

NEW TESTAMENT USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Introduction

A long history of discussion surrounds the NT use of the OT. Ellis points out that such questions were being raised by students in the theological schools at Alexandria, even in the earliest centuries of the Christian church. Irenaeus, who lived quite a distance from Alexandria in the mid second century, also gave attention to issues concerning the textual background of OT citations in the NT.¹

Central to the debate are some very significant hermeneutical questions which still continue to be of great interest up to this present day.

In this study, discussion will be given to the different ways that NT writers made use of the OT. This will be done by presenting recent works from those who have studied the issue in significant detail. The findings of these scholars will be evaluated and compared for strengths and weaknesses, and recommendations will be made therefrom.

Progressive revelation

Within these evaluations, consideration will be given to the nature of Scripture itself. Considerable attention will be given to the nature of progressive revelation, that is, the way in which Scripture was given by God in incremental stages. As redemption history progressed through the ages, God gave greater and greater light about His own person, purposes, and plan of redemption. Sometimes this new revelation was building upon a truth that had been given previously through explicit declaration; sometimes the new light was an amplification of a previous allusion; and sometimes this revelation was totally new, not having been mentioned in any previous Scripture.

¹E. Earle Ellis, The Old Testament in Early Christianity (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), p. 54.

In light of progressive revelation, we should ask the question whether or not it was even considered unusual for Christ or the apostolic church to appeal to Scripture on a basis other than the literal, grammatical, historical method. Were the NT writers using the OT in a way that was suspect (either by our modern standards or those of the first century)? Or, were they simply following the current exegetical practices of the day (practices which may not have demanded perfect accuracy)? Or, were they acting in perfect accord with the Spirit of God, who was directing their pen to write errorless, inspired Scripture?

Hermeneutical questions for today

What about the church today? Is it legitimate for the church to use the same methods that Christ and the apostles employed? What kind of hermeneutics should we employ in our interpretation of Scripture? Is it legitimate for one to find types in the OT which might not be discerned using a literal, grammatical, historical method of exegesis?

These are all crucial questions on which many today do not agree. The issues are also of particular importance to a paper like this. As the data is presented and brought to a conclusion, it is believed that the reader will see that though the issues demand diligent effort, the problems are not insurmountable. The first topic to be considered will be the number of OT citations in the NT.

Statistics on New Testament Uses of the Old Testament

One can find a wide variance of figures among those who document statistics in this area.² Part of the problem is that it is not necessarily easy to identify and classify OT citations. Sometimes a citation will

²Ellis lists quotations at "some 250 times or, if allusions are included, over 2500 times." He points out that various factors make it difficult to classify with precision. Many passages are used more than one time, while some citations merge several OT passages into one citation. Ellis presents the following statistics as the approximate numbers for the majority of specific quotations: synoptic Gospels, 46; John, 12-14; Acts, 23-24; Paul, 78-88; Hebrews, 28-30 (ibid., p. 53); Nicole's figures for direct quotations are 295, almost 20% higher than those Ellis lists. Nicole points

be introduced by some kind of formula,³ while at other times there is direct quotation without any sort of indicator.⁴ Also, citations may involve numerous OT passages which are strung together in a chain, perhaps connected with only the word "and."⁵ On the other hand an OT citation may be nothing more than a mere allusion which does not correspond exactly to the OT passage from which it is believed to come.⁶ Such is often the case in the Book of Revelation. Thomas points out that though there are 278 allusions in this book of 404 verses, there is not one direct quotation from the OT.⁷

out that if one includes allusions, the estimates vary widely: anywhere from 613 to 4105 (Roger Nicole, "The Old Testament in the New Testament," in The Expositor's Bible Commentary, vol. 1, gen. ed. Frank E. Gaebelin [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979], p. 617).

³Cf. Matthew 1:22: "Now all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying"

⁴Cf. Matthew 27:46: "And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is, 'my God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?'"

⁵Cf. 1 Peter 2:7-8: "The stone which the builders rejected, this became the very corner stone, **and** a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." In this citation Peter links together references to Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 8:14, respectively.

⁶Clear but unspecified allusion can be seen in the way that John makes reference to Psalm 2:8-9; Isaiah 30:14; and Jeremiah 19:11 in Revelation 2:26-27: "To him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces."

⁷Robert L. Thomas, Revelation 1-7 (Chicago: Moody, 1992), p. 40; Ellis adds that neither are there any explicit OT citations in Philipppians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Titus, Philemon, 1-3 John, or Jude (Ellis, The Old Testament in Early Christianity, p. 53).

No matter what numbers one finally settles on, it remains a firm reality that the NT writers made **extensive** use of the OT; these early missionaries "presented their message by proclamation, exhortation, and argument, using the Old Testament to authenticate their claims."⁸

Now we ask the question, "What were the ways in which the NT writers used the OT?" In answering this question we will not interact greatly with the liberal opinions of those who reject the inspiration, inerrancy, or authority of the Scripture. Furthermore, redactional or midrashic views which contradict inerrancy doctrines are not consistent with evangelical convictions and are simply to be rejected as illegitimate.⁹

Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament

A good starting place is Darrell Bock's article on NT use of the OT.¹⁰ Bock simplifies the analysis by placing the major current views into four categories. He labels the views, and those who hold them, as follows: (1) the full human intent school (Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.);¹¹ (2) the divine intent/human words school (S. Lewis Johnson; J. I. Packer; Elliot E. Johnson);¹² (3) the historical progress of revelation and Jewish

⁸S. Marion Smith, "New Testament Writers Use of the Old Testament," Encounter 26/2 (Spring 1965): 239.

⁹David L. Turner, "Evangelicals, Redaction Criticism, and Inerrancy: The Debate Continues," Grace Theological Journal 5/1 (1984): 44.

¹⁰Darrell L. Bock, "Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New, part 1," Bibliotheca Sacra 142/567 (July-September 1985): 209-23; part two of Bock's article was published in the following October-December issue.

¹¹Ibid., p. 210.

¹²Ibid., p. 212.

hermeneutical school (E. Earle Ellis; Richard Longenecker; Walter Dunnett);¹³ (4) the canonical approach and the NT priority school (Bruce K. Waltke).¹⁴

The full human intent school

The basic premise of view 1 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**" (emphasis Kaiser's).¹⁵ Kaiser states that it is an absolute necessity that we establish a "single sense to any writing," especially Scripture. He adds, "to accept a manifold sense makes any science of hermeneutics impossible and opens wide the door for all kinds of arbitrary interpretations."¹⁶ Based on this statement, Kaiser would seem to slam the door shut for any possible meaning beyond that which the OT prophet foresaw. Evangelicals can gladly agree with Kaiser's insistence that original context and authorial intent must be the starting place for exegesis, but we ask the question, "Is his position fully supportable from Scripture?" Also, does Kaiser actually hold this view in practice, the way certain statements might imply, or does he allow for the possibility that an OT text might go beyond a single meaning?

Kaiser presents what he sees as five major ways in which the NT writers used the OT. He calls these (1) the apologetic use (Acts 2/Ps. 16; Matt. 2/Hos. 11); (2) the prophetic use (Acts 2/Joel 2); (3) the typological use (1 Cor. 10/Ps. 40); (4) the theological use (Heb. 3/Amos 9); and (5) the practical use (1 Cor. 9/Deut. 25). Again, Kaiser's basic premise is that in each of these categories the OT writer had as part of his intent the later NT usage.

Authorial intent and understanding. A question that quickly arises is this, "What about 1 Peter 1:10-12?" Kaiser deals with that question early in his book and presents this as the conclusion: the OT

¹³Ibid., p. 216.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 219.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 210.

¹⁶Walter C. Kaiser Jr., The Uses of the Old Testament in the New (Chicago: Moody, 1985), pp. 25-26.

author did in fact understand the **content** of what they prophesied concerning the Messiah; however, they simply did not understand the **timing** of when He would come and when these events would take place. In Kaiser's view, the prophets did "have an adequate understanding of the subject" even though it may not have been a "comprehensive control of all the particulars and parts that belong to that subject."¹⁷ To lend support to his view, Kaiser appeals to the Book of Daniel.

Kaiser takes the reader to Daniel 12:6 where Daniel asks the question: "How long will it be until the end of these wonders?"¹⁸ Kaiser's purpose is to explain how it is that Daniel said in verse 8 that he "could not understand." Kaiser states that the only thing Daniel did not understand was **when** these events would take place, but to support this conclusion he appeals to another verse (8:27) in a totally different context. Furthermore, he does not even tell the reader that he is doing so. He says that the reason Daniel was exhausted and sick (8:27) was because he did not understand **when** these messianic end-time predictions would be fulfilled. However, the very verse that he cites as proof for his position actually argues against his view, for in 8:27 Daniel goes on to say the following: "I was astounded and there was **none to explain it.**"

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 18-21; Kaiser is not alone in his view of 1:10-12. A. T. Robertson is one of various commentators who holds the similar view that the prophets understood that they were speaking about Messiah, but just did not know what the timing would be (cf. A. T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, vol. vi [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1933], p. 85); this position does not mean, however, that the prophets **understood everything** except the time of Messiah's coming. Hiebert is right for pointing out, "They foresaw a Christ, but they could not foresee Jesus; they could give to their Christ no definite position in future history. The One whose coming they foresaw did not fit any familiar pattern" (D. Edmond Hiebert, 1 Peter [Chicago: Moody, 1975], p. 75). In other words, it was not possible for the OT prophets to put together all the messianic prediction and reconcile a conquering Messiah with a suffering Messiah.

¹⁸Kaiser, The Uses of the Old Testament in the New, pp. 22-23.

Daniel **did not** understand his second vision (chapter 8) and nothing indicates that mere timing is the issue. This is why Gabriel comes in chapter 9; it is to give Daniel "**understanding of the vision**" (9:23). Kaiser tries with diligence to argue his point, but it is questionable whether Scripture can fully support his view. Though it may very well be possible that the prophets understood in some way they were predicting beyond the immediate horizon, it seems from this passage and various others that OT predictions were not always fully grasped by the prophets.

Types. Bock observes that Kaiser's position, as stated, would mean that he "rejects sensus plenior, dual sense, double fulfillment, or double meaning." However, he also points out that Kaiser does have a place for typology, which he sees as having four elements: historical correspondence; escalation; divine intent; and prefiguration. For Kaiser, though, typology is "not prophetic nor does it deal with issues of meaning; rather it is merely applicational."¹⁹

Kaiser makes repeated references to the fact that his position is basically the same as Willis J. Beecher's, the so-called "concept of promise theology." In Kaiser's words, the idea goes like this,

God gave the prophets a vision of the future in which the recipient saw as intimate parts of one meaning the word for his own historical day with its needs and that word for the future. Both the literal historical sense and the fulfillment were conceived of as one piece. . . . More was involved in this vision than the word spoken prior to the event and the fulfilling of the event itself. There was the common plan of God in which both the word, the present historical realization, and the distant realization shared.²⁰

These events often revolved around generic or corporate terms, such as "seed," and referred to historical antecedents as well as realities to come. Kaiser adds,

every historical fulfillment of the promise was at once a fulfillment and a sample, earnest, or guarantee of whatever climactic event it likewise often pointed forward to by virtue of the wholeness and singularity of the meaning in that word.²¹

¹⁹Bock, "Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New," p. 211.

²⁰Kaiser, The Uses of the Old Testament in the New, p. 29.

²¹Ibid.

It seems that although he is using different terms to describe his position, Kaiser is very close in practice to a *sensus plenior* meaning. He continues to hold his position, however, that human authorial intent is always present.

Another factor in Kaiser's argument is that the whole context from which the OT citation is taken must often be taken into consideration. In other words, if a NT citation only quoted one verse or a part of a verse, the force of that citation must be found from the larger context of the OT passage.²² Also, if the author used a term that could refer to both a plural referent (like Israel as "son") and an ultimate singular referent (like Jesus as "son"), then this term should clue in the reader that a type is perhaps intended. For example, in Matthew's apologetical use of Hosea 11, the important considerations are (1) a corporate collective term like "son," and (2) Hosea's context of God's covenant love for His son (Israel in Hosea and Christ in Matthew).

Concerning this passage Kaiser believes that Hosea realized that he was writing about something more than just the immediate destiny of Israel. He says that Hosea did not write a **prophecy**, but that this is **"biblical typology** at its best, for it begins with a clear divine designation, is limited in its sphere of operation to the act of preservation and deliverance, and is circumscribed in its effects: the redemptive action of God in history."²³ Kaiser presents some excellent evidence in support of his explanation of a very difficult hermeneutical question.

Kaiser also believes that types should be discernable through a literal, grammatical, historical interpretation and contain the following elements: (1) the type must be historical, concerning some OT person, event, or institution; (2) there must be some discontinuity through escalation; (3) there must be some continuity through prefiguration; and (4) there must be a clear divine intent and not merely passing resemblance.²⁴ It is debatable whether or not one can demand that types are discernable through a literal, grammatical, historical exegesis of the OT text, but the rest of Kaiser's guidelines are good.

²²Ibid., p. 51.

²³Ibid., p. 53.

²⁴Ibid., p. 106.

His closing comments on types includes the thought that one might look for clues such as the mention of terms like "new," the use of technical and theologically loaded terms, and the mention major biblical events or themes.²⁵

The cumulative nature of promise. In his section on prophetic uses of the OT, Kaiser makes mention of the cumulative nature of promise in special revelation, beginning with Eve, Shem, and the patriarchs, and continuing to Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Concerning these promises, Kaiser says, "It ever remained as God's single, cumulative promise." Also, he adds, almost every commentator agrees that this single plan often occurs with a phenomenon known as prophetic foreshortening. That is,

The perspective of the prophet in certain predictive passages often simultaneously included two or more events that were separated in time at their fulfillment, yet there often was no indication of a time lapse between these various fulfillments in the predictive words as they were given.²⁶

This certainly seems to be the case in passages like Isaiah 9:6, among others, and is a good observation.

His section on the theological use of the OT builds on these same ideas. He approves of the idea that the OT must be considered as theologically relevant to NT interpretation, though he does not believe that it is the **basis** for the interpretation of a NT text.²⁷ Elaborating on his repeated plea that we can look backwards into **antecedent** revelation for theology, but not forwards, he says:

The Old Testament has a valid and strong contribution to make to the ongoing theology found in the New Testament. . . . We can honestly point to a strong line of continuity between the testaments in themes, concepts, issues, and the divine program and beneficiaries of that everlasting plan.²⁸

In conclusion, one can make the following observation: whether or not one agrees with all the details of kaiser's view, it must be admitted that he presents some very good arguments which explain the issue adequately. We can also take note of his closing words concerning the difficulties: "There is nothing

²⁵Ibid., p. 121.

²⁶Ibid., p. 63.

²⁷Ibid., p. 145.

²⁸Ibid., p. 151.

approaching a consensus within the believing or scholarly communities either on the definition or the ways typology is to be used in biblical studies."²⁹

He also adds the following closing thought: "When exegesis will observe those characteristics [historical correspondence, escalation, prefiguration, divine intent], it will be clear that there are some large sections of biblical truth intended by God to be prophecies."³⁰

The divine intent/human words school

A reading of S. Lewis Johnson's book reveals many shared perspectives between Kaiser and Johnson. For example, Johnson declares his agreement both with Kaiser and John Calvin, who have both said that when the NT made a citation from the OT, it must have "applied to their subject, perverted not the Scripture, and did not turn the Scripture into another meaning." In other words, says Johnson, "they must faithfully represent the meaning of the Old Testament text on the point the New Testament author is making." Furthermore, "the meaning the New Testament author finds in the Old Testament text must really be there."³¹ However, in distinction from Kaiser, Johnson believes that the OT text may hold **more** than the original author saw, but never less, and never anything that is contradictory to the passage.

One sees additional shared perspectives when Johnson comments on the nature of progressive revelation and the cumulative effect of biblical theology. Commenting on Hebrews 1, he says that the NT writers looked at the OT from the perspective of "the completion of divine revelation, finding in the book clear prophecies of Him that were only seminal to the Old Testament saints." That is, as the messianic promise gained more and more light, it was only natural that the NT should bring out its fullness. What is the ultimate fulfillment of this promise? It is in the incarnation of Christ and the final dwelling of God with mankind.³²

²⁹Ibid., p. 231.

³⁰Ibid., p. 232.

³¹S. Lewis Johnson, The Old Testament in the New (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), p. 11.

³²Ibid., p. 92.

The differences between Kaiser and Johnson come out more as Johnson discusses biblical typology. Johnson says, "It is clear from the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament that there may exist more than one sense in the same Scripture." He also says, "many texts have a meaning that goes **beyond their normal and historical sense** [emphasis mine], valid though that [the normal historical sense] surely is."³³

Johnson adds that the human author of the OT type did not generally intend that the type be predictive, though divine intent was certainly always present. Otherwise, as in the case of Matthew's use of the OT, if there were no divine intent, there **could be no fulfillment**.³⁴ In other words, in Johnson's view, the human author did not always have a comprehension of that which God was speaking through him. Authorial intent was always present, but at times that intent was only in the mind of God. Johnson sees himself in the same camp as Augustine by holding that the "New Testament lies hidden in the Old, and the Old is made plain in the New."³⁵

Johnson urges that the NT provides a pattern for the church. He writes:

If the apostles are reliable teachers of biblical doctrine, then they are reliable instructors in the science of hermeneutics. And what better way is there to discover their hermeneutics than to investigate their use of the Old Testament Scriptures.³⁶

We must ask the questions, though, "Are we apostles?" "Do we operate under the same guidance of the Holy Spirit when we **read** the NT, as they did when they **wrote** the NT?" The answer to both

³³Ibid., p. 49.

³⁴Ibid., p. 56. Is it possible that there is good content in both Kaiser's and Johnson's arguments? Could it be that a mediating view is possible? If so, then some degree of human intent in the type was always sensed, but the fullness of the divine intent was not brought out until the Holy Spirit brought out that fuller meaning through progressive revelation. Such a view would satisfy Johnson's demand for the presence of all three elements of a type, namely, (1) historical reality; (2) correspondence; and (3) prediction with at least divine intent (p. 66).

³⁵Ibid., p. 21.

³⁶Ibid., p. 23.

questions is "No!" Surely this is the answer Johnson himself would give as well. Therefore, this writer suggests that because we cannot meet these conditions, we do not have a blank check for finding types or a *sensus plenior* meaning wherever we fancy.

Does this mean that types are wrong or must be restricted to a view which demands original authorial intent? Again, the answer this writer suggests to both questions is "No." To the former question we point out that there is great agreement that types do exist and are legitimate. To the latter, we appeal to those passages where authorial intent simply does not seem to be present (like the examples from Daniel presented in Kaiser's section). It is simply beyond reason to think, for example, that Moses saw Christ in Melchizedek when he wrote about him in Genesis 14.³⁷ Such a view violates both the grammar of the passage and the nature of progressive revelation, a factor which Kaiser himself insists must be observed. Though we cannot deny the possibility that the OT author always had understanding of what he wrote in prophecy or typology, it appears that such simply is not the case in an absolute sense.

In summary, Johnson allows for a decreased emphasis on the original human author's intent and understanding. His perspective on types is that the apostles understood all these typological hermeneutical principles (through the Holy Spirit) and that this was how they used the OT. In Johnson's opinion, the apostle's hermeneutical methodology was not only legitimate, but it is also the pattern that we should employ in our exegesis of the text (though with great care).³⁸

The historical progress of revelation and
Jewish hermeneutical school

Bock cites E. Earle Ellis as one who espouses the view which is defined as this:

³⁷Bock notes that the terms that are used to protect the connection between divine intention and human author's intention are *sensus plenior* or *referentia plenior*. Bock states that the former description is preferred by J. I. Packer with the implication that Packer's limitation is "slightly more open-ended than Johnson's (Bock, "Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New," p. 215).

³⁸Ibid., p. 67.

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. . . . 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. . . . The New Testament writers got their perspective from Jewish exegetical techniques and from Jesus.³⁹

Perhaps one of the most disturbing elements of this school of thought is that it tries to define Scripture according to the standards of non-canonical writings and equate the NT use of the OT with the practices of ordinary writers of the day. For example, one sees references to concepts like peshar,⁴⁰ midrash,⁴¹ Hillel's rules of interpretation,⁴² or Qumran exegesis techniques as the basis for the NT writings.⁴³ This school of thought holds that all of these phenomena were considered as acceptable methods for the handling of literature in that day. Therefore, if the NT writers used these same techniques, it would have been acceptable as legitimate by both Gentiles and Jews.

The major weakness with this view, however, is that it denies the necessity of single meaning, and seriously compromises on the accuracy of the text. Those who hold this position minimize or ignore the importance of accuracy in the biblical text.

³⁹Bock, "Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New," p. 217.

⁴⁰Ellis explains peshar as interpretation in which the peshar is equivalent to something like "this is," or "this is that which" (Ellis, The Old Testament in Early Christianity, pp. 68-69).

⁴¹Ellis delineates two kinds of midrash, implicit and explicit. He says that the former is an interpretive paraphrase and the latter consists of a quoted portion of Scripture combined with a commentary. He says that this technique "was an established practice in first century Judaism in the synagogue service as well as academic schools" (ibid., pp. 66, 91-92).

⁴²Ibid., pp. 130-32.

⁴³Ibid.

Compatibility of various positions. In spite of some of the glaring difficulties, and also the not so evident problems with this view, we need to ask the question, "Is there any legitimacy to any of its claims?"

For example, consider the following statement:

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. Thus, the theology of the Old Testament and in some cases that theology's development in intertestamental Judaism affect these writers.⁴⁴

This statement seems like a fair proposition in itself and is consistent with the views of both Kaiser and Johnson. Furthermore, this statement surely seems consistent with the confessions of people like Mary (Lk. 1:46-55), Zacharias (Lk. 1:68-79), Simeon (Lk. 2:29-32), and Anna (Lk. 2:38).

A question one might ask is this, "Is it legitimate to hold a view like **Kaiser's** (which demands a literal grammatical hermeneutic, at least some degree of intent by the original author, and which builds on progressive antecedent revelation) in conjunction with **Johnson's** view that OT prophecies **do** at times go beyond authorial understanding, and **Ellis'** view that the NT writers were in fact shaped to some extent by their own culture and also informed by the cumulative theology of antecedent progressive revelation?" With the exception of explicit authorial intent by the human author (Kaiser), there is no apparent reason why one might not see **compatible elements** in each of these views.

Spirit given sensus plenior or midrash? As Bock points out, sensus plenior is often the phenomenon to which writers appeal in order to justify the manner in which the OT is handled when pesher and midrash are suggested. Ellis is not so quick to embrace this idea fully, though. He says that all in all, "it is doubtful that sensus plenior provides an acceptable hermeneutical tool to explain the New Testament's interpretation of Scripture."⁴⁵

⁴⁴Bock, "Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New," p. 217.

⁴⁵Ellis, The Old Testament in Early Christianity, p. 73.

Peter Blaser's article on Paul's use of the OT suggests that there is both "a real affinity as well as a profound difference" between Paul's hermeneutics and those of contemporary rabbinical exegesis.⁴⁶

Blaser's closing words include the following comments:

It is true that kinship exists between Pauline exegesis and the rabbinical methods of interpretation; however, in his fundamental attitude toward the whole of Scripture, St. Paul is worlds apart from his former teachers. . . . and thus, one cannot speak of arbitrariness in Pauline exegesis, in spite of his rabbinical method.⁴⁷

Balentine also makes note of the significant differences between NT methodologies and those found in Qumran literature. He writes,

Qumran theology is dominated by a messianic hope, by a forward look toward the coming fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures. Qumran exegesis reflects this eschatological outlook. The New Testament too has an eschatological perspective, but the New Testament perspective is not only eschatological but Christological. . . . Hence, whereas Qumran interpretation of the Old Testament was characterized by a forward look toward coming fulfillment, New Testament interpretation of the Old Testament was characterized by a backward look, seeing the culmination of the Old Testament in the advent of Christ.⁴⁸

⁴⁶Peter Blaser, "St. Paul's Use of the Old Testament," Theology Digest 11/1 (Winter 1954): 51; Blaser suggests the following similarities: (1) the same introductory formulas; (2) same modes of expression, e.g., indefiniteness, mosaics of citations; (3) groupings in which each phrase advances the thought another step; (4) distributive exegesis; (5) philological exegesis; (6) argument from silence. He also notes the following differences: (1) Paul places much greater emphasis on prophetic portions of Scripture like Isaiah and the Psalms verses the Law of Moses; (2) Paul took more liberties [?] in making freer citations of the text to show its Christological force. Similar conclusions can be found in the journal article by Samuel E. Balentine entitled "The Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New Testament," Southwestern Journal of Theology 23/2 (Spring 1981): 50-51.

⁴⁷Blaser, "St. Paul's Use of the Old Testament," p. 52.

⁴⁸Balentine, "The Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New Testament," p. 46; though Balentine's point about the Christological emphasis and "backward look" of the NT can be appreciated, it must not detract from the very strong forward perspective of NT eschatology.

Balentine makes some other pertinent observations about first century Judaism. First, the OT was in fact used in the first century. It was not simply disregarded because it came from an earlier period. Second, the OT was believed to be the Word of God and applicable for their lives. Third, the Old Testament was interpreted. In cases where it could be applied directly, without modification or modernization, it was so applied. Fourth, no single method of hermeneutic emerges as primary above all others. In other words, it is wrong to try and foist a pesher or midrash style on the NT on the basis that these were the methods of the day.⁴⁹

In summary of this school of thought, this writer rejects the idea that rabbinical methods, like midrash and pesher, were the basis for NT hermeneutics. This does not mean that the human personalities were not influenced by practices of that period. It is almost undeniable that such is the case, yet this need not necessarily cause concern. We must remember that God ordains ends, yet He also ordains the means to those ends as well.

The force of progressive revelation. Furthermore, it is helpful to bear in mind the point which was emphasized by both Kaiser and Ellis that progressive revelation had a tremendous impact on the theological understanding of first century Jews. Though there were many misunderstandings, Israel knew about God's unfolding plan of redemption and they knew that they were intimately bound up within that plan. Passages like Zechariah 6:12-13 and 12:10 show us that cumulative revelation had come to the point where Israel "could" be adequately informed about some of the incredible realities that were about to be revealed in Christ in the NT era.⁵⁰ The fullness of OT revelation had prepared the nation for the coming of their King. This idea comes out when Scripture says that it was **in the fullness of time** that God sent forth His Son (Gal. 4:4).

Ellis rightly adds the note that the NT also contains **mysteries** which had not been revealed in OT times. Ellis points to Paul as one who preached these mysteries (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:2, 5, 9; Col. 1:25).

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 46-47.

⁵⁰Ellis, The Old Testament in Early Christianity, p. 114.

He says that these mysteries had been hidden from prior generations, but **now** (in the NT era) they were being made known through NT prophets, like Paul (Rom. 16:26) and the other NT prophets. Even at the close of the OT, revelation was still **incomplete**. There was still more to be said when Malachi recorded his words. The writer of Hebrews, however, alludes to the finality of NT revelation when he contrasts the various ways God spoke in the past with the way that God has **now** spoken in a totally new manner, in His Son (Heb. 1:1-2).

In conclusion, God was actively working out His plan of redemption in the NT era, and a central feature of this plan was the giving of new inspired literature. God ordained these ends, yet he also ordained the means, Israelites from first century Judaism (Luke is probably the only NT author who was not Jewish). The evidence does not suggest that NT writers based their methods on any particular hermeneutic of the period, but that they were influenced by these factors in the way they wrote. Finally, because of the superintendence of the Holy Spirit, these men were able to bring forth the very words of God exactly the way God intended.

The canonical approach and the New Testament priority school

The fourth and last hermeneutical approach listed by Bock is what he calls the canonical approach and the NT priority school. Bock lists Bruce Waltke as one who holds to this method, and cites Waltke's own words for explanation of the position:

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.⁵¹

Another important feature of Waltke's understanding can be seen in that he,

asserts the unity between the Old Testament writer's ideal language and God's intention. This agreement of intention is possible because the human authors spoke in ideal language . . .

⁵¹Bock, "Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New," p. 219; Bock's citation comes out of Bruce K. Waltke's "A Canonical Approach to the Psalms," in Tradition and Testament, eds. John S. and Paul D. Feinberg (Chicago: Moody, 1981), p. 7.

progressive revelation made more clear the exact shape of the ideal, which was always pregnant in the vision.⁵²

These statements seem compatible with traditional positions on inspiration, hermeneutics, and progressive revelation. Interestingly, Waltke resembles Kaiser when it is said that he too "rejects a *sensus plenior* that 'wins' new meanings from the text and sees New Testament writers as 'supernaturally' discovering the fuller sense."⁵³ Given Waltke's total view, though, it is difficult to see why he would say this.

The problem that arises is that Waltke, in contradiction to Kaiser and Johnson, believes that it is legitimate to read later progressive revelation back into antecedent revelation for determining the interpretation of the earlier text. Not only does Waltke believe this is legitimate, but he believes that the entire OT must be read and interpreted in the light of the NT.

One of the most immediate observations of this anachronistic approach is that OT promises made to Israel are seen as entirely fulfilled in the church.⁵⁴ As Bock puts it, "Such a wholesale shift of referents to the exclusion of the original sense is actually a **shift of meaning**" (for the OT passage).⁵⁵ Why would Waltke reject a *sensus plenior* idea for the NT when he is so willing to create fresh interpretations for the OT based on a later NT text?

⁵²Bock, "Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New," p. 219.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴It must be observed that this is the hermeneutical method used by amillennial theologians. They read NT truth back into the OT. By this, they redefine all promises to national Israel as being fulfilled in the church. The result of this reasoning must be that God changed the meaning of Scripture and lied to Israel. It is not simply a matter that there was more in the promise than foreseen (like S. Lewis Johnson allows for), but something different and something less.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 220.

Though Waltke does present some good principles on progressive revelation for NT interpretation (i.e., antecedent revelation helps the exegete form a biblical theology), the benefit of this is forfeited by his practice of reading progressive revelation into prior revelation. For this reason, Waltke's position, as so articulated, must be rejected.

Conclusion

The preceding discussion indicates why this issue has been a debated topic since the days of the early church. Even today one is hard pressed to find two theologians who can agree on every single detail. Sometimes these differences are do to legitimate conflicts in perspective, but at other times the difference is more a matter of semantics. As we pull all this together, let us consider some valuable observations made by the various writers.

Valuable observations

The strongest agreement between all the theologians came in the area of progressive revelation. Every author believed that God's plan of salvation became more explicit and understandable as God continued to give greater and greater light about both Himself and His plan of redemption.

Along with this was the common belief that Israel's understanding of God's promise was fully informed through the cumulative nature of God's promise. In other words, a first century Jew **knew** (even if imperfectly) that the Word of God was filled with truth about salvation, and that this salvation was "from the Jews" (John 4:22).

Most of the authors believe that both prophecy and typology are found in Scripture, though there is no firm consensus on the definition and explanation of the latter. The four elements that most agree must be present in a type are: (1) it must be grounded in historical circumstances as a person, event, or institution; (2) there must be some degree of discontinuity through escalation; (3) there must be some level of continuity in its prefiguration; (4) there must be at least divine intent in the type (Kaiser would also demand human intent and the ability to discern it by a literal, grammatical, historical exegesis).

Many of the authors would also point to the importance of theologically loaded technical terms. For example, when one finds terms or phrases in the OT that have come to have fixed theological connotations, these can be clues that eschatological themes may be present. These "collective" (Kaiser) or "ideal" (Waltke) terms may also give clues that an entire context has typological significance.

Another important observation is that when the NT uses the OT, it must never be in such a way that it contradicts the OT passage. Furthermore, though the NT use may bring out more than what the OT presented in its original context, it can never be less, nor totally different than what the original meaning was; it cannot twist the OT passage.

Questions to be answered

Several questions remain to be answered from the beginning of this study. First, were the NT speakers and writers suspect in their use of the OT? Were they in some way violating literary standards by the way they cited the OT? It is quite apparent that the answer is "No!" We say this with confidence because the greatest opponents of the early church (the Jews) never made this an issue. If the apostolic church had been using Scripture in a questionable way, their opponents would have seized on this to totally discredit their testimony.

Second, were writings and interpretations of NT authors simply patterned after practices of first century Judaism? Did the apostles merely employ the same kinds of midrashic techniques that were popular among the rabbis.

The answer to this question is again "No." As noted earlier, though there are some similarities between the NT writer's methods and the rabbinic methods of the day, there is by no means close correlation. There are, in fact, many differences between the NT and other uninspired writings of that time. Furthermore, as was also noted earlier, it has been shown that there was no single literary or hermeneutical model uniformly employed in the first century. Though there were influences, it is a figment of the modern scholar's imagination that people followed a set mold.

Third, and finally, can the church continue to use the same techniques used by the apostles and prophets of the NT? This time the answer must be "Yes" and "No." Since we do not operate under the

superintendence of the Holy Spirit in the way the prophets did when they wrote Scripture, we do not have the right to copy their exact methods. However, the very fact that types are known to be present does give us the right to identify types and their fulfillment. The key to this process must be a careful observance of those principles discussed above.