CHAPTER THREE

THE MODEL READER, INTERTEXTUALITY AND BIBLICAL STUDIES

3.1 Introduction to Intertextuality

Gospel scholarship may have been slow to appreciate the profound narrative sophistication of the Gospels, thus neglecting their intratextual dynamics, but they have never been negligent in examining extratextual relationships—particularly the phenomenon of biblical quotations and potential parallels of figures in both Judaism and paganism—albeit often without a coherent, explicit methodology. This is why the concept of “intertextuality,” born in the field of literary studies, has been able to sneak in the back door, as it were, in spite of modern biblical scholars’s general skepticism towards many trends in literary criticism. In fact, the term has become rather “fashionable” in biblical studies as a new term designating the old endeavor of source and influence study. Steve Moyise notes, “Critics who once spoke of ‘sources’ now speak of an author’s intertextual use of traditions.” The question concerns whether the fascination with intertextuality is nothing more than an exercise of pouring new wine into old skins.

The term largely made its way to prominence in biblical studies in the year 1989 with the publication of two significant books, *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings*, a collection of essays edited by Sipke Draisma dealing with intertextual theory and exegetical practice, and Richard Hays’s

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Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul, an intertextual investigation of the function of allusions to and echoes of the LXX in Paul’s letters. Neither Hays nor the essayists in the Draisma volume are naïve about the intricacies of intertextuality; rumors of their theoretical naïveté have been greatly exaggerated. Hays’s approach in particular is much more theoretically informed than certain critics have admitted. Hays’s “working hypothesis” is that “certain approaches to intertextuality that have developed within literary criticism prove illuminating when applied to Paul’s letters.”

Hays first briefly explains Kristeva’s and Barthes’s broad notion of intertextuality as “the study of the semiotic matrix within which a text’s acts of signification occur,” noting that “[a]ll discourse, in this view, is necessarily intertextual in the sense that its conditions of intelligibility are given by and in relation to a previously given body of discourse.”

Hays proposes a more limited version of intertextuality, “focusing on [Paul’s] actual citations of and allusions to specific texts.” Hays’s approach surpasses the traditional philological quest for sources and influences in that he recognizes that identifying allusions “is only the beginning of the interpretive process… The critical task, then, would be to see what poetic effects and larger meanings are produced by the poet’s device of echoing predecessors.”

Hays next introduces John Hollander’s concept of metalepsis, Hays’s main theoretical impetus. We will resume our discussion of Hays’s work later; what should be clear at this point is that Hays presents an informed and subtle view of intertextuality that is something other than the traditional and much maligned author-centered quest for sources and influences.

Other writers are not so informed and subtle, however. A prime example of a piece of rather traditional scholarship appropriating the concept as a sophisticated but superficial banner is George Buchanan’s

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7 For instance, Moyise wrongly asserts that Hays does not mention Kristeva (Moyise, “Intertextuality,” 15); Hays discusses her ideas on p. 15 of *Echoes*. George Aichele and Gary Phillips are singularly unfair to Hays in “Introduction: Exegesis, Elsegesis, Intergesis,” *Semeia* 69–70 (1995); see fn. 48 below.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., 17–18.