Review of Erik Waaler. *The Use of the*

Old Testament in Matthew 1–4

Lauren Lockhart

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Erik Waaler. *The Use of the Old Testament in Matthew 1–4*. Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2023. 326 pages. Paperback. ISBN 978-3-16-162225-0. $124.00.

Erik Waaler received his doctorate from MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion, and Science, and he currently serves as a professor at NLA University College in Norway. He has written extensively on the New Testament's use of the Old Testament, giving particular attention to both the Gospels' and Paul's use of Deuteronomy and the Shema. His expertise in intertextuality comes to the forefront in numerous essays published in the Scriptures, Texts, and Tracings series, as well as monograph-length works such as *The Use of the Old Testament in Matthew 1–4*. In *The Use of the Old Testament in Matthew 1–4* in particular, Waaler "aims to reclaim the mode of recontextualization current in first-century Judah and Galilee as it is reflected in the Gospel of Matthew" (VII). More specifically, he critiques modern approaches to intertextuality that merely identify quotations, allusions, and echoes, arguing that these approaches are "far removed" from the approaches of those writing in the Second Temple Period (VII, 1). In contrast to these modern methods, he ultimately proposes "that we speak of recontextualization," which he defines as "the reuse of parts of one text in the body of another text," and "that we focus on describing the many different factors that are at work when a text is recontextualized" (1). Considering his two-fold aim of establishing and applying his method to Scripture, Waaler spends the first few chapters of the book on the philosophical and technical aspects of intertextuality and recontextualization, and then he applies these insights to specific passages in the Gospel of Matthew in the second half.

Beginning in chapter one, Waaler argues that the approaches to intertextuality espoused by Richard Hays and Brian Rosner, both of whom have popularized the study of intertextuality within New Testament studies by developing criteria for identifying allusions and echoes, are

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insufficient since they only focus on identifying whether intertextual references occur in a text and the source from which a reference was taken (7). In contrast, Waaler urges readers to focus on how writers employed and interpreted a text in its new context for a particular purpose. He states, "We would like to ask: How is the text changed when it is recontextualized? The focus of our method should be on the identification of *how* exegetes of the Second Temple period employ Scripture and interpret Scripture" (7). This focus on how the writers of the Second Temple period employ and interpret Scripture points back to Waaler's overall aim "to reclaim the mode of recontextualization current in first-century Judah and Galilee" as discussed above (VII, 1). Before exploring recontextualization in detail, Waaler discusses synchrony, diachrony, subjectivity, dominant texts, and *sensus plenior,* all of which are key topics and debates within the field of intertextuality.

In chapter two, Waaler begins by distinguishing more clearly between citations, "reproduced word for word from a source" and accompanied by introductory formulas; quotations, "word-for-word reproductions of a text without introductory markers;" allusions, a reference that the author assumes the reader will recognize due to lexical parallels; and echoes, very faint references to a text (31). Yet, once again, Waaler does not believe these traditional terms and categories are helpful when they overlap in a text or when there is only one parallel lemma (30–35). Therefore, he reiterates that he prefers the term "recontextualization," and he begins to provide several key strategies or factors for identifying and interpreting the so-called recontextualizations. The first four factors address the literary reference, degree of verbal agreement, level of intent and awareness, and implicational change.

In chapter three, Waaler then provides twenty-four additional factors that "influence an interpretation of a pretext that is employed and manipulated when reused" (32). The first factor

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he discusses in this chapter focuses on "continuity within change" (55). Waaler argues that the interpreter must first identify the continuity and discontinuity between texts, as well as the possible implications of why an author chose to retain or recontextualize certain aspects of a text in its new context (55–57). Another factor that Waaler discusses is metalepsis, which occurs when an author connects two texts in such a way that the reference in the phenotext (new text in which the reference is placed) is read in light of the entire, original context of the phrase in the archetext (original text from which the reference is drawn) (62). Besides metalepsis and "continuity within change," other factors include differences in the culture, language, grammar, genre, and focalization between the archetexts and phenotexts. Waaler also notes that large-scale patterns can be recontextualized in the organization of entire New Testament books (83).

After laying the foundation for recontextualization in the first section, Waaler applies his strategies to Matthew in the second half of the book. In chapter four, Waaler examines the explicit recontextualizations in Matthew, otherwise known as the "fulfillment quotations." He notes a pattern of unity in these quotations, many taken from Isaiah (90–91). Next, he spends chapter five examining Matthew 1:1, and he suggests that this verse is a form of paratext and serves as a title that applies not just to the genealogy but to all of Matthew (101, 120). Then, in chapter six, Waaler argues that the genealogy is a form of rewritten Scripture drawn from Ruth 4:18–22 and 1 Chronicles 3:5, 10–16. He believes that the intrusions and changes to the text, such as the phrase "and his brothers" in 1:2, 11, the inclusion of Abraham and David in both the title and genealogy, and the inclusion of women in the genealogy, reveal Matthew's unique emphases that develop throughout the rest of the Gospel (121). Ultimately, towards the end of chapter six, Waaler argues that the recontextualizations in the title and genealogy indicate that the entire book should be read in light of recontextualizations.

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Next, in chapter seven, Waaler focuses on how Matthew recontextualizes the

predominantly verbatim citations of Isaiah 7:14, Micah 5:1, Hosea 11:1, and Jeremiah 38:15

throughout the infancy narrative. He also explores how Matthew interweaves additional Old

Testament texts within these verbatim recontextualizations. Waaler's detailed analysis cannot be

reproduced here, but a few examples will suffice. Regarding Matthew 1:23 ("Behold the virgin

shall be with child, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call his name 'Immanuel,' which

translated means 'God with us'"), Waaler suggests that Matthew intertwined Isaiah 7:14 (LXX)

with Genesis 16:11; 17:19; Judges 13:3–5; 13:7 (149–150). Waaler argues that Matthew

interweaves these texts to connect typologically the birth narratives of Ishmael, Isaac, and

Samson with Isaiah's prophecy of Jesus's birth, illuminating the meaning of Immanuel and

emphasizing the theme of promise and fulfillment (149–150, 164). After discussing Matthew

1:23, he then examines the possible recontextualizations of Micah 5:1 and 2 Samuel 5:2 in

Matthew 2:6 as it relates to Messianic prophecies. Next, Waaler argues that Matthew embeds the

recontextualization of Hosea 11:1 in a "fourfold recontextualization of Exodus 4:20" in Matthew

2:15 for the dual purpose of highlighting the parallels between the lives of Jesus and Moses and

revealing that Jesus takes "on the role of Israel in a representative way in Matthew" (197).

Finally, Waaler explores Matthew's recontextualizations of Jeremiah 31:15, 38:15, and Genesis

37:35 in Matthew 2:18, all of which connect Jesus's experience of exile with that of Israel.

In contrast to the previous chapter where Waaler addresses numerous verbatim

recontextualizations, in chapter eight, Waaler focuses on Matthew 2:23, which does not seem to

recontextualize a particular prophecy but a variety of Old Testament texts containing "Nazarene"

and "branch." Given the similar spellings and meanings of the Hebrew terms, as well as debates

over their Greek translation and Matthew's original term, Waaler suggests that Matthew refers to

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both a priestly and kingly figure (217–223). Then, in chapter nine, Waaler focuses on how Matthew presents John the Baptist as the forerunner of Jesus in Matthew 3 through his recontextualization of Isaiah 40:3, as well as passages related to Elijah, such as 2 Kings 1:7–8 and Malachi 4:5 (232–233). He also argues that Matthew characterizes Jesus as a royal, obedient, and sacrificial servant in Matthew 3 by recontextualizing Psalm 2, Isaiah 42, and Genesis 22 (240). He concludes that "the use of the Old Testament in Matthew chapter 3 is Christological" (240). Finally, in chapter ten, Waaler examines four "explicit verbatim recontextualizations" in the temptation narrative (Deuteronomy 6:13, 6:16, 8:3; Psalm 91:11–12), all of which present Jesus as the new Moses and faithful Son of God (270). Waaler then summarizes his main points in the conclusion and reiterates that Matthew's process of recontextualizing Old Testament texts includes elements of both continuity and change for the ultimate purpose of presenting Jesus as the Christ (271).

Overall, Waaler's monograph provides a unique and beneficial approach to intertextuality that deserves attention. Regardless of whether Waaler's terminology takes root in the field, his decision to move away from traditional terms in the field of intertextuality in favor of the term "recontextualization" causes him to stand out amid scholars such as Richard Hays, G. K. Beale, and James Hamilton, who typically employ the standard terminology. Furthermore, in contrast to scholars such as Hays, who are known for providing criteria for identifying whether an allusion or echo is present in a text, Waaler's factors do not really address the question of how to determine if an intertextual reference is present. Instead, his factors focus on why a recontextualization has been incorporated in the text, how it has been adjusted for its new context, and how to interpret its significance. Therefore, in comparison to more traditional approaches, Waaler's twenty-eight factors for interpreting recontextualizations likely allow for a

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greater level of precision in identifying how an author incorporates an intertextual reference into their text, as well as the significance of any alterations an author might make to the text. Waaler's intentional focus on providing factors that align with the interpretive strategies of the Second Temple period rather than modern theories of intertextuality also provides a unique lens to his approach. However, scholars such as Beale and Hamilton have also explored the ways that New Testament authors employ and adjust Old Testament texts, and they often refer to similar criteria and topics as Waaler. Even Hays explores the ways that concepts such as metalepsis shape our interpretation of allusions. Therefore, although Waaler's approach is perhaps more detailed regarding the factors he proposes, it is not entirely new, even if his terminology and some of his factors are unique. Furthermore, considering the overlap between Waaler's approach and those espoused by Beale and Hamilton, Waaler's limited engagement with Beale and lack of engagement with Hamilton could be considered a weakness of his work.

Additionally, even though the detailed examples that Waaler provides throughout Matthew 1–4, as well as his frequent engagement with textual criticism, Second Temple literature, translation theory, and biblical cultures exhibit the well-rounded nature of his work, some of Waaler's discussions are extremely technical, and some of his factors, such as the cultural, sociological, and worldview factors or the narrative pattern and pattern of association factors, greatly overlap with each other. As a result of his inclusion of so many technical and sometimes overlapping factors within discussions of a single verse, his work may be somewhat confusing to a reader unfamiliar with the field. The absence of translations for certain Greek, Hebrew, and German texts may also lessen the book's accessibility. Therefore, the book is likely intended primarily for a scholarly audience, but a pastor or lay-person with some prior under-standing of the biblical languages and intertextuality would likely benefit from the work as well.

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Finally, although Waaler does not explicitly provide his own stance on topics such as *sensus plenior* and divine inspiration, some of his statements may raise concerns for readers from more Reformed traditions. For example, although he acknowledges that both the archetext and phenotext can be inspired, thereby allowing for both "interpretation of inspired texts" and "inspired interpretation," in chapter three, he seems to distinguish between the inspired, prophetic interpretation of a pre-text and a form of scholarly exegesis based on rules and criteria as seen in the rabbis (58–60). Although not explicit, he seems to leave room for both forms in Matthew's use of the Old Testament (59–60). Likewise, although he is not straightforward regarding his stance on *sensus plenior,* his discussion of the topic in the introduction and in chapter one may leave room for multiple fulfillments and meanings of Scripture. Yet, in the second half of the book, he predominantly appeals to typological understandings of texts rather than entirely separate meanings. Even if readers disagree with his discussions of inspiration and *sensus plenior* in the first half of the book, these discussions do not always shape his later conclusions regarding Matthew 1–4. Therefore, those with a more Reformed view of inspiration and Scripture can still glean much from his discussions of recontextualizations in Matthew. Ultimately, even considering the possible weaknesses mentioned above, Waaler's research is extremely beneficial for the study of intertextuality in general and Matthew's use of the Old Testament in particular, and he rightly pushes scholars and exegetes to explore the questions of how and why the New Testament authors employ Old Testament texts.