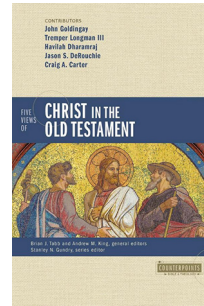


Book Review

Brian J. Tabb, Andrew M. King, eds.
*Five Views of Christ in the Old Testament: Genre, Authorial Intent,
and the Nature of Scripture.*
Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic 2022) pp. 322 ISBN
9780310125518, \$26.99.

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*Five Views of Christ in the Old Testament*¹ is a part of Zondervan's long running Counterpoints series. The format of this volume follows a presentation-responses-rejoinder pattern that makes the overall feel of the debate highly interactive. It allows for every contributor to interact fully with each contributor highlighting thought-provoking questions, pointing out weak or strong parts of the presentation, demonstrating gracious agreement and disagreement, and overall letting iron sharpen iron.

John Goldingay represents the First Testament Approach. He argues that Christ is not in the Old Testament, “that it is impossible to prove from the First Testament that Jesus is the Messiah” (p. 69) and “that we are unwise to read Jesus back into them and thus miss what they have to say” and yet “we are wise to read the New Testament in light of them” (p. 21). He explains from the Gen. 22 case study, “there is nothing to put the ancestors on the track of the idea that the passage may be messianic. Christ is not in Gen. 22, nor does Gen. 22 point to Christ. But Gen. 22 helped Mark and Paul understand Christ.” Goldingay distinguishes the meaning of the text from its significance, that the First Testament has a meaning as it is

written, while the New Testament highlights the significance of the First. In his rejoinder, after the other contributor's remarks, Goldingay humbly admits he overstated his case of the improbability of Jesus as Messiah in the First Testament, acknowledging that Paul does do this in Acts (p. 69–70).

Tremper Longman III argues for the Christotelic Approach. Christotelic meaning that Christ is the *telos* (from the Greek), the *goal* of the Old Testament, a term nearly synonymous with Christocentric. He advocates for a two reading method of the Old Testament. The first reading aims at grasping the literal meaning of the author in his context using the historical-grammatical approach, asking, “what was Solomon trying to say in Proverbs 8?” for example. Then, to follow with a second reading, taking what is known of the apostolic writings back to the Old Testament for greater illumination or *sensus plenior*, asking, “what would the New Testament writers see of Christ in Proverbs 8?” Each reading having a specific intent in focus.

Havilah Dharamraj explores the Reception-Centered, Intertextual Approach. This approach is set in contrast to “production-centered intertextuality, a largely author-centered, historical endeavor.” (p. 128). Dharamraj's method focuses on the Common Reader, who operates by “instinct” to set Old Testament and New Testament texts into “conversation” with each other. She considers, the whole

1 Contributors: John Goldingay, Tremper Longman III, Havilah Dharamraj, Jason S. DeRouchie, Craig A. Carter

reader's community, background, and culture in exploring the Bible devotionally because the method is "a largely reader-centered, literary investigation." (p. 129).

Jason S. DeRouchie advocates for a Redemptive-Historical Christocentric Approach. He states that his proposal is "a multifaceted approach that accounts for the central role Jesus plays in redemptive history" and is "biblically faithful" (p. 181). He then suggests that passages in the Old Testament fall into three overlapping contexts— a close or immediate context of the book's specific meaning, a continuing context being the ongoing account of God's salvation history and a complete context looking at the book through the whole of the Bible. Once contexts are clarified DeRouchie lists seven ways to see Christ in the Old Testament. These include any direct predictions, keeping the flow of God's salvation plan in mind, observing contrasts and similarities between the old covenant and the new, typology, how Yahweh acts, and identifies himself, wisdom and ethical ideals, and the law of love.

Finally, Craig A. Carter argues for the Premodern Approach. According to Carter this approach rejects the hermeneutical tradition of grammatical-historical method that has developed since the 19th century and seeks to return to an older, less Enlightenment influenced hermeneutic. He gives four principles for interpretation: 1) the Unity of Scripture, 2) the Priority of the Literal Sense, 3) the Reality of the Spiritual Sense, and 4) the Christological Control on Meaning. In line with his Premodern position Carter argues for a Four-Fold hermeneutical method popular in medieval times. He seeks to balance the literal and spiritual senses of the text writing that "the interpretation of Christ in the Old Testament

itself arises out of the Bible's own account of the metaphysical situation in which interpretation occurs." (p. 265).

The primary aim of each contributor is to explain his or her particular view of how to read and interpret Christ in the Old Testament. Key questions that guided the writers were: "How do you understand the nature, unity, and progression of the Scriptures, and what role does the New Testament play in your interpretation of the Old Testament texts?" "What is the relationship between the intentions of the human authors and editors of the Old Testament and the divine author?" "How does your approach to Christ in the Old Testament benefit readers?" (p. 16). Guidelines for each chapter include a treatment on the nature of scripture and interpretive steps that Old Testament readers should take. Each author demonstrated their view using Gen 22:1–19, Prov 8:22–31 and Isa 42:1–4 as case studies for practical application.

A primary theme that emerged throughout the book was the issue of authorial intent with each author seeking the balance between the human and divine. Longman writes that "we should insist on an author-centered understanding of meaning," leaning towards the human (p. 80) Carter states that "the focus on human authorial intent makes for very subjective interpretation," and advocates seeking divine meaning from the start (p. 120) All parties agree God is the ultimate author, thus the tension is unavoidable. Carter's view of seeking divine meaning as priority would operate under the umbrella of the Bible's emphasis on God desiring relationship with man. It allows God to speak through a relationship with the author, similar to God speaking through the incarnation of Christ.

In reading a book which clearly is structured

to teach multiple views of a particular topic, it is easy to start seeing if you happily fall into one particular position or another or, on the other hand, vehemently disagree with a specific position. Tabb and King, the editors of this volume, preempt these thoughts when they write that “doubtlessly, readers will resonate more or less with aspects of each view. The goal, however, is not to adopt a particular label, but rather to develop a faithful and robust approach to Scripture that is self-aware of our presuppositions and methodology” (p. 293).

Being “self-aware of our presuppositions” is a key element to any hermeneutical approach, particularly those addressing the person of Jesus Christ. This volume will give you much food for thought as you work through each position and the counterpoints made by the other contributors. Even though there is a final rejoinder by each author to the collective responses given by the other contributors, I find myself wondering what more Goldingay, for example, may have said to Carter on a particular point or other, and if on longer term reflection how any of the authors may have modified their own views based on the feedback given in this volume.

One of the strengths of *Fives Views of Christ in the Old Testament* is its friendly back and forth approach of the authors. In past volumes this interaction has not been present, so it is helpful here to see what each writer thinks of the other’s views and where they were challenged or found something lacking. Dharamraj’s perspective coming out of south Asia was a refreshing change to the more Western outlook. Carter’s presentation of the Premodern Approach dared to challenge the grammatical-historical method. A method that should be critiqued more often in light of the New Testament usage of the Old Testament. As a whole, there is much

in this volume that will help both the first year Bible school student and the seasoned scholar think more deeply about how one reads Christ in the context of the Old Testament.

One weakness of the book is that four of the positions come from a Western or Euro-Centric worldview. The inclusion of an offering from a Southern Asian culture opens up the question of how a believer from Brazil or Africa might read Christ in the Old Testament. Surely someone from a Muslim or Jewish background who came to Christ would have a different outlook again? Having at least one Messianic Jewish contributor would have enhanced the book greatly. In the same vein, there is a distinct lack of exploration in a first century Jewish hermeneutic as a guide to Christ in the Tanakh (Old Testament). Would this not have added greatly to the discussion of authorial intent? Each method was just that, a method, developed by the contributor over years of study. None wrestled with a hermeneutical approach rooted in Second Temple Period Judaism. Carter suggested the Four-Fold approach, but could equally have been justified in presenting PaRDeS, a four level Jewish method from medieval times.

Five Views of Christ in the Old Testament is a useful and thought-provoking volume on Old Testament/New Testament relations. For anyone interested in Christology broadly, Christ in the Old Testament specifically, or how the two Testaments work together, will benefit from reading this work. The language is not overly technical, but where it is technical it explains itself (except in the case of prosopological exegesis, I had to look that up elsewhere). There is a handy list in the back of all the works cited throughout for anyone who wants to explore more on the topic.

