

**A Response to Brian Collins' Review of "Literalism and the Prophets":
A Rejoinder to Collins' Complementary Hermeneutic**

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I am responding to Brian Collins' inquiries in his review of my article, "Literalism and the Prophets." My article was published in the book *Dispensationalism Revisited*, Central Seminary Press, 2023. Collins accurately summarizes my arguments, and many of our theological ideas coincide. Regarding predictive prophecy, however, he questions how my hermeneutical view (*solely literal fulfillment*) opposes his view (*more-than-literal fulfillment*). I welcome this collegial dialogue in answer to his questions. I insert Collins' review followed by my response. The sections that pertain most particularly to my reply are highlighted in bold.

Collins' Review:

Exegesis and Theology.com
Book Reviews

Roy E. Beacham, "Literalism and the Prophets: The Case for a Unified Hermeneutic," in *Dispensationalism Revisited*, March 14, 2024, [Reviewed] by Brian Collins, BJU Press
<https://exegesisandtheology.com/2024/03/14/roy-e-beacham-literalism-and-the-prophets-the-case-for-a-unified-hermeneutic-in-dispensationalism-revisited/>

Central Baptist Theological Seminary just published *Dispensationalism Revisited: A Twenty-First Century Restatement*. This book is a Festschrift for Charles Hauser, Jr. that is comprised of chapters by his former colleagues and students. The first three chapters focus on the classic *sine qua non*s of dispensationalism. This chapter by Roy Beacham defends literal interpretation as a *sine qua non* of dispensationalism.

Beacham's thesis is that dispensationalists are correct to insist that "God intended all prophetic foretelling in Scripture to be understood literally and only literally" (32; cf. 36)... Beacham's method in this chapter is to demonstrate that what God says in Scripture about the genre of predictive prophecy requires such prophecy "to be literally and only literally understood, interpreted, and fulfilled" (33). He further clarifies that the [*sic*] involves rejecting "any form of other-than-literal, less-than-literal, or more-than-literal interpretation of prophetic predictions" (37).

Beacham makes his case by examining what Scripture says about the "*purpose, ground, nature, function, and test* of divinely appointed predicative prophecy" (37).

Beacham argues that the *purpose* of predictive prophecy is "apologetic"—it is designed to demonstrate that only God is the true God. In support of this thesis he cites Isaiah 41:21-24, 26; 42:8-9; 44:6-8; 45:18, 20-21; 48:3-5. **From these texts Beacham concludes, "Any hermeneutical viewpoint that espouses any form of other-than-, less-than-, or more-than-literal fulfillment of God's foretelling negates the declared purpose and evidentiary worth of this genre" (41). I see how this argument [*sic*] counters "other-than" and "less-than" fulfillments, but I'm not sure it holds for "more-than."**

My Response:

Collins correctly states the fundamental thesis of my article: "God intended all prophetic foretelling in Scripture to be understood literally and only literally." Collins, however, disagrees with that thesis and, instead, embraces an alternative viewpoint. By rejecting "other-than" and "less-than" literal fulfillments of prophecy, Collins distances himself from the hermeneutical theories of various forms of covenant theology [CT, all iterations]. By accepting "more-than" literal fulfillments, Collins will argue for the "complementary hermeneutic" of progressive dispensationalism [PD]. Notably, near the conclusion of his review, Collins explicitly identifies with complementary hermeneutics. Complementary hermeneutics,

most simply put, asserts that God can fulfill his prophetic words by doing “more than” he said in a prophecy; he just cannot do “less.” Before responding directly to Collins, let’s examine the idea of nonliteral (“more-than”) fulfillments as espoused by complementary hermeneutics.

W. E. Glenny, an early published advocate of PD’s complementary hermeneutics, describes in detail this interpretational method and its application to OT predictive prophecy. Glenny concludes that “the church... is a fulfillment of the promises made to Israel in these Old Testament passages” (“Israelite Imagery,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church [DIC]*, 183-4). He explains that the church’s “initial fulfillment” of Israel’s prophecies infuses the original words of those prophecies with the “fuller meaning of an OT text, which... is rather a fuller referent,” a new referent discovered in the NT. This NT expansion of the words of an OT forecast constitutes an “escalation or advancement in meaning beyond its OT context.” In this way, the OT “referent” (e.g., “Israel”) in a predictive prophecy can come to *mean* something “fuller” in the NT (e.g., “the church,” *DIC*, 182-3). According to the theory of complementary hermeneutics, these “more-than” fulfillments (Collins) of God’s original words are labeled “typological-prophetic fulfillments” in distinction to “direct” literal fulfillments (*DIC*, 180-1). My article argues, instead, for the *exclusively literal fulfillment* of God’s predictive prophecies.

PD’s hermeneutic is labeled “complementary” because, in their view, the church’s *initial* nonliteral or “typological” fulfillment of Israel’s prophecies “complements” the *eventual* literal fulfillment of Israel’s forecasts (*DIC*, 186, see 184-7). Their belief that predictive prophecy will *eventually* find literal fulfillment serves as their primary distinction from CT. With nearly identical reasoning, CT also argues for the typological-prophetic fulfillment of Israel’s prophecies in Christ and the church, but unlike PD, they reject the *eventual literal fulfillment* of those prophecies for Israel. To CT, once the typological-prophecy is fulfilled nonliterally (i.e., typologically), *there is no other fulfillment*. In either case (*eventual* literal fulfillment or *never again* literal fulfillment), both PD and CT embrace a typological-prophetic hermeneutic: God’s OT prophecies can find typological fulfillment with different peoples in substitute ways at alternate times through the “escalation” and “re-referencing” of the “meaning” of God’s original prophetic words.

How do types and prophecies become amalgamated in these “typological-prophetic” systems? For PD (and presumably Collins), typological-prophetic interpretation is derived first by presuming, fundamentally, that OT “types” (e.g., Melchizedek, the serpent on a pole, lamb sacrifices, etc.) serve as “predictions.” Glenny, in concert with Darrell Bock, notes, “The designation ‘typological-prophetic’ is used... to emphasize the prophetic nature of typology” (*DIC*, 157-8, cf. note 7). Various iterations of CT agree: “typology is *prophetic* and *predictive*... God intended the type to point forward to its fulfillment.... Typology is best viewed as a subset of predictive prophecy” (Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant [KTC]*, 2nd ed., 131-3). Thus, in typological-prophetic interpretation, the genres of typology and predictive prophecy intersect.

Despite their insistence, however, the idea that types are “predictive” and “point forward” seems untenable given the nature of OT revelation. Doubtless, God planned certain events, people, ceremonies, etc. in *earlier* biblical history to serve as significant correlations to *far later* events, people, rites, etc., including the experiences of Messiah Jesus. Melchizedek, the bronze serpent on a pole, sacrificial lambs all became valuable analogies (types) in God’s self-revelation. However, as a forensic revelational genre designed by God for human instruction, these types *only worked by looking backward at history*. In reality, typology predicted nothing. No one who met Melchizedek or viewed the bronze serpent could have possibly envisioned the Messiah, nor did God expect them to. Typology? Certainly. Predictive? Impossible. In his desire to prove his sovereign deity by revealing himself to humanity, God designed two distinct revelational genres: prophecy, which explicitly pointed *forward*, and typology, which deliberately pointed *backward*.

Notably, those who declare typology to be “predictive” and to “point forward” recognize the incongruity of their thesis. “This is *not* to say that everyone associated with the OT type understood and knew the pattern to be pointing forward” (*KTC*, 133.). They acquiesce that the “predictive” nature of types, unlike

genuine predictive prophecy, is only “retrospective” (*DIC, loc. cit.*), “mysterious,” and “hidden” (*KTC, loc. cit.*). Types are *eventually* realized to “point forward...when the type is *discovered* to be a type” as “*later* texts pick up the pattern” (*KTC, loc. cit.*, emphasis theirs). Since God alone knows the pattern, not man, there is a “hidden assumption undergirding a predictive, God given view of typology” (*KTC, loc. cit.*).

This awkward conflation of typology with predictive prophecy is comparable to fusing proverb with promise, or blessing with mandate. The generic link is flawed. Nonetheless, in typological-prophetic interpretation, *typology must be predictive*, or their “typological-prophetic” hermeneutic falters. Why must these interpreters insist that types are predictive? Because only by classifying types as “prophetic” can they then interpret prophecies as “typological.” And here lies the foundation of my ongoing response to Collins’ complementary, typological-prophetic hermeneutic and the questions that he raises.

Collins’ Review:

If everything God predicted happened exactly as God said it would, but more happened in addition to what God predicted, how does the “more-than” negate this purpose for the prophecy? In fact, given the fact that no prophecy is exhaustive [*sic*], how does one escape “more-than” fulfillments. [(?) *sic*]

My Response:

Besides the incongruity of melding typology with predictive prophecy, Collins’ review introduces other difficulties, in my opinion. Collins’ two questions, above, become foundational to his own defense of complementary hermeneutics. Apparently, to Collins, so long as there is an *eventual literal fulfillment* of the words of an OT prophecy (“everything God predicted happen[s] exactly as God said it would”), God’s words can *initially* mean “more-than” they originally meant (“...but more happened in addition to what God predicted”).

I certainly concur that “more happened” than God predicted in any one particular prophecy. But the theory of complementary hermeneutics is far more technical. Complementary hermeneutics asserts that, when “more happened in addition to” a particular prophecy, a *meaning-shift* occurred in God’s original predictive words: a verbal re-referencing. The NT’s “more-than” expansion of an OT forecast involved an “escalation or advancement in *meaning* beyond its OT context” (*DIC*, 182, see also 167, 173, emphasis mine). In those prophecies, God’s words find *initial* fulfillment *nonliterally*, i.e., “typologically,” in altered ways through re-referenced persons and substitute events. Only *eventually* would those words find *literal fulfillment* “exactly as God said.”

Logically, I could conclude my response here. My article argues for *consistent literal fulfillment of all predictive prophecy*, as Collins clearly discerns: “Beacham...demonstrate[s] that...predictive prophecy [is] ‘to be literally and only literally...fulfilled’ (33).” Indeed, I argue that God’s own descriptions of predictive prophecy preclude *any* nonliteral fulfillments *ever*. If God purposed to prove his singular deity through prophetic foretelling, then *all* of his prophetic words must *always and only* come to pass exactly as foretold. Here, Collins seems to disconnect. Having correctly cited my argument that prophecy is “literally and *only literally...fulfilled*,” he then questions how that argument counters his complementary hermeneutic of *initial, nonliteral “typological” fulfillments*. Collins’ apparent belief that *eventual* literal fulfillments somehow exonerate earlier nonliteral fulfillments fails logically. *Always and only literal*, if true, excludes *sometimes nonliteral* (e.g., initial typological). The syllogism seems straightforward. If Collins cannot “see how this argument [*sic*] counters ... ‘more-than’ prophetic fulfillments” [i.e., complementary, nonliteral, typological fulfillments], I’m not certain how the syllogism could be made more clear.

Collins’ second question foretells another recurrent weakness in his review, as I see it. He asks, “given the fact that no prophecy is exhaustive [*sic*], how does one escape ‘more-than’ fulfillments. [(?) *sic*]” My article nowhere asserts that any one particular prophecy is exhaustive. And no student of Scripture would deny the ever-expanding volume of God’s revelatory word throughout biblical history (progressive

revelation). The progress of revelation clearly supplies us with “more (that) happened in addition to what God predicted” in any one specific prophecy. So the assertion that “no prophecy is exhaus[t]ive” seems truistic. That fact, however, has no essential bearing on the actual question addressed in my article. The question, rather, is this: can the *meaning* of God’s original words in any one particular prophecy later be expanded to *mean* something “more-than” (Collins) those words originally meant? Can God’s predictive words ever “escalate” to denote something “fuller” than their original “referent”; is there “advancement in meaning beyond (their) OT context” (*DIC*, 182-3)? Can “Israel,” for example, be prophetically re-referenced to *mean* “the church” (*ibid.*)? Collins, apparently, has blurred the axiom of *progressive revelation* with the hermeneutic of *resignified meaning*, and that axiom does not, of necessity, support his hermeneutic.

So, my article does not accept the theory of *eventual* literal fulfillment; it asserts *solely* literal fulfillment. Nor does my article disavow the *fact of progressive revelation*. Rather, it addresses a technical hermeneutical theory: the *modification of verbal meaning* in the prophetic statements of God. And the arguments that I make, based on God’s explicit descriptions, reject *any sort* of time-induced mutation of God’s prophetic words or their espoused fulfillments.

Simply put, a genuine predictive prophecy cannot be fulfilled in two different ways, both literally and nonliterally (e.g., “typologically”) as per a complementary hermeneutic. A stated forecast of God cannot find realization by two unique referents at contrasting times in anomalous ways: once precisely as stated by God, and once on a modified occasion in an alternate manner with substitute persons through the re-referencing of God’s original words. According to my argument, “x” (e.g., “Israel”) in God’s prophetic propositions can *never* (initially or otherwise) come to mean “y” (e.g., “the church”). But in the technical methodology of complementary hermeneutics, a “more-than” fulfillment (Collins) *does* constitute an “other-than” fulfillment (“y”) because, clearly, *typological* fulfillment is not *literal* fulfillment, and *the church* is not *Israel*. Nonetheless, Collins will continue to challenge my view based on these two grounds: eventual literal fulfillment and the progress of revelation. And those objections, and others, will engender my ongoing response.

Collins’ Review:

Beacham argues that the *ground* of predictive prophecy is “God’s immutable person and efficacious speech” (42). Isaiah 45:18-19; 45:22-25 are cited since these are passages in which God swears by himself to perform what he has stated. He also appeals to Isaiah 44-48.... He concludes, “The prophecy itself gives neither the original hearers nor the ensuing readers any indication that God intended some of these sworn forecasts to be fulfilled exactly as stated, while others he intended to resignify, typologize, expand, and/or spiritualize” (48). **Once again, “expand” strikes me as an outlier in this list. How does expanding on a predictive prophecy undermine the fulfillment of what was predicted? In fact, what is progressive revelation but an expansion upon previous revelation. [(?) sic] For instance, is not every subsequent revelation about the Messiah’s redemptive work an expansion of Genesis 3:15?**

My Response:

Note, again, my assertion that God *never* intends to “resignify, typologize, expand, and/or spiritualize” his foretelling; God *only* intends literal fulfillment. In my list of unacceptable theories, Collins takes exception to the word “expand,” because in his complementary hermeneutic, God *does* “expand” his words to *mean* “more-than” they originally meant: “Israel,” as noted above, “escalates” to *mean* “the church.” Oddly, Collins does not object to “typologize” in my list of fallacies despite complementary hermeneutics’ self-description as “*typological*-prophetic.” Nor does Collins mention “resignify” as “an outlier,” even though his hermeneutic espouses “fuller referents” that reassign the meaning of God’s prophetic words. The terms “resignify, typologize, and expand” *are equally fundamental* to PD’s complementary hermeneutic, the hermeneutic that Collins embraces. His objection *only* to the word “expand” as “an outlier” in my list seems curious to me.

Collins, then, raises three questions. I first address the final two. He asks, “...what is progressive revelation but an expansion upon previous revelation.” [(?) sic] As noted above, Collins seems to blur the

fact of progressive revelation with the theory of expanded meaning. If carefully nuanced, I agree that "... every subsequent revelation about the Messiah's redemptive work [is] an expansion of Genesis 3:15." Indeed, God progressively reveals the messianic identity of the "seed of the woman," and God more expansively clarifies the Messiah's "crushing" of "the serpent's head." But "subsequent revelation" nowhere expands *the meaning* of God's specific words in Genesis 3:15. The "seed of the woman" always and only ever means "the seed of the woman." That "referent" never later "escalates" to signify an alternate person, a "fuller referent" that is other than the coming Messiah. The gradual increase of revelatory information concerning the "seed of the woman" over time (progressive revelation) is far different than the escalated reassignment of God's prophetic referents over time (typological-prophetic fulfillment), and the two ideas should not be confused.

Which leads to Collins' initial question: "How does expanding on a predictive prophecy undermine the fulfillment of what was predicted?" Again, if "expanding on a predictive prophecy" refers simply to progressive revelation, that fact is axiomatic. But if "expanding on a predictive prophecy" refers to the systemic hermeneutic of "typological-prophetic fulfillments," then God's requirements for "fulfillment" are, indeed, "undermined." Complementary theory espouses *dual* fulfillment of some of God's forecasts: once *typologically* and once *literally*. In my argument, however, *initial nonliteral fulfillment* clearly "undermines" God's prerequisite for *solely literal* fulfillment. The words of a single prophetic proposition of God *cannot come to mean* something other than they *originally meant*, much less can they *mean* two different things at two different times.

Consider, for example, Joel 2. In agreement with many others, PD theorist Robert Saucy says of Joel 2 that "the 'baptism with the Spirit' [in Acts 2] is nothing less than the [initial] fulfillment of the OT eschatological promises," a fulfillment that expands beyond Joel's "original context [of] the coming of the Spirit upon all within the covenant nation of Israel" [*The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 182-3, cf. 171-183, 211]. But is it possible for Joel 2 to be fulfilled twice: once nonliterally or "typologically" on the day of Pentecost and once literally when Israel is restored as a nation exactly as God originally stated?

Using unambiguous referents in Joel 2:16-21, God foretold that "*after*" a specific eschatological time-period, he would pour out his Spirit on "*all*" Israelites so that a plethora of Jewish citizens in his restored kingdom would "*prophesy*," "*dream dreams*," and "*see visions*." Can God's carefully crafted prophetic words in Joel 2 later find an alternate "fulfillment" (e.g., Acts 2) by "typological expansion" with "escalated meanings" through resignified "referents"? When God sovereignly foretells that he will accomplish certain phenomena "*after*" a specified eschatological event (Joel 2), can his word "*after*" also *mean* "*before*" that same event (Acts 2)? When God prophetically quantifies "*all*" in Israel (Joel 2), might his quantification "*all*" in Israel somehow *mean* "*a few*" in the church (Acts 2)? Can God's predicted verbal actions "*prophesy, dream, and see visions*" (Joel 2) initially *mean* "*speak in foreign languages*" (Acts 2)? According to complementary hermeneutics, these kinds of re-referenced, escalated, and expansive modifications of God's meaning in initial fulfillment of his original prophetic words are precisely what occur. I argue, instead, that God's prescriptions for predictive prophecy wholly prohibit such incongruous linguistic metamorphoses. There are better explanations of Peter's citation of Joel than the theory that God later resignifies his prophetic words to *mean* what *they did not mean* when he originally spoke them [see, e.g., *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*, s.v. "Joel 2, Eschatology of," Kregel].

If, in one proposition of God (Joel 2), "*after*" can also mean "*before*," and "*all*" can also mean "*not-all*," and "*dreams and visions*" can also mean "*foreign languages*," then God's prophetic words adhere no fixed discernible meaning when he speaks them. In my argument, the nature and character of God himself preclude any such mutable, contradictive, and unintelligible uses of human language, not to mention the divinely crafted revelatory words of God. To me, it is unthinkable to theorize that a true and righteous God can initially *say* one thing and eventually *mean* a different thing, much less a contradictory thing—that he can announce words that, ages later, will *come to mean* that which they *did not mean* when he originally spoke them. And in my argument, that hermeneutical notion plainly violates the revelatory

descriptions and assurances of God himself with regard to the veracity and the fidelity both of his person and of his self-disclosing speech.

Collins' Review:

Beacham's concern about expansion is detailed in note 32: "The argument seems almost ubiquitous among partial nonliteralists and complementary hermeneuticians that...God should be admired if he produces a 'more expansive' fulfillment than those that he originally swore. According to this innovative hermeneutical theory, God can do more than he promised; he just can't do less.... In any case, the outworking of expanded nonliteral fulfillment usually does not result...in the equation, 'God promises to do x , but instead he does $x+$,' (something *more* than x). Rather, it results in the equation 'God promises to do x , but instead he does y , which, in their view, is $> x$ (something *greater* than x). In reality, however, y is not x at all. It seems more theologically sound to assert, in every case, that if God swears on his own person and nature to do x , then God will in fact do x , nothing more and nothing less. Any other outcome, expanded or diminished, would call into question the efficacy of his words, not to mention the integrity of his person. No outcome can be 'better' than the exacting accomplishment of God's self-sworn pronouncements all the time" (51, n. 32).

I agree with Beacham that if $x+$ in reality means y instead of x , there is a problem. But that doesn't really describe an "expansion" of the promises; it describes *replacement* under the label [*sic*] of expansion. **Thus, I do not see who [*sic*] this argument negates expansion in principle as Beacham goes on to do. In fact, I am again left to wonder how expansion can be eliminated without predictive prophecy being exhaustive. For instance, is it not an expansion that the prophecies regarding Christ are divided into a first coming and a second coming?**

My Response:

If Collins truly agrees that "there is a problem ... if $x+$ in reality means y instead of x ," then Collins' complementary hermeneutic is, in fact, a problem. When "*after*" can mean "*before*," and "*all*" can mean "*not-all*," and "Israel" can mean "the church," then " x in reality means y ." And, according to God's prescriptions for predictive prophecy, that kind of verbal elasticity does, indeed, "call into question the efficacy of [God's] words, not to mention the integrity of his person," as I argue. An appeal to *eventual literal meaning* does not somehow absolve *initial nonliteral meaning*, and the theory of complementary hermeneutics fundamentally espouses the initial re-referencing of God's prophetic words.

By reasserting the axiom that "no predictive prophecy is exhaustive" and by raising the issue of Christ's two comings, Collins perpetuates the confusion of *progressive revelation* with *expanded meaning*. The fact that no prophecy is "exhaustive" and the reality that OT prophecies do not distinguish two messianic comings have no essential bearing on the theory of resignified verbal meaning. This blurring of distinctions will continue in Collins' review.

Collins' Review:

Next Beacham argues that the *nature* of "predictive prophecy was univocal" (51). He argues that "there is no divergence of meaning between the human authors and the divine author" (52). He roots this in Deuteronomy 18:15-22, from which he concludes that "the human prophet served as no more than a mouthpiece" (55). ... Thus, "The prophet may have fully understood the prediction that he announced on behalf of God (1 Kgs 22:17, see 22:28) or the prophet may have found the forecast utterly perplexing (Dan 7:15-16), but neither case affected the prophecy's meaning or intent whatever. If a true prophecy consisted of God's words alone, and it did, then that true prophecy bore God's meaning alone" (55). **I'm not sure that this argument [*sic*] advances the thesis. Those who wish to find a fuller sense find it [*sic*] God's meaning. So negating the human meaning to focus on the divine meaning doesn't really address this challenge.**

My Response:

Collins correctly acknowledges my view of the "univocal nature" of God's prophetic words. In my argument, the attribution "univocal" describes two features of true predictive prophecy. First, the words

are *God's words alone*, never the prophet's words. Second, God's words *can only have one meaning: that which God originally meant*. As Collins also acknowledges, I ground that argument on God's clear description of predictive prophecy as found in Deuteronomy 18:18-20: "I will put *my words* in his [the prophet's] mouth...*my words* which he will speak in my name.... The prophet who *speaks a word* ...*which I have not commanded him to speak*...., that prophet shall die." Clearly, the words of God's predictive prophecies are God's words alone, not at all the prophet's words. The prophet is merely a mouthpiece.

That fact, as evidenced in Deuteronomy 18:18-20 and multiple other OT texts, *renders impossible* a broadly held and oft-repeated hermeneutical theory promoted both by CT and PD: the theory of "dual authorship." This theory, including that of Collins' complementary hermeneutic, attempts to justify the "dual meaning" of a predictive prophecy (a literal meaning *and* a nonliteral meaning) by asserting the "dual authorship" of that prophecy (a human author *and* a divine author). Glenny, for example, says, "the *OT prophet* did not always exhaust *God's* intended meaning (*DIC*, 183, emphasis mine). By this supposed "authorial" dissection, this theory attributes the more-"flat" literalistic meaning of a prophecy to the intellectually limited human author so that the later nonliteral "fuller" or typological meaning can be attributed to the all-knowing God. They assert that, because God *knows* "more than" the prophet knew, God can *mean* "more than" the prophet meant. Thus, *two meanings in one prophecy*: a limited human meaning and a "fuller" divine meaning. By this innovative hermeneutic, they presume to escape the charge that God *alone* meant two different things in one prophetic proposition.

Collins seems to dismiss the relevance of this critical argument from Deuteronomy 18 and other cited texts: "I'm not sure that this argument [*sic*] advances the thesis. Those who wish to find a fuller sense find it [*sic*] God's meaning. So negating the human meaning to focus on the divine meaning doesn't really address this challenge." I am at a loss to follow Collins' logic here. Deuteronomy 18 negates *any* "human meaning" whatsoever in a predictive prophecy. So, *any* assertion that "God's meaning" constitutes a "fuller sense" becomes untenable. Since true prophecy adheres no human words and, thus, no "human meaning," how might "God's meaning" be "fuller"? Fuller than what? If, on the other hand, Collins is agreeing that *all* prophetic meaning is *only* God's meaning, and at the same time Collins embraces the theory of "dual meaning," as per his complementary hermeneutic (a literal "flat" meaning *and* a nonliteral "fuller" meaning), then God *alone* stands accountable for two diverse meanings: i.e. God alone *later means* (nonliterally) what he did not *originally mean* (literally). I know of no one who holds God alone accountable for two meanings in one proposition. In fact, that kind of verbal incongruity represents the very notion that "dual meaning" hermeneuticians try to evade by their argument of "dual authorship."

Collins' Review:

I would agree that there can be no contradiction between the divine and human authors of Scripture in terms of meaning, but as I've written elsewhere, "**God, who knows all things, knows the whole scope of what he will reveal in Scripture along with all of the potentially correct applications. The human author is limited in what he can intend**" (*Scripture, Hermeneutics, and Theology*, 211-12). For instance, **Moses recorded the redemptive promise of Genesis 3:15. But did he understand all that God intended in that promise? Did he understand even what New Testament believers understand to day [*sic*] in reading that text? I am doubtful.... Moses and God did not intend different [*sic*] things in Genesis [*sic*] 3:15 but God certainly intended things beyond what Moses could have known.**

My Response:

I find four problems with Collins' statements here and will address each in turn. First, having summarily dismissed the major significance of Deuteronomy's denial of dual authorship ("I'm not sure that this argument [*sic*] advances [Beacham's] thesis"), Collins then engages the very argument that Deuteronomy 18 renders untenable: "*God*...knows all things...[while] *the human author* is limited..." [emphasis mine]. Second, having persisted in this invalid authorial partition, Collins then attributes "dual intention" to dissected authorship: "...the human author is limited *in what he can intend*" [emphasis mine]. Third, within his theory of "dual authorship = dual intent," Collins reinserts the blurring of

progressive revelation with the hermeneutic of re-referenced meaning: “God...*knows the whole scope of what he will reveal in Scripture.*” Finally, Collins further deflects the question of nonliteral *meaning* by interjecting the issue of textual “application”: “God knows...*all of the potentially correct applications*” [emphasis mine]. Let’s examine these problematic statements.

I begin with Collins’ supposition that dual authorship might produce dual intent: i.e., the divine author may have *intended* “more than” the human author intended in the words of a predictive prophecy. Again, in Deuteronomy 18:18-20, God affirms that *he alone is the author* of genuine predictive prophecy: “I will put my words in his (the prophet’s) mouth.” Thus, no one needs to imagine what the human prophet *meant* or *intended* by his recitation of God’s conferred prophetic words. Collins correctly acknowledges, for example, that “Moses *recorded* the redemptive promise of Genesis 3:15” [emphasis mine]. I fully agree. And I would aver that when Moses *recorded* God’s redemptive promises in Genesis 3:15, he recorded the *exact* and the *exclusive* words of God. Collins states that “Moses and God *did not intend* different [sic] things” [emphasis mine]. Again, Collins’ statement is true, if not truistic. Moses’ only *intent* in Genesis 3:15 was to record, accurately, the very words of God. Since the prophetic words that Moses recorded were *God’s words alone*, then Moses’ intention with regard to the *meaning* of those words is a logical *non-sequitur*.

When in Numbers 22:28 we are told that “the LORD opened the mouth of [Balaam’s] donkey,” should we wonder what the donkey intended by those words? In the same context, it is said that “the LORD put a word in the mouth of Balaam” (23:5,16). And Balaam emphatically attested before Balak the very truth that would soon be encoded in Deuteronomy 18:18: “Can I myself possibly speak anything? The word that God will put in my mouth, that I will speak” (22:38, cf. 23:12, 26; 24:13). Need we then ponder *Balaam’s* intended meaning in contrast to *God’s* intended meaning in the prophetic words that Balaam spoke? That exercise would be pointless.

According to Deuteronomy 18, God’s prophetic words as recorded in Genesis 3:15 or Numbers 23-24 (or Joel 2, or Hosea 11, or Amos 9, or any other predictive prophecy) are *God’s words alone*, and can *only* mean what *God intended* when he originally “put them in the mouth of the prophet.” It is a hermeneutical fallacy to ponder the intended meaning of a “human author” in a predictive prophecy, much less to contrast that supposed meaning with some kind of divinely impregnated “fuller” meaning of that same prophecy. God informs us, in multiple texts of Scripture as cited in my article, that his predictive prophecies entailed *only the words* of God himself and, thus, *only the meaning and intent* of God himself. The prophet, the mouthpiece, the human agent of God’s prophetic utterances, “authored” or originated no *words* of his own and, thus, could intend no *meaning* of his own. The widely-held theory of “dual authorship/dual meaning” in predictive prophecy is wholly negated by God’s description in Deuteronomy 18:20-22. That is the point of my article, and a point that should not be lightly dismissed in my opinion.

When Collins protests, “but God certainly intended things beyond what Moses could have known,” he renews his blurring of progressive revelation with altered meaning. I readily concur that, when Moses recorded God’s words in Genesis 3:15, “God...intended things beyond what Moses could have known.” And it is beyond self-evident that Moses did not “understand...what New Testament believers understand to day [sic]” with respect to that text or any other OT text. But the obvious increase of human *knowledge* over time does not equate with re-referenced *meaning* over time. God’s words, as recorded by Moses in Genesis 3:15, have *always and only ever meant* what they meant when God spoke them to Adam and Eve, not to mention thousands of years later when Moses recorded them in Scripture. They have never *come to mean* something “more-than” they *originally meant* through verbal “advancement” or “escalated” re-referencing.

Finally, as to Collins’ interjection of the issue of biblical “application,” I discuss in my article the fact that illustrations or applications that are drawn from a biblical text (or any other text for that matter) do *not constitute the meaning* of that text, nor can they validly *reconstitute the meaning* of the text. And that important distinction will resurface in more detail later in Collins’ review.

Collins' Review:

[Beside the issue of dual authorship] Beacham is also critical [*sic*] canonical interpretation. **He is right to be concerned about appeals to canonical interpretation that negate promises like the land promises to Israel.** But **canonical interpretation seems to simply be the way that texts are read.** If a person is **reading a series of novels** and one character seems ambiguous or evil in earlier volumes while a later volume reveals him to have been a secret agent working for the good side, that later information will necessarily reshape how those earlier scenes are understood. Likewise, **when the seed promise of Genesis 3:15 is read in light of all the progressive revelation that develops that promise, a richer understanding of that promise is had by readers of Genesis 3. The abuse of canonical readings does not negate its proper, even inevitable, use.**

My Response:

Without replying, again, to Collins' repeated blurring of progressive revelation with escalated meaning, I am intrigued by Collins' minimization of "canonical reading." In the technical discussion of hermeneutics (as per my article), "canonical reading" describes an exceptionally complex and widely held interpretational scheme. It is far more than "simply...the way that texts are read," and it certainly should not be confused with "progressive revelation that develops ... a richer understanding of God's promises and prophecies over time."

Under the designation "canonical reading," progressive covenant theology [PCT], primarily, imposes an extreme application of NT priority on the canon of Scripture. By means of this canonical priority, "the NT ... expand[s] the OT author's meaning" to a "final form" [Gentry and Wellum, *KTC*, 111-5] that, in the end, wholly mutates and ultimately negates the original meaning of those words. This later canonical data "becomes definitive" in supplying "the 'fuller meaning' of Scripture...the *sensus plenior*" of OT propositions [111-2]. In the NT "we discover *God's* intent, ... Scripture['s]...*true* meaning" [111], so that "Scripture..., in its final form, is God's own...*true interpretation*" of OT revelation [115, emphasis mine]. According to this technical reading of Scripture, "what...the OT prophets anticipated..., God has now brought to fulfillment in the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus" [114]. Thus, through the intricate hermeneutical system of "canonical reading," all of God's oft-recurring prophetic words that foretell Israel's national return to the land in the restored Davidic kingdom undergo a complete metamorphosis. They all find ultimate, final fulfillment "Christologically." They will *never* happen in the manner of God's original foretelling.

It is important to note that this complex hermeneutical schema, the theory that PCT labels "canonical reading," openly compels a colossal disconnect between the *OT prophet's meaning* in a predictive prophecy, and *God's "true meaning"* as found in that prophecy's Christological fulfillment—the "true interpretation" that is eventually discovered in the NT. As earlier noted, my argument renders unfeasible any such authorial dichotomy, much less any such disconnect in meaning. Deuteronomy 18:18-20 wholly negates the technical hermeneutic of "canonical reading." But, again, Collins minimizes canonical reading as something equivalent to "progressive revelation...[and] a richer understanding of (God's) promise(s)." He sees "canonical interpretation ... simply (as) the way texts are read," like a "series of novels."

I'm thankful that Collins believes me "right to be concerned about appeals to canonical interpretation that negate promises like the land promises to Israel." But why, then, immediately downplay this extremely technical and exceptionally re-interpretive hermeneutical schema? It occurs to me that Collins does not object to the *method* of canonical interpretation, only to its "*abuse*." Apparently, in Collins' view, the method is "abused" when canonical theorists assert that the nonliteral, typological fulfillment of OT prophecy in Christ and the church constitutes the *ultimate* and *final fulfillment* of those prophecies: Israel is disenfranchised because those typological prophecies will *never revert* to literal outcomes. But remember, with PD and Collins' complementary hermeneutic, these typological fulfillments *do eventually revert* to literal fulfillment. Thus, it seems, Collins deems *some* canonical interpretation "abusive" because of its *non-reversal* of typological fulfillments. Collins, however, does not disfavor the *method* itself.

I assume that Collins' apparent comfortable acceptance of the *method* of canonical reading rests in the similarity, though not the parity, between the hermeneutical theories of PCT (canonical reading) and those of PD (complementary hermeneutics). Both theories embrace the basic tenets of NT priority, escalated meaning, and typological-prophetic fulfillment through fuller referents. Both rely, fundamentally, on the theory of dual authorship in order to partition prophetic meaning. In this way, both views espouse alternate, typological fulfillments by discovering the more advanced verbal meaning and intent of God as found in the NT. In fact, Bock and Blaising engage similar though not equal language in their proposed "canonical-systematic" reading of the text (*Progressive Dispensationalism*, 100-102). The most significant difference, again, is that Collins and PD advocate an *eventual reversion* to literal fulfillment, whereas PCT sees *conclusive* fulfillment in the NT *sensus plenior*. In contrast to *both* of these typological-prophetic theories, I argue that God's prescription in Deuteronomy 18 invalidates, *as a whole*, the technical hermeneutical schema of "canonical interpretation"; it does not simply refute its "abuse."

Collins' Review:

To make his approach work, Beacham draws a stark line between meaning and "implications and applications" (59). But it is not clear that the line between these is stark. E. D. Hirsch wrestled with this problem. At one point he said, "'There is no magic land of meaning outside human consciousness.' But Hirsch realized that humans often intend their meaning to be true in situations of which they presently have no knowledge (the distant future, for instance). **Thus Hirsch was willing to broaden his statement so that principles from the original statement may be *applied* [emphasis REB] to new situations without violating authorial intention.** But, he notes, his original statement 'would be true if, godlike, he could oversee the whole of human consciousness, past, present, and future.'" This leads me to conclude, **"One of the difficulties, where to draw the line between meaning and *significance* [emphasis REB], is greatly mitigated if the Author intends all possible right *applications* [emphasis REB] from the beginning"** (*Scripture, Hermeneutics, and Theology*, 210-11, citing E. D. Hirsch, Jr., "Meaning and Significance Reinterpreted," *Critical Inquiry* [*sic*] 11, no. 2 (Dec. 1984), 202, 204).

My Response:

As I say in my article, I have no problem in affirming that OT prophecies about Israel are "applied" to the church. Such application of OT texts occurs with great frequency in the NT. In fact, the reader of Scripture should *expect* to find this forensic, scriptural "likeness" between God's chosen *pre-Pentecost people* (ethnic Israel) and God's chosen *post-Pentecost people* (the church). Paul makes this natural analogy both explicit and emphatic (twice-stated) in 1 Corinthians 10 (see esp. vv. 6 and 11). Israel's experiences (failures, successes, statutes, hopes, and prophecies) "were *examples* for us" (*tupos*, "types" or "analogies"). [Unsurprisingly, some partial nonliteralists engage 1 Cor 10:6 and 11 to argue for a "figural" reading of Scripture whereby the whole of the OT can become a pictorial representation of deeper meanings and fuller referents – but that theory constitutes another discussion].

I agree that the NT is replete with biblical "applications" and the explicated "significance" of Israel's history and future as recorded in the OT. This natural, analogical correspondence between Israel and the church forms the foundation of the church's principal preaching and teaching from the OT (2 Tim 3:16). How else would a pastor preach from the Psalms or the Book of Leviticus or any other OT text apart from drawing "principles from the[ir] original statement[s]" and *appl[ing] them* to new situations"? And I certainly hope that a preacher or teacher would do so "without violating authorial intention." Who would deny such a fundamental use of the Scriptures: the analogical and applicational engagement of the text's original meaning? But keep in mind, when it comes to predictive prophecy, CT, PCT, and the complementary hermeneutic of PD all *renounce, emphatically*, the simple "comparison" and "application" of OT prophetic "significance" to the NT church. In these hermeneutical systems, NT *applications* serve as instruments of NT *resignification*.

As Glenn explained with regard to his complementary interpretation of predictive prophecy [all emphasis mine]: there is "escalation or advancement of *meaning* in [the] *application* of these passages...." They are "...*more than simply comparing* Israel and the church." Rather, "... by means of

typological-prophetic hermeneutics...*there is escalation or advancement*...from the lesser OT type [Israel] to the greater NT antitype [the church]” so that “*the church fulfills these OT prophecies*” (DIC, 180-2, 184). My article, in contrast, does not reject NT illustrations, applications, and analogies that expound the significance of OT texts. I embrace them. Instead, my article rejects the *inflation* of NT comparisons, applications, and analogies into agents of *authorial partition* and *transformed verbal meaning*. God’s own prescriptions for predictive prophecy refute the notion that *any* of God’s words in his sovereign foretelling *ever* take on escalated, re-referenced, nonliteral meanings so that God’s words somehow *come to mean* that which they *did not mean when he spoke them*.

Collins is correct; I do not equate original authorial “meaning and intention” with later “significance, implications, and application.” Nor do I believe that Hirsch equates them in the citations above or anywhere else, for that matter. Apart from God, no speaker or author can possibly know all of the significance that might later derive from his or her original verbal propositions (take, for example, the Constitution of the United States). Indeed, all of the potential implications and/or applications of those propositions as originally framed far exceed the intelligence of any human author at the time of their framing. But later significance and subsequent implications and applications that are drawn from an author’s original words neither *constitute* the meaning of those original words nor legitimately *resignify* the meaning of those words into something that they did not originally mean [see my citation of Norman Geisler, “The Unity of Meaning,” *Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2002) 1:106-7].

So, I have no problem with Hirsch’s discussion of any of those ideas as stated above. Implications, applications, and analogies *find ground* in original meaning and authorial intent; they do not *reassign* original meaning and intent. In my argument, later significance, implications, and/or applications that are *drawn from* God’s original prophetic words (e.g., Jer. 31; Joel 2, Amos 9, et. al) do not linguistically *morph* those words into *fuller referents* with *escalated meanings* and *substitute outcomes*. According to God’s own prerequisites for predictive prophecy, “Israel” cannot later *mean* “the church,” “after” cannot eventually *mean* “before,” “all” cannot also *mean* “not-all,” and “dreams” cannot someday *mean* “tongues-speaking,” etc. And any attempt to justify nonliteral outcomes of predictive prophecy by attributing escalated fulfillments and advanced meanings to “dual authors” or to some form of later re-referential “significance, implications, and applications” is fallacious. The nature of predictive prophecy as defined by God in Deuteronomy 18 and elsewhere precludes any such incongruity in God’s univocal prophetic words.

Collins’ Review:

Next, Beacham appeals to “the *function* of predictive prophecy” according to Deuteronomy 18:19. On the basis that the prophets were to be obeyed, he concludes that “all that they foretold, was both comprehensible and practicable by the ordinary person.... There could be no vast passing of time until the ultimate true meaning of God’s words to Israel could acquire their final significance through canonical reinterpretation and/or typological fulfillment” (61, emphasis added). **I understand Beacham’s concern...regarding interpreters who conclude that God will not do exactly as he predicted through the prophets but might actually do something other than the prophets said. I share that concern. But I’m not confident that Deuteronomy 18:19 is saying that that [sic] everything the prophet said was comprehended by the original audience. I’m not even sure that Beacham truly wants to press the point that far, since he acknowledged earlier that the prophets didn’t fully understand all that they were saying [sic] all that they were given to say. ...Nevertheless, to turn again to Genesis 3:15, surely the understanding of the ultimate true meaning of God’s words has grown as God progressively revealed more about his redemptive plan in Christ. Doubtless Christians understand the meaning of Genesis 3:15 better than Adam or Moses. Or, to give another example, the Old Testament revealed much about the gospel going to the Gentiles and about Israel’s role in God’s plan in connection to this mission to the Gentiles. Surely Old Testament texts about the gospel coming to the Gentiles should be read in light of Acts and the Epistles.**

My Response:

If Collins is “not confident that Deuteronomy 18:19 is saying that *everything* the prophet said was comprehended by the original audience,” that’s a good thing. In fact, he cites my own caveat that, at times, the prophets themselves “didn’t *fully* understand *all* that they were...given to say” [emphases mine]. His citation confirms my rejection of the notion that the prophets and/or their listeners were responsible to “*understand fully*” “*everything*” about the “*ultimate*” outworking of a predictive prophecy (Collins’ words). But Collins’ overstatement only obscures the actual point of my article.

My actual thesis is this: according to Deuteronomy 18:19, God spoke his forecasts to audiences using words that were both “comprehensible” (if not always *fully* grasped) and “practicable” (if not always *ultimately* apparent). God created language in order to reveal himself rationally (verbal comprehensibility) and effectively (verbal practicability), and God’s purpose for language included the words of his prophecies. According to Deuteronomy 18:19, the recipients of God’s prophetic speech were enjoined both to *comprehend* those words (“hear, listen to”) and to *act upon* those words exactly as announced to them, lest God hold them culpable (“require, deem accountable”). These two directives in Deuteronomy 18:19 (*comprehension* and *accountability*) compel two fundamental, hermeneutical conclusions: 1) God’s prophetic utterances contained immediately *understandable* revelation, and 2) God expected that revelation to engender proximate, life-impacting *responses*. Those two basic conclusions constitute the actual point made in my article.

If God foretold that his audience should “repent or be judged,” he expected the hearers to comprehend those words and to react appropriately. God’s words to the Ninevites worked exactly that way (Jonah 3), as did his prophetic injunctions to Israel (e.g., Jer. 44:4-6). In foretelling Adam and Eve that “the seed of the woman” would “crush the head of the serpent,” God expected two things of them: linguistic comprehension and—apart from an injunction—a response of faith. They should *believe* that “the seed of the woman” would someday “crush the head of the serpent,” and they should *live* by faith in God’s words. This dual expectation was precisely met when Abraham both *apprehended* and *appropriated* God’s prophetic words to him (Gen 15:4-6 “The word of the LORD came to him Then he believed...”). God maintained the same two demands when he originally announced his forecasts to Israel as recorded in Jeremiah 31, and Joel 2, and Amos 9, not to mention *all of the rest* of his predictive prophecies. God expected the immediate audience of his prophetic words to “hear” and to “heed” those words with intellectual cognition and with faith-based living (Deut 18:19).

So, grounded on those two fundamental conclusions derived from Deuteronomy 18:19 (apprehension and appropriation), an even greater hermeneutical argument can be forwarded. According to God’s functional prescription for predictive prophecy, Adam and Eve and subsequent recipients of God’s prophetic words suffered no need to await “the ultimate true meaning” of his revelatory announcements to them—the NT’s escalated, re-referenced, and fuller verbal meaning. Rather, they were enjoined, immediately, to “comprehend” and to “heed” God’s forecasts exactly as revealed to them. Their lives and their destinies depended on it.

In contrast, recall some of the statements made by “canonical” interpreters who espouse the long, temporal delay of the *real meaning* of OT prophecies. Gentry and Wellum write: “...we must ultimately interpret [OT] biblical authors in light of the *entire canon* of Scripture. It is only by reading Scripture ‘thickly’ that we discover *the true meaning* of Scripture, i.e., what *God’s intent* is.... Scripture, in its *final* [NT] form, is God’s...*true interpretation*” of OT statements and predictive prophecies (KTC, 111-5, emphases mine).

That notion of NT canonical priority and the centuries-long suspension of the *true meaning* of OT prophecy embodies the technical hermeneutical theory that I purposed to refute in this section of my article. In my argument, such a delayed view of meaning denigrates the functional nature and purpose of God’s prophetic speech: the communication of *directly knowable truth* and the *immediate accountability* of his original audience to *believe in and to live by* that truth (Deut 18:19). It seems nonsensical, in the most technical denotation of that word, to believe that “we discover the *true meaning of Scripture*” [KTC., 111] only after multiple centuries of earth history. What does such a procrastinative theory of “meaning”

do to the knowledge, faith, life, and hope of millions of OT recipients of divine revelation who “heard” God’s verbal propositions and stood responsible to “heed” those propositions? Given the theory of “canonical reading,” these OT saints could *never* know what God *really* meant by the words that he spoke to them. That kind of revelational robbery and interpretational revisionism, to me, is unimaginable. And that is why I make my argument from God’s clear prescription for predictive prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:19. God’s expectation of immediate *comprehension* and proximate *accountability* eradicates the hermeneutical schema of “canonical reading” and any similar theory that delays the “true meaning” of OT prophetic words.

On another point, I’m thankful, though rather surprised, that Collins “shares [my] concern...regarding interpreters who conclude that God will not do exactly as he predicted...but might actually do something other than the prophets said.” Granted, Collins’ complementary hermeneutic affirms that God will *eventually* fulfill prophecy by “...do(ing) exactly as he predicted.” But the core tenet of complementary hermeneutics, “typological-prophetic” interpretation, also affirms that God can *initially* fulfill his prophecies by “...do(ing) something other than the prophets said.” I must suggest, again, that *eventual literal* fulfillment does not somehow erase *initial nonliteral* fulfillment as espoused by Collins’ complementary hermeneutic. Likewise, CT’s *permanent* re-referencing of OT prophecies does not somehow lessen PD’s *temporary* re-referencing of OT prophecies through “initial” typological fulfillments. Collins’ “concern” about God’s fulfilling a prophecy by “do[ing] something other than the prophets said” truly perplexes me, given his own “typological-prophetic” theory of nonliteral initial fulfillment.

Further, Collins reverts, again, to confusing the question of *resignified meaning* with that of *cumulative information*. His comment that “...Christians understand the meaning of Genesis 3:15 better than Adam or Moses” seems elementary to me. Certainly, we better understand the *outworking* of that which God said and meant in Genesis 3:15, but the original intended *meaning* of God’s words in that text is never *escalated*, later, to *mean* something other than it originally meant. I would also recommend that more-conservative interpreters avoid statements that suggest that “progressive revelation” supplies us with “the ultimate true meaning of God’s words” as Collins avers in his review. That verbiage sounds uncannily like the procrastinative theory and holistic revisionism of PCT’s canonical reading as cited above. Finally, Collins’ concluding sentence should be reversed, in my opinion. If revelational *information* is truly *progressive* over time (*vis-à-vis revisionistic* over time), then “Acts and the Epistles” should be read in light of “OT texts,” not *vice-versa*, as Collins suggests. And I argue that those OT texts, propositions, and forecasts should *always* be read in retention of their *univocal, original meaning*, not through some theory of *unfixed, nonliteral, mutable re-referencing*.

So, Deuteronomy 18:19 affirms that God’s prophetic words were both comprehensible and actionable for their original hearers. That being true, those prophetic words, both in their perspicuity and in their viability, required no long-deferred NT discovery of their reassigned “true meaning.”

Collins’ Review:

Finally Beacham argues that the “*test* of predicative prophecy” supports his view.... Deuteronomy 18:21-22; Jeremiah 28:7-9; Ezekiel 33:30-33 all affirm that the test of a true prophet is that his predictions come true. Beacham observes, “No caveat existed in God’s declared test of genuine prophecy to allow for spiritualized, typified, multi-intentioned, expanded, or canonically resignified fulfillments” (64). **Once again, I would agree that interpretations in which the fulfillment of Old Testament texts are replaced with spiritual interpretations or resignified are condemned by these texts. ...But I remain puzzled about the inclusion of “multi-intentioned” and “expanded” in the list. If there are texts in which God says, “I will do X for believing Israel,” and he does X for believing Israel while also revealing later that he always intended to do the equivalent for believing Gentiles as well, how does that fall afoul of the above passages? While the texts that Beacham adduces do rule out the spiritualizing approaches that were popular in previous centuries and some of the approaches today that reinterpret Old Testament texts, I do not think that the texts he cited contradict a**

complementary hermeneutic or interpretations in which the Old Testament texts retain their integrity while progressive revelation clarifies or extends the these [sic] OT texts.

My Response:

I'm truly grateful for Collins' affirmation that if God says that he will do "x" for Israel, then he will do "x" for Israel. But God's stipulations for predictive prophecy demand a *much higher* standard—an *exclusive* standard. If, in any forecast, God says he will do "x," then he will *always and only* do "x" in fulfillment of that forecast. He will *never* do "y" by *escalating his word-meaning* to bring about a different fulfillment (e.g., an *interim initial* fulfillment) by a surrogate means with a substitute people at an alternate time, as with the typological-prophetic theory of Collins' complementary hermeneutic.

I must, again, rehearse citations that define, technically, the theory of "complementary hermeneutics." Glennly says, "The *intended meaning* of the OT prophet did not always exhaust God's *intended meaning*." Thus, "the *fuller meaning* of an OT text, which it sometimes has in the NT, is rather a *further referent*..." This re-referencing creates an "advancement," an "escalation...in *meaning* beyond its OT context." With regard to Israel and the church, this NT reassignment of OT meaning is "more than simply *comparing* Israel and the church...[it is] an *escalation* from lesser to greater...[a] *typological-prophetic* connection between Israel and the church." By this hermeneutic, Glennly concludes: "the church...is a fulfillment of the promises made to Israel in these OT passages" (*DIC*, 181, 183-4, all emphases mine).

Given that technical description of complementary hermeneutics, here is my question: if specific OT prophecies that *say* "Israel" become escalated and re-referenced in the NT so that, *in fulfillment*, "Israel" now *means* "the church," are those not "interpretations in which the fulfillment of Old Testament texts are...resignified" (Collins)? On the one hand, Collins "agree(s) that interpretations in which the fulfillment of Old Testament texts are...resignified, are condemned by these texts" (i.e., the texts that ground my argument). But on the other hand, Collins "do(es) not think that the texts cited contradict a complementary hermeneutic," i.e., a hermeneutic that resignifies the text. Such apparent logical and hermeneutical anomalies throughout Collins' review have genuinely mystified me. To me, Glennly's specific explanations of complementary hermeneutics seem obviously to challenge Collins' general descriptions of that hermeneutic as forwarded in his review.

Certainly, concerning Israel's predicted future, God can "reveal, later, that he always intended to do the equivalent for believing Gentiles..." My article affirms an analogical "equivalence" between some of what God predicted for Israel and some of what God does for the church. But again, natural equivalence (the *application* of similarity) does not demand verbal equivocation (the *alteration* of meaning). And remember, in complementary hermeneutics, these verbal expansions are "more than simply comparing Israel and the church," they are "escalation(s) in meaning" (*DIC*, 181-2). The referent "Israel" later "advances" to *mean* "the church." That kind of re-referencing precisely exemplifies the verbal plasticity that God forbids in his "test" of predictive prophecy. If God foretells that he will accomplish some purpose for "Israel," then that forecast can only find fulfillment with "Israel." Other peoples, nations, and individuals in Scripture might and, in fact, *do* experience many things *like* God forecasts for Israel, but in so doing, they are not *fulfilling* Israel's prophecies through textually reassigned referents and verbally escalated prophetic meaning. And *never* can "Israel" *mean* "the church" in fulfillment of predictive prophecy, either initially or ultimately. In fact, if someone other than Israel is alleged to fulfill a specific prophecy whose referent is Israel, then the prophet who instigated that forecast is proven false—that prophecy *fails* God's test according to Deuteronomy 18:21-22.

In my opinion, Collins' last sentence well summarizes three recurring issues in his review. First, he says, "the texts that Beacham adduces do rule out ... some of the approaches today that reinterpret Old Testament texts..." Actually, the texts that I adduce in my article rule out *all* "of the approaches...that reinterpret OT texts," including complementary hermeneutics. Second, he says, "I do not think that the texts he cited contradict...interpretations in which the Old Testament texts retain their integrity while progressive revelation clarifies or extends the these [sic] OT texts." By "retain their integrity," Collins apparently references the complementary view that all OT prophecies will *eventually* find literal

fulfillment. I appreciate that tenet. But, as I've said, the retention of *eventual literal* fulfillment does not somehow mitigate *earlier nonliteral fulfillment*, and God prescribes *only literal* fulfillment. Last, when Collins says that "progressive revelation clarifies or extends...these OT texts," he fuses, again, two divergent issues: 1) the progressive *clarification* of OT texts, and 2) the supposed NT "*extension*" of OT texts. "Progressive clarification" is a given in Bible interpretation. But the "*extension*" of OT texts, according to a complementary hermeneutic, actually *re-references* the *meaning* of those texts, and, in my view, the texts that I cite (correctly understood) *do* "contradict a complementary hermeneutic" (correctly understood).

Collins' Review:

In sum, while I **share Beacham's concerns about approaches to Old Testament interpretation [sic] that re-interpret the text contrary to authorial intent** or which posit a "reality shift"...between the Old and New Testaments, I think that the approach he advocates makes it difficult to understand numerous New Testament interpretations and fulfillments of Old Testament passages. **I want to interpret the Old Testament literally. I also want to interpret the New Testament's use of the Old Testament literally.**

My Response:

I'm grateful that "reality shift(s)" in prophetic interpretation concern Collins, though I remain troubled by his earlier minimization of "canonical reading," the technical theory of PCT that champions such "reality shifts." Again, I am confused when he "share[s] (my) concerns about...OT interpretation [sic] that re-interpret the text contrary to authorial intent" while his own complementary hermeneutic 1) finds an alternate "fuller meaning of an OT text...in the NT," 2) asserts that "the intended meaning of the OT prophet did not always exhaust God's intended meaning," and 3) avers that the NT "evidences escalation or advancement in meaning beyond its OT context" [DIC, 182-3]. Those hermeneutical tenets seem clearly to espouse the *reassignment* of the original "author(s)" *meaning* and, thus, "re-interpret the text contrary to authorial intent."

Finally, I'm intrigued when Collins concludes his review with a mantra often repeated among those who disavow the consistent literal fulfillment of OT prophecy: they "want to interpret the New Testament's use of the Old Testament literally." This mantra implies that those who espouse consistent literalism in OT prophecy do *not* interpret these NT texts literally. That implication, itself, seems querulous to me and to others [see Mike Stallard, "Are Traditional Dispensationalists Non-literal in the New Testament?" *Pre-Trib Study Group*, Dallas, TX, Dec. 1999]. But beyond the *intended* implication, I find the *opposite* implication ironic, that interpreters who have rejected "always and only" literalism in OT propositions now want to stipulate a supposed "always and only" literalism in the NT. That fascinating contradiction invites an entirely different discussion.

In closing, I wish that Collins' concluding desire to "interpret the OT literally" meant *always and only* literally as prescribed by God's own descriptions of the purpose, ground, nature, function, and test of predictive prophecy. Nonetheless, I'm grateful that he posed his questions about those descriptions, for they offered me an occasion to reply.