**How to use the Old Testament**

**Reviewed by John Baigent**

**THE RICHES OF DIVINE WISDOM: The New Testament’s Use of the Old Testament**

**By David Gooding**

**(Myrtlefield Expositions: Myrtlefield House, 2013) ISBN 978-1-874584-21-6**

**426+ pages. Rrp. £16.73**

This book aims to help Christians, particularly those engaged in teaching and preaching, to use the Old Testament in a way which is both responsible (i.e., as God intended it to be used) and spiritually helpful. The author, who is Professor Emeritus of Old Testament Greek at Queen’s University, Belfast, and well-known for his commentaries on Luke, Acts and Hebrews, claims that a study of the interplay between the two testaments will bring to light new depths of meaning. He wants to demonstrate that ‘the idea that an interpretation of an Old Testament passage must be either literal-historical or else typological is far too simple.’ The result is a fresh and stimulating treatment of how the NT uses the OT and the ways in which we may use it in our preaching and teaching, while avoiding getting ‘the right doctrine from the wrong texts’ (the title of a book of essays edited by G. K. Beale listed below).

The first part of the book deals with the relationship between the two testaments. It shows how the NT is dependent on the OT, examines the continuities and discontinuities between them, and brings out the NT’s attitudes to the divine intention and profitability of the OT. The conclusions are that the OT is valid in its own right and that every part of it has a value for the Christian today.

The second part (which is the longest) investigates the NT use of the OT through five categories: prophetic insights, legal concepts, literary devices, implied features, and typological shadows. These chapters are full of fascinating examples of the multifaceted way in which the NT writers make use of a wide range of OT passages. Particularly valuable are the discussions of ‘fulfilment’ and ‘typology.’ Anyone who has been put off in the past by fanciful excesses in the typological exposition of the tabernacle needs to read David Gooding’s three superb chapters on the tabernacle: as a shadow of heavenly things, a shadow of the good things to come, and as a key to the interpretation of the book of Revelation.

The third part uses the principles discovered in studying the NT use of the OT to formulate guidelines for interpreting OT narrative where the NT provides no immediate guidelines. As the author says, ‘Honesty demands that we admit that there can sometimes be difficulties, as well as delights, in interpreting the long stretches of Old Testament narrative on which the New Testament does not comment, or does so only in part.’ Taking as his examples the accounts of Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac, David’s encounter with Goliath, and the case of the Gibeonites, he enunciates thirteen guidelines for correctly deducing the lessons that God intends us to derive from such passages.

The book ends with a bibliography, a list of the author’s publications, a study guide for each chapter, and indexes. Written by a believing scholar who has a thorough grasp of the subject, for ‘fellow-students’ of God’s Word, in everyday ‘layman’s’ language, without a host of footnotes and with a minimum of technical terms, this very readable book is the ideal place to begin a serious consideration of this topic. Those who want to pursue it at a more academic level should consult the books listed below.

**THE RIGHT DOCTRINE FROM THE WRONG TEXTS? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New**

**Edited by G. K. Beale**

**(Baker Academic, 1994) ASIN B00DT6BL3C**

**440 pages. Rrp.£23.99**

**COMMENTARY ON THE NEW TESTAMENT USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT**

**Edited by G. K. Beale & D. A. Carson**

**(Baker Academic, 2007) ISBN 978-0-8010-2693-5**

**1239 pages. Rrp. £36.23**

**HANDBOOK ON THE NEW TESTAMENT USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT: Exegesis and Interpretation**

**By G. K. Beale**

**(Baker Academic, 2012) ISBN 978-0-8010-3896-9**

**173 pages. Rrp. £11.83**