The Rhetorical Use
of the Old Testament in Hebrews

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I. Introduction

Hebrews is one of New Testament (henceforth, NT) books in which has most quotations from the Old Testament (henceforth, OT). Rhetorically, the use of the OT passages belongs to logos appeal as the rational appeal in the speech itself. Aristotle’s three constitutive methods of proof, in any effective rhetorical act, are ethos, pathos and logos; in other words, the attention paid to demonstrating the good character of the speaker, the arousing of emotions in the audience, and the logical character of the speech. ¹) Three of them are not apposed with each other because reason and emotion work together in a speech to achieve their effect, complementing one another.

There are two fundamental forms of the logical appeal: deductive and inductive. While an enthymeme is a deductive appeal, an example (paradeigma) belongs to an inductive appeal. Examples are best suited to deliberative oratory and enthymemes to forensic. ²) Aristotle defines the example as follows ³):

We have said that example is a kind of induction and with what kind of material it deals by way of induction. It is neither the relation of part to whole, nor of whole to part, nor of one whole to another whole, but of part to part, of like to like, when both come under the same genus,

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but one of then is better known than the other.

There are two kinds of examples as an inductive appeal: historical examples that have happened before and fictitious examples such as parables or fables that by the rhetor. Even though believers can say that the OT passages are testimonies of historical events and stories, the OT becomes fictitious examples in the sense that the OT is not historical events which the author directly experienced. The use of the OT passages, therefore, is the author’s rhetorical method of fictitious examples which is the citation of well-known and similar situations, persons, or events, emphasizing the familiarity between the speaker and audience. As examples are used for well-known people in rhetoric, the OT in Hebrews is also used for well known people.

The example supports the central notion of the proposition which is the rhetorical focus in Hebrews. It is clear that the author of Hebrews uses examples exclusively from the OT, sacred stories to be more compelling as evidence that exemplar from non biblical sources. They can be very effective for convincing believers. From this rhetorical point of view, this paper attempts to look at the way how the OT passages rhetorically function as examples in Hebrews in relation to the stasis at issue and how the OT plays an important role to illustrate or witness the gospel with other topics. It will be the study to examine that what kind of position the rhetorical use of the OT has in the letter.

II. Rhetorical Situation and Stasis of Hebrews

This chapter is focused on the motive to write the letter, rather than any literary milieu of the letter. In order to analyze the use of the OT

4) Aristotle, Rhetoric. 2.20.2-4.
6) Hebrews is known as a riddle of the NT. Many suggestions have been offered in attempts to identify the author; for example, Paul, Luke, Clement of Rome, Apollos, Barnabas, etc. There is no way to determine by whom or from where Hebrews was prepared. As the author says Hebrews is like Melchizedek(Heb 8:3) without father, without mother, without genealogy; W. Marxsen, Introduction to the New Testament, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 221. The author might belong to a subsequent generation(2:3-4). The Greek style of Hebrews is quite different from that of Paul’s letters. Among NT books, Luke and Acts are similar to Hebrews in style. From the use of the OT, language and Judaic style, it seems that the author was in the culture of