is not to say that these connections do not generate edification or insight. Rather, I think it less likely that Paul intended to communicate such connections.

What about the Philippians themselves? Again, if one thinks of the Philippians as largely uninstructed in the faith, on a first uninstructed hearing, it is unlikely that they would have picked up these allusions. One should not, however, assume that the Philippians had a relatively static relationship to this epistle and to those who conveyed it. If one grants that the Philippians probably read/heard and subsequently re-read/re-heard Paul’s letter several times, and that those delivering the letter could well have instructed the Philippians in the OT allusions here, then one must grant that, in time, they, too, might have detected these allusions. Obviously these latter considerations do not answer the question. They merely make it more probable that over time the Philippians might have come to see the connections between their situation and Israel’s.

²² See Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 158; Fee, *Philippians*, 247-8.

²³ So Fee, *Philippians*, 247 n.33.

Relative to the perspective of the Philippians, there is one key difference here between this passage in Philippians and the previous two. In the case of Phil 1:19 and 2:10-11 these texts are both intelligible regardless of whether the Philippians would have recognized the OT allusions. With regard to Phil 2:12-18 the issue is a bit more complex. One could argue that the Philippians would have been able to fulfill Paul's admonitions in this passage regardless of whether they picked up any OT allusions. Nevertheless, one of the habits Paul wants to help form in the Philippians is a sort of Christ focused practical reasoning. As Paul repeatedly demonstrates in Philippians, one of the keys to cultivating this habit of practical reasoning is developing the ability to read and interpret God's economy of salvation in ways that allow one to see the connections between that economy and one's current situation in order to discern how to live appropriately. Given that this appears to be one of Paul's overarching aims in Philippians, it seems reasonable to assume that part of cultivating such practical wisdom would entail developing the ability to see connections both positive and negative between Israel and the Philippians' situation. If the Philippians were ultimately unsuccessful in discerning Paul's allusions, then his overall aims and hopes for them would have been frustrated. Hence, if one is to judge that the Philippians were unlikely ever to have seen/heard the connections to the OT that Paul seems to intend in this passage then these consequences would have been more significant than they would have been with the other two passages.

I take this recognition to offer some evidence for answering questions about the Philippians' prospects for seeing/hearing this particular set of OT allusions. Let me explain. I think the OT allusions in Phil 1:19, 2:10-11 and here in 2:12-18 enrich and deepen our understanding of these texts. I think we have good reason to assume that such allusions were part of Paul's communicative intentions. With regard to 1:19 and 2:10-11 one could argue, even in the face of more sophisticated and optimistic accounts of the Philippians' capacities as the audience of this letter, that it is unlikely that they would have initially seen/heard these allusions. Such an argument would not have significant consequences for our judgments about Paul's overall rhetorical aims in writing Philippians.

If one recognizes that perceiving the allusions at work on Phil 2:12-18 seems to be part of Paul's overall communicative aims in Philippians, one also has to say that Paul assumed that the Philippians would or ultimately could come to perceive these allusions. That is, one is pushed to think that, at least with Philippians, Paul had a fairly high regard for the Philippians abilities, opportunities and capacities to perceive his allusive work with the OT. Why otherwise, would he risk failure with regard to one of his primary aims for writing in the first place? If one concludes that even over time and in the light of further study and instruction, the Philippians would not see/hear Paul's allusions in this passage, then one is also forced to conclude that an important aspect of Paul's aims in writing Philippians failed.

Let me be clear about what I am claiming here. I think it is perfectly possible that any number of Paul's aims in writing to any of his churches may have been frustrated either fully or in part. Just because we can discern Paul's communicative intentions and the ways in which he hoped for those intentions to shape the faith and practice of the communities to which he wrote, does not mean that these aims and purposes were always and fully realized. Rather, I think this passage and its role in Paul's overall aims and purposes for the Philippians shows that Paul assumed the Philippians had the prospects and capacities to perceive the allusions in this text. The alternative here is to argue that Paul assumed his work would ultimately fail in one of its central aims, the

cultivation of a form of Christ focused practical wisdom. Nevertheless, despite this conviction he went ahead and wrote Philippians as he did.

Regardless of how one answers this question about the epistle's first audience, Christians today should take these allusions seriously. It would be extremely odd to argue that despite the fact that attention to these allusions will probably enhance Christian life and practice in the present, Christians should not attend to these allusions because the epistle's first audience might not have recognized them. No matter how one resolves the historical questions, commenting on such allusions and reflecting on them would seem to be an essential element of interpreting Scripture theologically. Moreover, cultivating the familiarity with Scripture that will enable one to "hear" these and other allusions is a foundational practice of the Christian life. This is not because it enhances one's prospects of being a more clever reader of Scripture. Rather, such habits of reading Scripture enhance one's prospects of engaging Scripture in ways that will deepen one's communion with God and others.

For questions about the use of Scripture in the NT, we have to say that in Philippians Scripture plays a relatively minor role in comparison with Romans, Galatians or the Corinthian correspondence. As a result, discussions of Philipipans have not played a very significant role in the scholarly debates generated by *Echoes of Scripture*. Alternatively, that this paucity also allows us to examine some of the more vexing methodological issues in a context where the interpretive issues are less fraught. Less heat may help us generate more light.

When looking at the use of Scripture in Philippians, the relatively uncluttered scholarly terrain helps us to see that there are at least three perspectives one can adopt when looking at this question and that distinguishing between these perspectives helps to clarify how to evaluate work on the use of Scripture in any text. The first perspective is Paul's own. Here it is important to distinguish between Paul's communicative intention and his motives as spelled out above. Such a distinction offers a great deal of conceptual clarity. Recognizing such a distinction entails, however, that our claims about the character Paul, himself, and his own larger theological and personal hopes and aims will need to be limited.

When making judgments about the scope of Paul's allusive practices with regard to the OT, there seem to be two important areas to examine when one wants to make arguments about how deep to dig in order to display Paul's allusive practices. The first is vocabulary. Even when there are no direct indicators that Paul is engaging an OT text, one might rely on the presence of particular vocabulary to make a case that he is. In Philippians 1:19 and 2:10-11 one finds virtual quotations from OT texts that indicate that Paul intended to communicate some sort of connection between what he wrote in Philippians and what was already written in Job and Isaiah. With regard to 2:12-18 the case is less direct, though the use of "grumbling" in 2:14 and its relatively focused use in the LXX along with some close correspondences between 2:15 and Deut 32:5 support the claim that Paul is both interpreting the Philippians situation in the light of Israel's past relations with God and inviting the Philippians to do likewise as part of their growth in Christ focused practical wisdom. This might be further supported by the similar use of "grumbling" language in 1 Cor.

The second factor one should consider in offering judgments about Paul's allusive practices has to do with the fit between what is going on in the wider OT context and what Paul is arguing in any particular epistle. That is, if one wishes to argue that Paul uses specific vocabulary both to

invoke a specific OT verse or two and he wishes to draw on further and deeper connections between that text and its wider context, then one's argument is enhanced to the degree one can show that such allusions help to advance arguments Paul is already making in the epistle. For example, consider the allusion to Job 13 in Phil 1:19. In this section of Philippians Paul is already offering an evaluation of his situation in prison. He is offering himself as an example of how to comport oneself in the face of suffering taken on in obedience to God. He is also displaying for the Philippians a particular confidence in God's providential care. All of this is leading to and supporting his admonition in 1:27-30 that the Philippians should order their common life in a manner worthy of the gospel in the face of opposition. The wider contours of Job's discussion with his friends in Job 13 reflect and deepen these convictions about God's providence and Paul's ultimate vindication. This fit between the wider context of Job and Paul's argument in Phil 1 provides a basis, then, for arguing that Paul intends to communicate these deeper and wider allusions. When speaking of Paul's communicative intentions one is limited to arguing in this way. The alternative is to offer highly speculative arguments about what Paul's motives were.

In all of this, however, it is important to remember that one should proportion the level of conviction about Paul's practice with the amount and aptness of the vocabulary and the level and degree of congruence between OT context and epistolary argument. In this respect Philippians nicely offers scholars the opportunity to test arguments in an environment where there is less at stake interpretively speaking.

I also indicated that one can examine the use of Scripture in Philippians from the perspective of contemporary readers. Although there are a variety of possible interests contemporary readers might bring to this question, I focused on Christian readers interested in theological reading broadly conceived. My presupposition here is that this reflects the vast majority people who might examine this question. Such a perspective is freed from vexing questions about levels of literacy and accessibility of OT texts. Such perspective would be constrained by the plausibility of any particular interpretive argument relative to the specific theological interests one is pursuing. I am not sure that much more of a methodological nature needs to be said here.

The most vexing way of addressing the issue of the use of Scripture in Philippians is to focus on the Philippians as an audience. On the one hand, we can speak of this or any other epistle's original audience. By that we generally are referring to some sort of construct of linguistic, material and cultural conventions, which we have good reason to think that speakers of Greek in the middle part of the first century shared. This is not so much a judgment about any particular individual or group as a summary of generalities. I think this is a useful construction. When scholars speak of the "original audience" in this sense they are, for the most part, displaying the same sort of interest as someone who explains that an author's communicative intentions were.

Things become much more complicated, on the other hand, when someone wants to make specific historical claims about the particular audience of an epistle. On the one hand, we can claim that if an author writes with a particular set of communicative intentions, then we can assume that the author, who in this case had a good knowledge of the audience, presumes that the audience has the various capacities needed to grasp those communicative intentions. This, of course, is not a guarantee of success.

In addition, we have some idea of levels of literacy in the first century, but these are very general observations and speculative, too. Again, we have information about the cost and accessibility of books, but little precise information about what a particular group who had an intense commitment to a set of books might do in order to get a copy.²⁴ We know that Christians from the earliest days of the church catechized new believers, but our information about these processes of formation is much better for later centuries than for the first century. We know that Paul's epistles were read to their respective congregations, but we do not know much about a congregation's relationship to those texts and to the OT over time. Thus, although scholars may have an intense interest in the perspective of an epistle's original audience, we simply have to recognize that there is little to say.

As frustrating as this may be, it might also be useful to ask who, beside a very small group of scholars, would be interested in such a question? From the perspective of contemporary readers of Philippians it is not clear that even if we could know a great deal about how actual Philippian Christians read Paul's letter it would have that much regulative force for their own interpretations. From the perspective of those contemporary scholars interested in the use of Scripture in Paul's letters, the example of Philippians is not particularly rich in material for examination. I hope to have shown, however, that it provides an occasion for increased clarity and rigor with regard to what one hopes to discuss in addressing the question. Moreover, it may encourage us, scholars, to formulate our interests in ways that are directed to those questions that we can most fruitfully answer.

²⁴ See B Abasciano, "Diamonds in the Rough: A Reply to Christopher Stanelly Concerning the Reader Competency of Paul's Original Audiences," *NovT* 49 (2007), 156-61.