

## *From the President*

The Dominican philosopher Ralph Powell once said, “It is hard to see the whole picture when you are inside the frame.” This statement underscores one of the most difficult challenges facing Christian readers of the Old Testament; namely, the hermeneutical challenge of reading the text simultaneously from two perspectives. On the one hand, every text of the Old Testament is rooted in the authentic particularity of its own cultural, historical and textual setting. Every prophecy, psalm, wisdom saying, or historical account retains its own distinctive message within all the normal cultural and linguistic parameters that defines authentic communication within specific settings. On the other hand, there is a larger frame that we must be attentive to. We must also recognize the peculiar quality of divine inspiration and revelation such that all biblical texts are framed within the larger setting of God’s self-disclosure, the *missio Dei*, and the unfolding drama of redemption, which finds its climax in the person, and work of Jesus Christ.

Nowhere is this dramatic tension more readily on display than when the Apostle John brings together two quotations from Isaiah 53 and Isaiah 6 and then, quite boldly states, “Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him” (John 12:41). Clearly Isaiah is speaking in two ways. He is speaking about the suffering of Israel, but he is also anticipating the even more profound suffering of the coming messiah. Seeing both frames is essential for good biblical interpretation. Indeed, it is the capacity to read texts from both perspectives that empowers the author of Hebrews to introduce a series of quotations from the Old Testament and yet puts them in the lips of Jesus with the remarkable statement, “Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. He says...” (Heb. 2:11f). Many more illustrations could be shown, all demonstrating the inspired capacity of the early church to read texts simultaneously within their own setting as well as within the larger setting of God’s unfolding plan of redemption.

Few scholars have grappled with these twin realities more than the Brandeis trained professor John Oswalt, for whom these essays are dedicated. His two-volume work in Isaiah, in particular, established him as a leading scholar in Old Testament studies. His perspective on the messianic texts of

Isaiah, which simultaneously honors both their original setting and their prophetic power, is arguably unparalleled among Old Testament scholars. He knows how to work within the frame of a particular text without losing sight of the larger frame of the great meta-narrative of redemption.

Dr. Oswalt has also distinguished himself as a classroom teacher. His decades of mentoring students at Wesley Biblical Seminary and Asbury Theological Seminary have brought forth a lasting legacy in the lives and ministries of his students. If it is true that our greatest work is not what we accomplish, but what we enable others to accomplish, then only heaven will fully tell the story of the impact of the life and teaching of Dr. John Oswalt. His unwavering commitment to the word of God, his rigorous scholarship and his unflinching commitment to go where the text leads him has inspired several generations of younger scholars who continue to serve within the great historic tradition of the church. The multiplying effect of mentoring is as ancient as Jesus pouring himself into his disciples, and as contemporary as the latest graduation exercise. This is the very nature of biblical discipleship.

This volume is a festschrift honoring the scholarly legacy and teaching of John Oswalt. Each contributor in this volume has been a colleague or an associate of his, and therefore it serves as a wonderful testimony honoring his life and teaching. I commend these essays with the same simultaneous reading as Dr. Oswalt has so nobly advanced. May each essay be read within the context of its own contribution to advancing Old Testament scholarship. Yet, may each also be read within the larger context of the collective word of appreciation from the academic community for the legacy of Dr. John Oswalt as a preacher, a scholar, a mentor and one who, above all, has given his life to the extension of the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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