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THE CHRIST-CENTERED HOMILETICS OF EDMUND CLOWNEY AND
SIDNEY GREIDANUS IN CONTRAST WITH THE HUMAN AUTHOR-
CENTERED HERMENEUTICS OF WALTER KAISER

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THE CHRIST-CENTERED HOMILETICS OF EDMUND CLOWNEY AND
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CENTERED HERMENEUTICS OF WALTER KAISER

Jason Keith Allen

Read and Approved by:

Hershael W. York (Chair)

Robert A. Vogel

David L. Puckett

Date _____

To our five children,
Anne-Marie, Caroline, William, Alden, and Elizabeth.

You are indeed gifts from the Lord.

And most especially to

Karen.

A wife in whom charm abides and beauty is abundant,
but her fear of the Lord is what I most cherish.

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PREFACE

Southern Seminary has graduated more worthy men, but never a more grateful one. Drafting a preface such as this is a nostalgic, even sentimental, endeavor because so many have given so much to me. Though this work bears my name I am deeply indebted to many who have made this journey possible and who have helped me see it through to completion.

First, I thank my parents, Ray and Sandra Allen, who reared me in a Christian home, always managed to balance encouragement with challenge, and have been a steady source of support my whole life. Likewise, I am grateful for brothers who I am proud to say are also among my closest friends. I thank Greg and Marc who are a constant source of joy and encouragement in my life. I thank God for the four of them, my parents and brothers, and that appreciation for each one of them only grows year by year.

I am indebted to my boyhood pastor, Fred Wolfe, who consistently preached the inerrancy of Scripture, the Lordship of Christ, and the necessity of the new birth. I was converted under his ministry and will forever be indebted to God for his gospel influence. Likewise, I am deeply indebted to Steve Lawson. He is a mentor, friend, faithful preacher, and the primary one God used to call me to preach. I have never preached a sermon that in some way does not reveal his influence. Thank you.

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Beyond family, friends, and church, the institution I serve, the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and all that it represents, merits my indebtedness. It is so much more to me than a place of employment. It is a calling, a ministry, and a way of life. Southern Seminary is in my DNA and in every way, she is my *alma mater*, my mother of learning. 2825 Lexington Road has been an intellectual home, an incubator of spiritual growth, an ideal setting to rear my family and an unsurpassed place to give my life in pursuit of the highest of callings. I am forever indebted to those, past and present, who have made her what she is.

I am grateful for my team in the office of Institutional Advancement. These colleagues have prayed for me, encouraged me, and abided my unorthodox schedule during the final weeks of this dissertation. Moreover, I am grateful for friends on the Southern

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My dissertation committee members, Dr. Vogel and Dr. Puckett gave incisive counsel, abided my frequent interruptions, and kindly accommodated my schedule. My chairperson, Dr. Hershael York, repeatedly went beyond the call of duty. He gave prudential counsel, challenged my thinking, and worked through my manuscript often times at great personal inconvenience, yet he never let it show. I remain in his debt. Additionally, Alana Hendon, Tracy Burr, and Betsy Fredrick all helped in pulling resources, and with the formatting and final presentation of this dissertation.

Beyond family, perhaps no one has more influenced my life over the past decade more than Southern Seminary president, Albert Mohler. Dr. Mohler has the courage of Luther, the mind of Calvin, the productivity of Spurgeon, and the relentless self-sacrifice of Edwards. Karen and I are honored to serve the cause of Christ alongside of him and Mrs. Mohler, and we are even more honored to know them as cherished friends.

Our five children, Anne-Marie, Caroline, William, Alden, and Elizabeth, have sacrificed much, especially in recent months, for me to complete this dissertation. Their prayers, smiles, hugs, and even their interruptions were daily used by God to encourage me to press on. Alas, they now can call me Dr. Daddy.

On this earth, no one has sacrificed more than my sweet wife, Karen. I am grateful to her parents, Clayton and Betty Brunson, for rearing her to be the woman she has become. Karen is the consummate mother and a most sacrificial helpmate. Indeed she has found her ministry to be her husband. She has endured literally thousands of lonely nights over the past decade of my studies. If I could add another name to my diploma, without question it would be hers. I am, totus tuus.

If I had a thousand lives to live, I would not choose to live the prior 34 years

any differently. God has been good to me and those referenced in this preface have been evidence of his goodness. I do not take that, or them, for granted. May each one of them find some pride in this accomplishment.

Lastly, and most ultimately, I thank the good shepherd of the sheep, my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He redeemed me, called me to salvation, and to preach, even now intercedes for me, and will one day return for me. Until then, I await for the day when “the kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever” (Rev 11:15).

Jason Keith Allen

Louisville, Kentucky

December 2011

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Charles Spurgeon, the preeminent preacher of Victorian England, famously exhorted a candidate for ordination to find a route to preach Christ from every passage of Scripture. Spurgeon implored,

Don't you know, young man, that from every town and every village and every hamlet in England, wherever it may be, there is a road to London? So from every text of Scripture there is a road to Christ. And my dear brother, your business is, when you get to a text, to say, now, what is the road to Christ? I have never found a text that did not have a road to Christ in it, and if ever I do find one, I will go over hedge and ditch but I would get at my Master, for the sermon cannot do any good unless there is a savor of Christ in it.¹

The homiletical ethos that Spurgeon conveyed to the young minister is straightforward: the call to be a Christian preacher is, at its heart, a call to preach Jesus Christ from the entire Bible. Furthermore, he argues any preaching that either wittingly or unwittingly fails to preach Christ is sub-Christian in presentation and insufficient in its attempt to deliver the transformative message of the gospel.

Whether in Spurgeon's nineteenth century or in our current era, those who take the apostolic injunction to "preach Christ and him crucified" seriously and desire to proclaim the "whole counsel of God" must wrestle with one of the most urgent questions in hermeneutics and homiletics: how does one rightly preach Christ from the Old Testament?²

¹Charles H. Spurgeon, "Christ Precious to Believers," quoted by David L. Larsen, *The Anatomy of Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 168.

²1 Cor 1:23; Acts 20:28.

The Old Testament: Problem or Potentiality?

The “problem of the Old Testament,” according to Emil Kraeling, “is not just one of many. It is the master problem of theology.”³ The challenge to which “the problem of the Old Testament” refers is how to synchronize the Old Testament with the New Testament and how to bring the Old Testament to bear in the lives of contemporary followers of Christ. Referencing the problem of the Old Testament, Walter Kaiser writes,

As we attempt to determine how the Christian is to use the Old Testament, we situate ourselves at the heart of current theological discussion. This issue is, I think, the most important question for the contemporary Church. It affects almost everything else we do.⁴

A. H. J. Gunneweg escalates the concerns expressed in the problem of the Old Testament, writing,

It would be no exaggeration to understand the hermeneutical problem of the Old Testament as *the* problem of Christian Theology. It is not just one problem among others. It is the problem because all other questions of theology are affected one way or another by the solution of this problem.⁵

Various questions associated with the Old Testament frame this “problem.” How much did the prophets know of the Messiah and when did they know it? Did the apostles rightly interpret the Old Testament when citing it in the New Testament? May church-age interpreters feel free to use an “apostolic hermeneutic”?⁶ How does one bring

³Emil Kraeling, *The Old Testament Since the Reformation* (New York: Harper, 1955), 8.

⁴Walter C. Kaiser, *The Christian and the “Old” Testament* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1998), 1.

⁵A. H. J. Gunneweg, *Understanding the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 14.

⁶“Apostolic hermeneutic” refers to the attempt to interpret the Old Testament like the apostles did in writing the New Testament. Advocates of the “apostolic hermeneutic” typically are willing to go beyond even the apostles work in scope. That is to say, they are willing to draw types of Christ in references to Christ from the Old Testament that are not confirmed in the New Testament. The difficulty in modeling one’s hermeneutic after the apostles’ hermeneutic is the obvious fact that the apostles were interpreting the Old Testament as they wrote the New Testament under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is a luxury the twenty-first century does not enjoy.

Christological ballast to the Old Testament, a full two-thirds of Christian revelation? Most especially, and to the point of this dissertation, how should one preach Christ from the Old Testament?

Referencing these challenges associated with the Old Testament, Sidney Greidanus notes one of the central concerns is the preacher's perception. Simply put, many preachers separate the Old Testament from the New and view the Old Testament as a non-Christian book. From the outset such preachers are opposed to any kind of "Christological interpretation."⁷ Greidanus further argues this perception is vapid and has needlessly stymied the church. He writes, "Consequently, the dilemma of how to get a Christian message out of a "non-Christian" book is a predicament of our own making, for it does not arise out of the Scriptures themselves."⁸

These questions indeed are knotty issues, but the preacher who would exposit the Old Testament must face them. The only alternative is to lurch backwards into a Marcionite disposition, which finds the Old Testament as irrelevant for the church, and in so doing forfeits two-thirds of the Christian canon.

One finds near solidarity among Evangelicals in their conviction that Christ is the focal point of the entire canon of Scripture. Yet, the particulars of how one should preach Christ from the Old Testament are a question that has galvanized discussion and debate in the church for centuries. This emerges in the twenty-first century as one of the presenting challenges facing evangelical exegetes and preachers. At the heart of this

⁷Sidney Greidanus, "The Necessity of Preaching Christ Also from Old Testament Texts," *Calvin Theological Journal* 34, no. 1 (1999): 191.

⁸*Ibid.*, 193.

challenge is the juxtaposition of the redemptive-historical approach to preaching with an author-centered hermeneutic.

Redemptive-Historical Preaching

Redemptive-historical preaching aims to present Christ, or a connection to Christ, from every passage of Scripture. Believing that the apex of God’s revelation is the person and work of Jesus and that all revelation, both Old and New Testaments, conveys this redemptive storyline, proponents of redemptive-historical preaching argue that every sermon should point to Christ.

Daniel Doriani’s evaluation of redemptive-historical preaching adds insight into this approach to preaching. He describes redemptive-historical preaching as “emphasizing the unity of the history of redemption and the centrality of Christ in that history.”⁹ Doriani goes on to write,

Redemptive historical preaching emphasizes the progressive, organic revelation of God’s truth, disclosed ever more fully in successive covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus, in whose death and resurrection biblical history reaches its climax. This approach relates old-covenant events and earlier phases of Jesus’ life to that climax.¹⁰

Doriani adds, “Redemptive-historical preaching traces the unfolding of the plan of salvation, seeking hints of the Christ, though he may not be mentioned by name, in all Scripture, so as to proclaim him from all of Scripture.”¹¹ Doriani’s evaluations are helpful in distilling the major contours of redemptive-historical preaching, but in order to best frame this dissertation we must consider the pillars of redemptive-historical preaching.

⁹Daniel M. Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work* (Philadelphia: P & R, 2001), 294.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

The Pillars of Redemptive-Historical Preaching

Though every preacher is different and every sermon is unique, broad similarities frame redemptive-historical preaching. These similarities serve as theological pillars upon which proponents of redemptive-historical preaching build their homiletic.

Pillar 1: A Christ-Centered Biblical Theology

Of all approaches to preaching, the redemptive-historical method uniquely depends upon the wedding of a Christ-centered biblical theology with homiletics. The connection is most explicit in its derivative of a Christ-centered hermeneutic from a Christ-centered biblical theology. Dennis Johnson notes this connection:

Redemptive-historical preaching ties homiletics closely to hermeneutic considerations. It emphasizes the organic unity of the history of redemption—the enactment of God’s plan for the rescue, reconciliation, and re-creation of his people, climaxing in the person, obedience, sacrifice, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus Christ, and reaching consummation at his return in glory.¹²

As a discipline, biblical theology aspires to locate and trace the grand meta-narratives that run throughout Bible. Of biblical theology, Sidney Greidanus notes, “It is the specific theological discipline which seeks to uncover the theology which the Bible itself contains.”¹³ Those committed to redemptive-historical preaching establish it upon a Christ-centered biblical theology, which locates the person and work of Jesus as the ultimate meta-narrative that runs throughout Scripture.

Pillar 2: All of the Bible Points to Jesus

Second, redemptive-historical preaching is based upon the conviction that the entire Bible points to Jesus. Redemptive-historical preaching asserts that the Bible is

¹²Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim* (Philadelphia: P & R, 2007), 48.

¹³Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 67.

replete with prescriptive and descriptive accounts that make the injunction to preach Christ from all of Scripture, including the Old Testament, binding. This expectation is built upon the prior conviction that Jesus is the central figure and predominant theme of Scripture. Thus, the Bible's principle theme must also be its principle message preached.

Advocates of redemptive-historical preaching cite inter-scriptural evidence to support the notion that Jesus is the focal point of the Bible. The prophets of old foreshadowed the arrival and redemptive work of Christ, and to the Pharisees Jesus argued that belief in Moses should lead to belief in him because, "Moses wrote about me" (John 5:47). Moreover, upon encountering Christ, Philip found Nathaniel and announced, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (John 1:45).

Pauline literature also asserts the centrality of Christ in the Scripture and the concurrent Pauline intent to preach Christ above all else. In Paul's magisterial epistle to the church at Rome, he reaches a sequence of logical dominoes in chapter ten that culminates in his argument that salvation comes through the word of Christ, which must be preached, by the messenger of Christ (Rom 10:10-17). Furthermore, when charging Timothy to stand firm in the faith amid rampant apostasy, Paul pointed Timothy to the gospel message, as found in the Old Testament, writing,

Continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (2 Tim 4:8).

Most especially, Jesus himself iterated his unique station as the preeminent focus of Holy Scripture. In Jesus' famous encounter and dialogue with the disciples on the Emmaus road, he chastised them saying,

O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into his glory? Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things

concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. (Luke 24:25-27)

These sojourners then reflected on their own hearts stating, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scripture to us?” (Luke 24:25-27, 32). Jesus then argued, “These are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (Luke 24:44). Thus, Jesus himself affirms his singular position in the Bible—all Scripture points to him, and practitioners of redemptive-historical preaching conclude that all sermons should point to Jesus as well.

Pillar 3: Progressive Revelation

Progressive revelation serves as the third pillar of redemptive-historical preaching. Geerhardus Vos, one of the seminal thinkers of Christ-centered biblical theology and redemptive-historical preaching in the twentieth century, argued, “Biblical theology is given to tracing the predominant themes of the Bible from their earliest overtures to their latter revelatory culmination.”¹⁴ This is to say, a Christ-centered biblical theology seeks to synthesize the grand story of Scripture into a condensed summation that centers upon the person Christ. Due to the incremental and increasingly clarified nature of God’s redemptive story recorded in the Bible, theologians have dubbed this storyline “progressive revelation.” Vos further contended,

The progressive process is organic, and revelation may be in seed form which later yields full growth accounting for diversity but not true difference because the earlier aspects of the truth are indispensable for understanding the true meanings of the later forms and vice versa.¹⁵

Therefore, progressive revelation informs redemptive-historical preaching by making the

¹⁴Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 5.

¹⁵Ibid.

preacher ever mindful of Jesus' location in the canon of Scripture and where Christ fits into that unfolding message of redemption.

Pillar 4: Revelation is the Story of Redemption

Fourth, the redemptive-historical homiletic understands God's revelation to be the story of redemption. Revelation is not just a rambling account of God's intermittent acts in human history. Rather, the Bible is a master-narrative whereby from Genesis to Revelation, God discloses his redemptive storyline. This redemptive story ebbs and flows with poignancy, tension, and clarity, but through the Bible, it remains the consistent theme of revelation. So evident is the connection between revelation and redemption that, Vos argued, "Revelation is inseparably linked to the activity of redemption. . . . Revelation is the interpretation of redemption."¹⁶

The agent of redemption, of course, is Christ; therefore, revelation is also Christocentric. Graeme Goldsworthy insists,

Biblical theology is the study of how every text in the Bible relates to Jesus and His Gospel. Thus we start with Christ so that we may end with Christ. Biblical theology is Christological, for its subject matter is the Scriptures as God's testimony to Christ. It is therefore, from start to finish, a study of Christ.¹⁷

Since redemption is the overarching theme of progressive revelation, one must then look for Christ, and connections to Christ, in every passage under consideration. Thomas Schreiner makes this point, arguing,

When we read the Old Testament, therefore, we must read it Christologically. We must interpret it the way Jesus and the apostles did, and their own interpretation of the Old Testament functions as a pattern and guide for us. Neither do we believe that every stick in the Old Testament refers to the cross, nor do we arbitrarily and

¹⁶Ibid., 6.

¹⁷Graeme Goldsworthy, *The Southern Seminary Magazine* 79, no. 2 (2011): 23.

capriciously see strained references to Jesus. But we do see in the Old Testament story predictions and types of Jesus the Messiah.¹⁸

Pillar 5: Biblical Continuity

Fifth, redemptive-historical preaching assumes a continuity of message throughout the Scriptures. Edmund Clowney, in his landmark book *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, argues, “Biblical theology is a contradiction in terms unless the Bible presents a consistent message.”¹⁹ Clowney further insists, “Scholars who think there are many different theologies in Scripture (or the raw materials for many) have surrendered the biblical basis for the unity of biblical theology.”²⁰ On the contrary, Greidanus argued that “there is a fundamental connection between the two Testaments in the person of Jesus Christ. The Old and New Testaments are related, therefore, not as law—gospel but as promise—fulfillment (a person).”²¹ Thus, according to Greidanus, redemptive-historical preaching culminates in the fact that,

the Bible is not an assortment of similar parts (verses) which, like pizza, can be dished out at random; rather, each text must be understood in its own historical context and in the light of God’s progressive revelation before it can be proclaimed as God’s authoritative word for contemporary congregations.²²

Redemptive-historical preaching views the two testaments fundamentally through a lens of consistency, not inconsistency, of message. This consistency stands against some, such as Elizabeth Achtemeier, who argue for a trenchant inconsistency.

¹⁸Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Southern Seminary Magazine* 79, no 2 (2011): 36.

¹⁹Edmund Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002), 13.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 12.

²¹Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 25.

²²Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher*, 72.

Achtemeier insists, “Apart from the New Testament, the Old Testament does not belong to the Christian church and is not its book. The Old Testament is the Word of God to Israel.”²³ Moreover, Achtemeier goes on to write,

It must be emphasized that no sermon can become the Word of God for the Christian church if it only deals with the Old Testament apart from the New. In every sermon rising out of an Old Testament text, there must be reference to the New Testament outcome of the Old Testament’s word.²⁴

Redemptive-historical homileticians find a continuity and consistency of message between the testaments, thus both testaments are applicable for the church.

At the heart of redemptive-historical preaching is a conviction of the unity of the Bible—one author, one story, one consummation in the triumph of Jesus Christ.

Greidanus defends the continuity of the Bible, arguing,

As we move from the Old Testament to the New Testament, we notice progression in redemptive history as well as in revelation. But progression does not make the Old Testament non-Christian or pre-Christian. The point is that we ought not create a breach between the Old Testament and the New and then scurry about to find some kind of continuity in order to bring a Christian message. Instead, we ought to start with the continuity of a unified history of redemption which progresses from the old covenant to the new, and a single Scripture consisting of the two Testaments.²⁵

Pillar 6: A Homiletical Necessity

Sixth, redemptive-historical homileticians build upon the conviction that every sermon must reflect the prior belief that Jesus is the focal point of the Bible. Redemptive-historical preaching gives particular attention to telling the whole story of Scripture from every passage and in every sermon. In fact, the defining mark of redemptive-historical

²³Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Preaching from the Old Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1989), 56.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 142.

²⁵Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 45.

preaching is its resolve to bring forward the sum and substance of Christ's redemptive work from the passage under consideration. Dennis Johnson notes this is the strength of the redemptive-historical approach to preaching. He observes,

Redemptive-historical homiletics, such as Clowney, Goldsworthy, and Greidanus, insist, however, that apostolic precedent warrants our reading and preaching the ancient Old Testament texts not only in their original contexts but also within the flow of the history of revelation, and especially in light of the climax of that history in Jesus the Christ.²⁶

To preach the whole Bible as Christian Scripture means to take the context of the whole canon into account as we proclaim any text—not only the Scriptures already extant when a particular passage was given, but also those given in subsequent epochs of redemptive history.²⁷

Bryan Chapell notes the aim of the redemptive-historical approach to preaching by contrasting it with the author-centered hermeneutic, noting,

Just as historico-grammatical exegesis requires a preacher to consider a text's terms in context, correct theological interpretation requires an expositor to discern how a text's ideas function in the wider biblical message. Some meanings we discern by taking out our exegetical magnifying glass and studying a text's particulars in close detail. Other meanings we discern by examining a text with theological fish-eye lenses to see how the immediate text relates to texts, messages, events, and developments around it.²⁸

Since redemptive-historical homiletics hold to the prior commitment that the message of Christ is the apex of biblical revelation, finding it possible to preach Christ from the entire Bible is not enough. Rather, given this presupposition, preachers must preach Jesus from the entire Bible, thereby creating a homiletical necessity.

Statement and Explanation of Thesis

The preceding survey of evangelical hermeneutics and redemptive-historical

²⁶Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 241.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 275.

homiletics frames the context and interests of this dissertation. The redemptive-historical approach to preaching stands as an uneasy interpretive partner to the author-centered hermeneutic, as demonstrated by Walter Kaiser. Though sharing many similarities, these two schools of homiletical thought present differing homiletical goals and, at times, contradictory approaches to interpreting and preaching Christ from the Old Testament.

The writings of Edmund Clowney and Sidney Greidanus on homiletics have led to a piqued interest in redemptive-historical preaching. Thus, this dissertation analyzes the redemptive-historical homiletic through the writings and printed sermons of Clowney and Greidanus. Walter Kaiser, who occupies the alternative hermeneutical pole of the two aforementioned authors, serves as an evaluative plumb line for this dissertation, and Clowney and Greidanus are measured by their proximity to Kaiser's author-centered hermeneutic.

This dissertation does not argue that one should aim to preach Christ from the Old Testament. It presupposes that preachers should present Christ from the Old Testament. This dissertation argues that Edmund Clowney and Sidney Greidanus depart from the author-centered hermeneutic of Walter Kaiser. Furthermore, this dissertation also traces the degree to which Clowney and Greidanus depart from Kaiser and demonstrate the consequences, for better or worse, of these departures.

After this introductory chapter and its survey of redemptive-historical preaching, I support and develop the thesis through four subsequent chapters. Chapter 2 presents the author-centered hermeneutic, as championed through the writings of Walter Kaiser, in order to provide contrast with Clowney and Greidanus. Most especially, it emphasizes the signal points of Kaiser's author-centered hermeneutic, including: authorial intent, single meaning, interpretive rules, dual authorship, authorial knowledge,

the analogy of faith, the analogy of antecedent Scripture, heuristic evidence, *sensus plenior*, and typology.

Chapter 3 documents and defends the thesis of this dissertation by assessing the Christ-centered homiletic of Edmund Clowney. It first notes Clowney's unique contribution to the redemptive-historical movement and then traces the way a Christ-centered biblical theology shapes Clowney's homiletic. After following examples of Clowney's Christ-centered hermeneutic through several of his sermons, the chapter explores the two primary tools which Clowney offers for Christ-centered, Old Testament preaching: symbolism and typology. Lastly, Chapter 3 compares and contrasts Clowney with Kaiser and notes the differences between the two, especially those related to matters of: single meaning, dual authorship, appropriating Scriptural context and typology.

Chapter 4 supports the thesis by assessing Greidanus' redemptive-historical approach, as demonstrated through his seven ways of preaching Christ from the Old Testament, and contrasting it with Kaiser's author-centered hermeneutic. Chapter 4 notes that Greidanus's model is closer to Kaiser's than Clowney's, but it departs from Kaiser at several key points, including authorial intent, appropriating Scriptural context, analogy and typology, *sensus plenior*, and the apostolic hermeneutic.

Lastly, chapter 5 presents a concluding discourse that summarizes and implements the findings of this dissertation. While this dissertation is descriptive in approach, the concluding chapter also offers prescriptive comments for contemporary homiletics.

Relevance of Dissertation

John A. Broadus famously wrote, "Preaching is characteristic of Christianity.

No other religion has made the regular and frequent assembling of groups of people, to hear regular and frequent exhortation, an integral part of divine worship.”²⁹ In that preaching is central to Christian worship and identity, the church must think rightly and carefully about how the church most faithfully stewards the pulpit ministry. When one intersects the importance of preaching with the exclusivity of the gospel and the needs of the hearers, one can further affirm the urgency of this dissertation.

Yet any theory of preaching is first a commitment to a set of hermeneutical expectations. The act of preaching is the culmination of a prior-traveled road of biblical interpretation. How one navigates the contours of biblical interpretation will determine where one’s interpretive road ends and the subsequent shape of the sermon preached. The argument follows that one’s hermeneutical model, then, will lead him to a more or less Christ-centered sermon, depending on where his hermeneutical convictions originate. Thus, the relative Christ-centeredness of the sermon will determine how much the preacher exposes the church to the gospel of Christ.

While relevant for the twenty-first century church, this dissertation also speaks to one of the presenting questions facing seminary classrooms today, preaching Christ from the Old Testament. Adding clarity to this angular issue serves to further a theological discussion, which continues to occupy the church.

Methodology of Dissertation

This dissertation focuses on the redemptive-historical approaches of Edmund Clowney and Sidney Greidanus as evidenced in their writings and sermons with special attention given to their respective interpretive approaches *vis a vis* Walter Kaiser’s author-

²⁹John A. Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1895), 17.

centered hermeneutic. I chose Clowney and Greidanus, as their respective chapters make clear, due to their unique contributions to the redemptive-historical movement and due to the spectrums of redemptive-historical preaching they represent.

This dissertation utilizes the books, articles, lectures, and sermons of the three referenced authors as its primary sources of data. In that this dissertation is not a value assessment on the relative strengths of these authors' hermeneutic, but a descriptive analysis of their approach as they set it forth; Greidanus' and Clowney's published sermons are used as examples of their proposed methods of redemptive-historical preaching.

Conclusion

Redemptive-historical preaching provides the homiletician with a theory for preaching Christ from the Old Testament. As a movement, its popularity is increasing; yet reconciling it with an author-centered hermeneutic is an ongoing challenge. The uneasy relationship between an author-centered hermeneutic and redemptive-historical preaching necessitates a close evaluation. This dissertation undertakes such an examination.

CHAPTER 2
THE AUTHOR-CENTERED HERMENEUTIC
OF WALTER C. KAISER

Introduction

The late twentieth-century “battle for the Bible” that raged in much of evangelicalism emphasized the full inspiration and inerrancy of God’s Word and coincided with a heightened focus on achieving accurate biblical interpretation through appropriating established hermeneutical tools.¹ Often, this prompted interpreters to seek out the human author’s intent in order to discern a passage’s meaning. A survey of the popular hermeneutical textbooks of the present generation demonstrates the pervasiveness of the author-centered hermeneutic.² Moreover, many of the most popular works on homiletics of that era present an author-centered hermeneutic.³

The author-centered approach to hermeneutics assumes the human author fixed his intended meaning through his specific words. The author-centered hermeneutic also

¹Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus, *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984).

²E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University, 1967). Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970). Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994). Robert L. Thomas, *Evangelical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002).

³D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971). Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980). Ramesh Richard, *Preparing Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001). James E Rosscup, “Hermeneutics and Expository Preaching,” in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, ed. John F. MacArthur (Dallas: Word, 1992), 119-36. Jim Shaddix and Jerry Vines, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* (Chicago: Moody, 1999). John Stott, *Between Two Worlds* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

assumes the author's meaning is perspicuous, or knowable to the interpreter. Therefore, the goal of an author-centered hermeneutic is to find the human author's intent through a series of steps including a consideration of the grammatical and syntactical construct of the words, the historical setting of the text, and the contextual location of the passage, book, and broader canonical circles.

The International Council on Biblical Hermeneutics codified the aim of the aforementioned interpretive process in the 1980s, stating, "We affirm that the meaning expressed in each biblical text is single, definite, and fixed."⁴ Furthermore, the statement outlined,

We affirm the necessity of affirming the Bible according to its literal, or normal sense. The literal sense is the grammatical-historical sense—that is, the meaning that the writer expressed. Interpretation according to the literal sense will take account of all figures of speech and literary forms in the text.⁵

The International Council on Biblical Hermeneutics captured the hermeneutical consensus of the day among evangelicals; its boundaries, affirmations, and denials became a touchstone for subsequent discussions on hermeneutics.

This chapter examines the author-centered hermeneutic as expressed in the International Council on Biblical Hermeneutics and as documented and defended by Walter Kaiser. This chapter notes the defining marks of the author-centered approach to employ as a plumb line by which to evaluate redemptive-historical preaching in subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

⁴International Council on Biblical Hermeneutics, "Statement," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25, no. 4 (1982): 398.

⁵*Ibid.*, 399.

Walter Kaiser and the Human Author-Centered Hermeneutic

In the present generation, Walter Kaiser has been perhaps the most forceful and consistent proponent of an author-centered hermeneutic. Kaiser stands as an evangelical E. D. Hirsch, and is a singular influence on modern interpretation. Kaiser has served alternately as Old Testament professor, preacher, author, and most notably as president of Gordon Conwell Seminary. Kaiser exerts much of his scholarly output on matters of exegesis and Old Testament interpretation, and, in so doing, he positions himself as a counterbalance to the proponents of redemptive-historical preaching.⁶ Kaiser, a member and signatory of the International Council on Biblical Hermeneutics, argues that locating the human author's intended meaning is the *sine qua non* of faithful interpretation. Kaiser writes,

No definition of meaning could be more fundamental than this: To interpret we must in every case reproduce the sense the Scriptural writer intended for his own words. The first step in the interpretive process is to link only those ideas with the author's language that he connected them with. The second step is to express these ideas understandably.⁷

Emphasizing the author's intent as the key interpretive issue, Kaiser further argues,

The basis for validating the meaning of any passage can only be located in the meaning (i.e., the sense) that the author intended. . . . To put it another way, the authority for the sense of the text is only as solid as our grasp of the truth the author intended to convey.⁸

Walter Kaiser and Biblical Theology

Kaiser, like those committed to redemptive-historical preaching, builds his interpretive approach to Scripture upon biblical theology. Kaiser presents biblical

⁶ Scott M. Gibson, *Preaching the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 17-19.

⁷ Walter C. Kaiser, "Legitimate Hermeneutics," in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 118.

⁸ Walter C. Kaiser and Moses Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 45.

theology as doctrinal interpretation practiced by way of chronological development and progressive revelation, as opposed to systematic theology, which is a categorical assemblage of Scripture and topics. Those committed to redemptive historical preaching, like Edmund Clowney and Sidney Greidanus, find the person, work and reign of Christ to be the culmination of their biblical theology. Kaiser, though, argues, “the most suitable candidate for the unity or center of God’s disclosure is to be found in the “promise-plan” of God as revealed in repeated references throughout Scripture.”⁹ Kaiser’s understanding of promise-plan as the main theme of Scripture distinguishes him from others, like Clowney and Greidanus, who argue for a Christ-centered biblical theology. These respective approaches to biblical theology serve to point their methodologies of preaching in differing directions.

Kaiser and the Dimensions of Meaning

Since discerning the author’s intended meaning of the passage is at the forefront of an author-centered hermeneutic, Kaiser devotes a good deal of attention to describing exactly what “meaning” is. Kaiser notes four different components to which meaning might refer: referent, sense, intention, and significance

First, Kaiser suggests meaning refers to the referent itself. Kaiser writes,

It is possible to know the meaning of every word in a text and still be without a clue as to what is being said. In such cases, what is generally missing is a sense of what is being spoken about—the referent. The referent is the object, event, or process in the world to which a word or a whole expression is directed.¹⁰

Therefore, in order to grasp the meaning of a passage one must, with certainty, know that to which the author is referring.

⁹Walter C. Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 18.

¹⁰Kaiser and Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, 34.

Second, Kaiser notes the meaning of a passage may also refer to its “sense.” Behind determining the referent, clarifying the sense of the passage is the second most important step in crystallizing the meaning. Differentiating between meaning as the referent and meaning as sense, Kaiser clarifies, “Meaning as the referent tells what is being spoken about, but meaning as sense tells us what is being said about the referent.”¹¹ One gains the sense of the passage by recognizing the relationships of the words, clauses, and propositions of the text and thereby assimilating those grammatical relationships into a cogent expression of the text.¹²

Kaiser suggests determining the author’s intention as the third step in understanding the meaning a passage. Here, Kaiser acknowledges one cannot pretend to know the author’s mind, emotions, attitudes, or other indiscernible matters that may be at play in the ancient author’s life. Yet, one need not master the psychological profile of the author to discern his intended meaning. Kaiser writes, “We do not profess to get into the mind, psychology, or feelings of the author. We have no way of obtaining or controlling such data.”¹³ Though the modern interpreter cannot know these categories with certainty, he or she must pursue the author’s intention as much as possible. Kaiser clarifies, “Instead we are only concerned with the truth-intention of the author as expressed in the way he put together the individual words, phrases, and sentence in a literary piece to form a meaning.”¹⁴

Kaiser delineated significance as his fourth aspect of meaning. He notes that

¹¹Ibid., 35.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., 37.

¹⁴Ibid.

meaning and significance often overlap in common, evangelical parlance, but he stresses the importance of maintaining distinction. Though both are integral to the interpretive process, to confuse or disorder the two can ruin one's exegesis. Kaiser leans heavily on Emilio Betti and E. D. Hirsch. Citing these two affirmatively, Kaiser writes,

At the heart of their case is the distinction between 'meaning' or interpretation and significance or application. 'Meaning,' they rightfully contend, is that which is represented by a text, its grammar, and the author's truth-intentions as indicated by his use of words, while 'significance' denotes a relationship between (note well—it must be linked) that meaning and another person(s), time, situation, or idea(s).¹⁵

Kaiser further enunciates the distinction between meaning and significance: "Meaning is fixed and unchanging; significance is never fixed and always changing."¹⁶

Clearly, Hirsch influences Kaiser at this point. Like Hirsch, Kaiser argues that significance must come after the meaning of a passage is determined, but it must indeed come. Kaiser writes,

It would be just as tragic to conclude one's interpretational responsibilities with the task of what a text meant to the author and the original audience without going on to deal with the contemporary significance of the text. The hermeneutical task must continue on to say what the text means to the contemporary reader or listener.¹⁷

Kaiser stipulates that, though each text can only have one meaning, often texts have multiple implications or points of application. Multiple applications must not inadvertently lead one to assume the text has more than one meaning. Kaiser writes,

Meaning is determined and fixed according to those assertions that the author wished to make, while applications are always multiple, indeterminate, and only valid to the degree that they preserve the integrity of the principle found within the fixed or determined meaning.¹⁸

¹⁵Walter C. Kaiser, "Evangelical Hermeneutics: Restatement, Advance or Retreat from the Reformation?" *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 46 (April 1982): 168.

¹⁶Kaiser and Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, 41.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 41-42.

¹⁸Walter Kaiser, "The Nature of Criteria of Theological Scholarship: An Evangelical Critique and Plan," *Theological Education* 32 (1995): 60.

Human Author-Centered Hermeneutic and Single Meaning

Single meaning is the linchpin of Kaiser's hermeneutical model, and he has devoted much attention to the defense of the notion of a single meaning in his writings. Softening a single meaning hermeneutic, Kaiser suggests, causes irreparable damage to the interpretive process, and will eventually prove perilous to the church. Kaiser elaborates,

A literary work like the Bible can have one and only one correct interpretation and that meaning must be determined by the human author's truth-intention; otherwise, all alleged meanings would be accorded the same degree of seriousness, plausibility, and correctness with no one meaning being more valid or true than the others.¹⁹

Kaiser traces the emphasis on single meaning back to the protestant reformation. He notes, "Under the strong impetus of the Reformation there was a renewed emphasis that there is only one sense or meaning gleaned from every passage if the interpreter is true to his mission."²⁰ Kaiser goes on to draw from the reformers:

The principle of a single meaning to the text is second only to the principle of Sola Scriptura. Yet, no principle in the whole area of hermeneutics is in more doubt and debate among evangelicals and descendants of the Reformers. Nothing threatens the work and heritage of Luther and others more in the last half of the twentieth century than the contest over a single or polyvalent meaning for any given text of Scripture.²¹

Thus, Kaiser further argues, "The sole object of the expositor is to explain as clearly as possible what the writer meant when he wrote the text under examination."²² Kaiser goes on to summarize the hermeneutical process of ascertaining the single meaning of the passage accordingly:

¹⁹Walter C. Kaiser, "A Response to Author's Intention and Biblical Interpretation," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 441.

²⁰Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 43.

²¹Kaiser, "Evangelical Hermeneutics," 172.

²²*Ibid.*, 44.

God's meaning and revelatory-intention in any passage of Scripture may be accurately and confidently ascertained only by studying the verbal meanings of the divinely delegated and inspired human writers. . . . That single, original verbal meaning of the human author may be ascertained by heeding the usual literary conventions of history, culture, grammar, syntax, and accumulated theological context.²³

Kaiser undergirds his argument for single meaning by appealing to standardized rules of hermeneutics that extend beyond biblical interpretation. He suggests that the interpreter should treat the Bible as he would any other book, notwithstanding the knowledge of the divine inspiration of Scripture. Kaiser notes, "Now it may be laid down as a first rule that the Bible is to be interpreted in the same manner and with the same principles as all other books."²⁴ He recognizes the oppositional concern to this premise: "Some will object that the Bible is not a common or profane book. It deals with supernatural things; therefore it ought to be treated separately from other books."²⁵ Kaiser rebuts this notion, arguing,

It is a revelation God deliberately designed to communicate to human beings what they themselves could not or would not know unless they received it from Him. To deny this is to say that God gave a revelation in which nothing is revealed or that the disclosure of God is also a concealment! It reverses the meaning of words and of reality itself.²⁶

Kaiser also mentions,

God has deliberately decided to accommodate mankind by disclosing himself in our language and according to the mode which we are accustomed in other literary productions. While the content is vastly different, the medium of language is identical.²⁷

Therefore, whether the document is a historical contract, marriage license, bank

²³Kaiser, "Legitimate Hermeneutics," 118.

²⁴Ibid., 119.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 120.

²⁷Ibid.

statement, or Holy Writ, Kaiser's author-centered hermeneutic lends the text to interpretive certitude.

Kaiser's Axioms of Interpretation

In order to locate the single meaning of the passage Kaiser proposes five axioms the interpreter must follow. These axioms function as stepping-stones, leading the interpreter through the passage in the journey to find the author's intended meaning.²⁸

The Axiom of Grammatical and Syntactical Consideration

First, in order to discern the single meaning of a passage, one must be committed to ascertaining the grammatical and syntactical construct of the passage. The words themselves, God-given and so ordered, drive the meaning of the passage and should be determinative in establishing the meaning of a text. Kaiser notes, "God's meaning and revelatory intention in any passage of Scripture may be accurately and confidently ascertained only by studying the verbal meanings of the divinely delegated and inspired human writers."²⁹

The Axiom of One Verbal Meaning

Second, Kaiser insists each passage can only have one meaning. He frames a passage as a paragraph of thought, and argues that such a unit of Scripture typically carries with it a singular unit of meaning. Kaiser explains, "Only one verbal meaning is to be connected with any passage of Scripture unless the writer of the text gives literary

²⁸Walter Kaiser, "The Single Intent of Scripture," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Text*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 66-69.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 66.

and contextual clues that he has several aims in view for this exceptional passage.”³⁰

Such contextual clues that suggest more than one aim for a passage might come with prophetic passages.³¹

The Axiom of the Perspicuity of Scripture

Third, Kaiser argues the single meaning is a findable meaning. This is a key component of Kaiser’s hermeneutical model. It matters not if a text has one or countless meanings if one cannot approach the text with the assured possibility of locating that meaning. This assurance touches upon larger issues of inspiration for Kaiser. The ability to discern the meaning of a passage is imbedded in Kaiser’s doctrine of revelation, even his understanding of the perspicuity of Scripture. Not only has God disclosed his Word, but he has also made it knowable to his people. The key to ascertaining the meaning of God’s Word, then, is to deploy established hermeneutical tools. These tools will unlock the meaning of a passage. Kaiser writes,

That single, original verbal meaning of the human author may be ascertained by heeding the usual literary conventions of history, culture, grammar, syntax, and accumulated theological context. And if it cannot be ascertained by these means then it cannot be ascertained at all.³²

Furthermore, in order to interpret a passage rightly and to discern the author’s meaning, one must eliminate presuppositions that adversely influence one’s understanding of the text. Specifically, any pre-understanding that shifts one’s interpretive approach, even in the slightest, might well send the interpreter on a trajectory, which leads to inaccurate exegetical conclusions about the text. Thus, this

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., 67.

third axiom brings both promise and peril. The promise is the confidence that one can know the author's meaning if he is not hindered by prior theological commitments. The peril rests in the assurance that faulty pre-understandings will almost certainly preclude one from rightly deriving the author's single meaning. At this point, Kaiser cautions, "This authorial meaning can be understood by all readers who will allow the writer to first say what he wants to say without introducing conservative or liberal prejudices as a pre-understanding."³³

The Axiom of the Holy Spirit's Application

Fourth, while Kaiser cautions against the notion that the Holy Spirit might lead the interpreter to a deeper or fuller understanding of the passage, he nonetheless notes the role of the Holy Spirit in applying the text. In reference to this role, Kaiser maintains,

The personal impact, significance, application, reception, and value this text has for particular individuals or situations is directly linked to the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit takes the single truth intention of the author and in his convicting, comforting, teaching, and motivating power urges us to apply the principle taught in this text to scores of different situations.³⁴

At this point, Kaiser insists that the Holy Spirit, while working application in the heart of the interpreter, does not provide varied or subsequent meanings. Kaiser cautions,

No one denies that texts may legitimately have consequent extensions into later times, cultures, and settings. Normally we refer to these extensions of the single meaning of the text as applications, or implications of the general principle (or the universal term) that comes from the author's single meaning. The point where our differences arise comes when we ask if the extensions of that meaning, which we obtain from exercising the normal rules of grammar, must be applied by a continuous extension and from an application of the same sense, or may the

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

implications announced also be different and separate from the grammatico-historical meaning?³⁵

Clearly Kaiser is hedging against the notion of dual, or double, meaning at this point.

Kaiser cautions against any notion that the Holy Spirit may lead the interpreter into some sort of “Gnostic” insight into the passage.

The Axiom of Interpretive Sequence

The fifth axiom for establishing the single meaning of the text is a matter of sequence. Kaiser suggests that one must establish the meaning of the passage before moving on to broader considerations. These considerations may include reconciling the passage with wider canonical teaching as well as matters of personal application. Kaiser notes,

Having arrived at the original historical, cultural, grammatical, syntactical, theological meaning of the text, the exegete may now use the analogy of faith (of the whole Scripture) in the summaries and conclusions he offers to each section of his exegesis and to the whole message, for what is learned in this context may relate to the whole message, for what was later revealed in Scripture.³⁶

Sequence is key. For Kaiser, broader Scriptural comparisons must be delayed until the passage, and its immediate context, is considered.

The Author-Centered Hermeneutic and Dual Authorship

While Kaiser certainly acknowledges the over-arching inspiration of Scripture, he resists any theory of dual authorship that mitigates or undermines an author-centered hermeneutic. While God superintended the authors of Scripture, Kaiser notes that God “spoke through the vocabularies, idioms, circumstances, and personalities of each of the

³⁵Walter C. Kaiser, “The Promise of Isaiah 7:14 and the Single Meaning Hermeneutic,” *Evangelical Journal* 6, no. 2 (1988): 58.

³⁶Kaiser, “The Single Intent of Scripture,” 68.

chosen writers. . . . The superiority of the Scriptures over other books does not come in the manner we interpret it but in its matter and grand source.”³⁷ To illustrate this point, Kaiser argues that a secular interpreter of Scripture is better equipped to understand Paul in Romans than an ill-informed, but illumined, follower of Christ who approaches the text without an understanding of hermeneutics.³⁸ Put directly, Kaiser argues, “This writer cannot agree with those who force a distinction between the sense the prophets attach to their own utterances and what God intended in these utterances.”³⁹

The Author-Centered Hermeneutic and Prophetic Knowledge

Another potential liability to faithful interpretation that Kaiser criticizes is the notion that the biblical writer did not know in full what he was writing, especially as it relates to prophetic literature. Kaiser laments the persistence of this position:

The question of the ignorance of the writers of Scripture with regard to their own meanings, which permits interpreters to find ‘deep meanings’ embedded somehow within the text, or, better still the lines, or allows different senses than the grammar or syntax reveals still persists.⁴⁰

On the contrary, Kaiser argues that the biblical writers knew quite well what they were presenting and, often times, may have known more of futuristic events than they wrote. Kaiser argues,

I strongly affirm that the prophets claimed ignorance only on the matter of time. They decisively affirm that they knew five rather precise components of salvation. They knew they were writing about: (1) the Messiah, (2) His sufferings, (3) His glorified state yet to come, (4) the precedence of His suffering to His glory, and (5)

³⁷Kaiser, “Legitimate Hermeneutics,” 122.

³⁸Ibid., 123.

³⁹Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 31.

⁴⁰Walter C. Kaiser, *Recovering the Unity of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 79.

the application of the salvation they announced in pre-Christian days as being not only to themselves but also to those in the Christian era!⁴¹

Human Author-Centered Hermeneutic and the Analogy of Faith

In Kaiser's estimation, evangelicals have largely misunderstood and misappropriated the "analogy of faith." Kaiser suggests the Reformers moved to establish interpretive tools and standards to further distance the church's dependence on Roman Catholic doctrine and interpretive renderings: "In the hands of the Reformation's best exegetes," Kaiser writes, "the analogy of faith was a relative expression aimed at the tyrannical demands of church tradition."⁴²

Setting the historical backdrop for the analogy of faith, Kaiser notes that central to the Reformation was a return to the Bible, biblical exegesis and the principle of "Scripture alone." For the Reformers, "Scripture alone" displaced the primacy of church councils, church tradition, and even the pope as the ultimate source of ecclesiastical authority. The Reformers, therefore, determined "Scripture interprets Scripture" as a central principle of interpretation. This determination led, Kaiser suggests, to the analogy of faith. In the words of Kaiser, "The analogy of faith" became a corollary of "Scripture interprets Scripture."⁴³

Kaiser laments what he perceives as the mutation of the analogy of faith, evidenced by the tendency to use the analogy of faith as a tool to read Christ back into the Old Testament. On the contrary, Kaiser suggests that interpreters best employ the analogy of faith at the end of the interpretive process. He believes,

⁴¹Kaiser, "Legitimate Hermeneutics," 124.

⁴²Kaiser, "Evangelical Hermeneutics," 173.

⁴³Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 135.

The analogy of faith operates in the hermeneutical process in a clarifying role. Thus, it is used at the conclusion of the process. The Analogy of Faith operates as a piece of heuristic evidence because of the coherent, organic, and canonical nature of Scripture.⁴⁴

According to Kaiser, this limited usage of the analogy of faith is essential to his author-centered hermeneutic. Here, Kaiser states his concern most forthrightly:

Can the analogy of faith function as a ‘pre-understanding’ with which the interpreter approaches his task of exegesis in a distinctively Christian way? I believe not! The interpreter must not even carry such high and worthy goods to his task. Only the doctrine and the theology prior to the writing of the author’s composition of his revelation may be legitimately used in the task of theological exegesis.⁴⁵

The aforementioned concern notwithstanding, Kaiser makes provision for theological exegesis:

‘Theological exegesis’ of a passage is most important if we are to transcend the chasm between the scientific dissecting of the text into its philological components, complete with parsings and grammatical notes. However, a premature use of the *analogia fidei*, ‘analogy of faith,’ is as destructive of true meaning as no interaction with the accumulated and antecedent theology that ‘informed’ that text. The ‘analogy of faith’ is the sum of the prominent teachings of Scripture gathered from all its parts without regard to any diachronic considerations. This ‘rule of faith’ was . . . to say that the articles of faith were to be derived from clear passages and in no case was a clear passage to be set in opposition to a difficult or problematic passage. Hence a principle of harmonization or proportionality was introduced.⁴⁶

Therefore, Kaiser’s concern seems not to be one of practice, but of order and proportionality. Theological exegesis should take place by examining God’s revelation leading up to the passage under consideration in order to establish the text’s meaning. Only after settling that meaning can one look forward to the canon as a whole to seek further significance and implications.

⁴⁴Walter C. Kaiser, “Hermeneutics and the Theological Task,” *Trinity Journal* 12, no. 1 (1991): 13.

⁴⁵Kaiser, “The Single Intent of Scripture,” 68.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 67-68.

Author-Centered Hermeneutics and the “Analogy of Antecedent Scripture”

Kaiser’s concerns over the abuses of the analogy of faith lead him to devise a new hermeneutical category altogether. He dubs this category the “analogy of antecedent Scripture.” Kaiser suggests the prevalence and abuse of the analogy of faith has driven him to establish this new category. Kaiser elaborates,

The only correction that we know for past and present abuses that have taken place in the name of doing theological exegesis is to carefully restrict the process to (1) examination of explicit affirmations found in the text being exegeted and (2) comparisons with similar (sometimes rudimentary) affirmations found in passages that have preceded in time the passage under study.⁴⁷

Thus, Kaiser’s understanding of authorial intent limits the interpretive possibilities to exclude revelation given after the fact. In other words, one cannot let chronologically subsequent portions of Scripture inform the meaning of any given passage under consideration, a practice Kaiser refers to as “antecedent theology.” Kaiser argues,

We would strictly limit the purview of this tool solely to those theological considerations already in existence at the time when the target text being examined was written. Moreover we would require that this antecedent theology be made an issue in the exegesis of a passage only when the target text specifically quoted, clearly alluded to, or openly utilized that theological principle from an earlier text as an illustration or in some other overt manner. We agree with those who complain that the interests of responsible exegesis are violated when a later New Testament text is pulled in to loose the interpretation of an earlier text. Even when we are dealing with a true verbal parallel passage, we must not prematurely introduce these passages from later texts until we have established the meaning of the target passage on other grounds.⁴⁸

Kaiser presses his case, accusing those who do not employ the use of antecedent theology as practicing eisegesis. He writes, “If meanings established in texts chronologically later than the ones being exegeted were used to introduce new meanings

⁴⁷Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 136.

⁴⁸Kaiser, “Evangelical Hermeneutics,” 176.

unattested by the words, syntax, or grammar of that earlier text, the church should plead guilty to the charge of eisegesis.”

Kaiser is concerned that bringing post-dated revelation to bear on the meaning of a previously revealed passage warps the author’s original intent, and is detrimental to understanding the overall message of the Bible. In reference to not using his analogy of antecedent Scripture, Kaiser writes, “All revelation would be leveled out, resulting in the fact that whenever the Bible spoke on any subject, it said everything that the latest revelation included, since in this sense ‘Scripture interpreted Scripture.’”⁴⁹ Thus, according to Kaiser, without employing his analogy of antecedent Scripture, one risks developing a “flat Bible.”⁵⁰

Finding Antecedent Theology

In order to determine if a passage contains antecedent theology, Kaiser suggests four clues the interpreter should seek. First, Kaiser suggests that one look for terms that have already taken on a special meaning in the history of salvation.⁵¹ Second, a reference or allusion, either directly or indirectly, to a previous event in the progress of revelation may carry abiding theological importance. Examples of such references or allusions include the exodus or the epiphany on Sinai. Kaiser notes a third and more nuanced clue, writing, “Direct or indirect citation of quotations so as to appropriate them for a similar theological point in the new situation (e.g., ‘Be fruitful and multiply’; ‘I am

⁴⁹Kaiser, “Hermeneutics and the Theological Task,” 9.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 137. Such terms are seed, servant, rest and inheritance.

the God of your fathers’).”⁵² Fourth, Kaiser suggests references to the covenants of the Bible as a clear sign of antecedent theology within the text.⁵³

Kaiser argues one of the strengths of his analogy of antecedent scripture is it rightly weights cross-referenced passages. Though his method constricts reading later meaning back into a previously given portion of God’s Word, Kaiser suggests the later portion of Scripture can pull forward interpretive insights and significance from corresponding passages that are predated. This functions as an exegetical magnet, ensuring the interpreter pulls all prior and relevant passages to bear on the passage under consideration. Kaiser notes,

In this method, every time an author had quoted a previous text, or alluded to an earlier citation, person, event or teaching, these earlier texts were to be seen as conscious references that would increase the theological understanding against which this later passage was being viewed. In other words, the new revelation was being enhanced by the theological depth of meaning that God had already disclosed in the Bible that was available to that point.⁵⁴

Yet when the interpreter brings subsequent revelation to bear on the passage under consideration without first determining that passage’s meaning, Kaiser believes the passage then is neutered of its meaning and one is left with a subjective exegetical conclusion. Kaiser writes,

By failing to consider the theology of each textual unit in its diachronic setting (i.e. by failing to limit one’s consideration of those theological themes raised by the text’s key words, phrases, quotes or allusions to those Scriptures that had appeared already and were known to the writer and audience of the book under consideration for exegesis) that exegesis opens itself to the charge of subjectivism, for once again meaning is tied to something other than the words as the writer of that text intended those words to be understood.⁵⁵

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Kaiser, “Hermeneutics and the Theological Task,” 9.

⁵⁵Walter C. Kaiser, “The Current Crisis in Exegesis and the Apostolic Use of Deuteronomy 25:4 in 1 Corinthians 9:8-10,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 21, no. 1 (1978): 7.

This is not to say that subsequent revelation cannot affect the significance or implications of a passage. Rather, according to Kaiser, it is a matter of sequence and of interpretive weight. He explains,

Subsequent developments in the revelation of theology (subsequent to the passage we have under consideration) may (and should, in fact) be brought into our conclusion or summaries after we have firmly established on exegetical grounds precisely what the passage means. We do, in fact, have the whole Bible; and we are speaking (usually) to a Christian audience. Therefore, in our summaries we should point out these later developments for the sake of updating and putting everything in its fullest context. However, in no case must that later teaching be used exegetically (or in any other way) to unpack the meaning or to enhance the usability of the individual text which is the object of our study.⁵⁶

This quote is key in understanding Kaiser's appropriation of subsequent revelation. It is an overstatement to suggest that Kaiser prohibits subsequent revelation from informing a passage. Rather, Kaiser argues it should do just that—inform a passage's interpretation, but not define its meaning. Even with these qualifications, Kaiser's position shares common ground with a redemptive-historical homiletic. Kaiser's allocation of the analogy of antecedent Scripture is one of the defining marks of his author-centered hermeneutic, and his caution in bringing subsequent revelation to bear on a passage differentiates him from the redemptive-historical movement.

The Analogy of Faith and Heuristic Evidence

The point is not that not all of Scripture is relevant or that the interpreter should feign ignorance of subsequent revelation. Rather, Kaiser wants to bring all of Scripture to bear on any given passage at the appropriate interpretive time and in the appropriate interpretive way. For Kaiser, the appropriate time and way to employ the analogy of faith should come at the end of the interpretive process and the interpreter uses it best as heuristic evidence. This heuristic evidence serves to frame this

⁵⁶Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 140.

significance and implications of a passage. Kaiser demonstrates how heuristic evidence works:

The analogy of faith operates in the hermeneutical process in a clarifying role. Thus it is used at the conclusion of the process. The analogy of faith operates as a piece of heuristic evidence because of the coherent, organic, and canonical nature of Scripture—especially when it is operating from *sedes doctrinal*, the largest teaching block where a particular doctrine comes to its fullest expression.⁵⁷

In Kaiser's approach sequence is key. To introduce the analogy of faith too early is to risk eisegesis. To fail to bring the analogy of faith to bear later in the exegetical process is to risk under-applying the passage.

Kaiser explains exactly how the heuristic contribution is made through an analogy:

Let me illustrate: a student informs me that my son's wife drove off in a blue car. I know that my son, Jon, has a blue Honda that Susan also drives. A correct grammatical-historical exegesis of that statement would be that Susan drove away in a blue car. But just as additional evidence can be brought to bear on biblical studies from later biblical books than the one we are studying (or even from atlases, dictionaries, theological wordbooks, et al.) so here I attach more significance to these words than my informant thought I had. You see, I also had heard Susan call my son on the phone and say she was going shopping and that she would leave from campus with two of her girlfriends.

None of this knowledge changed the meaning of the informer's statement. But it surely enhanced it for me, since I had additional 'revelation.' Notice that this additional revelation deals with the same topic and extended what was seminally present, but unexpressed in the original statement. That is precisely the way that the analogy of faith operates. It is not an exegetical tool. But, given the fact that it uses evidence that belongs coherently to the same subject and contains the same truth—only adding to what was there—it can be used to enlarge on the basic meaning already in hand from the original statement. We propose to call this 'heuristic evidence,' i.e., evidence that aided us in further discovering implications of the thought.⁵⁸

Thus, heuristic evidence serves to undergird and further inform a previously disclosed passage. Heuristic evidence is not an exegetical tool, according to Kaiser. Rather it

⁵⁷Kaiser, "Hermeneutics and the Theological Task," 13.

⁵⁸Ibid., 11-12.

merely serves to amplify and further frame canonically a previously established meaning of a text.

Human Author-Centered Hermeneutic and the *Sensus Plenior*

Similar to his handling of the analogy of faith, Kaiser also argues for a restrained usage of the *sensus plenior*. Like the analogy of faith, Kaiser maintains modern interpreters often misuse the *sensus plenior* for a function the reformers never intended. Kaiser writes, “When this ‘consequent sense’ is a different and an additional meaning, allegedly intended by God, but expressed in words of the author without the author’s awareness of their meaning, then we do have an instance of *sensus plenior*.”⁵⁹ Kaiser’s rendering of appropriate and inappropriate uses of the *sensus plenior* goes back to his pre-commitment to a single meaning for every passage.

Kaiser questions many of the uses of the *sensus plenior* because at its heart is the idea the Old Testament passage has a fuller sense or deeper meaning. Kaiser expresses this concern writing, “In other words the text has been invested with a pregnant meaning whose plenary senses (*sensus plenior*) are known to the Holy Spirit and released as he will to those who are spiritually prepared to receive them.”⁶⁰

While Kaiser is not adverse to fuller implications or subsequent applications of a text, his author-centered hermeneutic leaves him entrenched against any understanding of the *sensus plenior* defined as a fuller meaning. Kaiser writes,

While the divine and human will are joined in the single grammatical, historical meaning of a text, only the divine will stands behind the fuller references these texts

⁵⁹Kaiser, “The Promise of Isaiah 7:14 and the Single Meaning Hermeneutic,” 66.

⁶⁰Walter C. Kaiser, “The Promise to David in Psalm 16 and its Application in Acts 2:25-33 and 13:32-37,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 23, no. 3 (1980): 221.

acquire—presumably from the wider biblical context and the interpreter’s use of reason.⁶¹

Getting to the heart of the matter, Kaiser inquires, “The question must be raised: Could God see or intend a sense in a particular text *separate* and *different* from that conceived and intended by the human instrument? Notice the italicized word: *separate* and *different*. Therein lies the story.”⁶²

Kaiser further questions the notion of a fuller meaning, writing,

The key then is to be found in whether the divine implication attributed to a biblical text is both contained in, implied, and extended (whether actually or virtually) by the human author. If the extension is *different* from that which by any normal rules of grammatical interpretation may be attributed a concept or idea found in the word(s) used by the author, then the *sensus plenior* is a *different* sense rather than a fuller sense.⁶³

Kaiser therefore concludes that a deeper meaning simply cannot be found:

To insist that the Holy Spirit interrupts the hermeneutical process with new—even messianic—meaning is to proudly argue that another divine revelation has taken place in the interpreter’s experience while he, the exegete, was looking at an ancient text.⁶⁴

This is a defining part of Kaiser’s hermeneutic and it stands in stark contrast to Clowney and Greidanus.

In addition to the aforementioned concerns Kaiser has with the *sensus plenior*, he appeals to common sense to argue for a single meaning hermeneutic that is rooted in the human author’s intent. Kaiser argues,

The best argument for a single-meaning hermeneutic is to be found in observing what happens when it is removed from current conversation or writing. Communication itself is severely handicapped if not made impossible. If individual speakers or writers are not sovereign over the use of their own words, and if meaning is not a return to how they intended their own words to be regarded, then

⁶¹Kaiser, “A Response to Author’s Intention and Biblical Interpretation,” 441.

⁶²Ibid., 442.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Kaiser, “The Promise to David in Psalm 16,” 221.

we are in a most difficult situation—everyone communicating, but no one in particular ever receiving (or knowing if he has adequately received) the message.⁶⁵

The Author-Centered Hermeneutic and Typology

After carefully considering Kaiser's author-centered hermeneutic, one should not be surprised by Kaiser's cautious endorsement of typology. Typology has been used as a hermeneutical device since the early days of the church and any survey of the history of interpretation will reveal that typology has a checkered past.⁶⁶ Specifically, during the patristic era of the church the Alexandrian school of interpretation indulged in typological excesses that strained believability and unwittingly undermined the authority of Scripture by hindering the reasonable and primary interpretation of Old Testament passages. Over the centuries, typology has swung back and forth on the pendulum of popularity among Bible interpreters. Critics of typology have long bemoaned its excesses, but the presence of typology in the Bible can hardly be denied.⁶⁷

Some apprehension over typology originates from longstanding confusion between typology and allegory. Whereas allegory seems bound only by the limits of the interpreter's imagination, responsible usages of typology are tethered to specific occurrences of analogy and reference between passages. While some are reticent to employ typology due to concerns pertaining to interpretive discipline, others have rejected typology because of what the method necessitates—a sovereign God who moves in history and has coordinated his Word, from start to finish, with overarching themes and a gospel meta-narrative.

⁶⁵Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 47.

⁶⁶Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 252.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*

Kaiser notes typology is the fulfillment of a unified Bible and the interpreter should expect to find types if one holds to a “promise-plan” biblical theology. He states,

The essence of typology is that it adds a theological perspective to our interpretation of Old Testament texts and is predicted not on anything mystical or subjective but on the fact that the same general divine plan runs throughout both Testaments. A type presupposes a purpose in history that unfolded a self-consistent unity throughout the Testaments.⁶⁸

Most especially, Kaiser’s hermeneutic guards against typological excesses. He insists, “Now there are real types in the Bible, but all true biblical types have clear divine designations shown in the same contexts with the alleged type from the Old Testament.”⁶⁹ He clarifies what these designations might be, writing, “Consequently, a person, an institution, an act, or an event that can claim by divine designation in the Old Testament that it is a partial picture of a greater reality to come can be recognized by all true interpreters as a type.”⁷⁰

Kaiser acknowledges, however, that the Scriptures may well contain more types than are specifically confirmed in the New Testament, but the interpreter must tread humbly at this point. He argues,

Of course, there are more types in the Bible than what the New Testament claims to be types, but that is a long way from making most things in the Old Testament a type, especially by reading the Old Testament through the lens of the New Testament.⁷¹

At this point, He resists any notion of an “Apostolic hermeneutic,” which would permit the interpreter to cite types like the writers of the New Testament did.

⁶⁸Walter C. Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 120.

⁶⁹Walter C. Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament: A Guide for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 43.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid., 44.

For Kaiser, several exegetical governors regulate typology. Most especially, he comfortably maintains his commitment to antecedent revelation and argues interpreters must not read typology proleptically into the text. He stands athwart of the redemptive-historical approach at this point, arguing, “Types cannot be ‘read into’ or ‘read back’ into the Old Testament from the New Testament in some sort of canonized eisegesis.”⁷²

Conclusion

In summary, this chapter concludes with the defining marks of Kaiser’s author-centered hermeneutic. This distillation of Kaiser’s author-centered hermeneutic frames the forthcoming evaluation of redemptive-historical preaching.

First, the central responsibility of the interpreter is to understand the author’s intended meaning. This concern trumps other legitimate and necessary interpretive questions, including how the passage intersects with broader canonical themes. The author is understood to be the human author, who wrote in his own historic and cultural setting and through his own dialect, personality, and human constraints. Though God inspired the human author, that inspiration is not to be construed to undermine the author’s ability to locate his meaning in the passage and for that meaning to be fixed, immutable, and single.

Second, the author’s intended meaning is single, not dual or multiple. Kaiser’s single meaning principle not only rebuts challenges from the left, including reader-response hermeneutics, but also redemptive-historical homileticians. Though Kaiser acknowledges a passage may carry implications and significance well beyond its own

⁷²Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New*, 121.

biblical setting, he rejects the notion that a passage may have a second, deeper or subsequent meaning. Moreover, in that God communicated his word, through the human agent, exactly as he intended and for the purpose that his will be known, the text's meaning therefore is knowable to the interpreter.

Third, in order to know the meaning of a passage, the interpreter should apply standard hermeneutical principles. These principles are trans-disciplinarian, applied to all written materials. Though the Bible is unlike every other book, because God is its ultimate author, it is to be interpreted like any other book, because he intended his revelation to be transmitted to his people through human authors. Kaiser offers five axioms to discern the human author's meaning: grammatical and syntactical consideration, one verbal meaning, perspicuity of Scripture, the Holy Spirit's application, and interpretive sequence.

Fourth, Kaiser argues that Scripture has one author, not two, and any notion of dual authorship that leads to dual meaning must be rejected. These two issues are intertwined but the latter is more disconcerting than the former. In fact, he is comfortable with the terminology of dual authorship as long as it is not construed to include the possibility, either stated or implied, of double meaning.

Fifth, Kaiser asserts that the Scriptural authors did, in fact, write with full prophetic knowledge. Though God may have chosen to keep matters of futuristic timing or prophetic realization unclear to the writers, Kaiser maintains they not only knew the meaning of what they wrote, but they may have known more than they chose to write.

Sixth, Kaiser maintains that some interpreters have stretched the analogy of faith beyond its usage by the reformers. He argues the analogy of faith should not be used to read meanings back into Old Testament passages. Moreover, it is not to be employed to mine for deeper textual meanings. On the contrary, the analogy of faith is

best understood as the analogy of antecedent revelation. According to this usage, prior revelation should inform subsequent revelation, not *vice versa*.

Seventh, Kaiser insists the best appropriation of the analogy of faith is to present heuristic evidence. Heuristic evidence serves to amplify and support the meaning of a previous passage. To Kaiser interpretive sequence is crucial. To bring the analogy of faith to bear too early on a passage in the interpretive process may foster eisegesis, but too late may lead one to under-apply the message. Thus, the analogy of faith, especially as it relates to antecedent revelation, can surface heuristic evidence that illumines and clarifies the passages meaning.

Eighth, like the analogy of faith, Kaiser argues some interpreters have stretched usages of the *sensus plenior* beyond the reformers' original intent. Kaiser argues that any rendering or appropriation of the *sensus plenior* that produces a secondary or divergent meaning from the original author's intent is an aberrant usage. Kaiser does not deny the reality of subsequent and fuller implications of a passage, but he cannot abide any notion of a subsequent or fuller meaning.

Ninth, Kaiser insists types may be cited with certainty only when there is a clear New Testament referent. Kaiser acknowledges there may be more types in the Old Testament than are verified by New Testament referent, but one can only cite the type with assurance if it has New Testament confirmation. While the New Testament affirms prior types, it should not be used to read types proleptically back into the Old Testament.

For over four decades, Kaiser has advocated his author-centered hermeneutic. He has become a leading thinker on biblical interpretation, and his standard helps to frame various approaches to preaching, most especially the redemptive-historical approach. In this dissertation, then, the key points of Kaiser's author-centered hermeneutic is an evaluative tool for Edmund Clowney and Sidney Greidanus.

CHAPTER 3

EDMUND CLOWNEY, BIBLICAL THEOLOGY, AND CHRIST-CENTERED PREACHING

Introduction

Perhaps no single figure in the twentieth century did more to advance the cause of redemptive-historical preaching than Edmund Clowney. Throughout his ministry, Clowney served alternately as preacher, pastor, biblical theologian, author, professor, and president of Westminster Seminary. His ministry spanned more than 50 years in a variety of places and roles, yet the one constant was his commitment to a Christ-centered biblical theology and redemptive-historical preaching.¹ Even after his death in 2005, Clowney's influence continues to reverberate through works published posthumously² and through the release of *Heralds of the King*, a collection of redemptive-historical sermons dedicated in Clowney's honor.³

Clowney, Biblical Theology, and Christ-Centered Preaching

Clowney described preaching as “the redemptive event in which the Word of God is present and the church is called into existence.”⁴ He saw preaching as a

¹Dennis E. Johnson, *Heralds of the King* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 17.

²Edmund P. Clowney, *How Jesus Transforms the Ten Commandments* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2007).

³Johnson, *Heralds of the King*, 17.

⁴Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002), 29.

“redemptive event” because he derived his homiletical approach from his Christ-centered biblical theology. Therefore, any survey of Clowney’s work must center upon his dominating theological concern: biblical theology.

Geerhardus Vos laid the foundation for biblical theology and redemptive-historical preaching in Reformed circles in the early twentieth century when he taught biblical theology at Princeton Seminary.⁵ Clowney built upon that foundation and became one of the master craftsmen of twentieth century redemptive-historical preaching. Though Clowney studied at Yale, and not with Vos at Princeton, he nonetheless came under Vos’ influence at an early age.⁶ In his landmark homiletics book *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, Clowney noted the formative influence Vos’ *Biblical Theology* had on his thinking. He writes,

The preacher who takes up Vos’s *Biblical Theology* for the first time enters a rich new world, a world which lifts his heart because he is a preacher. Biblical theology, truly conceived, is a labor of worship. Beside Vos’s *Biblical Theology* should be set his little book of sermons, *Grace and Glory*. There we hear a scholar preaching to theological students (the sermons were delivered at Princeton Seminary), but with a burning tenderness and awesome realism that springs from the grace and glory of God’s revelation, the historical actualization of his eternal counsel of redemption.⁷

For Clowney, biblical theology does not merely inform Christ-centered preaching. Rather, Christ-centered preaching is the natural and inescapable result of a rightly ordered biblical theology. He sees biblical theology and redemptive-historical preaching organically linked to the extent that a person’s discoveries made through biblical theology should inexorably define and drive Christ-centered preaching.

Clowney acknowledges that garnering a consensus definition for biblical

⁵Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2001), 47.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 18-19.

theology is no easy task. He bemoans the elasticity of meaning carried by the expression “biblical theology.” According to Clowney, “‘biblical theology’ can refer to anything from an organizational method of coupling Scriptural passages to related theological topics, to simply serving as a synonym for ‘Christian theology.’”⁸

Even among those who define biblical theology as the discipline of connecting the disparate parts of Scripture to the meta-narrative of God’s redemptive plan in Christ, there still remains divergence of meaning and practice. Indeed, the biblical theology movement is analogous to a multi-voice choir. Though the respective members of a multi-voice choir all aspire to the same end, one can detect different strains of giftedness, volume, and trajectory. Likewise, though practitioners of biblical theology share a common interpretive intent—locate the meta-narrative of Scripture—they often arrive at slightly different understandings of the Bible’s common themes. Therefore, one must thoroughly observe Clowney’s biblical theology, and appropriation thereof, in order to understand his prescribed method of preaching Christ.

Clowney’s Christ-centered biblical theology is not an entry point into his method of preaching; rather Clowney’s Christ-centered biblical theology, in many ways, is his proposed method of preaching. He uses the expressions biblical theology and redemptive-historical preaching virtually interchangeably, and his homiletic hinges upon his Christ-centered hermeneutic. Therefore, to understand Clowney’s Christ-centered biblical theology it is necessary to grasp his redemptive-historical homiletic.

Biblical Theology and Hermeneutical Presuppositions

The marrow of Clowney’s biblical theology resides in three presuppositions

⁸Ibid., 10.

with which, he argued one must approach the hermeneutical process. Clowney argued these three presuppositions, or convictions, must be present in the interpreter in order for him to arrive at a correct rendering of a Christ-centered biblical theology.

The Continuity of Scripture

First, Clowney argues a prerequisite to a sound biblical theology is the belief in the Bible as a book with a continuous message. According to Clowney, belief in a sovereign God who penned, albeit through human authors, the story of redemption from Genesis to Revelation necessitates a theory of continuity. God is not conflicted in his work with humanity and neither is the record of that work, Clowney maintains. Most especially, this continuity is a theological continuity. The Bible has many stages, scenes, and episodes, but one major plotline—the message of redemption in Christ.⁹ Clowney notes, “Scholars who think there are many different theologies in Scripture (or the raw materials for many) have surrendered the biblical basis for the unity of biblical theology.”¹⁰ Furthermore, Clowney insists, “Biblical theology is a contradiction in terms unless the Bible presents a consistent message.”¹¹ Thus, in Clowney’s opinion, the *sine qua non* of faithful biblical theology is that the Bible has a consistent, thematic message and those interpreting it should locate and trace that theme. For Clowney, of course, this consistent message is Jesus Christ.

The Progressive Revelation of Scripture

Second, Clowney argued that this consistent message is also scripturally

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., 12.

¹¹Ibid.

overarching and progressively revealed.¹² The message runs from Genesis to Revelation, expanding in clarity, intensity, and perspicuity. This overarching and progressively revealed theme of Scripture not only makes biblical theology possible, but it also makes it necessary. The interpreter should note how God chose to disclose his revelation to humanity, and in acknowledgement and submissiveness of God's revelation, similarly interpret it. Thus, Clowney argues,

Biblical theology formulates the character and content of the progress of revelation in these periods, observing the expanding horizons from age to age. So understood, biblical theology is both legitimate and necessary. It provides the full context of the exegesis of particular passages, which must be understood not only in the setting of the book, but also in the horizon of revelation. This intent to follow the storyline of the Bible, as opposed to a more categorized observation of biblical truths and sentiments, is integral to a healthy biblical theology.¹³

Clowney adds,

Biblical theology summarizes the teaching of the Bible by following the history of God's revelation in the periods or epochs of God's work in creation and redemption. Biblical theology follows the *story* of the Bible rather than the *topics* found in the Bible.¹⁴

Here, Clowney not only differentiates between biblical and systematic theology, but he also makes a value claim on the task of biblical theology. Biblical theology alone captures the full force of revelation because biblical theology, in its appreciation for progressive revelation, tracks and captures the story of redemption.

The Christ-Centered Nature of Scripture

A faithful biblical theology, Clowney argues, will recognize Christ as the fulfillment of Scripture's grand meta-narrative. For Clowney, this recognition of the

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., 15.

¹⁴Clowney, *How Jesus Transforms the Ten Commandments*, xii-xiii.

Bible's grand meta-narrative is non-negotiable, as his explication of redemptive-historical preaching hinges upon it. Clowney poses the question, "Where is Christ to be found in the Old Testament?" In answering this question, Clowney sets forth the ubiquity of Christ in the Old Testament. He writes,

Not merely in the relatively few passages that explicitly speak of the coming Messiah but in the whole Old Testament message. The Old Testament is about the covenant Lord and his mercies to his people. Christ is the Lord of the covenant, gathering his people in the latter days. The Old Testament is about Israel; but Christ is the true Israel, the son called out of Egypt, the remnant shoot out of the roots of David (Isa. 49:3-7; 10:34-11:1). The Old Testament is about Moses and the prophets, Aaron and the priests, David and the kings. Christ is the true Anointed, the Prophet like unto Moses, the Priest after the royal order of Melchisedec, David's Son and Lord.¹⁵

Clowney's insistence on the ubiquitous Christ in the Old Testament sets him apart from Kaiser and the author-centered hermeneutic. Clowney's rather broad insistence that the coming Messiah is found in the "whole Old Testament message" diverges from Kaiser's more guarded Christological hermeneutic.¹⁶

Clowney pulls from Jesus' famous encounter with disciples on the road to Emmaus, arguing for an almost mystical, heart-warming reaction of the believer to the revealed Christ in Scripture.¹⁷ This knowledge of the revealed Christ serves as a demarcation point for preachers. Those who approach the text with an eye for redemptive-historical preaching arrive at an altogether healthier and more powerful sermon. On the contrary, those who have not yet beheld Christ in the text are not yet ready to proclaim that text. Clowney amplifies this assertion:

¹⁵Edmund P. Clowney, "Preaching Christ," *Christianity Today* 9, no. 12 (1965): 7.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

Until you have seen a text illumined not only from without but from within the light of Christ, you are not ready to proclaim it to the Church or the world. This preaching hems you in to Christ's fullness, limits you to all the riches of the wisdom of God, narrows your thought to the mind of Christ, and restricts your vision to one light of the eye, the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Concede wider ranges to those who want to wander in trackless places; let them be conformed to the passing patterns of preaching, non-preaching, or anti-preaching. But determine with Paul to preach Christ. No more, no less.¹⁸

Pulling these three aspects of Clowney's biblical theology together, one sees Clowney's predominant macro-interpretive concern. The Bible is one book, not 66. This singular book has one continuous and ever-unfolding theme, and that progressively revealed theme is a person, Jesus Christ.

In assessing Clowney's three pre-commitments of biblical theology, one can see how integral biblical theology is to his method of preaching. For Clowney, his Christ-centered biblical theology is both the rudder and the sail for his prescribed method of preaching. As a rudder, biblical theology determines the interpretive direction of every passage, and thus the applied meaning of every sermon. Moreover, as sail, biblical theology gives every passage a fuller sense of meaning and interpretive force, thereby further empowering the thrust of the sermon. The consequence of Clowney's biblical theology is not unique to him. Kaiser gives similar prioritization to biblical theology, but his biblical theology leads him down a different hermeneutical road. Clowney's biblical theology, however, is Christ-centered in its aim and Christ-centered in its conclusion, thereby leading him to redemptive-historical preaching.

Biblical Theology and the Authority of Preaching

According to Clowney, biblical theology carries with it the mandate for preaching itself. Biblical theology does not merely facilitate redemptive-historical

¹⁸Ibid.

preaching; rather it demands a redemptive-historical approach to homiletics. Clowney reflected on this relationship, musing, “An old Dutch preacher has sagely observed that the pulpit must not drive us to the text, but rather the text must drive us to the pulpit. In biblical theology that scriptural dynamic impels the preacher’s heart with unimagined strength.”¹⁹ Inculcated through biblical theology, redemptive-historical preaching carries with it inherent spiritual authority, and thus a mandate to preach.

Authority and the Word of God

The word-centered sermon also has authority because the Scripture reveals Christ, and, in a twist of logic, to preach Christ is to preach the word. This word predicted, commanded, and determined all things to come. This “word” that authoritatively moved all things is embodied in Christ.²⁰

Clowney maintains that, although God’s Word determines of all things, it nonetheless finds its most poignant act and the accentuation of its story in redemption. Clowney states, “The emphasis of the Word, however, is not so much on the sovereignty of God’s word in nature or providence as on its authority in the history of redemption.”²¹ Thus, “the grandeur of God’s sovereignty in his word is the background of the fulfillment of God’s word in Christ.”²²

Authority Exhibited in Apostolic Preaching

To undergird the centrality of redemption in the Old Testament, Clowney

¹⁹Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 19.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 29.

²¹*Ibid.*, 24.

²²*Ibid.*, 33.

looks to preaching as recorded in the New Testament. He argues, “There can be no doubt that the whole structure of New Testament preaching rested upon the conviction that the gospel fulfilled the authoritative Scriptures of the Old Testament.”²³ Moreover, the “core of Christian preaching given by Christ himself to his disciples is expanded in the book of Acts, with the greatest fidelity to the pattern of interpreting Scripture.”²⁴ Therefore, it follows,

To the Gospel writers and to Jesus there was nothing artificial in the fact that the most intimate crises of the Messiah’s spiritual experience found expression in the fulfillment of the precise letter of Scripture. If all the Scriptures testify of Christ, Christ also is subject to the Scriptures.²⁵

Clowney deduces that preachers in the church age should preach Christ because he is the fulfillment of the Old Testament and the focus of the New Testament. The biblical theology demonstrated by the Apostles, namely their focus on Christ, is what gave their preaching authority. This authoritative word came because the apostles preached Jesus as both the giver and culmination of God’s Word. Clowney continues,

The Old Testament pattern of objective revelation and authoritative teaching is fulfilled but not destroyed in the coming of Christ. No suppression or sublimation of verbal revelation is involved in the work of the Messiah. In Jesus Christ, the word is not an uninterpreted act or a bare event but a *person*: One who acts, to be sure, but who also speaks. Christ the Logos is the full and final revelation of God in both word and deed (Acts 1:1). He fulfills the promise of the prophet in Deuteronomy 18:18.²⁶

Authority-less preaching is impotent to change the hearers and is anemic in the life of the church. On the contrary, though, Clowney maintains that a robust, Christ-centered biblical theology ensures sermons are authoritative. Clowney argues, “Without

²³Ibid., 30.

²⁴Ibid., 31.

²⁵Ibid., 33.

²⁶Ibid., 50.

authority preaching is denatured. . . . Other characteristic aspects of the ministry of the word are renewed through the understanding of redemptive history.”²⁷

Biblical Theology and the Character of Preaching

Though Clowney primarily focused on defending the practice of biblical theology and redemptive-historical preaching, he also described how this biblical theology should inform and shape one’s preaching. Biblical theology informed Clowney’s exegesis and homiletics, therefore molding the nature of preaching itself.

Christ-Centered Preaching and Boldness

Clowney proposed that Christ-centered biblical theology provides the preacher with an authoritative message, and the preacher should therefore deliver his sermon with boldness and conviction. Thus, redemptive-historical preaching is, and ought to be, marked by boldness of conviction.²⁸

Clowney cites the preaching of Peter in the New Testament as a case in point. How might one explain Peter’s transformation? He went from timidity to temerity, from cowardly retraction to bold proclamation. Peter denied Christ three times to a slave girl, yet in a matter of days he stood before the nation of Israel and indicted them with the murder of the Son of God at Pentecost.²⁹

The manifest power of God as demonstrated through the resurrection of Christ led to Peter’s transformation, Clowney argues.³⁰ Similarly, a deep awareness of Christ in

²⁷Ibid., 63.

²⁸Ibid., 66.

²⁹Ibid., 67.

³⁰Ibid.

the Scriptures will fill the modern preacher's heart with power. Clowney likens the modern preacher to the disciples on the Emmaus road.³¹ Like these disciples, modern preachers will find their hearts burning within when they behold the fullness of Christ's revelation in Scripture. Thus, Clowney cautions,

Our preaching cannot have the boldness or the urgency of Peter's until we have understood the perspective from which his addresses are formed, the perspective of the whole New Testament. Biblical theology has here rendered a great service to the church.³²

Clowney maintains that the ever-present reality of Christ's grandeur is what drove Peter to preach the gospel before a crowd of adversaries.³³ Clowney explains this power and applies it to the modern preacher, writing,

Christ has been exalted as a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins. It is the sovereign Saviour that Peter preaches. Our great sin in preaching is our little faith therefore our little joy. We forget who our Saviour is and where he is. We even manage to preach Christology without any real understanding of the present kingship of Christ. . . . The joy of his resurrection, the power of his Spirit, the hope of his coming—preaching oriented in this perspective honors Christ.³⁴

Christ-Centered Preaching and Richness

According to Clowney, redemptive-historical preaching infuses the preacher with boldness and the preacher's sermon with richness. This sort of preaching stands in contradistinction to "textual sermons," which often strike the hearer as bland and lifeless.

Clowney writes,

Textual preaching has long been advocated as a strong remedy for monochromatic sermons. Without an appreciation of biblical theology, however, even the riot of

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., 68.

color in the profusion of Scriptural texts may be tamed by the dark glasses of the preacher.³⁵

Here, Clowney especially takes aim at careless exposition. Preaching that merely wallows in the nuances of the text, but misses the Christological import of the passage, lands lifeless on the hearer's ears.

In reference to the urgency of presenting the big, Christological aspects of the passage, Clowney writes, "The more fully a text is approached in the context of its own setting in redemptive history, the better is the preparation for preaching that is not uniformly hortatory, or didactic, or even sentimental, but rather reflects the glory of the Word."³⁶ Clowney does not suggest the preacher ignore the lesser, more mundane concerns of the hearers. Rather, he argues that as sermons present the overarching message of the work of the Messiah, they will envelop and alleviate the listener's lesser, sentimental concerns.

Christ-Centered Preaching and Focus

Biblical theology's preeminent contribution is to focus the preacher—and the sermon—on Jesus Christ. This is Clowney's key concern and is central to the development of his overall argument for Christ-centered preaching. Clowney puts it bluntly: "Most important of all, biblical theology serves to center preaching on its essential message: Jesus Christ."³⁷

Clowney develops his theory of homiletics full bore around the centrality of Christ for preaching. Because Christ is the one that saves and the one the hearers must

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., 74.

³⁷Ibid.

encounter, every sermon must convey the ultimate focus of every page of Scripture, Jesus.

Clowney writes,

The unifying structure of Scripture is the structure of redemptive history. The Bible does not have the form of a textbook, and the witness to Christ unfolds with the progressive epochs of revelation, which in turn are grounded in the successive periods of redemption. Biblical theology recognizes both the unity and the epochal structure of redemptive history.³⁸

For Clowney, this unifying structure provides the scaffolding of redemptive-historical preaching. It coordinates the revelation of Christ in the Bible and provides the interpreter with plausible avenues to Jesus regardless of his biblical vantage point.

Moreover, this unifying structure not only presents a consistent theme but also a connected theme, ebbing and flowing with redemptive scenes and overtones. Clowney further notes,

As we progress in our study of each period in its own context and ‘theological horizon,’ if we may so speak, we discover that each epoch has a coherent and organic structure and also that there is organic progression from period to period as the plan of God is revealed.³⁹

Clowney concludes that pursuing the organic, Christological narrative of Scripture is the only way for one’s preaching to be both theological and Christ-centered. These should be dual aims of the preacher, and the former enables the latter. Therefore, Clowney maintains that no imaginative exegesis is necessary.⁴⁰ One need not find Jesus in the Old Testament by deploying a peculiar or esoteric allegorical hermeneutic. On the contrary, Clowney argues,

To discover Christ in the Scriptures no desperate allegories are necessary, although the mind of faith is. The hearts of the disciples on the road to Emmaus burned within them as Christ opened the Scriptures. They were not in the least amazed at his

³⁸Ibid., 75.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

cleverness, but only at their dullness in not having perceived long ago the sufferings and glory of Christ so clearly set forth.⁴¹

He further maintains,

All the many detailed prophecies of Christ which stud the pages of the Old Testament are related to this fundamental structure of salvation. Through the method of biblical theology the redemptive significance of a particular revelation in a particular period is studied and seen in the perspective which converges on Christ.⁴²

According to Clowney, the Bible's particular focus on Christ points the interpreter to him as well and all the preacher must do to focus the sermon on Jesus is objectively follow the focus of the passage under consideration.

The Redemptive and the Ethical

Clowney acknowledges redemptive-historical preaching and ethical preaching are often set in opposition to one another. These two approaches ought not be non-synchronous, according to Clowney. On the contrary, Clowney credits biblical theology with presenting both the redemptive message and behavioral instructions for the follower of Christ. He writes,

Biblical theology, then, serves to unlock the objective significance of the history of salvation. It focuses on the core of redemptive history in Christ. On the other hand it also opens up for us the subjective aspect, the religious riches of the experience of God's people, and its relation to our own.⁴³

To set the redemptive implications of a passage at odds with its ethical application not only does a disservice to the sermon's recipients but also to the passage itself. Thus, Clowney elaborates, "We do well, then, to avoid setting up a false antithesis between the redemptive-

⁴¹Ibid., 76.

⁴²Ibid., 77.

⁴³Ibid., 78.

historical approach and what might be called an ethical approach to the Scriptures, particularly the historical passages.”⁴⁴

Elaborating further on this point, Clowney argues,

Relating the history of redemption to the ethical in the explication of the text does not cause problems to arise. Every evangelical preacher has struggled more or less consciously with them, and a teacher of homiletics has many opportunities to observe young men facing them for the first time.⁴⁵

Rather, Clowney argues the preacher should ground ethical imperatives in the gospel of Christ. This sort of preaching, according to Clowney, is quintessential redemptive-historical preaching, and this the type of sermon will most impact the hearer.

Clowney writes,

The Scriptures are full of moral instruction and ethical exhortation, but the ground and motivation of all is found in the mercy of Jesus Christ. We are to preach all the riches of Scripture, but unless the center holds all the bits and pieces of our pulpit counseling, of our thundering social sins, of our positive or negative thinking—all fly off into the Sunday morning air.⁴⁶

Clowney’s insistence of the unnecessary dissonance between the exemplary and the redemptive Old Testament sermon gives him a unique station in the redemptive-historical movement. Typically, these two approaches appear more divergent, leading the preacher to emphasize one over the other. Clowney’s attempted reconciliation of the two prompted Anthony Selvaggio to observe:

Clowney’s discussion of preaching becomes more intriguing when he deals with the tension between the redemptive-historical approach and the exemplary approach. The interesting twist in Clowney’s thought is his attempt to downplay this tension, even to the point of denying its existence.⁴⁷

⁴⁴Ibid., 80.

⁴⁵Ibid., 81.

⁴⁶Edmund P. Clowney, “Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures,” in *The Preacher and Preaching* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1986), 191.

⁴⁷Anthony T. Selvaggio, *Another Foundation: The Presbyterian Confessional Crisis* (Philadelphia: P & R, 2007), 181.

Clowney notes the established practice of dividing doctrine and application in one's sermon is detrimental to the homiletical task. Rather, Clowney maintains, "The solution is the organic relationship that exists in God's great work of redemption and revelation, a relationship that it is the great work biblical theology to study."⁴⁸ Clowney reasons, "Just as the ethical response is always required by the covenant of grace, so the ethical is never artificially or inconsequentially present in the lives and actions of those figures that play decisive roles in the history of redemption."⁴⁹ Therefore, Clowney suggests that it is only

through the study of the biblical-theological horizon of a period we may interpret the ethical demands of that period in theologically accurate terms. Such interpretation enables us to perceive the relationship of that ethical element to our own situation.⁵⁰

Biblical Theology and the Content for Preaching

Clowney's understanding of biblical theology undergirds his entire philosophy of preaching, and his appropriation of biblical theology determines the content of his preaching as well. Clowney argues, "Biblical theology furnishes the charter for our preaching, a declaration of the authority, urgency, and relevancy of preaching Christ from the Scriptures."⁵¹ If the preacher's mandate is to preach the Word, then the content of the Bible determines which word he preaches and how he preaches it. Therefore, biblical theology is at its heart a hermeneutical task and what one uncovers during the interpretive process yields fruit for preaching.

⁴⁸Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 82.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

Biblical Theology and Hermeneutics

For Clowney, appropriating his Christ-centered biblical theology is primarily a hermeneutical endeavor. Biblical theology frames how one interprets the Bible because it frames, in a more fundamental way, how one approaches the Bible and how one begins the task of hermeneutics. Clowney elaborates,

Biblical theology is not a method in this sense. If its principle is grasped, it cannot be optional or superficial. Its approach is rather an essential step in the interpretation of the Bible. Neither exegesis on the one hand, nor systematic theology on the other, can ignore the progressive unfolding of revelation in the history of redemption, and it is the task of biblical theology to study that revelation without losing sight of either its continuity or its progressive and epochal structure.⁵²

The Text and the Theological Horizon

As it relates to context, Clowney synthesizes his hermeneutical approach into two key steps. First, He argues one must pursue the immediate theological context or “horizon.” Only after weighing the immediate Scriptural context should the interpreter move to broader textual considerations. He writes, “Our hermeneutical method, therefore, must always begin by finding the immediate ‘theological horizon’ and then relating that to the broader biblical-theological perspectives.”⁵³ Clowney argues for giving initial focus to the text under consideration before moving to broader canonical concern. In order to achieve this He maintains, “As we approach the interpretation of the text, we must understand the text in the light of the ‘theological horizon.’”⁵⁴ Then, the interpreter must, “carry the principle of contextual interpretation to the total setting of the revelation of the period.”⁵⁵

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid., 92.

⁵⁴Ibid., 88.

⁵⁵Ibid.

Clowney suggests the theological horizon should also have the broader, panoramic view of Scripture in mind as well. This broad view includes the Edenic period, the antediluvian period, the Noachian epoch, the patriarchal age, and then the age from Moses to Christ. Finally, the coming of Christ brings in the last great epoch of redemptive history. The final period, of course, is the awaited age, the consummation of God's intended order when all things are summed up in Christ.⁵⁶

Clowney notes that within the grand superstructure of Scripture, one also finds sub-periods as well.⁵⁷ One must be mindful of these sub-periods in order to situate a passage in its theological horizon. As an example, Clowney cites the story of Elisha's healing of Naaman in 1 Kings 5. In order to understand this story, one must not only be mindful of the broad horizon of the theocratic kingdom, but one must also consider the passage in light of Elisha's particular ministry. When one considers the narrative in light of these spheres of context, the interpreter is afforded greater clarity into the meaning of the passage. Clowney elaborates,

This narrative does not simply indicate salvation cannot be bought, as Naaman hoped, nor sold, as Gehazi supposed. Nor does it merely show the goodness and the severity of God. In the biblical-theological setting, the relation of Israel to the Gentiles cannot be ignored. The anointing of Hazael and the restoration of Naaman are part of the consistent picture of judgment upon Israel and blessing to the Gentiles.⁵⁸

The Text in God's Total Revelation

After considering the passage in its own context and broader theological horizon, Clowney suggests that the interpreter then consider the passage in light of the

⁵⁶Ibid., 89.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid., 92.

whole revelation of God. At this point, the interpreter must be mindful of how the text participates in God's overarching message of redemption and then how it applies to the modern reader. In this step, Clowney argues that the challenge is to "relate the event of the text, by way of its proper interpretation in its own period, to the whole structure of redemptive history."⁵⁹ Yet, in seeking to keep balance, Clowney argues stringently for these steps to be separate and sequential: "It must be stressed that this second step is valid and fruitful only when it does come second."⁶⁰

In the second step, one looks to trace the projected, redemptive work of Christ from the point of foreshadowing in the Old Testament to its dawning in the New Testament. In crossing this bridge, Clowney argues, "We must bear in mind the principles we have already considered. Christ is revealed in the Old Testament as both Lord and servant."⁶¹ Again, this view is anticipatory in both Old Testament fact and expectation. Clowney notes,

However, just because the final redemption is accomplished in history by the incarnate Son of God, the saving work of the Lord in the Old Testament is not complete. It has a prospective reference pointing forward to the great day of culmination.⁶²

He then elaborates,

Because the continuity of God's work of redemption, the connection between salvation in the Old Testament and the New is organic. There is one saving Lord, and one true Israel, the people of God. But because of the epochal progression of redemption and revelation to fulfillment in Christ, there is a dependence on the partial of the total, of the provisional on the final, of the old and the new. In the form of revelation, therefore, the principle of analogy operates. The essence of the covenant is the same, and only in Christ is it actualized: I will be your God, and ye

⁵⁹Ibid., 88.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid., 99.

⁶²Ibid.

shall be my people. By faith, by a “realized eschatology,” believers in all ages share this covenant relation, and their experience of fellowship with God is actual; their life is not a parable of salvation but the experience of it. Yet the redemptive manifestation of God to which faith is directed culminates in Christ, and redemption and revelation in the earlier ages foreshadow Christ.⁶³

Clowney argues that not to bring the entirety of God’s redemptive work in Christ to bear on a passage, is more than an oversight. Rather, he makes it tantamount to ministerial malpractice with impugning consequences, explaining,

If . . . we develop the most thorough knowledge of the period without relating its conceptions to the whole structure of redemptive history, we may risk the mistake of the history of religions school, failing to recognize, in the organic development of the whole, the hand of God in redemption and his voice in revelation. The Christian proclamation of an Old Testament text is not the preaching of an Old Testament sermon.⁶⁴

Primary Tools for Finding Christ in the Old Testament

After establishing the theological scaffolding for his Christ-centered approach to preaching, Clowney presents two primary tools for finding Jesus in the Old Testament: symbolism and typology. When rightly applied, these two tools serve as utilities with which one can locate Christ, or a Christological reference, in the Old Testament.

The Tool of Symbolism

Clowney suggests symbolism functioned in the Old Testament as a temporal signage to presage the person and work of Christ.⁶⁵ Jesus fulfilled these prior symbols through his incarnation and earthly ministry. According to Clowney, the symbolism of Scripture further testifies to the continuity of God’s revelation. Clowney writes, “It is evident, then, that symbolism is of particular importance in relating the revelation of the

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid., 75.

⁶⁵Ibid., 76.

‘past ages’ to the fulfillment in Christ.”⁶⁶ These symbols occur with frequency and are recognizable to the interpreter with an eye for them. Clowney notes, “Symbols abound in Scripture, not incidentally, but because of the structure of the history of redemption which is at once organic and progressive.”⁶⁷

Clowney describes biblical symbols:

Truths may be emphasized in one period of redemptive history more than in another, but no truth is eliminated or forgotten. The meaning of any Old Testament symbol is the concept that it symbolized. In the biblical context the concept is affirmed or denied; it is related to other concepts in such a way that some statement is made. A truth is expressed. An Old Testament event, ceremony, or a prophetic, priestly, or royal action may therefore symbolize, pointing to a revealed truth at a particular point in the history of redemption. We may therefore connect the event, ceremony, or action directly with that truth as it comes to full expression in Christ.⁶⁸

Clowney disputes any hermeneutical approach that disavows the presence of symbolism in the Old Testament, or that minimizes their occurrence or importance. Moreover, he disputes those who acknowledge its existence yet render symbolism ineffectual by claiming it too mysterious to locate and decipher with certainty.⁶⁹

By appealing to common sense, Clowney chides those who argue for a rigid literalism in reading Scripture, thus devaluing or denying symbolism altogether. He maintains, “The preacher who would plough under all the symbolism of Scripture in favor of bare ‘literalism’ should be prepared to assert not only that God has eyes, but that these eyes have legs, since they ‘run to and fro through all the earth.’”⁷⁰

Although Clowney argues strongly for symbolism as a tool to preach Christ, he

⁶⁶Ibid., 101.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Clowney, “Preaching Christ From All the Scriptures,” 180.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 102.

also acknowledges one must rightly interpret it. Thus, Clowney proposes several keys to interpreting symbolism: differentiation, relationship, and divine intentionality.

Differentiation. First, Clowney suggests, “We should recognize that the symbol is distinct from that which it represents.”⁷¹ To amplify this point, he borrows an illustration from Roman Catholicism. Clowney writes,

The Roman Catholic view of transubstantiation passes beyond symbolism at the point of the Elevation of the Host. If the bread becomes the body of Christ it can no longer represent it. In biblical theology, as we have seen, the realization of the promise of Christ is not in symbol, but reality.⁷²

On the contrary, the Old Testament symbol of Christ must point to the Messiah, not be messianic.

Relationship. Second, Clowney argues there must exist a relationship between the symbol and the symbolized reality. This relationship owes its existence to God’s work in fashioning his revelation with such connections. For Clowney the relationship condition is a safeguard against farfetched symbolic assertion.⁷³ As an example, Clowney notes the unity-in-diversity of the human body as a symbol of the church. He suggests that, just as the human body of Christ represents the physical body, so symbols in scripture demonstrate inter-scriptural connectivity. Yet, Clowney maintains,

The symbol remains a symbol, and frightful idolatry arises when the highest symbols are identified with that which they symbolize. . . . An object may become a symbol through a play on words; the connection consisting merely in a similarity of sound between the name of the object and the concept which it symbolizes.⁷⁴

⁷¹Ibid., 104.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid., 105.

The symbol points to the greater reality, but itself maintains a lesser significance. Thus the symbol functions as the moon does to the sun, reflecting the presence of Christ but never overshadowing it.

Divine intentionality. Third, Clowney argues God divinely established the symbol and its New Testament correspondent. The symbol arrives with divine intention and a corresponding certainty of connection.⁷⁵ Therefore, the interpreter should not be reticent to connect such symbolic dots. If God has placed them in Scripture, then why should the interpreter have pause in making them clear? To this point, Clowney writes,

The biblical theology of revelation, however, cannot be set at a convenient distance from science in this way. The symbolism of Scripture is communicated in word revelation and its elements have rational meaning. Indeed the symbolism of Scripture is characteristically discursive rather than presentational. Rather than there being a wholeness of imagery which baffles thought, the symbolism is organized coherently and conceptually.⁷⁶

At this point, Clowney returns to his presuppositions of context and “horizon.” Lest one think the interpreter can deduce the symbol in a “Gnostic,” deeper knowledge way, Clowney resurfaces the connectivity of the Bible. He writes,

The interpreter of biblical symbols needs therefore to seek the meaning of the individual elements of symbolism in the context of scriptural use. As in all exegesis, the historical setting must be examined. The whole context of the period of revelation is always significant.⁷⁷

The Tool of Typology

Clowney builds upon his theory of symbolism to advance his argument for typology. He describes typology, noting,

Typology is grounded in God’s design. It flows from the continuity and difference of

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid., 106.

⁷⁷Ibid., 107.

God's saving work. . . . The use of models, images, or symbols is part of God's design to anticipate the fullness of meaning that cannot yet be revealed. . . . It may serve as a sign, a symbol that points beyond itself to the reality of Christ's atoning sacrifice. . . . The New Testament proclaims the fulfillment of all the typical symbols of the Old Testament in Christ.⁷⁸

Clowney explains the progression from symbol to type is not only logical, but also necessary. This necessity is because the interpreter should derive the type only from a prior designated symbol. Recognizing Vos, who argued, "the gateway to the house of typology is at the farther end of the house of symbolism,"⁷⁹ Clowney argues, "only the symbolic can be typical."⁸⁰

To overstate the significance of this qualification for Clowney is difficult. For Clowney the usage of typology unlocks the presence of Christ, and thus the richness of the Old Testament. Clowney notes,

God's word of promise fixes seasons of redemptive history. Had God spoken only the final promise, the lamp of faith would surely have flickered out during the long ages of delay. But God granted provisional fulfillments to point to the final reality. Isaac was given to Abraham long before the true Beloved Son came; David entered Jerusalem long before the Heir of the promise ascended God's holy hill.⁸¹

The necessity that the type first be a symbol guards the type on both fronts. On one hand, this principle permits one to pursue a type even when there is not a clear New Testament referent. Clowney regrettably recalls his own seminary training in this regard:

My own seminary teacher instructed us to recognize as types in the Old Testament only those things that are identified as types in the New Testament. That is certainly a safe rule. If the New Testament specifies something as a type, we may so interpret it. But that is a little like saying that you can find solutions to math problems only by looking in the back of the book of the book, since you haven't a clue as to how to work the problems. To conclude that we can never see a type where the New

⁷⁸Clowney, "Preaching Christ From All the Scriptures," 174-75.

⁷⁹Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 111.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Clowney, "Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures," 6.

Testament does not identify it is to confess hermeneutical bankruptcy.⁸²

On the other hand, the insistence on a symbol-type relationship means one can only designate a type once the interpreter has established a symbol. This insistence on connectivity prevents inferring or over reading types into the text. Clowney is adamant at this point, writing, “If there is symbolism in the account, we can rightly infer typology. If there is no symbolism, there can be no typology.”⁸³ He developed a helpful diagram that shows the relationship between the symbol and the type and the truth they both convey:

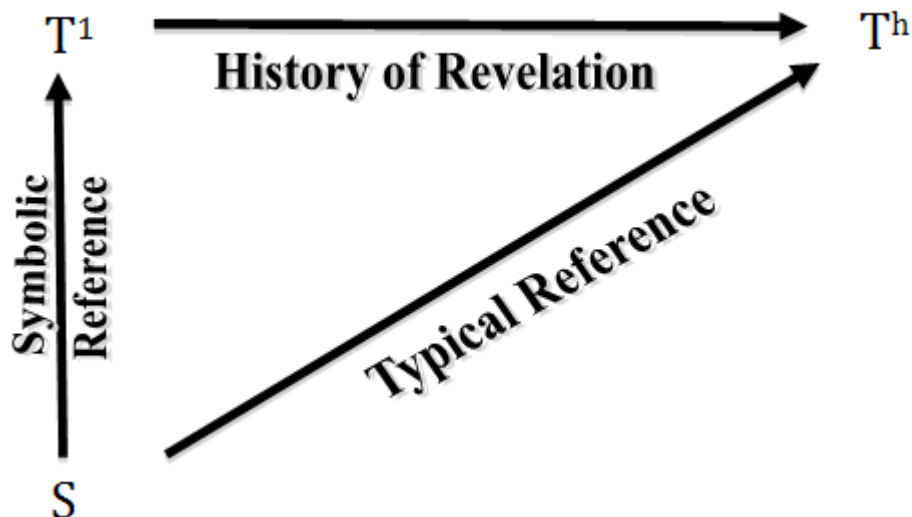


Figure. Clowney typology chart⁸⁴

Clowney explains his chart by noting,

A simple schematism that is helpful here is to regard symbolism as involving a vertical reference to a revealed truth as it is manifested in a particular horizon of

⁸²Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of the Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 31.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 110.

redemptive history. Typology is then the prospective reference to the same truth as it is manifested in the period of eschatological realization.⁸⁵

Clowney also places parameters on the usage of typology. As the chart illustrates, he argues that an Old Testament event or institution may only be a type of the truth that it symbolizes. Thus, the offering of the Passover lamb symbolizes the substitutionary atonement and therefore typifies Christ's redemptive work. Therefore, Clowney affirms his Christ-centered methodology:

If we proceed to construct the line of typology only when we have first clarified the symbolism we will be able to work in confidence. We honor the Word of God when we recognize the principle of organic connection between promise and fulfillment.⁸⁶

Clowney suggests the interpreter should categorize biblical types in respective groupings. He argues, "God gave directly to his people some types. These types were emblazoned on the minds and imaginations of his people, thus they merit their own category."⁸⁷ Clowney goes on to specify types that merit such categorization, noting, "For instance, such types include the fire in the bush on Sinai, the rainbow with Noah, the stairway at Bethel. Their immediate divine origin makes them "direct signs of God's presence and power."⁸⁸ This primary category of types comes with such force because they indicate a divine intervention.

According to Clowney, the next tier of types was cultic, marking out the people of God as his chosen nation. Such types include sacrifices and circumcision. Prophetic symbols form the third class of types. Prophetic symbols include actions on the part of the prophets at the behest of God. Such types include Ezekiel's representation at the

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid., 111.

⁸⁷Ibid., 108

⁸⁸Ibid.

siege of Jerusalem or Hosea's marriage to Gomer. A fourth class of types is "historic symbols." An example of a historic symbol would be the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt.⁸⁹

As with symbolism, Clowney argues that typology confirms God's longstanding messianic intentions: "If God had not begun His work of salvation before sending His Son into the world, the Marcionite view of the Old Testament would be correct. We would then have the religion of Israel only another example of false religions in the world."⁹⁰

Clowney's Christ-Centered Model in Sermon Form

In order to further clarify Clowney's methodology for preaching Christ from the Old Testament, one must assess his published sermons. Several of Clowney's expositions on Old Testament passages are considered to demonstrate how he appropriates his methodology.

Genesis 22:1-19

In his sermon on Genesis 22:1-19 entitled "See What It Costs," Clowney presents one of the more famous Old Testament passages as a paradigm for Christ-centered preaching. He suggests the focal point in the passage is the testing scenario whereby God confronts Abraham. Clowney notes Abraham's trial increased in intensity with every testing step towards Mt. Moriah, and Isaac matched Abraham's obedience with his resilient faith.⁹¹

⁸⁹Ibid., 110.

⁹⁰Clowney, "Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures," 174.

⁹¹Edmund P. Clowney, "Preaching Christ How All of Scripture Points to Him," *Modern Reformation* 7, no. 6 (1998): 35-37.

Herein the passage contains both ethical and redemptive aspects. Abraham is an ethical example of obedience and Isaac is an ethical example of faith, but the thrust of the passage is in neither of these examples. Rather, this story poetically reveals the price and provision of redemption. God reveals his redemption by sending Abraham the trial to confirm his faith. Moreover, this trial also depicted the redemption, which would come when the promised one arrived.⁹²

Clowney zeroes in on the Christological importance of the passage in the sermon. He argues that God's provision of the ram signified the inability of Abraham to provide his own sacrifice, hence the given name of God—Jehovah Jireh, the God who provides. This notion of the Lord's provision foreshadows the coming of the Messiah, through whom God would bless all the earth. Clowney maintains, "Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day when Isaac was born, and rejoiced again when God provided the ram as a substitute for Isaac; but Abraham looked further (John 8:56). Not Isaac, but the Lamb of God was the Sacrifice that the Father would provide."⁹³

Tying the sermon together, Clowney argues the ultimate fulfillment of the passage is in the coming sacrifice of Christ:

In the mountain of the Lord, the Lamb will be seen. A popular chorus sings, 'Jehovah Jireh, the Lord provideth for me,' but misses the heart of the message. Jehovah Jireh: in the mountain of the Lord, Jesus Christ will be seen. What we see is Jesus Christ lifted up on the Golgotha in that very place, the hills of Moriah.⁹⁴

Thus, the ultimate messianic realization of this passage would occur through Jesus' sacrifice on Golgotha, and the ram in the bush prefigured that forthcoming redemptive event.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of the Scripture*, 76.

⁹⁴Ibid., 77.

Genesis 28:10-22

Next, in Clowney's sermon taken from Genesis 28:10-22 entitled "When God Came Down," Clowney demonstrates how Christ is found in this famous passage pertaining to Jacob's wrestling with the Angel of the Lord. In this section, Esau and his forces encounter Jacob to exact revenge for Jacob's theft of Esau's birthright and blessing. While sleeping, Jacob has a dream and envisions a ladder reaching up into heaven. The apex of the dream is God coming down and standing over Jacob. In this setting, the Lord assures Jacob that his promises are secure and that indeed he will bless him.

From God's promises to Jacob, Clowney segues to Jesus' promises to his children. Just as God's promises are true and certain, so Christ's children can trust in him.⁹⁵ Yet, Jesus himself makes the clearest affirmation of the presence of Christ in Genesis 28. Clowney notes,

Jesus illumined the significance of this passage for us when he alluded to it in his calling of Nathaniel. . . . When Jesus saw Nathaniel coming, he said, 'Behold an Israelite in whom is no deceit! (v.47).' Jesus recognized that Jacob had practiced deceit. The name 'Jacob' drawn from the word 'heel' in Hebrew, describes Jacob as a 'heel grabber' trying to supplant Esau, even at birth. God had given the name 'Israel' to Jacob. Here was an offspring of Jacob more worthy of that name.⁹⁶

Clowney interrogates the passage, asking, "The reference to Jesus in Jacob's dream at Bethel is clear. But in what sense does Jesus apply the going and coming of the angels to himself?"⁹⁷ Clowney argues the answer is "the Lord who came down the stairway of Jacob's dream is the Lord who came down to be born of Mary."⁹⁸ Moreover, Clowney

⁹⁵Ibid., 82.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Ibid., 83.

⁹⁸Ibid., 84.

says, “He sees you now and comes to you—the Lord is in this place, and you did not know it! This is your Bethel, the house of God.”⁹⁹

Genesis 32

In Clowney’s sermon “The Champion’s Strange Victory,” taken from Genesis 32, he recounts the epic struggle between Jacob and the Angel of the Lord. In this passage, Jacob wrestled with the Angel of the Lord throughout the night, refusing to let the Angel go until he had blessed him. Clowney summarizes this passage as the Lord teaching Jacob to look to him in trust, and to know that if he could trust God with his life, he could trust God when he encountered Esau. Clowney also finds this passage to be rich for redemptive-historical preaching, arguing,

Jacob was a winner by grace, the Lord was the Victor of grace. Christ is foreshadowed in this account, not in one role, but in two. He is the Angel of the Lord, the mysterious figure in whom God himself is present. As the Lord, he wins by losing. Had he simply touched Jacob with the finger of judgment, Jacob would have lost irretrievably. But that was not his purpose. The Lord restrains his power, withholds his judgment, to hear the cry of faith, to give himself to the grasp that holds to his promise.¹⁰⁰

Furthermore, Clowney suggests that Jacob is a type of Christ in this passage. Clowney argues, “Christ is also foreshadowed in Jacob, the seed of the promise, and the servant of the Lord. Christ is the Israel. . . . Jacob suffers the crippling touch with reference to his progeny, to the One who will be born of his descendants, the Messiah.”¹⁰¹

Joshua 5:13-15

In Clowney’s sermon “Meet the Captain” he recounts the scene in Joshua 5

⁹⁹Ibid., 85.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 93.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

when the Israelites are on the verge of claiming the Promised Land. After a season of rebellion, the children of God are now poised to realize God’s promise to them of settling in Canaan. As the Israelites were poised for conquest, the captain of the host of the Lord appeared. Clowney asserts this individual was Christ, writing, “In the Old Testament, Christ appeared as the Angel of the Lord to deliver his people and to bring judgment on his enemies.”¹⁰² Here, Clowney maintains, the Angel of the Lord appeared to “show his rule over Israel and the nations.”¹⁰³

Clowney notes the Israelites seizure of the Promised Land coincided with their renewed commitment to God and their revived trust in his care and provision. Through Christ, this scenario of obedience and blessing are applicable to church age believers as well.¹⁰⁴ Yet, the main Christological theme of this passage is the conquering might of the Captain of the host of the Lord. God’s mode of conquest was counter-intuitive and could only be explained by his might, not the Israelites battle strength. Thus, the Captain of the host of the Lord receives ultimate glory in this passage.

In this passage Clowney’s Christ-centered hermeneutic appears in two forms. First, he confidently asserts Christ to be the Captain of the host of the Lord, thereby locating Christ himself in the passage.¹⁰⁵ Clowney notes,

The Greek Old Testament says, ‘Do not fear what they fear or be terrified, but sanctify the Lord himself, and let him be your fear.’ Peter in his quotation replaces ‘himself’ with ‘the Christ.’ The appearing of the Captain of the host of heaven was an appearing of the Son of God, who became incarnate when he was born of Mary.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰²Ibid., 103.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 105.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 106.

Yet, Clowney also finds the strength of the Captain of the host of the Lord to take on symbolic aspects, pointing to the day when Jesus will come again in final judgment and inaugurate his complete reign over all the cosmos. In anticipation of this moment, Clowney writes,

One day the last trumpet will sound to announce the return of the King. But the trumpet of grace is now sounding in the gospel. Jesus with the sword of his lips prepares for the day when the battle will be finished upon the earth, as it is in heaven. But the sword is not in the hand of the Captain. It is his spoken word that governs the storms to bring his peace. His hands do not bear the sword, but are lifted in blessing, displaying the marks of the nails. The Captain received the spear-thrust to win his battle. Before him we fall down with Joshua and say with Thomas, 'My Lord and My God.'¹⁰⁷

Analysis and Assessment

As this chapter has evidenced, Clowney championed redemptive-historical preaching and any assessment of Christ-centered homiletics must factor in his approach to Old Testament preaching. Such an evaluation, when made in light of Kaiser's author-centered hermeneutic, reveals that Clowney departs at several key points from Kaiser. These respective departures coalesce into a singular concern: the issue of determining a text's meaning.

Each of Clowney's variegated departures from an author-centered hermeneutic, whether explicitly or implicitly, go back to how one rightly determines the meaning of a passage and what other factors should influence the determination of that meaning. Likewise, Kaiser's writings reveal a dominating, transcendent concern as well, protecting and regulating the author's intended meaning. Clowney's departure with Kaiser over meaning takes shape in at least three major categories.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Single Meaning

First, Clowney departs from Kaiser over the reality of a single meaning in a text that corresponds with the human author's intent. While this departure evidences itself in multiple sub-differentiations, one finds cleavage between the two homileticians by a general assessment of their respective assignments of a passage's meaning.

Clowney's dual authorship leads him to embrace a dual or subsequent meaning of a passage. The interpreter may ascertain this subsequent meaning by drawing lines from the Old Testament passage to New Testament fulfillments or references. Moreover, and in further contrast to Kaiser, Clowney also supports bringing the New Testament to bear on an Old Testament passage in such a way that one can read meaning proleptically back into an Old Testament passage. Clowney notes his biblical theology "rests upon the unity of the primary authorship of Scripture and the organic continuity of God's work in redemption and revelation."¹⁰⁸ As he approaches the text from a Christ-centered biblical theology, Clowney argues, "Its perspective clarifies the meaning of the text and emphasizes its central message."¹⁰⁹ Kaiser would not quarrel with Clowney as it relates to God's ultimate influence over Scripture, nor would he fail to acknowledge subsequent revelation supporting or amplifying the prior established meaning. However, Clowney leaves open the possibility for interpreters to bring subsequent canonical material to bear on a passage not merely to amplify the passages meaning, but to shape and establish it.

Single meaning is the central component of Kaiser's hermeneutic. Yet, to tease out the contrast between Kaiser and Clowney, one must consider more fully the location of meaning in a passage. Kaiser writes, "Under the strong impetus of the

¹⁰⁸Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 87.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 88.

Reformation there was a renewed emphasis that there is only *one sense* or meaning to be gleaned from every passage if the interpreter is true to his mission.”¹¹⁰ Therefore, according to Kaiser it follows that, “The sole object of the expositor is to explain as clearly as possible what the writer meant when he wrote the text under examination.”¹¹¹ Since each passage has only one meaning and determining that single meaning is necessary for a faithful hermeneutic, Kaiser instinctively resists any mode of interpretation that leaves open the possibility of a secondary or alternative meaning.

In making this point, Kaiser raises a host of rhetorical questions:

So, did the text evidence a deeper meaning that God had somehow hidden in the text until later generations suddenly discovered the dual-author theory of Scripture? Did the New Testament writers, as a matter of fact, exhibit a revelational stance in their alleged expansive use of Old Testament citations that showed that more was in the text than had met the eye in Old Testament times? Or did the apostles have a privileged revelatory stance, which allowed them to expand what could not be seen in the text, while under no circumstances are we to imitate their practices since ordinarily we are not recipients of revelation such as is found in Scripture? That is to say, could the apostles get so-called ‘deeper meanings out of the Old Testament texts they cited, but are we not to follow their practice since they were given special ability to do this virtue of their gift of revelation?’¹¹²

To this sequence of questions, Kaiser answers,

One option is to trust one’s own instinct and to say that the deeper meaning one wishes to attribute to the text is the correct one, for he or she is a fellow believer who can sense the meanings that may not be immediately validated by investigation of the grammar or history before us in the text.¹¹³

According to Kaiser, others suggest,

If the apostles could find such rich meanings in the Old Testament that would not have been advocated there by older methods of interpretation, then perhaps in the new

¹¹⁰Walter C Kaiser, Jr., *Toward and Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 45.

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Walter C Kaiser, Jr., *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 196.

¹¹³Ibid.

age of the Spirit, this pastor could likewise apply a little ‘hermeneutical stretcher’ to similar texts.¹¹⁴

Furthermore, Kaiser poses the rhetorical question, “Cannot God, the real author of Scripture, include a second meaning, which is unknown to the human author of Scripture?”¹¹⁵ Kaiser suggests,

I contend that it is an inaccurate representation of the facts. God did not use the language of the angels or the like but spoke to mortals in the language of the Greek marketplace and the tongue of the pagan Canaanites. Why? For one reason and one reason alone: In order to be understood.¹¹⁶

At this point, Clowney differs from Greidanus as well. Though Greidanus and Clowney share much in common in their respective redemptive-historical approaches, Clowney critiques Greidanus for loitering too much in the immediate context of the passage. According to Clowney, Greidanus’ seven ways of preaching Christ from the Old Testament are helpful, but in applying his methodology, one might miss an imbedded reference to Christ in the passage. Clowney writes,

While Greidanus might have drawn his separate ‘ways’ to advantage, he opens the doors to textual interpretation that focuses on the meaning of the text to Israel, the original hearers. Even this commitment to original meaning cannot be made supreme in application to the Word of God. The prophetic richness of Old Testament Christology goes beyond any grounding in the address to Israel.¹¹⁷

Clowney’s critique of Greidanus also clarifies Clowney’s understanding of meaning. He clearly argues for an opening of the assignment of a text’s meaning. The interpreter may locate meaning beyond the original audience and human author’s intent. Clowney is comfortable with a broadening of the meaning because of the divine authorship of Scripture. Clowney writes, “In tracing the progress of revelation, biblical theology rests

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 197.

¹¹⁷Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of the Scripture*, 44.

upon the unity of the primary authorship of Scripture and the organic continuity of God's work in redemption and revelation."¹¹⁸

Considering Context

Second, Clowney's emphasis on the broader context of Scripture reveals dissonance between him and Kaiser. The difference is subtle but profound, and the difference will lead one to different understandings of a passage's meaning. Clowney argues,

Preaching Christ from the Old Testament means that we preach, not synagogue sermons, but sermons that take account of the full drama of redemption, and its realization in Christ. To see the text in relation to Christ is to see it in its larger context, the context of God's purpose in revelation."¹¹⁹

Finding the fuller theme of Scripture requires the interpreter to bring the entire Bible, regardless of chronological order, to bear on every other passage.

Clowney's Christ-centered biblical theology informs his insistence on bringing the entirety of the canon to bear on every passage of Scripture. Since Jesus is the grand theme of Scripture, one should not settle for only preaching Christ in passages traditionally classified as prophetic. Rather, in a very real way, all of Scripture is prophetic, pointing to Jesus. All of Scripture contextually informs every other passage of Scripture of Christ, and one should therefore preach Christ from every passage of Scripture. Clowney goes on to write,

The focus on Christ in the Old Testament does not spring simply from the fact that Old Testament revelation is given in the framework of a history that does actually lead to Christ. Or, more pointedly, the history that leads to Christ is not a random succession of events. Neither is it simply history under God's providential control, serving His sovereign purpose. It is rather the history of God's own intervention in

¹¹⁸Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 87.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, 11.

history, the history of His great work of salvation as he prepares for His own coming in the person of His Son.¹²⁰

This signifies a departure from Kaiser's regulated use of biblical context. While Kaiser insists on the interpreter bringing the broader canonical context to bear, he suggests strict regulations as to how one should carry this out. Specifically, Kaiser's notion of antecedent revelation precludes allowing subsequent revelation to inform the meaning of a previous text.

Kaiser insists many evangelicals usage of the analogy of faith fosters elasticity of meaning, which he finds problematic. Kaiser writes, "Our problem here is whether the analogy of faith is a hermeneutical tool that is an 'open theological sesame' for every passage of Scripture."¹²¹ Kaiser's concern is so pressing that he argues,

The only correction that we know for past and present abuses that have taken place in the name of doing theological exegesis is to carefully restrict the process to (1) examination of explicit affirmations found in the text being exegeted and (2) comparisons with similar (sometimes rudimentary) affirmations found in passages that have preceded in time the passage under study. Thus the hermeneutical or exegetical use of the analogy of faith (if we may still use this terminology in exegesis as well as in systematic theology, where it might seem to be more appropriate) must be carefully controlled diachronically (i.e., we must ever be aware of the various time periods in the sequence of the progress of revelation).¹²²

Most especially, Kaiser is concerned with inadvertently developing a "flat Bible." He notes, "The Bible was meant to be read forward, not backward. To read it backward is to end up with a flat Bible, one in which any mention of a topic calls for the total teaching in all Scripture to be used to interpret that way."¹²³ The problem with a flat Bible is it minimizes, or even eclipses, the indigenous meaning of individual passages.

¹²⁰Clowney, "Preaching Christ from the Scriptures," 173.

¹²¹Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 45.

¹²²*Ibid.*, 137.

¹²³Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament*, 51.

Kaiser finds this exegesis ruinous, needlessly limiting of the multifaceted nature of God's revelation and contrary to established hermeneutical rules.

Though pejorative in sound, the accusation of a flat Bible would not necessarily alarm Clowney. Kaiser's flat Bible might well be Clowney's singularly focused Bible. Of course, Clowney understands the singular focus to be the redemptive work of Christ.

Typology

Clowney differs from Kaiser in his process of finding and verifying a typological reference. Kaiser necessitates a New Testament confirmation of an Old Testament type. While he acknowledges there may well be more types than the New Testament writers cite, he warns of being too ambitious in finding types.

Kaiser writes,

There are real types in the Bible, but all true biblical types have clear designations shown in the same contexts with the alleged type from the Old Testament. Consequently, a person, an institution, an act, or an event that can claim by divine designation in the Old Testament that it is a partial picture of a greater reality to come can be recognized by all true interpreters as a type.¹²⁴

Kaiser adds,

The problem with typology is that many take it far beyond what we have biblical authorization to do. Of course, there are more types in the Bible than what the New Testament claims as types, but that is a long way from making most things in the Old Testament a type, especially by reading the Old Testament through the lens of the New Testament.¹²⁵

Clowney finds Kaiser's restricted understanding of typology as needlessly limiting, and he expresses frustration with those who necessitate such New Testament confirmation. In reference to the necessity of a New Testament confirmation of a type,

¹²⁴Ibid., 44-45.

¹²⁵Ibid., 45.

Clowney sardonically replies, “We would dare not find Christ in passages where the New Testament does not expressly find Him, and we have difficulty with some of the passages where it does.”¹²⁶

Clowney acknowledges, “It is true the New Testament does not often speak of the way it interprets the Old, and we are often left to draw our own conclusions. But the grand structure is clear.”¹²⁷ However, Clowney argues this pattern is indeed clear enough and Christ is ubiquitous enough in the Old Testament that the interpreter can rightly cite types without an explicit New Testament referent.

Most especially, though, Clowney regrets a limited use of typology not because of the hermeneutical error, but because it deprives the church of pastoral encounters with Christ. This studied indifference to unconfirmed types stymies spiritual growth by needlessly placing blinders on the eyes of faith. In referencing those who desire a New Testament confirmation of a type, Clowney writes,

It is not what those who take these approaches see that is at fault. It is what they miss. The Bible is full of golden texts of inspiration, maxims of morality, outlines of sound doctrine. Yet, the Word of the Lord is not structured by any of these motifs. What does determine the form of the Bible is its nature as the *Word of the Lord*. The testimony of Jesus explains both the structure of Scripture and its content.¹²⁸

Clowney turns conventional hermeneutical wisdom on its head at this point. The author-centered hermeneutical model, as established by Kaiser, would find sound hermeneutics as a safeguard against over reading typology. As opposed to straining accurate interpretation, Clowney argues the interpreter rightly practices hermeneutics only

¹²⁶Clowney, “Preaching Christ from the Scriptures,” 166.

¹²⁷Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of the Scripture*, 20.

¹²⁸Clowney, “Preaching Christ,” 5.

when considering biblical symbols. Clowney argues, “Biblical hermeneutics . . . must take account of the text of Scripture, including the symbolism found in it.”¹²⁹

Further making this point, Clowney elaborates,

Only the lack of hermeneutical method can shut us up to recognizing types only where the New Testament itself explicitly recognizes them. Such caution is then admirable. But a better grasp of biblical theology will open for us great riches of revelation. We need not lack the sound method to find these and bring them to the people of God.¹³⁰

In that Clowney erects his Christ-centered homiletic on the prevalence of Old Testament types, the marked difference between him and Kaiser at this point is most consequential. Moreover, Clowney’s less restrained rendering of types is dependent upon a dual authorship and it often culminates in ascribing dual meaning to a passage.

Conclusion

Edmund Clowney is a luminary in the redemptive-historical preaching movement. Clowney interweaves his redemptive-historical preaching with his Christ-centered biblical theology. The impulses of Clowney’s Christ-centered biblical theology prompt him to bring the totality of revelation to bear on the Old Testament in order to determine the passage’s meaning. Furthermore, since Clowney is convinced of the ubiquity of Christ in the Old Testament, he aggressively pursues typology and symbolism. Clowney’s presuppositions place him at a different exegetical starting place than Kaiser and the appropriation of his presuppositions often leads Clowney to different exegetical conclusions than Kaiser’s.

In summary, therefore, we conclude this chapter by enumerating the defining marks of Clowney’s Christ-centered hermeneutic and the substantial areas that he departs

¹²⁹Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of the Scripture*, 21.

¹³⁰Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 112.

from Kaiser. First, Clowney understands the meta-narrative of Scripture to be the redemptive work of Christ. Before the incarnation of Jesus, Scripture points to his arrival. After the resurrection of Jesus, Scripture builds upon his work. Seeing the person and work of Christ as the key event in history differs Clowney from Kaiser, who finds the grand meta-narrative to be in the promise-plan of God.

Second, Clowney maintains a dual authorship view of Scripture and therefore has an eye to God's broader revelation to determine the meaning of a passage. Kaiser understands that God expressed his intent through the human author, thus the interpreter should locate his energies on finding the author's intent. Simply put, Kaiser maintains that God meant what he said when he gave his revelation to the human author and one need not look for deeper or subsequent meanings.

Third, Clowney argues the interpreter may locate types with certainty by looking for them as the New Testament authors did. Clowney liberates the interpreter to pursue an apostolic hermeneutic, whereas Kaiser argues certainty in finding a type can only come with New Testament confirmation.

CHAPTER 4

SIDNEY GREIDANUS' METHODOLOGY OF PREACHING CHRIST FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

Introduction

Sidney Greidanus' intrigue with preaching Christ from the Old Testament began humbly, with the gentle chastisement of a retired preacher who had heard him preach Ecclesiastes. Greidanus recounts, "The gentleman said, 'I appreciate your sermon, Sid, but I wonder, could a Rabbi have preached your sermon in a synagogue?'"¹ This probing question stirred within Greidanus a restlessness of mind which led him on an exegetical quest that ultimately culminated in the publication of Greidanus' celebrated book "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament."²

Over the past two decades, Greidanus may have single-handedly done more to advance redemptive-historical preaching than any other author on the subject. Through his *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament, The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, and other associated books, articles, and sermons, Greidanus has set forth a comprehensive theory and methodology of preaching Christ from the Old Testament, all firmly rooted in the redemptive-historical tradition.

¹Sidney Greidanus, "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 161 (2004): 3.

²Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

Greidanus, Expository Preaching, and the Redemptive-Historical Method

Since classic exposition tends to focus on the human author's intended meaning in the specific, localized text, and the classic redemptive-historical method is more concerned with the bigger, trans-biblical theme of Christ's redemptive work, these two approaches to preaching often result in sermons that are different in substance and presentation. Though Greidanus pursues a redemptive-historical approach to preaching, he does not find it to be incompatible with the expository method. Greidanus channels his redemptive-historical commitments into the framework of expository preaching. What is nuanced to Greidanus and differentiates him from the two poles of redemptive-historical preaching and classic exposition is his emphasis not only on the passage under consideration, but also on the way that passage is informed by the broader brushstrokes of his Christ-centered biblical theology.

Greidanus' Theological Presuppositions for Preaching Christ

Before exploring Greidanus' methodology for preaching Christ from the Old Testament, understanding Greidanus' driving presuppositions and theological precommitments that frame his approach to Christological preaching proves helpful. First, Greidanus argues that the Bible insists upon the preaching of Christ from the Old Testament.³ Jesus said to the Jews that any study of the Scriptures would reveal they testified of him and the entirety of the Old Testament unveiled, if in incremental form, Jesus. Thus, Greidanus argues, "If all three parts of the Old Testament—law, prophets,

³Greidanus, "The Necessity of Preaching Christ Also from Old Testament Texts," 195.

and writings—testify to Christ, then we fail to do full justice to the Old Testament unless we bring out its witness to Christ in our sermons.”⁴

Second, Greidanus argues that one should preach Christ because of the mandate to make disciples, and, according to Greidanus, it follows that, “we cannot make disciples of Jesus without telling people about Him.”⁵ On the surface, this appears to be a pragmatic argument, yet Greidanus suggests the preaching that makes disciples is the ultimate application of his Christ-centered biblical theology, because the triumph of the gospel of Christ is the fulfillment of the Bible’s grand story. Therefore, one must preach Christ because of the gospel implications of ministry. Evangelicals believe that salvation comes only through the name of Jesus; thus evangelical preachers must make that name known at every opportunity.

Third, Greidanus shapes his approach to preaching Christ from the Old Testament by his belief in the coming of Christ as the signal event of human and redemptive history. Therefore, one cannot marginalize such a monumental event.

Greidanus writes,

An earlier act of the redemptive drama must necessarily be understood and preached in the light of the climax. . . . In preaching God’s acts of redemption in the Old Testament, we cannot ignore this summit of redemptive history: God has fulfilled his promises; his salvation has become a reality; the kingdom of God has broken into this world in a wonderful new way; the King has come!⁶

Fourth, Greidanus argues that the decadence of the culture and the pervasive societal rejection of the gospel add urgency to the need to preach Christ from the Old

⁴Ibid.

⁵Greidanus, “Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,” 4.

⁶Greidanus, “The Necessity of Preaching Christ,” 196.

Testament. Greidanus bemoans a dearth of gospel knowledge, even in the church. He notes,

In the past, in our Christian culture, preachers could perhaps assume that many or most of their hearers would instinctively make connections between the message of the sermon and Jesus Christ. But one cannot make such assumptions in a post-Christian culture.⁷

Greidanus' Theory of Preaching Christ from the Old Testament

Crafting a definition of preaching Christ from the Old Testament is difficult.

Greidanus laments this dilemma: "Preaching Christ means different things to different people. Although the meaning seems simple on the surface, it is complicated by several factors, not the least of which is that Christ is both eternal God and incarnate."⁸

Greidanus regrets that the phrase "to preach Christ" comes with such elasticity of use that it can mean almost anything, and thus it actually means almost nothing in the parlance of twenty-first century preaching.⁹

Greidanus helpfully delineates what he means by "preaching Christ," and, in so doing, sets forth a sequence of affirmations and denials, which in turn also expose much of what passes for "preaching Christ" in the contemporary pulpit as shallow and Christologically vapid.

First, Greidanus argues that preaching Christ is more specific than merely preaching God. This stipulation seems to be self-evident, but Greidanus notes that in an attempt not to force Christ on Old Testament passages, some have settled for simply preaching God-centered sermons from the Old Testament. Indeed, Christ is God, but

⁷Greidanus, "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament," 4.

⁸Greidanus, "The Necessity of Preaching Christ," 190.

⁹Ibid.

Greidanus argues that to leave it at that albeit rich, but generic level, is to miss the point that the Word became flesh.¹⁰ Greidanus elaborates,

Preaching Christ is not, of course, merely mentioning the name of Jesus or Christ in the sermon. It is not identifying Christ with Yahweh in the Old Testament, or the Angel of Yahweh, or the Commander of the Lord's army, or the Wisdom of God. It is not simply pointing to Christ from a distance or 'drawing lines to Christ' by way of typology.¹¹

Second, Greidanus argues that preaching Christ is broader than merely proclaiming, "Christ crucified." On balance, Greidanus argues,

If understanding preaching Christ as preaching God is too broad, others have made their definition of 'preaching Christ' too narrow. They say it means preaching Christ crucified. But the requirement of preaching the cross of Christ from every text in the Old Testament is a hermeneutical straightjacket that is bound to lead to twisting the Scriptures.¹²

Greidanus notes that such a "straightjacket" often leads to allegorical impositions on the text, invariably placing the interpreter in the role of superimposing New Testament understandings incongruously on Old Testament passages.

Third, Greidanus argues that preaching Christ is more than merely preaching the person and work of Jesus. Of course, the person and work of Christ comes with preaching Jesus, but it must not be mistaken as the totality of preaching Christ. While Greidanus finds this common understanding of preaching Christ to be a helpful expansion of the understanding of preaching Christ, he perceives it to be too limited as well.¹³

Greidanus argues that preaching Christ is a holistic approach to expounding the text in such a way that the person, work, and teaching of Christ are brought to bear on the

¹⁰Greidanus, "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament," 5.

¹¹Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 8.

¹²Greidanus, "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament," 5.

¹³Ibid.

hearer. Greidanus writes,

When we think of preaching Christ, therefore, we must think not only of preaching Jesus' crucifixion but also His resurrection, His ascension, His present rule at the right hand of the Father, and His coming again to establish God's kingdom in perfection.¹⁴

Such sermons authentically integrate the message of the text with the climax of God's revelation in the person, work, and teaching of Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament. This authentic integration takes place by "proclaiming some facet of the person, work, or teaching of Jesus of Nazareth so that people may believe him, trust him, love him, and obey him."¹⁵ According to Greidanus the task of crafting a sermon is not complete until this connection has been made.

In other words, a generic preaching of "God" by the Christian preacher should no more pass for the preaching of Christ than should a generic illumined light pass for the blazing glory of the sun at high noon. Generic "God preaching" does little to answer the question that Greidanus believes to be plaguing modern exegetes: "How can we preach Jesus of Nazareth from a book that predates him by centuries?"¹⁶

The Methodology of Redemptive-Historical Christocentric Interpretation

Though Greidanus has in many ways framed and popularized redemptive-historical preaching, such preaching traces its modern roots back more than one hundred years. Its modern rise as an interpretive and homiletical emphasis is tethered to the rise of biblical theology, as espoused by Geerhardus Vos. In fact, one of the central strengths

¹⁴Ibid., 6.

¹⁵Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 10.

¹⁶Greidanus, "The Necessity of Preaching Christ," 191.

of the redemptive-historical method is the wedded nature of a Christ-centered biblical theology, hermeneutics, and preaching.

Geerhardus Vos was the seminal thinker of redemptive-historical interpretation. Vos served as the first professor of biblical theology at Princeton Theological Seminary from 1894 to 1932. Though Vos did not understand his work to be in conflict with systematic theology, he became the first evangelical proponent of what would come to be known as biblical theology. At first, Vos' innovation was simply the intent to organize theology in a historical and canonical framework as opposed to systematic theology, which organized material in topical or thematic ways.¹⁷ Vos, in turn, "transplanted through his writings and former students this method to the newly formed Westminster Theological Seminary in 1929."¹⁸ Edmund Clowney, later president of Westminster Seminary and professor of practical theology, further disseminated the redemptive-historical approach through his lectures, writings, and sermons.¹⁹

Because the preacher's task is to proclaim the full meaning of the passage preached, it follows naturally that hermeneutics and homiletics be conjoined. Johnson adds,

Redemptive-historical preaching ties homiletics closely to hermeneutic considerations. It emphasizes the organic unity of the history of redemption—the enactment of God's plan for the rescue, reconciliation, and recreation of his people, climaxing in the person, obedience, sacrifice, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus Christ, and reaching consummation at his return in glory.²⁰

Greidanus selects "redemptive-historical Christocentric interpretation" as his

¹⁷Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 184.

¹⁸Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim* (Philadelphia: P&R, 2007) 47.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰*Ibid.*, 48.

terminology of choice because he finds his approach fitting comfortably between Calvin's more theocentric model and Luther's more Christocentric approach. In fact, Greidanus presents his approach as something of a *via media* between the two aforementioned poles. "Redemptive-historical" refers to Greidanus' attempt to situate the text between its placement within the broader context of God's redemptive story and the specific way in which the passage applies to Christ or Christ applies to the passage. Greidanus labors not to imply neglect of the traditional historical-cultural context. Rather, he argues that a preacher's first responsibility is to seek to understand the message in its own historical-cultural context, including examining the passage in light of its literary, historical, and theocentric meaning.²¹

According to Greidanus, the key exegetical segue is the transition from theocentric interpretation to Christocentric interpretation. This transition is led by altering how one approaches the text. Greidanus argues at this point one should shift from questions like "What does this passage reveal about God and his will?" to questions like "What does this passage mean about the light of Jesus Christ?" and "What does this passage reveal about Jesus Christ?"²²

Though Greidanus brings full theological freight into his treatment on preaching Christ from the Old Testament, his practical methodology of redemptive-historical Christocentric interpretation can be distilled into seven ways with which to mine the Old Testament passage: redemptive-historical progression, promise-fulfillment, typology, analogy, longitudinal themes, New Testament reference, and contrast. These

²¹Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 228.

²²*Ibid.*, 232.

seven methods serve as something of an exegetical dredge – pulling to the surface Christ wherever the interpreter may rightly find him in the passage.

The Way of Redemptive-Historical Progression

According to Greidanus, the way of redemptive-historical progression is the key ingredient in his seven-fold methodology. Methodologically, for Greidanus any mature attempt at Christocentric interpretation must begin with an eye to redemptive-historical progression. Defining redemptive-historical progression, Greidanus writes, “Redemptive-historical progression links Christ to Old Testament redemptive events which find their climax in him.”²³ Greidanus sees redemptive-historical progression as the spinal column of Christ-centered preaching and the natural fruit of a Christ-centered biblical theology. Indeed, he argues, “Redemptive history is the bedrock for preaching Christ from the Old Testament.”²⁴

Informing any attempt at redemptive-historical progression is one’s understanding of biblical theology. Here enters, in full freight, one’s theological presuppositions about the major framework of the Scripture and God’s overarching meta-narrative. Greidanus presents creation, redemption in the Old Testament, redemption through Jesus Christ, and the new creation as God’s four major movements in human history.²⁵ He notes this redemptive history is God’s history. Thus redemptive history is God-centered, unified, and a continuous narrative. Redemptive history then is God’s continuous plan to redeem his people, through the person of Christ, which spans Genesis to Revelation. Greidanus writes,

²³Ibid., 204.

²⁴Ibid., 235.

²⁵Ibid.

There is one composite and yet single story—from Genesis to Revelation. And this story is history. There is a process going on between these two terminal points. . . . Every particular moment is correlated to both terms and has thereby its proper and unique place within the whole. No moment therefore can be understood except in the whole context and perspective. Because redemptive history is a unified history, sound interpretation requires that every part of history be interpreted in the context of its beginning and end or goal.²⁶

The way of redemptive-historical progression is as much an attitude as a method, an outlook as much as a system. Fundamentally, in order to approach the Bible with the redemptive-historical schema, one must believe that the apex of the Bible is the person and work of Christ. Events preceding Christ in one way or another foreshadow or anticipate the coming Messiah. Events after the incarnation of Christ either amplify or are influenced through Jesus' coming. Greidanus notes,

A holistic interpretation of biblical texts demands further that the interpreter see the message of the text not only in its immediate historical-cultural context, but also in the broadest possible context, that is, Scripture's teaching regarding history as a whole.²⁷

Therefore, according to Greidanus, "Since Old Testament redemptive history steadily progresses to its center of God's climactic acts in Christ, Christian preachers need only locate their preaching-text in the sweep of redemptive history to sense its movement to Christ."²⁸

Greidanus cites the Old Testament story of David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 16 as a template to bring the redemptive-historical method to bear on a particular passage. Greidanus acknowledges that the redemptive-historical method is easiest to employ in the context of Old Testament narratives. Greidanus criticizes the age-old propensity to emphasize the courage of David in the lives of the parishioners who are facing their own

²⁶Ibid., 236.

²⁷Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 95.

²⁸Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 238.

Goliaths. Not only does such an approach do a disservice to the text, it also robs the congregants of the opportunity to see the flow of God’s redemptive work in the Old Testament and to bring to bear the implication of the gospel in the lives of the hearers. Greidanus notes, “Old Testament narratives can be understood at three levels: the bottom level is seeing the story as personal history, the middle level is viewing it as national history, and the top level is understanding it as redemptive history.”²⁹

Greidanus suggests applying this three-fold schema first at the personal level by underscoring the courage of David and his example of faith. Second, at the middle level, 1 Samuel 16 is a story of David, God’s anointed king, delivering Israel and securing her for the Promised Land. Finally, and most consequentially, Greidanus argues the story is about the top level—the leader of Israel defeating the forces of Satan.³⁰ Thus, according to Greidanus,

The battle between David and Goliath is more than a personal scrap; it is more than Israel’s king defeating a powerful enemy; it is a small chapter in the battle between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent—a battle which reaches its climax in Jesus’ victory over Satan, first with his death and resurrection, and finally at his Second Coming.³¹

The “way of redemptive-historical progression” is indeed the driver of Greidanus’ Old Testament hermeneutic. Since Greidanus is convinced Jesus is the apex of the Bible, spanning both testaments, he is committed to advancing and defending the way of redemptive-historical progression.

The Way of Promise-Fulfillment

The second avenue that Greidanus recommends for preaching Christ from the

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid., 239.

Old Testament is “the way of promise-fulfillment.” Promise-fulfillment plays off the biblical pattern of prophecy foretold and prophecy fulfilled. It relies on a careful rendering of the chronological flow of the Bible, as well as the embedded predictive and expected tensions that are relieved with forthcoming fulfillment and realization.

Greidanus notes that with the advance of Julius Wellhausen and the proliferation of source criticism in divinity schools and seminaries throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the promise-fulfillment approach waned. This setback was due to the distrust Wellhausen and his followers held of the chronological patterns and perceived dating assumptions of the various books and passages of the Old Testament.³² Since little credibility can be given to dates, Wellhausen argued, the power of the prophecy and fulfillment argument is rendered impotent because the entire structure of promise and fulfillment was called into question. Wellhausen and the school of source criticism notwithstanding, the promise-fulfillment approach has enjoyed a renaissance in recent decades, most especially among reformed-evangelical interpreters.³³

Greidanus suggests two aspects of promise-fulfillment methodology. First, “One must take into account that God usually fills up his promises progressively—in installments as it were.”³⁴ Secondly, Greidanus argues for something of a back-and-forth rendering of the promise-fulfillment relationship. Greidanus writes, “In interpreting the text, move from the promise of the Old Testament to the fulfillment in Christ and back again to the Old Testament text.”³⁵ Greidanus traces the argument of Willem

³²Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 242.

³³Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 453.

³⁴Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 242

³⁵*Ibid.*

VanGemeren at this point, noting the danger of moving too abruptly from promise to fulfillment, without seeing the incremental kingdom emphasis along the way. In other words, one should have an eye not only for how the promise was fulfilled, but also for how it is being fulfilled and how it might yet be fulfilled.³⁶

In *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, Greidanus demonstrates how to utilize the promise-fulfillment method. For example, in Greidanus' sermon on Genesis 23:1-20, which documents the burial of Sarah, he employs the promise-fulfillment method as it pertains to God's land promises to Abraham. In this passage, Greidanus notes, the Lord began to fulfill his land promise to Abraham, and when the Lord gave the entirety of the land of Canaan to Joshua, he further fulfilled his promise. Then again, the promise was witnessed through the birth of Christ in the land of Canaan. Yet, Jesus' "view of the Promised Land was much larger than Canaan. He taught his followers, 'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth' (Matt 5:5). This promise will be fulfilled when Jesus comes again."³⁷ Further in *Preaching Christ from Genesis* Greidanus points the reader to another promise-fulfillment scenario pertaining once again to the Promised Land. Here, in Genesis 48:1-50:26, Greidanus finds a promise-fulfillment picture in the burial of Joseph. God's specific assurance of a Promised Land began, of course, with his word to Abraham and then Isaac and Jacob. God first fulfilled this promise when he gave Abraham a burial site in the Promised Land, and then, sequentially, when the patriarchs died they too were buried in Canaan. The promise reached literal fulfillment when God gave Joshua the land. God further expanded the promise through the conquests and

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 218.

expansions of his people. Now, the promise-fulfillment method finds the culmination of the land promise in the vested hope believers in Christ have as they approach death. Greidanus argues, “Today God’s people still die and are buried in the earth. But they die with the hope that through Christ’s atoning work they will inherit the new creation. God’s ancient promise of land is still awaiting complete fulfillment.”³⁸

Promise-fulfillment as a methodology to preach Christ from the Old Testament is pregnant with interpretive opportunity. According to Greidanus, one must first master the meta-narrative of Scripture and hold to a Christ-centered biblical theology to rightly utilize it, but it can be a legitimate way to preach Christ. Yet, promise-fulfillment’s greatest strength can also be its surest liability. The elasticity to connect Old Testament passages to Christ and Christ to Old Testament passages can be theologically accurate and immensely rewarding to the hearers, but that same elasticity can also place the interpreter in danger of stretching the passage to find Christ.

The Way of Typology

Greidanus offers “the way of typology” as the third tool for preaching Christ from the Old Testament. He differentiates a type from a biblical promise-fulfillment, stating,

Promises are usually words spoken, types are historical events, persons and institutions. Further, where promises point forward to future fulfillment, typology generally moves in the opposite direction, from New Testament fulfillment to past type.³⁹

The distinctions Greidanus makes between promise-fulfillment and typology are both crucial for the integrity of interpretation and helpful in recognizing what might

³⁸Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 462.

³⁹Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 252.

be at play in the Old Testament passage. Finding promise-fulfillment is like reading a novel whereby that which existed in seed forms progressively comes to full bloom later in the book. On the other hand, finding a type is more like investigating a crime scene. Any and every piece of evidence may inform and amplify other pieces of evidence regardless of location or sequence of discovery.

One of the persistent questions pertaining to typology is whether typology is prophetic or simply found and rendered retrospectively. Greidanus argues not for one choice or the other, but rather an amalgam of both. He writes,

Some Old Testament types are predictive and others are not, but specific persons or events are later seen to have typological significance. For example, it is not likely that during David's reign Israel saw King David as a prediction of a greater king. King David only became a type centuries after he lived, when the prophets began to announce the coming of a new shepherd-king.⁴⁰

At the same time, Greidanus maintains there are also types that clearly are predictive for Israel in their original historical context. For example, circumstances and events such as Passover, the Sabbath, and blood sacrifices were consequential in their immediate context as symbols for the people of Israel, yet they maintain their ultimate fulfillment futuristically as pictures of the work of Christ.⁴¹

Greidanus acknowledges the foremost concern associated with typology is inadvertently reading Christ retrospectively back into Old Testament passages in a haphazard and baseless way. Yet, Greidanus argues, "One could counter that typological interpretation is not reading meaning back into the event described in the text but simply understanding this event in its full redemptive-historical context."⁴²

⁴⁰Ibid., 251.

⁴¹Ibid., 252.

⁴²Ibid.

After considering the longstanding challenges associated with typology, Greidanus argues that one should nonetheless employ this method. In considering the approaches some have employed to safeguard proper typology, Greidanus engages the notion of only citing a type when the New Testament explicitly identifies an Old Testament passage as such. While there is an interpretive comfort zone associated with such stringent rules for citing a type, Greidanus rejects this criterion as needlessly limiting the interpretive scope of the Old Testament. At this point, Greidanus sides with Edmund Clowney, who similarly argues,

Only the lack of hermeneutical method can shut us up to recognizing types only where the New Testament itself explicitly recognizes them. Such caution is then admirable. But a better grasp of biblical theology will open for us great riches of revelation. We need not lack the sound method to find these and bring them to the people of God.⁴³

If one rejects the New Testament referential criteria, then what governors might one employ to delineate between legitimate and illegitimate typological reference? Greidanus helpfully offers various characteristics, criteria, and examples of typology. First, he argues an authentic type is historical. This is to say, the type refers to a person, event, institution, or object from history. The insistence upon the historical reality of the object is a primary point of differentiation between typology and allegory.⁴⁴ Second, Greidanus suggests a type is genuinely theocentric, which means it has to do with God's acts in and through human persons and events. Third, the genuine type evidences a true and meaningful relationship with its antitype. While some subjectivity may exist in

⁴³Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 112.

⁴⁴Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 256.

finding this connection, Greidanus nonetheless insists this connection is vital. Fourth, escalation characterizes the relationship between the type and its antitype.⁴⁵

In addition to marking characteristics of true types, Greidanus also proffers rules for utilizing typology. First, Greidanus argues one should precede typological interpretation with literary, grammatical-historical interpretation. The interpreter must locate the specific, immediate meaning of a given passage before moving to any broader, symbolic assertions the passage and type might be setting forth. Greidanus writes,

We must know the author's message for Israel before we look for ways to focus the message on Jesus Christ and apply it to the church. To reverse the process is to court disaster, for literary historical interpretation is the indispensable foundation for sound typological interpretation.⁴⁶

Additionally, Greidanus argues one must look for the type in the central message of the text, not in the secondary or tertiary aspects. Greidanus states, "The rule is, don't wander off the typological trail into the morass of incidental parallels and farfetched analogies."⁴⁷

Again, Greidanus not only elucidates an interpretive methodology for types, but he also gives copious examples throughout his published materials. For instance, in Greidanus' sermon on Genesis 2:4-3:24 entitled "Paradise Lost," he draws the link between Adam and Christ. This is an easy type to find because of the New Testament connectivity of the two heads. Before getting to the New Testament, the type is first embedded in Genesis 3. Greidanus notes, "As Adam was tempted by Satan, so Jesus would be tempted by Satan. But whereas Adam disobeyed God and followed Satan, Jesus obeyed God and sent Satan away."⁴⁸ Greidanus goes on to seal the typological

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid., 257.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 69.

nature of Adam by citing Paul's great comparison of Adam and Christ, and even the apostle's specific use of the word "type" in reference to Adam in Romans 5:12-19.⁴⁹

Greidanus cites a second less clear, and therefore less certain, type in his sermon "The Call of Abram," based upon Genesis 11:27-12:9. Here Greidanus argues for a typological link between Abram and Jesus:

Abram's actions foreshadow more than Israel worshipping the Lord in Canaan. As seed of the woman reclaiming the land for the Lord, Abram foreshadows Jesus Christ, the Seed of the woman, who restores true worship of God and who sends out his disciples to make disciples of all nations, thus reclaiming the whole world for the Lord.⁵⁰

Since the connection to Abram is less clear and there is no clear New Testament reference, Greidanus relaxes the certitude of the type.

Finally, Greidanus' sermon "Jacob's Wrestling with God at Peniel," taken from Genesis 32:22-32, illustrates Greidanus' caution in utilizing typology. Greidanus suggests one might see a typological connection between Jacob and Jesus, as both were seed of the woman that wrestled with God. Jacob wrestled with God all night for a blessing and Jesus wrestled with the Father in the Garden. Yet according to Greidanus, "The typology breaks down because Jacob was a self-sufficient sinner and Jesus is the sinless Son of God. It is advisable, therefore, not to use typology in the sermon."⁵¹

Though a survey of Greidanus' sermons reveals both the caution and intentionality with which he locates typological renderings, it also demonstrates some of the inherent challenges in finding types and the internal inconsistencies in validating a reference as typological. Nagging questions remain. If the first type's divergence

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid., 148.

⁵¹Ibid., 324.

between Adam and Christ does not nullify it, why does the second type's breakdown between Jesus and Jacob nullify it? Furthermore, do not all types break down at some point?

The aforementioned questions notwithstanding, the way of typology is a strength of Greidanus' proposed homiletical method. Through offering regulating structures to finding and interpreting typology, Greidanus avoids the stereotypical, and the real, excesses often associated with typology. Nonetheless, as with beauty the validity and value of the type often is in the eye of the beholder.

The Way of Analogy

Greidanus' fourth proposed method for preaching Christ from the Old Testament is "the way of analogy." Greidanus argues that analogy is less controversial than both typology and promise-fulfillment and by its very nature is nuanced and qualified. Homiletically, analogies may be connected using "like" and "just as" phrases. Therefore, analogy does not inherently carry the freight, or subsequent burden of proof, as typology. Moreover, analogy does not bring with it claims of assured connection and predictive intentionality. Todd Murphy characterizes Greidanus' treatment of analogy as especially helpful, noting, "With this method, the preacher is not looking for anything specific or prophetic pointing to Christ, but merely observes the relational pattern of how God deals with his people in the Old Testament and its similarity to God's work in Christ."⁵²

Greidanus reasons,

Analogy is less controversial today than are typology and promise-fulfillment. The

⁵²Todd J. Murphy, "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44 (2001): 331.

reason may be that analogy does not claim to be, strictly speaking, exegesis or interpretation of a text but it is a popular method of applying the message of the Old Testament to the church today.⁵³

Greidanus maintains the power of the analogy rests in the continuity of redemptive history. Greidanus writes, “We need to stress that the unity of redemptive history adheres in Christ; the continuity between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church is accomplished only in Christ.”⁵⁴ Thus, it follows that “this pivotal position in Christ in redemptive history enables preachers to use analogy to direct the Old Testament message to the New Testament church.”⁵⁵ It follows, then, “This pivotal position of Christ in redemptive history enables preachers to use analogy for preaching Christ from the Old Testament.”⁵⁶

Greidanus suggests several different avenues to employ analogy. These avenues include perceiving analogies between God’s actions toward Israel and God’s actions, through Christ, toward the Church. One should also look for similarities between what God teaches the people of Israel and what God, through Christ, teaches his Church. Furthermore, one should search for parallels between God’s demands in the Old Testament and Christ’s demands in the New Testament. Though there will be differences in all of these analogous circumstances due to the specific contexts and concerns, Greidanus argues that one can nonetheless find and connect these occurrences.⁵⁷

Greidanus’ sermons on the book of Genesis provide helpful case studies to evaluate his appropriation of analogy. For example, in his sermon “The Call to Sacrifice

⁵³Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 262.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid., 263.

⁵⁷Ibid.

Isaac” taken from Genesis 22:1-19, Greidanus suggests analogy is a helpful way to preach Christ from the passage. Greidanus acknowledges that many see a type in Genesis 22, but he argues, “There is no agreement on whether it is Abraham, Isaac, or the ram.”⁵⁸ As opposed to bogging down in the exegetical mire of deciphering which figure might be a type of Christ in Genesis 22, Greidanus presents analogy as a more legitimate way to present Christ from this passage. Specifically, Greidanus suggests, “As God through this narrative assured Israel that their faithful covenant Lord can be trusted to provide for their redemption, so Jesus assures his followers that their faithful covenant Lord can be trusted to provide for their redemption.”⁵⁹ Greidanus stipulates,

This analogy would have to be supported by New Testament references such as Jesus’ teaching, ‘I give them (my sheep) eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand’ (John 10:28); or, ‘On this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it’ (Matt 16:18).⁶⁰

Yet one is left to wonder, why does there have to be a New Testament reference? Is that not the point of analogy? Why would an analogy, which claims less than typology, require more textual evidence to validate?

Another example of analogy is found in Greidanus’ sermon “Jacob’s Dream at Bethel,” derived from Genesis 18:10-22. Greidanus finds in this passage both typological significance and an opportunity for analogy. The theological theme of the narrative, which is the recounting of Jacob’s ladder, is “God is with us” according to Greidanus. Yet, as a passage given to reassuring the people of God that he will be with them forever, Greidanus says one can also see

as God promised Israel that he would be with them wherever they go, so Jesus

⁵⁸Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 202.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 203.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 204.

promises the church that he will be with them wherever they go. The New Testament supports this bridge to Christ with Jesus' promise to his church, 'I am with you always, to the end of the age' (Matt 28:20).⁶¹

Greidanus' development of analogy is indeed helpful. Analogy can bring out the very best in redemptive-historical preaching by functioning as a tool to connect Christ to the passage under consideration. Furthermore, using analogy as Greidanus suggests frees one from the burdens of proof and longstanding concerns associated with typology.

The Way of Longitudinal Themes

Greidanus' fifth method of preaching Christ from the Old Testament is "the way of longitudinal themes." A longitudinal theme is a particular incorporation of a Christ-centered biblical theology into the hermeneutical method. This insertion traces the meta-narrative of Scripture, giving due weight to their Christological emphasis and connections. This is to say, the interpretive strength of longitudinal themes is to subject every sub-passage to the broader currents and redemptive emphasis of the Bible as a whole. Those committed to redemptive-historical preaching find Christ rooted in these broader currents. Greidanus describes longitudinal themes:

Major Old Testament themes which function as highways leading to the person, work, and teaching of Christ are the kingdom of God (reign and realm), the providence of God, covenant, the presence of God, the love of God, the grace of God, justice redemption, law, sin and guilt offerings, God's concern for 'the poor,' mediator, the Day of the Lord, and so on.⁶²

In explaining the link between biblical theology, redemptive-historical preaching, and longitudinal themes, Greidanus writes,

The history of revelation is the history of God's kerygma, that is, God's relevant proclamation to his people at different stages of redemptive history. This proclamation is relevant for Israel at each stage because it has a redemptive focus,

⁶¹Ibid., 287.

⁶²Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 267.

that is, God's goal is to teach Israel about himself, his plan, and his will in order to save his people.⁶³

Greidanus then adds, "This kerygma is still relevant today, but because of progression in the histories of redemption and revelation, its themes need to be traced through the New Testament in order to establish the message for the church."⁶⁴ Moreover, Greidanus argues,

In the literary dimension, biblical theology's wholistic approach is demonstrated particularly by its concern for longitudinal themes that span not only individual books (the concern of redaction and rhetorical criticism) but several books and even both testaments.⁶⁵

Clearly, the way of longitudinal themes is the fruit of biblical theology. At this point, Greidanus borrows from Gerhard Hasel:

A biblical theology has the task of providing summary interpretations of the final form of the individual biblical documents or groups of writings and of presenting the longitudinal themes, motifs, and concepts that emerge from the biblical materials.⁶⁶

Greidanus likens longitudinal themes to biblical avenues that run through and connect the apparently disparate parts of God's Word. These themes run in a linear fashion throughout the Bible, intersecting and "connecting the dots" of theological emphasis.

In *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes*, Greidanus offers examples of the way of longitudinal themes. His sermon on Ecclesiastes 1:3, "What Do People Gain from All the Toil at which they Toil under the Sun?" demonstrates the way of longitudinal themes. Here Greidanus suggests tracing the theme of toil from the garden, to the fall, and then to a lifetime of toil that culminates in man's return to dust. This longitudinal theme

⁶³Ibid., 266.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 69.

⁶⁶Gerhard Hasel, *Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 93.

demonstrates a reoccurring pattern of vanity—life, toil, death, and then dust. The only reversal of this predictable pattern is found in Christ who proclaimed, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die” (John 11:25-26). Herein lies the methodology of longitudinal themes: the Old Testament problem finds its solution in Jesus Christ.⁶⁷

Another example of Greidanus’ recognition of longitudinal themes is his exposition of Ecclesiastes 4:6, “Better is a Handful with Quiet than Two Handfuls with Toil, and a Chasing after Wind.” Here, Greidanus acknowledges one can trace the theme of work throughout the Bible, but suggests it would be best to trace the notion of enjoying one’s work with quietness or contentment.⁶⁸ Greidanus argues this longitudinal runway began in the Garden of Eden where God rewarded meaningful work with eating and rest. The environment was perfect, yet due to their discontent and desire to be like God, Adam and Eve violated this Edenic covenant. However, in Genesis 13:10 God promised once again to bring his people into another “Garden of the Lord.” This paternalistic love of the Father reoccurs in places like Exodus 3:8 where God desires to bring his people into the land of Canaan, which flows with milk and honey. Most especially, this longitudinal theme runs through Psalm 23 where the sheep in the flock of God are promised contentment, protection, and restoration.⁶⁹ Ultimately this longitudinal theme of contentment comes to fruition in the New Testament where Jesus commands his followers, “Take care! Be on guard for all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions”

⁶⁷Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 38.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid., 86.

(Luke 12:15) and also through Paul, who exhorted his readers to “pursue contentment” (1 Tim 6:6), “quiet work” (Thess 3:12), and, through Christ, to “be content in every circumstance” (Phil 4:11).

While the way of longitudinal themes is helpful, it can also be difficult. This method cuts to the heart of a key hermeneutical conundrum: how can the larger themes of Scripture inform and shape the interpretation of smaller, specific passages of Scripture without first establishing the larger framework by interpreting and thematically connecting smaller, localized portions of Scripture? Indeed a hermeneutical spiral will ensue. Yet, one must also acknowledge the progression of biblical revelation. As the ultimate and final author of Scripture, the Holy Spirit presents his people not with a collection of 66 loosely affiliated books, but with one book, marked by continuity of theme and completion of revelation.⁷⁰

The Way of New Testament Reference

The sixth method Greidanus proposes for preaching Christ from the Old Testament is the way of New Testament reference. Greidanus derives this method from many occasions in which the New Testament authors quote or reference Old Testament texts. On the surface, this approach appears straightforward and may be practiced with relative ease. A closer look, however, reveals embedded challenges. Most especially, some scholars dispute the validity, or at least the normality, of apostolic interpretation as a model for the interpreter of Holy Scripture.⁷¹ First, one must remember that the apostles were not so much concerned about maintaining hermeneutical rules, especially those

⁷⁰Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991).

⁷¹Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 268.

practiced in the twenty-first century.⁷² On the contrary, the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles. Greidanus acknowledges these stipulations: “We must keep in mind that the New Testament authors do not intend to give us a definitive interpretation of Old Testament passages but use the Old Testament to support their own particular messages.”⁷³ This nuance is key, and it has dramatic implications for how one should utilize New Testament reference.

Since the New Testament authors are presenting new revelation from God, when they borrow from the Old Testament they are not necessarily referring to its Old Testament rendering. Thus, the New Testament nuance of the Old Testament passage may have no ramifications on interpreting the Old Testament passage. Greidanus writes,

We must remember, of course, that we cannot always follow a New Testament writer’s use of their Old Testament: when we preach on 1 Chronicles 3, we cannot use Matthew’s number fourteen (David), and when we preach on Sarah and Hagar (Gen 21:8-21), we cannot use Paul’s ‘allegory’ in Galatians 4.⁷⁴

Greidanus acknowledges that the interpreter may have already established a New Testament reference through promise-fulfillment, typology, analogy, or longitudinal themes. The New Testament reference then may serve as confirmation, or validation, of the prior “way.” If one of the previous “ways” has not been cited, then the New Testament reference may prove to be a “corrective” to a previous oversight.⁷⁵

An example of Greidanus’ use of New Testament reference is found in his sermon on the Cain and Abel narrative from Genesis 4. In making these New Testament references, Greidanus notes that Jesus spoke of “the blood of righteous Abel” (Matt 23:35;

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid., 269.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid.

Luke 11:51). The New Testament also references Abel in places like Hebrews 11:4, Jude 11, and 1 John 3:12-13. Yet, other than citing these passages, Greidanus does little to explain how these New Testament texts enable one to preach Christ from the Old Testament. Furthermore, the New Testament references cite Abel in contrast to Cain's unworthy sacrifice and act of murder or by commending Abel's faithful sacrifice. The point in both scenarios is to avoid Cain's choices and pursue a life that mirrors Abel. In this case, if one utilizes New Testament references, as Greidanus suggests, the result is a sermon steeped in moralism: reject a life like Cain and pursue a life like Abel. Of course, this is precisely what redemptive-historical preaching strives to eclipse, not facilitate.⁷⁶

Another example of Greidanus' usage of the way of New Testament reference is found in his sermon on the fall of Adam, taken from Genesis 3. This passage is key for several reasons, including its introduction of sin, the fall of Adam, typology, the foreshadowing of Christ in Adam, and the prophetic coming of Christ in verse 15. Greidanus notes the richness of the passage offers numerous ways to preach Christ. Greidanus demonstrates the way of New Testament reference by linking the devastating consequences of the fall of Adam with its reversal in Christ. Passages that make this connection include 1 Corinthians 15:25, 2 Corinthians 5:17, and 1 John 3:8.⁷⁷

One final example, taken from Greidanus' sermon on Genesis 1, further illustrates his utilization of New Testament reference. By simply employing a cross-referencing tool, Greidanus finds 23 New Testament quotations or allusions to Genesis 1.⁷⁸

⁷⁶Sidney Greidanus, "Preaching Christ from the Cain and Abel Narrative," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 161 (2004): 389.

⁷⁷Sidney Greidanus, "Preaching Christ from the Narrative of the Fall," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 161 (2004): 264.

⁷⁸Sidney Greidanus, "Preaching Christ from the Creation Narrative," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 161 (2004): 135.

Some of these passages are specific references to verses in Genesis 1. Greidanus suggests this scenario is less helpful for preaching Christ. What is most helpful, Greidanus argues, is when the New Testament author references the theme of the Old Testament passage. Therefore, the best place to find the theme is John 1, where John carries the theme of creation forward and locates it in Christ himself, the eternal Word.⁷⁹

In summary, New Testament reference, as Greidanus suggests, serves to find, validate, or amplify the previously referenced ways to preach Christ. Perhaps the real strength of New Testament references lies in prompting the interpreter to not miss the obvious. The way of New Testament reference also serves as a stop gap measure to make sure one does not either miss an obvious connection to Christ, on the one hand, or fail to see a more obscure reference to Christ on the other hand. Greidanus clarifies,

Because of the stature of the New Testament, I first placed the way of New Testament references at the top of this list of ways to preach Christ. Nevertheless, this can sometimes get us on the wrong track, for the New Testament writers did not always seek to interpret Old Testament passages but simply used them to illustrate the point they wished to make. It is best, therefore, to do our own work first with the above five ways and then investigate whether the New Testament supports any of these ways to Christ.⁸⁰

The Way of Contrast

Greidanus' final way of preaching Christ from the Old Testament is contrast. Comparatively speaking, Greidanus gives little attention to the "way of contrast" in relation to his other six avenues to preach Christ. Nonetheless, Greidanus suggests it may be useful in reconciling hortatory differences between the Old and New Testaments, especially when those differences are reconciled through the work of Christ.⁸¹ This

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Greidanus, "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament," 12.

⁸¹Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 272

reconciliation takes place when Christ has abrogated or replaced an Old Testament expectation with a New Testament, Christological revision of that instruction.⁸²

Greidanus finds Christ to be the hinge upon which the door of contrast turns, noting, “The way of contrast clearly centers in Christ, for he is primarily responsible for any change between the messages of the Old Testament and those of the New.”⁸³

Greidanus adds, “Under the way of contrast we can also include a road to Christ frequently traveled by Spurgeon—a road which begins with the problems encountered in the Old Testament and leads to the solution in Jesus Christ.”⁸⁴

Examples of the way of contrast include the Old Testament prescription for Jewish parents to circumcise their son on the eighth day (Gen 17:12-14). Yet, God clearly rescinds this expectation in the New Testament at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:28-29). Similarly, the Old Testament’s expectation that Israelites keep the Sabbath gives way to the New Testament’s presentation of the Lord’s Day. This contrast is also reconciled through Jesus (Exod 29:10, 1 Cor 16:2, Col 2:16).

Analysis and Assessment

After analyzing Greidanus’ theological framework and his seven ways of preaching Christ from the Old Testament, upon which he has built his homiletic, one can see a compelling case for redemptive-historical preaching. Greidanus imports the richness of a Christ-centered biblical theology with a methodology that is not only understandable, but also implementable. Yet, the question remains—how does Greidanus compare to an author-centered hermeneutic, as exhibited by Kaiser?

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid., 273.

⁸⁴Ibid.

First, at the broadest level Greidanus hedges his proposed hermeneutic to make it, at least on the surface, compatible with an author-centered approach. Greidanus even appears in harmony with a rigid author-centered hermeneutic as advocated by Kaiser.

For instance, Greidanus cautions,

It should be clear by now that our concern is not to preach Christ to the exclusion of the ‘whole counsel of God’ but rather to view the whole counsel of God, with all its teachings, laws, prophecies, and visions, in light of Jesus Christ. At the same time, it should be evident that we must not read the incarnate Christ back into the Old Testament text, which would be eisegesis, but that we should look for legitimate ways of preaching Christ from the Old Testament in the context of the New.⁸⁵

Greidanus goes so far as to acknowledge the propensity of practitioners of the redemptive-historical method to skew Old Testament:

Unfortunately, the legitimate demand for Christocentric preaching often results in questionable methods of interpretation in order to have the text speak of Christ. . . . That endeavor is not wrong, but its imposition as a methodological principle on every text is wrong, for it leads to forcing parallels between the text and Jesus.⁸⁶

Greidanus aims to establish the author’s intended meaning in its immediate context, then continue toward the broader canonical and redemptive-historical concerns.

Greidanus’ insistence on starting with the human author’s intended meaning differentiates him from others in the redemptive-historical tradition. For instance, Graeme Goldsworthy advocates an intrinsic gospel genre throughout the Bible that the interpreter should bring, a priori, to the interpretation of any particular passage. This commitment therefore becomes a gospel hermeneutic. Goldsworthy explains, “By referring to the gospel as the hermeneutical key I mean that proper interpretation of any part of the Bible requires us to relate it to the person and work of Jesus.”⁸⁷ This commitment to the gospel

⁸⁵Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 212.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 118.

⁸⁷Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 84.

as a hermeneutical key has led to Goldsworthy moving the interpretive starting point from the passage under consideration to the broader, gospel meta-narrative of Scripture.

Goldsworthy contends,

The ultimate interpretation of the meaning of everything is found only in Christ. This includes every text of the Bible. . . . For the student of the Bible, the gospel becomes the norm by which the whole Old Testament and all the exhortations and other non-gospel aspects of the New Testament are to be understood.⁸⁸

Though Greidanus and Goldsworthy often arrive at similar Christological conclusions about Old Testament passages, Greidanus' exegetical starting point places him nearer to Kaiser than Goldsworthy.

Again, Greidanus elaborates,

Understanding a text in the contexts of the biblical canon and of redemptive history is the foundation of my proposed Christocentric method. It involves two basic moves. We must first determine the text's message for Israel. This is of vital importance in order to do justice to the Scriptures. . . . Only after we have established the text's meaning for Israel can we then seek to understand this message in the context of the whole biblical canon and redemptive history.⁸⁹

Sounding most Kaiserian, Greidanus further notes,

The original, historical meaning is important for preachers because it offers the only objective point of control against deriving from the text all kinds of subjective and arbitrary messages. . . . In addition to offering an objective point of control for deriving the contemporary significance of the passage, the original meaning can also prevent a Christomonistic reduction of its meaning, for the original message of the Old Testament is clearly God-centered.⁹⁰

At this point, Kaiser commends Greidanus' prescribed approach to interpreting the Old Testament. Kaiser writes, "When Greidanus sets forth his general hermeneutical stance, he correctly assumes with G. Fee and D. Stuart that 'the only proper control for

⁸⁸Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Wisdom: Israel's Wisdom Literature in the Christian Life* (Exeter, England: Paternoster, 1987), 63.

⁸⁹Greidanus, "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament," 9.

⁹⁰Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 228.

hermeneutics is to be found in the original intent of the biblical text.”⁹¹ The stated similarities of Kaiser and Greidanus at this point are a crucial congruence. Though Greidanus is unequivocally committed to the redemptive-historical approach, this similarity aligns Greidanus with Kaiser in starting with the Old Testament passage’s context before moving to the broader canonical context.

However, a closer, more nuanced look at Greidanus’ preliminary interpretive steps reveals cleavage between him and Kaiser. The presenting question is, shall one start with the macro spiral and interpret downwards to the specific passage or should one start with the micro spiral and interpret outwards from the passage under consideration to the broader circles of contextual consideration? Moreover, this conundrum begs the question, how can one craft the meta-narrative of Scripture without first connecting the smaller, particularized dots?

While Greidanus’ words echo Kaiser’s insistence on giving interpretive deference to the immediate passage under consideration, one must remember that placing primacy of the localized context over the broader context of Scripture is not simply a matter of giving one’s first attention to the former over the latter. It is not enough merely to start with the particular passage and then work outward to broader contexts. One must demonstrate the primacy of the particular passage over the broader scriptural contexts by giving added weight and interpretive deference to the particular passage under consideration.

One might therefore note discrepancies between what Greidanus prescribes by way of methodology and what his method bears out when appropriated. At times,

⁹¹Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Recovering the Unity of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 216.

Greidanus sounds as though he is pursuing the author-centered hermeneutic of Kaiser; however when his method is brought to fruition, he arrives at altogether different exegetical conclusions. Most concerns with Greidanus are not so much what he does interpretively, but what door he leaves open. Rarely does one find liberty taken with, say, typology, but his rendering is elastic enough that one can see how others abuse the method.

A second point of assessment is Greidanus' seemingly contradictory exhortation to exhaust the meaning of the Old Testament passage, even though that passage finds its ultimate meaning and application in its fulfillment in Christ. If Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament, and its respective passages point to or are satisfied in Christ, then why loiter in the Old Testament text? Instead, should one not hurry to the Christological interpretation and implication of Old Testament passages? Mike Graves levies this very concern:

For example, he says that 'preachers can use analogy to make the point that as Israel learned about God's protecting presence from Jacob's experience at Bethel before his hazardous journey, so Christ promises to be with us on our dangerous journey through life (analogy combined with New Testament reference such as Jesus' promise in Matthew 28:20).' But why bother with the Old Testament text if the promise of Jesus in Matthew is the point?⁹²

Third, though Greidanus injects words of caution into his treatment of typology, he nonetheless breaks from Kaiser at this point. Sounding like Kaiser, Greidanus writes,

We must know the author's message for Israel before we look for ways to focus the message on Jesus Christ and apply it to the church. To reverse the process is to court disaster, for literary historical interpretation is the indispensable foundation for sound typological interpretation.⁹³

⁹²Mike Graves, "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method," *Review & Expositor* 97 (Winter 2000): 129.

⁹³Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 257.

Though this statement coincides with an author-centered hermeneutic, in light of Greidanus' over-arching Christ-centered biblical theology one must wonder why Greidanus expresses this concern so forcefully. Why does Greidanus speak with such concern if what is most ultimate and consequential to the passage is the manner in which the passage ultimately connects with Christ?

Typology concerns and cautions notwithstanding, even after Greidanus' best efforts, typology is often still a subjective pursuit. The validity of types, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. Here Kaiser asserts,

My argument is against eisegesis—reading material back into the text from the New Testament—but it is not an argument for truncating the revelation of God so that the light of the New Testament must never be brought to bear on any Old Testament passage. I contend only for the fact that the New Testament must not be used as an 'open sesame' for explaining what the Old Testament means in the first place.⁹⁴

Fourth, Greidanus' treatment of analogy can undergird an author-centered approach to interpretation. Unlike typology, analogy guarantees less, can produce more, and comes without the past baggage or potential excesses of typology. Of Greidanus' deploying of analogy, Murphy writes,

A particular impressive development is his discussion of analogy. With this method, the preacher is not looking for anything specific or prophetic pointing to Christ, but merely observes the relational pattern of how God deals with his people in the Old Testament and its similarity to God's work in Christ. Preachers and teachers will probably find this point very helpful and yet naturally respectful of historical context.⁹⁵

Yet others, such as Ramesh Richard, criticize Greidanus for being too elastic with the use of analogy, likening it to "a tool that is trotted out but never defined or defended."⁹⁶

⁹⁴Kaiser, *Recovering the Unity of the Bible*, 217.

⁹⁵Murphy, "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament," 330.

⁹⁶Ramesh P. Richard, "The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 146 (1989): 473.

Fifth, though Greidanus goes further than Kaiser, he refrains from the more extreme elements of the redemptive-historical movement which suggest not only that Christ must be preached from every passage, but that he also can be found in every passage. Kaiser assesses Greidanus at this point:

Greidanus is not absolutely clear, but it does seem that he is saying ‘every text’ must somehow be a witness to Christ. Thus, his seven methods could theoretically also be turned into a more sophisticated grab bag of homiletical tools to *make* every text ‘witness to Christ.’ This begins to show itself in his suggestion that one must preach wisdom literature ‘redemptive-historically’ in spite of the common consensus that Israel’s wisdom traditions are rooted rather in a theology of creation. Therefore, our problem is not with a Christocentric method, but the degree to which it is applied in various texts.⁹⁷

On the contrary, Kaiser argues,

Preaching Christ, especially from the Old Testament, does not mean that every verse in the Old Testament directly reveals the Messiah. Instead, it argues from a concept of the unity and cohesiveness of the whole Bible that the same overarching story begins, continues, and ends where it had always been intended in the plan of God.⁹⁸

Sixth, one of the most debated aspects of Greidanus’ model is the concept of *sensus plenior* or the “fuller sense” of Scripture. The employing of the *sensus plenior* as Greidanus uses it, causes major concern for Kaiser and elicits from Kaiser some of his sharpest criticisms of Greidanus. Kaiser seems to have a theological allergy to even a whiff of *sensus plenior*, at least as it is employed by Greidanus.⁹⁹

Greidanus uses the notion of the *sensus plenior* to argue that “a passage understood in the contexts of the whole Bible and redemptive history may reveal more meaning than its author intended originally.”¹⁰⁰ Commenting on this very Greidanus quote, Kaiser writes,

⁹⁷Murphy, “Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,” 331.

⁹⁸Kaiser, *Recovering the Unity of the Bible*, 219.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 217.

¹⁰⁰Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 233.

Everything in this quote was going well until Greidanus used the words ‘may reveal more meaning than its [human] author intended originally.’ Had Greidanus used ‘may reveal more significance than its [human] author intended originally,’ I would have no quarrel.¹⁰¹

The distinction between Kaiser and Greidanus at this point is not merely a matter of semantics. Kaiser elaborates on his concern:

The fuller sense, though admittedly not present in the text, can be established, Greidanus alarmingly assures us, as an extension of the original sense and solely on the basis of subsequent Biblical revelation. If this is not (by definition) reading a meaning ‘into’ a text, what is it? To also take the New Testament’s fullness and progression of revelation on topics treated in the Old Testament as ‘new understandings’ of the Old Testament again sounds like, looks like, and probably is eisegesis.¹⁰²

Seventh, Greidanus’ notion of an “apostolic hermeneutic” that can be applied by contemporary interpreters is also a departure from Kaiser. “Apostolic hermeneutic” refers to the attempt to interpret the Old Testament as the apostles did in writing the New Testament. Advocates of the “apostolic hermeneutic” are typically willing to go beyond even the apostles’ work in scope. They are willing to draw types of Christ and references to Christ from the Old Testament that do possess New Testament citations.

The difficulty in modeling one’s hermeneutic after the apostles’ hermeneutic is the obvious fact that the apostles were interpreting the Old Testament as they wrote the New Testament under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The twenty-first century exegete does not enjoy this luxury. Again, in direct reference to Greidanus, Kaiser offers criticism, writing, “The author [Greidanus] admits that modern preachers cannot always follow New Testament writers hermeneutically but Greidanus appears to be willing to do so when convenient.”¹⁰³

¹⁰¹Kaiser, *Recovering the Unity of the Bible*, 217.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, 218.

¹⁰³Graves, “Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,” 129.

Eighth, Greidanus and Kaiser differ over their application of “antecedent theology.” Antecedent theology is central to Kaiser’s method of preaching the Old Testament. Kaiser argues,

The Bible was meant to be read forward, not backward. To read it backward is to end up with a flat Bible, one in which any mention of a topic calls for the total teaching in all Scripture to be used to interpret any one of the contributions made to that topic along the way.¹⁰⁴

In contradistinction to Kaiser, Greidanus writes,

An earlier act of the redemptive drama must necessarily be understood and preached in the light of the climax. . . . In preaching God’s acts of redemption in the Old Testament, we cannot ignore this summit of redemptive history: God has fulfilled his promises; his salvation has become a reality; the kingdom of God has broken into this world in a wonderful new way; the King has come!¹⁰⁵

Kaiser does not deny the notion of progressive revelation. Rather, Kaiser insists on letting later revelation inform the former, but not vice versa. Kaiser writes,

From the work of biblical theology, we are taught that the Bible has an overall plan, purpose, and unifying story. . . . This means that the truth of God may be spoken in earlier texts in seed form, but that seed will continue to build as God’s revelation progresses to become a full plant in full bloom by the time it comes to full maturation.¹⁰⁶

Kaiser goes on to argue,

I must not prematurely infuse New Testament values and meanings back into the Old Testament in order to sanctify it before I independently establish, on purely Old Testament grounds, the legitimate meaning of the Old Testament text. . . . Then, having gotten the meaning God revealed at that point in time, let us see how our Lord developed that same word, if there is further development, on into the rest of the Bible.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament*, 51.

¹⁰⁵Greidanus, “The Necessity of Preaching,” 196.

¹⁰⁶Kaiser, *Recovering the Unity of the Bible*, 218.

¹⁰⁷Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Majesty of God in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 17.

Conclusion

Greidanus persuasively argues that the preacher can indeed preach Christ from the Old Testament and he skillfully offers a methodology to employ. Greidanus' methodology for preaching Christ from the Old Testament is, in the main, closer to Kaiser's author-centered hermeneutical pole than many in the redemptive-historical tradition, like Clowney and Goldsworthy. Greidanus positions himself on the conservative wing of practitioners of redemptive-historical preaching by broadly arguing and demonstrating that Christ should be preached in every sermon and from every passage, but he resists the impulse to argue that Christ may be exegetically found in every passage.

Greidanus forwards his methodology while maintaining broad continuity with Kaiser's author-centered approach. Though Greidanus attempts to safeguard an author-centered hermeneutic, he does at key levels stretch the boundaries beyond Kaiser's hermeneutic.

In summary, therefore, we conclude this chapter with the defining marks of Greidanus' Christ-centered methodology of preaching and how he differs from Kaiser's author-centered hermeneutic. First, Greidanus' initial interpretive step, like Kaiser, is to locate the meaning of the passage in its immediate context, but further along in the interpretive process he drifts from Kaiser by giving more interpretive weight to the larger canonical context than Kaiser affords it.

Second, Greidanus' willingness to assign a typological reference proleptically, and without New Testament confirmation, diverges from Kaiser's insistence on a chronological reading of revelation and the need for a type to be confirmed in the New Testament.

Third, Greidanus' seven-fold method affords him multiple ways to preach Christ from the Old Testament and it places him, similar to Kaiser, not arguing for Christ

to be present in every passage. Moreover, Greidanus' seven ways enable him to preach Christ from every Old Testament passage without necessarily finding Christ in every Old Testament passage.

Fourth, Greidanus' use of *sensus plenior* to render later or fuller meanings of a passage differentiates him from Kaiser, who is only willing to acknowledge later implications or significance.

Sixth, Greidanus' openness to an apostolic hermeneutic deviates from Kaiser, who insists the Bible is subject to the rules of interpretation like any other book.

Seventh, as it relates to progressive revelation, Greidanus believes later revelation informs and clarifies previous revelation whereas Kaiser insists only antecedent revelation should shape the meaning of a passage.

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY ASSESSMENTS AND HOMILETICAL
PRINCIPLES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

This dissertation has sought to prove the drifting of the redemptive-historical homiletic from an author-centered hermeneutic. Though redemptive-historical homileticians are not monolithic in their approach to the Old Testament, the movement exhibits a proclivity to loosen the tether of an author-centered hermeneutic. Redemptive-historical preaching's practitioners do not necessarily intend to minimize the human author's intent; rather they argue that God, the divine author, intended for his revelation to be interpreted with the main theme of redemption in mind. In any event, this divergence of interpretive loyalties between the author-centered hermeneutic and redemptive-historical preaching leads one in different exegetical directions. As Alister McGrath argues, "A theologian's hermeneutical presuppositions inevitably exercise considerable influence over his theological conclusions."¹

This dissertation has documented the cleavage between Kaiser's author-centered hermeneutic and redemptive-historical preaching. The divergence is uneven, however, with Clowney and Greidanus representing currents within redemptive-historical preaching. Chapter 2 presented Kaiser's hermeneutic and, after careful evaluations of

¹Alister McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1987), 152.

Clowney's and Greidanus' homiletic, chapters 3 and 4 documented their respective dissonance with Kaiser.

In light of this dissertation's findings, this final chapter will present, in summary form, the four most consequential areas in which redemptive-historical preaching tends to diverge from the author-centered hermeneutic. This chapter will revisit and accentuate the major areas of potential discrepancy between Kaiser's author-centered hermeneutic and redemptive-historical preaching.

After the brief summary assessment, the lion's share of this chapter will offer strategies for implementing the findings of this dissertation into one's homiletic. Though this dissertation has been descriptive in its approach, and its assessments have been value neutral, the section on implementation gleans from this dissertation's findings and suggests prescriptive measures for preaching Christ from the Old Testament.

Areas Redemptive-Historical Preaching Often Diverges from an Author-Centered Hermeneutic

Kaiser's author-centered hermeneutic is straightforward and has served this dissertation as a helpful point of reference to track Clowney, Greidanus, and their proposed methodologies of preaching. In that Clowney and Greidanus deploy their respective homiletics differently, their distance from Kaiser often varies from point to point between the two.

The Sequence and Weight of Contextual Consideration

The first area of dissonance between Kaiser and redemptive-historical preaching pertains to considering a passage's context and how its broader canonical setting informs its meaning. At first reading, Kaiser, Clowney, and Greidanus sound similar in their assertion to find the primary, localized meaning of a passage before moving on to the

broader canonical or theological interpretation of a passage. In fact, one can selectively appeal to quotes from each of the three authors, which align their wording almost verbatim. A closer look, however, reveals dissonance between the three.

For example, Kaiser insists that the first and primary exegetical step must be for the interpreter to weigh the passage in its original historical setting and ascertain its meaning accordingly. Kaiser argues, “The sole object of the expositor is to explain as clearly as possible what the writer meant when he wrote the text under examination.”² Kaiser adds, “We are concerned with the truth-intention of the author as expressed in the way he put together the individual words, phrases, and sentence in a literary piece of to form a meaning.”³

Similar to Kaiser, Greidanus argues, “We must first determine the text’s message for Israel. This is of vital importance in order to do justice to the Scriptures.”⁴ This quote bespeaks Greidanus’ intuitive deference to the text under consideration. Greidanus continues, “Only after we have established the text’s meaning for Israel can we then seek to understand the message in the context of the whole biblical canon and redemptive history.”⁵ To move hastily to the broader context may cause the interpreter to miss the meaning of the passage. Greidanus warns, “The original, historical meaning is

²Walter C. Kaiser, “Evangelical Hermeneutics: Restatement, Advance or Retreat from the Reformation?” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 46 (April 1982):168.

³Walter C. Kaiser and Moises Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 37.

⁴Sidney Greidanus, “Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 161 (204): 9.

⁵Ibid.

important for preachers because it offers the only subjective point of control against deriving from the text all kinds of subjective and arbitrary messages.”⁶

In words that are similar to both Kaiser and Greidanus, Clowney argues, “Our hermeneutical method, therefore, must always begin by finding the immediate theological horizon and then relating that to the broader biblical-theological perspectives.”⁷ Clowney maintains that only after studying the text in its original context should one move on to its broader canonical place.⁸

Even though these three authors all assert the primacy of the passage’s immediate context, the appropriation of their respective methodologies reveals dissonance. In other words, their theories of interpretation and their implementation of their respective theories diverge. If three travelers embark on a journey from the same point of origin but arrive at different destinations, then one must conclude they somewhere traveled different roads. So it may be with interpretation as well. Though Kaiser, Clowney, and Greidanus stated similar interpretive intent by giving priority to the passage in its original and immediate context, Clowney and Greidanus often arrive at different interpretive findings than Kaiser. One may rightly assume a deviation between their respective understandings of how to treat the passage in its context, or at least their appropriation of their theories.

Dual Authorship and Dual Meaning

In one sense, the distinction between the divine and human author is a false

⁶Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 228.

⁷Edmund Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002), 42.

⁸Ibid.

dichotomy. Clowney and Greidanus emphasize the dual authorship of Scripture. This is well enough, and has been seen; Kaiser has no quarrel with a dual authorship as long as it does not convey the idea of dual meaning.

Rather, the dissonance, and one of the most marked points of conflict, between the author-centered hermeneutic and redemptive-historical preaching relates to a dual authorship that leaves the door open to a passage having a dual meaning. For example, exhorting interpreters to first determine a passage's meaning by considering it in its immediate, localized setting, Kaiser writes, "To interpret we must in every case reproduce the sense the Scriptural writer intended for his own words."⁹ Furthermore, Kaiser argues,

Meaning is determined and fixed according to those assertions that the author wished to make, while applications are always multiple, indeterminate, and only valid to the degree that they preserve the integrity of the principle found within the fixed or determined meaning.¹⁰

Thus, the faithful interpreter, according to Kaiser, knows "only one verbal meaning is to be connected with any passage of Scripture unless the writer of the text gives literary and contextual clues that he has several aims in view for this exceptional passage."¹¹

Kaiser stands in clear contrast to Clowney at this point. Though Kaiser acknowledges subsequent revelation may clarify implications or further application of the passage, Clowney argues subsequent revelation may in fact shape the meaning of the prior text. Clowney writes, "As we approach the interpretation of the text, we must

⁹Walter C. Kaiser, "The Single Intent of Scripture," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Text*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 66.

¹⁰Walter Kaiser, "The Nature and Criteria of Theological Scholarship: An Evangelical Critique and Plan," *Theological Education* 32 (1995): 60.

¹¹Kaiser, "The Single Intent of Scripture," 66.

understand the text in the light of the ‘theological horizon.’”¹² Initially, this quote is not problematic, but the slide into subsequent meaning appears as Clowney elaborates on the integration of the passage with the broader theological horizon. Clowney argues,

The method of biblical-theological preaching involves simply the proper use of these principles (the integration of the theological horizon) in the explanation of the sermon text. Its perspective clarifies the meaning of the text, emphasizes its central message, and provides for sound application.¹³

Greidanus’ commitment to single meaning stands between Kaiser and Clowney at this point. Greidanus does not argue, as Clowney, that the passage may take on secondary meaning. Rather, he proposes that the passage may have contained more meaning all along than the original author was aware. Greidanus writes, “A passage understood in the contexts of the whole Bible and redemptive history may reveal more meaning than its author intended originally.”¹⁴ Yet, this does not go far enough for Clowney. He criticizes Greidanus for not being elastic enough with the text’s original meaning. Clowney writes,

While Greidanus might have drawn together his separate ‘ways’ to advantage, he opens the doors to textual interpretation that focuses on the meaning of the text to Israel, the original hearers. Even this commitment to original meaning cannot be made supreme in application to the Word of God. The prophetic richness of Old Testament Christology goes beyond any grounding in the address to Israel. There was much that even David the king did not understand in his own writings. The witness of the Scriptures to Christ is the reason they were written—and of him and through him and to him are all things (Rom 11:36).¹⁵

The redemptive-historical movement’s posture towards single meaning is variegated and yet to be fully ferreted out. For instance, does Clowney’s hermeneutic fall outside of

¹²Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 88.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 233.

¹⁵Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of the Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 44.

Article VII of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics, which states, “We affirm that the meaning expressed in each Biblical text is single, definite, and fixed”?¹⁶

Moreover, are redemptive-historical homileticians in danger of violating Article XVIII of the same statement, which reads,

We affirm that the Bible’s own interpretation of itself is always correct, never deviating from, but rather elucidating, the single meaning of the inspired text. The single meaning of a prophet’s words includes, but is not restricted to, the understanding of those words by the prophet and necessarily involves the intention God evidenced in the fulfillment of those words.¹⁷

What is certain at this point is, at the least, some redemptive-historical homileticians are willing to at least crack the door open to multiple meaning. This door is one Kaiser insists upon nailing shut.

The *Sensus Plenior* and the Analogy of Faith

As chapter 2 noted, Kaiser argues that some, including practitioners of redemptive-historical preaching, fundamentally misunderstand the *sensus plenior* and the analogy of faith. According to Kaiser, these shifts have severed these two interpretive tools from their reformation roots, and, when abused, lead the interpreter to faulty exegetical conclusions. Kaiser argues that the reformers employed both the *sensus plenior* and the analogy of faith, against the backdrop of the Roman Catholic magisterium, as guardians against external influences shaping the simple interpretation of Scripture.¹⁸ He argues, “The analogy of faith operates best in the hermeneutical process as a clarifying

¹⁶“International Council on Biblical Hermeneutics Statement,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25 (1982): 398.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 135.

role. Thus it is used at the conclusion of the process.”¹⁹ Kaiser further affirms the necessity of bringing the broader theological context to bear, writing,

Theological exegesis’ of a passage is most important if we are to transcend the chasm between the scientific dissecting of the text with its philological components, complete with parsings and grammatical notes. However, a premature use of the *analogia fidei*, ‘analogy of faith,’ is as destructive of true meaning as no interaction with the accumulated and antecedent theology that ‘informed’ that text.²⁰

Though Greidanus insists upon the integrity of authorial intent, he nonetheless moves quickly, and perhaps disproportionately, to the broader testimony of Scripture, as evidenced through the analogy of faith and the *sensus plenior*. Greidanus writes,

At this broader level, historical interpretation is redemptive-historical interpretation and asks not, What was the author’s intended meaning for the original hearers? but, how does the redemptive-historical context from creation to new creation inform the contemporary significance of this text.²¹

Greidanus adds,

As we move from the Old Testament to the New Testament, we notice progression in redemptive history as well as in revelation. But progression does not make the Old Testament non-Christian or pre-Christian. The point is that we ought not create a breach between the Old Testament and the New and then scurry about to find some kind of continuity in order to bring a Christian message. Instead, we ought to start with the continuity of a unified history of redemption which progresses from the old covenant to the new, and a single Scripture consisting of the two Testaments.²²

Clowney takes an even more progressive approach than both Greidanus and Kaiser, arguing for a more full-throttled implementation of the analogy of faith and the *sensus plenior*. Clowney argues for setting the text within the broader theological context to such a degree that the latter shapes the former’s meaning. In order to achieve this

¹⁹Walter C. Kaiser, “Hermeneutics and the Theological Task,” *Trinity Journal* 12 (1991): 13.

²⁰Kaiser, “The Single Intent of Scripture,” 66.

²¹Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 8.

²²*Ibid.*, 45.

Clowney maintains, “As we approach the interpretation of the text, we must understand the text in the light of the ‘theological horizon.’”²³ Then, the interpreter must “carry the principle of contextual interpretation to the total setting of the revelation of the period.”²⁴

Typology

Typology presents a final area of divergence between Kaiser, Clowney and Greidanus. Kaiser readily acknowledges the presence of types in the Old Testament and even acknowledges that there are more types than are clearly labeled as such in the New Testament.²⁵ However, Kaiser argues one must proceed cautiously by not “reading the Old Testament through the lens of the New.”²⁶

Greidanus, moving beyond Kaiser, offers typology as one of his seven ways of preaching Christ from the Old Testament. Greidanus argues that some types are prophetic, looking forward to Christ, while others may indeed be read retrospectively back into the Old Testament.²⁷ In response to a critic, such as Kaiser, that his methodology of types reads meaning back into the text, Greidanus writes, “Typological interpretation is not reading meaning back into the event described in the text but simply understanding this event in its full redemptive-historical context.”²⁸

For Clowney, typology is central to his method of preaching Christ from the

²³Ibid., 88.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Walter C. Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament: A Guide for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 51.

²⁶Ibid., 45.

²⁷Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 252.

²⁸Ibid.

Old Testament. He criticizes those, like Kaiser, who insist on a New Testament referent of confirmation for the type.²⁹ Similarly, but not as aggressively, Clowney criticizes Greidanus for being too timid in his employment of typology.³⁰

Clowney's use of typology is so central to his homiletical method that he developed a diagram, as displayed in chapter 3, to aid the interpreter in finding types. This grid is presented because, in the words of Clowney, "Only the lack of hermeneutical method can shut us up to recognizing types only where the New Testament itself explicitly recognizes them. . . . A better grasp of biblical theology will open for us great riches of revelation."³¹

Strategies of Implementation

This dissertation now shifts its focus from Clowney's and Greidanus' variance from an author-centered hermeneutic to the strategic implementation of derivative principles for Christ-centered Old Testament preaching. This chapter has summarized, in final form, Clowney and Greidanus' drift from Kaiser. Now we forward the assessment from the proclivity of redemptive-historical preaching to move beyond the author-centered hermeneutic and identify how one might employ the best of the redemptive-historical movement to preach Christ from the Old Testament, yet in a way which remains faithful to the author-centered hermeneutic. Specifically, this chapter concludes by offering nine principles for preaching Christ from the Old Testament.

²⁹Clowney, "Preaching Christ From the Scriptures," 166.

³⁰Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of the Scripture*, 44.

³¹Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 112.

Desire to Preach Christ

Perhaps the most helpful contribution from the redemptive-historical movement is a heightened awareness of Christology and a deepened appreciation of Christ-centered preaching from the Old Testament. A deepened emphasis on Christ-centered preaching is an encouraging development as a new generation of preachers is hearing the Pauline exhortation to “preach Christ and him crucified.”

The preacher who loves the gospel should be committed to preach Christ as often as possible and in every legitimate way from Scripture. This commitment must be more than a general, gospel-lite desire to tack Christ on to the end of a sermon. Rather, it means that the preacher must make Jesus, as God’s ultimate revelation, known to the recipients of the sermon. Jesus’ accusation of the Pharisees—that they searched the Scriptures, but were not aware that the Scriptures testify of him—is a cautionary word for every preacher. Similarly, Jesus’ revealing of his presence in the Old Testament to the disciples on the Emmaus road points us to the importance of finding Christ in the Scriptures.

The preacher should desire to preach Jesus not only because the Scriptures point to him, but also because only Christ can meet the needs of the contemporary hearer. Jesus is the true answer to the burdens lost humanity carries. Only the gospel can ameliorate depression, guilt, pain, hard-heartedness, and other sin induced maladies of the human heart. On the pastoral necessity of preaching Christ, John Stott notes the gospel is the only tool to reverse the effects and consequences of sin. He elaborates,

Jesus Christ, we believe, is the fulfillment of every truly human aspiration. To find him is to find ourselves. Therefore, above all else, we must preach Christ. Enthusiasm for Christ is the soul of preaching. . . . Uplift him, and he draws people to himself as he said he would (John 12:32). Was this not the major secret of power which attended the preaching of Whitefield and Wesley in the eighteenth century? In January 1739 in Bermonsdey, South London, George Whitefield found the church packed to capacity, while outside perhaps another thousand people could not get in. ‘I offered Jesus Christ freely to sinners,’ he wrote of his sermon in the church, ‘to all who would lay hold of him by faith.’ And even while he was preaching, he dreamed

of the possibility of going out into the churchyard, and of climbing on to a tombstone in order to preach Christ again.³²

One can hardly overstate the pastoral imperative to bring the gospel to bear on the congregation. While this burden does not license over-reading Christ into every Old Testament periscope or making unfounded connections to his redemptive work, it does underscore the pastoral implications of preaching Jesus.

Charles Spurgeon, who ministered among societies' dregs in Victorian England, insisted on preaching Jesus in every sermon. Like Stott, Spurgeon argued not only for doing so for hermeneutical reasons, but also pastoral reasons. In *Lectures to My Students*, Spurgeon recounted an address he gave to a group of young men training for ministry. He recounts his response to a query about the subject matter of preaching. Spurgeon answered,

Of all I would wish to say this is the sum; my brethren, preach Christ, always and ever more. He is the whole gospel. His person, offices, and work must be our one great, all-comprehending theme. The world needs still to be told of its Saviour, and of the way to reach him. . . . Salvation is a theme for which I would fain enlist every holy tongue. I am greedy after witnesses for the glorious gospel of the blessed God. O that Christ crucified were the universal burden of men of God.³³

In more recent years, Alistair Begg has argued for preaching Jesus from the breadth of Scripture for pastoral reasons as well as theological ones. Begg maintains the preacher must clearly proclaim the gospel by focusing on the person and work of Christ, or the message will prove ineffective to transform the congregation. Begg writes, "Gospel preaching fails if it does not set forth the glories of our once crucified and now

³²John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 152.

³³C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), 82.

risen and glorified Savior. Everything we proclaim about the gospel must be viewed in its relationship to Him.”³⁴

The key is to embrace the ethos of Spurgeon, Stott, and Begg without over applying it to the text. One can faithfully preach Christ from the Bible without attempting to find him within every text under consideration. To this end, there are at least three questions the interpreter should ask to foster balanced Christ-centeredness. First, does the passage under consideration directly reference Christ? Second, may one rightly preach Christ from the passage under consideration without violating the human author’s intent? Does the trajectory of one’s pulpit ministry clearly evidence Christ-centeredness?

Resist a Dual Authorship if It Implies a Dual Meaning

Throughout this dissertation, a recurring concern has been the notion of a dual authorship that permits more than one textual meaning. One must carefully handle the notions of dual authorship and single meaning. The preacher might well be committed to the dual authorship of Scripture as long as his rendering of dual authorship does not lead to multiple meaning.

In order to be faithful to the author-centered hermeneutic, the interpreter must reject any understanding of dual authorship that leads to multiple meanings of a passage. God divinely inspired his Word, and thus it carries his authority and his consistent canonical message from Genesis to Revelation. The Holy Spirit utilized the human author to express God’s intended message for his people.

An acceptable understanding of dual authorship simply means the human

³⁴Derek Prime and Alistair Begg, *On Being a Pastor* (Chicago: Moody, 2004), 140.

author communicated God's Word in such a way that his own personality, circumstances, writing style, and concerns are expressed in the recorded text, but at the same time, God the Holy Spirit, the ultimate author, superintended the human instrument in such a way that He accurately encoded God's intended Word. This understanding of dual authorship has implications not only for the immediate context, but also for the ultimate, broader revelation of God. The interpreter must consider every passage within the framework of broader circles of meaning and revelation. The immediate context and meaning of a passage must be determined with an eye to the broader flow and context of the whole Bible. At the same time, the interpreter knows that each individual passage informs the broader message of the Bible.

Use the Analogy of Faith and the *Sensus Plenior* to Illumine but Not Alter a Passage's Meaning

The interpreter must consider every text in light of the larger biblical context, and the preacher should preach every sermon against this larger biblical backdrop as well. Moreover, he should be mindful of the concepts of the *sensus plenior* and the analogy of faith.

As R. W. L. Moberly writes,

Reading the Old Testament within a canonical frame of reference seeks to shift the focus of interpretative interest from the questions characteristic of a historical-critical approach to questions about how the Old Testament can best be understood and appropriated within a Christian frame of reference.³⁵

Moreover, rightly employing these tools will allow the expositor to preach sermons that rightly integrate the overarching biblical narrative of redemption. After all, according to

³⁵R. W. L. Moberly, "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament," in *Reclaiming the Old Testament for Christian Preaching*, eds. Grenville J.R. Kent, Paul J. Kissling and Laurence A. Turner (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2010), 234.

Greidanus this is in essence what preaching Christ is. He writes. “Preaching Christ is preaching sermons which authentically integrate the message of the text within the climax of God’s revelation in the person, work, and/or teaching of Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament.”³⁶

Resist Using a Gospel Hermeneutic

One of the more assertive aspects of the redemptive-historical movement is the notion of a so-called gospel hermeneutic. Graeme Goldsworthy argues the Christian interpreter must approach the text with such a hermeneutic, writing,

The Bible makes a very radical idea inescapable: not only is the gospel the interpretive norm for the whole Bible, but there is an important sense in which Jesus Christ is the mediator of the meaning of everything that exists. In other words, *the gospel is the hermeneutical norm for the whole of reality*. . . . Hence the ultimate interpretation of the meaning of everything is found only in Christ. This includes every text of the Bible. . . . For the student of the Bible, the gospel becomes the norm by which the whole Old Testament and all the exhortations and other non-gospel aspects of the New Testament are to be understood.³⁷

Goldsworthy continues and clarifies his notion of a gospel hermeneutic, arguing: “By referring to the gospel as the hermeneutical key I mean that proper interpretation of any part of the Bible requires us to relate it to the person and work of Jesus.”³⁸

Goldsworthy’s logic is twofold. First, his Christ-centered biblical theology leads him to conclude that, since the entire Bible points to Jesus, each respective text should be interpreted within that light. Secondly, since the gospel message of Jesus

³⁶Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 10.

³⁷Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 63.

³⁸Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 84.

transforms all things, including the interpreter himself when the gospel converts him, one should approach the text with illumined gospel eyes.

Goldsworthy's approach diverges from an author-centered hermeneutic and even proves a little much for his co-laborer in the redemptive-historical movement, Sidney Greidanus. Referencing the gospel hermeneutic, Greidanus cautions, it "lies not in the lines drawn from the Old Testament to the New Testament but in the prior move in the opposite direction—the move from the fullness of the New Testament revelation to a new understanding of the Old Testament passage."³⁹ Greidanus notes Goldsworthy's gospel hermeneutic tends to superimpose a predetermined exegetical outcome before considering the Old Testament passage in its own setting.

In addition to jettisoning the notion of a determined, localized meaning in a passage, such a gospel hermeneutic makes the significance, if not the meaning, of every passage the gospel. While there certainly are worse places to arrive than at the gospel, the process is fraught with a reduced hermeneutical act. If the gospel is the end of every text, one would not need to interpret the text on its own merits in the first place.

Preach the Saving Power of the Old Testament

The modern preacher must be convinced of the saving power of the Old Testament. Second Timothy 3:15-17 is a formulaic passage. This text sets forth the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture, stating, "All Scripture is inspired by God," and the authority of Scripture by claiming God's Word is "profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness." This passage also sets forth the efficacy of the

³⁹Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 119.

Old Testament to bring about conversion. Paul reminded Timothy of the sacred Scriptures (the Old Testament) which were able to give the message of salvation. This passage is often overlooked, but consequential nonetheless. From the Old Testament one finds ample messianic, and even explicitly Christological, focus. Therefore, so Christological is the Old Testament that it contains enough gospel clarity to convert the one confronted with the message of Christ from it.

This fuller understanding of the Old Testament's power to save should endue the homiletician with confidence to preach it. To this point, David Larsen argues, "Not only does the Old Testament contain building blocks which form the structural footings of our grand doctrines and theology, but suffusing and permeating the whole is the person and presence of the Savior."⁴⁰ Larsen, who ascribed to an author-centered hermeneutic like Kaiser, maintains,

To preach an Old Testament text as a Rabbi would preach it would be in fact a betrayal of the gospel. We must not hint or imply more in the text than is there, but Christ is the Messiah is the frame for the picture of redemption. The theme of the Bible is salvation and deliverance—the older Testament looks forward to it in the Christ-event and the newer Testament looks back upon the actualization of the promises in our Lord Jesus Christ.⁴¹

Therefore, employing Paul's assertion from 2 Timothy 3:15 that "the Holy Scriptures are able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ," Larsen asks, "How conceivably could a preacher of evangelical faith give short shrift to any part of the Scriptures which Christ and his apostles loved and venerated?"⁴² The answer to Larsen's rhetorical question is, of course, that the faithful evangelical preacher cannot avoid preaching the Old Testament, both for this reason and given its immense power.

⁴⁰David Larsen, "Preaching the Old Testament Today," in *Preaching the Old Testament*, ed. Scott Gibson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 174.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 175.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 176.

The preacher should thus undertake preaching the Old Testament without reservation. In the words of Paul House, “The New Testament writers do not treat the Old Testament as a problem to be solved but rather as God-breathed sacred writing (Scripture) to be obeyed.”⁴³

Give Interpretive Deference to the Text under Consideration

Next, the exegete should give interpretive deference to the text under consideration. The sermon gains its authority by arriving with a “thus sayeth the Lord” ring in the ears of the hearers. Hershael York argues the strength of the sermon rests in bringing the passage to bear on the listeners, and in order to bring the text to bear with full authority one must rightly interpret it. York writes, “The purpose of preaching is to lay bare the meaning of a passage, to present its application, and to show its relevance to the audience.”⁴⁴ York continues,

In other words, when our sermons arise from the text, based on sound hermeneutical and exegetical methods, we can call men and women everywhere to obey the admonitions of the text, to believe its prophetic word, to accept its directions for the home, and to trust its word of salvation.⁴⁵

While interpreting the passage first in its own context may seem to be a simple step, it is a profound one. If one approaches the text with the hermeneutical spiral in mind, they must take a philosophical step to either begin with the specific text or the broader, meta-flow of Scripture. In some ways, of course, this is a false decision because

⁴³Paul House, “Written for Our Example: Preaching Old Testament Narratives,” in *Preach the Word*, ed. Leeland Ryken and Todd Wilson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 24.

⁴⁴Bert Decker and Hershael York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance* (Nashville: B & H, 2003), 22.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

a person cannot unlearn everything he knows about the big picture of God's redemptive work. At the same time, though, if one always begins with the big picture of God's story and brings that to bear on a particular passage, how could the interpreter not let his biblical theology prejudice his interpretation of the passage?

The interpreter must operate with one foot planted in the immediate passage under consideration, and the other foot stepping toward God's bigger, broader message of redemption. The interpreter must always lean first and most heavily into the immediate passage under consideration. Albert Mohler argues for this balance between the passage in its immediate context and its connection to the broader context of Scripture. Mohler writes,

Every time we preach a text of Scripture, we are accountable to that text. We must read and explain accurately to our people what that text means and how it applies to their lives. Yet we have another task as well, for we must take that particular text and place it within the larger story of Scripture.⁴⁶

Interpretive deference is not merely a matter of chronology. Chronological sequence is not merely starting with the passage and its immediate context before rushing on to the broader canonical story. Yes, the broader canonical story should inform and clarify a passage's meaning, and it may well shape and even morph a passage's implications, but it should not displace the passage's prior meaning. The interpreter must establish that meaning in the text, as intended by the original author.

Look for Christ in the Passage but Maintain Exegetical Humility

An author-centered hermeneutic does not deny that Christ may be found in the Old Testament or even that Christ is ubiquitous in the Old Testament. Rather, a commitment to an author-centered hermeneutic simply means one has a predetermined

⁴⁶R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *He Is Not Silent* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 96.

governor (the author's intent) on the passage which limits how much one may read Christ into a text. Therefore, the author-centered hermeneutic insists upon an interpretive humility, happily proclaiming Christ from a passage when the text warrants it, but demonstrating exegetical humility when the passage is less clear.

Dennis Johnson elaborates on such exegetical humility:

Pastors are called to preach Christ boldly and persuasively, from the Law, the Prophets, the Writings, the Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles, and the Apocalypse. We are not apostles, of course. We have not been taught by Jesus on the road to Emmaus or in an upper room in Jerusalem; nor have we been inspired to write Scripture as they were. For these very reasons, a humble recognition of our limitations in contrast to the revelatory insights of the apostles should lead us not to depart from but follow the hermeneutical example particularly as we interpret those Old Testament texts on which the New Testament writers have not commented. Can we not derive from a careful reflection on the New Testament's interpretation of the Old a paradigm, a pattern, a way of viewing the experiences, officials, institutions, and expectations of ancient Israel, a model that discloses the integral wisdom of the vast redemptive plan of God, which reaches its climax in Jesus Christ?⁴⁷

Similarly, Sidney Greidanus also expresses words of restraint when attempting to preach Christ from the Old Testament text. Greidanus writes,

Unfortunately, the legitimate demand for Christocentric preaching often results in questionable methods of interpretation in order to have the text speak of Christ. . . . That endeavor is not wrong, but its imposition as a methodological principle on every text is wrong, for it leads to forcing parallels between the text and Jesus.⁴⁸

Exegetical humility is crucial. If one dashes headlong into attempts to locate Christ in a passage, one might violate the author's intent and end up with an aberrant interpretation. Furthermore, one can preach Christ from a passage even if the passage does not directly reference him. This remains the strength of Greidanus' seven ways. One need not force an unnatural reading on a passage in order to get to Christ.

⁴⁷Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2007), 75.

⁴⁸Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 118.

Look for Connections to Christ from the Passage

Next, the preacher must look for connections to Christ from the passage. Jesus once chided the Pharisees, writing,

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me. . . . Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words? (John 5:39, 44-47)

It follows that, since Jesus commands his people to search the Scriptures for him, our labors will be fruitful. As John Calvin argued, “The Father testifies in them concerning his Son in such a manner that He will manifest him to us beyond all doubt. . . . Yet it requires the utmost attention, and, therefore, Christ enjoins us to search diligently for this hidden treasure.”⁴⁹

As it relates to locating connections to Christ from a passage, many opportunities to preach Jesus occur. The interpreter should interrogate the text as to how it intersects with the whole of the biblical message appertaining to the person and work of Christ. One need not superimpose him on a passage or to haphazardly tack a seemingly corresponding New Testament passage alongside the Old Testament passage under consideration.

Rather, one should barrage the passage with questions: how does this passage fit into the broader message of God’s redemptive purpose? If one believes that the broad brushstrokes of God’s message are creation, fall, redemption, and consummation, then one must ask where a passage fits into the big picture of God’s story. Does the passage contain promises that Christ fulfills later in the New Testament? Does the passage carry with it a longitudinal theme that runs throughout the entirety of the Bible?

⁴⁹John Calvin, *Commentary of the Harmony of the Evangelists: Matthew, Mark and Luke*, Calvin Commentaries, vol. 17, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 360.

More specifically, one should also ask, are there clear references to Christ in the passage? This question is perhaps the easiest to answer. Often times the passage will have a clear Christological marker within it. Such a marker might include a prophecy, which is given and has a later New Testament fulfillment or it might include a clear messianic reference that immediately leads to a point of Christological importance. A clear reference to Christ would also be a type, which has an explained meaning and reference in the New Testament.

Finally, if an apparent type occurs, but with no New Testament confirmation, one may choose to employ analogy. Surely, some types have no clear New Testament confirmations, but one must know he is on exegetical thin ice to cite them with certainty.

One should also query the text to see if New Testament authors quote all or part of the passage. Does the passage have potential analogous references? Moving from typology to analogy can be an easy and helpful transition to make. By simply employing the words “like” and “just as”, one can use analogy and have similar force as typology without carrying the heavier burden of proof. Analogy works only if the preacher makes the connection for the hearers. If the passage seems to portray or point to Christ, but there is no clear New Testament referent, one can make the connection for his hearers by saying “Just as X so Christ is Y.” This enables one to bring Christ to bear on his hearers without bringing the full weight and possible interpretive baggage of announcing a possible or almost type.

Lastly, and at the broadest level, one should ask how the passage intersects with the message of Christ in the New Testament. The interpreter may find the answer to this question to be both positive and negative. In other words, if one finds the ethic of Christ, we can point to the New Testament for the completion of that ethic and the fact that it has its basis and completion in Jesus. The preacher can then point his hearers to the New

Testament and show them how this characteristic is applicable to followers of Christ. If, at the same time, the deed or characteristic revealed cuts against the grain of the person and work Christ, one can point his hearers to the New Testament for how Christ contravenes and amends the example or sentiment.

Be Expository First and Christological Second

Haddon Robinson's definition of expository preaching has become something of a standard in homiletics classrooms. He famously described expository preaching as

the communication of a biblical *concept*, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and *literary* study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the *personality* and experience of the preacher, then through him to his hearers.⁵⁰

How one harmonizes such a definition of exposition with a commitment to redemptive-historical preaching demands consideration. Must one of these methodologies of preaching displace the other as the primary homiletical goal? What is more, are these two approaches mutually exclusive, forcing the preacher to decide which style of preaching to pursue?

Competing New Testament injunctions about preaching call the proclaimer of God's Word to both "preach the Word" (2 Tim 4:2) and "preach Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2). In fact, New Testament writers claim both injunctions as the source and power of preaching. James argues, "In the exercise of his will he brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures" (Jas 1:18). Further, Peter maintains, "You have been born again not of seed which is perishable, but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God" (I Pet 1:23).

⁵⁰Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 20. Emphasis original.

Likewise, Paul states, “We preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:23).

The alternate verbiage of preaching the Word and preaching Christ in the New Testament does not reveal conflicted intent. Rather, it speaks to the prevalence of Christ in the Bible: to preach the Word is to preach Christ and to preach Christ is to preach the Word. To this point, Stephen Olford refers to the preacher’s call to preach Christ from the passage. Olford uses Paul as an example, writing,

Paul had no doubt as to why God had given him the preaching gift. Within the immediate context [of 1 Corinthians 2], Paul spells this out. It was to glorify the Son of God (1 Cor. 1:29, 31), magnify the Word of God (1 Cor. 1:18), edify the church of God (1 Cor. 1:30), and satisfy the heart of God (1 Cor. 1:21). The Lord Jesus and Him crucified must be the compelling aim of all our preaching to the world and in the church.⁵¹

Similarly, Albert Mohler argues,

The link between the preaching of the gospel and the preaching of the Word is indissoluble and unbreakable. . . . We are charged to preach a message we have received. We are to preach that which has been sent, delivered, and addressed to us, not a message that has been developed or altered.⁵²

The importance of this is key. Often a false dichotomy seems to exist between expository preaching and redemptive-historical preaching. The methodological emphasis of their respective practitioners indeed often diverges. On the surface, though, the New Testament betrays such discrepancy. The New Testament exhorts the preacher to be faithful to the text while preaching Christ. These are timeless injunctions for the church and they seem to inform the relationship between authorial intent and redemptive-historical preaching.

⁵¹Stephen F. Olford and David L. Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: B & H, 1998), 232.

⁵²R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *Preaching: The Centrality of Scripture* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2002), 9-10.

Christological preaching that misplaces meaning within the interpretive process may preclude the preacher from faithfully “preaching the word” (2 Tim 4:2) and “Rightly dividing the Word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15). At the same time, any expositional model that loses sight of the redemptive message of Christ abrogates Scriptural injunctions to preach Jesus.

Greidanus, though a luminary in the redemptive-historical movement, refuses to let go of an expository methodology. He argues that one should be faithful to the Scripture’s meaning, writing,

If preachers wish to preach with divine authority, they must proclaim these messages of the inspired Scriptures, for the Scriptures alone have divine authority. If preachers wish to preach with divine authority, they must submit themselves and echo the Word of God. Preachers are literally to be ministers of the Word.⁵³

Similarly, Paul House writes, “Expository preachers should take their sense of the Bible’s grand narrative from descriptions of early Christian preaching. Stephen and Paul preached an account of salvation history that encompasses God’s good work from creation to final judgment.”⁵⁴ House goes on to argue that expository preachers should “keep this sweeping narrative in mind as they preach through any narrative segment of the Bible. They will then be in a position to do what Stephen and Paul did, which was to apply the lives of their hearers to the biblical narrative.”⁵⁵ This process will culminate in preachers being

prepared to mine the text at hand for life-changing teachings and to set that text in its proper place in the overall biblical story line. They will be prepared to preach about Jesus from any text without inserting Jesus into texts that do not mention him or the messianic promise.⁵⁶

⁵³Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 12-13.

⁵⁴House, “Written for Our Example,” 35.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid., 36.

A Redeemed Messenger Best Preaches a Redeemed Message

Lastly, we acknowledge that preaching redemptive messages requires more than a homiletical theory. To be sure, the gospel alone saves and God can change the heart of a congregant despite a sinful or even lost preacher. At the same time, the most effective preachers of Christ are those whom Christ has transformed. They know the redemptive story they preach experientially and theoretically because Jesus has transformed them through it.

While a trained theologian might be able to locate Christ in the Old Testament and even trace the scarlet thread of redemption throughout the Bible, only the preacher that God has redeemed can preach the message of Christ's redemptive work with full authority and conviction. To this point, Stephen Olford argues, "True preaching is an incarnational mystery. . . . You cannot detach the messenger from his message if preaching is going to be redemptive, and therefore, life changing."⁵⁷

Kaiser further supports this point as well, arguing,

We must have the Holy Spirit incite us to declare with boldness the truth we have discovered in the Word of God. From the beginning of the sermon to its end, the all-engrossing force of the text and the God who speaks through that text must dominate our whole being. With the burning power of that truth on our heart and lips, every thought, emotion, and act of the will must be so captured by that truth that it springs forth with excitement, joy, sincerity, and reality is an evident token that God's spirit is in that word. Away with mediocre, lifeless, boring, and lackluster orations offered as pitiful substitutes for the powerful Word of the living Lord. If that Word from God does not thrill the proclaimer and fill the servant who delivers it with an intense desire to glorify God and do his will, how shall we ever expect it to have any greater effect on our hearers?⁵⁸

The preacher should make certain that God has first made real in his heart the message of redemption he proclaims. If Christ has not redeemed the preacher, the efficacy of his

⁵⁷Olford and Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, 233.

⁵⁸Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 239.

message is mitigated, and, even more tragically, he shall come to know the horrors of punishment of which he formerly warned others.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to forward the assessment in this dissertation from the proclivity of redemptive-historical preaching to move beyond the author-centered hermeneutic. It attempts to identify effective ways to employ the best of the redemptive-historical movement to preach Christ from the Old Testament in a way which still remains faithful to the author-centered hermeneutic. This shift is necessary, for preachers to proclaim Christ-saturated sermons is more than a discussion for a preaching lab. Preaching Christ-centered sermons is a matter of pastoral urgency, and the pastoral implications of preaching Jesus in every sermon are beyond accurate estimation.

Ligon Duncan stands as one of this generation's most gifted homileticians. Committed to redemptive historical preaching, in his 2008 plenary address at the Together for the Gospel conference, he argued for its broader practice. Duncan's address is presented in his chapter, "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament" in *Preaching the Cross*. Duncan recalls an experience he had in an ordination council in his local presbytery, writing,

A number of years ago several men were undergoing examination for ministry in my presbytery, and all of these men were required to give testimony of their Christian experience of salvation as well as their objective and subjective call to ministry. The variety in their testimonies was remarkable, especially the manner in which they had come to faith in Christ. A couple of them had grown up in Christian homes. One had known, from the earliest days of his remembrances, that he was a sinner and needed a savior, and that Christ was that Savior; another had been reared in a Christian home but had rejected the teachings of his parents in the days of his youth, gone astray, and come back to the Lord by his marvelous grace. Yet, another had come from a family that was not Christian; the young man did not read the Bible or attend church until he was in college, at which time he was brought to faith in Christ. Their stories of salvation were radically different.

At the end of that examination period, the clerk of the presbytery, who happened to be the eldest minister there, stood up and said, 'We've been reminded again today

that though there is only one way to God, there are many ways to Christ.’ He meant that although salvation is through Jesus Christ and his cross alone, the Lord draws us to Christ in many different ways.⁵⁹

By way of analogy, Duncan goes on to write, “Preaching Christ from the Old Testament is the same: there is only one way to God, which is through Jesus Christ, but there is a dazzling variety of ways to get to Christ from the Old Testament.”⁶⁰

Duncan is correct. Only one way to God exists, through Christ, but one can find many legitimate ways to preach Jesus from the Old Testament. In fact, many ways occur that one can consistently and faithfully preach Christ from the Old Testament without the interpreter ever having to contort a passage or abrogate the author’s intended meaning. May God raise up a generation of preachers committed to the text and to Christ, who preach both with biblical fidelity and transformative power.

⁵⁹J. Ligon Duncan III, “Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,” in *Preaching the Cross*, ed. Mark Dever, et al. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 47-48.

⁶⁰Ibid.

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ABSTRACT

THE CHRIST-CENTERED HOMILETICS OF EDMUND CLOWNEY AND SIDNEY GREIDANUS IN CONTRAST WITH THE HUMAN AUTHOR- CENTERED HERMENEUTICS OF WALTER KAISER

Jason Keith Allen, Ph.D.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011
Chair: Dr. Hershael York

This dissertation examines the Christ-centered homiletics of Edmund Clowney and Sidney Greidanus in contrast with the human author-centered hermeneutics of Walter Kaiser. Chapter 1 frames the dissertation by presenting the consequence of preaching and the marks of redemptive-historical preaching.

Chapter 2 presents Walter Kaiser's author-centered hermeneutic. Kaiser's hermeneutic is presented because it is used as a plumb line to assess if and how redemptive-historical preaching drifts from an author-centered hermeneutic.

Chapter 3 introduces Edmund Clowney as one of the seminal thinkers in redemptive-historical preaching. It considers Clowney's Christ-centered biblical theology and how that informs his use of symbolism and typology to preach Christ.

Chapter 4 juxtaposes Greidanus' seven ways of preaching Christ from the Old Testament alongside Kaiser's author-centered hermeneutic. Attention is also given to Greidanus' sermons from the Old Testament.

Chapter 5 presents summary conclusions, documenting some of the frequent cleavages between Kaiser and redemptive-historical preaching. It concludes with ways to implement the dissertation findings for preaching the Old Testament.

VITA

Jason Keith Allen

PERSONAL

Born: November 5, 1976, Mobile, AL
Parents: Ray and Sandra Allen
Married: Karen Marie Brunson, June 26, 1999
Children: Anne-Marie Margaret, born October 21, 2002
Caroline Elizabeth, born December 16, 2003
William Franklin, born June 18, 2005
Henry Alden, born August 5, 2007
Elizabeth Grace, born July 17, 2008

EDUCATIONAL

Diploma, Mobile Christian School, Mobile, Alabama 1995
B.S., Spring Hill College, 1999
M.Div., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004

MINISTERIAL

Youth Pastor, First Baptist Church, Frisco City, Alabama, 1998
Assistant to the Pastor, Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile, Alabama, 1998-2001
Senior Pastor, Muldraugh Baptist Church, Muldraugh, Kentucky, 2002-2006
Senior Pastor, Carlisle Avenue Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky, 2006-

ACADEMIC

Instructor of Pastoral Ministries, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007-
Instructor of Preaching, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008-
Instructor of Christian Preaching, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009-