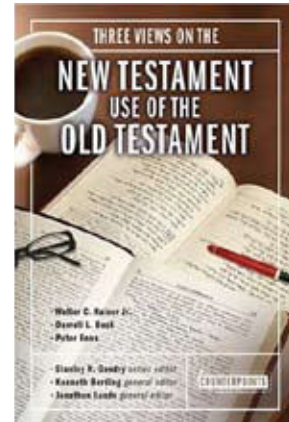


— NEW TESTAMENT —

Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde, eds. *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Counterpoints. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008. 256 pp. \$16.99.

The three views to which the title refers are upheld, respectively, by Walter C. Kaiser Jr. (“Single Meaning, Unified Referents: Accurate and Authoritative Citations of the Old Testament by the New Testament”), Darrell L. Bock (“Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents: The New Testament’s Legitimate, Accurate, and Multifaceted Use of the Old”), and Peter Enns (“Fuller Meaning, Single Goal: A Christotelic Approach to the New Testament Use of the Old in Its First-Century Interpretive Environment”). The book follows the format now made familiar by other volumes in the series: each writer contributes a major essay and responds to the other two contributors. One editor, Jonathan Lunde, writes an opening chapter introducing the central questions raised by the New Testament use of the Old, and Kenneth Berding, the other editor, offers a concluding analysis of the three views.



Each of the three contributors was asked to comment specifically on five topics (set forth by Lunde and summarized by Berding) that have a bearing on the book’s subject:

(1) *Sensus plenior*: Is there a “fuller meaning” to the Old Testament text than the Old Testament prophet himself understood, a meaning that doubtless God intended and the New Testament author discloses? Kaiser says no. He insists that only “that which stands written in the text” is Scripture. Bock is willing to approve *sensus plenior* in some limited sense, for God’s knowledge of the future contexts and referents was transparently greater than that of the Old Testament writer. Even so, the Old Testament passages reused in the New Testament reflect central ideas that are stable across the Testaments. Sometimes at the narrow exegetical level contemporary interpreters may have difficulty discerning the connections, but the connections become clear at the canonical level of interpretation. Enns holds that *sensus plenior* is a helpful “theological construct” not only because it deals fairly with the fact that the Old Testament texts in question have both a human and a divine author, but also because this approach handles the instances when there is some sort of “disconnect” between the Old Testament passage and its use by the New Testament. New Testament writers were not limited by “grammatical-historical principles” but broadly mirrored the techniques of other first-century Jews. What made them different was their conviction that “Christ is somehow the *end (telos)* to which the OT story is heading” (and hence the “Christotelic Approach” of Enns’s subtitle).

(2) Typology: Is typology a valid category, and if so how are we to understand it? Kaiser accepts that there are repeatable patterns in the Old Testament that belong to the “promise-plan of God,” and that these are sometimes fulfilled in the New Testament. He insists, however, that these are invariably in some way or other designated as such within the Old Testament itself—i.e., it will not do to recognize them as predictive “types” only after the fact, for then they are not properly predictive at all. Bock holds that “typological patterns in history” are central to understanding the relationships between the Old Testament and the New. Some of these are clearly predictive, he says, but in other cases the pattern is not recognized or anticipated until it is fulfilled. This, however, is perfectly acceptable, since God designed the pattern, even if the human authors did not recognize it before its fulfillment. Enns affirms that

typology is a helpful way to understand how the New Testament uses the Old, but doubts that typology provides “an adequate *hermeneutical* explanation for the way New Testament writers actually cite Old Testament texts. Typology, in other words, does not explain their actual usage of Old Testament texts. For this, one must observe how the New Testament writers are simply deploying the commonly shared hermeneutics of Second Temple Judaism, the environment in which they did their work.

(3) Context: Do the New Testament authors observe and respect the contexts of the Old Testament texts they cite, or do they treat them atomistically, ripping them out of their (literary or historical) contexts? Kaiser offers numerous examples to demonstrate his conviction that New Testament writers commonly reckon with the context of the Old Testament texts they cite, but that context includes all divine revelation that *precedes* the text in question. Bock denies that New Testament authors offer atomistic readings, but argues that they bear in mind *two* contexts, the exegetical and the canonical. The latter in particular generates “a grand synthetic reading” that shows the New Testament writers do their work “in light of the progress of revelation.” Enns asserts that only sometimes do the New Testament writers read Old Testament texts contextually, but even when they do, this must not be seen as a resolution of obvious tensions between the Testaments. The New Testament writers are simply participating in all the exegetical and interpretive practices common to the Judaism at the time of the Second Temple.

(4) Exegetical methods: Do the New Testament authors simply share the interpretive assumptions and methods of their unconverted Jewish contemporaries, or do they deploy distinctive exegetical and interpretive grids? If the latter, what are they? Kaiser holds that it is unwise to appeal to ostensible Jewish parallels. For a start, such approaches would not be apologetically convincing when it comes to proving that Jesus truly is the promised Messiah. Bock provides a list of six “presuppositions” that guide the New Testament authors (a list substantially worked up by Lunde in his opening chapter), but insists that only the three of them are shared with Judaism. In other words, as Berding points, Bock “resists any appeal to Jewish methods that involves a rupture in the essential unity between OT and NT meanings.” By contrast, Enns insists that no wedge can legitimately be driven between the New Testament authors’ “interpretive practices” and those of Second Temple Judaism; the same could be said for the New Testament’s “interpretive traditions.” The only thing that distinguishes the interpretation of the New Testament authors is their certainty that all of the Old Testament points to Christ.

(5) Replication: Can contemporary readers of the Bible properly duplicate the exegesis of the Old Testament exemplified by the New Testament writers? All three scholars answer in the affirmative, though what they think we are to replicate varies considerably. Kaiser holds that the New Testament authors’ interpretive method is essentially grammatical and historical, and we may safely—indeed, we must—follow their lead in careful reading of the biblical text. Bock claims that we tend to read the Bible the way the apostles did even when we think we do not. In other words, as Christians we adopt a “theological-canonical” reading of Scripture, and so our specific exegeses are worked out within this grid. In principle, then, the apostles become not only the primary witnesses to the gospel but also “our hermeneutical guides.” Enns says we should duplicate what the New Testament writers do, but “more in terms of their hermeneutical goal than in terms of their exegetical methods and interpretive traditions.”

The book is thoughtfully set out, and the writing is clear. Many more details are evaluated than can show up in this brief review. One wishes that the editors had set the three principal writers not only five questions that they had to answer, but also, say, ten specific instances, of various kinds, where the New Testament cites the Old. One would have had a much better grasp of the outworking of theory in the

less forgiving terrain of exegesis. In any case, the volume is useful for students first breaking into these debates, though they should be warned in advance that the three positions advocated here are far from being the only ones. It is doubtful that any informed reader will change his or her mind as a result of reading this book.

Inevitably, I kept wanting to ask my own questions to one writer or another. For example: Even if we accept that (at least some kinds of) types in the Old Testament are clearly predictive, would the human author of the first entry in a series of events/institutions that become a repeated pattern (i.e., a type) have understood that he was laying the cornerstone for a type? Doubtless God would know, and presumably the more discerning of later human authors would sooner or later discern the pattern, but why is it necessary or even plausible to assert that the author of the first entry would be so discerning? Or again: Is it not the case that the more one insists that the New Testament authors' interpretive methods exactly mirror those of Second Temple Judaism, the harder it is to explain why their understanding of what *Tanakh* (the Hebrew Bible) actually says differs so much from theirs? If one responds that this difference is entirely explained by "Christotelic" commitments that are themselves entirely independent of distinctive exegesis, then neither the Jewish nor the Christian exegesis has much to do with the determination of meaning. More questions spring to mind, but perhaps it is unfair to give the impression the authors should have written a different sort of book.

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