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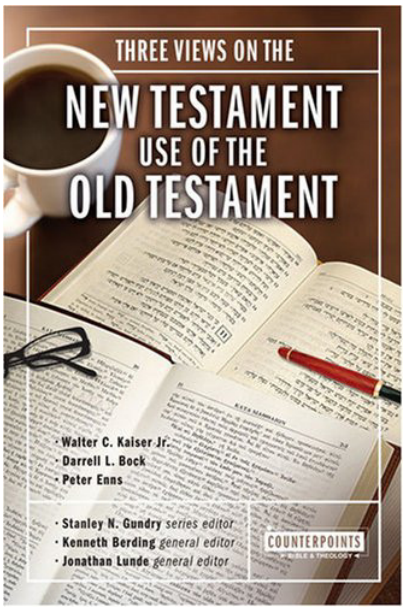

Kaiser, Walter C., Jr., Darrell L. Bock, and Peter Enns; edited by Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde

Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament

Counterpoints: Exploring Theology

Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008. Pp. 256. Paper. $16.99.
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This book is part of the Counterpoint series, which intriguingly includes *Five Views on Law and Gospel, Four Views on Hell*, but only *Two Views on Women in Ministry*! This topic warrants three views, and they are provided by Walter Kaiser, Darrell Bock, and Peter Enns. The book begins with a helpful overview of the topic by one of the general editors (Jonathan Lunde), who draws attention to five orbiting questions that can be summarized as follows (1) Are the concepts of *sensus plenior* and typology a helpful way of explaining the New Testament use of the Old Testament? (2) What role did either the original Old Testament context or contemporary Jewish exegetical tradition play in the New Testament use of the Old Testament? (3) Does the New Testament use of the Old Testament provide a model for our use of the Bible? Each author is then given about forty-five pages to outline his view and respond to these questions, followed by a seven- to eight-page response by the other two authors. The book ends with a summary by one of the other general editors, Kenneth Berding.

Kaiser's views are well known and can be distinguished from the other two in terms of method. For Kaiser, the New Testament authors were careful exegetes who used the same sort of historical-grammatical methods as we do. The "problem" that he addresses is not the New Testament use of the Old Testament but evangelicals who have fallen from this

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position and become enticed into liberalism. Thus most of his chapter aims to show that passages used to defend a "fuller meaning" of the Old Testament in the New Testament, such as 1 Pet 1:10–12 and 2 Pet 1:19–21, have been misinterpreted. Thus according to Kaiser, 1 Pet 1:10–12 asserts that the prophets were only ignorant of the *time* of fulfillment, not the *manner* (or content) of that fulfillment. Such a view is simply incompatible with an evangelical doctrine of inspiration. Bock and Enns, on the other hand, believe that one's view of inspiration must be formed by what we actually find in Scripture.

This is most clearly seen in Enns, who expresses his bewilderment that Kaiser cannot see that the New Testament use of the Old Testament is nothing like our modern historical-grammatical exegesis. He illustrates this with three examples: Paul's argument that Abraham's "seed" refers to Christ (Gal 3:16), when it clearly refers to his "descendants" in Genesis; the statement found in Gal 3:19, Acts 7:53, and Heb 2:2 that the law was given through angels, when no such view can be found in the (Hebrew) Old Testament; and Hos 11:1 ("Out of Egypt I called my son") as a reference to the boy Jesus when the following verses make it clear that it is looking back to the exodus. This leads Enns in two directions. First, he observes that, while such uses of Scripture seem alien to us, they are utterly at home in contemporary Jewish exegesis. Second, and following on from this, he sketches out a doctrine of inspiration that he calls incarnational, where God "accommodates" his word to the culture and context of the time (see his *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* [Baker, 2005]). In effect, just as Jesus was a particular Jew who spoke Aramaic with a Galilean accent, so the New Testament writers made use of traditions and forms of argumentation that were current at the time. In one sense, the debate is about hermeneutics, but one wonders if, more fundamentally, it is about one's view of God. Kaiser's God would not inspire Hosea to speak about the exodus and then inspire Matthew to find new meaning in the same words. Enns thinks this is precisely what the God who became incarnate in Jesus would do.

Bock agrees that the New Testament writers have drawn upon Jewish traditions and modes of argumentation but wishes to assert more continuity than Enns. He acknowledges that the new revelatory context of the New Testament authors allows them to *clarify* the meaning of Old Testament texts in ways that would not be deducible from grammar and syntax alone. Meaning is genuinely extended into new situations, but Bock insists that this does not contradict the core meaning of the original. For example, the enemies that rage against the Lord and his anointed in Ps 2 are Gentiles, and this is how it is interpreted in such texts as Ps. Sol. 17:21–25 and 4QFlor 1:18–2:2. But the identification of Christ as God's anointed in Acts 4:27 leads the author to include "the peoples of Israel" among those who gathered against him. This cannot be deduced from the text alone, nor

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can it be described as simply an "application." Meaning has been expanded and clarified, but Bock insists that this does not amount to a negation of the original sense: "Any who join in the 'conspiracy' that surrounds the Anointed One, now identified in God's vindicating action as Jesus, come under the scope of the text's meaning" (130). Enns sees much of value in this but thinks that Bock's desire to assert a stable core of meaning obscures the most obvious point about this interpretation: Israelites are now named as enemies of God in the light of the crucifixion of Christ. This is a radical interpretation. Think how Christians would feel at the suggestion that a text like "I will build my *ekklesia*" (Matt 16:18) finds its fulfillment in the birth of Islam.

For the intended audience (evangelicals), it was perhaps obligatory to include Kaiser, but to my mind it would have been a far better book to have included someone who is grappling with the issues today rather than defending a position stated thirty years ago ("The Single Intent of Scripture," 1978). While it is now clear that Sanders has not had the last word on the nature of Jewish beliefs in the first century, one does not expect to find comments like the following: "The Gentiles got it by faith, whereas Israel missed it badly. They thereby failed to obtain this righteousness and tried to obtain God's righteousness by their own home-made substitute for that righteousness, idiosyncratically trying all the time to earn it by works" (158). It is of course ironic that a defense of "single grammatical meaning" involves many tortuous explanations. Hosea apparently understood that "the son" whom God called out of Egypt referred to a "coming Man of Promise who would appear under the similar reference" (223), even though the following verse says that they "kept sacrificing to the Baals, and offering incense to idols" (Hos 11.2). Readers can decide for themselves if any of his convoluted explanations could possibly be described as the natural historical-grammatical meaning of the text.

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