

Gregory R. Lanier's *Corpus Christologicum*: A Review Article

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1. Introduction

In recent decades, a lot of work has been done on the origin and development of New Testament Christology. Such work usually investigates how some New Testament depictions of Jesus relate to other Second Temple sources with regard to messianic or eschatological figures. Although such investigations often rely heavily on textual comparisons and exegetical details, many of those Second Temple or later sources are difficult to access for both researchers and readers, or are available only in rather dated translations. This is where Gregory R. Lanier's monumental work¹ comes in and offers a comprehensive and accessible sourcebook for the study of early Christology with reference to Second Temple and Rabbinic texts and traditions. Undoubtedly, this book will serve as a helpful starting point for future research in the field.

2. Presentation of the Book

The *Corpus Christologicum* is unique in its aim and its broad range of material. It offers almost three hundred ancient texts from seven different languages. Lanier presents these texts in their original or ancient languages on one column and offers a new English translation on the facing column. The texts come from the Hebrew Bible and its ancient versions, from the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Philo and Josephus, as well as from other, mainly Rabbinic, traditions. In each case, a very short introduction helps the reader contextualize each source. Key words are underlined and major textual variants are included in notes. Additionally, the volume offers bibliographical references for primary and secondary sources, which include the most important English, German, and (more rarely) French publications.

¹ Gregory R. Lanier, *Corpus Christologicum: Texts and Translations for the Study of Jewish Messianism and Early Christology* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2021).

Taken as a whole, the focus of the book is the presentation of primary texts and translations of those texts. The at times wooden nature of the translations is helpful for precise comparison. Whereas the volume does offer helpful indexes of sources, epithets, hypostasis, figures, metaphors, and attributes, it gives no actual interpretation of the texts and does not argue in favor of any particular scholarly tradition of how to read New Testament Christology in its Jewish context.

With respect to other and related works, it differs precisely in its focus on presenting the primary texts as well as in its inclusion of an astonishingly wide range of material. Previous works have either discussed a wide range of relevant ancient material without presenting the primary sources,² or they have limited themselves to the interpretation of a specific set of material, for example, messianic texts in the Dead Sea Scrolls.³

Thus, I am confident that this superb reference work will be used widely in future research and will help further promote the study of early Christology in its Jewish setting. Nevertheless, some aspects are in need of further discussion.

3. Selection of Sources

For such a reference work, the selection and presentation of the sources is no doubt crucial. In this respect, Lanier makes a good decision not to argue fiercely about the dating or the provenance of a specific text, or whether it is chronologically relevant. Rather, the book aims at including all those texts that are regularly discussed in the secondary literature on early Jewish messianism and early

² Such as Gerbern S. Oegema, *Der Gesalbte und sein Volk: Untersuchungen zum Konzeptualisierungsprozess der messianischen Erwartungen von den Makkabäern bis Bar Koziba* (Schriften des Institutum Judaicum Delitzschianum 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994); John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature*, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 2010); Stefan Schreiber, *Gesalbter und König: Titel und Konzeptionen der königlichen Gesalbtenwartung in frühjüdischen und urchristlichen Schriften* (BZNW 105; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000).

³ Such as Johannes Zimmermann, *Messianische Texte aus Qumran: Königliche, priesterliche und prophetische Messiasvorstellungen in den Schriftfunden von Qumran*, (WUNT II 104; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998); Géza G. Xeravits, *King, Priest, Prophet: Positive Eschatological Protagonists of the Qumran Library* (STDJ 47; Leiden: Brill, 2003); and Albert L. A. Hogeterp, *Expectations of the End: A Comparative Tradition-Historical Study of Eschatological, Apocalyptic, and Messianic Ideas in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament* (STDJ 83; Leiden: Brill, 2009).

Christology. That is, irrespective of the scholarly debates on the precise dating of such complex texts as the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* or the *Parables of Enoch*, Lanier includes them in his collection without further discussion. The same is true for texts such as Lam 4:20, where it is uncertain whether the messianic reading of the Septuagint (χριστὸς κυρίος) reflects a later *interpretatio Christianae* from the supposedly original χριστὸς κυρίου.⁴ This broad approach seems reasonable and helpful for this kind of reference book.

More questionable, however, is the selection of sources with respect to the relevance of their contents. Although Lanier includes a variety of sources, his inclusion or exclusion of specific ancient sources seems arbitrary at some points.⁵ To be sure, the book includes all major relevant texts, but at the margins some decisions seem unfounded. Overall, the subtitle of the book, *Texts and Translations for the Study of Jewish Messianism and Early Christology*, is a bit misleading since Lanier's selection of sources focuses more on the study of early Christology than on ancient messianism. For instance, on the one hand, the volume includes texts such as Prov 8 which were interpreted christologically within the New Testament and later, even though we have no evidence they were interpreted messianically before the Jesus movement. On the other hand, however, texts from the Hebrew Bible that were read as messianic texts by some Second Temple Jewish groups are not included at times if they were not also read christologically/messianically within the New Testament. For example, Lanier does not include Isa 52:7, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace," even though it was understood as a messianic text in some early Jewish groups. This is attested clearly in 11QMelch (11Q13) II 16–18, which first cites the text and then adds the comment: "the messenger is the anointed of the spirit."⁶ The same exclusion is true for a number of texts from the Hebrew Bible that are relevant for the study of ancient messianism, though not as relevant to New Testament Christology (e.g., Lev 25; Num 6:45–26; Deut 15; Ps 7; 82; 146; Dan 3).⁷

⁴ On this see Ruben A. Bühner, *Hohe Messianologie. Übermenschliche Aspekte eschatologischer Heilsgestalten im Frühjudentum* (WUNT II 523; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 98.

⁵ Lanier does not offer an explanation of his criteria for selecting ancient sources.

⁶ On the interpretation of biblical texts in 11QMelchizedek, see James A. Sanders, "The Old Testament in 11Q Melchizedek," *JANESCU* 5 (1973): 373–382.

⁷ Surprisingly absent is also Isa 7:13–14. Of course, no messianic text prior to Matt 1:22–23 unambiguously cites or alludes to Isa 7. Nonetheless, scholars have pointed to some

The focus on Christology is also reflected by the absence of some messianic texts outside the Hebrew Bible. Thus, for instance, texts such as CD II 12 or 1QM XI 7 talk about משיח/משיחו and are, therefore, discussed in other works on Second Temple messianism,⁸ but are absent in the *Corpus Christologicum*. Admittedly, for the study of early Christology these texts seem rather marginal, but this may not be true for research that focuses on other parts of Second Temple messianism outside the New Testament.

4. Presentation of Primary Sources

Related to Lanier's selection of primary sources is his presentation of those sources. In offering the primary sources in their original languages and their various ancient versions, this volume will be an unparalleled resource for any researcher in the field. In this respect, for instance, it is of great help that Lanier presents the Aramaic version of Dan 7:9–27 not only next to its Greek translation which prevailed in the early church, but also next to the older Greek translation which presents the “one like a son of man” (Dan 7:13) in quite different terms. In other instances, however, Lanier's presentation of the sources seems quite mechanical and, thus, a bit confusing for the uninformed reader. For some texts which have been preserved in different ancient versions, it is quite clear that only one of those versions was ever interpreted messianically. Since the other ancient versions were not interpreted in this manner, including them in a collection like this is both unnecessary and confusing. For example, as is true for most texts from the Hebrew Bible within the *Corpus Christologicum*, Lanier includes the Masoretic Text, Greek translation, and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan for Amos 4:12–13. Of these versions, only the Greek text reads “his Messiah” (τὸν χριστὸν αὐτοῦ) which is very likely due to a misreading of the Hebrew מה שחו (“what his

intertextual links within the book of Isaiah that make it at least likely that the messianic rereading of Isa 7:14–16 was indeed carried out by some Jewish groups outside the Jesus movement; see, for instance, Randall Heskett, *Messianism Within the Scriptural Scroll of Isaiah* (LHB 456; New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 38–132; Richard M. Davidson, “The Messianic Hope in Isaiah 7:14 and the Volume of Immanuel (Isaiah 7–12),” in *For You Have Strengthened Me: Biblical and Theological Studies in Honor of Gerhard Pfandl in Celebration of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Martin Pröbstle, trans. Gerhard Pfandl (St. Peter am Hart: Seminar Schloss Bogenhofen, 2007), 85–96; cf. also Ruben A. Bühner, *Messianic High Christology: New Testament Variants of Second Temple Judaism* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2021), 108–109.

⁸ Cf. Zimmermann, *Messianische Texte*, 316–319; Xeravits, *King*.

thought”) as משיחו (“his Messiah”).⁹ Whereas it is absolutely clear that the Greek version can be classified as a messianic text, this is not true of the Hebrew text nor of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, and we have no evidence that anyone in antiquity ever interpreted them messianically. In special cases like this, it might have been helpful to use a more flexible and individualized manner of presenting the selected sources.

Additionally, Lanier provides helpful, though scant, comments about the primary sources, their content, and their relevance, especially to early Christology. Although the book rightly focuses on the presentation of the ancient sources themselves, these introductory comments are at times misleading or omit crucial information. For example, the messianic character of 4Q246 is heavily debated in the scholarly literature, with some scholars arguing that the text portrays a negative rather than a messianic figure.¹⁰ Yet, the introduction in *Corpus Christologicum* speaks without any hesitation or further reference of a “messianic” text (p. 205). Similarly, the introduction to CD XII and XIV tells the reader that the texts would attest to a “singular ‘Messiah of Aaron and Israel.’” Although such an interpretation is possible, Lanier does not alert the reader to the scholarly debate on this issue, which is divided between a singular and plural understanding.¹¹ Of course, for a sourcebook like this it is

⁹ See Edward W. Glenny, *Finding Meaning in the Text: Translation Technique and Theology in the Septuagint of Amos* (VTSup 126; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 238; Bühner, *Hohe Messianologie*, 91.

¹⁰ For a negative figure, see for instance, David Flusser, “The Hubris of the Antichrist in a Fragment from Qumran,” *Imm* 10 (1980): 31–37; Michael Segal, “Who Is the ‘Son of God’ in 4Q246? An Overlooked Example of Early Biblical Interpretation,” *DSD* 21 (2014): 289–312; Józef T. Milik, “Les modèles araméens du livre d’Esther dans la Grotte 4 de Qumrân,” *RevQ* 15 (1992): 321–406, here 383. In contrast, others argue in favor of a positive and messianic figure; cf. Adela Y. Collins and John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 65–74; Florentino García Martínez, “Messianische Erwartungen in den Qumranschriften,” *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 8 (1993): 171–208; Tucker S. Ferda, “Naming the Messiah: A Contribution to the 4Q246 ‘Son of God’ Debate,” *DSD* 21 (2014): 150–175, here 175; Zimmermann, *Messianische Texte*, 169–170; Andrew Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation: Jewish Messianic and Visionary Traditions and New Testament Christology* (WUNT 207; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 232; Schreiber, *Gesalbter*, 498–508.

¹¹ On this, cf. Zimmermann, *Messianische Texte*, 40–43.

not necessary to give an interpretation of the selected sources, but the few introductory sentences should reflect the scholarly debates.

5. Indexes

The various indexes Lanier provides will certainly be of great help for future research on the topic. Despite their broad coverage, however, they lack accuracy at times and omit some important texts. For example, the entry on “throne” omits Ps 110, and the entry on “Torah/Revelation” does not include 4 Ezra 14:21–50. Whereas these instances are rather marginal oversights, others are due to interpretative decisions which are not laid out. For example, the entry on the attribute “Sonship/Firstborn” does not mention 4 Ezra. Some scholars would agree with this decision since there are good reasons to assume that the Latin (*filius*) and Syriac (ܐܒܝܘܢ) in 4 Ezra 7:28, 29; 13:32, 37, 52 go back to a Greek *παῖς* (rather than *υἱός*). Other scholars, however, have argued differently. For example, John J. Collins writes, “But even if the Greek did read *παῖς*, the word can also mean child or son—compare Wis 2:13, 16, where the righteous man claims to be *παῖς* of God and boasts that God is his father. In 4 Ezra 13, in any case, the context strongly suggests an allusion to Ps 2, so the meaning is ‘son’ rather than ‘servant.’”¹² In such debated cases, it would have been helpful to use the same broad principle in the indexes as Lanier uses for the inclusion of sources despite their debated dating and provenance.

6. Relation of Christology and Messianism

One could argue that the above-mentioned criticism regarding the selection and presentation of sources is rather marginal and irrelevant for a sourcebook like this which must limit its scope. This is a fair response. More objectionable than Lanier’s selection of sources themselves, however, is the theological/historical position the selection reflects. By focusing on the most important Second Temple texts for New Testament Christologies rather than presenting texts that attest to a diversity within Second Temple messianism, this sourcebook stands within a scholarly tradition that tends to differentiate between early Jewish messianism and New Testament Christology, arguing that although the latter is based on the former it is no longer a part of it. In the introduction to a volume of collected essays, Magnus Zetterholm has made a similar comment about Jewish and Christian messianism: “A concept of a Messiah exists both within Judaism, where it originated, and in Christianity, where perhaps it underwent its

¹² Collins and Collins, *King*, 96.

most profound transformations.... ‘The Messiah’ has been the most important concept that distinguishes Christianity from Judaism.”¹³ However, against this older line of research, scholars such as Matthew Novenson have demonstrated convincingly that early Christology itself is part of the messianic discourse of its time and cannot be separated from other messianic texts and traditions.¹⁴ “In short, the oft-cited stereotypes of the Jewish messiah and his Christian counterpart are as inaccurate as they are oft-cited.”¹⁵ Rather, historically, we should read New Testament Christology as nothing other than a possible variant of a diverse field of Second Temple messianism.¹⁶

Including additional messianic texts and including texts from the Hebrew Bible which were interpreted as messianic texts outside the New Testament would have ensured an understanding that no longer sees Christology

¹³ Magnus Zetterholm, “Introduction,” in *The Messiah in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Magnus Zetterholm (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2007), xxiv. Cf. further, e.g., Martin Karrer, *Der Gesalbte: Die Grundlagen des Christustitels* (FRLANT 151; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 408: “In allem Facettenreichtum der Stellungnahme beansprucht es [sc. the early Jesus movement, or, in Karrer’s words, ‘Urchristentum’] Gottes Herrsein, nicht Davids Herrschertum als entscheidenden Maßstab christlichen Gesalbtenverständnisses.... Christi, des Gesalbten, Hoheit und rettende Kraft drängt so in der Linie des Neuen Testaments unter Überbietung und Korrektur alles Irdisch-Herrscherlichen, ja überhaupt aller menschlichen Gesalbtenhoffnungen nach einer Explikation aus Gottesaussagen.” Similarly, Schreiber, *Gesalbter*, 491, concludes: “Ein wesentlicher Grund für die christliche Modifikation der königlichen Gesalbtenkonzeption liegt sicher darin, daß zentrale Züge dieser Tradition wie nationale Präferenz, königliche Herrschaftsausübung, politische Umgestaltung und übernatürliche (quasi-militärische) Macht im Auftreten Jesu keinen Anhalt finden. Dafür stellt der Titel die Möglichkeit zur Verfügung, Jesu einmalige Nähe zu Gott und den Heilscharakter seiner Existenz prägnant zu artikulieren.”

¹⁴ Cf. Matthew V. Novenson, *The Grammar of Messianism: An Ancient Jewish Political Idiom and Its Users* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); idem, *Christ Among the Messiahs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Benjamin Reynolds and Gabriele Boccaccini, eds., *Reading the Gospel of John’s Christology as Jewish Messianism* (AGJU; Boston: Brill, 2018); William Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1998); Collins and Collins, *King*; Bühner, *Messianic High Christology*. For a more detailed review of the common scholarly distinction between Christology and messianism, see Novenson, *Grammar*, 187–216.

¹⁵ Novenson, *Grammar*, 192–193.

¹⁶ Novenson, *Grammar*, 196, calls “Christian messianism ... just an extraordinarily well-documented example” of Jewish messianism.

as a transformation or as the historical climax of all forms of early Jewish messianism. The same is true of some of the introductory lines Lanier provides before each primary source. They tend to suggest a reading that understands Second Temple messianic texts as a preparatory context for New Testament Christology. Yet, with respect to the examples discussed above, 4Q246 for instance could also be read as a form of “counter-messianism” to what we find in the New Testament,¹⁷ and if CD XII and XIV are understood as attesting a form of dual messianism, this would once again have a rather different relation to New Testament Christology.

Furthermore, the various indexes attest the book’s focus on New Testament Christology rather than on messianism. On the one hand, the indexes include several entries which are especially relevant for the study of the New Testament, such as the entry on “wisdom” or “worship.” On the other hand, potential entries that are primarily important for Second Temple messianism independent of the New Testament are overlooked at times. For instance, the indexes lack entries on the different “tools” or “weapons” of the messiah, his opponents, or texts which attest to a dual or triple messianism. Although messianic elements such as these may be only minimally relevant to the study of New Testament Christology, they are highly relevant to the study of messianism outside the early Jesus movement.

At all these points a more careful and less christological approach would reveal the close relationship between what we misleadingly label “Christology” and “messianism,” not because they share the same ideas, but because they take part in the same ancient discourse. That is, they argue with similar words, pretexts, and motifs but sometimes come to very different conclusions.

The way we present ancient sources in sourcebooks like this not only recognizes possible differences within ancient texts, but also creates them.¹⁸ That is, messianism is not only about fixed ideas and concepts for the end of times. It is also a political idiom, which is used in different times and places to make sense of differing circumstances and is used to define one’s identity.¹⁹ This is also true for the history of Jewish-Christian relations in antiquity and, likewise, for the

¹⁷ See Ruben A. Bühner, “The Contested Character of Divine Messianism: From an Inner-Jewish Debate to an Identity Marker,” *Early Christianity* 13 (2022): 433–454, here 438–444.

¹⁸ Cf. Novenson, *Grammar*, 216.

¹⁹ On this, cf. also A. Y. Reed, “Messianism Between Judaism and Christianity,” in *Rethinking the Messianic Idea in Judaism*, ed. L. M. Morgan and S. Weitzman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 23–62; Bühner, “Contested Character.”

way modern scholars conceptualize the difference between messianism and Christology. Such categorical distinctions are not only questionable in a historical perspective and represent anti-Jewish clichés in theological perspective, but they once again reveal that messiah language—then and now—is also a political idiom that is used to define one’s own identity and to secure one’s own claims against the claims of others. As recent studies have revealed, early Christology is not only rooted within Jewish ideas but should be seen as a possible variant of Second Temple messianism.

7. Conclusion

Lanier’s sourcebook certainly does not intend to reaffirm the older notion of a categorical difference between messianism and Christology. On the contrary, this unique and monumental reference work not only has the potential to become the standard sourcebook for future research, but also has the potential to help readers overcome long established clichés. Nevertheless, in some places it reveals how subconsciously and deeply rooted these scholarly traditions can be.