

Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New - Part I

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For evangelicals, whose distinctive characteristic is their commitment to a high view of Scripture, perhaps no hermeneutical area engenders more discussion than the relationship between the Testaments. Within this discussion, a particularly important issue is the use made of the Old Testament by the New Testament. For evangelicals this issue is of high importance since both Christological claims and theories of biblical inspiration are tied to the conclusions made about how the phenomena of these passages are related to one another. The hermeneutics of the New Testament's use of the Old is a live topic for discussion within evangelicalism. In fact one could characterize the discussion as one of the major issues of debate in current evangelicalism. In short, the subject of the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament is a "hot" issue in evangelical circles, as many recent works in the area suggest.¹

Despite all the discussion, no consensus has emerged. The main reason for the absence of consensus is the complex nature of the discussion both hermeneutically and historically. Major theological issues often involve multifaceted questions and this area is no exception. The goal of this article is to discuss the hermeneutical issues that are raised in the debate. The article seeks to describe four schools of approach that have emerged recently in evangelicalism, letting each view define its perspective on these complex issues. A second article will discuss four major hermeneutical issues which each school is attempting to handle in dealing with the phenomena of certain passages. The merits and weaknesses of each hermeneutical area will be evaluated briefly. Also a framework for dealing with the Old Testament in the New will be presented that reflects consideration of these key hermeneutical issues and draws from the contributions of each of these schools. Hopefully this two-part discussion will lead to a better understanding of the debate in this complex area and will provide a basis for better dialogue.² It is also hoped that the proposed framework in the second article can serve as a functional working model for a way to approach the subject of the Old Testament in the New.

¹ A survey of recent evangelical literature on this subject shows that at the technical monograph level, the evangelical societal level, and the level of more popular works, this issue is the subject of major concern. Article XIII of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy dealt in its denial section with an issue raised by Old Testament in the New Testament phenomena. Also 2 of the 16 areas raised at the ICBI 1983 Summit Conference on Hermeneutics dealt directly with this subject, namely, "Author's Intention and Biblical Interpretation," and "Patrick Fairbairn and Biblical Hermeneutics as Related to Quotations of the Old Testament in the New" These are chapters 7 and 14 of *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy and the Bible*, ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984). At this conference, Article XVIII of the Affirmations and Denials dealt specifically with this subject. Article XVIII is presented in the Radmacher and Preus volume, page 885, while Article XIII can be found in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), p. 496. The last decade has produced a myriad of evangelical works in this area as this article will show.

² The author hopes at a future date to write a follow-up work that sets forth a detailed consideration of the author's position on specific texts in relationship to the four schools referred to in this article. However, in fairness it should be stated that the author sees himself in most agreement with the second and third schools of the upcoming discussion; but as to which side among these two views he falls, even he cannot say at this time for reasons that this two-part series will show. The author's doctoral work at the University of Aberdeen was on this subject; see his *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, forthcoming), which examines all the major Christological Old Testament passages in Luke-Acts.

Four Schools within Evangelicalism

The following outline of the four approaches to the use of the Old Testament in the New is an attempt to group together the various evangelical approaches to this area. None of these groups has consciously attempted to form a “school”; but the term is used simply for convenience. The titles given to each school represent an attempt to summarize their distinctive qualities. All the approaches have one thing in common: they all recognize that the way to discuss the use of the Old Testament in the New is not on a “pure prophetic” model, in which one takes the Old Testament passage in its context and simply joins it directly to its New Testament fulfillment without any consideration of the historical situation of the Old Testament passage. In fact Kaiser explicitly makes the point that the best term to summarize the prophetic connection between the Old Testament and the New is not “prediction” but promise.³ This point is well taken.

The relationship between certain Old Testament texts and their New Testament fulfillments is often more than just a mere linear relationship between the Old Testament text and New Testament fulfillment. As helpful as charts are which simply lay Old and New Testament passages beside one another, the hermeneutics of how the passages are tied together is often more complex than a direct line-exclusive fulfillment. All the schools mentioned in this article agree on that fundamental point.⁴

The Full Human Intent School (Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.)

The basic premise of this school is that if hermeneutics is to have validity then all that is asserted in the Old Testament passage must have been a part of the human author’s intended meaning. Thus the Old Testament prophets are portrayed as having a fairly comprehensive understanding of what it is they are declaring about the ultimate consummation of God’s promise.⁵ So Kaiser rejects *sensus plenior*, dual sense, double fulfillment, or double meaning. He rejects any bifurcation between the divine author’s intended meaning and the human author’s intended meaning, though he recognizes that God has a better recognition of the fuller significance of a promise. He believes that to portray the relationship between the human and divine author as in some way divided is to create hidden secret meanings, something that is not a disclosure, something that cannot be called a revelation. Kaiser does have a place for typology, which he sees as having four elements: historical correspondence, escalation, divine intent, and

³ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody Press, forthcoming). Kaiser has kindly allowed the author access to proofs of his important new work. The references to it will be to sections of the book since it is not yet published. These remarks are made in his introduction to Part II: “The Prophetic Use of the Old Testament in the New.” The book will be an important catalyst for discussion on this topic.

⁴ See, for example, Kaiser’s forthcoming work (see n. 3); Richard Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Age* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975); S. Lewis Johnson, *The Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980); and Bruce K. Waltke, “A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms,” in *Tradition and Testament*, ed. John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981). However, these authors each represent a different approach to the issue.

⁵ Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New*, the chapter on the prophetic use of the Old Testament; and Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “Legitimate Hermeneutics,” in *Inerrancy*, esp. pp. 133-38.

prefiguration. Typology, however, is not prophetic nor does it deal with issues of meaning; rather it is merely applicational.

The key point of Kaiser's view is his appeal to "generic promise," drawn from Beecher's "generic prediction."⁶ Beecher defines it this way:

A generic prediction is one which regards an event as occurring in a series of parts, separated by intervals, and expresses itself in language that may apply indifferently to the nearest part, or to the remoter parts or to the whole—in other words, a prediction which, in applying to the whole of a complex event, also applies to some of its parts.⁷

Kaiser comments,

The fundamental idea here is that many prophecies begin with a word that ushers in not just a climactic fulfillment, but a series of events, all of which participate in and lead up to that climactic or ultimate event in a protracted series that belong together as a unit because of their corporate or collective solidarity. In this way, the whole set of events makes up one collective totality and constitutes only one idea even though the events may be spread over a large segment of history by the deliberate plan of God.⁸

Kaiser's key point is that in generic prediction only one meaning is expressed and also that the human author is aware of all the stages in the sequence from the first event to the last. The only factor the prophet does not know is the time when those events will occur, especially the time of the final fulfillment. Kaiser does identify features by which one can spot a generic promise. These textual features include: (1) collective singular nouns (e.g., "seed," "servant"); (2) shifts between singular and plural pronominal suffixes in an Old Testament passage (e.g., Servant as Israel in Isa. 44:1 and as an individual, the Messiah, in Isa. 52:13-53:12; reference to the monarchy and to the Davidic ruler through a pronoun shift in Amos 9:11-12); and (3) analogies that are expressed on the basis of antecedent (*italics his*) theology (e.g., either a use of technical terms already revealed like "kingdom," "seed," "rest," or a quotation or allusion to an earlier Old Testament text, event, or promise). Thus the human author can intend in one message to address two or more audiences at once and have in view two or more events at once. It is important to recognize that for Kaiser generic promise does not equal typology, a distinction which others might not make. Kaiser sees typology as a non-prophetic, analogous phenomenon.

⁶ Kaiser, "Legitimate Hermeneutics," p. 137, citing Willis J. Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), p. 130.

⁷ Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise*, p. 130

⁸ Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New*, in Part II on prophecy in the section on "Double or Generic Fulfillment" (*italics his*).

His view may be diagrammed as follows:

Human Intent School

**Intention of
prophet in
God's revelation:**

**One sense,
many events.**



1 sense, meaning (generic promise)

Again the point of Kaiser's model is that "the truth-intention of the present was always singular and never double or multiple in sense."⁹ The key distinctive of this view is that the human author had the whole picture in view as part of his own intention and understanding, with the one exception of the time frame.

The Divine Intent-Human Words School
(S. Lewis Johnson, James I. Packer, Elliot E. Johnson)

The key emphasis of this school of thought is that prophetic passages all draw on the human author's words but that the human author did not always fully intend or comprehend the prophetic reference, while God did intend the full reference.¹⁰ In a real sense, according to this view, God speaks through the prophet's words. The terminology used to describe how this distinction is made and maintained differs between the adherents in the school even though they express basically the same view. S. Lewis Johnson and James I. Packer refer to *sensus plenior*, while Elliott E. Johnson prefers the term *references plenior*. The meaning of these terms is disputed and will be discussed later. In making the distinction between the human author's intention and God's intention, all three proponents seek to maintain a connection between the human author's words and meaning and God's intention and meaning in order to avoid the appearance of arbitrary fulfillment. Thus the fulfillment does not give the Old Testament text a meaning foreign to its wording and conceptual sense.¹¹

⁹ Ibid., Part II, section on "B.C. or A.D. Fulfillment?"

¹⁰ S. Lewis Johnson cites J. I. Packer with approval (*The Old Testament in the New*, p. 50); Elliott E. Johnson, "Author's Intention and Biblical Interpretation" in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy and the Bible*, pp. 409-29. One of the respondents to Elliott E. Johnson's paper was Kaiser (pp. 441-47).

¹¹ More on this point will follow later in this section.

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Both Johnsons allude to the work of E. D. Hirsch for support.¹² S. Lewis Johnson says directly that “we may agree with Hirsch”-by which he means he can agree with Hirsch’s thesis that meaning is to be located in the author’s willed meaning-provided “that it is understood that the ‘authorial will’ we are seeking as interpreters is God’s intended sense.” He continues, “we should not be surprised to find that the authorial will of God goes beyond human authorial will, particularly in those sections of the Word of God that belong to the earlier states in the historical process of special revelation.”¹³ This introduces a key issue, namely, how the progress of revelation affects the understanding of these passages and their relationship to one another. (More will be said about this factor later.)

One objection that could be leveled against this school is the charge of the arbitrariness of a fulfillment that distinguishes between what God knows and what the human author does not know. How does this school deal with this problem? S. Lewis Johnson cites Packer as follows in defining their concept of *sensus plenior*:

If, as in one sense is invariably the case, God’s meaning and message through each passage, when set in its total biblical context, exceeds what the human author had in mind, that further meaning is only an extension and development of his [i.e., of the human author’s meaning], a drawing out of implications and an establishing of relationships between his words and the other, perhaps later, biblical declarations in a way that the writer himself, in the nature of the case [i.e., because of the limits of the progress of revelation to that point] could not do. Think, for example, how messianic prophecy is declared to have been fulfilled in the New Testament, or how the sacrificial system of Leviticus is explained as typical in Hebrews. The point here is that the *sensus plenior* which texts acquire in their wider biblical context remains an extrapolation on the grammatico-historical plane, not a new projection onto the plane of allegory. And, though God may have more to say to us from each text than its human author had in mind, God’s meaning is never less than his. What he means, God means.¹⁴

Packer stresses the role of the progress of revelation and the connection between the human author’s meaning and God’s meaning.

Elliott E. Johnson emphasizes some important semantic issues in his article which among other things discusses his concept of *referent plenior*.¹⁵ In defining meaning he notes the distinction between sense and reference.¹⁶ “Sense” refers to the verbal meaning of language expressed in

¹² E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967). Kaiser also appeals to Hirsch for support, but in the matter of human intention. The major difference between this school and Kaiser’s view is on the question of what the human author knew and the emphasis on full intention at different places: human author (Kaiser) versus divine author (Johnsons).

¹³ S. L. Johnson, *The Old Testament in the New*, p. 50.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*; and James I. Packer, “Biblical Authority Hermeneutics, and Inerrancy,” in *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussion on the Theology and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til*, ed. E. R. Geehan (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian Reformed Publishing House, 1971), pp. 147-48 (italics added, except for the words “*sensus plenior*”).

¹⁵ E. E. Johnson, “Author’s Intention and Biblical Interpretation,” p. 416

¹⁶ Semanticists suggest many levels at which the meaning of “meaning” may be discussed! They are: (1) meaning_R (= referent or reference; identifies the specific person[s], thing[s], or concept[s] named); (2) meaning_S (= sense; describes the qualities of person[s], thing[s], event[s], or concept[s] named); (3) meaning_V (= value, “this means more to me than to anyone else”); (4) meaning_E (= entailment or implication, “this discussion means we are

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the text regardless of the reference, that is, “sense” involves the definition of a term, not what the term refers to. “Reference” indicates what specifically is referred to through the sense meaning. There is a difference between what is described and meant (sense) and to whom or what it refers (reference). For example, the word “Paraclete” is defined as “comforter” (the sense), but in John 14-16 it refers to the Holy Spirit (reference). The human and the divine authors share the sense of a prophetic passage but God may have more referents in mind than the human author had. Thus Johnson’s designation of references plenior is to him a more accurate term than sensus plenior. For Johnson, there is always a fundamental connection between the sense the human author intends and what God intends.

He writes, “What we are therefore proposing is that the author’s intention expresses a single, defining textual sense of the whole. This single sense is capable of implying a fullness of reference. This is not sensus plenior but sensus singular as expressed in the affirmation of the text. But it also recognizes the characteristic of references plenior. In Psalm 16...the words of verse 10 apply to both David and Christ in their proper sense, yet in a fuller sense to Christ who rose from the dead, while David’s body knew corruption but will not be subject to eternal corruption.”¹⁷

Johnson’s illustration of Psalm 16 argues that the idea of the passage, the “sense” of the author, is this: “Rejoicing in God, His portion brings His Holy One hope for resurrection.” The passage applies both to David (at the final resurrection) and to Christ (at His resurrection). Thus the term “Holy One” has two referents: David and Christ. Though David spoke of his own hope, his language prophetically pointed to Christ. This Psalm 16 passage illustrates how this school sees these kinds of texts.¹⁸

The point of the previous discussion is that within the divine intent-human words school two sets of terms are used to protect the connection between the human author’s intention and God’s intention. Appeal is made either to sensus plenior (Packer and S. L. Johnson) or to references plenior (E. Johnson). There is a small but potentially significant difference in nuance between the two terms. Packer’s sensus plenior sees the limitation that prevents an arbitrary fulfillment as residing in “the implications of the words” in the light of the progress of revelation. While Elliott

discussing the area of...or it involves including the following details of...”); (5) meaningI (= intention, what a speaker wishes to declare by his use of language); (6) meaningEM (= emotive meaning, the emotion which a speaker intends to convey); and (7) meaningSig (= significance, “this means that I must...”). In discussions on what an author “means,” it is helpful to know what level of meaning one has in mind. Also with the issue of significance it is important to distinguish between “what it was intended to mean” (author’s meaning) and “what it means to me” (significance) (see G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980], pp. 37-40; and J. P. Louw, *Semantics of New Testament Greek* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982], pp. 147-66).

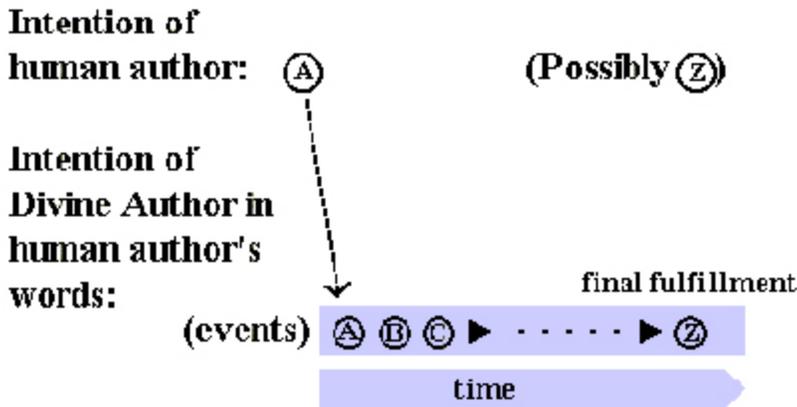
¹⁷ Elliott E. Johnson, “Author’s Intention and Biblical Interpretation,” p. 427 (italics his).

¹⁸ An alternative way to view Psalm 16 in the same framework is to argue that David spoke of his own deliverance with such confidence that he knew “nothing would separate him from God,” that is, God would not abandon him either in an early death (so some interpreters) or ultimately (so others). The sense of the passage is found in this expression of confidence; but the “how” of the passage, an aspect of the referent, depends on the subject fulfilling it. For David, the how of the referent is never historically revealed; but for Christ, the “how” is in resurrection. Therefore Peter, knowing that the fulfillment for David was never revealed and realizing that Christ did fulfill it, proclaimed Jesus as the Holy One who truly fulfills the Psalm 16 text in Acts 2:25-32. For details of this approach to the passage and alternate views, see Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology*, the section on Acts 2:25.

Johnson's limitation is found in the non-alteration of the "defining sense" of the human author's words. Thus Packer's limitation is slightly more open-ended than Johnson's. In other words Packer has more room for the amount of extension of meaning between the Old and New Testaments than does Elliott Johnson. This school, despite this internal distinction, has many other nuances hermeneutically, but the preceding paragraphs have surfaced its basic characteristic.

The view of this school may be diagrammed as follows:

Human Words School



1 sense, multiple reference with extension

For this school, typology is prophetic because the pattern of God's activity is designed by God to be repetitive and the correspondences are identifiable from details in the Old Testament text. In identifying typology as prophetic, this school differs from Kaiser's view. This represents a second divergence, the first being its refusal to identify human intent with divine intent totally, as Kaiser does. The key distinctive of this school is its defense of a distinction between the human author's intent and God's intent, while trying to maintain a connection between the meaning which both express in the words of the text.

The Historical Progress of Revelation and Jewish Hermeneutic School
(Earle E. Ellis, Richard Longenecker, Walter Dunnett)

The main characteristic of this school of thought is its utilization of historical factors in assessing the hermeneutics of the relationship of the two Testaments. As the title of Longenecker's work suggests, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, this school attempts to present the New Testament use of the Old as a reflection of the progress of revelation in Jesus Christ ("the Christological glasses" of the New Testament writers) and as especially making use of methods of first-century Jewish interpretation and exegesis (concepts such as midrash, peshet, and Hillel's rules of interpretation).¹⁹ Longenecker speaks of the "Christocentric exegesis" that permeates

¹⁹ The originator of this approach as it is grounded in Jewish methodology is Otto Michel, *Paulus und seine Bibel* (Gütersloh, 1929; reprint, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972). The fundamental monograph

the New Testament. He argues that the “Jewish roots of Christianity make it a priori likely that the exegetical procedures of the New Testament would resemble to some extent those of then contemporary Judaism.”²⁰ He argues that New Testament writers neither (a) mechanically “proof-texted” the Old Testament nor (b) illegitimately twisted or distorted the ancient text. The New Testament writers got their perspective from Jewish exegetical techniques and from Jesus. Their exegesis could be characterized as “charismatic” in the sense that they saw events and declared them to fulfill the Old Testament in the “this is that” language reminiscent of pesher exegesis at Qumran. Some of these pesher treatments of the text may not conform to historical-grammatical exegesis as it is practiced today; but it was the basic way in which the Bible was read in the first century and therefore was a legitimate way to read the Old Testament. Often an important element in the pesher handling of the text is the rewording of the Old Testament passage so that it more nearly conforms to the New Testament situation in light of larger biblical and theological understanding.²¹ One can readily see the historical stress in the argument of this school. Also appeal is often made to *sensus plenior* as a way to describe this phenomena.²²

This view also emphasizes that when the New Testament writers read the Old Testament, they did so out of a developed theological picture both of messianic expectation and salvation history.²³ Thus the theology of the Old Testament and in some cases that theology’s development in intertestamental Judaism affect these writers.²⁴ Proponents of this view argue that one’s understanding of the New Testament writers’ hermeneutic should be less concerned with abstract issues of legitimacy and be more sensitive to the historical factors that can explain this type of exegesis.

study on Pauline Old Testament hermeneutics also comes from this school: Earle E. Ellis, *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957). For a brief introduction to Jewish hermeneutics, see Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, pp. 19-50, and the extremely well done but technical work by D. J. Moo, *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983), pp. 5-78. This latter work is full of relevant historical data. Also see Earle E. Ellis, “How the New Testament Uses the Old,” in *New Testament Interpretation*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), pp. 201-8.

²⁰ Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, p. 205

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 205-14. Walter M. Dunnnett recognizes the tension such an approach creates and thus attempts to defend the concept of *sensus plenior* (*The Interpretation of Holy Scripture* [Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984], pp. 39-64, esp. pp. 57-64).

²² Dunnnett, *The Interpretation of Scripture*. Another writer who defends *sensus plenior* and represents this viewpoint is Donald Hagner, “The Old Testament in the New Testament,” in *Interpreting the Word of God: Festschrift in Honor of Steven-Barabas*, ed. Samuel J. Schultz and Morris Inch (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976), pp. 78-104.

²³ Ellis mentions their theological presuppositions, such as a salvation historical perspective that involves a two-stage consummation in Jesus’ two comings, the use of typology, corporate solidarity, and the right to charismatic exegesis (“How the New Testament Uses the Old.” pp. 109-14).

²⁴ The appeal to ideas of intertestamental Judaism need not be inherently a problem. The use of the term “the Messiah” as a technical term for the Davidic Descendant who will fulfill God’s promise is an intertestamental term from the Psalms of Solomon 17-18. To cite such points of theology is not to make these works authoritative; rather it is to say that some developments in intertestamental Judaism were accurate reflections of divine realities based on the Old Testament. God is to be seen as working sovereignly in the conceptual world of the first century as much as He is seen to be working sovereignly in the sociopolitical world of the first century to prepare all the world for the message of Christ given in linguistic and conceptual terms to which they could relate. For an overview of intertestamental Jewish theology as expressed in its apocalyptic literature, see D. R. Russell, *The Message and Methods of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964).

A few citations from Longenecker serve to summarize the approach of this school. It is hardly surprising to find that the exegesis of the New Testament is heavily dependent upon Jewish procedural precedents, for, theoretically, one would expect a divine redemption that is worked out in the categories of a particular history...[and] to express itself in terms of the concepts and methods of that particular people and day. And this is, as we have tried to show, what was in fact done—the appreciation of which throws a great deal of light upon the exegetical methodology of the New Testament. But the Jewish context in which the New Testament came to birth, significant though it was, is not what was distinctive or formative in the exegesis of the earliest believers. At the heart of their biblical interpretation is a Christology and a Christological perspective.²⁵

Longenecker also writes:

Thus it was that Jesus became the direct historical source for much of the early church's understanding of the Old Testament. But in addition, the early Christians continued to explicate Scripture along the lines laid out by Him and under the direction of the Spirit.... But the Christocentric perspective of the earliest Christians not only caused them to take Jesus' own employment of Scripture as normative and to look to Him for guidance in the ongoing exegetical tasks, it also gave them a new understanding of the course of redemptive history and of their own place in it.... From such a perspective, therefore, and employing concepts of corporate solidarity and correspondences in history [i.e., typology], all the Old Testament became part-and-parcel of God's preparation for the Messiah.²⁶

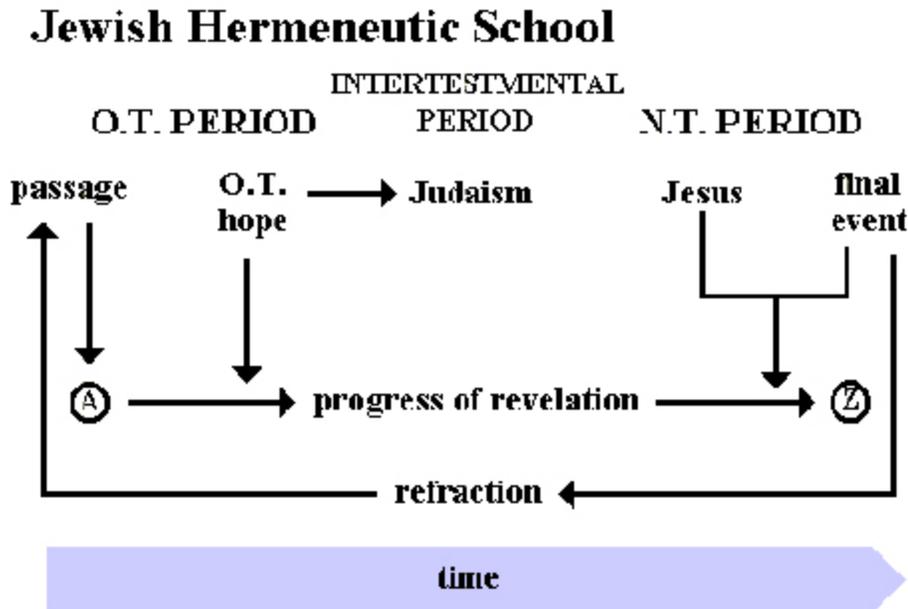
While this view will be evaluated later, two potentially negative responses to it are addressed now: (1) This view seems too open to historical parallels from outside Christianity, and (2) this approach seems to lessen the concept of prophecy by setting its recognition largely in the fulfillment period, rather than at the time of the original revelation. The view, however, need not seem as unusual or negative as it may appear at first. For example, any New Testament passage where Yahweh in the Old Testament becomes Christ in the New Testament (e.g., Rom 10:13 and its use of Joel 2:32) follows this principle of reading the Old Testament in light of New Testament realizations about the nature of the Messiah (where Jesus as Messiah is recognized as Lord and God Himself). Even Christianity's interpretation of a gap in Isaiah 61:1-2—in which part of the passage refers to Jesus' first coming (Luke 4:18) and the other part refers to Jesus' return—is possible only because of the New Testament teaching about Jesus' two comings. This “refractory” and reflective use of the New Testament on the Old is a key factor that must be evaluated in the use of the Old Testament by the New. As new revelation was given (in the life of Jesus and in the teaching from Him), the Old Testament was elucidated with greater detail.²⁷

²⁵ Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, p. 207 (italics added).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 207-8 (italics added).

²⁷ The qualification “with greater detail” is important. The teaching of the Old Testament is not changed or overridden; rather it is either deepened, made more specific, or is given additional elements. For example, when God told the serpent that “his seed would bruise Adam's seed on the heel,” but that Adam's “seed” would crush the head of the seed of the serpent (Gen 3:15), what would Adam's or Moses' readers at this point in the narrative be able to understand about the promise? It would be something like this: Adam's seed will eventually have victory over the forces of evil as represented by the serpent. The statement is true enough but it lacks detail. What would New Testament readers or Christians today see in this promise? Nothing other than that the victory of Jesus over Satan at the crucifixion and resurrection with a view to His eventual total reign is what is in view. It is called, and rightly so, the protoevangelium. The progress of revelation has filled in the details of the meaning of the saying (or to use the

Again the distinctive of this school is its attempt to be historically sensitive to factors operating in the interpretation of Scripture in the first century. It could be diagrammed as follows:



Obviously the diagram for this school is more complicated than the other diagrams. Advocates of this view still see a “prophetic” element in the fulfillment, even though it is realized mainly with the event itself. Their appeal for a prophetic meaning is grounded in (a) the sovereign design of God in which the patterns of salvation history reoccur and aim for fulfillment and in (b) the appeal to the wording of the text in conjunction with God’s revelation in Christ. However, it is also crucial to note that the event is the key dynamic that leads to the realization of the prophetic meaning. Most realization of fulfillment works toward and from the New Testament event.

The Canonical Approach and New Testament Priority School
 (Bruce K. Waltke)

The discussion of this fourth approach will be brief since the writings propounding this point of view are not so numerous.²⁸ Waltke defines his approach as follows:

By the canonical process approach I mean the recognition that the text’s intention became deeper and clearer as the parameters of the canon were expanded. Just as redemption itself has progressive history so also older texts in the canon underwent a correlative progressive perception of meaning as they became part of a growing canonical literature.²⁹

language of the previous section, the “referents” of the passage). This process could be called the “principle of refraction” within revelation.

²⁸ Bruce K. Waltke, “A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms,” in *Tradition and Testament*, pp.3-18, esp. pp. 6-10. Also see Waltke, “Is It Right to Read the New Testament into the Old?” *Christianity Today*, September 2, 1983, p. 77. Waltke answers the question of this article with a resounding yes.

²⁹ Waltke, “A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms,” p. 7.

While noting his indebtedness to Brevard Childs' work, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, Waltke distances himself from all the details of Childs' approach. Waltke also states that his approach, though similar to *sensus plenior*, is distinct from it in that he asserts the unity between the Old Testament writers' ideal language and God's intention. This agreement of intention is possible because the human authors spoke in ideal language. For him, progressive revelation made more clear the exact shape of the ideal, which was always pregnant in the vision. What is unclear from Waltke's writing is what the human authors understood of their intention. The lack of clarity on this point distinguishes his view from Kaiser's view. Waltke rejects a *sensus plenior* that "wins" new meanings from the text and sees New Testament writers as "supernaturally" discovering the fuller sense. Waltke and Kaiser are close in their denial of *sensus plenior*. The difference between them is how they handle later revelation in relationship to earlier revelation.³⁰ Waltke appeals to it openly, while Kaiser refuses to refer to subsequent revelation as relevant to this discussion.

Waltke's appeal to the refractory role of the progress of revelation sounds like Longenecker's view. The difference is in the widespread application of this method and the assertion of the unity of authorial intent. For Waltke, all of the Psalter was ultimately the prayerbook of Jesus Christ. All the Psalms can ultimately be applied to Him.³¹ In addition, New Testament fulfillments of earthly Old Testament promises have the effect of taking priority over the Old Testament promise and "unpacking" its literal meaning.

An illustration of this approach can be seen in the following quote:

If the Lord Jesus Christ and his church fulfill the promises of the Old Testament, as the New Testament affirms (see Acts 3:24-25), then those promises expressed in terms appropriate for the earthly form of God's kingdom in the old dispensation, find their literal fulfillment in the spiritual form of the kingdom in the New dispensation. Thus if Psalm 2:7 refers to Jesus Christ in his first coming, so also the reference to Psalm 2:6 and Mt. Zion does not refer to a location in Palestine; but rather refers to heavenly Mt. Zion and Christ's taking possession of the nations.³²

So Waltke's position is that the whole of the Old Testament is to be reread ultimately in light of the New Testament; as a result the original expression of meaning within the Old Testament passage is overridden and redefined by the New Testament. Though Waltke would probably not describe the result of his method in this manner, such a conclusion seems fair. This description of Waltke's method is argued for as a result of his shift from earthly to heavenly referents in his understanding of Psalm 2. Such a wholesale shift of referents to the exclusion of the original sense is actually a shift of meaning. This writer is not able to supply a good functional diagram for this view.

The key to this view is its desire ultimately to read the Old Testament so thoroughly in light of the New.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 8.

³¹ Ibid., p. 16.

³² Waltke, "Is It Right to Read the New Testament into the Old?" p. 77 (italics added except for the word "literal").

Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New - Part I
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Summary

This survey of recent evangelical views on the Old Testament in the New has demonstrated the variety of approaches which this area of debate has produced among conservatives. Four distinct schools exist. Some share overlapping concerns while they diverge from each other at other key points. What key hermeneutical issues are isolated by this debate? The second and concluding article in this series will state and evaluate four key issues involved in the debate. That article will discuss the differences among the schools and isolate the key points in the discussion, highlighting the four key areas of debate. The writer will then seek to offer an eclectic approach to the hermeneutical problems raised by suggesting lines of approach for the evangelical handling of each of these four areas. This eclectic approach will draw on the best points of each of these schools of thought.

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