

Tabb, Brian J., and Andrew M. King, eds. *Five Views of Christ in the Old Testament. Counterpoints: Bible & Theology. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2022. 290pp. + 10pp. (front matter) + 20pp. (back matter).*

What the OT says or anticipates about Christ has always been a key question in the Church's struggle over the continuity and discontinuity of the Testaments. This issue rose to prominence in postapostolic debates over allegorical versus literal interpretation, and it has come into focus again in contemporary discussions of "Christ-centered" hermeneutics and preaching. Whereas books on the subject tend to defend one approach, *Five Views of Christ in the Old Testament* allows scholars to express their individual perspectives and interact over disagreements. The presentation of each view follows the same major headings: (1) the nature of Scripture, especially the concept of authorial intent; (2) interpretive steps for the reader of Scripture; and (3) case studies, specifically Genesis 22, Proverbs 8, and Isaiah 42. After an author lays out his approach, the others give their responses, and then the author issues a rejoinder. The editors also provide a brief introduction and conclusion to the book.

John Goldingay, senior professor of OT and David Allan Hubbard Professor Emeritus of OT at Fuller Theological Seminary, expounds the "First Testament Approach." Calling the OT "the First Testament" so as not to imply it is outdated, he wants the message of the OT to stand on its own right and not be neglected because of a search for Christ. Goldingay holds that the text of the OT does not mention Christ and does not encourage readers to think of him specifically. Rather, the OT "simply invites them to relate to God" (22). Yes, Jesus is the climax of the biblical story, and OT material can help us understand him. But that does not mean that OT passages are about Christ or even point to him. Upholding Goldingay's view is an absolute equation of the human authors' meaning and the divine author's meaning (23) as well as a sharp distinction between the meaning and the significance (application) of Scripture (24). When NT authors connect OT passages with Christ, they are drawing out significance, not meaning. Similarly, Goldingay presents typology as *a posteriori* reflection rather than authorially intended symbolism. "The sanctuary, the priesthood, the sacrifices, or the servant's suffering do not point forward to Jesus" (31). Thus, Goldingay's interpretive steps and case studies connect OT passages to Christ only in the sense of after-the-fact light that may be thrown on Jesus (36).

As the narrowest approach in *Five Views*, Goldingay's understanding seems unlikely to win the day. Damaging to his presentation is his tendency to overgeneralize and overstate. "God doesn't really predict things. What God does is promise and threaten things" (33). "The First Testament's significance is to help us see what his messiahship means, not to prove anything" (35). Occasionally these kinds of statements call into question the inerrancy of Scripture. "Jesus's comment about hardness of hearts implies that later parts need to be corrected by earlier parts" (29). "Sometimes the New Testament uses a First Testament text in a way that ignores its inherent meaning" (37). I agree with Jason DeRouchie (56–62) that Goldingay misreads original OT contexts (e.g., Gen 22) and contradicts NT treatments of OT passages (e.g., Luke 24:27). To his credit, at least Goldingay acknowledges in his rejoinder, "I overstated the point about it being impossible to prove from the First Testament that Jesus is the Messiah" (69; cf. Acts 28:23).

Tremper Longman III, professor emeritus of biblical studies at Westmont College, argues for the “Christotelic Approach.” Christ is the goal (*telos*) of the OT, and what this means becomes clearer after his resurrection. Christian readers should read an OT text twice (74). The first reading looks for the OT’s “discrete voice,” bracketing out any related NT information and focusing only on how the text addressed its original audience. The second reading studies the text in the light of the revelation provided by the NT. This second stage leads to *sensus plenior*, the fuller divine meaning that the original writers would find surprising though legitimate (81–82). Longman views this as an “intuitive, Spirit-led reading” that cannot be boiled down to interpretive steps. But he does encourage readers to look for “key words, common themes, or similar patterns of plot (the stuff of typology)” (88). Thus, for instance, in Proverbs 8 Woman Wisdom represents all the virtues of wisdom that flow from a right relationship with Yahweh. Though the NT does not *identify* Woman Wisdom with Jesus, it does *associate* the two in that Christ is the fullest manifestation of divine wisdom (95, citing Col 2:3).

Some OT passages clearly connect with Christ in a teleological sense, and Longman’s approach to Proverbs 8 provides one compelling example. Other parts of his discussion are not so persuasive, however, such as his claim that the Servant in Isaiah 42:1–4 is Israel rather than Christ. Longman also creates confusion when he uses the terms *Christological*, *Christotelic*, and *Christocentric* interchangeably (85). One also wonders whether it is possible, let alone advisable, to do a first reading of the OT without thinking of relevant NT considerations. Similarly, the category of *sensus plenior* introduces much more hermeneutical complexity and uncertainty than Longman indicates. The reader is left frustrated with how little guidance he provides for figuring out whether a possible connection to Christ is a divinely intended deeper meaning or the product of an overly active imagination.

Havilah Dharamraj, head of the department of biblical studies at South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies in Bangalore, India, expresses the “Reception-Centered, Intertextual Approach.” This approach centers on the “Common Reader,” someone influenced by the “public meaning” of Scripture. That is, from his/her personal and ecclesiastical experience, the individual already has some sense of connections between the OT and Christ. As the Common Reader studies the Bible, he/she pairs an OT text (T1) with a seemingly parallel NT text (T2) and puts the two in a “conversation” that results in a kind of third text (T3) (128–29). The link between the two “intertexts” is a “dominant theme” or “icon” in the OT passage that has a “resonance” with a NT passage about Christ (131–32). So, for example, Isaac’s willingness to be sacrificed by Abraham (Gen 22) reminds the Common Reader of the self-humbling of Christ in Philippians 2. Juxtaposing these two passages leads to a greater love for and imitation of Christ.

Dharamraj’s view represents a moderate reader-response hermeneutic. While she does not dismiss entirely the intent of the human author of a text, she significantly minimizes the role of that intent. Unsurprisingly, then, the discovery of Christological resonances becomes a rather subjective enterprise. Since Dharamraj upholds orthodox doctrine as a guardrail for interpretation, the conclusions of her Common Reader will probably not end up being heretical. Often, however, they will be unconvincing exegetically. For example, Genesis 22 says nothing concerning Isaac’s attitude about being sacrificed. Instead, the passage focuses on the trial of Abraham’s faith, a theme that Dharamraj passes over. She also explicitly bypasses the question of the identity of the Servant in Isaiah

42 (145n48), sets aside the clear use of this passage in Matthew 12, and instead opts for a presumed parallel in Revelation 19 (145–46). It seems that the Common Reader has effectively taken the place of the authors/Author of Scripture.

Jason S. DeRouchie, research professor of OT and biblical theology at Midwestern Theological Seminary, develops the “Redemptive-Historical, Christocentric Approach.” He strongly contends that, as the climax of salvation history, Christ is central to the interpretation of Scripture. Jesus serves as the lens for understanding completely what the OT means. Thus, post-resurrection believers are in a better interpretive position than even the OT’s authors. Specifically, DeRouchie urges us to “interpret Scripture along three distinct but overlapping contexts”: the “close context” (C1), the “continuing context” (C2—how a text is informed by and adds to antecedent revelation), and the “complete context” (C3) of the entire canon (187). The results of such study are multifaceted. A passage may relate to Christ in one or more of at least seven ways: (1) “direct messianic predictions,” (2) “salvation-historical story and related trajectories,” (3) “similarities and contrasts of the old and new ages, creations, and covenants,” (4) “typology,” (5) “Yahweh’s identity and activity,” (6) “ethical ideals of Old Testament law and wisdom,” and (7) “using the Old Testament to instruct or guide others in the law of love” (188–91).

I found DeRouchie’s chapter to be the most practically helpful part of *Five Views*. His clear explanations of the three contexts and the seven ways provide the interpreter with useful tools for discerning how OT passages relate to Christ. Additionally, DeRouchie’s exegesis—more detailed than the other writers’ exegesis—effectively demonstrates how he fleshes out his approach. This does not mean that his exegesis is always persuasive. For example, since burnt offerings are typically associated with substitution and since Scripture does not mention sin in Isaac that demanded his immediate killing, in Genesis 22 “God likely sets Isaac forth as a vicarious sacrifice standing in for the sinner Abraham or a broader community” (194). That is a bit of a stretch. But at least DeRouchie words such views tentatively, using “likely,” “may,” and “suggests” with some frequency. In any case, what is compelling about DeRouchie’s chapter is that he does not squeeze every OT passage into a single hermeneutical mold but presents various possibilities for how a text may connect to Jesus.

Craig A. Carter, research professor of theology at Tyndale University, sets forth the “Premodern Approach.” Carter takes aim at the naturalistic bent of historical criticism, especially its rejection of NT Christological readings of the OT as eisegetical. He also opines that the grammatical-historical method is a conservative version of the historical-critical method and lends itself to the problems of that method. The premodern approach to interpretation is preferable, especially because it gave rise to Trinitarian and Christological orthodoxy. This is more of a spiritual discipline than an exegetical method. It values the intent of the human author but concentrates on the intent of the divine author as the essence of the “literal sense” of Scripture. Rather than claiming objectivity, the premodern approach reflects faith in Jesus seeking understanding of him through the text. This entails four interpretive principles. First, Scripture is united around the central theme of Jesus Christ. Second, the foundation of interpretation is the literal sense. *Sensus plenior* is possible, but it must meet two criteria: “(1) it cannot contradict the literal sense, and (2) it must be related to it in some logical manner” (252). This leads to the third principle: the literal sense may include “the spiritual sense.” The latter includes

three categories (253–54): the allegorical sense (truth about Christ), the moral sense, and the anagogical sense or eschatology. The fourth principle provides the hermeneutical control on these layers of meaning: Christological orthodoxy.

Carter does well to highlight the divine intent of Scripture, but he fails to demonstrate that this intent requires the methodology and conclusions he espouses. Goldingay is right that Carter's assessment of grammatical-historical exegesis is unfair, as though they are not concerned about the spiritual dimensions of the text (266–67). Or as Dharamraj puts it, Carter has unnecessarily polarized the modern and premodern (280). Carter's case studies are a mixed bag. He holds to the literal meaning of Genesis 22 as focused on the test of Abraham's faith but remains open to the idea that Isaac carrying the wood is a type of Christ carrying the cross. He also argues that Proverbs 8:22 teaches the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son. Despite Carter's protestations (292), it remains hard to avoid the impression that such interpretations are imported from the NT rather than being the intent of the author of the OT text, human or divine. I am still a little shocked that a twenty-first century scholar encourages the medieval theory of multiple levels of meaning, but such has become common among those who, like Carter, operate within the contemporary trend known as Theological Interpretation of Scripture (TIS).

Five Views of Christ in the Old Testament provides a meaty discussion of a major topic of interest to biblical scholars and preachers alike. I did go away wishing for more detailed discussion about what certain NT passages teach and do *not* teach about the topic, specifically Luke 24:25–27, 44–47, John 5:39, and 1 Peter 1:10–12. I also wondered what considerations guided the selection of the five authors. Essays by Michael P. V. Barrett, Abner Chou, Christopher J. H. Wright, or Sidney Greidanus would likely have been more profitable than some of the chapters included. I was surprised that Greidanus—a towering figure in the field—does not even show up in the list of authors cited. Nevertheless, *Five Views* presents a worthy summary of the spectrum of current approaches to the relationship of the OT to Christ: premodern (Carter), modern (Goldingay and Longman), postmodern (Dharamraj), and what could be considered a hybrid of premodern and modern emphases (DeRouchie).

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