

TESTING THE INTERTEXTUALITY OF ματαιότης
IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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Abstract: Adapting Michael Hoey’s lexical priming theory, this article provides a new rubric for the evaluation of intertextuality in the New Testament. This article tests the veracity of the claim that the lexeme ματαιότης functions to invoke the language of Ecclesiastes. Romans 8 mirrors some of the language of Ecclesiastes, while Eph 4:17 has strong ties to Rom 8, creating an intertextual chain via the lexeme ματαιότης. (Article)

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Introduction

In this article, I develop a linguistic model that tests for intertextuality,¹ particularly as triggered through individual lexemes.

1. Julia Kristeva first initiated the terminology of intertextuality and textual surfaces (see for example Kristeva, “Bounded Text,” 36–37; cf. Moyise, “Intertextuality,” 14). It was Richard Hays, drawing on the work of literary critic John Hollander, who brought such terminology into the realm of New Testament studies. Hays’ definition of intertextuality as “the embedding of fragments of an earlier text within a later one” seems to capture this as well (Hays, *Echoes*, 14). Intertextuality, what Moyise now calls “common coinage” (Moyise, “Intertextuality,” 15), has evolved to the point that it is used almost irresponsibly, to the extent that it adds few methodological constraints. The present study is an inquiry into intertextual theory; however, it will require more specific definition as will be seen below. A simplified definition of intertextuality as the interaction of multiple textual surfaces, seems apropos to the present discussion. Note that this study has in view an antecedent or source text, unlike Kristevan intertextuality which makes no comment upon origin or source.

This model will be used to test the intertextuality of *ματαιότης* between the New Testament and Ecclesiastes. I will argue that in the New Testament the rare word *ματαιότης* functions intertextually in Rom 8:20 and 2 Pet 2:18. Rom 8:20 is linked with the book of Ecclesiastes while 2 Pet 2:18 is associated with Rom 8:20 and its surrounding context.

Intertextuality in Linguistic-Semantic Perspective

Semantics as a sub-discipline within linguistics provides a valuable theoretical framework for addressing issues of word meaning, particularly what sort of associative power might be present in the use of a single lexeme. Lexical semantics provides a more specific theory and more precise terminology that may help to steer the way through the array of terms currently in vogue in Old Testament in the New Testament research.

For this I turn primarily to the work of Michael Hoey, whose work in corpus linguistics has led to his theory of lexical priming as a means to account for collocation in written and spoken language.² Lexical priming is understood as a psychological phenomenon. As words are experienced by language users in day to day life, co-occurring words and grammatical and semantic patterns become associated with them.³ Language use does not occur in a vacuum but occurs within a tradition of use. Priming is thus the cumulative result of repeated encounters with a

2. Corpus linguistics implies an analysis of language phenomena across a specified (representative) group of texts, i.e., the corpus (see O'Donnell, "Register-Balanced Corpus," for insights into generating a representative corpus for Hellenistic Greek). Observed phenomena can then be generalized to the language as a whole, or register or text-type, etc (see, for example, Stubbs, "On Texts," 127, who provides some positive assessments of the benefits of corpus analysis for linguistic description). Strictly speaking, this study is not a corpus investigation proper as it does not compare phenomena in a particular text to patterns in a particular corpus. Instead, using some corpus-derived linguistic theory, I compare particular texts to observe any related patterns that may generate some exegetical significance.

3. Note that according to Hoey, priming is a function of the mind and not the word itself. It is the language users who are primed to expect and duplicate patterns (see Hoey, "Literary Creativity," 7-9).

particular word. The implication is that language is fundamentally intertextual, as new linguistic moments are indebted to prior language use.⁴ At this point, intertextuality becomes a reader-centered phenomenon made possible through the reader's (repeated) experience of particular texts and the accompanying lexical associations. Left here, however, priming is random and personal and of little interest for discerning textual meaning. But language is also a social phenomenon, which means that through mutually experienced language events—such as the reading of common texts—primings become shared. A potent implication of this principle for this study can be seen with respect to religious texts (such as the LXX), which may have had overwhelming associative power for New Testament authors and early Christian communities.⁵ Traditional Old Testament in the New Testament research seeks to identify these moments of meaningful association, a microcosm of the vast intertextual web appreciated by many post-structural critics and revealed within a representative corpus. The corpus is thus a collection of possibility or even meaning-potential from which to compare specific instances.⁶ In the present investigation, a particular text is compared to a collection of instances within another text (and part of a larger corpus) to see if there may be any shared, meaningful patterns.

Intertextuality at any level is a result of primed associations with an antecedent text. More allusive invocations may be targeted through the use of keywords in carefully constructed contexts. Priming is an act of preparation. For example, one puts a coat of primer on a wall before painting in order to prepare the wall to be painted. In the same way, experiencing particular lexemes in particular repetitive or memorable contexts causes the language user to be primed to re-experience these associated

4. This point is essentially made by Hoey (Hoey, *Lexical Priming*, 10, 20, 29). See also Teubert, "Parole-Linguistics," 80, who defines intertextuality as "the recurrence of selected keywords."

5. Hoey notes that widely read and influential works such as religious texts go a long way in forming and maintaining a language user's primings (Hoey, *Lexical Priming*, 12).

6. See Halliday and Matthiessen, *Functional Grammar*, 26–29.

contexts in future linguistic events. The use of a linguistic construct (grammatical and/or lexical) taken from an antecedent text transports the reader into the world of that text and brings certain associations to the forefront of the reader's mind. These keywords are notable, because the corresponding linguistic associations—present in both the author's and reader's minds—are conceptually larger and communicate a broader range of meaning than could have been otherwise succinctly communicated. As Stamps points out, “the influence of some texts extends to the social, cultural, and ideological baggage that gets attached to them.”⁷ In other words, “less is more.” Any portion of language can be used to invoke primed associations, including sizable quotations and paraphrases to a small phrase or even a single word.⁸ It is up to the investigation of individual cases, then, to determine whether this phenomenon is actually occurring.⁹

Specificity provides constraints whereas ambiguity is less constrained.¹⁰ This is an important principle with regard to intertextual priming. Because intertextual priming may occur primarily with a single word rather than an entire clause or clause complex, there is a deficit of formal constraints. Consequently, it becomes increasingly difficult to determine the invocation of a

7. Stamps, “Use,” 20.

8. A word of warning is necessary when investigating single words like this. Barr, followed by Silva, warns against “illegitimate totality transfer.” This occurs when all possible associations, meanings, etc. are brought to bear on the specific use of a single word (Barr, *Semantics*, 218; Silva, *Biblical Words*, 25). There is a balance that must be struck between acknowledging potential associations and committing ITT.

9. Not just any word can have intertextually primed associations. Commonplace words such as conjunctions and articles are obviously too common to prime in the way that I am suggesting. Instead rarer keywords are the type of words required to jolt the reader. Further study is needed that investigates criteria for determining such keywords.

10. For example, an explicit quotation (especially with an introductory formula) has firm lexical and syntactical constraints. The words used and their syntactical order constrains the quotation to the extent that a proposed source must conform to those lexical and syntactical features. More ambiguous examples of intertextuality (such as a paraphrase or allusion) will have fewer formal constraints and therefore may not have as specific a source.

previous text as particular lexicogrammatical constraints decrease. I suggest, therefore, that it is highly unlikely that a skilled author would use a single keyword to invoke a very precise portion of text. Instead, single words are likely employed to target larger bodies of literature, notable passages unified by a single theme, or other more general referents. Linguistic constraints are required, therefore, to provide a measure of rigor and control in such an investigation. As noted above, corpus linguistic theories seek to account for language patterning and repetition; select theoretical constraints can help better identify meaningful associations between texts. Hoey's lexical priming theory provides a number of pattern-types that may serve as criteria in such an investigation, the first being collocation—the frequent co-occurrence of one lexeme with another.¹¹ Besides lexical collocations, there are seven additional criteria that can identify and constrain meaningful interactions between texts:¹²

The grammatical patterns a word appears in and the grammatical function it serves including the grammatical categories it realizes (colligation)

The meanings with which it is associated (semantic association)

The pragmatics it is associated with (pragmatic association)

The genres, styles, domains, and social situations it occurs in, and/or is restricted to

The patterns of cohesion (or absence) it forms in a text (textual collocation)

The textual positioning of the word, e.g., whether it typically begins or ends the sentence it appears in or whether it has a tendency to appear at the beginning of paragraphs or speaking turns (textual colligation)

11. See Teubert, "Language and Corpus," 83; Hoey, *Lexical Priming*, 2–5. Hoey and O'Donnell both suggest that ± 4 words is the ideal range for collocates of consequence (Hoey, *Lexical Priming*, 4–5; O'Donnell, *Corpus Linguistics*, 332).

12. This list is adapted from Hoey, "Literary Creativity," 8. Cf. Hoey, *Lexical Priming*, 13, where these concepts are well developed throughout the rest of the book.

Its place in the larger semantics of the text, e.g., its associations with contrast relations, problem-solution patterns, narrative climax, etc. (textual semantic association)

Theoretically, an author may give clues to the source text through the use of any of these linguistic constraints. When a keyword in the antecedent texts occurs consistently in certain syntactical frames, near certain words, or expressed within a certain theme, the repetition of this pattern will constrain the implied audience's recognition of the source text.¹³

When investigating such an allusive category of intertextuality, that which counts for evidence must be firmly defined and rigorously applied. None of the criteria alone can confirm an intertextual relationship. The presence of multiple criteria is ideal; this will correct for random or coincidental constraints. The principle of "less is more" suggests that the targeted effect of the keyword is variable. An author may make use of a keyword under the assumption that the associations set off in the recipient's mind may be similar to the author's, though not necessarily so. By virtue of the fact that this keyword is used, the author consciously surrenders the locus of meaning from him- or herself and places it into the hands of the audience.¹⁴ Even so, a reader-oriented approach to such a study demands caution. As noted above, priming—while being a thoroughly psychological phenomenon—can only be measured in terms of shared linguistic events. An audience-sensitive, author-centered approach to intertextuality therefore appreciates socially-bound lexical associations and the skill of an author to anticipate them.

13. Without these constraints, measurable intertextuality cannot exist. A single word on its own is too small a unit to relate to an antecedent text with any certainty.

14. Porter accurately describes the ways in which meaning is controlled. "The less control the original author has over the citation, the more control the citing author has over it" (Porter, "Further Comments," 108). The use of a single keyword allows for maximal control of the "quoting author" because the meaning constraints from the source text are minimized. However, this in turn allows for ambiguity in meaning for the audience, thus the surrendering of meaning to the audience.

Ecclesiastes, Psalms, and ματαιότης

Thirty-nine of the total fifty-four occurrences of ματαιότης in the Old Testament, a common translation of the Hebrew word לַבַּיִת, are found in Ecclesiastes and characterize the repeated evaluation of the experiences of Qoheleth. A pattern emerges as Qoheleth searches for meaning in life, yet finds it utterly vain. This repeated refrain occurs in a number of forms. The two most common are: καὶ γε τοῦτο ματαιότης and τὰ πάντα ματαιότης καὶ προαίρεσις πνεύματος. At times, the refrains are modified with the addition of καὶ προαίρεσις πνεύματος to the end of the former phrase or removing καὶ προαίρεσις πνεύματος from the latter. Further, Ecclesiastes is bookended in 1:2 and 12:8 by ματαιότης ματαιότητων εἶπεν ὁ Ἐκκλησιαστής, ματαιότης ματαιότητων τὰ πάντα ματαιότης. Though occasionally modified, the refrains have one thing in common: the lexeme ματαιότης, which reinforces a theme that is further emphasized by Qoheleth's thesis in 1:2 and 12:8. This is a work that identifies the paradoxical and uncertain nature of the world—aptly described in terms of ματαιότης.

Several primed patterns support these observations as the majority of repetitive lexical, grammatical, and semantic patterns contribute to the overall thesis of futility (see concordance table in the Appendix). Interestingly, the lemma ματαιότης is one of the most frequent collocates. This is best seen in the “bookend” statements. Further, other semantically-related lexical items collocate around ματαιότης to contribute semantically to the futility thesis. For example, in Eccles 11:10, youth is seen to be ἡ ἄνοια ματαιότης (the folly of futility). The most frequent nested collocation (14 times) is the idiom καὶ γε τοῦτο ματαιότης. This repetition is a reminder to the reader that in the mind of Qoheleth, each endeavour comes to futility. Such a sentiment is reiterated by an additional common collocate pattern, τὰ πάντα ματαιότης (6 times). The futility theme is often expanded upon by the nested collocation καὶ προαίρεσις πνεύματος (7 times). This metaphor helps define for the reader how Qoheleth conceives of futility. The volume of instances of ματαιότης in Ecclesiastes, accompanied by its consistent and programmatic use

represented by these priming patterns, recommends the book as an ideal antecedent text for consideration.

The other text in which *ματαιότης* often occurs is the Psalms.¹⁵ Generally, *ματαιότης* is used in the Davidic Psalms, though it occasionally occurs in others. The lexeme is commonly used to refer to humankind and their days on the earth,¹⁶ in parallel to *ἀδικαίως*,¹⁷ and in connection with idolatry.¹⁸ There does not seem to be any unifying theme behind the use of *ματαιότης* in the Psalms, making it an unlikely source text for the New Testament writers.

Pauline Usage

ματαιότης appears twice in the Pauline writings: Rom 8:20 and Eph 4:17. The context of each occurrence is conspicuously different. In Rom 8:20, *ματαιότης* is used as a characteristic of the creation, as that to which the creation has been subjected, while in Eph 4:17 *ματαιότης* typifies of the minds of the Gentiles. The following discussion will explore Paul's uses of the term in each context to determine if *ματαιότης* is being used as a keyword.

In Eph 4:17, most commentators do not see any intertextual connection with Ecclesiastes in the lexeme *ματαιότης*.¹⁹ Rather,

15. The only other occurrence is in Proverbs.

16. See Ps 39:5 (38:6 LXX), 52:7 (51:9 LXX), 78:33 (77:33 LXX), 144:4 (143:4 LXX) among others.

17. See esp. 144:8, 144:11 (143:8, 143:11 LXX).

18. Ps 31:6 (30:7 LXX) and possibly 40:4 (39:5 LXX)

19. Barth, *Ephesians 1–3*, 499–50; Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians*, 355; Best, *Ephesians*, 214; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 271–73; MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 302; O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 318–20; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 296–97; Liefeld, *Ephesians*, 112; Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, 248–49. This statement is primarily based on an implicit lack of any reference to Ecclesiastes, rather than explicit denial by commentators. Few exceptions exist. Muddiman notes that Ecclesiastes and Psalms both employ *ματαιότης* frequently, while Hoehner gives reference to the entire biblical witness including Ecclesiastes, Psalms, Romans 8, and 2 Peter 2 though he makes no claims for intertextuality (see Muddiman, *Ephesians*, 213; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 583).

they emphasize the lexeme's link to τὰ ἔθνη. If there is any dependence on the LXX, it appears to be on the basis of the adjectival form μάταιος, which frequently describes pagan idolatry (for example Jonah 2:9; Zech 10:2; Wis 15:8).²⁰ Paul also uses this language to depict the futility of Gentile practices, including idolatry.²¹ Others have proposed a connection between Eph 4:17 and Rom 1:21.²² Lincoln puts the two passages in parallel to illustrate the verbal and thematic similarities. Key concepts, which include futility, darkness, impurity, and the giving up of oneself, exhibit a strong conceptual relationship between the two passages, perhaps demonstrating a development or application of the thought in Romans 1.²³

Both of these suggestions provide important background to the text and usage of ματαιότης in Ephesians. The author's attempt to distance the readers from their idolatrous Gentile heritage is highlighted by negative associations present in Jewish perspectives on idolatry. There is also clear continuity in thought between Romans and Ephesians, as seen in Lincoln's analysis.²⁴

Despite the lack of recognition by commentators, ματαιότης in Eph 4:17 has the strongest collocational link with Ecclesiastes in comparison to other New Testament references.²⁵ In Eph 4:17, τὰ ἔθνη are described as walking ἐν ματαιότητι τοῦ νοῦς αὐτῶν. The assertion is further described as being ἐσκοτωμένοι

20. O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 320; Best, *Ephesians*, 214; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 296. The link to idolatry is also emphasized in Caird, *Letters from Prison*, 79; Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians*, 355.

21. Best, *Ephesians*, 214; O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 320; Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians*, 355. Barth goes even further to suggest that this word was commonly used in Jewish anti-pagan propaganda to describe the Empire (Barth, *Ephesians 1–3*, 499–500).

22. See discussion in MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 302; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 273; Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians*, 355; Caird, *Letters from Prison*, 79; O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 318; Darko, *As the Gentiles*, 34.

23. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 273.

24. This should not be surprising if Paul wrote Ephesians. Otherwise, this may simply reflect development of the Pauline tradition.

25. That is to say, at least in terms of lexical relationships. Syntactical and thematic links are lacking.

τῆ διανοίᾳ ὄντες. σκοτία appears six times in Ecclesiastes, sometimes in close proximity to ματαιότης.

In Eccles 2:13–14, Qoheleth contrasts wisdom and folly, and equates them with τοῦ φωτός and τὸ σκότος, noting that the fool walks in darkness. The thematic relationship between darkness and folly (though the word here is not from the ματαιότης family, it is actually ὁ ἄφρων) is evident. Eccles 5:17 (5:16 LXX) has no apparent thematic relationship, despite the verbal parallel. In Eccles 6:4, ματαιότης is linked with the preposition ἐν (the same as Eph 4:17) and paralleled with ἐν σκότει, though the context is different than in Ephesians. Finally, Eccles 11:8 parallels darkness and futility. Qohelet speaks of τὰς ἡμέρας τοῦ σκότους, calling all that comes “futility.”

There is little doubt as regards the lexical relationship between ματαιότης and σκοτία; however, it is hard to demonstrate any other points of contact. Thematically, there is no apparent relationship except in Eccles 2:13, 14, where the lexical links are fewer, i.e., ματαιότης does not appear.²⁶ Any proposed intertextual relationship in this case would be tenuous. Verbal and thematic parallels are at least able to show some correspondence in thought between Eph 4:17 and Rom 1:12, where the verbal form of ματαιότης is used.

Romans 8:20 marks the earliest instance of ματαιότης in the New Testament. Paul writes: τῆ γὰρ ματαιότητι ἣ κτίσις ὑπετάγη, οὐχ ἔκουσα ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν ὑποτάξαντα. There are essentially three main positions regarding Old Testament allusions in Rom 8:20: (1) the Fall narrative, particularly Gen 3:17–19, (2) the book of Ecclesiastes and/or (3) Rom 1:21, with the surrounding verses involved in an intratextual relationship. The majority position identifies the Fall narrative as the central source for the language and thought of Rom 8:20.²⁷ The numbers

26. σκοτός collocates with ματαιότης only once in Eccles 6:4.

27. Consider Cranfield's comments: “there is little doubt that Paul had in mind the judgment related in Genesis 3:17–19...” (Cranfield, *Romans*, 413), while Murray calls this Paul's commentary on Gen 3:17–19 (Murray, *Romans*, 303). Moo notes that ματαιότης may connote the futility of Ecclesiastes, but it is better to read it in light of the Genesis 3 narrative (Moo, *Romans 1–8*, 552). Schreiner explicitly states that Rom 8:20 should not be read in light of

are not in favour of position (2); only a small number of scholars support this position.²⁸ It is notable, however, that this position is variously nuanced. While commentators may have Ecclesiastes as a whole in view, Barrett simply asserts that the reader naturally thinks of the specific uses of ματαιότης in Eccles 1:2.²⁹ As for (3), Rom 1:21 contains the single use of the verb form ματαιόω in the New Testament. Because of this, several commentators see a thematic intratextual relationship between Rom 1:21 and Rom 8:20.³⁰ This is occasionally seen as a direct link, but more often is described as a continuous development of thought carried forward vis-à-vis the Adam theme. It is problematic that none of these three interpretations reflects a developed method for evaluating intertextuality (or intratextuality). Many of the comments are unsupported, leaving the conclusions without a solid foundation. This state of affairs requires a defined method of measuring intertextuality that will serve to evaluate the complexities of the evidence.

Dunn notes that ματαιότης in Rom 8:20 is one of many verbal parallels between Romans 8 and Romans 1.³¹ For example, there is a striking connection between the noun ματαιότητι

Ecclesiastes (Schreiner, *Romans*, 436). Witherington even uses the word “echo” to describe Paul’s use of the Genesis narrative, though the term is not well defined (Witherington, *Romans*, 223–24). See also Achtemeier, *Romans*, 142; Bullmore, “Important Passages,” 159–60; Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 467; Eastman, “Whose Apocalypse?” 273; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 505; Jewett, *Romans*, 513; Käsemann, *Romans*, 233; Keener, *Romans*, 105; Keck, *Romans*, 211; Lawson, “Hope of Creation,” 559–60; Lenski, *Romans*, 534; Moo, “Nature in the New Creation,” 460; Moo, *Romans*, 515; Moo, “Isaiah’s Cosmic Covenant,” 78; Osborne, *Romans*, 211; Rimbach, “All Creation Groans,” 382; Stuhlmacher, *Romans*, 134.

28. Barrett, *Romans*, 166; Jewett, *Romans*, 513; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 208; Luther, *Romans*, 108.

29. Barrett, *Romans*, 166. Jewett suggests that the lexeme would have initiated thoughts of Ecclesiastes, and makes specific reference to the statement in Eccles 1:2 (see Jewett, *Romans*, 513).

30. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 467, 470; Eastman, “Whose Apocalypse?” 274–75; Johnson, *Reading Romans*, 128; Käsemann, *Romans*, 235; Keener, *Romans*, 105; Moo, *Romans 1–8*, 552.

31. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 467.

and the verb ἔματαιώθησαν in Rom 1:21. Johnson presents this as an obvious allusion to Paul's earlier description of idolatry,³² which Eastman suggests is an interpretation of Genesis 3.³³ Paul may use this keyword to help his readers recall the description of fallen humanity in ch. 1, especially the idolatry that is so characteristic of humanity's fall.

Jonathan Moo develops this line further. Given that Romans 5 presents Adam as the individual who brought sin and its consequences into the world, Moo posits a continuity between the giving over to futility in Rom 1:21, the Adamic themes in Romans 5, and the creation's subjection to futility in Romans 8. There is, therefore, an echo of Genesis 3 in Romans 8, which is strengthened by the link between Romans 5 and 8.³⁴ Despite the lack of verbal parallels with Genesis 3, this relationship is plausible. Even so, it does not preclude the possibility of intertextuality with Ecclesiastes.

Despite the scholarly consensus, Ecclesiastes is the best possible candidate for intertextuality. As opposed to the above suggestions, there is a firm lexical relationship simply due to the fact that ματαιότης is present in Rom 8:20 and in Ecclesiastes. This point is reinforced given that ματαιότης is a rare word in Paul but a very common word in Ecclesiastes. Paul also seems to put emphasis on the lexeme ματαιότητι. In contrast to Eph 4:17 where ἐν ματαιότητι is placed near the end of the clause, in Rom 8:20 the phrase τῇ γὰρ ματαιότητι is placed in the clause-initial position before the verb and the subject. The highly marked dative case may also bring τῇ ματαιότητι into prominence in comparison to the less-marked nominative ἡ κτίσις.³⁵ Evidently, Paul wants to draw attention to ματαιότης.³⁶

32. Johnson, *Reading Romans*, 128.

33. Eastman, "Whose Apocalypse?" 274.

34. Moo, "Isaiah's Cosmic Covenant," 78.

35. Westfall's cline of markedness with regard to case places the dative case as the most highly marked behind the vocative, while the nominative is only above the unmarked accusative case (Westfall, "Analysis of Prominence," 82).

36. Jewett also makes reference to the placement of τῇ ματαιότητι in "emphatic position" (Jewett, *Romans*, 513).

There are some significant primed relationships between Ecclesiastes and Rom 8:20. *ματαιότης* appears predominantly in the nominative case in Ecclesiastes, whereas it appears in the dative in Rom 8:20. The predominant occurrences of the lexeme in Ecclesiastes involve no verbs.³⁷ However, when *ματαιότης* is in direct syntactical relationship with a verb, that verb is usually either in the present or aorist tense-forms.³⁸ This is significant given that, in Rom 8:20, *ματαιότητι* is the direct object of *ὑπετάγη*, which occurs in the aorist form. This may reflect an important colligation relationship: “*ματαιότης* + aorist verb.” Such a colligation may help to invoke associations with the opening and closing refrains of Ecclesiastes (see below). Even so, a close link is seen in the transition between chs. 11 and 12 of Ecclesiastes and Romans 8. Qoheleth addresses the youth, telling them *καὶ ἀπόστησον θυμὸν ἀπὸ καρδίας σου καὶ παράγαγε πονηρίαν ἀπὸ σαρκός σου ὅτι ἡ νεότης καὶ ἡ ἄνοια ματαιότης*. In 12:1, Qoheleth, still addressing the youth, encourages them to remember *τοῦ κτίσαντος σε*. These verses are held together by the repetition of *νεότης* (youth), especially as it collocates with *ματαιότης*. Thus, there is a recognizable tension here between the created status of the “youth” and their futility. Three important intertextually primed relationships are in view here. First, a semantic association between *ματαιότης* and creation language (i.e., *τοῦ κτίσαντος* and *ἡ κτίσις*) indicates a plausible intertextual link.³⁹ Second, the created-but-futile tension present in both Eccles 11:10–12:1 and Rom 8:20–21 reflects Hoey’s *textual semantic association*.⁴⁰ Third, the imperative verb

37. Often an equative verb is assumed. See, for example, Eccles 2:11, 17; 4:4, 8.

38. Perhaps most notably in the opening and closing refrains (*ματαιότης ματαιοτήτων, εἶπεν ὁ Ἐκκλησιαστής*).

39. This association may be extended to include the collocate *ποιέω* (three times in Ecclesiastes), which is in the same semantic domain as the *κτίζω* family.

40. Hoey’s definition of a textual semantic association is “[the lexeme’s] place in the larger semantics of the text e.g. its association with contrast relations, problem-solution patterns, narrative climax” (Hoey, “Literary Creativity,” 8). This would be a case of a contrast relation.

μνήσθητι (remember) occurs in the aorist form in Eccles 12:1, as does ὑπετάγη in Rom 8:20—an established colligation in Ecclesiastes. These three primed patterns help to establish some sort of intertextual link between Eccles 11:9–12:1 and Rom 8:20. That is to say, given Paul’s (and perhaps his readers’) exposure to the language patterns of this portion of Ecclesiastes, these patterns are repeated in the in language choices of Rom 8:20.

Paul may also have the entire book of Ecclesiastes in view. The ambiguity of the reference in Romans allows for more interpretive freedom on behalf of the reader. ματαιότης invokes a central theme in Ecclesiastes. The notion of futility forms a thematic bracket with the phrase ματαιότης ματαιοτήτων, εἶπεν ὁ Ἐκκλησιαστής, τὰ πάντα ματαιότης and the sense of futility is the single concept that prevails in the evaluatory refrains throughout the book. Thus, the thematic coherence constrains the intertextual potential of Rom 8:20 (unlike Eph 4:17). As Qoheleth searches for meaning in various aspects of life, he finds them all to be futile, which culminates in the assessment that τὰ πάντα ματαιότης. This is the sentiment expressed in Rom 8:20, where creation (or the creature) is subjected to ματαιότης. In that light, I propose that the entire book of Ecclesiastes serves as the primary target association in Paul’s use of ματαιότης. Even so, the language of Rom 8:20 invokes the strongly primed patterns in Eccles 11:10–12:1, and so readers who are more familiar with the book could be expected to recognize those grammatical, semantic, and textual parallels.

Moyise raises a concern with regard to the acceptance and use of Ecclesiastes in and around the first century CE. He observes rabbinic resistance to the value of Ecclesiastes, probably due to the book’s consistently negative tone.⁴¹ If this disapproval in rabbinic circles is any indication of the general opinion of the book in that period, one has to seriously question whether Paul would want to allude to it.⁴² Moyise raises a more serious objection when he suggests that the LXX text of Ecclesiastes is “post-

41. Moyise, “Intertextuality,” 20–21.

42. That is, unless the overall negative feelings are exactly what Paul wished to evoke in his readers.

Christian.”⁴³ Surviving Greek translations of Ecclesiastes appear to stem from a tradition originally produced by Aquila.⁴⁴ This confirms Moyise’s claim of a post-Christian date, c. 140 CE.⁴⁵ Even so, Dines does point out that Ecclesiastes can be placed within the textual tradition called the *kaige* group, a phenomenon that exemplifies an earlier and wider translational tradition eventually culminating in Aquila’s work, which is thought to have been translated between the first centuries BCE and CE.⁴⁶ If the Ecclesiastes translation is part of this earlier and influential *kaige* group, it remains possible for Paul to have been influenced by the ματαιότης of Ecclesiastes.

For Paul, Qoheleth’s description of a world given over to futility is the basic association that corresponds with a subjected world. The insertion of ματαιότης brings the audience into the world of Ecclesiastes (especially 11:10—12:1), characterizing the futility of creation in accordance with the futility described by Qoheleth.

Petrine Usage

The only non-Pauline use of ματαιότης in the New Testament is found in 2 Pet 2:18. As the author warns against false teachers in ch. 2, he gives a lengthy description of their practices and appeals to Balaam son of Beor as an archetype for their behavior. In 2:17, the author provides vivid description of the teachers, calling them “waterless springs” and “storm-driven mists,” and even suggests their punishment. Further, they are said to entice

43. Moyise, “Intertextuality,” 22.

44. Jobses and Silva, *Invitation*, 172; Dines, *The Septuagint*, 20.

45. Jobses and Silva, *Invitation*, 39.

46. The first instance of the *kaige* group was found in 8QHevXIIgr. It soon became one of many texts containing a number of unique and characteristic translational patterns including the Greek phrase *καί γε* (Dines, *The Septuagint*, 20, 51). Jobses and Silva note that “the evidence indicates that this text does not represent an independent translation, but rather a Jewish Palestinian recension of the Greek version found in the main LXX tradition,” which actually seems to have brought the text closer to the original Hebrew and became the basis for Aquila’s work (Jobses and Silva, *Invitation*, 172).

the church through loud boasts of ματαιότητος.

Most commentators do not mention any Old Testament background to this passage, questioning any sort of intertextuality with the Old Testament.⁴⁷ Despite this fact, it is likely that an intertextual connection exists between 2 Pet 2:18–19 and Rom 8:19–21.⁴⁸

Romans 8:19–21	2 Peter 2:18–19
<p>ἡ γὰρ ἀποκαταδοκία τῆς κτίσεως τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν τῶν υἰῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ἀπεκδέχεται. τῇ γὰρ ματαιότητι ἡ κτίσις ὑπετάγη, οὐχ ἔκοῦσα ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν ὑποτάξαντα, ἐφ’ ἐλπίδι ὅτι καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ κτίσις ἐλευθερωθήσεται ἀπὸ τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς εἰς τὴν ἐλευθερίαν τῆς δόξης τῶν τέκνων τοῦ θεοῦ.</p>	<p>ὑπέρογκα γὰρ ματαιότητος φθεγγόμενοι δελεάζουσιν ἐν ἐπιθυμίαις σαρκὸς ἀσελγείαις τοὺς ὀλίγως ἀποφεύγοντας τοὺς ἐν πλάνῃ ἀναστρεφόμενος, ἐλευθερίαν αὐτοῖς ἐπαγγελομένοι, αὐτοὶ δούλοι ὑπάρξοντες τῆς φθορᾶς.</p>

When both passages are viewed together, four verbal parallels are noticeable, which comprise a thematic core that holds these two passages together. In Rom 8:18–21, Paul depicts the hopeful expectation of the creation that was subjected to ματαιότης. This futile creation was subjected in hope that it will be set free (ἐλευθερωθήσεται) from slavery to corruption (τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς). Further, the author of 2 Peter writes regarding false teachers that in speaking loud boasts of ματαιότητος they promise freedom (ἐλευθερίαν), but, ironically, they are in fact slaves to corruption (δούλοι τῆς φθορᾶς). It appears as though the author engages in an ironic use of the language of Romans 8—a case of both collocational and textual semantic association,

47. See Davids, *II Peter and Jude*, 244–45; Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 220; Green, *Second Peter and Jude*, 127; Kelly, *Peter and Jude*, 345; Donelson, *I & II Peter and Jude*, 258; Green, *Jude & 2 Peter*, 293–94; Harrington and Senior, *I Peter, Jude and 2 Peter*, 276; Witherington, *1–2 Peter*, 360. It is common for commentators to make note of parallels with Jude 16.

48. Verbal parallels are highlighted in bold.

which is best characterized through the contrast relation of slavery–freedom.⁴⁹ While Paul promises the release from slavery to corruption, the author of 2 Peter uses this language as an accusation. In both cases, ματαιότης is the key term that characterizes the subject.

Second Peter reveals progressive intertextual movement from ματαιότης in Ecclesiastes to Romans 8, and then to 2 Peter’s use of ματαιότης, which occurs in accordance with ἐλευθερίαν, δούλοι, and τῆς φθορᾶς to associate the description of the futile creation with the false teachers he criticizes. This phenomenon illustrates the associative permutations that occur with the re-experiencing of a lexeme.

Conclusion

Michael Hoey’s theory of lexical priming is a useful model for the analysis of potential cases of intertextuality in the New Testament. Hoey’s priming classes function as criteria to affirm or deny intertextual relations. Utilizing this model, I have shown that the language of the book of Ecclesiastes (particularly Eccles 11:10—12:1) is a likely target in Rom 8:20 in a description of futile creation, while ματαιότης in Eph 4:17 does not invoke any such associations. The verbal parallels present between 2 Pet 2:18 and Rom 8:20—particularly ματαιότης—suggest that the author of 2 Peter intended to invoke the language of futile creation in his critique of false teachers.

49. See, again, Hoey, “Literary Creativity,” 8, for a reference to contrast relations as textual semantic association.

Appendix: Concordance of ματαιότης in Ecclesiastes

1:2	ς Ἰσραηλ ἐν Ἱερουσαλημ	ματαιιότης	ματαιιοτήτων εἶπεν ὁ Ἐκκλησι
1:2	ν εἶπεν ὁ Ἐκκλησιαστής	ματαιιότης	ματαιιοτήτων τὰ πάντα ματαιό
1:2	ς ματαιιοτήτων τὰ πάντα	ματαιιότης	τίς περισσεία τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐν
1:14	λιον καὶ ἰδοὺ τὰ πάντα	ματαιιότης	καὶ προαίρεσις πνεύματος δι
2:1	καὶ ἰδοὺ καί γε τοῦτο	ματαιιότης	τῷ γέλῳτι εἶπα περιφορὰν
2:11	ιεῖν καὶ ἰδοὺ τὰ πάντα	ματαιιότης	καὶ προαίρεσις πνεύματος κα
2:15	λαλεῖ ὅτι καί γε τοῦτο	ματαιιότης	ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν μνήμη τοῦ σοφ
2:17	τὸν ἥλιον ὅτι τὰ πάντα	ματαιιότης	καὶ προαίρεσις πνεύματος κα
2:19	τὸν ἥλιον καί γε τοῦτο	ματαιιότης	καὶ ἐπέστρεψα ἐγὼ τοῦ
2:21	ἰδα αὐτοῦ καί γε τοῦτο	ματαιιότης	καὶ πονηρία μεγάλη ὅτι τί γ
2:23	δία αὐτοῦ καί γε τοῦτο	ματαιιότης	ἔστιν οὐκ ἔστιν ἀγαθὸν ἐν ἃ
2:26	θεοῦ ὅτι καί γε τοῦτο	ματαιιότης	καὶ προαίρεσις πνεύματος το
3:19	νος οὐδὲν ὅτι τὰ πάντα	ματαιιότης	τὰ πάντα πορεύεται εἰς τόπον
4:4	ρου αὐτοῦ καί γε τοῦτο	ματαιιότης	καὶ προαίρεσις πνεύματος ὁ
4:8	γαθωσύνης καί γε τοῦτο	ματαιιότης	καὶ περισπασμὸς πονηρὸς ἐστ
4:16	αὐτῷ ὅτι καί γε τοῦτο	ματαιιότης	καὶ προαίρεσις πνεύματος φύ
5:9	ᾧν γένημα καί γε τοῦτο	ματαιιότης	ἐν πληθεὶ τῆς ἀγαθωσύνης
6:2	ος φάγεται αὐτόν τοῦτο	ματαιιότης	καὶ ἀρρωστία πονηρὰ ἔστιν ἐ
6:9	ενον ψυχῇ καί γε τοῦτο	ματαιιότης	καὶ προαίρεσις πνεύματος εἰ
7:6	ν ἀφρόνων καί γε τοῦτο	ματαιιότης	ὅτι ἡ συκοφαντία
8:10	ἐποίησαν καί γε τοῦτο	ματαιιότης	ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν γινομένη
8:14	ροσώπου τοῦ θεοῦ ἔστιν	ματαιιότης	ἡ πεποίηται ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς
8:14	εἶπα ὅτι καί γε τοῦτο	ματαιιότης	καὶ ἐπήνεσα ἐγὼ σὺν τὴν εὐφ
9:2	τα πρὸ προσώπου αὐτῶν	ματαιιότης	ἐν τοῖς παῖσι συνάντημα ἐν
11:8	νται πᾶν τὸ ἐρχόμενον	ματαιιότης	εὐφραίνου νεανίσκε ἐν νεότη
11:10	ἡ νεότης καὶ ἡ ἀνοία	ματαιιότης	καὶ μνήσθητι τοῦ κτίσαντός
12:8	ὄν θεόν ὃς ἔδωκεν αὐτό	ματαιιότης	ματαιιοτήτων εἶπεν ὁ Ἐκκλησι
12:8	Ἐκκλησιαστής τὰ πάντα	ματαιιότης	καὶ περισσὸν ὅτι ἐγένετο Ἐκ
6:12	ᾧ ἀριθμὸν ἡμερῶν ζωῆς	ματαιιοτήτος	αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐποίησεν ἀπάτας
7:15	πάντα εἶδον ἐν ἡμέραις	ματαιιοτήτός	μου ἔστιν δίκαιος ἀπολλύμ
9:9	ησας πάσας ἡμέρας ζωῆς	ματαιιοτήτός	σου τὰς δοθείσας σοι ὑπὸ
9:9	τὸν ἥλιον πάσας ἡμέρας	ματαιιοτήτός	σου ὅτι αὐτὸ μερίς σου ἐν
6:4	ὕτὸν τὸ ἐκτρωμα ὅτι ἐν	ματαιιοτήτι	ἤλθεν καὶ ἐν σκότει πορεύε
1:2	ν Ἱερουσαλημ ματαιιότης	ματαιιοτήτων	εἶπεν ὁ Ἐκκλησιαστής ματα
1:2	Ἐκκλησιαστής ματαιιότης	ματαιιοτήτων	τὰ πάντα ματαιιότης τίς πε
12:8	ἔδωκεν αὐτό ματαιιότης	ματαιιοτήτων	εἶπεν ὁ Ἐκκλησιαστής τὰ π
5:6	ἐν πληθεὶ ἐνυπνίων καὶ	ματαιιοτήτες	καὶ λόγοι πολλοί ὅτι σὺν
4:7	πέστρεψα ἐγὼ καὶ εἶδον	ματαιιοτήτα	ὑπὸ τὸν ἥλιον ἔστιν εἷς
4:7	γοι πολλοὶ πληθύνοντες	ματαιιοτήτα	τί περισσὸν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ὅτι

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