A SURVEY AND ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY EVANGELICAL

HERMENEUTICAL APPROACHES TO UNDERSTANDING

MESSIAH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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by

Jason Alan Motte

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APPROVAL SHEET

A SURVEY AND ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY EVANGELICAL

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Jason Alan Motte

Read and Approved by:

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T. J. Betts (Chair)

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Duane A. Garrett

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Robert L. Plummer

Date_____

To Pamela, Abbie, and Natalie

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANE	Ancient Near East
AUSS	*Andrews University Seminary Studies*
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BSac	*Bibliotheca sacra*
CBQ	*Catholic Bible Quarterly*
CTJ	*Calvin Theological Journal*
CTQ	*Concordia Theological Quarterly*
ERT	*Evangelical Review of Theology*
EvJ	*Evangelical Journal*
EvQ	*Evangelical Quarterly*
HB	Hebrew Bible
JETS	*Journal of Evangelical Theological Society*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
LHBOTS	*Library of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies*
MT	Masoretic Text
NTT	*Norsk Teologisk Tidsskrift*
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
SBTJ	*The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*
ST	*Studia Teologica*
SwJt	*Southwestern Journal of Theology*
TJ	*Trinity Journal*

TMSJ   *The Master's Seminary Journal*

TynBul   *Tyndale Bulletin*

WTJ   *Westminster Theological Journal*

ZAW   *Zeitschrift fur Die Alttestamentliche Wissenchaft*

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PREFACE

One day, while I was researching a paper on Deuteronomy for a doctoral seminar, a book on a nearby shelf in the library caught my eye. It was Sigmund Mowinckel's *He That Cometh*. During a break, I read a few sections, and this dissertation was set in motion.

Though it is not a lengthy work, this study marks the end of a long journey for me. In fact, it was an exceedingly difficult voyage at times. But through it all, God was gracious, and I praise him for his faithfulness. A large part of his grace involved placing others in my life to help me cross the finish line, and I would like to take a moment and thank them as well.

Foremost, I would like to thank my family—Pamela, Abbie, and Natalie never complained about late nights or Saturdays spent in the library. And during the times that I thought the journey would never end, they were there to encourage me. But more importantly, they were there to laugh and remind me that while scholarship is important, still greater things in life are more important.

David Deaton has been a friend since the very beginning of my academic and ministerial paths. Words cannot express the amount of support he has given me through the years. But during this particular season, he went above and beyond the call of duty for our entire family. I will never forget his kindness.

I was privileged to serve on staff of two churches through this process, and neither could have been more supportive to my family and I. Maple Grove Baptist housed

us, cared for us, and encouraged us for three years. And First Baptist Church Rochester followed suit the day we arrived there. I am grateful.

When I think of my time at Southern Seminary, the entire Old Testament faculty stands out. I truly believe that one cannot find a group of men who are more committed to scholarship, Christ, and his church. Space does not permit me to list all the things I gained from my time with each one, but perhaps the best compliment I can give to Duane Garrett, Russell Fuller, Jim Hamilton, and Peter Gentry is that they all helped me to be a more passionate scholar, teacher, and pastor.

T. J. Betts, my faculty supervisor, deserves a very special word of gratitude. He has walked with me very closely and graciously through the entire Ph.D. process. He has been both a mentor and a friend in ministry, teaching, and life. The things he has taught me will impact others through me the rest of my life.

<div align="right">Jason A. Motte</div>

Louisville, Kentucky

December 2015

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Messianism in the OT is a highly debated topic in contemporary biblical studies. Regardless of perspectives on the matter, most agree that the selection of hermeneutical approaches ultimately determines the conclusions one will reach about this issue. Gordon McConville frames the situation well when he states that "evaluations of messianism in the OT are closely bound to the task of exegesis and interpretation,"[1] and that "messianism is essentially hermeneutical."[2] Eugene Merill further notes that evaluations of various approaches to messianism in the OT are exclusively based on "the hermeneutical principles of the individual Bible student."[3]

There is little consensus within contemporary evangelical Christian circles as to what constitutes an appropriate hermeneutical approach for understanding messiah in the OT. However, recent works on the subject reflect both a renewed interest in the topic and a wide variety of opinions on the matter.[4] Further, some of these works also indicate several shifts from traditional approaches in this area.

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[1]J. Gordon McConville, "Messianic Interpretation in Modern Context," in *The Lord's Anointed*, ed. Philip Satterthwaite, Richard Hess, and Gordon Wenham (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1995), 4–5.

[2]Ibid., 11.

[3]See his comments in the preface to E. W. Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament* (McLean, VA: Macdonald Publishing Company, 1970), 1:5.

[4]Four recent works represent current, renewed interest in the topic, as well as the divergence of approaches to it. All four works contain multiple essays that represent various hermeneutical approaches. See Phillip Satterthwaite, Richard Hess, and Gordon Wenham, eds., *The Lord's Anointed* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1995); Stanley Porter, ed., *Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, McMaster New Testament Studies (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2007); John Day, ed., *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, Library of Hebrew Bible Old Testament Studies 270 (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013); Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde, eds., *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, Counterpoints: Bible and Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008). Other recent

Background

These various approaches to understanding messianism in the OT bear major consequences for both the evangelical academic community and the preaching of the evangelical church. Accordingly, the topic should be of the greatest relevancy for anyone associated with either group. It should also be an area in which all branches of biblical studies, as well as those ministering in the church, work together towards a consensus. Unfortunately, this ideal is not always reality. Collin Hansen, the editorial director for The Gospel Coalition website, astutely states in an introduction to a column by Paul House on understanding messiah in the OT:

> Preachers and New Testament scholars monopolize much of the discussion about Christ-centered preaching. Meanwhile, many Old Testament experts are less than enthused by what they see from zealous young preachers and teachers striving to find Jesus Christ and the gospel in the Hebrew Bible. We can blame modern academia for fragmenting these departments and sending mixed messages. We can blame inexperienced teachers for wandering dangerously close to the pitfall of allegory.[5]

Others, as will be seen later in this dissertaion, share similar sentiments. On the one hand, it is regrettable that seeking and proclaiming the Messiah from the OT is often relegated to branches of scholarship outside the area of OT studies. On the other hand,

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works on the topic range from scholastic to ecclesiastically focused. See Herbert Bateman IV, Darrell Bock, and Gordon Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah: Tracing the Promises, Expectations, and Coming of Israel's King* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2012); Michael Bird, *Are You the One Who Is to Come? The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009); Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006); idem, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012); Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ From the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999); David Murray, *Jesus on Every Page:10 Simple Ways to Seek and Find Christ in the Old Testament* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013); Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church: A Guide for Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010); Shirley Lucass, *The Concept of the Messiah in the Scriptures of Judaism and Christianity* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013); Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Really Messianic?* NAC Studies in Bible and Theology (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2010); Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995); idem, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006).

[5]See Hansen's introductory remarks in Paul House, "Christ-Centered Zeal: Some Concerns from an OT Scholar," *The Gospel Coalition Blog*, February 17, 2011, accessed September 21, 2013, http://thegospelcoalition.org /blogs/tgc/2011/02/17/christ-center.

those interested in OT studies are justified in their concern with some of the unsubstantiated approaches to finding Christ in nearly every verse of the OT. House is correct to state that evangelical scholarship, and OT scholarship in particular, should be more a "part of the solution and less a part of the problem."[6] A major step in such a process calls for the identification and examination of current approaches to this issue. This is why a survey and evaluation of contemporary evangelical hermeneutical trends regarding understanding messiah in the OT is both appropriate and necessary.[7]

Thesis

This dissertation will identify and evaluate contemporary evangelical Christian approaches to understanding messiah in the OT. Based on this identification and analysis, it will also present a brief hermeneutical model for understanding messiah in the OT. This model primarily will be formed by taking into account the strengths and weaknesses of current evangelical approaches to this issue.

Before going forward with this proposal, however, I must clarify four terms. First, it is important to define what is meant by the term "contemporary." This expression will be used in this work to represent the period of time extending from A.D. 1956- A.D. 2014. This particular period of time is chosen because the most influential work regarding understanding messiah in the OT is Sigmund Mowinckel's 1956 study, *He That Cometh*.[8] Most scholars recognize this work to be the classic and most comprehensive study on OT messianism to date.[9] However, some fail to appreciate that it

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[6]House, "Christ-Centered Zeal."

[7]Based on my research, to my knowledge, no other work of this nature exists.

[8]Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh: The Messiah Concept in the Old Testament and Later Judaism*, trans. G.W. Anderson (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2005).

[9]See Collins's comments on the importance, longevity, and contemporary influence of Mowinckel's work after fifty years. John Collins, "Mowinckel's *He That Cometh* Revisited," *Studia Theologica* 61, no. 1 (2007): 3–20.

also represents a turning point for various modern-day trends that have emerged as a result of it. Because of Mowinckel's wide influence, and particularly because of the vast amount of scholarly attention devoted to his work, a post-Mowinckel survey best allows focus on current developments that largely have come about in response to, or as a result of, his study.

Second, it is also important to define the word "evangelical." This term will be used in this work to represent persons and parties "in modern Christianity, transcending denominational and confessional boundaries, that emphasize conformity to the basic tenets of the faith," and ". . . who believe and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ."[10] These "basic tenets of the faith" that help define evangelicals primarily include "the sovereignty of God, . . . Scripture as the divinely inspired record of God's revelation, and the authoritative guide for faith and practice, . . . Christ's substitutionary or vicarious atonement, . . . and salvation as an act of unmerited divine grace received through faith in Christ."[11]

Third, it is also crucial to define the words "messiah" and "messianism." Much has been written on the meaning of the word מָשִׁיחַ (messiah) in particular, but because of its diversity of usage across OT history and among scholars, a "one size fits all" definition is not possible.[12] David Wallace claims that within Evangelicalism "the study of the rise and development of the figure of the Messiah is primarily historical and then theological."[13] In short, Wallace argues that initially "messiah" pertained to an anointed present-day leader, predominantly a king or prophet. With the collapse of the Davidic

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[10]Walter Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), s.v. "Evangelicalism," by Richard Pierard and Walter Elwell.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Fitzmyer offers a detailed study on the OT use of מָשִׁיחַ. See Joseph Fitzmyer, *The One Who Is to Come* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 5ff.

[13]Walter Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), "Messiah," by David Wallace.

monarchy, this word, over time, began to be redefined as a future deliverer who became the central focus of hope for post-exilic Jews. The NT further specialized the meaning by presenting Jesus as the Messiah.[14]

However, as McConville points out, even if Wallace and others holding a similar developmental understanding of "messiah" are accurate, for modern evangelicals and their views on the OT, "the topic is much broader than the simple issue of the changing connotations of a single word."[15] The critical issues center on the roots of messianic ideology and the validity of Christian interpretations of OT texts. As a result, unless otherwise noted, when the term "messiah" is used in reference to OT texts or theology, it will focus on an anointed, future eschatological deliverer who eventually became the focus of hope for post-exilic Jews and who is later identified in the NT as Jesus Christ. In a similar fashion, unless otherwise noted, "messianism" in reference to the OT, will be used in reference to the expectation of a future eschatological deliverer who eventually became the focus of hope for post-exilic Jews and who later is identified in the NT as Jesus Christ. The phrase "the Messiah" will refer directly to Jesus Christ.

History of Research

The amount of literature reflecting Christian hermeneutical approaches to understanding the Messiah in the OT is vast. Therefore, due to space limitations, this survey cannot be exhaustive, but will seek to show various trends resulting in the contemporary impasse among evangelical scholarship regarding how to understand messiah in the OT.

Turning Point

The ability and validity to understand and proclaim Jesus Christ from the OT

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[14]Wallace, "Messiah."

[15]McConville, "Messianic Interpretation in Modern Context," 9.

Scripture is an issue that goes back as far as the Church itself. From the time of the apostles, the church fathers, and the Reformation, various hermeneutical approaches to this issue have existed. Despite the diversity in methods represented in these time periods, the most direct roots of many contemporary understandings of the Messiah in the OT can be traced back to the 1700's (A.D.).[16]

Anthony Collins. Anthony Collins' 1724 work, *A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*, is considered by many to represent the first critical, scholarly work regarding a proper hermeneutic for understanding messiah in the OT.[17] Rydelnik accurately points out that before Collins, "the church spoke unanimously that in some way Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled Old Testament messianic prophecies."[18] By the early 1700's, however, a debate, fueled by Deism, was underway. This debate centered on the compatibility of OT texts believed by the apostles and the early church to be fulfilled by Jesus Christ, and interpretations of the same passages yielded from an application of historical-grammatical methodology.[19]

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[16]Since this dissertation is concerned with contemporary understanding of the messiah in the OT, is will focus on the most significant and direct influences on the current situation. This does not imply that an understanding of previous approaches is unimportant. However, due to space, effort will be focused on Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment developments since they provide the most direct context for contemporary understandings of messiah in the OT. For more on this topic from the early church through the time of the Reformation, see Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 69–151.

[17]Anthony Collins, *A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1976). This is not to imply that Collins is disconnected from a larger context. The influence of Deism was hotly debated during Collins' lifetime. Further, Collins is highly influenced by Hugo Grotius. Collins developed much of Grotius' ideas regarding what Christians traditionally regarded as messianic "proof texts" in the OT. See A. Keun, "Hugo Grotius als Ausleger des Alten Testaments," in *Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur Biblischen Wissenschaft* (Leipzig: Mohr, 1894), 161-85; Ronald Clements, "Messianic Prophecy or Messianic History?" *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 1 (1979): 87–104.

[18]Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope*, 13.

[19]By historical-grammatical methodology, both here and throughout this work, I am in line with Mare in referring to a methodology that approaches biblical texts with the presupposition "that a personal God has verbally communicated to personal man in time and space" in a way that is understandable to him. Therefore the approach to understanding that divine communication must center on "the two foundation stones of grammar, language and historical background" as they relate to the original author and audience of Scripture. See Harold Mare, "Guiding Principles For Historical Grammatical Exegesis," *Grace Journal* 14, no. 3 (1973): 14–25.

Collins' work is a response to William Whiston's 1722 publication, *An Essay Towards Restoring the True Text of the Old Testament*. Whiston maintains that a literal reading of OT texts often appears incompatible with the apostolic interpretation of them. In his work, he claims this is due to textual corruptions introduced by Jews, who, following the death of Christ, intended to hide the overtly messianic message originally found in the OT.[20] Collins claims, however, that this thesis is not based on either pragmatic logic or text-critical evidence.

Practically speaking, Collins asserts that if the canonical OT is corrupt, then Christianity and Judaism both fail as religions. The reason for this assertion is that the beliefs of both are rooted in the purity of the traditions handed down long before the time of Jesus.[21] From a text-critical perspective, Collins also notes that most of the textual amendments Whiston proposes in order to restore what he believes to be "the original text" of the OT, are based on faulty evidence. For example, a large portion of Whiston's claims are based on the Samaritan Pentateuch, the LXX, the Greek Psalms, the Syriac text, and several other writings including those of Josephus and a variety of church fathers. Collins points out that any attempt to provide the original, authoritative text from such a wide variety of sources appears to be little more than picking and choosing. To demonstrate this, Collins first points out that all texts have some level of corruption because there are no known original manuscripts of the OT. The works cited by Whiston are no exception to this, so any attempt to restore an original text from such a diverse group of documents that stem from varied backgrounds can only be considered an exercise in futility.[22] Second, Collins calls attention to the fact that the apostles cite

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[20]William Whiston, *An Essay Towards Restoring the True Text of the Old Testament* (London: Senex, 1722).

[21]Collins, *A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*, 111–12.

[22]Ibid., 215–26.

multiple versions of the OT. This point makes it is clear that the apostles themselves did not have a standard text they deemed authoritative. As a result, Whiston cannot "restore" something that did not exist. Third, Collins notes some of the texts Whiston cites are not necessarily reliable records of accurate theology. One example is found in the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John 4. Here Jesus corrects the misguided Samaritan understanding regarding the proper place of worship. The woman believes the correct location is Mt. Gerizim, but Jesus identifies it as Jerusalem. This, Collins argues, is proof that the Samaritan Pentateuch is not necessarily a more reliable source for representing accurate tradition than the OT.[23]

In response to Whiston's claims, Collins counter-argues that the OT is not corrupt in its canonical form. Rather, he contends that the apostles interpret OT content allegorically:

> I observe, that Christianity is wholly revealed in the Old Testament, and has its divine authority from thence; that it is not literally, but mystically or allegorically revealed therein; and that therefore Christianity is the allegorical sense of the Old Testament, and is not improperly called mystical Judaism. If therefore Christianity is grounded on allegory, converted Gentiles must be convinced by allegory, and become allegorists or mystical Jews, no less than converted Jews.[24]

Collins claims evidence for such a position is found in the apostle Paul's argumentation in 1 Corinthians 1-2. There, Paul appears to renounce

> all other methods of arguing besides the allegorical, when he says, that the wisdom spoken was wisdom among them, who understood the secret, mystical, and spiritual sense of things; that his wisdom was the wisdom of God, hidden from the world, which God had ordained before the world; that is, that it was the secret divine, and spiritual sense of Judaism which the world that interpreted Judaism literally knew nothing of; that this wisdom and method of discourse or reasoning was revealed to him and the other apostles by God, who alone knew his own spiritual meaning; and that the natural man receives not the spiritual sense of things, for they are foolishness unto him, and cannot be known by him, because they are not to be discerned by the common rules of wisdom or philosophy, or disputing, but are to be discerned only by a man, who has the secret, spiritual, or mystical meaning of

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[23]Collins, *A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*, 184–208.

[24]Ibid., 91–92.

things.[25]

Collins' rebuke of Whiston represents the beginning of an ongoing debate regarding Christian hermeneutical approaches to understanding messiah in the OT. In one sense, however, both Whiston and Collins argue for a similar position on a central issue. Both affirm, in different ways, that a historical-grammatical hermeneutic will not yield a messianic meaning for many OT passages that were interpreted as such by the apostles and early church.[26] The importance of this agreement between should not be overlooked. It, in many ways, defined the main source of hermeneutical tension among scholars and pastors regarding messiah in the OT. This tension, by and large, is still widespread today.

Thomas Sherlock. Thomas Sherlock responded to Collins' thesis in his 1725 work *The Use and Intent of Prophecy in the Several Ages of the World*.[27] Sherlock argues that interpreters, who claim that only historical-grammatical interpretation can validate OT predictions of a messiah, demand more of both God and prophecy than should be reasonably expected.[28]

For Sherlock, these scholars elevate the literal meaning of OT prophecy to such a level that it alone becomes the sole arbitrator of messianic truth. He argues that this is a mistake for three reasons. First, he says that God is not obligated to reveal any specific amount of information to mankind in order for it to be reality. God is, therefore, not required to reveal every part of his redemptive plan in an explicit fashion on the pages of Scripture in order to bring about his Messiah.[29] Prophetic revelation, in any form, is

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[25]Collins, *A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*, 92–93.

[26]Whiston, of course, believed that a historical-grammatical approach to the "original" Hebrew texts would yield messianic interpretation. However, to arrive here he must amend the traditional MT in major ways.

[27]Thomas Sherlock, *The Use and Intent of Prophecy in the Several Ages of the World* (London: J. Pemberton, 1725).

[28]Ibid., 2–3, 43.

[29]Ibid., 3–20.

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ultimately an act of grace, and not a requirement on the part of God. Second, Sherlock claims that prophecy, by nature, is most often "dark" and "obscure" in meaning.[30] This claim is particularly true at the time a prophecy is initially given to a prophet and/or original audience. In fact, Sherlock claims that most prophecies were originally capable of multiple meanings.[31] As a result, the only way to know the true meaning of a prophecy is when the fulfillment of that prophecy takes place.[32] Third, Sherlock claims that focus on prophecy, while important, often forces interpreters to overlook other more important methods of divine revelation. These other methods primarily consist of miracles, signs, and divinely inspired apostolic interpretation of OT prophecies.[33] Sherlock claims that these methods are more sure ways of determining what OT texts mean as opposed to a literal interpretation of prophecy. He also claims such extraordinary means are the main building blocks that both OT prophets and NT apostles used as indications of God's divine revelation. Thus, in Sherlock's view, modern exegetical approaches to prophetic texts are not the proper starting point to determine the meaning of any given prophecy. For him, the signs, wonders, and revelation accompanying the life of Christ and the apostolic church are the "complete evidence of the divine authority" of the revelation that Jesus is Messiah.[34] Only when persons acknowledge such signs of divine approval can they then go back and test OT prophecies for the legitimacy of the claims made by Jesus Christ and the apostles.[35]

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[30]Sherlock, *The Use and Intent of Prophecy*, 31–40.

[31]Ibid., 43.

[32]Ibid., 30. "The knowledge God gives us of things future by means of prophecy, is but an imperfect obscure knowledge, nothing to be compared to the clear knowledge that will attend upon the manifestation of the things themselves."

[33]Ibid., 5ff. Sherlock explicitly states that "the evidence of prophecy can never be greater than the evidence of miracles" (5).

[34]Ibid., 47.

[35]Ibid,, 48ff.

In order to test OT prophecies regarding Jesus, Sherlock states that specific hermeneutical criteria must also be in place. Once again, he argues that an interpreter should not use historical-grammatical methodology alone to arbitrate the meaning of a text. For him, the appropriate way to press prophecies for meaning is by understanding the way prophecy works. In his opinion, one first has to understand that God knows the beginning from the end. This means that OT events, particularly those pertaining to salvation acts, should be seen as part of a coherent, unified plan of redemption. Second, one must also understand that this driving goal of redemption most naturally is revealed to mankind in fragments of revelation that fit the immediate historical situation of the original audience:

> How low an idea does it give of the Administration of Providence, in sending prophets one after another, in every age from Adam to Christ, to imagine, that all this apparatus was for their sakes who lived in and after the times of Christ, with little regard to the ages to who the prophecies were delivered? As I think the prophecies of the New Testament are chiefly for our sake who live by faith and not by sight; so I imagine the ancient prophecies had the like use, and were chiefly intended to support the faith and religion of the old world. Had it been otherwise, a set of prophecies given some few years before the birth of Christ would have served our purpose as well as a series of prophecies given from the beginning, and running through every age.[36]

Thus, for Sherlock, prophecies are meaningful and relevant at the immediate time in which they are given, and at the same time are also divinely orchestrated to line up with forthcoming redemptive events in the future. There is an immediate fulfillment of messianic prophecies, as well as a future one. In this way, Sherlock advocates a dual fulfillment of messianic prophecy.

Genesis 3 provides an example of how this dual fulfillment plays out in the OT. This text, to the original audience, would deliver hope intended to keep mankind in the proper position to follow God after the fall.[37] In this way, the text is salvific at that

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[36]Sherlock, *The Use and Intent of Prophecy*, 43.

[37]Ibid., 82. "Under this period the light of prophecy was proportioned to the wants and necessities of the world, and sufficient to maintain religion after the fall of man; by affording sufficient grounds for trust and confidence in God; without which grounds . . . religion could not have been supported in the world."

particular time. Sherlock notes that this prophesy, "with respect to those whom it was given, answered their want, and the immediate end proposed by God."[38] However, after the revelation of Jesus in the NT as the ultimate provider of salvation, and since God knows the beginning of time from the end, Genesis 3, being salvation oriented, must be understood as divinely orchestrated to predict Christ. Sherlock goes on to say after Christ, one must " . . . view it with respect to ourselves, and it answers our wants; and shall we complain of its obscurity?"[39]

Sherlock's methodology was not widely accepted by scholars. Instead, the standard of demanding historical-grammatical interpretation of messianic passages rapidly gained popularity. This standard was particularly advocated by scholars who held critical views of Scripture, so much so that one such scholar, J. G. Eichorn, boldly claimed in 1793 that the "last three decades have erased the Messiah from the Old Testament."[40]

Further Responses

In response to the approaches of Collins, Eichorn, and others, various positions regarding how to understand messiah in the OT arose in subsequent years.

Alfred Edersheim. In a series of lectures given between 1800-1804, Alfred Edersheim attempted to refute critical scholarly approaches regarding apostolic hermeneutics and messianism in the OT. He considers such critical methodologies to be "mere speculation, whether critical or metaphysical."[41] In his opinion, such approaches

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[38]Sherlock, *The Use and Intent of Prophecy*, 83.

[39]Ibid.

[40]As quoted in Eberhard Sehmsdorf, *Die Prophetenauslegung bei J. G. Eichhorn* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 153.

[41]Alfred Edersheim, *Prophecy and History In Relation to the Messiah* (New York: Anson D.F. Randolph & Company, 1885), 5.

fail to account for issues that must be addressed by historical investigation. Thus, he

states the purpose of his lectures is

> to make it clear that the New Testament really points back to the Old. To put it more precisely: we hold that Christianity in its origin appealed to an existing state of expectancy, which was the outcome of a previous development; further that those ideas and hopes of which it professed to be the fulfillment had not first sprung up in the immediately preceding period-that is, in the centuries between the return from the Babylonian exile and the birth of Christ-but stretched back through the whole course of Old Testament teaching.[42]

For Edersheim, if Christianity is to be considered true and valid, the NT must

be an "organic development and completion of the Old."[43] The NT must logically be the

outcome of promises and prophecies made throughout the OT. Thus, based on the

revelation of Jesus as Messiah in the NT, both Testaments must form an inseparable

unity. The OT without the NT is incomplete, and the NT without the OT is impossible.

According to Edersheim, the start of the organic connection between the two

Testaments is the kingdom of God. This kingdom is first introduced in Genesis 3 when

God's plan for a worldwide kingdom, in which He intends to possess all nations, is

revealed.[44] This plan gradually unfolds throughout the OT and is ultimately fulfilled in

the pages of the NT. God's central plan and purpose of kingdom formation is consistently

the same throughout Scripture, according to Edersheim. But, he notes that this plan is

revealed progressively over many centuries and through an eclectic mix of contemporary

events and circumstances experienced by the people living at the time of the biblical

writings. This means that God's kingdom plan is often revealed through promises and

prophecies that address an immediate historical circumstance, all the while looking

towards a deeper meaning that goes beyond the initial historical situations used to present

them.[45]

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[42]Edersheim, *Prophecy and History In Relation to the Messiah*, 5–6.

[43]Ibid., 26.

[44]Ibid., 45.

[45]Ibid., 34ff.

This gradual unrolling in the sight of men, as they were able to read it . . . accounts for the peculiar form in which the future is so often presented in prophesy. It explains how so many of the predictions concerning the kingdom of God are presented under a particularistic and national aspect . . . We believe that they had a deeper and an eternal meaning which at the time and to that people could only be set forth in such a manner . . . it would have been impossible to convey otherwise in such a form.[46]

Not all promises or prophecies have deeper meanings in Edersheim's view, however. Quite often they only apply in the temporal context in which they are given. The only way to distinguish whether a deeper, messianic meaning is intended is through observing the ultimate fulfillment of a prophecy. The process is primarily guided by the revelation presented in the NT.[47]

Edersheim's views of messianic prophecy are very similar in many respects to Thomas Sherlock's. First, Edersheim is adamant that prophecy, by nature, does not require a literal, ultimate fulfillment in many cases. Second, he also believes that messianic prophecy must have some level of present significance as well as future connotation. "Prophecy has always a present meaning and present lessons to those who heard it; and that, as this meaning unfolded in the course of history, it conveyed to each succeeding generation something new."[48] He further states his perspective in this way:

The prophets were not merely, perhaps not even primarily, foretellers of future events, but that their activity also extended to the present: that they were reprovers, reformers, instructors. Certainly: for they were God's messengers. But from this it does not follow that the futuristic element had no place in their calling . . . My answer is that, when a prophet foretells, he presents the future in light of the present; and when he admonishes or reproves, he presents the present in the light of that future which he sees to be surely coming. Thus he is always, and in all respects of it, the messenger of God to every generation.[49]

In comparison, Edersheim's position is centered on the historical understanding of the unfolding kingdom of God through typology. "The type is always

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[46]Edersheim, *Prophecy and History In Relation to the Messiah*, 34–35.

[47]Ibid., 37.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Ibid., 38–39.

based on the symbol—the application to the future on the meaning in the present—so are the prophecies of the kingdom presented in the forms of, and with application to the then present."[50] To Edersheim, his position does not advocate a dual fulfillment of prophecy, at least from the perspective of the overarching messianic kingdom unfolding in the Scriptures:

> We do not propose the clumsy device of a twofold application of prophecy, to the present and to the future, but, taking the prophetic standpoint, we regard the present as containing in germ the future, and the future as the child of the present; or to revert to a statement in a previous lecture, it is not a progression, nor even a development, but an unfolding of the present. Viewed in relation to the Messianic Kingdom, it is one and the same thing, which to the eye of the prophet now is, and ever shall be.[51]

For Edersheim, the goal of all prophecy is the same. This goal is the realization of what he calls the "Divine ideal" of God's kingdom. This ideal is the goal of all Scripture, and thus all Scripture is prophetic and points towards the Messiah.[52] What a prophet sees or understands may be clothed in temporal events from his perspective, but from the atemporal divine perspective what is revealed are glimpses of the ultimate end, the Divine ideal kingdom.[53] Thus, in his view, all prophecy has one ultimate fulfillment, not two. "And it is in this sense that we understand and adopt the fundamental principle of the synagogue . . . that every event in Israel's history, and every prophecy pointed forward to the Messiah."[54]

Ernst Hengstenberg. Ernst Hengstenberg, in similar fashion to Edersheim, argues for a clearly messianic reading of the OT in his 1835 work *Christology of the Old*

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[50]Edersheim, *Prophecy and History In Relation to the Messiah*, 35.

[51]Ibid., 130.

[52]Ibid., 119.

[53]Ibid., 119ff.

[54]Ibid., 130.

Testament.[55] Hengstenberg's position is that, ultimately, NT revelation is the true arbitrator of OT interpretation. In Hengstenberg's view, God acted in various ways at various times in the tangible history of Israel, but with an overall view towards the coming messiah who is later revealed as Jesus Christ. In fact, all of the OT points in various ways to Christ. Although this truth was not fully transparent at the time of the original writings, it must now be read in this way in light of subsequent revelation.

Hengstenberg's view regarding God's acts in the history of Israel results in a fragmented picture of the Messiah scattered throughout the OT. The first fragment of messianic prophecy, in his opinion, takes place directly after the fall of Adam in Genesis 3. The proclamation of victory for the seed of the woman over the serpent, though indefinite at the time, marks the birth of a "germ" promise that continually grows throughout the rest of the Pentateuch and prophets. This idea ultimately leads to the NT revelation of Jesus as the Christ.[56] Not every single passage of OT Scripture contains direct messianic bearings in Hengstenberg's analysis, but they do contain major "linking points" that grow out of the prophecy of Genesis 3. These linking points direct readers to a personal, individual messiah. In the Pentateuch, for example, some of the linking points that fill in the messianic picture include the postdiluvian promise of "deliverance" made to Shem, the preparation for the appearance of this deliverance by "separating from the corrupt mass a single individual-Abraham-in order to make him the depositary of His revelations," the narrowing of Abraham's line to the tribe of Judah by Genesis 49, the giving of the Law, and Moses as a prophetic prototype. Thus, the Pentateuch effectually prepares

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[55] Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament*.

[56] The significance of a "germ" prophecy should not be overlooked. As will be seen later, this idea is still influential today. One well-known example of a modern scholar who is guided by this idea is Walter Kaiser. Though differing from Hengstenberg's overall approach, Kaiser's messianic "epigenetical" methodology, which links an Old Testament text's "implantation of seminal ideas organically imbedded within the one, single, truth as understood by the author in his own times and circumstances," is dependent on the concept of a "germ" prophecy. See Walter Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 24ff.

the way for the Messiah by laying the theocratic institutions on a firm foundation, and by establishing the law which is intended to produce the knowledge of sin, and to settle discipline . . . . If the hope of the Messiah was to be realized in a proper manner, and to produce its legitimate effect, it was necessary that the people should first be accustomed to this new order of life . . . . Yet, even in the last four books there are not wanting allusions to Him who, as the end of the law, was, from the very beginning, to be set before the eyes of the people.[57]

These links later connect with the Davidic covenant and the figures of David and Solomon. Here, Hengstenberg also lists the Song of Songs as an important messianic link because of its association with Solomon. He notes that in this book

the coming of the Messiah forms the subject throughout, and He is introduced there under the name of Solomon, the Peaceful One. His coming shall be preceded by severe afflictions, represented under the emblems of the scorching heat of the sun, of winter, of rain, of dark nights, and of the desert. Connected with this coming is the reception that of the heathen nations into His kingdom, and this, though through the medium of the old Covenant-people.[58]

Hengstenberg believes the song introduces little new in the way of messianic prophecy in the first part of the book. However, in the latter part, he claims that there is the first indication that the salvation offered in Christ will be rejected by many people.[59]

After David and Solomon, Hengstenberg's messianic links move forward into the prophetic corpus. Prophets, in his view, do not reveal the Messiah in a progressive, unfolding pattern as is the case in the earlier portions of the OT. Rather, they paint various characteristics of the coming Messiah that specifically pertain to the needs and desires of the people at the time. The depth of these revealed characteristics of the Messiah are likely dependent on the "measure of receptivity" of each prophet to the prophetic spirit. The result of the prophetic corpus, therefore, is that

as the Messiah was thus represented from the most various points of view, and in the way of direct perception, and divine confidence, as He was thus everywhere pointed out as the end of the development, He could not but become more and more the soul of the nation's life. This thesis, of course, leads to the fulfillment of OT

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[57]Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament*, 1:11–13.

[58]Ibid., 1:159.

[59]Ibid., 1:160. "No corresponding parallel can be adduced from any other former time to the view, that a great part of the people would reject the salvation offered them in Christ" (ibid.).

prophecies in Jesus Christ.[60]

Overall, Rydelnik describes Hengstenberg's approach to understanding messiah in the OT as dogmatic-theological, while Sailhamer labels it typological.[61] In truth, it is both. Hengstenberg starts with the dogmatic confession of Jesus as Christ, and typologically works his way from the OT and back again to the NT. Regardless of labels, Sailhamer is certainly correct in noting that while Hengstenberg's specific view is not widely held today, his work, in large part, charted the course of evangelical discussion regarding messiah in the OT. Much in his work continues to strongly influence the contemporary evangelical discussion.[62]

Charles Briggs. Charles Briggs, in his 1886 work *Messianic Prophesy*, advocates a developmental approach to reading and understanding messiah in the OT.[63] Briggs believes that all biblical prophecy contains various levels of foreshadowing of a larger goal.[64] This larger goal is the complete redemption of humanity through the work of the Messiah. "Hebrew prophecy rises in higher and higher stages until it culminates in Messianic prophecy. This is the central theme about which all its lessons cluster."[65] Thus, in his view, the canonical storyline in general, and each successive Hebrew prophet in particular, advances this prophetic agenda to some degree through temporally and

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[60]Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament*, 1:164.

[61]Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope*, 15; John Sailhamer, "The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44, no. 1 (March 2001): 7.

[62]Sailhamer, "The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible," 6.

[63]Charles Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886).

[64]Briggs' use of the terms "prophet" and "prophecy" are somewhat ambiguous. For him, a prophet is one who is divinely inspired by God to give authoritative religious instruction. This instruction constitutes "prophecy." But prophecy is, broadly speaking, "an organism of redemption." So Briggs' use of "prophecy" only seems to apply towards writings in scripture that point towards redemption, regardless of where such writings are located in the canon, the genre of literature they represent, or the speaker presenting them. See Briggs' discussion: Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy*, 1–18.

[65]Ibid., 60.

contextually relevant redemptive prophecies. These prophecies ultimately point towards and prepare humanity for complete redemption through the Messiah. Because prophecies are meant for the immediate historical and redemptive contexts in which the original audiences were located, Briggs labels his views as "progressive redemption."[66] He explains its functionality by arguing that the complete doctrine of redemption that plays out across the entirety of Christian Scripture is present in a three-fold division. The first division is communicated as a present redemptive possession for God's chosen people. The second division looks towards a future redemptive possession that builds on past and present experiences of redemptive acts. The third division is the complete fulfillment of this redemption in the eschatological future through the Messiah. Briggs summarizes the stages of redemption in these words:

> The Old Testament redemption advances in a long line of historic and predictive succession towards the New Testament redemption, and the New Testament redemption marches onward towards the redemption of the Messianic end…Thus the two systems of present advancing redemption and future completed redemption are related as substance and shadow, as type and antitype, as the building in course of erection to the finished building, as the elementary and preparatory studies to the perfected wisdom. In the Old Testament we see the unfolding germ whose flower and fruit appear under the New Covenant.[67]

For Briggs, the earliest phases of biblical revelation, including non-prophetic texts such as the creation account, the fall, the flood, the blessing of Shem, and the Exodus present the concept of complete redemption in "germ form."[68] Later revelation builds on these redemptive themes and ideas and expands them primarily through the development of an ideal, future, redeemed kingdom of God. The ultimate culmination of this redemption is found in Jesus Christ at the end of time.[69] It is this central theme of redemption that acts as a single chord running throughout scripture and that serves to

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[66]Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy*, 62.

[67]Ibid., 62–63.

[68]Ibid., 67–120.

[69]Ibid., 62.

bind all biblical writings into one unit that functions as an "organism of redemption."[70]

While Briggs' theories could be regarded as advocating dual or progressive fulfillments of prophecy, he argues staunchly against such positions. In his view, there is only one meaning for each OT prophecy. He believes that contextual prophetic fulfillments in the OT reveal God's ultimate intention of complete redemption. As man's experience expands through early messianic prophecy, future prophecies also expand their predictions wider and farther, revealing complete redemption through the person and work of the Messiah. Again Briggs states

> As prediction is rising in successive stages to higher and broader and more extensive views of the messianic redemption, the history of redemption is advancing with it towards the same end. Thus we ought to expect that the Messianic ideal should be realized in some of its phases ere the ideal itself is attained, and that the later predictions should base themselves on these partial realizations.[71]

Although Briggs does not explicitly state it, his hermeneutical approach ultimately allows the NT revelation of Jesus as the Messiah and redeemer to arbitrate the interpretation of all OT texts. For example, his position on Genesis 3 is that the battle between seed and serpent predicts the humanity of the Messiah, while the blessing of Shem predicts the divine side of the Messiah.[72] Regarding Exodus 4, Briggs further claims that when God commands the Pharaoh to release Israel and refers to Israel as "his son," this lays the foundation for the messianic kingdom of God.[73] Briggs also declares

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[70]Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy*, 61.

[71]Ibid., 65.

[72]"In the former prophecy we have the human side of Messianic redemption brought out in the victory of the seed of the woman over the serpent. Here, on the other hand, we have the divine side of Messianic redemption in the prediction of the advent of God as a blessing in the tents of Shem. These two lines of Messianic prophecy, the human and the divine, henceforth develop side by side in Messianic prophecy, but never converge till they unite in the person of Jesus Christ, the God-man, at His first advent, and still more at His second advent." Ibid., 82–83.

[73]By Yahweh's calling Israel "his son," Briggs concludes there is an "unfolding of the second Messianic prophecy, in that the dwelling of God in the tents of Shem becomes the reign of God as the King of Israel. And thus the foundation of the idea of the kingdom of God was laid, which henceforth constitutes one of the most essential Messianic ideas." Ibid., 102.

that the star and scepter prophecy in Numbers 24 is explicitly about the kingdom of Israel, but implicitly involves "the royal scepter of David's greater son."[74] Similar interpretations abound throughout his work, but seem exegetically unlikely unless one is reading various texts through the lens of the NT.

George Goodspeed. In 1900, George Goodspeed advocated moving from the concept of messianic prediction in the OT to the concept of messianic ideals in his work, *Israel's Messianic Hope to the Time of Jesus*.[75] In Goodspeed's view, the OT does not present direct, predictive prophecies about Christ, but contains "germinal forces" and "ideals" presented in the history of Israel. These predictive prophecies eventually culminate in the NT realization that Jesus Christ is the Messiah.[76] Israelite history, therefore, functions to prepare for Jesus' coming through foreshadowing his life and work by revealing "elements, ideas, and forces which united and came into their fullness in him."[77]

Goodspeed's methodology is what he terms "historical." By historical, he means an approach that seeks to understand Hebrew literature in the specific historical origins and environments in which it was presented to the original audience.[78] A major portion of this approach involves reconstructions and interpretations heavily dependent on historical-critical ideas current at the time. He argues that such methodology is to be preferred over traditional prophecy-fulfillment and systematic-theological constructs,

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[74]Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy*, 108–9.

[75]George Stephen Goodspeed, *Israel's Messianic Hope to the Time of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1900).

[76]Ibid., 35, 281ff.

[77]Ibid., 2–3.

[78]Ibid., 4–5. "The history is studied from the Hebrew side; the ideas are investigated as they grow out of the history, and are modified or conditioned by it. The question asked is not so much, 'What did the statement mean to the Christian church?' But, 'what did it mean to him who first uttered it, and to those by whom it was first heard or read?'"

both of which, in his opinion, take their point of view from the NT. To Goodspeed, the superiority of the historical approach lies in that it keeps the OT "a living thing." Thus, it gives a better and more accurate understanding of God's history and ultimately produces a better apologetic for the Christian faith.[79]

According to Goodspeed, Genesis 1:26-28 is both the beginning and key to all messianic prophesy. "This sublime picture is the condition of all prophecy and of all history, since it represents them as under special divine guidance, and reveals a ground of hope."[80] Goodspeed does not translate the concept of dominion in Genesis 1:26 (וְיִרְדּוּ) as jussive in meaning ("let them rule"), but rather as a purpose statement that he believes implies guaranteed results ("so that they rule"). This purpose is the "gradual taking of possession of a kingdom given to mankind by God . . . . This sublime prophecy, therefore, is the foundation of all that is to follow. The purpose and progress of salvation is made possible because of this primal fact."[81] What follows in the rest of the OT and in various Intertestamental writings is the unfolding of man's destiny to rule a God-given ethical kingdom.[82] In large part, the canonical HB represents multiple layers of interpretation and reinterpretation of various events and traditions over long periods of time by multiple authors ("prophets"). These authors are strongly grounded in the broad Hebrew ideology that God would bring about this perfect and ethical kingdom on earth.[83]

The revelation of this kingdom, according to Goodspeed, unfolds across the

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[79]Goodspeed, *Israel's Messianic Hope*, 4–6.

[80]Ibid., 15.

[81]Ibid., 15.

[82]Goodspeed strongly focuses on the ethical aspects of Hebrew thought. For him, "The fundamental characteristic of Hebrew thought is its ethical optimism." Ibid., 1.

[83]Goodspeed says that the entire Hebrew nation was grounded in and built on the premise that Yahweh "delivers his people from their enemies." Essentially all "prophetic and priestly seers" who are responsible for the writings in the HB interpret and reinterpret all Israel's history to accommodate this ideology. Ibid., 35–36.

story line of the HB by presenting ever-increasing glimmers of hope that march towards this ideal. In Genesis, for example, the prophetic writer highlights the basic struggles of mankind brought on by sin, including such things as labor, death, and temptation. These negative things, however, are given ethical and ideal hope in the prophecy of Genesis 3:14-15.[84] Later in Genesis, the story of Noah represents opposition to corrupt city life by pointing to an ethical and ideal society.[85] The prophet's portrayal of the patriarchs' lives gives hope for an ideal national kingdom.[86] Exodus through Deuteronomy represents the starting point for what is in the final redactor's mind an ethically ideal situation in which Israel obeys God's law, and God provides blessings.[87] This hope is particularly pushed forward by the presentation of the Davidic covenant and in the reigns of David and Solomon. Though their heirs fail to bring about the ideal, the later prophets continue to believe in such a future kingdom and are grounded in the unwavering Hebrew ideology that God must bring it about.[88] This kingdom ideology, in the end, ultimately culminates in the revelation of Jesus as Messiah in the NT. In this regard, the revelation of Jesus is the natural and ultimate outworking of Israel's ideal destiny, as opposed to prophetic prediction.

Willis Beecher. In 1905, Willis Beecher approached OT prophecies from another perspective.[89] In comparison to many at the time, Beecher expresses great skepticism regarding historical-critical theories and their ability to effectively and accurately enhance proper understanding of biblical texts. Beecher is particularly

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[84]Goodspeed, *Israel's Messianic Hope*, 16–18.

[85]Ibid., 18–20.

[86]Ibid., 22–31.

[87]Ibid., 33–45.

[88]Ibid., 47–182.

[89]Willis Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1963).

skeptical of the critical approaches associated with the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*. However, he is also equally skeptical of scholars like Edersheim who allow NT texts or theology to dictate what the OT writings mean. He regards all these approaches as "eisegesis" and argues that though there is conceivably some good in each, they must be avoided to ensure exegetical purity. Instead, he claims the most pure methodology is one in which interpreters examine the Scriptures and let them speak for themselves, as opposed to allowing scholarly or theological constructs to determine meaning. In order to accomplish this goal, he proposes that one must begin with the fundamental question, "What did this mean to an intelligent, devout, uninspired Israelite of the time to which it belongs?"[90] He later adds, "In order to understand the passage, we must bear in mind that it was uttered for thoughtful people, and was suited for their capacities. The great majority was then as now unintelligent and superficial in matters of religious thinking, and we are not to gauge the utterance by the likelihood that such would take an interest in it."[91]

He goes on to distinguish sharply between the inspired writers of the biblical prophecies, who he believes likely understood their own prophecies in light of the distant future and ultimate fate of humanity, with the "uninspired original audience" of the prophecies, who would only understand the message in light of their immediate context. It was to these uninspired audiences that OT prophecies are intended to communicate, so interpreters must take into account that the utterances "were primarily designed for them."[92]

Beecher's ultimate conclusion from his investigation of the OT is that messianic prophecy is doctrine as opposed to prediction.[93] For Beecher, there are not

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[90]Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise*, 14.

[91]Ibid.

[92]Ibid., 15.

[93]Ibid., 175–78. Beecher does believe that there is a certain level at which the prophecies are

numerous messianic predictions that are met in one fulfillment, but rather one prediction that is "repeated and unfolded through successive centuries, with many specifications, and in many forms; always the same in essential character, no matter how it may vary in its outward presentation or in the illustrations through which it is presented."[94]

The one central doctrine that runs throughout both Testaments is that which God gave "to Abraham and through him to all mankind; a promise eternally fulfilled and fulfilling in the history of Israel; and chiefly fulfilled in Jesus Christ, he being that which is principal in the history of Israel."[95] Thus, Beecher sees all biblical history, particularly everything post-Abrahamic, as being a part of one "messianic subject matter" that runs throughout Scripture. While in his view pre-Abrahamic events are not strictly a part of messianic doctrine, they function as supplemental teaching by establishing the need for the messianic promise. Thus, for Beecher, messianism starts with creation and the line of Adam and continues at the forefront of the entire biblical corpus.[96] This naturally means that interpreters must approach scripture by seeking to understand and explain how every passage promotes, move towards, or fulfills the central messianic promise.

W. **O**. **E**. **Osterley**. In a 1908 dissertation, W. O. E. Osterley championed an evolutionary approach to messianism in the OT that was broadly based on

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predictive. But, he finds that predictive prophecy in and of itself is an inadequate categorization. Ultimately he concludes that prophecies teach a particular doctrine that establishes God's purpose with Israel in various stages of history. The result is that while forming Israel's religion at the immediate time, they also reveal a growing fullness that forms a "complete" doctrine of the Messiah.

[94]Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise*, 176–77.

[95]Ibid., 178.

[96]Ibid. Although Beecher is primarily interested in prophecy, it is telling that his theory does little to address wisdom literature and how his all-entailing idea of promise relates to this area of Scripture. He does claim a category that is labeled "collateral lines" of the messianic promise. These lines generally consist of persons, behaviors, objects, and events that are types-anti-types of the messiah. These categories include a wide variety of things including the lives and behaviors of the prophets, Noah, Noah's ark, Lot, and "every predictive prophecy" which does not directly connect with the central promise. This "umbrella" category may be where he would place the wisdom literature, but for the most part, he chooses not to address it.

anthropological, sociological, and comparative religion studies. Osterley argues that the concept of a messiah was initially presented by God in "seed" form in the hearts and minds of mankind "as soon as thought became articulate in man."[97] These seeds were, in essence, seeds of knowledge and experience, which grew over time at a rate compatible with what humans could comprehend at various points of their developmental progression. Over long periods of time, as mankind advanced, the seeds slowly revealed more and more of God's divine plan until its ultimate realization was displayed in Jesus.[98]

Initially, Osterley contends, humans expressed the awareness of these divinely planted seeds through the development of myths.[99] According to Osterley, there are three primary myths, rooted in ANE thought, that form the basis of the subsequent messianic hope found in Christian Scripture. The first myth-is the "*Tehom*-myth." This myth presents "a belief in which the root-idea is the existence of a primeval monster who was the embodiment of the principle of evil, and who was inimical to God and man. This primeval monster is identified with the Ocean."[100] This myth, according to Osterley, was brought about by common human needs, experiences, desires, and instincts. The *Tehom*-myth more specifically highlights the fight against good and evil in the world. The antagonists in these myths, and the chaos that they bring about, eventually lead to the hope of a hero to combat them. This is the initial birthplace of the messianic idea.[101]

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[97]W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Evolution of the Messianic Idea* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1908), 11.

[98]Ibid., 11ff.

[99]Ibid., 11–34. Myths, according to Oesterley, have two parts; an idea, and the way an idea is expressed. The idea itself is true regardless of the way it is expressed. The concept of a messiah, more specifically, was something that was true from the onset of humanity, but the myths used to articulate the human understanding of that truth were not. It was only gradually as the understanding of mankind advanced that human beings were capable of realizing the ultimate fulfillment of this concept in Jesus Christ.

[100]Ibid., 41.

[101]Ibid., 47.

The second myth Osterley cites is what he refers to as the "Yahweh-myth." In a similar fashion to the *Tehom*-myth, the central characters in the Yahweh-myth are water-based chaos monsters that represent evil and basic human needs. In response to this evil, the Yahweh-myth represents "a belief in the existence of a great Divine-Human Helper, who, by subduing the dragon, prepared the way for the presence of men on the earth; these men he made, and furnished them with material blessings. Later ages recognized in him- Yahweh."[102] This myth served to prepare the way for a divine savior who would subdue all enemies and establish blessing and care for humanity.

The third myth Osterley identifies is the "paradise myth." Based on anthropological studies, Osterley theorizes that it is a universal tendency among humans to desire ultimate happiness, and that failure to permanently experience this happiness naturally will

> crystallize into day-dreams; such day-dreams will in the course of time assume a more or less definite form, and when communicated to men by each other- which is also a very natural proceeding- a fixed tradition tends to be developed; and such a tradition would inevitably come to be regarded as the echo of something that actually happened some long time ago. This step, when once reached, would form a tangible basis upon which to build superstructures, and men would yearn for the happy time that once existed, and by degrees there would be formulated a definite hope that in time to come that happy period would repeat itself; and then, finally the hope would develop into a fixed expectation.[103]

This particular myth prepares humanity for the concept of an ideal kingdom brought about through a messiah.

Based on comparative religions studies, Ostereley believes that the three initial "base myths" cited above represent a unified sampling of basic universal religious ideas prevalent throughout the ANE. This, in his perspective, indicates that the myths represent universal ideals, desires, and experiences planted by God in humanity for the purpose of

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[102]Oesterley, *The Evolution of the Messianic Idea*, 107.

[103]Ibid., 125.

revealing Jesus as Messiah.[104] Throughout the pre-exilic period of Israel's history, Osterley theorizes that these common ANE traditions were both contextualized and passed down orally. Later, they were further contextualized and supplemented during the exilic and post-exilic periods, particularly by elements and experiences stemming from Israel's captivity in Babylon. Therefore, the traces of the original myths are only currently present in the OT in a type of faint echo as opposed to the full original myth.[105]

From Israelite and Christian specific perspectives, *Tehom* eventually evolved into the concept of Satan. The desired divine helper (*Heilbringer*) was first identified as Yahweh, and eventually as the Messiah. The idyllic paradise that was longed for eventually presented itself as an earthly kingdom in the OT and later as an everlasting kingdom of God in the NT.[106] Thus, God used the development and contextualization of these "base myths" to reveal the truth that Jesus is the Messiah.

Wilhelm Vischer. In his 1936 work *The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ*, Wilhelm Vischer makes the case that the NT revelation of Jesus as the Messiah should be the driving force for understanding the message of the OT. He contends that when one starts with the conviction that Jesus is the Christ, one must naturally conclude that all the words of the OT "look beyond themselves and to the One in the New in whom alone they are true."**[107]**

For Vischer, in light of the NT revelation of Jesus as Messiah, there is little room for understanding the words of the OT in any other way than pointing literally and directly to Christ. This view, Vischer argues, represents the hermeneutical approach of

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[104]Oesterley, *The Evolution of the Messianic Idea*, 168–70.

[105]Ibid., 41.

[106]Ibid., 170–267.

[107]Wilhelm Vischer, *The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ*, trans. A. B. Crabtree, 3rd ed. (London: Lutterworth Press, 1936), 7.

the apostles. Thus, to take the apostolic witness of the NT seriously, Vischer contends it

is impossible to conclude any other hermeneutical approach is employed except that

which recognizes that the OT is literally fulfilled in Jesus. This is the key to arriving at a

proper OT hermeneutic:

> In their preaching of Jesus the Messiah, the apostles in no way desire to declare anything else than that which is written in the Old Testament. Nor do they wish to give to "the life of Jesus" in the Old Testament an arbitrary Christian interpretation, and still less to assert the embodiment of some "Christ-idea." Anyone who construes the declarations of the New Testament as arbitrary or mythological interpretations should realize that he thereby ascribes to the witness a standpoint which they would have held to be the direst blasphemy.[108]

Thus, like Edersheim, Beecher, and others before him, Vischer is leery

regarding modern scientific and critical approaches to Scripture, particularly those aimed

at restoring historical events or texts. He regards these methods as intrusions that read

into the canonical biblical account modern ideologies that are foreign to both the authors

and original audiences of both Testaments. For him, such theories distort the true

intended revelation of God. Ultimately Jesus Christ alone is the fundamental revelation of

God and is beyond both logical reason and historical events. He is the source and goal of

all history, the one who is "the truth before which the historical facts of all ages stand or

fall."[109] The purpose of the OT, then, is not to prove "necessary truths of reason," but

rather is to testify that Jesus is the Messiah.[110] The Apostles are the conduit through

which this message is delivered by God, so the only way to properly access divine

revelation is by taking into account the canon as it stands and by interpreting it by its

"own characteristic sense, however strange this may seem to our modern way of

thought."[111]

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[108]Vischer, *The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ*, 11.

[109]Ibid., 16.

[110]Ibid., 16.

[111]Ibid., 29. Here Vischer acknowledges the influence of Karl Barth on his thinking. He claims that Barth's "new orientation" has placed Protestant theology in the proper position to be interpreted correctly.

Thus, Vischer believes that the OT and NT form an inseparable Christocentric unity. They both reveal a messiah who is Jesus Christ. It is, however, a hidden message. A reader will not be able to fully discover this message in the OT or the NT through scientific analysis or historical-grammatical hermeneutics. Rather, it can only be ascertained when the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of the unbeliever and reveals the hidden message of Christ that runs throughout both Testaments. "Is it then impossible to prove from the Scripture that Jesus is the Christ? Yes; for this proof is only given by the Holy Spirit."[112]

Vischer's hermeneutical approach to the OT leads him to frequently find Christ in the pages of the OT. One example is his approach to the story of Jacob in Genesis 32. Here he concludes that the being Jacob wrestles with is Jesus Christ in veiled form.[113] Vischer reasons this because, for him, this story represents the central story line of both Testaments:

> In Jesus, and only in Him, does the inconceivable happen, that the Almighty gives Himself into the power of men. However fiercely reason may revolt against this, this and nothing else is the message of Jesus, the Crucified. Wherever this message is preached, there is Israel, these men are summoned to wrestle with the maker of Heaven and earth that His wrath may be averted and His blessing given to those to whom He has promised it in His word.[114]

There are numerous other similar examples of Vischer's Christocentric approach to understanding the OT. His general view, much like Hengstenberg's, is still influential in current evangelical circles.

Ivan Engenell. Although other scholars previously utilized knowledge of comparative religions to try and shed light on messianism in the OT, the discovery of

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[112]Vischer, *The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ*, 33.

[113]Ibid., 153. "And now we are able with Luther to say, 'without the slightest contradiction this man was not an angel, but our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the eternal God and yet was to become a man whom the Jews would crucify'" (ibid.).

[114]Ibid., 153–54.

Ugaritic documents at Ras Shamra starting in the 1920's only fueled interest in this area

of study. A variety of scholars, including Gressmann, Schmidt, Mowinckel, and Hooke

either consulted these newly discovered ANE texts or other previously discovered texts.

These documents were then used to provide information that could help understand

messianism in the OT.[115] But the scattered findings of their works, as well as the works of

many others, were synthesized in Ivan Engenell's 1943 *Studies in Divine Kingship in the

Ancient Near East*.[116] Engenell both combines and builds on a wide range of previous

studies on various Egyptian, Hittite, Summerian-Akkadian, and Ugaritic texts. His goal is

to shed light on sacral kingship and its role in the development of messianic tendencies

and ideals in ancient Israel.

While little attention is given directly to discussing a Christian understanding

of messiah in the OT, Engenell's work is important because it brings focus on the role of

sacral kingship in the ANE to the forefront of studies on messianism in ancient Israel.

Engnell presents evidence from a wide variety of ANE kingship texts that he believes

shares striking parallels with both OT and NT concepts of messiah. The divinity of the

king, for example, his position as the "son of god," the suffering, death, and resurrection

enacted in various enthronement festivals, priestly duties, the ushering in of a righteous

and everlasting kingdom, the defeat of all enemies, and other basic features of Egyptian,

Sumerian-Akkadian, and Hittite kingship, in Engenell's view, all pointed to wide spread

ANE expectation of some form of an ideal, righteous, deliverer. It also pointed towards

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[115]For example, S. H. Hooke, "The Babylonian New Year Festival," *Journal of the Manchester Egyptian and Oriental Society* 13 (1927): 29–38; idem, "Some Parallels with the Gilgamesh Story," *Folklore* 45, no. 3 (1934): 195–211; idem, ed., *Myth, Ritual and Kingship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958); Hugo Gressmann, *Der Ursprung der Israelitisch-Jüdischen Eschatologie* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1905); idem, *Der Messias* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1929); Sigmund Mowinckel, "Til Uttrykket 'Jahves Tjener.' Streiflys Fra Ugarit 2," *NTT* 43 (1942): 24–26; Hans Schmidt, *Die Psalmen* (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1934).

[116]Ivan Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship In The Ancient Near East* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1943). Engnell says his work is the assembling of "scattered observations of details into a concatenation of indications that shows the role of sacral kingship also in Israel" (174).

the desire for a divine kingdom ruler who is closely bound to a national deity. This common expectancy, for him, is the root of Israelite messianic expectancy. Engenell further argues that the newly discovered Ugaritic texts discovered at Ras Shamra demonstrate similar Canaanite tendencies:

> We have thus also in Ras Shamra found most of the elements displayed in the antecedent: the king divine of origin and through enthronement, his identity with the high god and, in particular, with the fructification deity, having power over rains and crops; his being the object of the cult, his functioning in the cult, as *zānin*, etc., in divination and purification rites, and especially the annual festival as suffering, dying, and reviving, and as performer of the hierogamy. We have seen him in sham fights, and in the ideology of dragon-killer and rescuer-god, as ideal law performer, and have met with his collective responsibility, with his insignia of power, and with his substitutes the bull and the lamb.[117]

Thus, Engnell concludes "it must be granted that the Ugaritic and thus on the whole the Canaanite conceptions of the divine kingship are to a very large extent a counter part of divine kingship in the surrounding cultures."[118] This statement is significant in that it grounds messianism in ancient Israel within the wider context of ANE ideology. More specifically, it ties ancient Israelite messianism to the concept of sacral kingship. This conclusion, in large part, helped pave the way for Sigmund Mowinckel's classic study on the topic.

Sigmund Mowinckel. The most influential modern study on understanding messiah in the OT is Sigmund Mowinckel's 1956 work, *He That Cometh*.[119] Originally given as a series of lectures that were later published in book form, *He That Cometh* is still considered by many to be the most extensive and important study of messianic concepts in the OT. Mowinckel's hermeneutical approach to understanding messiah in the OT is not reflective of any one particular ideology or methodology. However, he is

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[117]Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship*, 173.

[118]Ibid.

[119]Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*.

most influenced by the thought of Gunkel and the "history of religions" school, as well as the "myth and ritual" school of Hooke, Osterley, and Engnell.

Mowinckel's main premise is that the concept of a messiah is a tradition that developed in ancient Israel over many centuries, and for most of the OT period, pertained only to immediate, human kingship. The roots of this tradition are embedded in the ANE concept of an ideal, sacral king. Based on comparative religion study, Mowinckel concludes that throughout the ANE the fundamental role of every king was to perfectly submit to the will of his deity, and through this obedience, he was to be the channel through which unceasing blessings would flow. This naturally would lead to a utopian kingdom on earth.[120]

This ideal standard of kingship, however, in time proved too lofty a task for any Israelite monarch to satisfy and eventually came to haunt the office. Anytime a crisis of any nature ensued, the goal of an ideal kingdom ceased to be, and the reigning monarch was considered at fault. Therefore, the hope for the ideal king and kingdom always remained with "the next ruler" throughout the storyline of the OT.[121]

The Babylonian Exile, in particular, presented a major obstacle for the hope of an ideal monarch and earthly kingdom. It was in this specific context that those in various prophetic circles, particularly those associated with Second and Third Isaiah, began to lay the foundation of what would become an eschatological, supernatural, messianic hope.[122] This shift towards "eschatology" began when Deutro- Isaiah "set the future hope in a new light by the religious character he gave to it. He bases the hope of national restoration entirely on religion . . . namely Yahweh's epiphany, His coming as king to triumph over

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[120]Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 21–95.

[121]Ibid., 96–97.

[122]The use of terms such as "Second Isaiah," "Third Isaiah," and "Deutro-Isaiah" should not be taken as a reflection of my views on the authorship of the book. I simply use these terms here because Mowinckel does.

His enemies and His kingly rule or kingdom."[123]

Deutro- Isaiah's message, for Mowinckel, is essentially a mythological representation of the restoration of cosmic order, a time when things would return to their original state and Yahweh himself would reign. This message was technically not eschatological in the strict sense because the author did not realize the ultimate and supra-historical character of his prophecies. Rather, he expected them to be fulfilled in Cyrus' defeat of Babylon. His message became truly eschatological when it was later interpreted from a dualistic perspective that was highly influenced by Persian culture, particularly Persian apocalyptic literature. This dualism strongly distinguished between "this world" and "the eternal world to come," a theme also strongly reflected in the apocalyptic literature of early Judaism.[124]

This shift towards dualistic thought subsequently caused a tension that Mowinckel believes created two concepts of the Messiah by the Intertestamental period.[125] In most "prophetic wisdom circles" there was hope in a primordial, eschatological messiah, most often referred to as "the son of man." This messiah was frequently reflected in the pages of Jewish apocalyptic literature.[126] Among the majority of common people and rabbis, however, the older idea of an ideal human king was still prevalent. This concept appealed to those specific people because it provided immediate hope for the everyday pressures of foreign rule, economic difficulty, and the invasion of

[123]Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 261.

[124]Ibid., 261–79.

[125]"[T]here were two tendencies, originally quite distinct, but now fused with each other, so the conception of the Messiah in later Judaism manifests the same double character. The one side is national, political, this worldly with particularistic tendencies, though universalistic when at its best. The other is super-terrestrial, other worldly, rich in religious content and mythological concepts, universalistic, numinous, at home in the sphere of the 'Holy' and the 'wholly Other.'" Ibid., 281.

[126]Ibid., 346–450.

foreign religions and customs.[127] The presence of these two competing messianic concepts, consequently, was the context in which Jesus lived his earthly life.

In sum, Mowinckel argues that it cannot "be taken for granted that Jesus simply took over the ideas about the Messiah (in the strict sense) which were to be found in the Old Testament...clearly He did not."[128] Rather, "Jesus adopted other biblical or late Jewish ideas, which had, perhaps, originally no connection with the figure of the Messiah, and combined them with the Jewish Messianic ideal, that He might use it to express his own thought of His person and vocation."[129] Overall, Mowinckel's methodology for understanding messianism in the OT can be broadly labeled as a "history of religions" approach. It is heavily dependent on various historical reconstructions and development, ANE ideology, and an understanding of Jewish and apostolic ideals and expectations present during the time period of Jesus' earthly life.

The influence of Mowinckel's work on contemporary views of messiah in the OT cannot be underestimated. Almost every work produced since, in some way, has been done so in light of Mowinckel's study. Some scholars chose to build on his conclusions. Others chose to push back against his findings and move in other directions. Regardless, it seems that all writings on this topic are influenced to some degree by his analysis. And out of that influence, several evangelical trends have emerged or are currently emerging.

Methodology and Research Proposal

To evaluate contemporary evangelical approaches to understanding messiah in the OT, one must first identify modern methodologies that are prevalent or that are becoming prevalent among evangelicals. The difficulty of this task is that it is subjective in nature.

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[127]Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 282ff.

[128]Ibid., 8.

[129]Ibid., 9.

Nevertheless, Rydelnik's recent study is helpful in recognizing broad evangelical trends. Although he does not list all of the same categories, his identification of current evangelical tendencies largely aligns with the findings of this dissertation and thus helps confirm its categorization. The five broad contemporary evangelical methodological approaches to messiah in the OT that this work evaluates are (1) Christocentric; (2) Epigenetic; (3) Second Temple Exegetical Methodology; (4) Canonical; and (5) Developmental.[130]

Chapters 2-6 of this dissertation will indentify and analyze one of these contemporary evangelical hermeneutical approaches to understanding messiah in the OT. Unless otherwise noted, each individual chapter will address a particular approach to understanding messiah in the OT in the following manner: First, it will define the broad category under consideration. It will also identify contemporary influential persons, primarily evangelicals, who hold this approach. Their key publications on the topic will also be listed. Second, it will identify general distinctions and characteristics of the position under consideration. Third, it will identify one or two prominent representatives of the view being examined and will isolate their specific views and argumentation within the broad category. Fourth, these individual positions will be analyzed. This analysis will be two-fold. First, it will seek to identify and verify the strengths of each particular position for shedding light on understanding the Messiah in the OT. Next, it

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[130]Rydelnik identifies the following categories as contemporary Christian positions for understanding messianic fulfillment of Old Testament passages: "Historical Fulfillment," "Dual Fulfillment," "Typical Fulfillment," "Progressive (Epigenetic) Fulfillment," "Relecture Fulfillment," "Midrash or Pesher Fulfillment," and "Direct Fulfillment." I have chosen not to address what he labels "Historical Fulfillment" in this work. This decision is based on the fact that it is typically held only by critical scholars who generally do not align with the definition of evangelical as given on page 4 of this work. What Rydelnik calls "Dual Fulfillment," or what is commonly referred to as *sensus plenior*, and what he labels as "Relecture," are, as Walter Kaiser accurately points out, essentially the same category. Therefore, both will be considered synonymous in this work. These items, along with typology, factor into the methodological approaches of various positions in this dissertation and are therefore too broad to constitute a single category in and of themselves. So, instead of being given individual chapters in this dissertation, each category will be addressed in various chapters as is appropriate. See Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope*, 27–33; Walter Kaiser, "Biblical Theology and the Interpretation of Messianic Texts," *AUSS* 34, no. 2 (1996): 200.

will also seek to identify and verify any deficiencies of the approach for understanding messiah in the OT. Fifth, a brief exegetical example will be provided from one scholar holding the broad approach under consideration, offering an opportunity to see how an individual adhering to this perspective approaches understanding messiah in a specific OT passage. Last, a brief summary statement will be made regarding the overall category in each chapter for understanding messiah in the OT.

In chapter 7, based on the results of the analysis of the various approaches examined, a brief hermeneutical model for understanding messiah in the OT will be presented. This model will primarily be formed by drawing on the study of the positions evaluated in previous chapters. The intended outcome of this dissertation is two fold. First, it is to identify and evaluate current evangelical hermeneutical approaches for understanding messiah in the OT. Second, based on the findings of the evaluations, it is to offer an evangelical hermeneutical approach for understanding messiah in the OT.

CHAPTER 2

CHRISTOCENTRIC APPROACH

One widely accepted evangelical hermeneutical approach to understanding
messiah in the OT can be broadly labeled as "Christocentric." Generally, this
methodological approach can be defined as a hermeneutic that seeks to read the OT in
light of the NT revelation of Jesus as the Messiah. This hermeneutical approach gives
particular attention to how the OT storyline progresses towards Christ. It mimics the
hermeneutical approach of the apostles who, through the illumination of the Holy Spirit,
understood Christ to be the ultimate fulfillment of all the OT. Thus, Christ provides the
OT with its definitive, objective meaning and hermeneutical key. As a result, advocates
of this position often tend to find a significant amount of indication of the Messiah in the
OT.

This hermeneutical approach to understanding messiah in the OT may also be
referred to as "gospel-centered," "apostolic," "reformational," "redemptive-historical,"
"reformed," "covenantal," or even more broadly as "dogmatic," or "biblical-
theological."[1] There is a wide range of contemporary evangelical advocates of this
position.[2]

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[1] Dennis Johnson gives this approach many similar labels. Dennis Johnson, *Him We Proclaim:
Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2007), 14.

[2] A sampling includes Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom: A Christian Interpretation
of the Old Testament* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 1981); idem, *Preaching The Whole Bible as
Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: W. B.
Eerdmans, 2000); idem, *The Goldsworthy Trilogy* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2000); idem,
According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press,
2002); idem, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006); idem, "The
Kingdom of God as Hermeneutic Grid," *SBJT* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 4–15; idem, "Wisdom and Its
Literature in Biblical-Theological Context," *SBJT* 15, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 42–55; idem, *Christ-Centered
Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012); Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*; Michael
Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010); Tremper Longman

Characteristics

There are several general distinctions of a Christocentric hermeneutical approach to the OT. One key characteristic is a low view of the Enlightenment's impact on evangelical hermeneutics. For those holding a Christocentric hermeneutic, the Enlightenment represents a distinct, humanistic movement away from traditional apostolic interpretive approaches to the OT.[3] It also represents a distinct departure from the hermeneutical approaches to understanding Christ in the OT as practiced by the Reformers.

A second, basic characteristic of those holding a Christocentric approach to Christ in the OT is an emphasis on the necessity of divine transcendence in hermeneutics. Goldsworthy asserts, "Modern theology is marked by the revolt against an emphasis on transcendence, a revolt that began at the Enlightenment."[4] This revolt runs against the

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III, "The Messiah: Explorations in the Law and Writings," in *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, ed. Stanley Porter (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 13–34; idem, *Immanuel in Our Place: Seeing Christ in Israel's Worship*, The Gospel According to the Old Testament (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001); David Murray, *Jesus on Every Page* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013); Vern Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," *WTJ* 48 (1986): 241–79; idem *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1995); idem, *Science and Hermeneutics: Implications of Scientific Method for Biblical Interpretation*, in vol. 6 of Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Academic Books, 1988); idem, *God Centered Biblical Interpretation* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1999); idem, *Inerrancy and the Gospels: A God-Centered Approach to the Challenges of Harmonization* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012); Mark Strom, *Days Are Coming: Exploring Biblical Patterns* (Sydney: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989); Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975); Edmund Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2013); idem, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003); Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988); idem, *Preaching Christ From the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999); Iain Duguid, *Is Jesus in the Old Testament?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2013); Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010); R. Albert Mohler, "Studying the Scriptures and Finding Jesus," in *The Scriptures Testify about Me*, ed. D. A. Carson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 11–32; D. A. Carson, "Getting Excited About Melchizedek," in *The Scriptures Testify About Me*, ed. D. A. Carson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 171–72.

[3]While most evangelicals claim this shift began with the Enlightenment, others see it beginning much earlier. Goldsworthy is one of those seeing the shift occur before the Enlightenment. He labels this shift away from apostolic hermeneutics as the "eclipse of the gospel," and sees it slowly coming about across various periods of time. He devotes a large portion of his work on gospel-centered hermeneutics to tracing this pattern. See Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 87–180.

[4]Ibid., 121.

grain of biblical epistemology and the necessity of the Holy Spirit's role in the

illumination of objective truth. Goldsworthy explains that a proper, biblical

> interpretation of Scripture proceeds from the revelation of God in Christ outward to
> the humanity of the biblical texts. This could be referred to as a hermeneutic 'from
> above.' Any attempt at a hermeneutic 'from below,' moving in the opposite
> direction from human reason to an assessment of Christ and revelation, is
> inconsistent with Evangelical interpretation.[5]

According to Goldsworthy, this shift from divine transcendence towards the elevation of

human reasoning results in a categorical misunderstanding of Christ in the OT. A leading

contributor to this misunderstanding was brought about by the rise of historical criticism

and the focus on "scientific" analysis of texts. In contrast, many of those holding a

Christocentric hermeneutic emphasize the right, power, and need for God to provide the

proper interpretation of the OT. He does this through both divine written revelation in the

NT and the illumination of believers by the Holy Spirit. This principle holds true even if

a particular interpretation of the OT goes against human reasoning.

A third characteristic of a Christocentric hermeneutic is the recognition of a

tightly bound biblical metanarrative that runs throughout both Testaments. This

metanarrative provides a framework for understanding Christ in the OT via one grand,

redemptive-historical story. The center and focal point of this story is Christ. The

progress of this redemptive storyline is most often ascertained through biblical theology.

Frequently, this presupposition leads to the utilization of a number of hermeneutical tools

to understand Christ in the OT. Of particular note in this area is the utilization of

typology. Further, though not always the case, those holding to the tenets of covenant or

Reformation theology also make up a large portion of those holding to a Christocentric

hermeneutic.

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[5]Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 91–92.

Analysis of Specific Approaches

This chapter will examine two advocates of this position. The two advocates are Graeme Goldsworthy and Willem VanGemeren. These individuals are selected for several reasons. First, they both represent varying degrees of emphasis and approach within the broad Christocentric hermeneutic for understanding Christ in the OT. Second, both men focus on hermeneutical issues in the academy and their practical application in the evangelical church. Third, each represents different evangelical institutions that are influential in training and equipping evangelical pastors. And fourth, both men have written extensive and influential works on this topic.

Graeme Goldsworthy

The first contemporary proponent of a Christocentric understanding of Christ in the OT to be examined is Graeme Goldsworthy. Goldsworthy views the gospel of Jesus Christ, as it plays out through the kingdom of God across the storyline of Scripture, as the central framework for understanding messiah in the OT.

Major presuppositions. Goldsworthy believes that evangelical interpreters of Scripture must methodically consider hermeneutical models for interpretation. He asserts that many evangelicals fail to examine their preconceived assumptions and attitudes towards understanding truth, particularly in light of progressive biblical revelation. This failure most often results in corruption of the biblical-hermeneutical principles intended by God to guide the correct reading and understanding of Scripture.[6] Goldsworthy, in line with Carl F. H. Henry, sees three broad hermeneutical assumptions that can drive Christian interpretation of Scripture.[7] For Goldsworthy, his hermeneutical preference is

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[6]Goldsworthy sees a clear distinction between OT exegesis and hermeneutics. For him, exegesis is a historical-grammatical approach to Scripture, ultimately resulting in what the words of the text convey to the original audience that received it. Hermeneutics, on the other hand, is concerned with theological and normative issues, resulting in how modern believers are to understand the "ultimate meaning" of a text, particularly in light of the advent of Christ and his final fulfillment of all Scripture.

[7]Henry classifies these stances as "Fideism," "Empiricism," and "Presuppositionalism." See

"a form of presuppositionalism," which he believes accurately aligns with that of both Scripture itself as well as the Reformers.

Goldsworthy more narrowly defines his basic hermeneutical assumption as "presuppositional realism." Such "realism" gives primary focus to the biblical portrayal of human reason and understanding as corrupted by sin. He notes that this position ". . . is required by the Bible's realism in its teaching about the effects of sin and by the sovereign grace of God in revelation and salvation."[8] Goldsworthy specifically believes that God always desires to communicate with humans in a clear, understandable way. In fact, God's message is unambiguous both in creation and in the words of Scripture. However, sin dramatically disrupts this communication. Specifically for Goldsworthy, the result of sin on human thinking is the "declaration of independence from God and the suppression of His truth."[9] Goldsworthy labels this post-fall human limitation as "noetic," stating that it dramatically sets both the human mind and will against the ways and thinking of God. This state makes a clear understanding of God's objective truth impossible.

For Goldsworthy, failure to fully grasp the consequences of sin on human reason can eventually lead to what he describes as "snake-think." This term is born out of the serpent's corrupt philosophical approach to God's clear, objective truth in the Garden of Eden narrative. Such a methodology involves the willful denial of the need for God to provide a rational framework for humans to gauge and comprehend reality. Goldsworthy believes such rejection, in due course, elevates human wisdom to the position of determining objective truth.[10]

Carl F. H. Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 38ff.; Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 183.

[8]Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 184.

[9]Ibid., 60.

[10]Ibid., 61–62.

While this type of imposition on truth started in Genesis 3, it has progressively achieved a more detailed expression through subsequent humanistic-centered philosophical developments, particularly those brought about during the Enlightenment. Three pillars of corrupt thinking indicative of "snake think" are "1. If God is there, he does not communicate truth. 2. We do not need God to reveal the rational framework for understanding reality. 3. Human reasoning is autonomous, and the ultimate arbitrator of truth and falsity, right and wrong."[11] When applied to the interpretation of Scripture, the consequence of such humanistic rationale is the failure to acknowledge that truth must be understood on God's terms. Any hermeneutical approach that denies God's role in providing the appropriate framework for understanding truth is established on a rational, humanistic epistemological approach to objective reality. This outlook elevates human reason alone to be the ultimate, objective, accurate way of understanding Scripture. Similar hermeneutical methodologies, in Goldsworthy's view, represent the current evangelical majority approach to understanding Christ in the OT.[12]

However, a proper biblical hermeneutic for understanding messiah in the OT starts with the acknowledgment that God alone possesses the authority to dictate how humans should understand truth as it is presented in Scripture. Since Christian Scripture teaches that Christ is both God and the ultimate fulfillment of God's promises, Goldsworthy believes the foundational hermeneutical consideration for the entire bible can be summed up in one question: "What do you think about Jesus Christ?"[13] For evangelicals who answer this question by acknowledging belief in Jesus as both God and the Messiah, the implication of this confession is that Jesus is the ultimate mediator

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[11]Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 61.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Goldsworthy notes, "The hermeneutical question about the Bible correlates with the question, 'What do you think of Christ?' The authority of Christ appropriates the spoken/written word in the Bible. The hermeneutic centre of the Bible is therefore Jesus in his being and in his saving acts—the Jesus of the gospel." Ibid., 62.

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between God and man. And because he is mediator, by necessity, Christ "must mediate the meaning of the whole of God's communication to us."[14] In particular, because of the noetic effects of the fall, just as Christ alone must provide salvific redemption, he alone must also provide epistemological redemption. Thus, the revelation of Jesus Christ as the Messiah is the necessary key for understanding all ultimate, rational, and objective truth in Scripture.[15]

This recognition of Jesus as the arbitrator of God's timeless truth leads Goldsworthy to identify several important presuppositions that should drive evangelical understanding of Christ in the OT. First, Jesus, as revealed and presented in the NT, should be both the starting point and focus of hermeneutical approaches to every part of Scripture.[16] Second, Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of the entire OT, and, as a result, the OT must be read in this way. This principle is the position of the apostles and is exemplified throughout the NT. Though it plays out in different, complex ways, the apostles model a broad hermeneutical framework that operates under the conviction that Christ is the center and fulfillment of every verse in the OT. Thus, the apostles present believers of all ages with a hermeneutical blueprint for interpreting every OT scripture in light of Christ. This hermeneutic, according to Goldsworthy, is the only biblical, Christian approach to Scripture. Third, because Christ is the center of all the divine revelation presented in Scripture, both Testaments naturally form a coherent metanarrative that progressively plays out across the canonical story line. Understanding this metanarrative is essential for understanding messiah in the OT.

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[14]Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 62.

[15]Ibid., 60–61. Christ and his gospel are also the guide to understanding all of reality: "Christian theism maintains that these presuppositions of the gospel are foundational truths that stand the tests of having explanatory power for all human experience and having rational consistency." Ibid.

[16]"The hermeneutic centre of the Bible is therefore Jesus in his being and saving acts—the Jesus of the gospel . . . 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 . . . 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." Ibid., 62–63.

Methodology. For Goldsworthy, the best approach to understanding Christ as both the focus and "hermeneutical norm" of all canonical Christian Scripture is through the perspective of biblical theology. Goldsworthy concludes that a true evangelical biblical theology should be defined as "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 whole Bible as God's testimony to Christ. It is therefore from start to finish, a study of Christ."[17] A focus on this kind of Christological-Biblical theology naturally demands identifying a central theme in Scripture by which one can understand the progressive revelation of Christ.[18] The framework that Goldsworthy advocates is the kingdom of God.[19]

The kingdom of God in a Christ-centered biblical theology starts as early as creation, in Goldsworthy's view. It then moves progressively across various biblical epochs to the first advent of Christ then all the way to new creation.[20] Goldsworthy

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[17]Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 40.

[18]Here, Goldsworthy is critical of scholars such as Hasel and Greidanus who approach biblical theology through a wide variety of "longitudinal themes" that unite both Testaments. Goldsworthy believes there is validity in such "multiplex approaches" to biblical theology for identifying hermeneutical principles and themes that unite the OT and NT in a variety of ways. However, his contention is that to see such multifaceted themes as the definitive approach to biblical theology fails to provide a specific coherent center around which to understand and structure Scripture. See Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 101–10; Gerhard Hasel, "Proposals for a Canonical Biblical Theology," *AUSS* 34, no. 1 (1996): 23–33; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*.

[19]"If we conclude that it is true to say that the Scriptures are all about Christ, then he provides the hermeneutical grid for all of Scripture. This demands explication as to how we can discern the significance of Christ as the center and interpretive key to the whole Bible. Once we establish the relationship of Jesus to the all-pervasive message of the kingdom of God we can access the kingdom's role as a hermeneutical grid for the whole Bible." Goldsworthy, "The Kingdom of God as Hermeneutic Grid," 6. Also, see Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom*.

[20]"The Old Testament gives ample evidence of the centrality of the reign of God and the role of kingship in Israel in relationship to God's rule. These two dimensions are seen in the creation account of Genesis 1. The implications of creation *ex nihilo* cannot be avoided. God is reigning Lord . . . that Yahweh reigns . . . expresses the rule of God in creation, in salvation, and in the affairs of the nations. These are hardly abstract notions." Goldsworthy, "The Kingdom of God as Hermeneutic Grid," 8. Goldsworthy also notes that "the biblical story from beginning to end is one of God's active rule, however much it is challenged, from creation to new creation." Ibid., 4.

acknowledges the difficulty of identifying the kingdom of God as *the* central theme

across the wide spectrum of Scripture, particularly the OT.[21] In response to such

difficulties, he advocates a "deliberately reductionist" approach to this theme across the

storyline of Scripture. A large part of this "deliberately reductionist" approach involves a

broad definition of God's kingdom. Goldsworthy generically defines the kingdom of God

as "God's people in God's place under God's rule."[22] Goldsworthy justifies his opinion

by identifying one common denominator undergirding all aspects of God's kingdom

throughout Scripture. This undergirding theme is the relationship between God, as ruler

of all creation, and man as the pinnacle of that creation.[23] For Goldsworthy, Christ

incarnate is the "perfect expression of this relationship," in both unity and seeming

disunity across Scripture, always working progressively towards uniting God and his

people in his place.[24]

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[21]Charles Scobie rightly criticizes proposed single "centers" of biblical theology such as Goldsworthy's kingdom of God. "While the kingdom of God is a dominant theme in the Synoptics, the actual phrase does not occur in the OT and plays very little role in the rest of the NT . . . . It is difficult to understand the obsession with finding one single theme or 'center' for OT or NT theology, and more so for an entire Biblical Theology. It is widely held today that the quest for a single center has failed." Charles H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 86–87. Goldsworthy himself acknowledges the problematic nature of the failure of any one proposed center of biblical theology to gain scholarly consensus. However, he does little to address this issue, particularly in relation to his own proposal for the kingdom of God. For him, the centrality of kingdom is something intuitively ascertained based on the ultimate revelation and perspective of the NT. This type of hermeneutical circle or spiral is recognized and advocated by Goldsworthy across his writings as necessary because of the revelation of Christ. Also, see Charles H. Scobie, "The Structure of Biblical Theology," *TynBul* 42, no. 1 (1991): 179ff.; Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 108.

[22]Goldsworthy, "The Kingdom of God as Hermeneutic Grid," 9; idem, *The Goldsworthy Trilogy*, 53–54.

[23]Goldsworthy, "The Kingdom of God as Hermeneutic Grid," 9; idem, *According to Plan*, 232.

[24]"The doctrine of the incarnation indicates that Jesus is God, the people of God, and the place where God and humanity meet perfectly (Immanuel). He is, thus, within himself the kingdom of God perfectly, if representatively, expressed . . . . The gospel of the kingdom thus revealed provides a hermeneutical grid for all reality, which, of course, includes the Bible. The ultimate significance of every relationship, every fact, every event, is found in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Nothing has ultimate meaning apart from him. And, in all relationships the operative structure is unity/disunity." Goldsworthy, "The Kingdom of God as Hermeneutic Grid," 10–11.

In line with Vos and Clowney, Goldsworthy sees this Christ-centered kingdom progressively revealed across Scripture in various epochs grounded in covenant. However, Goldsworthy challenges Vos' and Clowney's redemptive epoch framework for understanding Scripture in significant ways. Vos and Clowney, for example, see distinct redemptive epochs running from Adam to Moses to Christ.[25] However, Goldsworthy challenges the validity of this structure on four grounds:

> The first is the tendency to see Moses and Sinai as a new beginning in a way that can separate it from the promises to Abraham. The second is the failure to give full significance to the glories of David and Solomon and to recognize that 1 Kings 3-10 is an important fulfillment of the promise to Abraham. The third is the downplaying of the role of prophetic eschatology and the way it recapitulates the progress of salvation history from the beginning to David's son and the temple in Zion. The fourth is that it does not, in my opinion, provide the best way for a working typology.[26]

Specifically for Goldsworthy, Vos' and Clowney's epoch schema ultimately falls prey to a criticism that covenant theologians charge dispensational theologians with—drawing too much distinction between various stages of redemptive history to the detriment of the unfolding redemptive metanarrative across Scripture.[27] Goldsworthy believes that the promise of salvation runs through the entire Scripture, even when not explicitly stated.[28] More specifically, redemption finds its "main expression in the promise to Abraham."[29]

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[25]Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 36; Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery*; idem, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961); idem, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003); Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 168; idem, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 244.

[26]Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 168–69.

[27]For a covenant theologian's critique of Dispensationalists, see Vern S. Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publish Company, 1993).

[28]In discussing Christopher Wright's view of promise, Goldsworthy notes, "To be more specific, I would propose that promise is implicit in many ways as well as being explicit in the obvious places . . . . Thus promise is implicit in creation, a fact that is confirmed by the gracious acts of God to allow the human race and the created order to survive the fall into sin. The indicative of Genesis 3:15 that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent is full of promise. Every indication of the plan and purposes of God, even when not given as verbal promise, is promissory." Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 107–8.

[29]Ibid., 169.

Thus, the Mosaic Law, though a significant component of redemptive history, is at the same time thoroughly grounded in the Abrahamic covenant. To identify Moses as representing a major, distinct redemptive epoch is to camouflage the connection of the Sinaitic Law with the Abrahamic covenant. Ultimately, this implies too large a level of distinction between closely connected periods in redemptive history.

Rather than identifying distinct redemptive movement between the epochs of Abraham and Moses, Goldsworthy sees a more specific shift occurring during the height of the monarchy under David and Solomon. In fact, for Goldsworthy, Solomon is as important, if not more important, than David when understanding the unfolding Christocentric metanarrative.[30]

A significant portion of Goldsworthy's emphasis on Solomon's role in redemptive history is born from the need to place OT wisdom literature into a Christ-centered biblical theology. Goldsworthy recognizes that the broad consensus of scholars view wisdom literature as being focused on creation motifs and having little connection with biblical covenants or the redemptive-historical story line of Scripture. However, he argues that this concentration does not produce competing theological themes or focus in the OT. He argues that when properly read, wisdom literature demonstrates strong covenant and redemptive-historical ideologies in the progressive Christocentric metanarrative.

To ascertain exactly how wisdom literature fits into a Christocentric redemptive metanarrative, Goldsworthy advocates following four chronological hermeneutical steps. First, one must accept the centrality of Christ in all of Scripture, and

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[30]Goldsworthy's emphasis on the Davidic covenant is not surprising given the importance placed on the Davidic line in both the prophets and NT. However, the importance he places on Solomon is unique, particularly considering that Solomon factors so little in later OT passages and, perhaps more importantly, in the NT. The sheer amount of space Goldsworthy dedicates to discussing Solomon and his importance in biblical theology in comparison with the relative little attention he gives David and the Davidic covenant is telling. See, for example, Goldsworthy, "Wisdom and It's Literature in Biblical-Theological Context," 45-55; idem, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 128ff.

particularly his role as "Israel's wise man" as presented in various NT passages.[31]

Second, having realized Christ as the central and ultimate fulfillment of wisdom, one

must then look back to obvious antecedents of messianic wisdom in the OT. The most

organic connections are found in the office of the monarchy. The best examples of this

office are David, but in particular, Solomon. They both provide significant precursors of

wisdom characteristics. Solomon further serves to intrinsically bind wisdom literature

with the redemptive progression assigned to the Davidic covenant. Third, having

identified the antecedents of wisdom in the OT monarchy, one can utilize those

characteristics to identify wisdom in various pre-monarchial texts.[32] Fourth, one must

then progress to identify wisdom theology in the context of all subsequent epochs in OT

redemptive revelation.[33]

When applied in this manner, Goldsworthy believes the result of his steps

demonstrate the association of wisdom literature with covenantal focus and concern.[34]

Indeed, it shows an intimate connection between the two. Goldsworthy notes that those

who claim such tension between wisdom literature and the rest of the Christocentric

redemptive metanarrative introduce an irreconcilable dualism within inspired Scripture.[35]

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[31]Col 2:3; 1 Cor 1:30; Matt 7:24, 26, 28-29.

[32]Goldsworthy argues evidence of connection between Solomonic wisdom and covenantal concerns can be shown through linguistic analysis and thematic parallels found in both wisdom and non-wisdom literature. Words such as "wisdom, instruction, insight, wise dealing, righteousness, justice, equity, prudence, knowledge, discretion, learning, and guidance" represent perspectives associated with a covenantal worldview, and these same ideas also abound in wisdom traditions associated with Solomon. 1 Kings 3-4, in his view, provides an example of such correlation: "In 1 Kings 4:20 and 29 the seashore metaphor is applied to the people, as it was in the promise to Abraham in Genesis 22:17, and then to Solomon's wisdom. The extent of the land in 4:21 is applied to the extent of Solomon's wisdom in 4:30-31. The covenantal blessing of dominion and rest in the land of plenty (4:25) is extended to Solomon's wisdom (4:32-33). 'Every man under his vine and under his fig tree' is a phrase given eschatological significance in Micah 4:4 . . . . Solomon's composition of songs and proverbs about nature certainly links with the theme of creation, but so does the covenant promise of a fruitful land." Goldsworthy, "Wisdom and Its Literature in Biblical-Theological Context," 49.

[33]Ibid., 47.

[34]Ibid.

[35]"It is not feasible to suggest that the sages formed some kind of heretical clique that focused

Following the redemptive shift brought about under David and Solomon, Goldsworthy then identifies a third, final distinct epoch in OT salvation history. This epoch is the eschatological period of the prophets. This broad era differs from the previous epochs of Abraham and David-Solomon in that the advancement of redemption is no longer primarily focused on new redemptive-historical events. Instead, it involves typological reflection on the great redemptive acts of the past. The prophets looked at the pattern of past redemptive acts in expectation of God's future redemptive deliverance of His people and kingdom.[36] This typological practice was also exercised in the NT as well, and thus provides a large amount of insight into understanding Christ in the OT.

A central tenet of Goldsworthy's typology is dependent on his interpretation of Ephesians 1:10. This passage, in his view, argues for a typological connection "between every aspect of the OT and the person of Jesus Christ."[37] Therefore, this passage justifies

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on creation, and that eschewed the idea of covenant and the growing sense of redemptive history . . . . Proposing wisdom and covenant as an either/or suggests a kind of dualism in Israel's theology." Goldsworthy, "Wisdom and Its Literature in Biblical-Theological Context," 47–50. Because of the importance of this claim for his overall argument, it is surprising that Goldsworthy does not do more to develop it. Specifically, since Goldsworthy argues for the connection of Israelite wisdom, kingship, and kingdom through covenant, and also acknowledges the connection of Israelite wisdom with various other traditions in the ANE, it is surprising that he does not make more of the similarities between Israelite kingship and kingship throughout the rest of the ANE. As Weinfeld observed in respect to Deuteronomy in particular, the obedience of ANE kings in areas pertaining to justice was commonly connected to land, blessing, and kingdom. In essence, there was a divine covenant between king and deity in these areas. It was commonly held that if the will of the deity was obeyed, then blessings would follow, the kingdom would thrive, and borders would be safe and expand. But if the will of the deity was disobeyed, curses would be inevitable, and the kingdom would be destroyed. These ideas appear to strengthen Goldsworthy's case that there is a connection between wisdom concerns such as righteousness, justice, etc; and kingship, kingdom, and land through covenant. See Moshe Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 45–56; idem, "Freedom Proclamations in Egypt and in the Ancient Near East," in *Pharaonic Egypt: The Bible and Christianity*, ed. Sarah Israelit-Groll (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1985); Goldsworthy, "Wisdom and Its Literature in Biblical-Theological Context," 42–43.

[36]"The matrix of revelation is clearly indicated by the way the later writers and theological commentators in Israel recall the past. After the Fall, creation has a new beginning with the call of Abraham . . . the covenant with Abraham comes to a brilliant climax with David, Solomon, Zion and the temple. The apparent hiatus of the captivity in Egypt turns out to be in the plan of God as a means of revealing the paradigm of the redemptive processes that are necessary if sinners are to be saved by grace. . . . The crucial point is this: *nothing happens after Solomon in the history of Israel to improve the glorious pattern of the revealed kingdom and the way of salvation.* Prophetic eschatology does not add to the pattern of the revealed kingdom and the way of salvation." Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 148.

[37]Ibid., 188.

what he labels as "macro-typology." This macro-typology does not simply find correspondence between persons, events, and institutions, but rather understands the various stages of redemptive history within the OT to be typological of Christ.[38] Thus, in line with von Rad, Goldsworthy sees unlimited typological connection between the OT and the NT.[39] In fact, typology is so unlimited that for Goldsworthy every text in the OT is in some way a typological testimony to Christ.[40] This assumption ultimately provides the main way believers are to seek and understand Christ in most OT passages.

Evaluation. Goldsworthy's hermeneutical approach offers several ways that aid evangelicals in understanding Christ in the OT. First, he presents a comprehensive strategy to deal with what many evangelicals recognize as the central Christian hermeneutical consideration of the OT—that "as long Christianity has Christ at its centre, then its Scriptures must in some sense witness to him, both in Old and New Testaments."[41] Goldsworthy does an excellent job of keeping this central consideration at the forefront of his hermeneutical proposal.

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[38]Goldsworthy notes, "The summing up of all things in Christ is, in my view, integral to typology . . . the three stages of revelation are, first the type in the biblical history; secondly, the confirmation of the type in the way the prophets look forward to a recapitulation in a perfected eschatological form of the events of redemptive history; and thirdly, the antitype in the fulfillment of Christ . . . that is, typology is not restricted to certain key people, events and institutions that are prominent in the salvation history of the Bible, but rather the whole first stage is typological of the coming of Christ." Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 185.

[39]Gerhard von Rad, "Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament," in *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics*, ed. Claus Westermann, trans. John Bright (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964), 36.

[40]Here again, Goldsworthy is critical of Greidanus' multiplex approach to Christ in the OT. While he gives validity to the distinct approaches Greidanus advocates, at the same time, Goldsworthy thinks Greidanus misses the larger typological substructure that envelopes all of the distinct approaches Greidanus advocates. By recognizing this broad substructure under the category of "macro typology," Goldsworthy concludes that now "we have a comprehensive basis for tracing the way that every text in the Old Testament is a testimony to Christ." Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 189.

[41]David J. Reimer, "Old Testament Christology," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, Library of Hebrew Bible Old Testament Studies 270 (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 399.

Second, he is correct in pointing out deficiencies with the Vos-Clowney redemptive-historical epoch schema. In particular, Goldsworthy accurately points out that the Davidic covenant represents a distinct shift in redemptive history. Before, Vos' and Clowney's Adam-Moses-Christ framework masked this distinction to a certain degree.[42]

Third, Goldsworthy also takes seriously the imposition of modern and postmodern philosophical ideologies on biblical hermeneutics. His accounting for the biblical perspective on the effects of sin on human reason is particularly commendable. This perspective properly respects NT Pneumatlogy, especially the need for the Holy Spirit in illumination.

Fourth, Goldsworthy is to be commended for his boldness in attempting to integrate wisdom literature into a broader redemptive-historical metanarrative. This issue is important for any approach to understanding Christ in the OT. Yet it is one some evangelicals fail to take into account.[43]

However, Goldsworthy's approach also has several drawbacks for an evangelical understanding of messiah in the OT. First, Goldsworthy's methodology falls close to what Barton labels as a postmodern "feedback loop."[44] Theologians often refer to similar tendencies as a "hermeneutical circle" or "hermeneutical spiral," but the term feedback loop perhaps best frames how some information gained from historical-grammatical exegesis of one text can subsequently fuel reading more into another text

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[42]This is not to imply that David or the monarchy is unimportant in Vos' and Clowney's views. However, the focus of Vos, in particular, is on the role of the prophets brought about by the monarchy as opposed to the monarchy and Davidic covenant itself. See, Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 203–5.

[43]One such example is Willem A. VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988).

[44]Barton defines a feedback loop as a process by which "information generated by a given system begins to scrutinize that system itself." John Barton, "The Messiah in Old Testament Theology," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John Day (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 371. For an example of how Barton sees feedback loops playing out in Scripture, see John Barton, "Alttestamentliche Theologie Nach Albertz? Oder Theologie Des Alten Testaments," in *Religionsgeschichte Oder Theologie Des Alten Testaments*, ed. B. Janowski and N. Lohfink, Biblische Theologie, vol. 10 (Neukirchen: Neukirchen Verlag, 1995), 25–34.

than that text itself allows. This is especially true when, like Goldsworthy, one begins

with particular starting and ending points in mind. In approaching every OT text

doctrinally by starting and ending with Christ as revealed in the NT, Goldsworthy is

prone to subjective interjections onto OT passages, thereby corrupting the historical-

grammatical stage of exegesis. This corruption can lead to a lack of appreciation of OT

texts in their original contextual, theological, and literary settings. By focusing on the

"ultimate meaning" of a text, Goldsworthy gives too little attention to the way and means

that God reveals and progresses redemptive history.[45]

One example of this tendency can be seen in his approach to OT wisdom

literature. As noted above, Goldsworthy argues that to understand the place of wisdom

literature in the redemptive-historical narrative of Scripture, one must start with Christ,

work back to the monarchy, and then to pre-monarchial texts. Only then can one work

through the wisdom literature towards Christ. This methodological approach has at least

three distinct issues that are indicative of Goldsworthy's overall approach to the OT.

First, it gives little attention to the historical, grammatical, and literary considerations of

Hebrew wisdom literature.[46] Second, it is unnecessarily anachronistic, particularly given

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[45]That Scripture can have a deeper, divine, or ultimate meaning that the original human author and audience would not recognize is a common evangelical position for understanding Christ in the OT. See for example, Phillip Barton Payne, "The Fallacy of Equating Meaning with the Human Author's Intention," *JETS* 20 (1977): 243–52; Willem A. VanGemeren, "Prophets, the Freedom of God, and Hermeneutics," *WTJ* 52, no. 1 (March 1990): 79–99; Vern Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," *WTJ* 48 (1986): 241-79; idem, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses*; idem, "Truth and Fullness of Meaning: Fullness Versus Reductionist Semantics in Biblical Interpretation," *WTJ* 67, no. 2 (September 2005): 211–27. However, Bateman accurately points out the tendency of many such Christian interpreters is to neglect the original historical setting of an OT text in order to focus on how Christ fulfills that passage. This neglect ultimately leads to the deprivation of "historical information that ultimately helps us grasp what was going on in the lives of the Jewish people and what God's revelation told them about their present and their future," thereby failing to truly appreciate the progressive revelation of redemption. See Herbert W. Bateman IV, "Introduction," in *Jesus The Messiah* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2012), 24–29. Goldsworthy's heavy dependence on typology for understanding Christ in the OT fuels the danger Bateman points out. Goldingay notes that typology comes with the "built in danger of turning real people or events that had significance of their own into mere representative symbols or puppets in a cosmic drama." John Goldingay, *Models For Interpretation of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 65.

[46]This is not to imply that Goldsworthy does not express value in things associated with historical-grammatical exegesis in his approach to wisdom literature. He does. See, for example,

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his stress on the progressive canonical storyline of Scripture. If wisdom is truly connected to covenantal concerns as Goldsworthy theorizes, instead of seeking how to understand wisdom retroactively from Christ, he should be able to first identify these same themes exegetically from the earliest part of the canonical story line and show their development across the OT *toward* Christ. If Goldsworthy's thesis is true, not only should this approach result in the same conclusion, but it would also be more faithful to the development of the historical-redemptive narrative he advocates following. This alternate approach lowers subjectivity and respects the canonical and progressive nature of revelation. It also possesses a greater potential for addressing a third issue with Goldsworthy's methodology—apologetic concerns. Goldsworthy seems content with ignoring the apologetic ramifications of his hermeneutic proposal. But Bury points out the specific importance of this issue and the significant consequences it carries for the evangelical church.[47]

Second, Goldsworthy's use of typology is questionable. His term "macro-typology" is out of line with the function of types in Scripture. More specifically, it is the scholarly consensus that types in Scripture point out relationships between specific people, institutions, or events—not broad sections of historical epochs.[48] Goldsworthy's

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Goldsworthy, "Wisdom and Its Literature in Biblical-Theological Context." However, the overall tendency of his methodology is to under-emphasize or bypass these things and focus on Christ to the detriment of the original meaning. This is particularly dangerous in the area of wisdom literature. This genre is very contingent on both ANE and cultural backgrounds, Hebrew linguistic structure and parallels, transmission, and others. For an introduction to some of the basic issues in OT wisdom literature, see Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, New American Commentary, vol. 14 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1993), 21–39.

[47]Bury rightly notes that with Goldsworthy's Christ-centered hermeneutic, "two concerns raise themselves: how can Christian apologists argue a rational case for biblical authority," and how can "Christian apologists acknowledge previous errors in interpretation and reassess their principles of hermeneutical praxis without appearing hypocritical?" Benjamin Bury, "Review: Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics, Biblical-Theological Foundations and Principles," *Reviews in Religion and Theology* 15, no. 3 (2008): 303–5.

[48]See, for example, Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 254–55; Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 200–7; Gordon P. Hugenberger, "Introductory Notes on Typology," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?* ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 341; Ian Duguid, *Is Jesus in the Old Testament?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013), 12–37; Edward Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of*

broader view of typology has little supporting evidence and appears to be fueled both by his need to see every individual OT text point towards Christ and a questionable interpretation of Ephesians 1:10. While Goldsworthy's interpretation of Ephesians 1:10 is indeed possible, it is difficult to establish with any amount of certainty.[49] This ambiguity severely challenges the validity of his unlimited approach to typology. It is most likely that a large portion of scholars who advocate a heavy use of typology to understand Christ in the OT would dismiss Goldsworthy's particular approach to this topic. Not only would they deem it out of line with a biblical understanding of types, but also as something too easily resulting in "interpretive excess."[50]

Third, if every passage in the OT is to be understood as pointing towards Christ within the progression of redemptive history, Goldsworthy is unclear as to how passages that do not have discernable historical identification within specific epochs or covenants should be understood as pointing to Christ. Many "untitled" psalms and various other psalms, which give little hint of a particular historical context, serve as such an example. On a macro-level it is possible to connect the entire Psalter, or even sections of the Psalter, canonically to the Davidic covenant, though doing so is difficult at best.[51]

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Scripture (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 32; David Baker, "Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 327–30.

[49]Lincoln, for example, points towards the difficulties and variety of interpretations of this passage across church history. See, Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1990), 33. Here Clowney's approach towards typology is more appropriate. This approach is more faithful to the history of an OT passage and recognizes that there must be evidence within an OT passage itself for it to be recognized as typological. See Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 32.

[50]See, for example, Francis Foulkes, "The Acts of God: A Study on the Basis of Typology in the Old Testament," in *The Right Doctrine From the Wrong Texts?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 369; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 252ff.; Hugenberger, "Introductory Notes on Typology," 335.

[51]This has been the approach of some who believe the canonical shape of the Psalter is intended to send a message about the Davidic monarchy. See Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985); idem, "The Use of 'Untitled' Psalms in the Hebrew Psalter," *ZAW* 97, no. 3 (1985); John H. Walton, "Psalms: A Cantata About the Davidic Covenant," *JETS* 34, no. 1 (1991): 21–31; Bruce K. Waltke, "A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms," in *Tradition and*

However, on the micro-level, there is even more difficulty for Goldsworthy's hermeneutic. As Vern Poythress points out, various psalms were written at unknown times, and then collected in stages, placed in the Psalter, and later even possibly rearranged in the Psalter up until the close of the canon.[52] This reality poses a problem for understanding the historical, epochal, and canonical circumstances of many psalms.[53] This criticism also applies to various parts of OT wisdom and other books where historical circumstances are difficult to ascertain, or where reception and redaction issues are complex.

Fourth, Goldsworthy's "reductionistic" approach to integral parts of his hermeneutic for understanding Christ in the OT is also problematic. For example, his broad definition of the kingdom of God, coupled with its lack of objective presence in the OT, is extremely challenging for his hermeneutical framework. The same is true of his views of prophecy. Despite the fact that prophetic eschatology does not articulate a history of salvation events, Goldsworthy theorizes the prophets were consciously reflecting on salvation history. The lack of evidence for this position, however, is problematic. Perhaps the most powerful criticism is of his focus on the importance of Solomon in the progress of the redemptive storyline. Since Solomon is vitally important for Goldsworthy's epoch framework but factors in so little in both the OT and NT, this

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Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg, ed. John S. Feinberg and David Paul Feinberg (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 3–18. However, others heavily criticize this idea. See in particular, Longman, "The Messiah," 20–24.

[52]Wilson makes a strong case that the final canonical form of the Psalter was not set until at least the mid-first century A.D. See Gerald H. Wilson, "The Qumran Psalms Manuscripts and the Consecutive Arrangement of Psalms in the Hebrew Psalter," *CBQ* 45, no. 3 (1983): 377–88; idem, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 70–92.

[53]Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," 105–6. Poythress suggest that it is still possible to move forward in a "general way." This seems to include tying the Psalter to previous historical promises and covenants present at the time of the final arrangement of the present canonical form of Psalms. Though this is somewhat helpful, it still does not solve all the historical background issues associated with Psalms.

issue also creates a significant hurdle for Goldsworthy. All of these points are major criticisms that Goldsworthy needs to address in detail.

Willem VanGemeren

Willem VanGemeren takes a similar, yet different approach from Goldsworthy for understanding messiah in the OT. For him, a significant result of Enlightenment philosophy on evangelical theology is the separation of ancient historical events presented in the OT and their meaning and application for modern believers. In order to alleviate this issue, VanGemeren proposes reading the OT through a framework that centers on Christ, via a trifocal redemptive-historical hermeneutic.

Current evangelical state. In VanGemeren's view, the most obvious result of historical-critical approaches to Scripture is the separation of ancient event from modern life. In line with Brevard Childs**,** VanGemeren believes historical-critical methodology, originally aimed at clarifying the meaning of OT Scripture, only confuses those not familiar with biblical studies.[54] The result of this confusion is a steadily growing distance between the academy and the church. The root cause of this gap is primarily dichotomous views on how to approach Scripture. Those following critical methodology tend to focus solely on historical and literary concerns. Their focal point is the human aspect of God's revelation. On the opposite end of the spectrum, others tend to ignore historical and literary items, and instead focus on inspiration, canonicity, and dogmatic doctrine. Their concentration is on the divine aspect of God's revelation. The result of these different emphases is that the church is left with a deficiency in the balance of human and divine aspects of revelation.

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[54]Brevard Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1979).

This deficiency leaves a "thirst for the Word" among believers.[55] This thirst, over time, has led to a central distrust among evangelicals emphasizing either side of inspiration. As a result, individual believers are left to satisfy their thirst for God's word and its practical meaning in their lives by other means. Unfortunately, this self-guided "urge for immediacy and pragmatic results have had as detrimental an impact on Evangelicalism" as any other antagonist in the history of the church.[56]

Methodology. The answer to this dilemma, for VanGemeren, is for evangelicals to wed both human and divine aspects of OT Scripture. He believes that interpreting Scripture must be "realistic" in regard to its historical, literary, and grammatical features, as well as "relevant" for modern day believers. He argues that this is best accomplished by reading the OT within a trifocal redemptive-historical framework because

> this approach to the Bible shows appreciation of God's Word as it has come to us in space and time, by paying attention to the historical and grammatical analysis as well as to the literary and canonical functions. This method of interpreting the Bible begins with the presupposition that the Bible is both the Word of God and the word of man. As the Word of God the Bible reveals the triune God and his plan for salvation and life for human beings in relation to his grand design for the renewal of heaven and earth. As the word of man the Bible is the collection of the literary works written by men of God and inspired by the Spirit of God.[57]

VanGemeren believes such a blended framework for approaching the OT brings together and balances both sides of revelation. He acknowledges, however, that it also brings about "tensions that relate to the most basic question of interpretation: 'Do we really

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[55]Willem VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 17.

[56]Here VanGemeren notes that this is equally as much a problem in non-evangelical circles. He quotes non-evangelical theologian Stuhlmacher, "Among the older and younger theologians at work in the church this distancing effect is accompanied by an enormous and at times even alarming uncertainty in their use of scripture . . . . For them biblical criticism has produced a vacuum which causes them to despair of the possibilities of a useful, historical-critical interpretation of scripture, and in part to seize at hair-raising theological substitutes." VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 35. See Peter Stuhlmacher, *Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scripture*, trans. Roy Harrisville (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 65.

[57]VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 17.

understand what we read?'"[58] The answer to this question, in his view, lies in seven

supplementary questions essential for evangelical interpretation:

1. How can an event described in the Bible be relevant for a twentieth-century Christian?

2. What is the relationship between a theological tradition or confessional statement and the continuing need for a fresh reading and study of the Bible?

3. What is the 'place of faith' in the reading and studying of Scripture, including the Old Testament?

4. How are the Old and New Testaments related to each other?

5. What is the theological center, or the dominant theme, of the Bible?

6. What elements in an interpretation vitally involve the interpreter?

7. How does biblical exegesis apply to practical life? How does the Bible lead to continual transformation?[59]

The answers to these questions provide VanGemeren's exegetical and hermeneutical

presuppositions for understanding messiah in the OT.[60]

First, VanGemeren believes that in order for the OT to be relevant for modern

believers, normative and descriptive tensions must be carefully balanced. Normative

focus must be balanced by carefully grounding modern application in ancient event. Any

attempt at a modern application of Scripture that fails to be rooted in true, historical

events creates a philosophical slide into a Hegelian-like liberalism that has a low

appreciation of divine revelation. A descriptive tendency is equally a danger, however,

and is represented by persons who strongly focus on historical aspects of biblical events

to the neglect of modern day relevancy. A true hermeneutical approach to Scripture,

therefore, is one that balances the study of " the biblical texts in its various contexts,

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[58]VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 18.

[59]Ibid.

[60]For VanGemeren, "Exegesis is the art and science of biblical interpretation in accordance with the rules of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics refers to the manner in which we listen to the text, relate it to other texts, and apply it." Ibid., 27.

including historical, grammatical, literary and cultural"[61] with practical, contemporary application. How to balance the tension between the descriptive and normative aspects of Scripture is ascertained by answering the other six questions VanGemeren puts forth.

For VanGemeren, a tension always lies between ancient Christian theological traditions and the need for "fresh readings" of Scripture. Again, a healthy balance is required. Concerning traditions, VanGemeren identifies three advantages they provide for hermeneutics. First, traditions act as a necessary launching pad for further theological advancement. Without tradition, each successive generation is forced to relive "the tensions, theological issues, and practical problems of the previous generations."[62] Second, he claims that fixed tradition helps produce a sense of identity, coherence, and stability for faith communities.[63] This also helps individuals and groups deepen their appreciation and identity within a particular faith heritage. Third, by being upfront about the theological framework one brings to the text, people are better able to guard against abuse and misunderstanding of Scripture.[64]

However, VanGemeren also notes two dangers stemming from fixed tradition. The first danger is the elevation of tradition to the detriment of the Reformation principal: *sola Scriptura*.[65] The second danger of tradition lies in adapting tradition to the detriment

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[61]VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 27. This is VanGemeren's definition of historical-grammatical analysis. This is one part of hermeneutics for him.

[62]Ibid., 19.

[63]Willem VanGemeren, "Prophets, the Freedom of God, and Hermeneutics," *WTJ* 52, no. 1 (March 1990), 94–95.

[64]He labels these frameworks as a "culturally conditioned approach" that prevents "misunderstanding." He is not, however, clear as to what he means by either set of terms. VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 20.

[65]He claims the same danger exists for modern believers as it did with those believers living before the Reformation. "Our position is not greatly different from the period before the Reformation. The Middle Ages were united by the acceptance of the "rules of faith," as taught and transmitted by the church. Scripture was secondary in importance to tradition. The modes of interpretation were inconsequential to the teaching of the church. The danger to modern evangelical Christianity is the extraction of values from the Bible, without a due concern for listening to it carefully . . . the chaos resulting from mishandling the Bible is not Reformational but is reminiscent of the pre-Reformational period." Ibid.

of "the excitement of fresh interpretation." Here VanGemeren appears sympathetic to Barr's call for fresh interpretations of Scripture as a means of continuity with an individual's faith heritage.[66] However, his primary concern lies with reductionistic hermeneutical tendencies brought about by tradition. For him, "'traditional interpretation' cannot but lead to a reductionistic hermeneutic. This hermeneutic is unable to adapt either to new revelation or to new insights" brought about in light of progressive revelation, particularly the revelation of Jesus as the Messiah.[67]

The tension between "fresh interpretations" and the place of tradition in exegesis leads to considering the place of faith in interpretation. For VanGemeren, the failure of critical biblical scholarship is its core assumption that the goal of exegesis is unbiased, objective knowledge. To him, the Bible is not like the study of any human work. Because of its status as divinely inspired revelation, faith must play a critical role in understanding it.

This notion means two things for VanGemeren. First, understanding revelation is not an individualistic exercise; it is part of a historical faith continuum. As a result, one must not fail to glean from any "conscientious readers" of the past. Second, as a part of the Christian faith tradition, believers studying the OT must "pass by the cross of Jesus Christ on their return to the Old Testament." This statement is significant for two reasons. One is that it identifies that, for VanGemeren, the starting point of OT hermeneutics is the NT, particularly the revelation of Jesus as Christ. Another is that it argues for what VanGemeren calls a "Reformational" model of exegesis.[68]

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[66]"The danger continually exists of living at ease with our theological formulations and not knowing the excitement of fresh interpretations. Barr thus encourages a return to biblical interpretation as a way of appropriating one's faith heritage. 'For a great deal of interpretative work, freshness will not mean departure from tradition . . . but the reappropriation of the tradition with greater depth of understanding.'" Ibid. As quoted in James Barr, *Old and New in Interpretation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 166.

[67]VanGemeren, "Prophets, the Freedom of God, and Hermeneutics," 94.

[68]VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 21.

VanGemeren argues that a Reformational model of exegesis is "exegesis within a theological context." This model occurs when, like the Reformers, readers of Scripture seek to "hear" the word of God, not seek objective knowledge. This hearing can only take place when one enters into a "hermeneutical circle" that is based on the following three presuppositions: (1) the OT and NT form a coherent unit, therefore there is one divine theme or purpose running throughout both; (2) one must interpret the OT in light of the NT and vice versa. Both Testaments must be in harmony with one another and particularly in harmony with the divine redemptive purpose revealed by the Christ-event; and (3) exegesis must move from both Testaments to the "theological reality" in modern life and vice versa.[69]

The importance of a theological context for Scripture naturally leads to seeking the exact nature of the relationship between OT and NT. Here, VanGemeren lays out his biblical theology framework. He is strongly aligned with the Reformed tradition, particularly as represented by John Calvin and the Reformed confessions of faith. He sees both Testaments as different forms of one divine administration of grace, with Christ at the center of each. This continuity, of course, can produce various tensions between the immutable aspects of God's redemptive plan and the labeling of various stages of this redemption as "Old" and "New." For VanGemeren, Calvin appropriately allows the tension between the eternal and temporal to stand in balance.[70] Like Calvin,

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[69]VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 21–22.

[70]This tension is traditionally identified with the conflicting views of Voetius and Cocceius. VanGemeren summarizes that "the followers of Voetius spoke not only of the eternal decree of the election of the church, but also about eternal salvation and eternal justification. The practical outcome of this process was a theologically oriented preaching in which a text of the OT could equally well teach what is found in the NT. Theology tended to obscure the historical and epochal differences. On the other hand, Cocceius and his followers approached the covenant historically and tended to deemphasize the unity. The two approaches have continued to develop. Reformed theology has polarized because eternity and history have not been held in tension." Willem A. VanGemeren, "Israel as the Hermeneutical Crux in the Interpretation of Prophecy," *Westminster Theological Journal* 45, no. 1 (March 1983): 135. Here VanGemeren depends on and agrees with Graafland. See C. Graafland, *Het Vaste Verbond Israel En Het Oude Testament Bij Calvijn En Het Gereformeerd Protestantisme* (Amsterdam: Uitgevery Ton Boland, 1978); Willem VanGemeren, "Israel as the Hermeneutical Crux in the Interpretation of Prophecy," *WTJ* 45, no. 1 (March 1983): 132–44.

VanGemeren[71] sees that the major difference between the OT law and the NT gospel is the level of historical ambiguity.[72] The OT law is indicative of the one covenant running throughout Scripture. The law was "an expression of the covenant of grace, extended forgiveness, adoption, and covenantal privileges on the basis of the finished work of Christ."[73] The law was not merely preparation for Christ, nor was it an end in and of itself, but rather was a gracious, redemptive revelation and administration of God's eternal decree through covenant. The subject of this redemption, and all Scripture, is Jesus Christ.[74] The difference between the OT law and the NT, however, is that the NT is unambiguous about this redemptive plan, whereas in the OT the promise was concealed in various historical events and circumstances that foreshadow the redemption found in Christ. In other words, the OT is "promise concealed," while the NT is "promise revealed," but "in each case it remains promise and it will continue to be promise until the final consummation."[75]

   For VanGemeren, the theological unity of both Testaments arises out of the conviction that the Bible is the revelation of God's overarching redemptive plan. At the center of that plan is Christ. He is the ultimate revelation of God's redemptive purpose and plan, and therefore is the organizing principle by which *all* Scripture is to be understood:

> The history of redemption unfolds a progression in the outworking of God's plan of redemption that will unfold completely in the restoration of all things. All blessings, promises, covenants, and kingdom expressions are reflections or shadows of the

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[71]Since this section focuses on VanGemeren's views of hermeneutics, I am summarizing his views on Calvin as opposed to Calvin himself. VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 24.

[72]"In Calvin's theology the difference between the two Testaments lies in the distinction between law and gospel, which reflects the historical period in each . . . . In other words, 'The gospel pointed out with the finger what the Law foreshadowed under types.'" Ibid.

[73]Ibid.

[74]Ibid.

[75]VanGemeren, "Israel as the Hermeneutical Crux in the Interpretation of Prophecy," 137.

great salvation in Jesus Christ that is to come at the end of the age . . . Christian interpreters of the Old Testament cannot limit their focus to one of the many themes. They cannot isolate the Old from the New. In their approach to the Old Testament, they must remember that they stand in a tradition that goes back to the midpoint of redemptive history, namely, the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah.[76]

This consistency means "all the acts and blessings of God in any age are thus based on the death of the Christ in anticipation of the new age."[77]

To answer the question "What elements involve the interpreter?" VanGemeren again calls for caution and balance. He is keenly aware that individuals must acknowledge that they bring to Scripture cultural, personal, and various life experiences that can skew the meaning of a text. Such influences have often led to vastly different interpretations of a common text, and even various types of hermeneutical systems (e.g., feminist readings, liberation readings, missiological readings). VanGemeren is equally as concerned, however, with those who choose to combat the danger of subjectivity in interpretation by strictly holding to textual analysis through historical-grammatical methodology. On the surface this may seem to be a safer approach to understanding Scripture, but in reality it offers an equally dangerous pitfall. When merely analyzing a text, exegetes are often only distant observers of various individual passages. However, this fails to allow them to be understood in light of God's broad, redemptive storyline that centers on Christ. It also fails to allow them to speak to modern day believers. In order to combat such tendencies, VanGemeren proposes a trifocal redemptive-historical approach to evangelical hermeneutics. This approach identifies how evangelicals should approach understanding messiah in the OT as well as how they are to proclaim messiah from the OT in the church.

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[76]VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 26.

[77]Ibid., 27.

Hermeneutical steps. The first step in VanGemeren's OT trifocal hermeneutic schema is "analysis." To VanGemeren, OT analysis involves taking into account the historical, cultural, socio-economic, grammatical, geographical, and text-critical backgrounds of a given text. The goal of such analysis is to respect the original, historical meaning of a passage. It is also intended to make the interpreter aware of the various core components of every text. Out of such analysis, however, VanGemeren believes a danger arises:

> The problem with the historical-grammatical method, however, is that students of the Word may be tempted to think that they have control over the text when all they have done is examine its constituent parts—but what grasp do they really have of its message? Only after seeing how the parts fit together and how they relate to the rest of the book and to the rest of Scripture can the student master the clear message of the text.[78]

In light of this danger, VanGemeren proposes that two more hermeneutical steps are needed to properly understand God's message.

Beyond analysis, VanGemeren believes one also needs to synthesize an OT text. Synthesis, in his view, is "that part of the interpretation of the text that considers its meaning within the context of the book and within the whole of the Scripture."[79] This aspect of hermeneutics, in VanGemeren's perspective, is the most important element in Christian interpretation. But, it is also the most dangerous. Synthesis is important because it acts as the bridge between God's word as a historical, cultural event mediated through ancient writers, and the significance and application of that event to modern believers.

The danger of synthesis, however, lies with the subjectivity involved in attempting to bring together various texts and utilizing Scripture to interpret Scripture. To help minimize this danger, VanGemeren proposes taking into account three different features that are aimed at discovering common links between various texts. These

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[78]VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 29.

[79]Ibid., 29–30.

common links reveal God's distinctive, consistent thought and action patterns. These patterns, in turn, help confirm a broad framework for understanding the meaning of OT Scripture.[80]

The first aspect of synthesis takes into account the literary form of a text. For VanGemeren, each passage within a book is a unique literary expression that is made up of form and genre. In order to appreciate this literary function and its impact on the meaning of a Scripture passage, one must compare a given text with other passages in the OT that have similar literary forms. VanGemeren labels this exercise as an example of "Scripture interpreting Scripture."[81]

His second aspect of synthesis calls attention to the function of the canon in interpretation. The function of the canon is to be ascertained in two ways. The first way is to be sensitive towards "canonical relations." Here VanGemeren means taking into account the section of the canon a particular book is placed (e.g., Law, Prophets, Writings.). The other aspect of synthesis "concerns the time in which the people of God received the particular writing."[82] This involves taking into account the canonical function of a text. It involves appreciating "the historical context in which God's people originally received individual books."[83]

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[80]VanGemeren believes that the goal of Bible study "aims at thinking God's thoughts after him." VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 30.

[81]Here it is unclear to what extent he sees the role of "other passages" functioning to interpret a text. For example, does the theology and message of "other passages" aid in interpretation, or is VanGemeren strictly interested in form critical considerations? Further, should the context and functions (*sitz im leben*, speech-acts, etc.) of other passages under consideration play a role in understanding a different text, or is it strictly literary considerations that should be examined? Also, it is unclear as to why this function is only coming into consideration at this point of the hermeneutical process. It would seem more natural that this step would occur in the analysis stage of interpretation.

[82]Ibid., 31.

[83]Ibid. What he means by considering the *original* context in which individual books were received is both unclear and potentially problematic. If he means taking into account various texts before they were set in their final canonical form, this raises a host of both redactional-critical and canonical issues that he does not properly address. It also raises the question of what to do with oral traditions that were likely deemed authoritative for the Israelite community, but were not immediately written down. See David M. Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

The third step in OT synthesis involves taking into account a text's redemptive-historical context. VanGemeren defines this context as the "history of God's self-involvement through his mighty acts of redemption and revelation . . . . The redemptive-historical approach assumes that the Bible was primarily given not to convey history or morals but to record God's fidelity to the nations, the patriarchs, Israel, and the church of Jesus Christ."[84] In line with Willis Beecher, VanGemeren believes that salvation in the OT is promise and not prediction.[85] This overarching promise stretches across both Testaments. Therefore, the redemptive-historical approach provides the framework to connect all of Christian Scripture into a grand metanarrative. Both the center of redemptive history and the proper starting point for understanding this metanarrative is the revelation of Jesus as the Messiah.[86] For those interpreting the OT, therefore, one must "pay careful attention to the text, to the particular redemptive-historical period, and to the relationship of that period to the coming of Jesus as Savior and Restorer of heaven and earth . . . . The interpreter asks what the text has to do with the coming of Jesus and our hope of restoration of all things in his return."[87] It is in this way that VanGemeren sees every text in the OT as relating in some fashion to Christ and believes they should indeed be read in this way.

2011); Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature*, ed. Douglas A. Knight (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996). On the other hand, if VanGemeren is envisioning the time when the canonical form was set, this brings up the question of identifying exactly when the book was accepted as canonical and what the historical circumstances were. As John Sailhamer rightly points out, texts were likely accepted as canonical long before they were put in their final forms. This point will be discussed in chap. 5 of this dissertation.

[84]VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 31.

[85]VanGemeren, "Prophets, the Freedom of God, and Hermeneutics," 92. On this issue, VanGemeren advocates Beecher's position quite extensively. For an overview of Beecher's position, see pp. 24-26 of this dissertation.

[86]See Willem A. VanGemeren, "Perspectives on Continuity," in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments in Honor of S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.*, ed. Paul Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), 32–62; idem, "Prophets, the Freedom of God, and Hermeneutics," 93.

[87]VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 32.

VanGemeren is careful, however, to argue that redemptive-historical OT interpretation should not merely be Christological. He states that it also should be eschatological. In his view, the redemptive-historical approach to Scripture must take into account the entire span of creation to new creation. While Christ is the starting point of hermeneutics, and his first advent is the center of redemptive history, the final culmination of redemptive history is His final second advent and the restoration of all things. This focus on the second coming of Christ relieves many tensions between the OT and NT brought about by exegetes only interpreting Scripture in light of his first advent. According to VanGemeren, such an approach leaves redemption incomplete, and the OT in particular only partially fulfilled, thereby causing friction between the OT and NT.

An eschatological focus on Christ's restoration of a new creation, however, holds the mosaic of diversity and unity in all of Scripture "by the assumption that now we know in part and by the confidence that God knows the end from the beginning."[88] Thus, VanGemeren divides the biblical narrative into twelve distinct epochs that represent main highpoints in the movement of redemptive history, culminating in new creation. Neither the number or the exact identification of individual epochs themselves appear to be crucial to VanGemeren, rather what is crucial is that they all lead to and converge on Christ as the complete culmination of redemption. This culmination, therefore, represents the focal point of how Christians are to view and understand all Scripture, including messiah in the OT.[89]

A major portion of understanding this eschatological-Christological focus in the OT involves the freedom and illuminating role of the Holy Spirit in objective truth. VanGemeren is staunchly against what he labels as "human structures and

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[88]VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 32. VanGemeren likens exegesis to a photograph, whereas redemptive history is like a movie, which brings together individual photographs and unites them to form a complete, unified moving story.

[89]Ibid., 34.

interpretations" which are in contrast to the power and freedom of the Spirit in interpretation. The prophets are evidence that believers must be open to the freedom and illumination of the Spirit in interpretation, and not trust in human exegetical methodologies for the final arbitration of meaning:

> The Spirit of God calls on each generation to adapt anew to God's revelation. He is the power of God who applies the word of God to a new situation. He transforms human beings, interpretations, and traditions as long as he is operating in and through the word, the community of God's people lives in the tension between stability and adaptability.[90]

The Holy Spirit progressively reveals ultimate meaning to believers and trumps all other modes of interpretation. This leads to adaptation of previous understandings of God, theology, the world, and the storyline of Scripture in light of the Spirit's illumination. Because of the revelation that Jesus is Christ, the faithful are called to understand the entire corpus of Scripture in a new way, and are invited to understand both the ancient text as well as its application to modern life in light of this revelation. [91]

Having established a text's place in the Christ-centered redemptive metanarrative, the intended outcome of VanGemeren's trifocal approach to hermeneutics is "interpretation in community." The heart of this stage is the application of God's Word to modern believers in light of Christ. This step, for VanGemeren, represents the bringing together of two horizons, the biblical event of the past, and the contemporary context of the reader. However, VanGemeren points out this can be both complex and subjective. Therefore, VanGemeren advocates a "hermeneutic of consent" or "interpretation in dialogue" with the faith community that provides a measure of accountability.[92] But his approach is also complex, involving tensions created between the present community of

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[90]VanGemeren, "Prophets, the Freedom of God, and Hermeneutics," 95.

[91]Willem A. VanGemeren, "The Spirit of Restoration," *WTJ* 50, no. 1 (1988): 81–102; VanGemeren, "Prophets, the Freedom of God, and Hermeneutics," 93–95.

[92]VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 35–37.

believers, church tradition, and the Holy Spirit. However, it is here that the "hermeneutical circle" both ends and starts again in the search for Christ in the OT.

Evaluation. VanGemeren's approach helps to advance an evangelical approach to understanding Christ in the OT in several ways. First, his focus on exegesis is much stronger than Goldsworthy and some others holding a Christocentric approach to understanding messiah in the OT. Whereas Goldsworthy typically gives little more than passing mention of the historical, original meaning of a passage, VanGemeren goes to great lengths in analyzing the original intent of a passage. Beyond original meaning, he also gives more focused attention to the function of the canon in interpretation. The respect for both the original meaning of a passage and the canonical function of a text is crucial to meaning and respecting the progressive storyline of redemption. VanGemeren does an excellent job of highlighting the way the canon functions in the process of interpretation.[93]

Second, VanGemeren is more cautious about typology than many others holding to a Christocentric hermeneutic. A large part of this caution stems from his stringent focus on textual analysis and the desire to combat subjectivity in interpretation.[94] This is a much more reasonable and balanced approach to typology, particularly in light of historical abuses of this hermeneutical approach.[95]

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[93]Here VanGemeren is in line with the approaches of Poythress and Waltke regarding the function of the canon in interpretation. However, both Poythress and Waltke are clearer on the role of the canon in interpretation. VanGemeren's two-fold approach to the canon's role in interpretation is unclear. See above. For Poythress' and Waltke's simplified approaches, see Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," 104; Waltke, "A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms," 3ff. However, all three scholars' approaches are problematic in regards to the role of canon and texts such as the psalms and wisdom literature that have no discernable historical markers and complex redaction histories.

[94]VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 30. Here VanGemeren warns against reading "too much New Testament into the Old" via typology. He is unclear, however, as to what constitutes "too much" typology and what specific criteria allows for appropriate identification of types.

[95]For historical and recent examples of the abuse of typology, see Gordon P. Hugenberger, "Introductory Notes on Typology," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, ed, G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 335. Other recent examples can be found in Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses*, 3ff. While Poythress is responsible in his use of typology in many areas within the Torah, he

Third, much like Goldsworthy, VanGemeren is also focused on a redemptive-historical metanarrative. This focus, again, is productive in addressing the way Christians are to approach the OT in light of the revelation of Jesus as the Messiah.

However, VanGemeren's theory also contains potential pitfalls for understanding Christ in the OT. First, his specific approach to typology is uncertain. While, as noted above, he is to be commended for avoiding excess in this area, little is said about how he specifically perceives typology functioning. He seems to advocate the use of typology at some basic level based on his approval of Calvin's typological approach to the OT.[96] And it is likely that his concept of examining God's "action and thought patterns" in redemptive history represents a typological approach to the OT. But even if so, he is not specific on the matter and how he envisions it factoring into OT interpretation. Since typology is currently a controversial yet widely practiced approach to understanding Christ in the OT, VanGemeren would do well to define, clarify, and justify his approach in more detail.

Second, VanGemeren stresses that an understanding of revelation must be carefully balanced between both divine and human aspects of communication. However, his views on the freedom of the Spirit in interpretation override this balance at times. In fact, it appears that VanGemeren's understanding of messiah in the OT could border on being classified as *senus plenior* at various points.[97] While it is true that some holding to a Christocentric hermeneutic argue that there is a divine meaning of Scripture that the human author does not necessarily have to be aware of, others like Kaiser counter that the

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is somewhat careless about it at other times. For example, his argument that the gold clasps holding the tabernacle together point to "the firm manner in which God constructs the world and His way to salvation as one whole, all parts being held together in Christ," is likely closer to allegory than typology. Ibid., 28-29.

[96]VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 24.

[97]Both Longman and Poythress point out that a Christocentric or redemptive-historical approach to messiah in the OT can, at some level, be classified as an example of *sensus plenior*. See Longman, "The Messiah: Explorations in the Law and Writings," 32–34; Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," 108–10.

consciousness of the human author is vital to meaning.[98] Here it is likely that there should

be "middle-ground" on this issue. Douglas Moo, F. F. Bruce, and Raymond Brown, for

example, convincingly argue that while the human author does not have to be aware of

the divine author's ultimate intention, at the very least the divine author's greater

intention should roughly be in line with the human author's understanding and

intention.[99] VanGemeren's view on the freedom of the Spirit in interpretation does little

to establish such balance. It is easy, as a result, for his interpretation of the OT to become

subjective. Again, such an approach is out of line with VanGemeren's call for

equilibrium between divine and human aspects of revelation. Thus, he would benefit

from establishing a more defined and evenhanded approach to the Spirit's role in

revelation and ultimate meaning.

Third, advances in research contribute little to VanGemeren's hermeneutical

theory. For instance, knowledge of Jewish methods of interpretation that have become

known due to various documents from second-temple Judaism are virtually nonexistent

in his approach. While one may not think that such knowledge should be the driving

force for understanding Christ in the OT, it seems wise that, given his stress on the

human side of progressive redemption, one must also not ignore the historical interpretive

context in which the apostles read and interpreted messiah in the OT. This is not only

valuable from a hermeneutical perspective, but also from a progressive-redemptive

perspective. Studying techniques of the past is vital in understanding the historical

process by which God unfolds his redemptive purpose in Christ.[100]

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[98]Walter C. Kaiser, "The Single Intent of Scripture," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 65–69.

[99]Douglas J. Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," in *Hermeneutics, Authority, Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 210; F. F. Bruce, "The Theology and Interpretation of the Old Testament," in *Tradition and Interpretation*, ed. G. W. Anderson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 414; Raymond E. Brown, "The 'Sensus Plenior' in the Last Ten Years," *CBQ* 25 (1963): 277.

[100]Herbert Bateman IV, "Introduction," in *Jesus the Messiah: Tracing the Promises, Expectations, and Coming of Israel's King* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2012), 28–29; Moo, "The

Fourth, VanGemeren's hermeneutical approach to the OT also falls victim to the same feedback loop criticism that Goldsworthy's approach does. Of specific concern in regard to VanGemeren's approach is his emphasis on the faith community's role in the hermeneutical circle. His call for "dialogue in community" seems similar to much of the focus within the emerging "Theological Interpretation of Scripture" movement and its emphasis on ecclesiastical and theological interpretation of Scripture.[101] This movement is still too early in its development to define with any level of certainty, but some of the preliminary dangers of its focus on interpretation within the community of believers are already apparent. These dangers include the use of allegory and the loss of the original historical meaning of a text.[102] Granted, VanGemeren is staunchly opposed to such interpretative approaches, his call for interpretation in theological community can naturally give way to such tendencies. This propensity is something that must be given proper accountability.

Exegetical Example

Goldsworthy furnishes one example of the Christocentric approach to understanding messiah in the OT with his interpretation of Genesis 1:1- 2:3. His approach is simple. Because of his broad view of typology and the centrality of Christ in the OT, he concludes that

> if God is summing up all things in Christ (Eph 1:10), if Christ is the locus of the new creation (2 Cor 5:17), and if the goal of Christ's person and work is the new heavens and earth (Is 65:17; 2 Pet 3:13), then it seems to me that the creation is broadly typological of the new creation, and, therefore, of Christ who, in himself, is the representative new creation and the basis for the consummated new creation. This surely has the potential for preaching the Old Testament as God's testimony to Christ.[103]

Problem of Sensus Plenior," 92–95.

[101]For an excellent overview of the TIS movement, see Gregg R. Allison, "Theological Interpretation of Scripture: An Introduction and Preliminary Evaluation," *SBJT* 14, no. 2 (2010): 28–36.

[102]Stephen J. Wellum, "Editorial: Reflecting upon the Theological Interpretation of Scripture," *SBJT* 14, no. 2 (2010): 3.

[103]Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and*

Little attention is given to historical, grammatical, or literary details of this narrative. In fact, it is difficult to discern any other hermeneutical criteria to identify messiah in the OT other than the assumption that each passage is about Christ.

Conclusion

Overall, a Christocentric approach to understanding Christ in the OT provides several valuable insights for evangelical hermeneutics. Of particular value are both the recognition of the need for God to provide the framework for truth, as opposed to fallen human reasoning, and the recovery of a progressive redemptive-historical metanarrative across Scripture. Important weaknesses include the tendency to under appreciate the "original meaning" of a text as well as subjectivity associated with typology. The tendency of "feedback loops" is also a concern.

Principles (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 189.

CHAPTER 3

SECOND TEMPLE EXEGETICAL METHODOLOGY
APPROACH

A second evangelical hermeneutical approach to understanding messiah in the

OT primarily takes into account interpretive methodology and messianic expectations

prevalent during the time of Second Temple Judaism. These matters, it is believed,

explains how the authors of the NT interpreted the OT as predictive of Jesus as the

Messiah. Douglas Moo argues that this approach is the most consistent way in which

contemporary scholars seek to explain how the NT utilizes and interprets OT passages.[1]

A wide range of contemporary evangelicals advocate this hermeneutical

approach to understanding Christ in the OT. At the same time, a large number of non-

evangelicals supporter this position as well. In fact, often non-evangelical works in this

area of study are often highly influential on evangelicals.[2]

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[1]Douglas Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," in *Hermeneutics, Authority, Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 192.

[2]A sample of both evangelical and non-evangelical authors and works influential in understanding messiah in the OT in relation to Second Temple Jewish hermeneutical practices and messianic expectations includes Joachim Becker, *Messianic Expectation in the Old Testament*, trans. D. E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977); John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995); idem, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008); Nils A. Dahl, "Eschatology and History in the Light of the Qumran Scrolls," in *The Crucified Messiah* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974), 129–45; idem, *Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine*, ed. Donald H. Juel (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1991); Nils A. Dahl, "Messianic Ideas and the Crucifixion of Jesus," in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. James Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1992), 382–403; idem, *The Crucified Messiah* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, n.d.); C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (London: Nisbet & Company, 1952); idem, "The Old Testament in the New," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?* ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 167–81; E. Earl Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1957); idem, "How the New Testament Uses the Old," in *New Testament Interpretation*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1977), 199–219; idem, *History and Interpretation in New Testament Perspective*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and Rolf Rendtorff, Biblical Interpretation Series 54 (Boston: Brill, 2001); Peter Enns, "Wisdom of Solomon and Biblical Interpretation in the Second Temple Period," in *Way*

Characteristics

It is somewhat difficult to identify general characteristics of those holding a Second Temple hermeneutical approach to understanding messiah in the OT. This difficulty arises primarily from the considerable amount of disagreement among scholars on a variety of significant issues within this approach. In broad strokes, such difficulty can often be traced back to the relatively new and complex issues sparked by the discovery of the Qumran documents in the 1940s and 1950s. These discoveries rejuvenated discussion about the NT use of the OT, and messianism in particular, around the time of Jesus. Unfortunately, an adequate amount of time has not yet passed to allow sufficient study and consensus on many of the more important issues fueled by the discoveries of these documents.

For example, until the present time, arguably Dodd, Lindars, and Stendahl have written the three most influential works on the NT use of the OT.[3] Naturally, these

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of Wisdom, ed. James I. Packer and Sven Soderlund (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 212–25; idem, "Expansions of Scripture," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism, The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 1:73–98; idem, "Apostolic Hermeneutics and an Evangelical Doctrine of Scripture: Moving beyond a Modernist Impasse," *WTJ* 65, no. 2 (September 2003): 263–87; idem, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005); idem, "Preliminary Observations on an Incarnational Model of Scripture: Its Viability and Usefulness," *Calvin Theological Journal* 42, no. 2 (November 2007): 219–36; idem, "Fuller Meaning, Single Goal," in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 167–217; idem, "Some Thoughts on Theological Exegesis of the Old Testament: Toward a Viable Model of Biblical Coherence and Relevance," in *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Authority of Scripture* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 183–203; James Barr, *Old and New in Interpretation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966); Richard N. Longenecker, *Studies in Hermeneutics, Christology and Discipleship* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006); idem, "Negative Answer to the Question 'Who Is the Prophet Talking About?' Some Reflections on the New Testament's Use of the Old," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 375–86; idem, "Prolegomena to Paul's Use of Scripture in Romans," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 7 (January 1997): 145–68; idem, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1999); idem, "Major Tasks of an Evangelical Hermeneutic: Some Observations on Commonalities, Interrelations, and Differences," *BBR* 14, no. 1 (January 1, 2004): 45–58; D. H. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1973); Barnabas Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic: The Doctrinal Significance of the Old Testament Quotations* (London: SCM, 1961); Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament* (Lund: Gleerup, 1954); Donald Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1992); idem, "New Testament Reading of the Old: Norm or Nuisance?" *Dialog* 31, no. 3 (June 1992): 181–89.

[3]Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*; Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic*; Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament*.

works are also influential on understanding messiah in the OT. The works, however, highlight the level of ambiguity, difficulty, and diversity in this area of study. All three represent different perspectives on issues such as exegetical presuppositions of the early church, similarities and differences between Qumran and NT exegetical practices, and the goal of utilizing the OT by NT authors. There still remains wide disagreement on these core issues, and others, among scholars today.[4]

General Distinctions

Although difficult, it is still possible to present a few broad distinctions of those evangelicals advocating a Second Temple Jewish hermeneutical approach to understanding the Messiah in the OT.

Presuppositions. Three essential presuppositions typically underlie the views of those holding to this perspective. First, most agree that NT authors begin their approach to biblical interpretation with the assumption that God revealed Jesus as the Messiah. This premise subsequently leads to various hermeneutical sub-pillars for the apostles and early church. One of these sub-pillars involves a shift in temporal and historical understanding. Based on both Jesus' teachings and his subsequent presentation as the Messiah, the apostles operate from the perspective that the kingdom of God is inaugurated with his advent. This understanding reorients the interpretive lens of Scripture for these early believers. Now, Jesus is seen as the embodiment and pinnacle of "salvation history." As a result, the whole of OT history is now considered a divinely ordered plan pointing to Christ and his consummation as the Messiah.[5]

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[4]Such issues include the definitions of allusions and intertextuality, the role of typology, the identification and definition of *midrash*, *pesher*, allegory, etc. and whether these methods of interpretation should be mimicked by believers today.

[5]Although the term "salvation history" does not appear in the NT, Ellis relates it implicitly to Eph 1:10. He notes that the concept of a "dispensation represents this idea, that is, a divinely ordered plan though the term 'salvation history' does not occur in the New Testament. The concept is most evident in the way in which the New Testament relates current and future events to events, persons, and institutions in the Old Testament." Ellis, "How the New Testament Uses the Old," 210.

There is a further outcome of this historical perspective. Because of the Semitic concept of corporate personality, the earliest believers reason that they are now grafted into Christ.[6] Because Christ is the pinnacle of the salvation history for God's people and the earliest believers understand that they are now grafted into Christ, they themselves are the true Israel of God. Hence, they also reason that they are incorporated into God's OT salvation story, and that this story should now be interpreted accordingly.

It is also understood that the specific identification of how believers in Christ fit into the OT salvation story ultimately originates from the interpretive guidance of the Holy Spirit. He alone is the one who points out truth and reveals the deep mysteries of Scripture. Aside from approaching the OT from a Christological perspective, this pneumatic premise is understood by many contemporary scholars as the most foundational to apostolic hermeneutics.[7]

The second hermeneutical presupposition identified by those holding a Second Temple Jewish hermeneutical approach to understanding the Messiah in the OT is Christological. In light of the revelation of Jesus as the Messiah, and the various other hermeneutical sub-pillars flowing from that truth, the authors of NT Scripture approached the interpretation of the OT Christologically. This Christological approach was primarily accomplished by employing Jewish interpretive practices in vogue at the time. These

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[6]For more on the concept of corporate personality, see Henry Wheeler Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 1–40.

[7]Longenecker points out that "the New Testament authors' use of the Old Testament is to be seen as being *pneumatic* in that they believed that they were guided by the exalted Christ, who by means of the Holy Spirit brought about their continued understanding and application of Scripture." Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, xxxi. Ellis labels this type of interpretation "charismatic exegesis." He notes that this approach to the OT provides the ultimate authority and means by which NT authors seek to understand the Messiah in the OT. Apostolic interpretation of the OT did not rest on "the proved superiority of their logical procedure or exegetical method but rather on the conviction of their prophetic character and role." Ellis, "How the New Testament Uses the Old," 215. Ellis argues that in the case of Paul, he "drew from the text the meaning originally planted there by the Holy Spirit and expressed that meaning in the most appropriate words and phrases known to him." E. Earle Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity: New Testament Essays* (Grand Rapids: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1978), 180.

Jewish hermeneutical practices were both intermingled with and influenced by messianic expectations. These were, in large measure, intricately tied to the historical and political circumstances of the large scale Jewish community.[8] Such expectations, however, were often sectarian in nature, differing in relation to emphasis on messianic identification, hope, function, and temporal perspectives. In short, these different expectations produced various understandings of the identity of the Messiah and how he would function. These cultural expectations also exercised great influence over how the apostles, the early church, and even Jesus himself chose to interpret the OT in relation to the concept of a messiah.

A third presupposition deals with the unique and complex circumstances surrounding Second Temple social, political, and theological contexts. Because of these ancient, complex circumstances, modern readers cannot understand the way in which Jesus was biblically justified as the Messiah by NT authors without an intimate knowledge of the macro-Jewish interpretive framework prevalent in the first-century. Grasping this interpretive context is vital to understanding the hermeneutical approaches of the NT authors to the OT scriptures and their relevancy for understanding Jesus as the Messiah.

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[8]Generally, messianic expectations during the life of Jesus are traced back as far as the Davidic dynasty and the subsequent historical and political happenings following it. One example of this tendency is seen in Bateman. He goes to great lengths in providing a detailed reconstruction of historical and political happenings that gave rise to the messianism present during the lifetime of Jesus. His historical scheme takes into account virtually every major political and social circumstance in the lives of Israel from the time of Solomon through the time of Josephus. While helpful in gaining an appreciation of the historical context for messianism among Pharisees and Essenes around the time of Christ, it is often speculative in its reconstruction. As Bateman himself points out, sources of Intertestamental literature are too sparse and diverse to create the type of reconstruction he presents. See Herbert W. Bateman IV, "Three Obstacles to Overcome, and Then One," in *Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2012), 211–49. Pomykala also points out the dangers of assuming the uniform importance of the Davidic dynasty for messianism during Jesus' time. But it should be noted that many of Pomykala's conclusions are founded on speculative dating of Second-Temple sources. Kenneth Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition in Early Judaism: Its History and Significance for Messianism* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995).

Sources. There are multiple sources that provide the basis for understanding the Second Temple Jewish interpretive context. There are also large and complex categories by which scholars classify approaches to the OT utilized by the authors of these sources.[9] Broadly, scholars agree that there are several major categories of resources that aid in understanding the hermeneutical approaches to the OT during Second Temple Judaism. Ellis identifies these categories as rabbinic literature, later Palestinian Jewish literature (150 BC- AD 100), and works stemming from Jews in Alexandria.[10] Longenecker is slightly more specific than Ellis and categorizes the sources as Targums, rabbinical or Talmudic literature, Jewish apocalyptic literature, and Jewish Alexandrian literature primarily stemming from Philo.[11]

The first three of Longenecker's categories are generally considered most important regarding NT messianic hermeneutical approaches to the OT. Although it is somewhat futile to distinguish between the interpretive approaches of the Targums and rabbinic literature, collectively these works represent one thousand years of Jewish theological and interpretive development. More specifically in relation to hermeneutical approaches to the OT, both show that pre-Christian biblical exegesis generally took the form of *midrash*.[12] Particularly important within the category of *midrash* are the seven

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[9]Moo provides a detailed analysis of the complex sources, axioms, methodologies, and techniques associated with the hermeneutics of late Judaism. See Douglas J. Moo, *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives* (Sheffield, England: The Almond Press, 1983), 5–78.

[10]Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*, 39–40.

[11]Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 6–18.

[12]Here I am following the definition of *midrash* provided by Horovitz and also advocated by Longenecker. Both see *midrash* as an exegetical approach to Scripture "which, going more deeply than the mere literal sense, attempts to penetrate into the spirit of the Scriptures, to examine the text from all sides and thereby to derive interpretations which are not immediately obvious." S. Horovitz, "Midrash," in *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1904, 548; also quoted in Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 19. This approach to Scripture largely involved providing the OT text normative status in the lives of Jews living in later and diverse historical and political contexts than those to whom the OT was originally written. However, it also should be recognized that, as Longenecker points out, there is little evidence that rabbis before the second-century AD distinguished between *pesher* (a straight-forward, literal interpretation of Scripture) and *midrash* interpretation. For such interpreters of Scripture, what Horovitz defines as *midrash* , is, in fact, the straightforward sense of OT Scripture. Ibid., 18–19. However, as Ellis also points

hermeneutical *middoth* that provide rules for biblical interpretation (see Table 1 below). The Talmud associates these principles with Hillel, who lived slightly before the time of Jesus. These hermeneutical principles were later expanded to thirteen rules by Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha in the early second century AD and again to thirty-two rules by Rabbi Eliezer ben Jose ha-Galili between AD 130-AD 160.[13]

Jewish Apocalyptic literature is also of great importance to the study of first-century Jewish hermeneutics. Major sources relevant for apocalyptic messianic expectations include Jubilees, 1 Enoch, 3 Enoch, Assumption of Moses, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, and multiple writings discovered at Qumran.[14] One reason for the importance of this genre of literature is that it spans an approximate time frame of two centuries before the birth of Christ, and one century after his death. Another reason for the significance of apocalyptic literature is that it reveals the exegetical approaches and messianic expectations found within this genre vary from those of traditional rabbinic literature. Thus apocalyptic literature helps to highlight the diversity in both Jewish messianic expectations and exegetical practices around the time of Christ. Also, in contrast to rabbinic and Talmudic literature that is typically considered Pharisaic, Jewish Apocalyptic literature is most often understood as being influenced or produced by Essenes. Again, this difference highlights the diversity and sectarian nature of Jewish exegesis and messianic expectations around the time of Jesus.

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out, over time, although the literal meaning "theoretically reigned supreme," normative approaches to Scripture through *Halaka* and *Haggada* led to such rabbinical interpretations having "a value independent of Scripture, and often Scripture proofs were recognized as a mere formality if not superfluous." Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*, 40–41.

[13]Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 19–21.

[14]Bateman provides a comprehensive list of passages in OT Pseudepigrapha and Qumran documents which look forward to an apocalyptic messianic figure. These passages are 11QMelch 2.18; 4Q171 1; 4QpPs; 1 Enoch: Similitudes 48:10; 52:4; 2 Baruch 29:3; 30:1; 39:7; 40:1; 70:9; 72:2; 4 Ezra 7:28-29; 11:37-12:34; 3 Enoch 45:5; 48a:10. Herbert W. Bateman IV, "Anticipations of the One Called Messiah," in *Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2012), 255.

Table 1. Hillel's hermeneutical principles

Hermeneutical Principle[15]	Definition	NT Examples
Qal wahomer	Argument from less to greater. What applies in a less important case applies more in a more important case.	John 7:23; Rom 5:15-21
Gezerah shawah	Verbal correspondence. Where the same words are used in different passages or situations, what applies in one applies to the other.	Luke 6:3-5; Rom 4:3-8
Binyan 'ab mikathub 'ehad	Formation of a family of texts based on a common phrase. What applies in one use of the phrase applies in other uses of the same phrase in different passages or contexts.	Heb 9:11-22
Binyan 'ab mishene kethubim	Formation of a family of texts based on the common principle of two texts.	Heb 1:5-14
Kelal upherat	A general principle can be restricted by a particular verse and a particular principle can be extended to a general rule.	Rom 13:8-10
Kayoze' bo bemaqom 'aher	Analogy with a similar passage. One passage can be explained by another passage that shares general points of similarity.	Gal 3:8-9
Dabar halamed me-'inyano	A meaning established by context.	Rom 4:10-11; Gal 3:17

Hermeneutical categories. In general terms, scholars recognize four broad hermeneutical categories associated with Second Temple Jewish biblical interpretation. The first category is known as *peshat*. This hermeneutical approach can be described as a

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[15]Table 1 is dependent on a number of resources: Ellis, *History and Interpretation in New Testament Perspective*, 54:126–28; Juel, *Messianic Exegesis*, 31–57; Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 6–35. Also, see Moses Mielziner, *Introduction to the Talmud* (Chicago: Bloch Printing Company, 1894), 117ff.

literal, face value approach to interpreting a biblical passage. Examples of this approach towards scripture interpretation are numerous. Instances can be found throughout the Targums, rabbinic, apocalyptic, and even in Alexandrian writings. The second category is *midrash*. This hermeneutical approach corresponds most with Hillel and his principles of biblical interpretation noted above.[16] The third category is *pesher*. Generally, *pesher* interpretation almost exclusively refers to the exegetical practices of the Essene sect at Qumran.[17] Comparing and contrasting *pesher* interpretation with the hermeneutical approaches of rabbinic literature best provides a description of this mode of interpretation. Whereas rabbinic literature seeks contemporary application of an ancient text that addresses previous generations and circumstances, F. F. Bruce points out that a *pesher* hermeneutic interprets Scripture passages as exclusively referring to the contemporary community. This perspective leads the community to believe that the consummation of all prophecy is immediately at hand.[18] Longenecker concurs, noting that *pesher*

> distinguishes itself from rabbinic interpretation, for while in the Talmudic literature there is a contemporizing treatment of Holy Writ that seeks to make God's word relevant to the present circumstances and ongoing situations, among the Dead Sea

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[16]See the examples and definition on pp. 80-83 above.

[17]The origin and background of Qumran literature is complex, and space here does not allow for a detailed discussion of it. Though not always the case, however, scholars generally agree that the Qumran literature is produced by one particular strand of Essene mentality. See Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 13. Although written in 1955, Burrows's work gives a good overview of the evidence and issues involved with this issue. See Millar Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: The Viking Press, 1955), 227–98. He concludes that the Qumran community in many ways was "akin to Essenes, as we know them from sources of the Roman period. If this term is used in a broad, comprehensive sense, we may legitimately call the Qumran sectarians Essenes. For the present, however, in order not to prejudge the case, it seems better to reserve that name for the group described by Philo and Josephus, which, if their reports are accurate, was not exactly identical or coextensive with the Qumran community. As a matter of convenience we may still designate the latter by the term 'covenanters.'" Ibid., 298.

[18]Bruce summarizes the presuppositions of Qumran exegesis in three statements: "1. God revealed His purpose to His servants the prophets. 2. All the words of the prophets had reference to the time of the end. 3.The time of the end is at hand." F. F. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts* (London: Tyndale Press, 1960), 9–10.

covenanters the biblical texts were looked on from the perspective of immediate apocalyptic fulfillment.[19]

Put more plainly, *midrash* is an application of an original passage that was most often intended for another historical community and their specific historical circumstances. Such an approach to Scripture essentially states "This is what the ancient text means for us today." In contrast, *pesher* interpretation understands all Scripture to be written exclusively about the contemporary community. It essentially states, "The text is exclusively referring to us."

The fourth hermeneutical category of Second Temple Judaism is allegorical interpretation. This approach to biblical interpretation is characteristically associated with Philo of Alexandria. But there is sufficient historical evidence to warrant that Philo stood in an extended tradition of allegorical interpreters.[20] Later, Philo's style of Hellenistic, allegorical interpretation of Scripture also influenced the hermeneutical approaches of prominent Christians such as Clement of Alexandria and Origen.[21] Such allegorical readings of the OT can be described as an "esoteric enterprise . . . disassociated from literal interpretation."[22] It most often views OT Scripture as a group of symbols indicative of a deeper spiritual meaning. This depiction does not imply, however, that those associated with the Alexandrian school always defy the "literal" or "face value" meaning

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[19]Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 25.

[20]"Philo, it is true, was not universally admired, and he may not have been representative of the entirety of Hellenistic Judaism in many ways. But his exegetical methods were not unique to himself. C. Siegfried and H. A. A. Kennedy have shown that 'there can be little question that Philo stood in a long succession of allegorical interpreters of the Old Testament. The practice had been reduced to a kind of science.' Clement of Alexandria mentions a second-century-B.C.E. Alexandrian Jew by the name of Aristobulus who used allegorical exegesis in a series of works on the Mosaic Law. *The Letter of Aristeas* includes one instance of mild allegorical treatment in its . . . defense of the Jewish dietary laws, which, judging from Josephus's extensive paraphrase of that letter, . . . was probably widely known . . . In addition the Dead Sea Scrolls include a number of examples of allegorical interpretation." Ibid., 32–33.

[21]For an overview of Philo, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen's allegorical approaches to the OT, see Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 80–90.

[22]Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 31.

of an OT passage.[23] But in general, those advocating allegorical interpretation most often expound hidden meanings and eternal truths of Scripture that depart from the plain meaning of a given text.

In summary, it is these broad Second-Temple Jewish hermeneutical approaches to the OT that many evangelical scholars believe to be the key for comprehending the NT authors' use of the OT and their understanding and justification of Jesus as the Messiah.

Analysis of Specific Approaches

Two general advocates of a Second Temple hermeneutical approach to understanding messiah in the OT have been selected for examination in this chapter. The two advocates are Donald Juel and Richard Longenecker. These scholars are selected for two reasons. First, they both represent varying degrees of emphasis and approach within a Second Temple hermeneutical approach to understanding Christ in the OT. Second, both men and their works are two of the most extensive and influential on this topic among evangelicals at this time.

Donald Juel

Donald Juel believes a historical-grammatical hermeneutic cannot adequately explain many of the NT authors' depictions of Jesus as the Messiah from the texts of the OT. Juel's thesis is that the earliest Christian believers did not read the OT contextually, but rather in light of Jesus' surprising and ironic vindication as "The Messiah." This

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[23]As McCartney, Clayton, Greidanus, and Longenecker all point out, allegory to Philo, Clement, and the Alexandrian school, is not entirely opposed to the literal meaning of a passage. In some situations the literal is important. To determine the validity of a literal interpretation of a passage, Clement and Philo both exercised various principles. For example, in their views, the literal meaning cannot be true if it violates or contradicts another passage in Scripture, or if it is "unworthy of God," or where anthropomorphisms are used of a spiritual being, particularly God. See Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2002), 87; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 81; Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 30–32.

vindication was primarily attained following his claim of messianic status, via his subsequent death and resurrection. Convinced of Jesus' messianic standing by these events, the early church was then obligated to understand the entire corpus of OT Scripture in light of him. As a result, the apostles approached the OT Christologically through various Jewish hermeneutical approaches widely practiced at the time. These Jewish hermeneutical practices can often seem arbitrary or fanciful to modern interpreters; however, they allowed early Christians to both understand the OT in light of the revelation of Jesus as the Messiah, as well as possess a common stock of biblical language with which to speak about him.

Presuppositions. Juel's theory is heavily dependent on the presupposition that there was little widespread consensus regarding the identity and function of "the Messiah" during Jesus' lifetime.[24] Specifically, Juel asserts that there was no standard belief in a suffering, dying messiah during either the OT or Intertestamental periods. He grants that such a tradition did develop over time in Judaism, but by the time of the NT, there is little indication that such a view was standard. The only widely held consensus regarding messianic expectation before the time of Jesus centered on an earthly, Davidic monarch.[25] Juel believes that this view is evident from an analysis of both OT and non-

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[24]While this view is Juel's position, it is also widely held among most critical scholars today. In a 1992 Princeton Symposium this point was widely discussed and advocated by participants. The symposium was later published: James Charlesworth, ed., *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992). Most of the essays in this volume deny any widespread coherent belief in reference to the function and identity of the Messiah during Second Temple Judaism. In the introductory essay, Charlesworth tersely summarizes the findings of most when he notes that around the time of Jesus, "Jews did not profess a coherent and normative messianology." James Charlesworth, "From Messianology to Christology: Problems and Prospects," in *The Messiah*, ed. James Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 35.

[25]Though there was a consensus that the messiah would be an earthly monarch from the line of David, Juel believes extra biblical evidence indicates little agreement on much else, particularly eschatological issues. Juel notes, "With respect to eschatology, what Jews shared was a Bible, certain traditional interpretations of biblical passages, and a conviction that God would do something great for his people in the future. When that great future would arrive, which biblical figures would play a role in those coming events, and which biblical passages were regarded as central to an understanding of that future depended upon the particular experiences and even the structure of each distinct group." Donald Juel, "The Image of the Servant-Christ in the New Testament," *SWJT* 21, no. 2 (March 1979): 9. Here Juel is heavily

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canonical pre-Christian Jewish literature, but is especially apparent in the text of the NT gospels. Juel finds interest in the earliest of the canonical gospels, Mark, where Jesus is not formally referred to as "The Messiah" until recounting the last week of his life.

In fact, Juel believes that there are two key motifs running across Mark's gospel. He identifies them as Mark's apparent reluctance to formally proclaim Jesus as the Messiah any earlier in his account, along with his seeming effort to portray Jesus' life and work as anything but indicative of prevalent Jewish messianic expectations.[26] The last week of Jesus' life, in his view, is crucial for recognizing these themes. Juel argues that it is not mere coincidence that Mark first uses a high volume of royal language and imagery in reference to Jesus when recounting the last days of his life. A particularly important point regarding this observation is that the timing of such royal language coincides with Jesus' own late claim of messianic status in Mark (cf. Mark 14:61-62). Juel concludes from this timing that Jesus was crucified for claiming to be "The Messiah," which, based on the sum of both biblical and extra biblical evidence, simply meant a liberating Jewish monarch. In essence, "Jesus was executed as a pretender to royalty, as King of the Jews."[27] And as a result, based on the popular consensus at the time, he would be eliminated from being considered the anticipated Davidic Messiah because of his death.

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dependent on the work of Nils Dahl. See Dahl, "Eschatology and History in the Light of the Qumran Scrolls."

[26]Juel notes, "One of the basic motifs in Mark's portrait of Jesus is the unprecedented nature of his ministry. He is the expected one, the one for whom God has prepared, the one whose career is 'in accordance with the scriptures'; ministry likewise does not fit established patterns or expectations. He associates with the wrong sorts of people, threatens the tradition, and, at the climax of his ministry, is executed as a would-be king, rejected by the religious and political authorities, deserted by his followers, abandoned even by God. The tension is not a simple misperception but is in fact constitutive of the gospel Mark knows." Donald Juel, "The Origin of Mark's Christology," in *The Messiah*, ed. James Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 457–58.

[27]Donald Juel, *Messianic Exegesis* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1992), 25.

But, in the utmost of ironies, God actually confirmed Jesus as the Messiah through his death and resurrection.[28] This confirmation was especially shocking at the time because again, in Juel's view, no one expected the Messiah to suffer or die.[29] But through the corroboration of Jesus' messianic claim by God, the traditional understanding of what the title "Messiah" meant was radically altered for his followers.

Because of this altered messianic understanding, the earliest believers in Christ were charged with approaching the OT from a new perspective. "Their task was to understand how such things could be and what the implications were, and it led them into Scripture with a fresh agenda."[30] For Juel, this new agenda directed believers to partake in a "creative exegetical enterprise" that largely amounted to a Christ-focused atomistic form of exegesis. Such an exegetical approach to the OT, for the most part, aligns consistently with documented cases of non-contextual, first-century Jewish hermeneutical approaches to biblical interpretation. The most notable difference, however, is that the believers start with the presupposition that Jesus is the Messiah. This same premise then becomes both the basis and the goal of their interpretation of the OT.

For Juel, such an approach to understanding the OT in light of Jesus should be specifically labeled as "Christological." This classification, in his opinion, is in line with the findings of his mentor, Nils Dahl, who previously theorized about the odd nature of Christ's life and work in comparison with OT texts:

> Jesus is indeed the Messiah—the only Messiah known to Jewish tradition prior to Bar Kokba. But his career does not correspond to that of the promised Christ. Thus

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[28]For Mark's use of irony, see Donald Juel, *Messiah and Temple: The Trial of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1977).

[29]"No one expected the Messiah to suffer for sins. No one expected the Messiah to rise from the dead, because he was not expected to die. The biblical passages acknowledged as 'messianic' in Jewish tradition are consistent in this regard. Attempts to find evidence of a pre-Christian 'suffering Messiah' have been unsuccessful." Juel, *Messianic Exegesis*, 13.

[30]Ibid., 29.

the adage formulated by Nils Dahl: the confession of Jesus as Messiah is the presupposition of NT Christology, but not its content.[31]

Juel's Christological classification places his perspective in contrast with that of the highly influential C.H. Dodd. Dodd proposes that the earliest Christian understanding of the OT is held together by the distinct eschatological view that, with the advent of Jesus, the kingdom of God was inaugurated. This perspective holds that all history centered on a particular redemptive pattern designed by God. The first believers understood this redemptive pattern to be revealed in the history of Israel. As a result, they interpreted the OT in light of this pattern.

Juel believes the true genesis of apostolic hermeneutics to be the central belief that Jesus is the Messiah, whereas Dodd believes that inaugurated eschatology and an assumed redemptive- historical pattern represent the starting points of early Christian exegesis of the OT. In order to justify his conclusion, Juel points out several deficiencies in Dodd's approach. First, Juel argues that Dodd's thesis does not align with the known evidence about first-century Jewish exegetical approaches to the OT. Dodd makes a case that NT exegesis of the OT is not atomistic in light of the apostles understanding of their place in biblical history. Juel, on the other hand, maintains that it is evident biblical interpretation during this time period was both capable and prone to utilize passages with little regard to their original context. Juel further argues that much of the use of the OT by NT authors follows hermeneutical procedures that explicitly mirror atomistic exegetical practices known from multiple extra-biblical sources. This tangible evidence, according to Juel, strongly argues against Dodd and his theoretical view of NT exegesis. Support for such a historical perspective is simply lacking, according to Juel, while evidence of atomistic exegesis in line with the culture of interpretation at the time abounds.

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[31]Juel, "The Origin of Mark's Christology," 458. See also Nils A. Dahl, *Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine*, ed. Donald H. Juel (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1991); Nils A. Dahl, "Messianic Ideas and the Crucifixion of Jesus," in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. James Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1992), 388–89.

Second, and more strongly, Juel argues that Dodd's starting point for understanding the NT use of the OT—shared quotations and allusions—is problematic. One issue is that Dodd assumes that there was a unified interpretation of most OT passages in both pre-Christian traditions as well as in the NT itself. But this assumption appears surprisingly out of line with both biblical and extra-biblical evidence. Juel points to Psalm 22 and Isaiah 52 as an example:

> Though no unified interpretation of Psalm 22 or Isaiah 53 is offered in the NT, Dodd argues that the plot in these texts served as a model for understanding Jesus' career. One way to sustain such an argument would be to demonstrate that in Jewish tradition the plots had worked out in terms of a typical sufferer—whether personified as Israel or as a single figure. If there is no evidence of such a unified interpretation, however, it is it difficult to rule out the possibility that Christians made use of bits and pieces of psalms or Isaiah 53 until finally a unified interpretation was produced . . . . If there existed no mythic construct such as an apocalyptic Son of man or a Suffering Servant or a Righteous Sufferer, but only the Scriptural potential for the construction of such figures, what appears to us as coherent interpretive traditions may well be the product of our imaginations. The so-called plots of Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 may not have been the starting point for Christian interpretation at all but only a later byproduct.

The same is true in regard to Isaiah 61:

> Several scholars have, like Dodd, suggested that Isaiah 61 was important to Christian interpreters because it permitted them to speak about Jesus as "anointed." Does that mean, however, that "Christ" is a term used of Jesus because passages from Isaiah were perceived to be appropriate to him? Or are passages from Isaiah appropriate because Jesus is confessed as the Christ? Our knowledge of post-biblical exegesis in the pre-Christian era has an important bearing on such questions.[32]

A further problem with Dodd's starting point is that it does not adequately account for other potential "deposits" of earlier biblical tradition and interpretation. Juel points out that the NT represents a lengthy history of reflection on the OT, and particularly its relationship to Jesus.[33] Such developed contemplation by NT authors

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[32]Juel, *Messianic Exegesis*, 22.

[33]One example Juel gives is the use of the term "seed" across both Testaments. For instance, "The use of the term 'seed' to speak of Jesus derives from an interpretation of Psalm 89 and 2 Samuel 7, yet in the passages where it is used, no reference is made to either text. We must begin with quotations and allusions that we can find, but there is no guarantee that they will provide a good starting point for the history of exegesis. Scriptural terminology that has become part of a standard vocabulary cannot be excluded from consideration." Ibid.

would assume a common biblical vocabulary stock grounded in a lengthy history of interpretative traditions without necessarily quoting, acknowledging, or even being conscious of the roots of those traditions. Juel believes that this indicates the inadequacy of utilizing quotes and allusions as the starting point for analyzing the NT's exegesis of the OT.

Methodology. A safer approach, in Juel's view, is to examine essential Christian tradition and to ascertain exactly how those who are convinced that Jesus is the Messiah apply OT language and imagery in the NT. For Juel, this approach generally involves several steps. First, Juel starts with OT passages that show wide evidence of being messianic in pre-Christian Judaism. Such passages primarily include 2 Samuel 7; Psalm 89; and Daniel 7. Second, since in large measure Jesus did not live up to the messianic expectations of the time, Juel focuses on texts and themes that are applied to Jesus by NT authors that are largely out of line with pre-Christian messianic expectations. The most important of these themes involves the death and resurrection of Christ. Juel proposes, therefore, that the starting point for analyzing the NT approach to messianism in the OT is found in the Christian *kerygma*. In particular, Juel utilizes 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 as representative of this message. This passage characterizes both the essential elements of the *kerygma* and a well-developed tradition passed to Paul after considerable theological reflection (cf. 1 Cor. 15:3). Third, then Juel identifies OT allusions and quotations in the NT that are used in support of this *kerygma*. He then compares known pre-Christian interpretations of these same OT passages and themes with the NT authors' usage of them.

Juel concludes that this comparison results in a few important items. One is that there was no widely held pre-Christian messianic expectation that specifically aligned with the life and work of Jesus. Two, the apostles therefore appear to be exercising a form of non-contextual Christological exegesis of specific OT passages. But

third, for the most part, the NT use of these OT passages and themes do possess a distant, yet deliberate and discernible, connection with pre-Christian messianic passages and expectations.

These connections can largely be classified as *midrash* and *pesher* approaches to Scripture interpretation. The most prominent ties are with Hillel's *midrash* principles of *gezerah shawah* and *qal wahomer*. One example of Juel's proposal is his attempt to explain the NT usage of Psalm 22; 31; and 69. These psalms are used in the passion narratives of the NT gospels in reference to the death of the Messiah. However, there is little evidence in pre-Christian sources that any of them were understood as messianic. Juel argues, however, that the gospel writers, through linguistic and thematic association rooted in Psalm 89,[34] understood such psalms as messianic:

> Psalm 89 and its interpretation provide one key to the use of the passion psalms. In this psalm, understood in Jewish tradition as messianic in the narrow sense, it is the Messiah who is mocked, reviled, and threatened. The psalm identifies the Messiah as servant and seed, making possible associations with other biblical passages by means of analogy. The language of reviling for example, provides a link with a small number of laments. Psalm 89 shows that the speaker in a psalm may be the Messiah and that the Messiah can complain about maltreatment. Christian exegetes took advantage of the interpretive potential in other psalms as they sought to tell their story of the King who died on a cross.[35]

Juel concludes that Psalm 89 is valuable for a number of reasons. One reason is that it shares parallel themes with the passion narratives. It also provides the passion psalms verbal and thematic connection with a messianic passage in pre-Christian Judaism. Such an interpretation of the OT is primarily an example of *gezerah shawah*. A further connection between Psalm 89 and the other passion psalms involves the psalm titles. Because all of the psalm titles are connected with the monarchy, all four of these psalms can be granted a connection with the Davidic covenant, and thus popular

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[34]Psalm 89 was considered messianic in pre-Christian Judaism. This view is demonstrated in such sources as *b. Sanhedrin* 97a; Gen Rabbah on 48:8; Exod Rabbah on 13:1; and the Targum on Ps 89:51-52. Juel, *Messianic Exegesis*, 126.

[35]Ibid., 117.

messianic expectation. Again, in Jewish methods of interpretation, what applies in one case can be connected and applied to all similar cases.[36]

Thus, according to Juel, the main interest of citing or alluding to Psalm 89 in the NT is not "proving" that Jesus was the Messiah. Rather it is to make sense of the revelation of Jesus as The Messiah by providing logical links between pre-Christian messianic expectations and other OT passages. "The prominent role it plays is in providing links with other biblical passages that that could further develop the kerygma 'in accordance with the Scriptures.'"[37] Juel shows similar connection between NT and OT themes and passages including the Son of Man (Dan 7), Kingship (2 Sam 7), and the suffering Servant (Isa 53).[38] Overall, to Juel, these connections tangibly demonstrate that "the confession of Jesus as messiah is not a goal toward which scriptural interpretation moves but the presupposition for the interpretive tradition."[39]

Analysis. Juel's position for understanding messiah in the OT demonstrates several strengths. First, he brings attention to an important collection of evidence that many evangelicals either downplay or ignore entirely.[40] Failure to consider such evidence, as noted in the previous chapter of this dissertation, is often true of those holding a Christocentric approach to the OT. But, evangelicals such as Bock, Bateman, Longenecker, Moo, and a host of others accurately note that the happenings within this historical context play an important role in understanding the revelation of Jesus as the

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[36]This connection can be understood as an example of *Binyan 'ab mikathub 'ehad* or *Gezerah shawah*. See Table 1 above.

[37]Juel, *Messianic Exegesis*, 117.

[38]Juel, "The Image of the Servant-Christ in the New Testament"; idem, *Messianic Exegesis*, 59–165.

[39]Juel, *Messianic Exegesis*, 117.

[40]Bateman lists this as one of the most critical obstacles for evangelicals trying to understand messiah in the OT. See Bateman, "Three Obstacles to Overcome, and Then One."

Messiah. Put another way, understanding Second Temple hermeneutical approaches to the OT and messianic expectations prevalent at the time of Jesus' life plays a vital role in understanding redemptive history. In fact, it is required to understand it properly.

Second, much of Juel's thesis is based on textual and historical evidence. For example, Juel does an excellent job in demonstrating that many passages such as Isaiah 53 were not widely understood as messianic in pre-Christian tradition. Thus, evangelicals must come to grips with such passages that are considered messianic in the NT, but that were not in pre-Christian interpretation. Avoiding such issues carries major apologetic risks in modern society, and is indicative of an irresponsible handling of God's Word.

But, there are also several potential pitfalls for Juel's position in relation to understanding Christ in the OT. First, Juel almost entirely ignores typology in his analysis. His level of comfort in understanding Christ in the OT appears to lie completely with *midrash*, *pesher*, and allegorical exegesis. While it is appropriate to recognize these exegetical categories and their relevance for understanding Christ in the OT, it is a fundamental error to downplay the importance of typology. This point is particularly true because typology is an explicit category in the NT (e.g., Rom 5:14). E. Earl Ellis demonstrates that various categories of Second Temple exegetical approaches to Scripture work underneath the macro-category of typology. He points out that typology represents the most widespread and basic approach of the earliest believers toward understanding Jesus as Christ.[41] This macro-category is something Juel fails to recognize.

Second, Juel gives little definition or criteria for understanding terms such as "allusions" and "intertextuality" when referencing the appearance of OT passages in the NT. The meaning of each of these words is diverse and hotly debated among scholars.[42]

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[41]Ellis, "How the New Testament Uses the Old," 210–12.

[42]See, Joseph Ryan Kelley, "Intertextuality and Allusion in the Study of the Hebrew Bible" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014).

Yet, Juel appears comfortable leaving them largely undefined. This point by itself does not disqualify the relevancy of Juel's overall argument, but it often serves to make the validity of the textual evidence he presents uncertain. Juel would greatly benefit from both defining these terms and presenting his criteria for how to discover examples of them in Scripture. Such criteria and definitions can be found in the works of Greg Beale and Richard Hays.[43] While not everyone will agree with either scholar's definition or criteria, both Hays and Beale go to great lengths in highlighting the importance of carefully delineating what is meant by such terms. The results of such description leaves readers better able to understand, identify, and examine textual evidence.

Third, despite the presence of biblical and extra-biblical textual evidence in his argument, much of Juel's interpretation of these texts is often speculative. A prime example is found in his interpretation of the book of Mark. For Juel, Mark intentionally holds off on declaring Jesus to be the Messiah until late in his gospel account. This hesitancy leads to the "shocking" and "ironic" vindication of Jesus as the Messiah following his death and resurrection. But if it is in fact the case that the book is written to believers who already assume Jesus is the Messiah, it is difficult to know for certain that Mark is intentionally silent about Jesus' messianic status. It may simply be the case that he takes for granted that his believing readers know that and therefore does not feel the need to explicitly state it earlier. Juel fails to take this possibility seriously.

Another area of speculation revolves around Juel's views on unity and disunity of pre-Christian messianic traditions. Generally, Juel argues there was little standard uniformity of messianic tradition during the life of Jesus except that revolving around the Davidic dynasty. Here two things should be pointed out. First, as Craig Evans demonstrates, often times scholars are quick to point out differences among Jewish sects

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[43]G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 31–40; Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 29ff.

that appear to indicate there was little uniformity of pre-Christian messianic traditions. However, while there were differences, these differences are likely not as great as Juel assumes.[44]

Next, Juel's speculation that the Davidic Dynastic tradition provides the only consistent messianic expectations amongst pre-Christian Jews is also problematic. Here Pomykala is right to caution against assuming too much uniformity within the Davidic tradition. An analysis of Pomykala's argument is beyond the limits of this chapter, but he provides sufficient evidence to caution against taking for granted complete uniformity of Davidic messianic expectations across the broad spectrum of Judaism.[45]

Third, Juel's accusation of non-contextual or "atomistic" exegesis by the authors of the NT is also problematic. To claim that there is little or no connection to the original meaning of an OT passage beyond distant verbal or thematic analogy is an overstatement. In a recent dissertation on Matthew's use of Hosea, Matthew Pearce argues that taking into account both the dynamics of human communication and the theological context of Scripture renders claims of extreme atomistic exegesis invalid in the case of Matthew's use of Hosea.[46] Darrell Bock makes a similar case in relation to various other OT passages referenced in the NT. He demonstrates that a comparison of the contextual meaning of an OT passage with the NT interpretation of that same passage

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[44]Craig A. Evans, "The Messiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Israel's Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Richard Hess and M. Daniel Carroll (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2003), 85–101.

[45]Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition in Early Judaism*.

[46]"To state it succinctly, if Matthew recognizes that Jesus' flight into Egypt is the fulfillment of a text of Scripture, then one must conclude that Matthew personally understands what that original text means in its immediate context and within the greater redemptive and theological discussion of Hosea and the OT. If he does not, then his point is moot, his meaning nonsensical. In other words, if Matthew genuinely wished to communicate a point through his citation to his readers, irrespective of whether or not any of them knew or even cared about Hosea's original meaning, his inclusion of this text into his narrative necessarily requires knowledge of its original meaning lest *his* intended meaning becomes vapid. Any other conclusion undermines the norms of sound and reasonable communication." Matthew Alan Pearce, "The Redemptive Function and Theological Meaning of Matthew's Citation of Hosea 11:1" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008), 3–4.

yields certain a predictable pattern. It indicates that though referents may change or meaning expand in the NT, most often a stable core meaning established by the original OT context and function remains.[47]

Last, Juel also fails to address perhaps the most divisive question for modern evangelicals within the scope of this area of study: should modern believers attempt to mimic NT hermeneutical approaches to the OT? This issue, as will be seen in the examination of Longenecker's perspective below, is vital for an evangelical understanding of messiah in the OT. Yet, Juel does not answer it.

Richard Longenecker

Like Donald Juel, Richard Longenecker believes that knowledge of Second Temple hermeneutical practices is essential for understanding messiah in the OT. Unlike Juel, however, Longenecker is focused on how these ancient interpretive procedures should impact contemporary evangelical hermeneutical practice.

Presuppositions. Longenecker has written to date the most influential and comprehensive study on apostolic hermeneutics from an evangelical perspective.[48] The conclusions of this study form many of his hermeneutical presuppositions for understanding messiah in the OT. Longenecker primarily concludes that the authors of the NT utilized the same exegetical approaches to the OT that were common among the Jews of that time. He deduces that for his earliest followers, both Jesus' teachings and his use of Scripture, particularly *pesher* approaches to the OT, served as a primary paradigm for their own unique brand of highly atomistic biblical interpretation. Longenecker specifically argues that, under the guide of the Holy Spirit, the authors of Christian

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[47]Darrell L. Bock, "Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents," in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 125–32.

[48]Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*.

Scripture started with the assumption that Jesus was the Messiah, and then interpreted the OT accordingly.[49] Again, their specific approach to interpretation primarily stemmed from the teachings and exegetical methods left to them by Jesus. This type of "creative" interpretation was intended to show how the OT relates to Jesus as the Messiah.[50]

Longenecker also believes, however, that both Jesus' and the apostles' approach to OT interpretation was highly influenced by culturally relevant methodology. In fact, he strongly distinguishes between the central tenets of the gospel message and the culturally relevant means used by the authors of the NT to explain and defend that message from the OT Scriptures. He understands that the former is the fundamental biblical truth and message that transcends culture. The latter is in large measure merely the contextualized vehicle for the justification and communication of that essential truth. It serves to present and/or defend the central gospel message in a manner that was both appropriate and relatable to the circumstances and mindset of the audiences of the NT period. Central to this point is that apostolic attempts at this manner of circumstantial contextualization must be understood as taking place under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This guidance alone guarantees the accuracy of their handling of OT Scripture and truth, not the interpretive tactics they employed.[51]

Longenecker also argues that since these methodological approaches are no longer culturally relevant or accepted by contemporary society as a legitimate way to

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[49]Longenecker holds that the authors of the NT approach the text in various ways, but from the same set of presuppositions grounded in the revelation of Jesus as the Messiah. He lists these shared axioms as corporate solidarity, correspondence in history, eschatological fulfillment, and messianic presence. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 76–78.

[50]"Convinced of His Messiahship and Lordship, via the convergence of His historical presence among them, the witness of the Spirit, and the validation of the resurrection, the early Christians began with Jesus as the 'certain and known quality.' In Him they witnessed a creative handling of the Scriptures, which became for them both the source of their own understanding and the pattern for their treatment of the Old Testament." Richard N. Longenecker, "Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the New Testament?" *TynBul* 21 (January 1970): 23.

[51]Ibid., 33–38. Also see Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity*, 180.

determine meaning in texts, they are now rendered futile. Because of the particular

cultural and historical circumstances in which the apostles lived, the early church was

able to justify that particular use the OT. However, these methods are ineffective because

one cannot reproduce those same circumstances. Perhaps most importantly, he also notes

that the Holy Spirit no longer infallibly guides attempts at such exegetical endeavors. The

sum of these arguments is that, in Longenecker's view, unless a contemporary interpreter

is following the apostles in a *peshat* form of interpretation, one should not follow their

hermeneutical methodology at all today.[52]

Methodology. Rather, for Longenecker, an ideal contemporary evangelical

hermeneutic involves three distinct tasks. He identifies these tasks as descriptive,

transformational, and contextualization.[53] The descriptive task involves more than simply

understanding the original contexts, words, and thoughts of the biblical writers. Though

Longenecker states that this explicatory aspect of exegesis is the first stage of an

evangelical hermeneutic, he also believes that evangelical interpretation must go beyond

this point. For him, going beyond what he equates with the "historical-grammatical"

stage of exegesis primarily involves taking into account the whole of God's revelation,

particularly as it is understood in light of the disclosure of Jesus as the Messiah.[54]

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[52]While Longenecker does argue that both Jews and early Christians alike participated in various forms of exegetical practices including *pesher*, allegory, and *midrash*, he also points out that a significant portion of the NT interpretation of the OT involved *peshat* exegesis. Longenecker is comfortable in equating this straightforward approach to Scripture with "historical-grammatical exegesis." Longenecker, "Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the New Testament?," 37–38. However, it is doubtful that interpreters in the Second-Temple time period would be conscious of or advocate what contemporary interpreters see as historical-grammatical exegesis. In other places, Longenecker admits as much, noting both that methods of exegesis are cultural and that ancient Jewish interpreters through at least the second century AD where not conscious of distinction of various hermeneutical categories that are now used to label their interpretive approaches to the OT. To those living around the life of Christ and the early church, it was likely all "literal" interpretation of the OT. See Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 18–19.

[53]For a succinct article on his three hermeneutical tasks, see Longenecker, "Major Tasks of an Evangelical Hermeneutic."

[54]"Evangelicals, however, go beyond many other interpreters in asserting that all truly Christian thought and all truly Christian living must begin with and be based on the revelation of God as (1)

Longenecker states that one part of understanding the biblical justification for Jesus' messianic status involves comprehending "inner-biblical exegesis." However, perhaps an even more fundamental consideration is what Longenecker terms "extra-biblical exegesis."[55] This factor principally involves taking into account the literary and hermeneutical contexts in which NT authors interpreted the OT. These contexts are located squarely in the shadow of Second Temple Judaism and the Greco-Roman world. For Longenecker, it is impossible to properly understand and describe the NT writings and their justification of Jesus as the Messiah without knowledge of these specific "extra-biblical" interpretative contexts.[56]

The identification of these particular contexts upfront in the exegetical process is of particular importance for Longenecker. Such significance in large measure appears to stem from his conviction that a unique distinction must be made between what is the central content of the NT gospel proclamation and the culturally conditioned ways of justifying, contextualizing, and proclaiming that message.[57] This dichotomy is a recurring

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given in the experience of the nation Israel in the OT, (2) uniquely expressed in the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth, (3) interpreted and proclaimed by the apostolic witness of the early church, and (4) illuminated and applied by the Holy Spirit." Longenecker, "Major Tasks of an Evangelical Hermeneutic," 46.

[55]For Longenecker's definition and criteria for both inner-biblical and extra-biblical interpretation, see Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, xix–xxii.

[56]"Further, in seeking to explicate the revelation of God as given and interpreted in the NT, we must consider not only 'innerbiblical' exegesis—that is, so called 'intertextuality' or 'interpreted intertextuality' (which, however, all-too-often means 'intratextuality' that is focusing exclusively on the parallels and echoes that exist between the OT and NT)—but also 'extrabiblical' exegesis, which involves comparative analyses of the themes and practices of the NT writers vis-à-vis the conventions, themes, and practices of the Greco-Roman world generally and the writings and traditions of Second Temple Judaism in particular. Despite protests from some Evangelical scholars, I believe it impossible to give a fair hearing to the interpretations of the NT writers without also interacting with the exegetical presuppositions, procedures, and practices found in the writings of Second Temple Judaism or Early Judaism—that is, in the Jewish apocryphal, pseudepigraphical, and apocalyptic writings, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the later rabbinic codifications of earlier Pharisaic teaching." Longenecker, "Major Tasks of an Evangelical Hermeneutic," 47.

[57]"I find it necessary to make a distinction between (1) that which was divinely (also often humanly) intended to be the essential, transcultural message of the various NT writers, and (2) the cultural, circumstantial, time-bound methods they used to convey and support that message in their day." Ibid., 48.

theme in his writings. And, as will be described in more detail below, it also has great implication for the question of mimicking the hermeneutical procedures of the apostles in contemporary evangelical culture.[58]

Longenecker labels the second step of an evangelical hermeneutic as the "transformational task." Longenecker states that this particular undertaking "has to do with appropriating the biblical message for personal and corporate living . . . which involves commitment to the message of the biblical writers and openness to God's Spirit to make operative in one's life what was meant to be normative in the gospel proclamation."[59] While Longenecker argues that the transformational hermeneutical task is similar to the descriptive task in that it seeks to identify the central biblical message, he distinguishes between the two by stating that the transformational undertaking is primarily normative in nature. He also maintains that whereas the descriptive task is accomplished individually, through personal research and reflection, the transformational task is primarily attained corporately, through the teaching of the church. He believes this corporate function is to be primarily based on the work and teaching of Jesus, and must be driven by the guide of the Holy Spirit. This perspective, in his view, is conducive with the NT writers' pattern of urging believers to follow the example of Jesus (e.g., Phil 2:5; 1 Pet 2:21). It also is in alignment with the NT description of the Holy Spirit's role in the life of believers (e.g., John 14:26).[60]

Here again, however, Longenecker is careful to distinguish between what he perceives to be the descriptive, transcultural features of the central gospel message, and the circumstantial ways that the NT writers defended, proclaimed and applied that

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[58]Longenecker, "Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the New Testament?"; idem, "Negative Answer to the Question 'Who Is the Prophet Talking About?'"; idem, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 193–98.

[59]Longenecker, "Major Tasks of an Evangelical Hermeneutic," 49.

[60]Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, xxx–xxi.

message. This distinction is of particular importance for identifying what is normative in contemporary circles. Longenecker's perspective is that what was normative for various settings within the early church is not necessarily normative for contemporary society.

One part of his argument for this position is that normative application of the gospel message within various NT churches was highly circumstantial in nature. This is evidenced by the specific issues addressed in various NT writings, the various literary approaches to argumentation in these writings, and the ethnic and spiritual backgrounds of addressees.[61] And since these exact circumstances no longer exist, the same applications of the gospel should not automatically be considered normative within contemporary culture. A second part of his argument involves the longstanding evangelical separation of the descriptive and normative functions of Scripture. Longenecker points out that evangelicals have traditionally advocated a strong distinction between the centrality of acceptance of faith in Christ as the Messiah and normative matters such as church government, charismatic gifts, baptism, worship styles, and others. In a similar fashion, one's faith in Christ rests upon faith in his substitutionary death and resurrection. It is not defined by rigid submission to apostolic applications of that truth.[62] Both of these points, for Longenecker, argue towards the separation of the apostolic gospel message and the apostolic normative contextualization of that message within the contemporary church.

The third stage of an evangelical hermeneutic deals more specifically with how to proclaim and defend the gospel message and its normative application within the contemporary church. Longenecker labels this step as "contextualization." Of central importance in this task is identifying the essential faith tradition of the early church and

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[61]One example of Longenecker's case for the circumstantial use of the OT in the NT can be found in Longenecker, "Prolegomena to Paul's Use of Scripture in Romans"; idem, "Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the New Testament?," 36–38.

[62]Longenecker, "Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the New Testament?," 385.

then contextualizing that message for proclamation in relatable ways within the contemporary church and society.

In order to accomplish this undertaking, Longenecker first presents a method for extracting the central gospel message. He proposes looking both to the teachings of Christ and the Christian creeds found within single statement faith affirmations, hymns, and *homologiai* in the NT. Longenecker believes within these particular sets of data lies the essential faith tradition of the early church. He also believes that this core message can be accurately identified and classified via form-critical methodology.[63]

Once this central message is extracted from the NT, what remains are examples of how that message was contextualized within the circumstances and culture of the early church.[64] These models provide guiding principles as to how the gospel should be contextualized within the modern church and culture. However, there are also other factors evangelicals should consider beyond the model of contextualization presented in the NT.

Longenecker labels the specific approach to contextualization that evangelicals should follow as "synergistic-developmental." He describes this approach as one that

> seeks to be true to the apostolic faith and witness of the NT and to the circumstances, culture, and ideological perspectives of those being addressed. It profits from observing how the gospel has been contextualized in the past (by studying contextualization in the apostolic period and throughout church history) and how it is being contextualized in various countries and regions of the world today (by being alert to modern linguistic, sociological, and anthropological studies and to reports of missionary activities worldwide). But it considers all past and present attempts at contextualizing the gospel to be only temporary and local expressions of the one normative Christian message. And it judges all past and present attempts to contextualize the Christian gospel on the basis of how accurately

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[63]Space here does not permit a detailed presentation of Longenecker's views on extracting the core traditions of the NT via form-critical analysis. His approach can be found in Richard N. Longenecker, *New Wine into Fresh Wineskins* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 6–44.

[64]Again, space does not permit a detailed presentation of how Longenecker understands the contextualization of the core Christian traditions playing out across the NT. For such a presentation, see Longenecker, *New Wine into Fresh Wineskins*, 48–131.

they embody the essentials of the earliest Christian convictions and how well they communicate these convictions to the peoples and cultures they address.[65]

Longenecker maintains that this model has two core components. The first component recognizes that "an understanding of Scripture and an understanding of a particular culture cannot come about simply from a static view of the phenomena but, rather, must be constructed with an appreciation that development has taken place in both sets of data." The second component acknowledges "relations between the gospel and any culture are synergistic—that is, they are meant by God to work together in order to produce a truly contextualized theology and lifestyle."[66] Such an approach, according to Longenecker, is superior to the most widespread evangelical models of gospel contextualization.[67] This superiority stems from the fact that Longenecker's approach takes seriously the development of doctrine and normative application of doctrine across the whole of biblical and church history, the Christian gospel message as revealed via faith affirmations, hymns, and *homologiai* in the NT, and both past and present culture.

Once one takes into account all these factors, the contextualization of the gospel proclamation can then primarily be attained through "adoption" and "analogy" of correlations between the core Christian message and similar features within contemporary culture. These correlations are what preserve the gospel message in modern society.

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[65]Longenecker, *New Wine into Fresh Wineskins*, 147.

[66]Ibid., 148.

[67]He defines these models as the "transferal" approach to contextualization and the "translation" approach. The former can be described as transferring the gospel message into modern culture with little regard for that culture. The chief cultural consideration in this view is what the gospel displaces within a particular context. The main weakness of this approach is that it refuses to understand the culture that the message is being given to. The latter represents an attempt to understand the original gospel message and then translate that message into relevant terms within a particular contemporary culture. The weakness of this position, according to Longenecker, is that it fails to take into account theological development and differences across the time frame of biblical history. In this regard, the biblical text is treated as "static." Ibid., 137–41.

In summation, Longenecker argues that an evangelical understanding of messiah in the OT primarily involves understanding that the central gospel message, while transcultural in and of itself, is presented within very specific cultural, literary, and hermeneutical contexts. This presentation is made in relevant ways that the original audiences would understand and accept within their specific circumstances. But, it should be noted that often their exegesis of the OT is atomistic. It is the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that ensures that NT authors' interpretation of the OT is accurate, not necessarily the specific hermeneutical procedures they follow to arrive at this interpretation. And since the cultural, circumstantial, and specific hermeneutical contexts in which these authors wrote no longer exists; attempts at mimicking such methodology should not be attempted by modern believers. The one exception to this rule is *peshat* exegesis, which is culturally relevant and considered safe to follow today.

Analysis. There are several advantages of Longenecker's approach to understanding Christ in the OT. First, he presents extensive evidence that demonstrates Jesus and the apostles utilized widely accepted Jewish hermeneutical tactics in their interpretation of the OT. This evidence is particularly true in reference to their attempts at grounding the messianic status of Jesus in the Hebrew Scriptures. Some evangelicals such as Greg Beale, however, challenge the validity of such evidence. But, while Beal may accurately point out that NT and extra-biblical approaches to interpretation do not exactly mimic one another, and that the NT as a whole does not necessarily show evidence of an overarching atomistic hermeneutical pattern, a high level of similarity between Second Temple hermeneutical approaches and those practiced by NT authors cannot be denied or minimized.[68] Evangelicals, as Longenecker points out, must be

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[68]G. K. Beale, "Positive Answer to the Question Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 388–89. Two things can be said here in relation to Beale's case against Longenecker's approach. First, it is not surprising that the hermeneutical tactics of Second Temple Judaism would not *exactly* mirror those of the NT. This discrepancy is because the writers of the NT had a different hermeneutical perspective and goal in light of Jesus. Longenecker points this fact out himself. See

honest about the hermeneutical context of Jesus and the early church, and its implications

for understanding messiah in the OT. It is a part of the redemptive history storyline,

which presents, explains, and defends Christ from the OT.

Second, Longenecker is also helpful in calling for consideration of developing

theology and messianic expectations across both the entire biblical narrative, while, at the

same time, being cognizant of the original context and meaning of an OT passage. This

combination is often rare in evangelical approaches to understanding messiah in the OT.

Once again, accounting for such development across the storyline of Scripture is a crucial

part of understanding the presentation of Jesus as the Messiah. It also helps in striking a

balance among many of the evangelical voices in the conversation regarding how to read

messiah in the OT. OT scholars fear the loss of respect and appreciation of the original

meaning of OT passages cited in support of Jesus' messianic status. NT scholars fear the

results of ignoring the implications of Jesus' messianic status in understanding OT

passages. Longenecker calls for a balanced approach that, while allowing for

development in the meaning of OT passages cited in the NT, also understands and

grounds those NT interpretations in the original, contextual meaning of OT texts.

Last, Longenecker is also to be commended for calling into consideration the

influence of culture in biblical interpretation, particularly in reference to understanding

messiah in the OT. This factor is often overlooked, but has major implications for both

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Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 186ff. Second, on some level, Beale's argument
that non-contextual exegesis does not represent the overall pattern of the NT, and therefore is inferior in
some way, is unconvincing. His choice of identifying *the* majority pattern of exegesis appears to be an
inaccurate way of assessing the validity of various hermeneutical methodologies. There are two reasons
why. First, various approaches to the OT are often dependent on the context, audience, genre, and goals of
a particular NT author. Depending on these factors, approaches may differ, but this does not render an
atypical approach less important. Second, and perhaps most important, Longenecker accurately points out
that it is an imposition of modern categories to use labels such as "midrash," "pesher," "contextual," or
"literal" to describe majority approaches to the OT. The writers of the NT would not make a distinction
between these categories in their interpretation. Rather, their "majority pattern" was to proclaim Christ,
regardless of the specific methodology used to arrive at Him. In this way, there is a majority pattern of NT
hermeneutics, but that pattern cannot be viewed or labeled as contextual or noncontextual. See
Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 184.

understanding the original meaning of OT and NT texts in their specific contexts. It also has implications for interpretation and proclamation of both OT and NT texts within contemporary culture, which, as VanGemeren points out, is at the heart of evangelical interpretation and preaching.

However, there are also some challenges for Longenecker's approach to understanding Christ in the OT. First, it is appropriate to question the extent and implications of his views on the contextual nature of the NT authors' approach to proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah from the OT. The major challenge to Longenecker's perspective does not stem from his arguments for the usage of Second Temple hermeneutical techniques to present Jesus as the Messiah from the OT, but rather what is concluded regarding the usage of those techniques. The main tension involves levels of coherency regarding the original, contextual meaning of OT passages that are cited in the NT, and atomistic citation of those same passages.

This issue is very divisive among evangelicals. Because of this tension, it is helpful to start with what those on both sides of this issue have in common. Most agree that the apostles approached biblical interpretation with the presupposition that Jesus was the Messiah. This axiom carried with it other hermeneutical presuppositions mentioned earlier in this chapter. Further, many on both sides even agree that the apostles, to some degree, also utilized literary and hermeneutical techniques current to the culture in their interpretation of the OT.

The main area of disagreement among evangelicals lies in the amount of emphasis given to those hermeneutical presuppositions and methodological approaches, and the subsequent implications of those choices. For Longenecker, the evidence leans more heavily in favor of a relatively large atomistic exegesis of the OT that was *pneumatic* or charismatically driven. The major implications of his emphasis are two-fold. First, for some contemporary evangelicals, the presence of atomistic exegesis can appear to call into question the inerrancy of NT Scripture in general. More specifically,

what appears to be subjective, non-contextual exegesis can also lead to distrust of the apostolic claim that Jesus was the Messiah. This distrust arises because it appears that the authors of the NT might be misguided in their connection of Jesus to the OT. Second, Longenecker's emphasis on culturally relevant hermeneutics and Spirit inspired interpretations of the OT also implies, in effect, that modern believers should not duplicate these approaches in their interpretation of the OT today.

For other evangelicals, however, the emphasis should focus almost exclusively on the contextual, historical, and theological presuppositions that the NT writers brought to the OT. Such items include broad canonical and theological contexts, as well as the views of corporate solidarity, and salvation history. Moo articulates the position of many holding this view when he states that recognizing the authors of the NT held specific Christ-focused presuppositions not only explains their interpretation of the OT, but it also justifies it.[69] The implications of this position are also two-fold. First, it means that, broadly, the apostles did use the OT contextually. Therefore, both the inerrancy of Scripture and proper justification for linking Jesus to the OT hold true. Second, it also implies that modern believers can, at least at some level, mimic apostolic hermeneutical methodology today in their interpretation of the OT.

Here both Enns and Moo are helpful in finding an appropriate route forward in this debate. Enns argues that evangelical readings of the OT must differentiate between exegetical goal and exegetical method.[70] For him, both the presupposition and goal of the

[69]"Allowing for the hermeneutical axioms of the interpreter, considering the larger theological framework of specific texts, recognizing the validity of the developing canonical context—suffice to explain any 'problem text' of which I am aware." Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," 211. Beale holds a similar position noting that "I remain convinced that once the hermeneutical and theological presuppositions of the New Testament writers are considered, there are no clear examples where they have developed a meaning from the Old Testament which is inconsistent or contradictory to some aspect of the original Old Testament intention." Beale, "Positive Answer to the Question Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?," 398. In this essay, Beale builds heavily on the work of Dodd. However, some have demonstrated that Dodd's thesis regarding contextual reading of the OT does not hold up in many instances. See, for example, Albert Sungerg, Jr., "On Testimonies," *NovT* 3 (1959): 268–81.

[70]Enns, "Apostolic Hermeneutics and an Evangelical Doctrine of Scripture," 282; idem,

apostolic interpretation of the OT was Christ. The methods used, however, were cultural. Moo, in similar fashion, suggests that clear distinction must be made between what he calls "approbation techniques" and "hermeneutical axioms." The former is defined as "the methods by which a text is 'approbated' for a new situation." By this term he is specifically referring to the methods the apostles used to communicate the gospel. The later is the sum of "the basic convictions of a community about Scripture, its own identity, and the movement of God in history."[71] This term, in short, represents the Christocentric presuppositions that the apostles brought to their interpretation of the OT.

To equally distinguish and account for the hermeneutical presuppositions of the NT writers and the methods they used to approbate the gospel message to their own culture helps dispel much of what Longenecker views as atomistic exegesis of the OT. While Longenecker does recognize both the hermeneutical presuppositions of the apostles as well as their methods of approbation, he gives less weight to their hermeneutical axioms, and more to the methodology they utilized. Because of this level of unbalance in accounting for both sets of evidence, he does not properly connect the potential implications of equilibrium for his own view of understanding Christ in the OT. The major inference is that when both axioms and approbation techniques are taken into full account, what may appear to be, in some measure, a largely atomistic exegesis of the OT on the part of the NT writers is likely more contextual than not. Striking this point of balance is precisely what Bock calls for and demonstrates in his work on this issue.[72]

Here Enns is correct for encouraging that evangelicals do not err by placing modern, cultural hermeneutical expectations, such as the demand for contextual reading of the OT, on apostolic approaches to Scripture.[73] However, while there is strong merit to

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"Fuller Meaning, Single Goal," 216; idem, *Inspiration and Incarnation*, 158.

[71]Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," 94.

[72]Bock, "Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents."

[73]Enns's concern is with "distancing the NT writers from their hermeneutical environment, on

his argument, to some degree, Enns errs in the opposite direction by often assuming that the presence of Second Temple approbation techniques must always imply noncontextual apostolic interpretation of the OT. This assumption is both out of sync with evidence from many Second Temple interpretations of the OT, and places an unnecessary and unwarranted expectation on the writers of the NT. James Scott also points out that such an approach raises issues with the doctrines of inerrancy and inspiration of Scripture.[74] In contrast, the arguments of both Bock and Pearce regarding the necessity of contextual, authorial meaning of the OT to provide the meaning, merit, and stability of NT Scripture are both strong and more in line with traditional evangelical views on Scripture. Their arguments are also better grounded in widely accepted understandings of how language and meaning work. They are also in line with the traditional evangelical view that the authors of OT Scripture intend to give clear, authoritative meaning at the time of their presentations.[75] This point does not imply that OT authors were cognizant of exactly how

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the basis of alleged 'higher' theological principles, rather than allowing the witness of Scripture as a historical phenomenon to play its proper role in forming the theological principles we appeal to." Enns, "Fuller Meaning, Single Goal," 209. He is also concerned with imposing on the NT writers "a hermeneutical grid we might be comfortable with but that has no real connection with their historical setting. Otherwise, we may find ourselves in the position of having to contort ourselves to explain apostolic hermeneutics according to standards that the apostles themselves did not adopt." Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation*, 156.

[74]James W. Scott, "The Inspiration and Interpretation of God's Word, With Special Reference to Peter Enns," *WTJ* 71, no. 1 (March 2009): 129–83. Enns notes that his views on apostolic approaches to Christ in the OT call into question inerrancy and are open "to the charge of circularity and subjectivity, but it is no more circular and subjective than adopting *any* doctrine of Scripture. Any notion of what Scripture is must, in the end, be an intimate, Spirit-led conversation with what Scripture *does*. And this is a matter of continual reflection and dialogue among Christians who are so inclined. It is not a matter that is fully worked out by any council or creed, but has always a "work-in-progress" dimension. This is not to imply that nothing is settled, but that the church, fully in dialogue with its own past and present, is continually in the process of getting to know better and better the Scripture that God has given us." Enns, "Apostolic Hermeneutics and an Evangelical Doctrine of Scripture," 280.

[75]Matthew Alan Pearce, "The Redemptive Function and Theological Meaning of Matthew's Citation of Hosea 11:1" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008), 207ff.; Darrell L. Bock, "Interpreting the Bible—How Texts Speak to Us," in *Progressive Dispensationalism*, ed. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell Bock (Grand Rapids: BridgePoint, 1993), 76–104; idem, "Interpreting the Bible-How We Read Texts," in *Progressive Dispensationalism*, ed. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell Bock (Grand Rapids: BridgePoint, 1993), 57–75; Bock, "Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents," 116, 122–52.

everything they wrote would work out in various, later, contexts. Rather, it simply means that the ways things did work out in various, later contexts are broadly in line with the original, contextual OT meaning of a passage. Longenecker is similar to Enns in his hermeneutical assumptions at times. His thesis would benefit from a more distinct and balanced approach to understanding Christ in the OT.

Second, the emphasis and order of Longenecker's three evangelical hermeneutical tasks should also be questioned. In terms of emphasis, there appears to be a level of misbalance in his first hermeneutical task. This task, according to Longenecker, involves understanding the biblical text in both its original context and as it develops and culminates in the revelation of Jesus as the Messiah in the teachings of the NT. While this is a commendable approach, Longenecker gives more attention to how the authors of the NT find Christ in the OT than the contextual meaning of the OT itself. He gives little more than initial lip service to the value and contribution of the original meaning of OT texts. One important point of evidence in this regard is that he gives minute attention to the development of OT history and specific doctrines that play an important role in understanding the Messiah. Important themes such as the covenants, the monarchy, the Exodus, and the Exile are mainly ignored. Longenecker's approach would benefit from taking into account these key historic developments.

Further, in relation to evangelical application and proclamation of Christ from the OT, the order of his three-step evangelical hermeneutical process is often ambiguous. For example, Longenecker calls for the corporate body of believers and the Holy Spirit to guide both doctrinal teaching and normative application of the gospel in the modern church. He states that this involves " . . . the message of the biblical writers and openness to God's Spirit to make operative in one's life what was meant to be normative in the gospel proclamation." Chronologically, this process is undertaken in step two of his plan. But it is not until step three that the gospel itself is extracted, via form criticism, and separated from what Longenecker understands to be a culturally normative application of

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that message in the NT. This approach appears anachronistic. One cannot go forward with normative application and commitment to the gospel without first extracting that central message and understanding the models of application in the NT church that are meant to serve as examples of how to make the gospel normative in contemporary culture.

Third, related to both understanding and proclaiming Christ from the OT, two additional items can also be cited. It is striking that a critical part of Longenecker's hermeneutical strategy is highly dependant on form criticism. This point is particularly relevant because of the lack of consensus in relation to both the value of form criticism, especially among evangelicals, as well as the ability to accurately identify and classify the confessional material he understands to contain the essential gospel tradition. This latter point is highlighted repeatedly by the amount of contrasting views on these topics present in his chapter on identifying and classifying the confessions.[76]

It is also striking that Longenecker understands most everything in the NT beyond the central gospel message as cultural contextualization of that message. Essentially Longenecker concludes that these circumstantial models of contextualization are not normative for believers today. It is difficult, however, to separate the subjectivity involved in such a process of differentiation between what is cultural and what is transcultural. Here, Longenecker fails to seriously account for the finite nature of human thinking fueled by the results of both the fall and sin on the human race. These factors present great challenges for humans to properly distinguish between the core gospel message and the teachings of Jesus, and the proper way to contextualize this message in contemporary culture.

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[76]Longenecker, *New Wine into Fresh Wineskins*, 6–26.

Exegetical Example

Donald Juel furnishes one example of the Second Temple approach to understanding messiah in the OT with his interpretation of the Servant Songs of Isaiah. Of particular importance to Juel is the suffering servant of Isaiah 52-53. Largely based on the Targum of Isaiah 52-53, Juel concludes that there was no expectation of a suffering messiah in Judaism prior to the birth of Christianity. Because of this interpretive absence in Judaism, coupled with the sparse mention of the same passage in the NT, Juel feels compelled to conclude that

> believing Jesus to be the promised messiah and following accepted principles of interpretation, his followers were led to the servant poems as potentially messianic texts, since the Messiah is called God's servant in Zech 3:8 and Ps 89:39, passages traditionally understood as messianic in postbiblical Jewish circles. The Isaiah material was not used to prove that Jesus was the Servant, since there existed no such figure in the interpretive tradition. Rather the texts were read as messianic, as verses that could legitimately be used to describe the career of "my servant the Messiah."[77]

Juel argues that this was a legitimate interpretation of the passage given the presentation of Jesus as Messiah combined with the hermeneutical context of the early church. However, Juel fails to consider the lofty, specific language produced by a historical grammatical approach to Isaiah 52-53—and the other Servant songs—renders a messianic meaning likely.[78] Further, as Oswalt points out, the intersection of the specific details of this passage with the life of Jesus are "so many and various that they cannot be coincidental. Either the facts of his life were reshaped by a conspiracy of the early Christian writers to make them conform to this text, a task so complex to be unimaginable, or, much more simply his life, death, and resurrection did so conform."[79] Oswalt's observations point out the tendency of a Second Temple approach to explain

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[77]Donald Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1992), 131.

[78]John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 107ff.

[79]Ibid., 408.

away each use of the OT in the NT as atomistic exegesis without giving proper attention to the original contextual, historical, linguistic meaning of an OT passage.

Conclusion

Understanding the hermeneutical context of the writers and audiences of the NT is an essential part of understanding messiah in the OT. It also has great implications for the proclamation and practice of the modern church. However it is important to emphasize that it is just one part of a holistic approach to understanding messiah in the OT.

CHAPTER 4

EPIGENETICAL APPROACH

A third evangelical approach to understanding messiah in the OT can be labeled as "epigenetical." The roots of this methodology are found in the work of Willis Beecher.[1] However, Walter Kaiser is credited with borrowing this word from biology and applying it to hermeneutics. Kaiser defines an epigenetical approach to understanding messiah in the OT as a methodology that recognizes the "implantation of seminal ideas organically imbedded within the one, single, truth as understood by the author in his own times and circumstances."[2] For Kaiser, this central and guiding truth in Scripture can be traced back to the Edenic narrative in Genesis 3, but primarily finds its expression and focus in "the promise," or covenant, with Abraham (Gen 12). Of particular importance regarding this specific promise is God's intention to bless the nations. In Kaiser's view, this covenant reveals a "promise-plan" from God, to which all subsequent biblical authors are conscious of and focused on when producing their works. Hence, from the initial giving of the promise to Abraham, the remainder of the canon "grew in accordance with the seed thoughts that were contained within its earliest statements, much as a seed is uniquely related to the plant that it will become."[3] In macro-hermeneutical terms, an epigenetical approach to understanding Christ in the OT recognizes the initial promise of God to bless all the nations of the earth, and sees subsequent passages of Scripture as developing and moving toward the ultimate fulfillment of that initial promise in Christ.

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[1]Willis Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1963).

[2]Walter Kaiser Jr., *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 24.

[3]Ibid., 27.

In comparison to previous evangelical perspectives examined in this dissertation, this view is not widely held. As mentioned before, the main proponent of the epigenetical position is Walter Kaiser. Kaiser has written quite extensively on various aspects of this position at both the scholastic and ecclesiastical levels.[4] In addition, Christopher Wright's perspective also falls within this broad camp, although he differs with Kaiser on various important issues.[5]

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[4]Walter Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991); idem, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, 1995; idem, "Biblical Theology and the Interpretation of Messianic Texts," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 34, no. 2 (1996): 195–209; idem, "Single Meaning, Unified Referents," in *Three Views On the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 45–89; idem, "The Eschatological Hermeneutics of 'Evangelicalism': Promise Theology," *JETS* 13, no. 2 (1970): 91–99; idem, "The Old Promise and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31-34," *JETS* 15, no. 1 (December 1, 1972): 11–23; idem, "Promise Theme and the Theology of Rest," *BSac* 130, no. 518 (1973): 135–50; idem, "The Promise Doctrine and Jesus," *TJ* 4 (1975): 58–66; idem, "Messianic Prophecies in the Old Testament," in *Dreams, Visions and Oracles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 75–88; idem, "Davidic Promise and the Inclusion of the Gentiles (Amos 9:9-15 and Acts 15:13-18): A Test Passage for Theological Systems," *JETS* 20, no. 2 (1977): 97–111; idem, "Wisdom Theology and the Centre of Old Testament Theology," *EvQ* 50 (1978): 132–46; idem, "Legitimate Hermeneutics," in *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 116–47; idem, "The Promise to David in Psalm 16 and Its Application in Acts 2:25-33 and 13:32-37," *JETS* 23, no. 3 (1980): 219–29; idem, *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981); idem, "Evangelical Hermeneutics: Restatement, Advance or Retreat from the Reformation?" *CTQ* 46 (1982): 167–80; idem, "Approaches to Old Testament Interpretation," *JETS* 26, no. 4 (December 1, 1983): 484–85; idem, "Inner Biblical Exegesis as a Model For Bridging the 'Then' and 'Now' Gap: Hosea 12:1-6," *JETS* 28, no. 1 (March 1, 1985): 33–46; idem, "Interpreting the Old Testament," in *Proceedings of the Conference on Biblical Interpretation 1988* (Nashville: Broadman, 1988), 65–91; idem, "The Promise of Isaiah 7:14 and the Single-Meaning Hermeneutic," *EvJ* 6 (September 1, 1988): 55–70; idem "God's Promise Plan and His Gracious Law," *JETS* 33, no. 3 (September 1, 1990): 289–302; idem, "Hermeneutics and the Theological Task," *TJ* 12, no. 1 (March 1, 1991): 3–14; idem, "Biblical Theology of the Old Testament," in *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 328–52; idem, "The Single Intent of Scripture"; idem, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, 1995; idem, "The Great Commission in the Old Testament," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 13 (January 1, 1996): 3–7; idem, "Biblical Theology and the Interpretation of Messianic Texts," *AUSS* 34, no. 2 (September 1, 1996): 195–209; idem, *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000); idem, *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003); idem, *The Promise-Plan of God: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008); idem, *Recovering the Unity of the Bible: One Continuous Story, Plan, and Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009); idem, "Psalm 72: An Historical and Messianic Current Example of Antiochene Hermeneutical Theoria," *JETS* 52, no. 2 (June 1, 2009): 257–70; idem, *Preaching and Teaching the Last Things: Old Testament Eschatology for the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011); idem, "Is It the Case That Christ Is the Same Object of Faith in the Old Testament? (Genesis 15:1-6)," *JETS* 55, no. 2 (June 1, 2012): 291–98; and Walter Kaiser and Moisés Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007).

[5]Christopher J. H. Wright et al., "Christ in/and the Old Testament," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 2, no. 1 (2008): 1–22; Christopher J. H. Wright, "According to the Scriptures: The Whole Gospel in Biblical Revelation," *ERT* 33, no. 1 (2009): 4–18; idem, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament*; idem, *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006).

Characteristics

Much like the advocates of the Second Temple approach examined in the previous chapter, there are various points of view among proponents of an epigenetical view of Christ in the OT.

General Distinctions

It is helpful to identify common features of those holding this particular view. Three items are particularly important to recognize.

Unity. One central tenet of the epigenetical approach to understanding Christ in the OT is a commitment to the unity of the Christian canon. This commitment stems from the logic that since God is the ultimate "author" of all Scripture, then the whole of Christian Scripture must represent a cohesive metanarrative. The existence of a unified storyline, however, does not imply that diversity is nonexistent within the canon. But, it does mean that there must be a central focus and movement, at least on a macro-level, across the whole of Christian Scripture. A result of this commitment is that advocates of the epigenetical approach generally stress the importance of first understanding the OT "on its own terms." But, in addition, the belief in a cohesive storyline often leads to a "biblical- theological" interpretation of many OT passages and topics. Of particular importance in this regard are the understandings of covenant/promise, mission, and ethics.

Promise. Another core principle of an epigenetical approach to understanding Christ in the OT is a focus on "promise." In particular, the promises to Abraham in Genesis are seen as foundational for understanding the biblical metanarrative. It is also worth noting, in specific relation to messianic hermeneutics, that the term "promise" is sometimes preferred over "prediction." Promise implies a multi-dimensional and surprising outgrowth over time. Prediction is, in contrast, one-dimensional. It implies a definitive event bound to a specific, immediate time, with no further implications or

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goals. Consequently, this term fails to accurately depict the unified and developing macro-redemptive movement across the canon.

Mission. One of the most unique distinctions of the epigenetical approach is its understanding of mission(s) in the OT.[6] This statement is most evident in the recent work of Christopher Wright. Although not as extensive as Wright, Kaiser also addresses this particular topic.[7] In short, because the promise of God given to Abraham involves the inclusion of the Gentiles into His people, and because the OT is a unified story steadily moving towards ultimate redemption in Christ, mission(s) is seen as both an active and vital part of God's work in the OT.

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Analysis of Specific Approaches
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Kaiser and Wright's views will be analyzed in this chapter. Since they are the most extensive and influential advocates of this position among evangelicals at this time, examining their perspectives is vital to understanding the epigenetical position.

Walter Kaiser

Walter Kaiser believes that from the time of Anthony Collins (1724) forward, evangelical scholarship has failed to present a valid methodology for understanding Christ in the OT. Kaiser contends that views, which demand a strict historical-grammatical approach to understanding OT messianic passages, and various other

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[6]As Wright accurately notes, the terms "mission" and "missions" are often defined in various ways. For Wright, they are interchangeable in meaning, with the major difference being geographical usage— with "missions" representing common parlance in the United States and "mission" being the preferred term in the rest of the world. He is helpful in defining what is meant by both terms among those holding to a "promise" plan approach to the OT. He notes that mission(s) is a "theological priority" in which God's people are called to "committed participation as God's people, at God's invitation and command, in God's own mission within the history of God's world for the redemption of God's creation." Wright, *The Mission of God*, 22–23. Unless otherwise noted, this definition will be followed in reference to these terms in this dissertation.

[7]Christopher J. H. Wright, "Truth With a Mission: Reading All Scripture Missiologically," *SBJT* 15, no. 2 (2011): 4–15; idem, *The Mission of God*; Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*; idem, "The Great Commission in the Old Testament."

evangelical responses to this methodology, have resulted in a "Gordian knot" that must be cut.[8] For Kaiser, the best way to sever this knot involves a return to a form of "pre-critical" exegesis that is in line with the hermeneutical *modus operandi* of the Reformers.[9] More specifically, he argues that a proper evangelical hermeneutic for understanding messiah in the OT must strike a balance between what he perceives as the two most extreme approaches to this issue. The first extreme is the radical isolation and contextualization of OT passages from their broader canonical context. In contrast, the second extreme is atomistic approaches to the OT, primarily those associated with *pesher* and *midrash* exegesis, but also including most cases of typology, allegory, and *sensus plenior*. Because the former group is so bound to the individual context and history of a particular OT passage, it results in a "messianic minimum." The latter group results in a subjective "messianic maximum" that offers no tangible way to properly study or understand OT passages, particularly within their original contexts.

To counter such imbalance, Kaiser reaffirms two traditional hermeneutical principles that he believes are now largely absent in evangelical interpretation. Broadly, both lay heavy emphasis on the OT human author's role in the inspiration process. The first principle focuses on authorial context. The meaning of any OT passage, in Kaiser's view, must reflect the OT author's "own times and circumstances." In addition, the second principle focuses on authorial linguistics. Interpreters must take into account an author's words as "reflected in the grammar and syntax of that OT text." Kaiser concludes, in fact, "God's meaning and revelatory-intention in any passage of Scripture

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[8]"If two hundred years has demonstrated anything, it has shown that appeals to some form of a dual sense or meaning in the OT, such as a NT additive of a messianic sense to OT texts, or some secondary development behind, under, or around the text that carries a spiritual or typological meaning, have all proved in the end to be self-defeating, leading ultimately to parochial, subjective, privatized, and preferential points of view about the Messiah that cannot be validated by the OT text itself." Kaiser, "Biblical Theology and the Interpretation of Messianic Texts," 204.

[9]Kaiser, "Evangelical Hermeneutics."

may be accurately and confidently ascertained only by studying the verbal meanings of the divinely delegated and inspired human writers."[10]

Kaiser confesses that this approach is remarkably similar to scholars who advocate a strict historical-grammatical approach to messianic hermeneutics. But, he calls for an additional and equally important consideration that distinguishes his methodology. He demands that the OT be understood theologically in light of the progressive, redemptive metanarrative presented within the boundaries of the Christian canon. For Kaiser, attaining equilibrium between historical-grammatical and theological exegesis is essential in grasping messianic revelation. To lack in one area or the other is to miss the totality of messiah in the OT:

> What, then, was missing from those who claimed they espoused the historical or literal meaning of the text? Primarily, they failed to see the parts in terms of "the whole." And what was missing from those who claimed they espoused the theological meaning of the texts? They failed to see the whole in terms of its "constituent parts."[11]

Presuppositions. To comprehend Kaiser's attempt to balance the "parts" and the "whole" within the OT, one must first identify his presuppositions. Here, three things are particularly relevant for understanding Christ in the OT. First is the fundamental view that Christian Scripture is a product of divine inspiration—it is infallible and coherent. This point, to Kaiser, is not one to be merely given lip service by evangelicals. If God the Holy Spirit truly guided the production of Christian Scripture, then, in Kaiser's view, there must be a divinely inspired consistency across the *entire* canon. More specifically, this means that the whole of Scripture must be read as a unified, progressing story.[12]

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[10]Kaiser, "The Single Intent of Scripture," 138; idem, "Biblical Theology and the Interpretation of Messianic Texts," 205.

[11]Kaiser, "Biblical Theology and the Interpretation of Messianic Texts," 206.

[12]"Since the mind governing Scripture is one, is it not just as appropriate and fair to God the Holy Spirit, as it is to the thought of a particular secular writer, to gather his total thinking on a particular subject? If communication is assumed, do we not grant that the writer exhibits coherence and unity in his or her thought until proven otherwise? Why must biblical scholars assume less, unless it is a subconscious protest against a simple divine mind behind the entirety of Scripture? This factor, more than any other, has

Second, because the biblical narrative represents a unified story, there must be a central focus to that story. Locating the center of the biblical storyline is vital for understanding Christ in the OT. Methodologically, to ascertain this center, Kaiser proposes that the OT must foremost be read on its own terms. Contextual, linguistic, and syntactical factors are all a part of what must be considered in identifying the center of the OT. Such features help determine the intent of the human author, which is a matter of immense importance to Kaiser. Authorial intent is so crucial because, to him, an evangelical view of inspiration cannot be deemed genuine or complete if the human author is not conscious, at some level, of what is being communicated.[13] When properly understood, the doctrine of inspiration reveals a partnership between the divine and human authors in which both sides must be actively conscious of intended meaning.[14] Consequently, this point eliminates the pitfalls of "dual meaning," "*sensus plenior,*" and *pesher* and *midrash* interpretations of OT messianic passages. It also limits the subjectivity often associated with typological and allegorical interpretation.[15]

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spoiled more and more Evangelicals and poisoned them against most discussions of a unifying principle to biblical theology, biblical ethics, or even of the legitimacy of systematic theology." Kaiser, "Hermeneutics and the Theological Task," 11.

[13]"Nowhere, then, does Scripture support the view that the Bible has a multi-track concept of meanings. If the human author did not receive by revelation the meaning in question, then exegetes and readers have no right to identify their meanings with God. Only by following the careful distinctions set forth in the authorial autonomy view can the Word of God be preserved for future generations and be handled as what it is indeed the powerful and authoritative Word from God." Kaiser, "The Single Intent of Scripture," 69.

[14]Kaiser, "Single Meaning, Unified Referents," 50–72; idem, "The Single Intent of Scripture," 125.

[15]Kaiser understands typology to be a legitimate hermeneutical approach in understanding messiah in the OT. However, he severely limits the use of it in comparison with many holding a Christocentric approach to the OT. For Kaiser, typology must show evidence of "divine indication" in the OT text. One such example of such indication is Psalm 41:9 in John 13:18. For Kaiser, since David and his line are given an extension of the initial promise in Scripture in 2 Sam 7, anything a psalm records about David can apply to the Messiah. In this regard, the connection with David provides a divine indication that of a legitimate type. See Kaiser, "Single Meaning, Unified Referents," 60–65.

Third, attention to both the diachronic development of doctrine as well as the synchronic canonical boundaries of doctrine is essential for Kaiser. On the one hand, the biblical narrative possesses chronological and logical progression across the biblical canon. This diachronical progression is crucial for understanding meaning in OT passages. On the other hand, however, Christians also possess a complete, synchronic canon, in which later parts of the story bring ultimate clarity to earlier parts.

Here, the combination of the chronological development of the OT and attention to the final canonical boundaries of the biblical storyline must be carefully delineated. Foremost, Kaiser advocates that believers "must not act as if God has not given us the total canon of Scripture." A major caution, however, is that consideration of the complete canon is only appropriate after the meaning of an OT text is determined from its own historical context, syntax, and knowledge of prior canonical revelation up until the time of the text.[16] It is only then that subsequent revelation can inform how preliminary OT doctrines are "thickened" or "filled out."

This point is crucial for an evangelical approach to understanding messiah in the OT. It means that though a NT passage will often shed light on the meaning of an OT text, it can only do so if the additional meaning presented in the NT is grounded and built on the original truth revealed in the OT passage.[17] This approach, for Kaiser, mirrors the Reformers' approaches to *analogia fidei* and *sedes doctrine*. He points out that the NT does in fact present a more clear and ultimate comprehension of how to understand the Messiah in the OT. However, the principle of Scripture interpreting Scripture (*analogia fidei*) and so-called NT "chair passages" (*sedes doctrine*) are not intended to grant priority to NT meaning. Nor are they intended to usurp the original meaning of an OT text. Rather, the principles presented in both the *analogia fidei* and *sedes doctrine* are

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[16]Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 79–83.

[17]Kaiser, "Single Meaning, Unified Referents," 52–53.

meant to function in a heuristic fashion. Their goal is to furnish more detail and clarity to what was originally presented and understood by the OT authors. To allow subsequent texts to assign new meaning or hold priority over preceding texts is the example *par excellence* of *eisegesis*.[18] In fact, to avoid forcing unwarranted meaning onto OT passages in the name of *analogia fidei*, Kaiser argues that a better term to use is the "analogy of *antecedent* Scripture."[19] For Kaiser, this expression better reflects the priority and foundational role of OT revelation.

Methodology. In sum, attention to exegesis mixed with the consideration of diachronic development and the final canonical analysis of the OT storyline leads Kaiser to identify "promise" as the central focus of the biblical metanarrative. Sequentially and exegetically, Kaiser sees the Edenic narrative as providing the thematic priority of promise for the entire canon. The subsequent storyline, from that point forward, focuses on growing bits of information that clarify and expand the details of the initial promise.[20] It grows and becomes both larger and clearer diachronically across the OT. And ultimately, it leads directly to Jesus, who is the goal of both the promise and the overall biblical narrative.[21] This largely means that an evangelical approach to understanding messiah in the OT must always be cognizant that the OT is both "epigenetical" (consistently growing) in relation to this area, yet "epangelical" (consistently unified) across both Testaments.[22]

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[18]Kaiser, "Hermeneutics and the Theological Task," 11–13; idem, "Single Meaning, Unified Referents," 52–53.

[19]Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 18ff.

[20]See especially Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, 1–69.

[21]"A straightforward understanding of the text in the context of the unity of the Bible will lead one straight to Jesus of Nazareth as the One who fulfilled and is now fulfilling the plan of God for the past, present and future." Kaiser, "Biblical Theology and the Interpretation of Messianic Texts," 209.

[22]"Epangelical," according to Kaiser, is "derived from the Greek word for promise. This view maintains that there is only one 'people of God' (even though there may be numerous aspects of that same singular group) and there is only one 'program of God' (again, with several aspects all within that one

This thesis is supported in large measure, according to Kaiser, by the use of specific "promise" language and themes across both Testaments. Though Kaiser admits that the OT does not utilize one specific word to communicate the idea of "promise," he sees a host of terms such as "blessing," "covenant," "oath," "word," "rest," "seed," "branch," "servant," "stone," "root," "lion," "firstborn," "servant of the LORD," "and others" taking on a "technical status" representing the root idea of promise.[23] OT authors, he argues, consciously and deliberately use these words to point back to God's initial promise in Genesis.[24] Later, NT writers also take up the promise theme based on these OT terms and add new ones as well. Hence, these terms help identify and confirm a specific "promise-plan" that Kaiser defines as

> God's word of declaration, beginning with Eve and continuing on through history, especially in the patriarchs and the Davidic line, that God would continually *be* in

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umbrella term." Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God*, 25–29. In essence, this term represents the answer to ongoing debate between dispensational approaches to theology and covenant approaches. For Kaiser, both views fail to account for the unified way God works out His singular promise for salvation across all of Scripture. Even the new covenant is not "new" in the strict sense, rather it can be labeled as a "renewed covenant" which simply adds more clarification to the initial promise of Gen 3:15. For Kaiser, the plan is so unified that he asserts that "All who believed in the Old Testament trusted in the Man of Promise who was to come . . . the same gospel that had been preached to us was the gospel that had also been preached to those who died in the wilderness." Walter Kaiser, "The Law as God's Gracious Guide for the Promotion of Holiness," in *Five Views On Law and Gospel*, ed. Stanley Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 192. Also, see Kaiser, "Is It the Case?," 291–98; idem, "The Old Promise and the New Covenant," 11–23; idem, *The Promise-Plan of God*, 31. Kaiser addresses issues of possible distinction in God's plan when he treats the Christian view of the Law. He argues for the unity of Law, minus the ceremonial aspects, across both Testaments. See Kaiser, "The Law as God's Gracious Guide for the Promotion of Holiness," 177–99; idem, "The Weightier and Lighter Matters of the Law: Moses, Jesus, and Paul," in *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 176–92.

[23]Such terms are found in a variety of Kaiser's writings. Here English terms are used because Kaiser generally does not give the Hebrew words from which he derives these expressions. See Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, 27; idem, *The Promise-Plan of God*, 22–23; idem, "Biblical Theology and the Interpretation of Messianic Texts," 207.

[24]Kaiser notes that failure to consider the meaning of these terms within their broader canonical and theological contexts has tended to "rob many of those words of the seminal ideas that the original authors deliberately imbedded and implanted in those same words. Much of the same freight was contained in those reutilized words, meanings that they had for both the previous author and now the new author who specifically chose to use the same word again. Here is where a great deal of the doctrine of the Messiah is lost, by those who fail to see the epigenetical meaning of quotations, allusions, or words, that tended to take on technical status, borrowed from earlier writers in the Scripture." Kaiser, "Biblical Theology and the Interpretation of Messianic Texts," 206.

his person and *do* in his deeds and works (in and through Israel, and later the church) his redemptive plan as his *means* of keeping that promised word alive for Israel, and thereby for all who subsequently believed. All in that promised seed were called to act as a light for all the nations so that all the families of the earth might come to faith and to new life in the Messiah.[25]

This promise-plan, when followed and understood in its entirety across all Scripture, reveals ten distinct characteristics pertinent for understanding messiah in the OT:

1. The doctrine of the Promised Messiah is found throughout all the Scriptures and not just isolated or selected passages. 2. The Old Testament Messianic teaching was regarded as the development of a single promise, repeated and unfolded through the centuries with numerous specifications and in multiple forms but always with the same essential core. 3. The New Testament writers equate this single, definite promise as the one made to Abraham when God called him from Ur of the Chaldeans. 4. While the New Testament writers occasionally speak of promises, using the plural form of the word, the manner in which they do so does not weaken the case for a single definite promise in the Scriptures. 5. The New Testament writers regard this single, definite promise, composed of many specifications, to be the theme of both the Old and New Testaments. 6. The promise made to Abraham is represented as both being fulfilled in the events of the Exodus and yet still to be fulfilled in the distant future. 7. The New Testament writers not only declare that the promise-plan of God is seen through the whole Old Testament, but they adopt the Old Testament phraseology as part of their own way of expressing God's revelation to them. 8. The New Testament writers teach that the promise of God is operating eternally and is irrevocable. 9. The New Testament writers make a strong connection between the promise and a number of other doctrines. 10. The culmination of all the specifications (i.e., the individual predicted doctrines that support the one unifying promise-plan) are wrapped up in the one promise doctrine, or promise plan, which focuses on Jesus Christ.[26]

These characteristics provide a framework for a unified biblical theology in which the "parts" of Scripture are understood in light of the "whole" and vice versa. It also provides evangelicals with the proper context to understanding messiah in the OT. Furthermore, it recognizes the single, consistent plan of God across both Testaments, which simply becomes clearer and more defined over time.

Analysis. Kaiser's approach contains several strong features. His focus on the inspired status and coherent nature of the entire Christian canon is admirable. The same is true about his call for tangible forms of exegesis that determines meaning based on the

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[25]Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God*, 19.

[26]Ibid., 19–25.

historical context and authorial language of the OT *before* proceeding to subsequent meaning found in the NT. Kaiser's frustration with "subjective" interpretations and the potential for *eisegesis* is commendable. These are the very things that often create apologetic concerns regarding the legitimacy of messianic claims based on the OT. His approach, in large measure, presents a viable solution for such apprehension.

But, one can find several drawbacks with Kaiser's approach to understanding Christ in the OT. One pertains to Kaiser's perspectives on divine inspiration and authorial intent. Kaiser argues that every OT Scripture has a single intent, and that meaning can only be ascertained from the conscious intention of the human authors of these texts. However, one must question whether a proper understanding of inspiration necessarily rules out multifaceted or additional messianic meanings of which the original OT authors might not be aware. Raju Kunjummen rightly argues that Kaiser is imbalanced in his views of inspiration to the point that the omniscience and sovereignty of the divine is severely and unnecessarily reduced. Poythress supports this objection with his demonstration of the complexities and tensions associated with the divine and human sides of inspiration.[27] In particular, he accurately argues that Scripture itself seems to demand that it possesses a unified meaning, while also demonstrating that this meaning can be unknown to human authors (e.g., Dan 7; 8:10, 27; 12:8-9; Zec 1-6; Rev 4:1-22:5). This point is particularly true within various genres. By attempting to confine inspiration to a single "mathematical formula," Kaiser does not take into account that the human and divine understandings of meaning are not always equal across various sections of the OT canon.[28]

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[27]Kunjummen exegetically demonstrates that Kaiser's perspective on authorial intent does not always work in harmony with his call for meaning to be grounded in historical grammatical exegesis of the OT. He concludes Kaiser's approach " . . . is not an absolutely valid dictum for biblical interpretation when it comes to authorial intention." Raju Kunjummen, "The Single Intent of Scripture—Critical Examination of a Theological Construct," *Grace Theological Journal* 7, no. 1 (1986): 81–110. Poythress makes a similar case. See Vern Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," *WTJ* 48 (1986): 241-79.

[28]Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," 260–62.

Kaiser's views on authorial intent can also be challenged. Payne, for example, points out four difficulties regarding the identification of human authorial intention. One of these difficulties is that "intention" can refer to a variety of things. It can include items ranging from the micro-level (e.g., word, words, sentence, sentences), to the macro-level (e.g., paragraphs, blocks of texts, books). Here Kaiser is ambiguous as to which level(s) he is specifically referring to when discussing authorial intention. A greater degree of clarity is needed to determine the validity of his argument on this topic.

Beyond this specific issue, Payne also points out that a human author may have more than one intention operating simultaneously. For instance, a writer may want to demonstrate or stress a spiritual truth, while at the same time present accurate historical facts. And to complicate matters further, some of these intentions may occur consciously while others may occur subconsciously. Payne rightly maintains these unconscious considerations may well be a direct product of the Holy Spirit driving the inspiration process. He concludes, in line with Kaiser, that if the doctrine of inspiration is understood properly, then the OT is indeed a product of both human and divine parties. But, in contrast to Kaiser, he maintains that ultimately it is a product driven by and belonging to the divine. It must, therefore, be understood in its overall canonical context, and should not be exclusively bound to the conscious intention of the human author.[29]

A second critique of Kaiser's approach involves the lack of consideration of Second Temple Jewish hermeneutics. Both Enns and Bock are critical of Kaiser for not utilizing advances in research when evaluating how the NT authors understood Christ in the OT.[30] Kaiser's argument for dismissing this evidence is that neither Testament hints

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[29]Phillip Barton Payne, "The Fallacy of Equating Meaning with the Human Author's Intention," *JETS* 20 (1997): 243-52.

[30]Darrell L. Bock, "Response To Kaiser," in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Stanley Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 92; Peter Enns, "Response to Kaiser," in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Stanley Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 96–101.

that a *pesher* or *midrash* method of interpretation is necessary for understanding.[31] This

argument is weak, however, for several reasons. First, one would not expect any NT

author to necessarily be actively conscious of the exact hermeneutical approaches they

utilize. Second, one would not expect the authors to explicitly list them in their writing,

particularly if such approaches were commonly accepted and utilized at the time. Third,

to demand that the OT authors be so aware of the exact ways their writings would play

out in history that they could "hint" at how they would or should be interpreted is

unreasonable. Fourth, Kaiser's perspective on Second Temple Jewish hermeneutics

dismisses one of his prime rules of exegesis: paying attention to the historical context of

the human author. Consideration of this context should naturally include accounting for a

writer's interpretive environment. But instead of taking this setting into account, Kaiser

demands that the interpretation of the OT by NT writers must be based on modern,

scientific hermeneutical approaches. Such a demand, however, inappropriately imposes

modern hermeneutical concerns on those from distinctly different cultures.[32] Here it is

possible to argue, as many evangelicals do, that accounting for the interpretation of the

OT in the NT via the hermeneutical methodologies of that time is a more valid way to

account for God's revelation and its progression throughout the redemptive storyline.

A third critique of Kaiser's position is that, ironically, by seeking to show that

Second Temple Jewish methodology is not a factor in the NT's handling of the OT,

Kaiser himself often enters into a *midrash*-like form of exegesis.[33] One example of this

type of exegesis is seen in his discussion of Acts 2 and the use of Psalm 16. To explain

how Acts 2 is grounded in historical-grammatical exegesis of Psalm 16, Kaiser first

utilizes psalm titles to connect Psalm 16 with David. This linkage then allows for the

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[31]Kaiser, "Biblical Theology and the Interpretation of Messianic Texts," 209.

[32]Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," 276–77.

[33]Although this conclusion was arrived at independently, Enns concurs that Kaiser's hermeneutics are often "fairly midrashic." Enns, "Response to Kaiser," 98.

correlation of Psalm 16 with various other psalms related to David. Specifically, Kaiser is able to link Psalm 16 with Psalm 89. This connection is particularly important to Kaiser because Psalm 89 mentions David and was considered messianic in pre-Christian circles. Additionally, both it and Psalm 16 contain the word חסד. Accordingly, Kaiser is able to conclude from Psalm 89 that since David is the messiah, the "recipient and conveyor of God's ancient and ever-renewed promise-plan for Israel and the world," and since Psalm 16 can also be linked with David, then by default Psalm 16 would be messianic in its original sense. Thus Peter is justified in his use of this psalm in Acts 2.[34]

Multiple problems exist with Kaiser's interpretation. The integrity and usefulness of psalm titles for interpretation and form-critical issues such as the original settings and various usages and re-usages of psalms over time are a few examples. But perhaps the largest issue for Kaiser's overall hermeneutical argument is that he fails to convincingly ground his messianic interpretation of Psalm 16 in historical grammatical exegesis of that specific passage. He gives little evidence that it should be read messianically based on the passage itself. He appears to be doing little more than applying the principles of *gezerah shawah* and *qal wahomer* in his interpretation.

A final critique for Kaiser's approach pertains to the role and function of promise as the center of biblical theology. One problem with his view is the difficulty in identifying any single center of biblical theology. A cursory glance of various proposals reveals that there is little consensus in this area.[35] Thus the burden of proof is on Kaiser to

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[34]Kaiser, "Single Meaning, Unified Referents," 73–81; idem, "The Promise to David in Psalm 16."

[35]Two works demonstrate the difficulties associated with biblical theology and centers of Scripture. James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999); Gerhard Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1991). Various recent works demonstrate that diversity still exists. Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013); James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010); Gerhard Hasel, "Proposals for a Canonical Biblical Theology," Andrews University Seminary Studies 34, no. 1 (1996): 22-33; Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012); Vern S. Poythress, "Models for Interpretation of Scripture," *WTJ* 58, no. 2 (September 1996): 316–19; Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the*

convincingly establish his choice of promise as the central theme of Scripture. But Kaiser's insistence that a host of OT expressions take on a technical status recalling promise is insufficient to identify a center of the OT alone, much less a unified biblical theology. Part of the problem is that most of the expressions he believes take on a technical, messianic status referring back to a central promise are high frequency terms in the OT. These terms are used widely in a variety of contexts, genres, and ways. Their meanings, therefore, can only be determined through analysis of each individual usage within each specific context. Kaiser fails to exegetically demonstrate that the authorial intent of these words across the OT is to recall promise. Rather, he merely relies on his perception of authors' intent. This approach appears to be little more than an example of *eisegesis*.

Another problem with Kaiser's choice of promise as the epicenter of biblical theology is that it is not a central focus in pivotal places within the canon. This point is especially true in the Gospels. If there is any place within the Christian canon that the connection of promise with Jesus would be vitally important, it is in the Gospels. However, as Kaiser himself admits, the explicit mention of promise is remarkably absent in these works. It is non-existent in Matthew and Mark and is only present once in John and eight times in Luke. In fact, according to Kaiser, only 2 percent of NT references to promise occur in the Gospels. It is also unusually sparse in various other NT works.[36] Lack of frequency does not necessarily disqualify promise as the central focus of both Testaments. But, it does raise the issue of why the gospel writers would not more explicitly and frequently connect Jesus with the promise if, in fact, this theme was perceived as the center and goal of the OT.

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Covenants (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012). Here both Schreiner and Poythress are accurate that "no one theme accurately captures the message of the Scriptures." Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, xii; Vern Poythress, "Kinds of Biblical Theology," *WTJ* 70 (2008): 129–42; idem, *Symphonic Theology: The Validity of Multiple Perspectives in Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2001).

[36]Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God*, 399.

Kaiser's treatment of wisdom literature is also problematic for his approach to biblical theology. He is accurate to point out that wisdom literature poses many problems for any unified biblical theology. His proposed solutions, however, do little to overcome these problems. Kaiser contends, for example, that the theme of wisdom literature is "the fear of the LORD." He then argues that this theme both links wisdom literature with the Pentateuch, and shows literary dependency on its laws.

Thus, because of the association with the Law, wisdom is afforded a connection with the promise theme. However, even if "the fear of the LORD" is understood to be the theme of wisdom literature, this theme does not demonstrate, as Kaiser proposes, an automatic, dependent relationship with either promise or the Law itself. The fear of the gods, for instance, is a common theme across the ANE. The fear of curses for wrongdoing and the promise of blessing for pleasing the gods are at the heart of much of the ANE legal corpus. In light of this widespread belief, in theory, it is equally possible to conclude that wisdom literature was as dependent on broad ANE tradition as it was OT Law. While this argument is not concrete, the point is that Kaiser's proposal of the phrase "the fear of the LORD" as a unified, dependent connection point between the Law and wisdom literature is not definitive either. The complexities of the origins and development of wisdom literature make it exceedingly difficult to trace it directly to the Pentateuch.[37] Any endeavor to do so must be proven exegetically.

But, Kaiser fails to provide convincing exegetical evidence for such connection. While he is accurate that forms of "fearing the Lord" appear in the Pentateuch, such language is not widespread in Genesis or Exodus and does not appear at all in the book of Numbers. The majority of references come in Deuteronomy.[38]

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[37]Duane Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1993), 26–28.

[38]Gen 20:11; 22:12; 42:18; Exod 1:17, 21; 9:30; 14:31; 18:12; 20:20; Lev 19:14, 32; 25:17, 19, 36, 43; Deut 4:10; 5:26; 6:2, 13, 24; 8:6; 10:12, 20; 13:4; 14:23; 17:19; 25:18, 58; 31:12-13. Ibid., 147–51.

Regardless of frequency, such shared language does little more than demonstrate a minor correlation between the two, not a unified thematic connection or direct literary dependence in either direction. Here Tremper Longman is accurate to acknowledge correspondences between wisdom literature and the Law while at the same time showing hesitation to identify a unified theme between the two.[39]

Christopher Wright

Wright is broadly similar to Kaiser in how evangelicals should understand messiah in the OT. He, like Kaiser, sees the Christian canon as one progressive metanarrative.[40] He also advocates that this metanarrative must be understood in light of the promise of blessing for the nations. He contends that this initial promise "grows" across the canon until it ultimately culminates in Christ. Therefore, he identifies promise as the central motif in Scripture. His understanding of the promise and the way it functions, however, varies from Kaiser in some significant ways.

Promise. Wright believes, for example, that the roots of promise go back farther than both Genesis 12 and Genesis 3. For Wright, promise is intimately connected with the account of creation in Genesis 1. In fact, Wright views Genesis 1-11 as crucial in discovering the promise motif of Scripture. It sets the need for the promise of Genesis 12 in proper perspective by showing both the ideal divine relationship with creation pre-fall and the dire situation and need of redemption by humanity post-fall.

Wright's specific understanding of promise and its subsequent role in the OT also separates his view from Kaiser's. Wright's definition of promise is essential to identifying this distinction. He goes to great lengths in arguing that promise must be

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[39]Tremper Longman III, *Proverbs* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 82.

[40]Since Wright's and Kaiser's ideas are comparable in several ways, similarities and presuppositions will only be briefly mentioned.

viewed in stark contrast to prediction. He notes three ways promise is distinct from prediction.[41] The first distinction is that a promise involves a personal relationship and a long-term commitment. Prediction, in contrast, is an indifferent foretelling of events that involves no permanent relational allegiance. Wright views the OT as more indicative of a promise in this regard.

The second distinction is that a promise requires a response on the part of a recipient. A prediction, in contrast, requires no response. It is merely a flat statement. An obligation of response to God's promise is clear across the OT. Israel, as the recipient of the promise to bless the nations, is consistently called and obligated to respond in *faith* and *obedience* to God's grace. This point is particularly important for Wright's understanding of the unity of the biblical metanarrative. It shows that there is little fundamental difference between the OT and NT. Both are focused on a gracious promise with a view to the redemption of all people. Also, both focus on a response of faith and obedience to this promise on the part of its recipients. In this way, the plan of God is, and always has been, the same.[42]

Because of such unity across the canon, Wright argues that most perceived contrasts between OT texts and their NT messianic fulfillments stem from the failure to recognize a crucial, third distinction between promise and prediction—that prediction is flat. It is indicative of a one-time fulfillment that is centered on the specific details of a particular prophecy. Promise, however, is dynamic and "involves ongoing levels of

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[41]Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament*, 64–76.

[42]"[I]t helps us realize that salvation is, and always was, a matter of God's grace and promise. The idea that the difference between the Old and New Testaments is that in the Old salvation is by the law whereas in the New, it is God who takes the initiative of grace and calls people to faith and obedient response . . . the message is clear and consistent throughout the Bible. The covenant promise of God is axiomatic and fundamental and all our hope of salvation hangs upon it." Ibid., 68–70. The unity of Scripture is also fundamental for understanding ethics. Wright believes that OT ethical commands, patterns, and models shed light on how God wants Christians to function in light of the redemption of "all of creation." For Wright, such things include patterns of OT creation care, the Exodus, the year of Jubilee, etc. See Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011); idem, *The Mission of God*; idem, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament*, 181–251.

fulfillment." This point is vital for comprehending Wright's view of Christ in the OT. He

maintains that a promise involves a "personal relationship and commitment, it has a

dynamic quality that goes beyond the external details involved . . . it is the relationship

behind it that really matters, the material form in which it is fulfilled may be quite

different from the literal form in which it was originally made, and yet it is no less a valid

form of promise."[43] This perspective leads Wright to argue that the focus of the OT is on

a broad, central promise to bless and redeem all of creation. The *specific* details of OT

texts are not essential for grasping messiah in the OT. Instead, what is important is the

unfolding of the OT as one broad redemptive promise with several different levels of

fulfillment across Israel's history. The details regarding the fulfillment of the promise are

merely given to Israel in the OT in terms relative to their historical circumstances and

level of understanding at the time.[44] But the ultimate fulfillment of the promise is

intended to culminate at a different time and stage of understanding. Recognizing this

contextual difference means that while there is broad continuity with the original things

God communicated to Israel, the ultimate fulfillment of the promise does not align

precisely with the details given in the OT.[45] In fact, the exact details of the ultimate

fulfillment of God's promise are largely unknown by the OT writers and audience. The

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[43]Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament*, 70–71.

[44]"Our point here is simply that in terms of the original promise in the Old Testament, all these features were quite naturally literal or physical, in relation to the historical nationhood of Israel. So promises concerning God's action in the future have to be made in terms already within the experience and comprehension of those who received them. But the fulfillment of the promise, with all these varied forms, through what God actually did in Christ, is at a difference level of reality. A different level, but still with continuity of meaning and function in line with the original promise." Ibid., 75.

[45]Wright illustrates his views by referencing the story of a father who promises his five-year-old son a horse when he turns 21. But then, on the son's 21st birthday, the father gives the son a car instead. Wright compares this illustration with the unfolding of the redemptive promise in the biblical metanarrative by noting "It would be a strange son who would accuse his father of breaking his promise just because there was no horse. And even stranger if, in spite of having received the far superior motor car, the son insisted that the promise would only be fulfilled if a horse also materialized, since that was the literal promise . . . the promise was made in terms understood at the time. It was fulfilled in the light of new historical events." Ibid., 71.

true meaning of any OT text can only be determined by the final understanding given in the Christian canon.[46]

Typology. For Wright then, the central way the OT points toward Christ is by revealing a discernable pattern of redemptive promise-fulfillment. The pattern flows in the following manner:

Initial promise- initial fulfillment $\longrightarrow$ fresh re-launch of promise- fresh fulfillment, $\longrightarrow$ fresh re-launch - fresh fulfillment $\longrightarrow$ fresh re-launch - fresh fulfillment.

This fresh re-launch- fresh fulfillment pattern is not only repetitive, but is amplified across the historical events of the OT until the ultimate fulfillment of redemption in Christ is revealed in the NT. The recognition of the growth and movement of this promise involves awareness of patterns that reveal and confirm God's redemptive intention for both Israel and the nations. Wright labels such OT patterns and models of correspondence with promise and redemption as "typology." He concludes, in contrast with Kaiser, that typology is broad and widespread across the OT. It is

> a way of understanding Christ and the various events and experiences surrounding him in the New Testament by analogy or correspondence with the historical realities of the Old Testament seen as patterns or models. It is based on the consistency of God in salvation-history. It has the backing of Christ himself who, on the authority of his Father, saw himself in this way.[47]

The recognition of such consistency, in Wright's view, best explains the complexities associated with the NT interpretation of the OT. Passages such as Hosea 11:1; Jeremiah 31:15; Isaiah 7:14 and others, are not direct messianic predictions. In fact, many of the OT passages quoted or alluded to in the NT were neither thought of as messianic around the time of Jesus, nor made sense in light of the historical realities of his life. Wright

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[46]"We cannot fully interpret any single text with confidence that we have 'heard the mind of God' on the matter, until it is set in the wider light of canonical teaching." Christopher J. H. Wright, "Response to Gordon McConville," in *Canon and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig G. Bartholomew et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 286–87.

[47]Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament*, 116.

concludes, therefore, that it is a fundamental mistake to claim that the authors of the NT understand the OT in a directly predictive way. Rather, they most often quote or allude to the OT because, in light of the revelation of Jesus as the Messiah, they are able to reflect back on these passages and detect God's pattern of promise-fulfillment.[48]

In fact, the influence of God's consistent promise pattern in the OT is so strong that Wright believes it served as a model for Jesus in understanding his self-identity.[49] This statement is especially true in reference to his understanding of Israel. Christ, in Wright's view, understands himself as the embodiment of both the identity and mission of Israel.[50] In particular, the focus is on fulfilling Israel's redemptive mission to both itself and the nations.

Missional methodology. The uniformity of redemptive promise across both Testaments ultimately leads Wright to argue that Christians are to understand Christ in the OT by means of a "hermeneutic of mission." He argues that the entire canon is a product of mission.[51] Mission, then, is the unifying theme of biblical theology.[52] It

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[48]Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament*, 57–58.

[49]"The Old Testament provided the models, pictures, and patterns by which Jesus understood his own essential identity and especially gave depth and color to his primary self-awareness as the Son of his Father God." Ibid., 135.

[50]"Jesus, then, saw his messiahship in terms of taking on himself the identity and destiny of Israel." Ibid., 148. Wright believes Jesus' use of "the Son of man" as a self-designation, as opposed to the Messiah, confirms this thesis.

[51]"The Bible, then, is a missional phenomenon in itself. The writings, which now comprise our Bible, are themselves the product of, and witness to, the ultimate mission of God. The individual texts within it often reflect the struggles of being a people with a mission in a world of competing cultural and religious claims. And the canon eventually consolidates the recognition that it is through these texts that the people whom God has called to be his own (in both Testaments), have been shaped as a community of memory and hope, a community of mission, failure, and striving." Wright, "Truth With a Mission: Reading All Scripture Missiologically," 6.

[52]"In short, a missional hermeneutic proceeds from the assumption that the whole Bible renders to us the story of God's mission through God's people in their engagement with God's world for the sake of God's purpose for the whole of God's creation. Mission is not just one of a list of things that the Bible happens to talk about, only a bit more urgently than some. Mission is, in that much-abused phrase, 'what it's all about.'" Ibid.

provides a framework for reading the OT that is based on the growing redemptive pattern of the OT itself, but also takes into account the ultimate fulfillment of redemption as revealed in Christ.

It is important to note that historical-grammatical interpretation of the OT does play a role in Wright's hermeneutic of mission. But it is only one part of determining the meaning of a passage. It simply provides an indication of what the people of Israel were facing and how they viewed a particular issue at the time. The true meaning of a passage, however, is found when viewing the circumstances of the original audience in light of the redemptive mission of God, particularly as it is revealed in the NT.[53] For Wright, this means that virtually every OT text, regardless of genre, rhetoric, or historical background, is tied to the redemptive mission articulated in Genesis 12 and is moving towards Christ. Creation is viewed, for example, as a response to polytheism. It promotes monotheism to the nations in preparation for their worship of the one true God. The Exodus keeps the promise to Abraham alive while, at the same time, showing God as ethical and just. Ethics and justice are a vital part of God's intention to redeem all of creation. Wisdom literature interacts with other ANE wisdom traditions, but does so in a monotheistic fashion. It points the nations to the one true God, and touts the superiority of his wisdom and ethics.[54]

Analysis. Many parts of Wright's approach to understanding Christ in the OT share similar strengths and weaknesses with Kaiser's position. Like Kaiser, the emphasis Wright places on the unity of the canon as well as the place of the canon in interpretation are strengths of his position. But, also like Kaiser, Wright's views on the central role of

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[53]"So a missional reading of such texts is very definitely not a matter of, first finding the 'real' meaning by objective exegesis, and only then, *secondly*, cranking up some "missiological implications" as a homiletic supplement to the "text itself." Rather, it is to see how a text often has its origin in some issue, need, controversy, or threat that the people of God needed to address in the context of their mission. The text in itself is a product of mission in action." Wright, *The Mission of God*, 5.

[54]Ibid., 50ff.

promise in interpretation, lack of attention to Second Temple hermeneutical techniques, and the identification of a single center of biblical theology are weaknesses.[55] Since these issues were analyzed previously, there is no need to repeat them. Instead, attention here will focus on two areas where Wright differs with Kaiser.

The first area of difference is Wright's heavy emphasis on mission in the OT. One significant issue here is the large amount of dependency Wright places on a specific understanding of the *niphal* and *hithpael* stems of ברך in references to the Abrahamic covenant. Particularly important is the use of these verbal stems to understand both OT mission and the relationship of Israel to the nations. Wright concludes that because the *niphal* and *hithpael* are used interchangeably in closely worded passages, there must be one specific function of both.[56] Traditionally, many have agreed with this view, and discussion has largely centered on whether the stems should be understood as exclusively passive (most indicative of the *niphal*) or reflexive (most indicative of the *hithpael*).[57] But Wright concludes that such a clear distinction should not be made. He maintains the use of the two stems collectively implies, at some level, that the attributes of both stems are present in each mention of the Abrahamic covenant:

> It is increasingly being realized that in the end a reflexive sense carries a passive inference anyway. This is because of the rest of the things God promises. If someone uses the name of Abraham as a blessing—that is to say, they prayed to be blessed as Abraham was—it presupposes that they know about the God who blessed Abraham so much that he became a showcase of the power of that God to bless. Such people thereby acknowledge both Abraham and Abraham's God. But God has just said he will bless those who "bless Abraham"—that is, those who regard Abraham as blessed in this way. So those who bless themselves by Abraham (if we give the *hithpael* its full force) will end up being blessed by God (*niphal*) because

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[55]Wright does give some attention to Intertestamental literature. However, the focus is on messianic expectations around the time of Jesus and not on the hermeneutical context during this time. See Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament*, 137ff.

[56]Wright, *The Mission of God*, 217.

[57]Wenham makes the case for a middle voice usage of the *niphal* that would be rendered "find blessing." Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 277.

he promises to do so. The reflexive implies the passive as an outcome.[58] A communal usage is important for Wright because a purely passive meaning, without some self-involving, reflexive sense, would eliminate both the need for an intimate knowledge of God and obedient response as a prerequisite for the blessing of the nations. With no need of such knowledge or action on the part of the nations, Israel possesses little purpose or motivation to show or tell the nations about God. This point conflicts with Wright's missional understanding of the OT.

The point also conflicts with his views regarding the level of unity between the Testaments. A clear distinction in the function of the verbal stems opens the possibility that there is a greater diversity in God's OT relationship and dealings with Israel and the nations than Wright recognizes. But on this topic, John Walton is correct to note that one must allow that a biblical author, knowledgeable of classical Hebrew, deliberately uses different verbal stems for a reason. The specific function of the *hithpael* and *niphal*, therefore, must be derived from their individual uses as opposed to an overarching theory regarding mission or the level of unity between the OT and NT. Walton examines the use of both stems in references to the Abrahamic covenant and concludes that the function of the *hithpael* is, in fact, markedly different from the *niphal*. The *hithpael*, he points out, is used in contexts of domination over and against the nations and is conditioned on obedience (Gen 22:17-18; 26:4-5). The *niphal*, in opposite fashion, is not used with a focus on domination or obedience.[59] It is used in a passive sense, which falls more in line with the most common usage of the *niphal* in the OT.[60] This evidence points to the likelihood of a wider diversity in God's dealing with Israel and the nations than Wright allows.

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[58]Wright, *The Mission of God*, 217–18.

[59]John H. Walton, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 393–94.

[60]Bruce Waltke and Michael O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 382.

Wright's views on the Abrahamic covenant also raise the issue of how missional the OT actually is. McConville points out, for example, that events such as the conquest of Canaan are problematic for Wright's missional perspective if the focus of the OT is indeed centered on the redemption of the nations.[61] Wright does, in fact, address the Canaanite conquest specifically in terms of ethics.[62] But while his approach may contain some merit, it fails to specifically and sufficiently address this topic in terms of his hermeneutic of mission. Wright also fails to adequately account for both the hostility and differences in treatment towards Gentiles in various other places across the OT. Such differences include slave legislation (Lev 25:39-ff.), the exacting of interest on loans (Deut 15:2-3; 23:21 HB), land rights, and open hostility against foreign people, including children (e.g., Ps 137).

McConville also points out that Wright's view of mission does not fit with large portions of the OT where there seems to be little outward consciousness. Places like Ezra-Nehemiah, Esther, and the Deuteronomistic History provide several examples of the lack of such focus.[63] A recent dissertation by Nancy Eavenson, largely based on Wright's works, attempts to demonstrate that the OT provides a strong witness of God's missional action and intention in the OT. Eavenson make an effort to demonstrate this thesis

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[61]Gordon McConville, "Chris Wright's *The Mission of God*: An Old Testament Scholar's Perspective," *Encounters Mission Journal*, 2007, accessed August 13, 2015, http://emj.redcliffe .org/editions/mission-and-the-old-testament-issue-17-april-2007/chris-wrights-the-mission-of-god-an-old-testament-scholars-perspective/.

[62]Wright's ethical argument is that the conquest of Canaan was a limited event and one that was likely rhetorically exaggerated. The point of it is primarily punitive and largely aligns with God's disciplinary tactics towards Israel. See Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 472–49.

[63]McConville, "Chris Wright's *the Mission of God*." McConville does argue, however, that the Deuteronomistic History perspective on the monarchy is largely an attempt to demythologize ANE kingship. In this regard, he sees the Deuteronomistic History as messianic. In some sense, this view could be in line with Wright's view in that the monarchy can be seen as making way for the true God and his messiah through the process of demythologization. But McConville does not make this case. He strictly argues for an inward focused, Israelite messianic trajectory, not an outward focused, missional goal. See J. G. McConville, "King and Messiah in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John Day, Library of Hebrew Bible Old Testament Studies 270 (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 271–95.

through an analysis of interactions between Israelites and Gentiles in the OT.[64] She

specifically points to the accounts of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath, Elisha and

Naaman, the servant girl and Naaman's wife, Jonah and the Gentiles, and Daniel and

Nebuchadnezzar as examples of God's missional intention.[65] From this analysis she

concludes that in the OT, "clearly, God's focus was always outward."[66]

But Eavenson's work is only able to establish the theoretical *possibility* of a

missional mindset in the OT. It does not demonstrate from textual evidence that mission

is *likely* the intended goal of many of the OT passages she evaluates. These texts are

largely silent on this matter. Also problematic is her own observation that even if some

Israelites understood their purpose as being on mission to Gentiles, this belief is largely a

minority perspective in the OT.[67] Even if it is conceded that God is on a mission to

Gentiles in the OT, those holding to a missional perspective must explain why the vast

majority of writers and participants in OT history appear oblivious or unconcerned with

this concept.

Besides the lack of tangible evidence for a missional focus in the OT, both

Wright's and Eavenson's views on this topic are also weakened by Gowan's observation

that OT law never "prescribes a full procedure for the acceptance of proselytes."[68] The

lack of such procedure appears strange if OT focus was centered on mission to the

nations. In the end, both Eavenson and Wright fail to refute Eichrodt's observation that

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[64]Nancy Jane Eavenson, "Israelite Interactions with Gentiles in the Old Testament and the Implications Regarding Missions" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011).

[65]Ibid., 85–121.

[66]Ibid., 200.

[67]Ibid., 202.

[68]Donald Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament* (New York: T & T Clark, 2000), 48.

there is only marginal focus on interactions with foreign individual or nations, apart from their effect on Israel, for much of OT history.[69]

Also, related to his view of mission in the OT, one must question the amount of consistency Wright sees between God's dealing with Israel and the nations across the entire Christian canon. Again, he recognizes little difference between the Testaments. But, at the same time, he also does not sufficiently explain why in the NT the plan of God for the world is discussed in terms of being something *new*, a *mystery* that has only now been revealed, something that is *now* extended to the nations, and something that is noticeably different from the OT (e.g., Eph 3:3-5, 8-10; Rom 11:11-27; 16:25-26; Heb 9). While he is correct to argue for the unity of the canon itself, the amount of consistency he sees in God's relationship to the nations seems unlikely.

As a result of all these things, Wright's choice of a hermeneutic of mission is not sufficient for understanding messiah in the OT. In the end, it does the very thing Wright sets out to work against: providing a framework that distorts the biblical text and that is not accountable to its content.[70]

A second area that should be mentioned regarding Wright's approach to understanding messiah in the OT is typology. While Wright acknowledges that typology is not the interpretive key to the OT, his views on this topic appear unbalanced. The most important issue is the amount of subjectivity that exists in Wright's identification of types. Because types are merely redemptive patterns or models, and because all of the OT is focused on a redemptive mission, every OT text, to one degree or another, can be labeled as a type. This issue is particularly dangerous in the preaching and teaching of the

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[69]Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. John Baker, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1967), 169.

[70]Wright recalls a conversation with Anthony Billington regarding his missional framework for the Bible. One of Billington's main contentions is that a framework is not inappropriate in and of itself. Billington's main issue, however, according to Wright, is "what sort of control the framework exercises over the text, and whether the text is ever allowed to critique the framework at any point." Wright, *The Mission of God*, 26.

church. It opens a strong possibility of reading into OT texts and assigning institutions and events meanings not found or grounded in the OT itself. This danger also carries apologetic consequences as well.

Exegetical Example

Walter Kaiser furnishes one example of the epigenetical approach to understanding messiah in the OT through his interpretation of Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2. Kaiser reasons that this passage is messianic for two reasons. First, the passage is eschatological in scope. He explains that the phrase "God will thunder against them from heaven" (2:10) is understood by many scholars to be a promise fulfilled in the defeat of the Philistines in 1 Samuel 7:10. But, Kaiser says this meaning "cannot be the ultimate meaning for the clause because the thunder is parallel with 'the LORD will judge the ends of the earth'—words much more universal in scope than one mere battle." Most importantly, though, because of the promise-plan of God, every victory that leads to the final culminating triumph of Christ "is embraced in the one meaning the text seeks to get across."[71] That meaning is tied to the ultimate, eschatological messianic intent of all of the OT.

Second, 1 Samuel 2 is messianic because it can be tied to other messianic passages such as Psalm 2 and 110. These texts, which are connected to the Davidic monarchy, are therefore messianic. They also contain similar language to 1 Samuel 2. Therefore, in light of the single intent of Scripture and in light of the promise plan of God, 1 Samuel 2 must also be referring to the messiah because of its connection to the monarchy.

The main problem with both of Kaiser's explanations is that they are built on the conjecture of a unified promise plan. This conjecture forces him to connect passages

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[71]Walter Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 70.

without grounding that connection in tangible linguistic and contextual evidence from the passages he considers.

Conclusion

An epigenetical approach to understanding messiah in the OT rightfully recognizes the importance of the canon and the unity of the OT and the NT in Christian theology. In Kaiser's case, it also recognizes the importance of apologetically grounding the NT in the OT. However, this approach is also prone to providing a framework that often distorts the biblical text and is not accountable to its content.

CHAPTER 5

CANONICAL APPROACH

A fourth evangelical approach to understanding Christ in the OT can be labeled as canonical. Those holding this position maintain that the final form of the HB provides clues as to how it is to be interpreted. More specifically, the order of the books in the canon, as well as various redactions within individual books making up the canon, yield evidence that the HB is to be understood messianically. This view is not widely held among scholars but currently appears to be gaining some attention.[1]

Characteristics

There are three items that are foundational to a canonical approach to messiah in the OT. These characteristics are vital to understanding and analyzing this viewpoint.

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[1]John Sailhamer, "The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible," *JETS* 44, no. 1 (2001): 5-23; idem, "The Canonical Approach to the OT: Its Effect on Understanding Prophecy," *JETS* 30, no. 3 (1987): 307–15; idem, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); idem, *The Pentateuch As Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992); idem, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition, and Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009); idem, "A Wisdom Composition of the Pentateuch?" in *The Way of Wisdom*, ed. James I. Packer and Sven Soderlund (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 15–35; idem, "Creation, Genesis 1-11, and the Canon," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 10 (2000): 89–106; idem, *How We Got the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998); idem, "Biblical Theology and the Composition of the Hebrew Bible," in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Scott Hafemann (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 25–37; Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2010); William Horbury, *Messianism among Jews and Christians* (London: T & T Clark, 2003); idem, "Messianism in the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, Library of Hebrew Bible Old Testament Studies 270 (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 402–33; idem, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1998); Stephen Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003). Provan also speaks of the value of the canon for understanding the Messiah in the book of Kings. Iain Provan, "The Messiah in the Books of Kings," in *The Lord's Anointed*, ed. Philip Satterthwaite, Richard Hess, and Gordon Wenham (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1995), 67–85.

General Distinctions

View of the Masoretic Text. The first characteristic is the place of the MT in interpretation. Advocates of the canonical approach stress that the MT is merely one of several ancient versions of the HB. In fact, it is one of the later versions and is often less reliable in strategic passages than other variant texts. It should not, therefore, be viewed as the infallible, authoritative version of the OT. This point is particularly important when considering the messianic status of the HB. Interpreters must keep in perspective that the Masoretes often attempted to preserve *postbiblical* Jewish tradition centuries after the time of Christ. The potential bias of the Masoretes in this regard means that their text must be carefully compared with other ancient versions of the HB and justified through a careful process of textual criticism. It also means that the MT must be considered in light of the overall theological thrust of the canon, not merely individual passages which may be distorted by rabbinical traditions and aspirations.[2]

Messianism. Akin to the bias of the MT, one must also take into account that other ancient versions of the HB appear to be highly messianic. This point is especially true during the Second Temple time period, when it is most likely that the final forms of biblical books and the final shape of the OT canon were established. A high level of messianism, for instance, can be seen in various works including the LXX, the Targums, the Qumran documents, the Intertestamental writings, and various others sources. Such a wide spread concentration of messianism can hardly be accidental. It must be indicative of widely held cultural expectations that are rooted in a common understanding of the HB. This evidence indicates that the HB was likely highly messianic in both its earliest versions and later forms.[3] It also indicates that the MT may, at times, represent a

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[2]Santala and Kinnaird, however, conclude that rabbinical traditions and aspirations more often than not confirm that the OT was messianic. See Risto Santala and William Kinnaird, *The Messiah in the Old Testament in the Light of Rabbinical Writings* (Jerusalem: Keren Ahvah Meshihit, 1992).

[3]Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ*, 37–63.

postbiblical interpretation of some of the messianic content of the HB that differs with more traditional messianic interpretations of the same content in Christianity and earlier Judaism.[4]

Historical focus. Another feature of the canonical approach is a focus on maintaining proper historical balance in biblical interpretation. Many OT scholars, it is argued, focus almost exclusively on sources, oral traditions, ANE backgrounds, and other factors that relate to the initial stages of OT works. Considerably less attention is given, however, to the final form of the HB and what it means. Consideration of the final form of biblical books, as well as the arrangement of the canon, is, in many ways, more important than the initial stages of writing. This point is particularly true because the final form of the HB yields evidence as to how earlier texts were interpreted. Sailhamer succinctly makes this point when he notes that the HB "is both text and commentary."[5] He argues that one cannot understand the earliest texts of the HB without starting with the evidence presented in the final form of the OT canon. Both later texts and the final shape of the canon provide commentary on earlier texts and build on the traditional interpretation of these texts. This evidence is invaluable in helping to determine how to understand messiah in the OT.

Analysis of Specific Approaches

Two proponents of the canonical approach to understanding messiah in the OT will be analyzed in this chapter.[6] John Sailhamer, by virtue his presidential address at the

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[4]Both Rydelnik and Sailhamer credit some modern messianic misunderstanding to Rashi and his brand of *peshat* exegesis. See Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope*, 112–28; Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 134–36. Sailhamer provides two examples of how the MT vocalization and cantillation systems steer some passages away from earlier Jewish and Christian messianic interpretations. He claims that the vocalization in 2 Sam 23:1 and the cantillation in Isa 9:5 represent these phenomenon. John Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 220–22.

[5]Sailhamer, "The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible," 13.

[6]Two other important persons hold the canonical approach to understanding messiah in the OT described in this chapter: William Horbury and Michael Rydelnik. They will not, however, be examined in

52nd annual meeting of the ETS in 2000, can be considered the most influential evangelical proponent of this position. He has also written more extensively on this position than any other evangelical. Therefore, examining his perspective is vital to the canonical view. Stephen Dempster is the next most widely read proponent of the canonical position, making an examination of his perspective also necessary.

John Sailhamer

Sailhamer believes that the tendency of most evangelicals is to read the OT through the lens of the NT. This tendency, however, is a major problem for Christian apologetics. For him, the legitimacy of Christianity hinges on whether the OT is messianic in and of itself.[7]

To identify an apologetically feasible way to understand messiah in the OT, Sailhamer examines three general presuppositions that he believes most evangelicals hold about this topic. He concludes that large portions of these presuppositions are in line with biblical evidence. He calls, however, for the adjustment of other parts that are not. These adjusted forms provide the basis he believes is needed for an accurate understanding of messiah in the OT.

Prophecy. A key presupposition pertains to the proper understanding of OT prophecy. The mainstream evangelical view of prophecy is that it gives a "vision of the future," according to Sailhamer. Though this aspect is indicative of the overall nature of

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this chapter. Horbury will not be examined because he does not align with the definition of evangelical established as the parameters for this dissertation. Rydelnik does, in fact, fall within the evangelical parameter, but he holds a position that is virtually identical to Sailhamer's, and that is so heavily dependent on Sailhamer that an examination of his position is not necessary.

[7]Here, Sailhamer advocates the positions of both Kaiser and McConville about this point. Sailhamer quotes Kaiser who notes that if the Messiah is not in the OT text, then "who cares how ingenious later writers were in their ability to reload the OT text with truths that it never claimed or revealed in the first place?" He also quotes McConville who states "the validity of a Christian understanding of the Old Testament must depend in the last analysis on the cogency of the argument that the Old Testament is messianic." Sailhamer, "The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible," 23.

prophecy, it does not provide a complete picture. Sailhamer maintains that prophecy should not be restricted to a description of the definitive end of *heilsgeschichte*. Rather, it must be understood as providing a detailed map of the *entire* course of *heilsgeschichte*. This point means that the OT must not only predict the coming of the Messiah, it must also specifically describe and identify him. Sailhamer argues, therefore, that the general evangelical view of prophecy is too narrow and fails to meet this requirement. The consequence of this perspective is the loss of meaning of OT passages, which, in turn, weakens the NT's central claim that the OT points towards the advent of Jesus as the Messiah.[8]

OT vs. NT function. Sailhamer argues, in fact, that a majority of evangelicals deem that it is the role of the NT to determine the messianic message of the OT. Without the NT, they reason, "OT messianic prophecy is at best hazy and uncertain." But Sailhamer contends that the opposite is true. For him, the NT is not the interpretive guide for OT messianism, instead, it is its interpretive goal. It is impossible to believe or grasp NT messianic assertions without first understanding the OT messianic portrait. The appropriate evangelical approach to the relationship between the Testaments should be that "the OT, not the NT, is the messianic search light . . . our primary objective should be to read the NT in light of the Old, rather than the OT in light of the New."[9] This statement leads Sailhamer to conclude "the messianism of the OT is fully developed and is the context from which we must identify Jesus as the promised Messiah."[10]

Canon. Sailhamer does not imply, however, that it should be taken for granted that the specific depiction of the Messiah is as clear and encompassing in the OT as it is

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[8]Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*; idem, "The Canonical Approach to the OT: Its Effect on Understanding Prophecy."

[9]Sailhamer, "The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible," 11, 22.

[10]Ibid., 15.

in the NT. Most evangelicals are correct in assuming that heavy amounts of the messianic portrait in the OT are scattered in bits and pieces across its pages. But, at the same time, they err at one crucial juncture. They wrongly presume that this information is thoughtlessly placed. Sailhamer maintains that there is, in fact, a carefully situated messianic logic across the OT. This information serves not only to predict the coming Messiah, but it also specifically identifies him.

The central interpretive guide for identifying the person and function of the Messiah is the OT canon, particularly its final shape. The idea of the layout of the canon playing a role in interpretation is largely assumed to be valueless by many evangelicals. But according to Sailhamer, this assumption often results in missing and misunderstanding the Messiah in the OT. He is, therefore, careful to spell out what he means by the final shape of the canon and the role it plays in interpretation. He defines it as the "compositional and canonical state of the Hebrew Bible at the time it became part of an established community."[11] Three components are crucial for grasping this definition and its implications for understanding the Messiah in the OT.

The first component is composition. Sailhamer's view of composition "takes seriously the notion that biblical texts have authors and the meaning of authors can be discovered by reading their texts." It also takes into account that the concept of authorship represents a "decisive moment" in a text's history.[12] For Sailhamer, though, this means that while there was an "original author" of each biblical book, at the same time, composition took place after the original author—granted it most often consisted of small, clarifying comments. So, it must be recognized to some extent, that there are multiple authors of a biblical book, including various non-canonical versions of them (e.g., LXX, Samaritan Pentateuch, DSD). These authors clarify texts over time by

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[11]Sailhamer, "Biblical Theology and the Composition of the Hebrew Bible," 25.

[12]Ibid., 27.

interpreting them in light of decisive historical and theological concerns native to their specific communities.

A classic example of such composition is found in comparing the various glosses, variations, and expansions in the LXX and MT versions of Jeremiah. The obvious differences between these texts lead Sailhamer to identify multiple "authors" of Jeremiah situated in a variety of communities with diverse theological perspectives and practical concerns. These contexts ultimately culminate in different compositions of the document. On a broader scale, this example demonstrates that OT composition must be "viewed neither in terms of a dynamic process nor a rigid status quo. The composition of a biblical book, like any other book, represents a creative and decisive moment in the history of the text."[13]

The second component central to understanding the final form of the HB is canonization. Sailhamer defines this term as "the point where a book becomes part of a larger collection and contributes to its overall shape."[14] Here, however, he differs with traditional perspectives on canonization. Generally, canonization is thought to be a theological endeavor that occurs long after the composition of individual works—which is primarily considered a historical enterprise—is complete. Sailhamer argues, however, that often composition continues well after an individual work is considered part of the canon. He also states that historical *and* theological factors influence both composition and canonization. The textual glosses and variations of Jeremiah, once again, serve as an example of both these points.

These glosses reveal that earlier versions were already viewed as authoritative for the community. The fact that passé compositions were worthy of updated historical and theological interpretation as well as clarifying remarks demonstrates that it was

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[13]Sailhamer, "Biblical Theology and the Composition of the Hebrew Bible," 27.

[14]Ibid., 30.

already part of a community's canonical collection. Attempts at adding, clarifying, or rearranging material after canonical status was granted, therefore, reveals both compositional and canonical fluidity. They also disclose the presence of *both* historical and theological considerations at the compositional *and* canonical levels. This fluidity means, in large measure, that canonization should not be thought of as a definitive process in traditional terms. Rather, Sailhamer believes that the OT canon is best viewed as a "punctuated equilibrium": "It is 'punctuated' in that it is the result not of a continuous process of development but of creative moments of formation that arise within multiple canonical contexts. It is an 'equilibrium' in that once established, the canonical shape continued in a more or less steady state until something triggered a major shift."[15] The "creative moments" that trigger shifts in composition and the shape of the canon are generally events or circumstances that have far reaching community impact. Changes to the canon in light of these circumstances are to be credited to a small elite class of individuals within each community. These individuals seek to inspire hope and assurance in light of each community's specific context.

The large-scale community itself effects the final shape of the HB in what Sailhamer labels as the process of consolidation. This third component of the final shape of the canon primarily takes into account that "once texts become a part of a community, they take on essential characteristics of the beliefs of that community." In this stage, the community stops short of composing new texts—at least in a strict sense. But they do adjust and arrange existing writings in such a way that furnishes a particular viewpoint to their meaning. Sailhamer lists examples of this phenomenon including Origen's fifth column in the Hexapla and the LXX's adjustment to NT quotations of the OT.[16]

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[15]Sailhamer, "Biblical Theology and the Composition of the Hebrew Bible," 30–31.

[16]Ibid., 31.

The example he is most focused on for understanding the Messiah in the OT, however, is the MT. He believes that many evangelicals have flippantly taken for granted that the MT is the inspired text given by God. To function with this assumption, however, is a fundamental error. The MT contains a "distinct layer of post-biblical exegetical tradition."[17] The Masoretes demonstrate the ability, on some occasions, to allow post-biblical interpretation to shift the meaning of passages that were likely originally messianic.[18] In short, the MT, to some degree, is not a reliable text for truly understanding messiah in the OT.

The best way to grasp the message of the OT, then, is to carefully trace the development of the OT in order to discover the final canonical form before consolidation corrupted it. It is this final form that will reveal whether or not the OT is truly messianic.

Methodology. Discovering the text, shape, and meaning of the canonical HB primarily involves considering the intersection of composition, canonization, and consolidation.[19] An initial step in this process is establishing a text model for study. Since the Christian canon differs in canonical shape from the Jewish canon, a choice must be made. For Sailhamer, the final form of the Hebrew Tanak must be viewed as the authoritative text for Christians. This work was the authoritative text around the time of Christ, and served as the Bible of the apostolic church.

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[17]Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 218.

[18]See the examples in fn. 4. Also Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 220–22.

[19]"The final shape of the Hebrew Bible is best described in terms of three intersecting coordinates: composition, canonization, and consolidation. Composition preceded canonization but did not stop there. Canonical books took on varying compositional shapes that reflected theological viewpoints. Moreover, once established within a specific community, OT texts began to take on essential characteristics of those communities that stopped short of actual new composition. The result was the production of the Hebrew Tanak: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings." Sailhamer, "Biblical Theology and the Composition of the Hebrew Bible," 31.

Having established the authoritative text model to work with, one must then identify the texts of the Tanak. These texts must be determined through a careful process of textual criticism. To some extent, this task is nothing new within biblical studies. Scholars have long attempted to discover the earliest stages of Biblical texts and trace their development towards canonical status. But the outcome of this endeavor is that effort is typically spent on reconstructing early sources. The latter stages of the text, as a result, garner minimal attention. Sailhamer, however, calls for the opposite approach. Since the final form of the Hebrew Tanak is the authoritative version for both Judaism and Christianity, he maintains that it should be the starting point for establishing earlier texts. Here, the most helpful resource is the MT. Because of its vocalization and cantillation systems, it provides the most detailed amount of tangible information to work with when reconstructing original texts.

But the MT merely represents the launching pad of what Sailhamer describes as a process of "text archaeology." By this term, he proposes a means of working backwards through the elements contributing to the final shape of the HB (composition, canonization, consolidation) in order to distinguish the compositional text, canonical texts redactions, and post-biblical tradition: "Starting with the Masoretic text as the last layer of occupation, we should attempt to peel back the post-biblical layers until we uncover the layer of the canonical text (or canonical texts), and from there attempt to isolate both the compositional layer of the individual books and the canonical redaction."[20] Sailhamer suggests that the process of text-archaeology must begin by locating the "solid ground" of a canonical section within the MT (i.e. Torah, Prophets, Writings). The best way to determine what is "solid ground" is by giving attention to the junctions of these canonical sections—what Sailhamer refers to as the "seams" of the canon. These seams serve as connectors of the original texts of the HB into one overarching work. When observed in

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[20]Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 218.

the canonical order of the Tanak, these seams provide information about the overall purpose of the HB in its final shape. As a result, this purpose then provides an overarching interpretive guide for the HB. It is the awareness of these factors that, in large measure, allows one to trace backwards from the MT and identify elements of consolidation that make up the "the post-biblical crust" of the MT. It also makes possible the identification of the original canonical and compositional levels of the text.[21]

Sailhamer concludes that when the layers of "outer crust" are removed, the final shape of the canonical text reveals a HB that is strongly messianic. The messianic focus of the HB is foremost grounded in the canonical shape of the Torah. He argues that the critical junctions of the Torah follow a predictable compositional form:

> At three macrostructural junctures in the Pentateuch, the author has spliced a major poetic discourse onto the end of a large unit of narrative (Gen 49; Num 24; Deut 31). A close look at the material lying between and connecting the narrative and poetic sections reveals the presence of a homogenous compositional stratum. It is most noticeably marked by the recurrence of the same terminology and narrative motifs. In each of the three segments, the central narrative figure (Jacob, Balaam, Moses) calls an audience together (imperative: Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Deut 31:29) and proclaims (cohorative: Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Deut 31:28) what will happen (Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Deut 31:29) in "the end of days" (Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Deut 31:29).[22]

He then concludes that

> such convergence of macrostructure, narrative motifs, and terminology among these three strategically important poems of the Pentateuch can hardly be accidental . . . these observations lead to the following conclusion. A consideration of the macrostructural strategy lying behind the final shape of Pentateuch suggests that the author works within a clearly defined hermeneutic. Because of the terminology he uses (viz., "the end of days"), we could call it an eschatological reading of his

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[21]Sailhamer labels locating the "solid ground" of the individual sections of the canon as compositional analysis, which is to be distinguished from the redactional analysis he calls for in working towards the "post-biblical crust." He states that compositional analysis is centered on features of a text that grant it the ability to be read as a coherent unity. Redactional analysis, in contrast, is geared towards it being included in a "larger context." Sailhamer is not clear as to how these terms function or are distinct. It appears that he is saying that compositional analysis is the result of binding a section of the canon together. Redactional analysis, on the other hand, considers the binding of the whole canon together in a post-biblical context. But even if this is the case, elements of both composition and redaction would be involved in binding the canonical sections together as well as the entire canon. Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 218–19.

[22]Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch As Narrative*, 36.

historical narratives. The narrative texts of past events are presented as pointers to future events. Past events foreshadow the future.[23]

Since the Torah is laid out in such a way to draw attention to "the last days," Sailhamer concludes that it gives an eschatological orientation to the rest of the Tanak. Based on this orientation, he is then able to identify and interpret the redactional seams of the Tanak.

Sailhamer believes the HB is centered around two primary seam sets. The first is Deuteronomy 34 and Joshua 1. The other is Malachi 3 and Psalm 1. Deuteronomy 34 concludes the Torah with the death of Moses and the conclusion that a prophet like Moses had not risen in Israel since this time. Joshua 1 picks up this storyline with the inauguration of Joshua as leader. But Joshua does not live up to the prophetic role of Moses. He is, in contrast, portrayed as a wise man. This portrayal marks a significant shift in operation and focus. God no longer speaks directly with prophets. Rather, as in the case of Joshua, the LORD speaks through meditation on Scripture.[24] However, the hope of the prophet to come in Deuteronomy 18 still lingers and presents a level of tension. Canonically, this tension represents an attempt to depict Torah as wisdom, and, at the same time, maintain the Torah's eschatological focus.[25]

Similar tension continues throughout the Prophets. No prophet lives up to the promise of Deuteronomy 18. The Prophets end in Malachi 3:22-24 (HB) with a reminder of Moses and the promise of Elijah's return. The reader is left to ponder this mention of Moses and exactly why Elijah is coming again. Sailhamer admits that Malachi is silent on this matter, but concludes that the only interpretive option for the canonical reader is that

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[23]Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch As Narrative*, 37. Sailhamer refers to this pattern as "narrative typology." He makes the case that this technique occurs across the Torah in both smaller narrative units as well as the final arrangement of legal material.

[24]"Moses the prophet is dead, and his place has been taken by Joshua. Joshua is characterized in these seams not as a prophet but as a wise man. The wise man who meditates on written Scripture has taken the place of the prophet who speaks directly with God. Scripture is now the locus of divine revelation." Sailhamer, "Biblical Theology and the Composition of the Hebrew Bible," 32.

[25]Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 240.

Elijah is coming to prepare the way of the Moses-like prophet in the future. This point is strengthened by the fact that the Writings begin with Psalm 1. With the prophet of Deuteronomy 18 still absent, and the mention of Moses and Elijah closing out the Prophets, Psalm 1 reverts again to the theme of wisdom and meditating on Torah. Sailhamer thus concludes,

> If we pull back and view the TaNaK in terms of its boundary markers, comparing Deuteronomy 34 with Malachi 3 and Joshua 1 with Psalm 1, we can see a remarkably coherent line of thought. Prophecy, or at least the great prophets of old, have ceased to be the means for gaining divine guidance. For the time being, the wise man has taken the role of the prophet as ideal leader. Scripture is now the locus of divine revelation. There still lies in the future, however, the hope for a return of prophesy. The Scriptures themselves (e.g., Deut 18) point in that direction . . . this shape was not an historical accident, but rather the result of a deliberate attempt to establish certain fundamental notions about the Hebrew Bible.[26]

With the absence of the eschatological prophet at the beginning of the Writings, the end of this canonical section, and the conclusion of the HB as a whole, 2 Chronicles 36:23 becomes illuminating. It ends with the call of Cyrus for a "messianic-priestly figure" that God is with, to rebuild the Temple. This passage functions as a natural bridge to Matthew 1, where Jesus is portrayed as the descendant of David, whom God is with.[27] He is the answer to the eschatological and prophetic tension across the Tanak. His advent also aligns perfectly with the forward-looking hope of the overall shape of the HB. This messianic emphasis is also in line with the messianic expectations of many persons in the NT.[28]

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[26]Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 249.

[27]"From a literary perspective, there is no Intertestamental gap between the Testaments. The last word in the Hebrew Bible can also be understood as the first word in the NT. It is a verb without a subject ("let him go up"). Its subject could very well be taken from the first chapter of Matthew in the NT. It is a call for the coming that one 'whose God is with him,' and who is to build the Temple in Jerusalem. In Chronicles (and the post-exilic prophets) this one is the messianic (priestly) son of David. Matthew's Gospel, which follows after this last word, begins, like Chronicles, with a genealogy identifying Jesus as the Christ (Messiah), the son of David, who is Emmanuel, 'God with us.'" Sailhamer, "Biblical Theology and the Composition of the Hebrew Bible," 14.

[28]Here Sailhamer lists John the Baptist as the example *par excellence* of this point. John is looking for a new work of God in line with the prophetic figures of Moses and Elijah. Sailhamer admits that there was a diverse range of opinions on the function of the Messiah around this time. The religious leaders of the time demonstrate this point with their views on the issue. But Sailhamer credits these

Thus, the overall framework of the Tanak provides the interpretive means by which Christians are to understand messiah in the OT. The final canonical shape of the Tanak, when properly established through a process of text criticism, provides a definitive eschatological hermeneutic for reading the OT. It is a hermeneutic that predicts the Messiah. It also establishes Christian messianic claims within the confines of the OT and therefore eases most apologetic tensions.

Analysis. Sailhamer's perspective offers some unique options for understanding messiah in the OT. First, Sailhamer's concern for Christian apologetics is commendable. The observation that a major part of defending the Christian faith hinges on demonstrating that the OT is messianic is a valid point. The same concern, as Sailhamer points out, is shared with other prominent evangelicals.

Second, Sailhamer's attention to text-critical issues is also praiseworthy. Many evangelicals tend to ignore such items. But Sailhamer is right to note that knowledge of these factors is important for understanding and defending Christ in the OT. Of particular importance in this area is Sailhamer's call to recognize that the MT should not be taken for granted as the definitive text of the HB. He is right to point out that the Masoretes were not only fallible humans, but they were biased toward a tradition that sometimes differed with Christianity and earlier Judaism on the issue of messiah. These points must be considered when approaching the MT.

Third, Sailhamer's perspective also brings evangelicals into broader discussion about the role of the canon in interpretation. He is right to note that the consideration of canon is relatively new among many evangelicals. However, the power and potential of

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differences to the various expectations and desires within communities. The existence of differences serves as an example of his views of composition, canonization, and consolidation within various contexts, and their effect on interpretation. Sailhamer, "Biblical Theology and the Composition of the Hebrew Bible," 37.

the role of the canon in interpretation is increasingly being recognized and demands

further investigation.[29]

Several points of Sailhamer's view on understanding messiah in the OT,

however, are problematic. First, the methodology he advocates is so complex that it is

unapproachable for most people. Unless individuals are thoroughly trained in text

criticism, redaction theory, rabbinical hermeneutics, Biblical Hebrew—including the

Masoretic cantillation system—and canonical criticism, they will not be able to approach

the OT in the way he prescribes. Sailhamer appears comfortable with the assertion that

the text is, in many ways, only accessible by the scholar.[30] But this principle runs in the

face of the traditional evangelical view that Scripture is perspicuous and approachable for

all. Grudem notes that the doctrine of perspicuity is especially applicable to scripture

passages pertaining to understanding salvation.[31] Since describing and identifying the

Messiah is intricately tied to salvation, it stands to reason that information about the

Messiah must be clear to recognize in the OT. Sailhamer's theory does not fit this

criterion.

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[29]Some influential contemporary works drawing interest to the OT canon include Brevard Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1979); idem, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1990); Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998); Bruce K. Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007); Rolf Rendtorff, *The Canonical Hebrew Bible: A Theology of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Deo Publishing, 2005); idem, *Canon and Theology Overtures to an Old Testament Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

[30]Sailhamer is not explicit about his specific view on this topic. However, he advocates Rambach's approach to hermeneutics as providing a model for modern evangelicals. He notes that "for Rambach, biblical hermeneutics could be viewed both in a popular form, which was applicable to virtually all Christians, and a specialized form, which was applicable to a select group of learned theologians . . . In a more developed sense, however, Rambach understood *hermeneutica sacra* as a practical learnedness (*habitus practicus*) by which trained theologians, instructed in the necessary disciplines and led by the Holy Spirit, are rendered fit for investigating the legitimate sense of Scripture, expounding it, and applying it wisely to life." Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 228–29.

[31]Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 108.

Second, the idea of canonical shape offering interpretive guidance is not a new concept in biblical studies. Perhaps the most famous example pertains to the potential interpretive value of the canonical layout of Psalms.[32] But, many of the criticisms of this approach to Psalms are also applicable to Sailhamer's views on the Tanak. The most powerful criticism is that if the editors of the final canonical HB intended for it to be interpreted in the way Sailhamer suggests, it is surprising that they left no explicit instruction or indication to do so. It is also significant that there is little evidence in rabbinical writings or Intertestamental literature that the HB is to be understood in this fashion.[33] Further, Sailhamer's methodology seems out of line with the way the NT authors appear to interpret the OT. While there is mention that the Messiah is predicted across the canon (e.g., Luke 24:44), the apostles mainly expound on individual verses or smaller sections of texts within the OT. They do not look to the shape of the canon itself as providing a messianic commentary in the way Sailhamer prescribes. Nor do they use it as apologetic proof that Jesus is the Messiah. It appears, therefore, that Sailhamer introduces a hermeneutic that is largely foreign to historical Judaism and Christianity, as well as the biblical authors.

Third, an important part of Sailhamer's thesis is that the shape of the Tanak produces a messianic commentary on the state of God's people. This perspective essentially amounts to the canon creating a type of messianic narrative. But this point is difficult to maintain. John Goldingay notes two important considerations. The first is that

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[32]Gerald Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985); John Walton, "Psalms: A Cantata About the Davidic Covenant," *JETS* 34, no. 1 (1991): 21-31.

[33]Longman's critique of Wilson's perspective on the canonical shape of the Psalter applies to Sailhamer's approach to the Tanak: "My question is: If the arrangement were so important . . . wouldn't it be more likely that explicit indicators would be built into the text? Moreover, if his idea of structure were implicitly understood among the early redactors and the early receptors of the material . . . the case would be supported if we had some early rabbinic statements that showed awareness of this. I am unaware of such comments." Tremper Longman III, "The Messiah: Explorations in the Law and Writings," in *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, ed. Stanley Porter (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007): 20–22.

the canon is not a narrative in and of itself.[34] Again, there is little historical evidence that it was widely understood as such. Second, even among those who see the order of the canon as yielding a narrative, there is little agreement as to what the focus of that narrative is or what it means.[35] Sailhamer fails to establish the superiority of his view over that of others concerning these issues.

And like many of the others seeing the canon as a storyline, Sailhamer is also forced to "links dots" for his particular framework to succeed. But frequently, his connections appear out of line with the biblical evidence. For example, his hypothesis that the seams of the Tanak are heavily focused on prophecy falls short at various junctions of the canon. He is able to make the case that the Torah and Prophets end with a level of concentration on prophecy. But no definitive case can be made for such focus in Joshua 1. It also cannot be maintained at the beginning or end of the Writings. Psalm 1, for instance, does not give reasonable thematic or linguistic evidence that it is concerned with the failure of prophecy. This view is merely speculation on Sailhamer's part. Block rightly argues that the seams of the canon are tangibly more reflective of Torah interests as opposed to prophetic or messianic interests.[36]

Also Sailhamer's observation that the call of Cyrus to rebuild the temple at the end of Chronicles looks towards a "messianic-priestly" figure does not align neatly with a prophetic focus. This figure is not prophetic. Neither does the passage supply sufficient

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[34]In a critique of Jack Miles and Stephen Dempster's narrative approaches to the canon, Goldingay notes, "This is a construct they bring to the text. While the scriptures are dominated and framed by narrative, they are not actually a narrative." John Goldingay, "Old Testament Theology and the Canon," *Tyndale Bulletin* 59, no. 1 (2008): 3.

[35]Again, referring narrative approaches to the canon, particularly Miles and Dempster's, Goldingay notes that "authors have to do considerable linking of dots" to make their theories work, and that in doing so they arrive at "monumentally different conclusions regarding the dynamics of the alleged narrative." Goldingay, "Old Testament Theology and the Canon," 3.

[36]Daniel I. Block, "My Servant David," in *Israel's Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Richard Hess and M. Daniel Carroll (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 21, 35.

evidence to indicate any type of solution regarding the prophet of Deuteronomy 18.[37] The

end of the OT canon would be particularly vital if the final redactors of the Tanak were

attempting to address the status of prophecy. It is significant, therefore, that Sailhamer

fails to adequately justify how this "messianic-priestly" figure fits within his overall

theory at this crucial location of the canon.

Further, Sailhamer's emphasis on the role of prophecy in the canon also causes

him to largely ignore the significance of the Davidic dynasty in the OT and in the

development of messianism.[38] Downplaying the role of the Davidic monarchy is strongly

out of line with biblical evidence in both Testaments (e.g., 2 Sam 7:16; Jer 33:17; Ezek

37:24-25; Matt 1; 22:42; Mark 10:48; Luke 1:32-33). It is also out of line with the

majority of scholarly perspectives on the role of the Davidic rulers in understanding the

Messiah.[39]

Fourth, the root of Sailhamer's perspective is contingent on a specific

translation of באחרית הימים in the Torah. He translates the phrase as "the end of days,"

thus giving it, and the remainder of the canon, an eschatological orientation. It is possible

to translate this phrase in the way Sailhamer suggests. But, it is equally possible to

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[37]Block points out the building of temples are indicative of a royal function, not a prophetic or priestly role. Ibid., 33–36.

[38]The significance of the monarchy, for Sailhamer, is largely attached to what he sees as prototypes of messianic rulers in the Torah. These rulers (Jacob, Balaam, Moses) are associated with "the end of days" passages in the Torah (Gen 49; Num 24; Deut 31). They function in the roles of prophet and king. These roles also match with the hope found in the Prophets. Sailhamer, however, does little to demonstrate or develop this idea, especially in reference to the monarchy, in his works. See Sailhamer, "The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible," 20.

[39]See, for example, Block, "My Servant David," 36–49; T. Desmond Alexander, *The Servant King: The Bible's Portrait of the Messiah* (Vancouver: Regent College, 2003); Phillip Alexander, "The King Messiah in Rabbinic Judaism," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, Library of Hebrew Bible Old Testament Studies 270 (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 456–73; George J. Brooke, "Kingship and Messianism in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, Library of Hebrew Bible Old Testament Studies 270 (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 434–55; John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 21–30; Joseph Fitzmyer, *The One Who Is to Come* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2007): 33–55; Day, *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. This topic will be addressed further in the next chapter.

translate it as "in the following days." When rendered in this manner, the phrase is a reference to the future, but it points to a more immediate future, not the definitive end of *heilsgeschichte*. Wenham states this meaning typically is intended when something will take place after another major event in the more immediate future occurs. He states that Gen 49:1 fits this description by looking beyond the period of the Exodus and looking toward the settlement in Canaan. This particular rendering also appears more in line with the other contexts of the Torah where באחרית הימים appears (Num 24:14; Deut 4:30; 31:29).[40] If nothing else, the phrase is far too ambiguous for Sailhamer's theory about the eschatological orientation of the entire Tanak to rest on it.

Fifth, his attempt to identify and distinguish between the original text, additional commentary, canonical linkage, and consolidation of the OT is built on dubious methodology. Hamilton, for example, notes that Sailhamer says the goal of interpretation is identifying an author's intent. But this statement is severely complicated by Sailhamer's focus on additional commentary on the original text that is the product of multiple "authors" within various communities, especially those responsible for the final form of the Tanak. Hamilton asks an appropriate set of questions about the methodological issues associated with distinguishing between the various levels of texts Sailhamer identifies:

> How does Sailhamer know that these are later insertions? And if we are to follow him, how do we distinguish between the earlier version and commentary? Is this a method that has constraints or is it dependent upon Sailhamer's ability to catch glimpses of authors at work? If we follow him in trying to catch glimpses, are we till seeking to interpret the text as it now stands? . . . Sailhamer argues for interpreting the text but moves from the text to the event of later authorial activity. Color me unconvinced.[41]

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[40]Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1994), 471.Walton takes a similar approach when he notes that Gen 49 is not framed as a prophetic oracle. He contends that the passage would be viewed as a "determination of individual and tribal destiny." Walton, *Genesis*, 712–13. Ross argues that the phrase references various time periods ranging from the near future to the eschatological. For him, differences depend on the tribe involved. Allen Ross, *Creation and Blessing* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 700.

[41]James M. Hamilton Jr., "John Sailhamer's the Meaning of the Pentateuch: A Review Essay," *SBJT* 14, no. 2 (2010): 67.

Hamilton raises valid concerns. Sailhamer's approach is largely based on conjecture as opposed to definitive evidence. He provides little concrete methodological guidance as to how the relationship between the original text, commentary on the text, consolidation of texts, and the canonical text can be tangibly ascertained. This point weakens his quest for an apologetically defensible approach to the messiah in the OT.

Stephen Dempster

Another evangelical proponent of the canonical position is Stephen Dempster. He holds many similar perspectives to that of Sailhamer. For this reason, only significant differences will be highlighted here.

Presuppositions. Dempster's central concern is that since the rise of historical criticism both scholarship and the church have focused on small portions of OT texts. This focus has led to the detriment of the overall message of the OT canon. The roots of this error stem from a failure to take seriously the divine authorship of Scripture, which Dempster believes demands a conceptual unity to all of the OT.[42] To alleviate this issue, he calls for an effort toward finding and defining a biblical theology that recognizes that Scripture is the unified product of one divine author. In his major work on this topic, Dempster states his thesis:

> When the Hebrew Bible is read and reread (that is, viewed with a wide-angle lens), the faces of the biblical Rushmore—"the purposeful pattern"—will be seen clearly, rather than the "textual patchwork" in the face of the mountain. To employ Alter's and Josipovici's images, it will be seen as a book and not as a ragbag . . . . As Alter acknowledges, the pre-modern tradition was better able to see the pattern because it assumed that the text was an interconnected unity rather than a collage of diverse documents.[43]

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[42]Besides making a theological case for the unity of the OT canon, Dempster also believes that there is sufficient evidence within the canon that points to a unified story. For Dempster, the stress on the "word of God" at the beginning of each section of the HB shows it is meant to be read as a complete unit with a coherent and purposeful story line. See Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 32–33.

[43]Ibid., 30.

Methodology. The "purposeful pattern" that identifies and explains a unified

biblical theology is primarily discovered through a literary approach to the OT. In fact, a

literary approach and a unified biblical theology are, in Dempster's view, akin to and

compliment one another. He states,

> One of the main tasks of a literary approach is to try to ascertain the overall message
> or central theme of a Text; and this coincides with the main task of biblical theology
> which is the description of the conceptual unity of a biblical text. A prime purpose
> of literary studies is to grasp the big literary picture through analysis of plot and
> theme, and the goal of biblical theology is to grasp the big theological picture
> through analysis of the theological views of the various biblical texts . . . . [P]erhaps,
> if it can be shown through literary means that this material has not only an implicit
> literary cohesion but an explicit unity as well, biblical theology may get a fresh
> hearing.[44]

The literary approach Dempster advocates primarily involves two parts. The

first part is recognizing and reading the OT canon as a unified narrative. This point means

that, just like any story, the OT canon exists to communicate a central message. To do so,

it utilizes various literary devices to chart a storyline that is comprised of a beginning,

middle, and end. Further, each individual text, regardless of the diversity of literary genre

or devices, must be understood as a purposeful piece of the overarching story. This means

that each OT text must work in alignment with all other parts of the OT to communicate a

metanarrative.[45] To identify this metanarrative, then, involves paying careful attention to

words, patterns, themes, and levels of intertextuality that chronologically build on one

another within the structural and conceptual framework of the Tanak.[46]

Second, once the structural and conceptual basis are identified through literary

study, the hermeneutical lens of Scripture can be further oriented and guide the proper

understanding of the OT. For Dempster, the result of a literary approach to the OT

storyline shows that it is strongly centered on the restoration of dominion and dynasty

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[44]Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 36.

[45]Ibid., 42–3.

[46]Ibid., 231.

after the fall of Adam. This premise is deeply rooted in Genesis 3:15 and then subsequently Genesis 49 and Numbers 24. These passages are intimately connected through an intentional process of intertextuality. The result is that through the connection of these particular texts, the OT is given an eschatological orientation that moves across the entire canon.[47] Further, they provide common ideas, patterns, and themes that the rest of the OT builds upon and develops. This is especially true in the case of the Davidic monarchy.[48] The OT, then, reveals a discernable storyline that Dempster states broadly moves

> from Adam to David. From the creation of the world to the building of the temple, which will give new life to the world and from which the divine rule will extend to the ends of the earth. Genealogy and geography, dynasty and dominion. This represents the story of the Tanak, a story that leaves Israel in a type of exile, waiting for someone from David's house to come and build a house to bring about the restoration of all things . . . . [T]his story is about the reclamation of a lost human dominion over the world through a Davidic dynasty. In short, it is about the coming of the kingdom of God, and it is unfinished.[49]

It is unfinished, that is, until the arrival of Jesus in the NT. He then fulfills what remains incomplete and in a state of chaos in the OT. The NT confirms the typological patterns across the OT. It does so by mimicking the same conceptual and literary patterns found in the OT. It also confirms OT patterns by presenting conclusions to any remaining or incomplete issues resulting from these patterns. Most importantly, however, these types give further confirmation of the eschatological orientation of the Tanak and how messiah is to be understood in the OT. This orientation provides contemporary believers the ability to see the prediction of Christ across the OT.[50]

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[47]Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 90–92.

[48]Ibid., 135–47.

[49]Ibid., 231.

[50]Ibid., 231–34.

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Analysis. Many of the same critiques applied to Sailhamer's perspective are also applied to Dempster's viewpoint. Therefore, these will not be repeated. Only some significant points unique or important to Dempster's position will be mentioned here.

Dempster's perspective has two particular strengths that should be recognized. The first is his focus on the final form of the OT and its literary features. Text critical issues, while important, have limitations. Dempster recognizes these restrictions and their potential consequences for interpretation. In contrast to Sailhamer, therefore, he gives primary attention to the final form of texts, not what is behind them. In a similar vein, it is also significant that Dempster focuses on the literary value of the OT. As Alter's work points out, the OT is literature and needs to be studied and respected as such.[51]

A second strength of Dempster's position is his focus on the importance of the Davidic dynasty for understanding OT messianism. This focus was lacking in Sailhamer's view, despite the almost universal recognition of its role and contribution toward understanding messiah in the OT as well as in the NT.[52]

There are, however, a few things that are problematic for Dempster's approach. The first is a necessary reminder of a crucial criticism of Sailhamer. Little explicit indication in the biblical text or in other extra biblical sources is given that would warrant the canon of the HB to be read in the manner that Dempster prescribes.[53] This point is crushing to his perspective. Goldingay is correct in pointing out that Dempster's particular view of the HB as a unified story lacks evidence and appears to be merely a human construct he imposes on the biblical text.[54]

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[51]Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 2nd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2011).

[52]See, for example, Annti Laato, *A Star Is Rising: The Historical Development of the Old Testament Royal Ideology and the Rise of Jewish Messianic Expectations* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997); Yuzuru Miura, *David in Luke-Acts: His Portrayal in the Light of Early Judaism* (Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

[53]See n. 33 above.

[54]See n. 34 above.

Second, Dempster's approach to intertextuality and typology are problematic. One issue is that Dempster does not adequately explain what he means by either term or how they are to be identified and understood in the OT. This point is especially true regarding intertextuality. Further, his connection of various OT passages, at times, almost seem to constitute a *midrash* approach to the OT. He connects various passages across the canon together through broad topics and shared language that he does not exegetically demonstrate is justified within specific individual contexts.[55] Because of his theory of the canon producing a unified story, he appears to simply take for granted that there must be natural connections between all such passages. But, the onus of proof lies on Dempster to exegetically demonstrate any potential connections.

Third, little attention is given to the original meaning of OT texts in Dempster's work. He fails to seriously weigh that these texts were first and foremost written to specific contexts and specific people during a specific timeframe. While there must be room for development of texts across the canon, it is crucial for these developments to be grounded in the contextual meaning of the original passages.

Last, Dempster fails to show convincingly that the restoration of dominion and dynasty are the center of biblical theology. The main issue with this theory is that neither of these themes has emerged as a consensus view of the center of the OT among scholars. These themes are simply two of many that could be, and have been, proposed as the center of the OT. As Poythress and Hasel demonstrate, however, there are various perspectives to the OT that highlight different topics in multiple ways and that tend to downplay others.[56] Dempster's choice of dominion and dynasty is no different.

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[55]See, for example, Dempster's connections between Gen 3; 12; 49; Exod 15; 17; Num 24; Esther 3; 7. Dempster provides little evidence that these passages are conscious of or focused on Gen 3:15. The strongest evidence he provides is broadly shared themes that he believes must be connected by virtue of the belief in a tight, divine metanarrative. See Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 90–117.

[56]Gerhard Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 139–71; Vern Poythress, *Symphonic Theology: The Validity of Multiple Perspectives in Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2001), 20.

Exegetical Example

Sailhamer provides one exegetical example of the canonical approach to understanding messiah in the OT. In dealing with the oracles of Balaam in Numbers, Sailhamer asks the question: "Does the writer of the Pentateuch understand these oracles of Balaam to refer to David or someone else in the more distant future?" He answers,

> From the standpoint of later biblical history, the events alluded to here extend far beyond the reign of the historical David. It is difficult in this context not to think of texts like Genesis 10:2-4, where the Kittim are associated with nations such as Magog, Tubal, Media, and Meshech, nations which figure prominently in the later prophetic books (e.g., Eze 38:2-3), and of Daniel 11:30 where the Kittim are again mentioned in reference to the last great battle. In any case, this last oracle of Balaam appears to place the scope of his oracles too far in the future to be a reference to the reign of David.[57]

This approach is largely tied to his theory of the Pentateuch and Tanak being redacted and complied in such a way as to produce an eschatological metanarrative. Here, Sailhamer again fails to clarify how to know the difference between what the "original author" wrote and intended and what are later additions or interpretations of the final redactors. Further, he also fails to provide strong evidence for intertextual connections related to Balaam's oracles across the canon such as he suggests. Little suggests that those finalizing the Balaam oracles from the "standpoint of later biblical history" are connecting the Kittim and various "associated" nations from an eschatological standpoint. This proposal appears to be mere conjecture on Sailhamer's part, highly grounded in his overall eschatological orientation of the OT canon.

Conclusion

The canonical approach addresses several points pertinent for evangelicals to understand messiah in the OT. These issues include the role of the canon in interpretation, the value of the MT, and the concern for apologetics. Addressing these topics is the major strength of this position. But other issues outweigh this strength. The

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[57]John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch As Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 409.

primary deficiency in this approach is the lack of explicit textual evidence for reading the OT in the way this position prescribes. Another strong concern is the lack of clear methodology for distinguishing between the original text, the canonical text, and consolidation changes.

CHAPTER 6

DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

A fifth evangelical position for understanding messiah in the OT can be labeled as the developmental approach. Persons holding this view tend to identify less explicit prediction of the Messiah in the OT than many holding alternate positions. The reason for this minimalism is largely related to a strong emphasis on historical-grammatical exegesis of OT passages with stress on not reading into a text what cannot be tangibly identified from the passage under consideration.

The developmental view holds that the concept of a messiah slowly evolves across Israel's history. It grows in both focus and clarity throughout the OT and ultimately culminates in the revelation that Jesus is the Messiah in the NT.[1] The OT is

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[1]A sampling of recent works in this area include Phillip Satterthwaite, "David in the Books of Samuel: A Messianic Expectation?" in *The Lord's Anointed*, ed. Phillip Satterthwaite, Richard Hess, and Gordon Wenham (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1995), 41–65; Martin J. Selman, "Messianic Mysteries," in *The Lord's Anointed*, ed. Philip Satterthwaite and Richard Hess (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2012), 281–302; Brian Kelly, "Messianic Elements in the Chronicler's Work," in *The Lord's Anointed*, ed. Phillip Satterthwaite, Richard Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1995), 249–64; Knut Heim, "The Perfect King of Psalm 72," in *The Lord's Anointed*, ed. Phillip Satterthwaite, Richard Hess, and Gordon Wenham (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1995), 223–48; idem, "The (God-)forsaken King of Psalm 89: A Historical and Intertextual Enquiry," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John Day, Library of Hebrew Bible Old Testament Studies 270 (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 296–322; Lucass, *The Concept of the Messiah in the Scriptures of Judaism and Christianity*; Mark J. Boda, "Figuring the Future: The Prophets and Messiah," in *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, ed. Stanley Porter (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 35–74; Daniel Block, "My Servant David," in *Israel's Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Richard Hess and M. Daniel Carroll (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003): 17-56. Also, see multiple essays in John Day, ed., *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013); James Charlesworth, ed., *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992); J. G. Heintz, "Royal Traits and Messianic Figures: A Thematic and Iconographical Approach," in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. James Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1992), 52–66; P. D. Hanson, "Messiahs and Messianic Figures in Proto-Apocalypticism," in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. James Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1992), 67–78; J. J. M. Roberts, "The Old Testament's Contribution to Messianic Expectations," in *The Messiah*, ed. James Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 39–51; W. G. Lambert, "Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, Library of Hebrew Bible Old

largely viewed, therefore, as providing the roots and trajectory of messianism. This messianism especially grew out of the hopes associated with the Israelite monarchy, particularly the Davidic dynasty. Laato articulates the position of many holding this view when he says that the various historical circumstances of Israel, across its history, "have provided the impulse for the birth and development of the Old Testament royal ideology," and that this ideology "generated different messianic expectations in Judaism(s) of late antiquity."[2]

That is not to say, however, that there is no messianic hope or prediction in the OT. In fact, it is important to distinguish the development view of understanding Christ in the OT with what Rydelnik refers to as the historical view. The historical view, according to him, denies any messianic hope or prediction in the OT. Christianity, therefore, is simply an outgrowth and byproduct of OT history, not a direct fulfillment of it.[3] In contrast, the developmental view asserts that the NT is the unequivocal fulfillment of the OT. Proponents of this view see links, trajectories, and allusions to the Messiah across the OT. They even see some direct predictions of the Messiah in the OT.[4] Direct

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Testament Studies 270 (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 54–70; John Day, "The Canaanite Inheritance of the Israelite Monarchy," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, Library of Hebrew Bible Old Testament Studies 270 (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 72–90; Gary Knoppers, "David's Relation to Moses: The Contexts, Content and Conditions of the Davidic Promises," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, Library of Hebrew Bible Old Testament Studies 270 (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 91–118; Katharine Dell, "The King in the Wisdom Literature," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John Day, Library of Hebrew Bible Old Testament Studies 270 (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 163–86; S. E. Gillingham, "The Messiah in the Psalms: A Question of Reception History and the Psalter," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, Library of Hebrew Bible Old Testament Studies 270 (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 209–37; H. G. M. Williamson, "The Messianic Texts in Isaiah 1-39," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John Day, Library of Hebrew Bible Old Testament Studies 270 (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 238–70; J. G. McConville, "King and Messiah in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John Day (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 271-95.

[2]Annti Laato, *A Star Is Rising: The Historical Development of the Old Testament Royal Ideology and the Rise of Jewish Messianic Expectations* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 1–2.

[3]Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2010), 27–29.

[4]Block, for example, sees two explicit messianic texts in Ezekiel. Daniel Block, "Bringing David Back: Ezekiel's Messianic Hope," in *The Lord's Anointed*, ed. Philip Satterthwaite, Richard Hess,

correlations are, however, typically viewed as occurring in exilic or post-exilic texts. In other cases, messianic predictions are simply considered to be products of post-exilic interpretation of chronologically earlier OT texts. In regards to the latter point, this position can appear to come close to *sensus plenior* or relecture fulfillment of the OT.[5]

Characteristics

More than any other evangelical position for understanding Christ in the OT, proponents of the developmental view hold an extremely wide spectrum of perspectives on a plethora of related issues. Because of this diversity, extensive examinations of many specific topics and persons who represent this position are not as helpful for evaluating the overall viewpoint as has been the case in other parts of this dissertation.

General Distinctions

Nonetheless, it is appropriate to identify important distinctions and differences among those holding the general developmental view. These distinctions and differences make an evaluation of the overall position possible.

Definitions. The prevalence and understanding of "messianism" and "messiah" in the OT are largely determined by how these terms are defined by those holding a developmental perspective. Some developmental scholars define messianism and messiah in terms of present rulers. Others define them in terms of a future, eschatological figure.[6] In a real sense, both of these time frames tend to argue against a

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and Gordon Wenham (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1995), 172–88.

[5]Two important works are illustrative of these positions. Although he is eclectic in his approach to messiah in the OT, Van Groningen often sees *sensus plenior* at work in the OT. See Gerard Van Groningen, *Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 347ff. Clements advocates relecture fulfillment. See R. E. Clements, "The Messianic Hope in the Old Testament," *JSOT* 43 (1989): 3–19.

[6]Even the word "eschatological" is often defined in different ways among scholars discussing messiah in the OT. As Boda points out, this word can be used in an "ahistorical, cosmic, cataclysmic" way. But it also can simply mean a time in the near future when a new era is ushered in. Mark Boda, "Figuring the Future: The Prophets and Messiah," in *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, ed. Stanley Porter

plethora of original, direct messianic texts in the OT. Those seeing OT messianism in relation to the former argue that many passages thought to be messianic by Christians were originally referencing rulers or figures contemporary with the writing of a particular OT book.[7] Those holding to the latter view argue that an eschatological messianic figure is not widely developed or presented until the post-exilic period, and particularly evolves during the Intertestamental time frame.[8] The result of both positions is that there is little overt messianism in large portions of the OT—particularly pre-exilic texts. Later messianic understanding and interpretation of many OT passages often appears to be something of a secondary theological development, not the intention of the original authors. As a result, most persons holding these views see a large amount of messianic trajectory, as opposed to explicit messianic prediction, across the OT. These trajectories develop across the OT storyline and ultimately culminate in the revelation of the Messiah in the NT.

Offices. Another significant point of difference among those holding a developmental view relates to whom the terms "messiah" and "messianism" specifically refer. Most agree that both words reference a leader, but a leader may be defined as a prophet, priest, king, or various types of government officials—or any combination of these offices.[9] By far, however, the majority of scholars tend to maintain that the

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(Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 43.

[7]Roberts, "The Old Testament's Contribution to Messianic Expectations," 56.

[8]Rex Mason, "Messiah in the Postexilic Old Testament Literature," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John Day, Library of Hebrew Bible Old Testament Studies 270 (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 338–64; Hanson, "Messiahs and Messianic Figures in Proto-Apocalypticism," 67.

[9]The role of Zerubbabel as governor, in particular, and his relationship to both the Davidic dynasty and messianic expectancy is a point of disagreement among scholars. See Wolter Rose, "Messianic Expectations," in *Yahwism After the Exile: Perspectives on Israelite Religion in the Persian Era*, ed. Bob Becking and Rainer Albertz (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2003), 168–85; Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition in Early Judaism*, 45–53; Boda, "Figuring the Future," 52–53.

concepts of a messiah and messianism center on a royal figure. Not all agree, however, on the level of importance or the amount of emphasis on various other offices. Block, for example, argues that only the office of king carries messianic significance in the OT.[10] However, his view is not the perspective of most. Nonetheless, Block represents the majority when he notes that the office of kingship, as well as OT messianism in general, must be viewed through the lens of the Davidic dynasty. This thesis is intricately connected with the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7), which is seen by some as the centerpiece of OT messianism.[11]

Others argue, however, that the role of prophet is also profoundly important for the idea of a messiah in both the OT and NT.[12] The role of the prophet in Deuteronomy 18 is especially significant in this regard.[13]

Somewhat more controversial is the role of the priesthood in relation to messiah and messianism in the OT. Few would argue that the priesthood did not impact messianic ideology for both Jews and Christians. Hebrews makes it clear that Jesus' life

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[10]For Block, the messiah "is no more or no less than a royal Davidic figure." Block, "My Servant David," 36. An excellent response to this thesis is given by J. Daniel Hays, "If He Looks Like a Prophet and Talks Like a Prophet, Then He Must Be," in *Israel's Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Richard Hess and M. Daniel Carroll (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2003), 57–69.

[11]See, for example, Laato, *A Star Is Rising*, 33ff.

[12]On the importance of the prophetic office on the concept of messiah in both the OT and in the theology of the NT, see Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, ed. S. J. Harrington, Sacra Pagina, vol. 5 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 73–74; Ben Witherington, III, *Jesus the Seer: The Progress of Prophecy* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999); Darrell Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987); M. Daniel Carroll, "New Lenses to Establish Messiah's Identity?" in *Israel's Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Richard Hess and M. Daniel Carroll (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2003), 73–76; Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus* (New York: Harper Collins, 1985); Robert L. Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet: A Sociohistorical Study* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006); David L. Tiede, *Prophecy and History in Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980); I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 125; Scot McKnight, *A New Vision for Israel: The Teachings of Jesus in National Context* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999).

[13]On the significance of the prophet like Moses and its value to both messianism and the ministry of Jesus, see Scot McKnight, "Jesus and Prophetic Actions," *BBR* 10, no. 2 (2000): 197–232.

and ministry are grounded in the priesthood, particularly the role of the high priest (e.g., Heb 2:17; 3:1; 4:14-5:10; 6:20; 7:11-8:2; 10:12). In addition, both Intertestamental literature and evidence from Qumran highlights the role of the priesthood in relation to messianic expectations within Judaism.[14] The controversy, however, relates to how messianic the priesthood was understood to be among the original authors and audiences of OT texts, particularly in the pre-exilic era. Hays succinctly observes, "One certainly does not get any sense of messianism reading through Leviticus." And though he argues that the priestly *roots* of messianism are located in the OT, he confesses that the relation of the priesthood to messiah may have developed much later in history. He concludes by observing that it is difficult to establish that a priestly-messiah role is the vision of most OT writers.[15]

Another difficulty for understanding the messianic function and intent of the priesthood is the blurry line between the role of the priest and the monarch across the ANE. Both roles are distinct offices in a strict sense. Yet the typical ANE monarch commonly functions as the chief cult leader. The importance of these dual monarchial roles is particularly evident in Assyrian and Babylonian records.[16] The Israelite monarch also appears to function in a similar manner in the OT (e.g., Ps 110). Association of priestly duties with the monarchy appears to point towards the place of the priesthood in the development of OT messianism. Some still maintain, nonetheless, that it cannot be argued that the priesthood was necessarily intended to point towards a messiah in the OT.

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[14]For the origins and relationship of the priesthood and messianic expectation, see Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 92–109.

[15]Hays, "If He Looks Like a Prophet and Talks Like a Prophet, Then He Must Be," 68.

[16]This is evident, for example, in the reigns of Assurnasirpal and Shalmaneser. See Daniel David Luckenbill, ed., *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926), 1:532, 616. Also, see A. Leo Oppenheim and Erica Reiner, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1977), 99–100. Lucas argues that the Babylonian kings' participation in the *Akitu* festival also has priestly/atoning overtones. Lucass, *The Concept of the Messiah in the Scriptures of Judaism and Christianity*, 52, 65.

Collins asserts this by noting that the messianic role of the Davidic dynasty had a basis in the OT, but the messianic value of the priesthood was not obvious from Scripture itself.[17] It seems likely, however, that based on both the role of Melchizedek as priest and king (Gen 14:18) and because of the prevalence of similar intermingled roles in the ANE, that such a blended relationship likely existed in the earliest stages of Israel's monarchy. Given the connection of the monarchy with messianism, it is likely that there is also a direct association between the priesthood and messianism. This theory also best explains the priestly function and portrait of the Messiah in the Intertestamental and NT literature.[18]

Development. A large part of the developmental understanding of the offices of prophet, priest, and king, and their relation to a messiah, focuses on how they enlarged in scope and significance over time. The contemporary roots of this position are in many ways directly tied back to Mowinckel's thesis in *He that Cometh*.[19] While Mowinckel primarily focuses on the role of the monarchy, most developmental scholars believe all three offices in OT history, over time, point towards the Messiah.[20] For evangelicals, however, the significance of this development must also be considered in broader categories.

Helmer Ringgren succinctly notes that consideration of messianic development in the OT must primarily take into account two things. The first view is directly in line

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[17]Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 108.

[18]Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 351; Hays, "If He Looks Like a Prophet and Talks Like a Prophet, Then He Must Be," 67.

[19]See chapter 1 above for an overview of Mowinckel's position. Although Mowinckel garners the most attention, two other important works that are influential on those holding a developmental position are Helmer Ringgren, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, Studies in Biblical Theology 18 (London: SCM, 1956); Aage Bentzen, *King and Messiah* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955).

[20]Block accurately notes that it is virtually axiomatic for Protestants to think of a messiah in relation to all three of these offices. Block, "My Servant David," 25.

with Mowinckel. He believes that a proper view of Israel's ANE context and its own historical reality is crucial for understanding messianism in the OT. The second consideration is a concept of sovereignty and divine design.[21] The former takes into account that Israel was not formed in a vacuum. It is almost certain that it was influenced by surrounding cultures, particularly in relation to their view of kingship. Israel's own historical situations also play a vital role in shaping their belief system. These historical factors play into the latter category by noting that God, in his sovereignty, used these other nearby cultures as well as Israel's own historical circumstances to slowly develop and reveal his plan for the Messiah to Israel. This view balances the traditional tension between the historical meaning of an OT text and Christian interpretations of the same texts. Ringgren puts it in this way:

> The Christian theological interpretation of the so-called messianic texts in the Old Testament is to a certain extent justified. Applying the view of the Epistle to the Hebrews we might regard Old Testament kingship as a pre-figuration or a shadow of that which was to come. But this does not mean that the original historical meaning of these passages is contested; it is not even called in question, but stands out clearer and sharper. At the same time these passages are placed in their proper context in the history of revelation. The divine kingship of ancient Israel is part of the preparations that were necessary for the realization of God's plan of salvation. And the fact that we have to do with influences from "pagan" cultures cannot diminish the religious value of these ideas. If we take our belief in God as the Master of history seriously, there is nothing offensive in the statement that this God could make use of non-Israelite ideas of a divine king, when he wanted to build up the messianic hope in his people, or in other words, that the belief in Christ, the Messiah, is rooted ultimately in the ancient Oriental ideas of the divine king.[22]

Methodology

For most holding a developmental view of the Messiah in the OT, historical-grammatical exegesis is the central methodological approach. Block concisely states that any potential messianic text must be "interpreted within its own historical and cultural

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[21]Ringgren, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, 24.

[22]Ibid.

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context and according to rules appropriate for that genre."[23] A large portion of this goal is aimed at being faithful to the revelation of the Scriptures, particularly to the historical context in which they were written. Block, again, is representative of many holding the developmental view in rejecting the methodology of those who attempt to find Christ in nearly every part of the OT. He states that many who seek to use Luke 24:13-35 as justification for finding Christ in every verse of the OT "exaggerate Luke's interpretation of the significance of Jesus' speech" by assuming that this is the theme of the entire Bible and that the Messiah must be on every page.[24] For Block, and others holding the developmental view, a lesser amount of direct messianic references in the OT do not indicate that the Messiah is less important. Rather, it seeks to allow God's revelation to come to His people at the rate and level he intended through the historical, linguistic, literary, and cultural means used to hand it down. Not only does this goal avoid reading into the OT what God did not intend or reveal, it also overcomes many of the apologetic concerns that can arise from unwarranted, fanciful Christian biblical interpretation.

In addition to tangible exegesis, as Ringgren points out, a developmental methodology must also consider how God's overall plan of salvation in Christ fits with the results of historical-grammatical exegesis of the OT. To do so, many proponents believe one must also take into account that these results must be viewed within a Christian framework of salvation history. The Christian canon should be understood as a storyline that moves from creation to re-creation, and accounts for sin and the reconciliation of sinners to God through Christ. But this step should only be considered after proper exegesis is done, and in light of what has been revealed about salvation up until this point in the canon. Only then can this evidence be considered in light of later revelation in the canon. But this later revelation must be grounded in historical

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[23]Block, "My Servant David," 19.

[24]Ibid.

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grammatical exegesis of the OT. Similar to Kaiser's analogy of antecedent Scripture, later revelation cannot render the original meaning of an OT passage void.[25] Rather, interpreters must understand how the original passage was fulfilled in the present day life of Israel. Then it can take into account a greater or ultimate fulfillment that takes place in the NT in Jesus. In this way, many OT passages are pre-figurations, types, examples, or partial fulfillments of the ultimate redemption that comes in Christ.

Analysis

The developmental approach for understanding messiah in the OT contains several strengths. Perhaps the greatest strength is the focus on allowing an OT text to speak in its historical setting. Block is right to note that OT Scripture functions as a guide for the lives of those who it is written in relation to the past, present, and future. But he correctly points out that among these three time periods, the overwhelming majority of texts are focused on the present.[26] This point serves to highlight that the OT must be appreciated for the contemporary significance it had for those to whom it was written. It is not a book solely dedicated to predicting the messianic future.

In many ways, this approach also tackles two other important problematic features that accompany some of the other positions examined in this dissertation. One of these issues pertains to wisdom literature. By allowing the OT to speak for itself within its own historical setting, the developmental position avoids many of the concerns brought about by trying to subsume wisdom literature within a unified, messianic, biblical theology.[27] Another issue is the need to identify one center of biblical theology. The developmental view avoids many of the matters brought about by reading the

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[25]Walter Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 18ff.

[26]Block, "My Servant David," 21.

[27]See, for example, the issues brought about by Goldsworthy's and Kaiser's approaches to wisdom literature on pp. 53-55 and pp. 132-33 of this dissertation.

biblical texts through the lens of such items as "promise," "mission," "kingdom," and others.[28]

Second, the developmental approach takes into account the ANE context that much of the OT was born. Just as it is irresponsible to ignore the cultural and historical context of Jesus and the NT, it is equally irresponsible to ignore what we know about the ANE context of the OT. This context, as Mowinckel and others pointed out long ago, sheds significant light on the role, expectations, and function of several messianic offices, particularly the king.

Third, the developmental view does an excellent job of accounting for apologetic interests. There is a growing concern among some about hermeneutical methodologies that seek to find Christ on every page of the OT.[29] Such approaches, without proper checks and balances, naturally become a hotbed of allegorical or imaginative interpretation that ignores traditional views of revelation. It also makes it difficult to ground the Christian faith tangibly in Scripture. This point often renders faith in Christ indefensible for believers and incomprehensible for unbelievers. The call for revelation to be grounded in historical grammatical exegesis helps alleviate such concerns.

The developmental view suffers from four important weaknesses. First, as pointed out earlier, those holding a developmental view are often not uniform or clear as to what they mean by key terms. How one defines words such as messiah, messianism, eschatology, and others is important for understanding messiah in the OT, and must be carefully delineated. Of particular importance in this regard is the term typology. Most

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[28]See especially the analysis of Kaiser, Wright, and Goldsworthy in this dissertation.

[29]For example, see the comments in Block, "My Servant David," 19; Benjamin Bury, "Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics," *Reviews in Religion and Theology* 15, no. 3 (2008): 303–5; Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 26; Paul House, "Christ-Centered Zeal: Some Concerns from an OT Scholar," *The Gospel Coalition Blog*, February 17, 2011, accessed August 13, 2015, http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2011/02/17/christ-center.

holding a developmental view acknowledge the presence and legitimacy of typology as a hermeneutical approach to the Messiah in the OT. Very few, however, are clear as to what the term means, how it functions, and how to identify its presence. This word is a category in the NT, and must be better defined by those holding a developmental perspective.

Second, while most holding a developmental view stress the value of ANE backgrounds and history for understanding the development of messiah in the OT, some are less interested in describing the place and role of NT history and its interpretive context. Of particular importance here is the hermeneutical context of Second Temple Judaism. It appears that many developmental scholars are so caught up in the world of the ANE that they tend to ignore Jewish hermeneutics. This approach causes tension, however, in relation to the NT interpretation of OT texts, and the developmental emphasis on OT meaning being grounded in historical grammatical exegesis.

Third, often those holding a developmental view tend to be unbalanced in their focus on the process of inspiration. The emphasis of most is on the human aspects involved with the inspiration process. While this element is crucial, there typically is less attention given to the equally important aspect of God's sovereign role in inspiration.

Fourth, little consideration is devoted to the proclamation of the church. Similar to other positions in this dissertation, the developmental view often leaves unanswered the question of how Christ should be proclaimed from the OT by contemporary believers.

Exegetical Example

Block furnishes one exegetical example of a developmental approach to understanding messiah in the OT. For him, Ezekiel 34:23-24 represents an "unequivocal" reference to the Messiah. To arrive at this conclusion, Block is heavily dependent on the historical context and language of this passage. In particular, Block is able to conclude that because of Israel's dire political situation, especially in light of the Davidic covenant,

Ezekiel's words serve to announce that "Yahweh will fulfill his irrevocable promise and his unfailing covenant to the house of David as the sole legitimate dynasty in Israel."[30] This announcement, however, is not merely about another succession of rulers in the Davidic dynasty. It is specifically a statement about the Messiah.

He demonstrates his thesis by pointing out the choice of language and contextual focus of the passage. The words used in the text indicate that the ruling figure is more than just a typical monarch. This conclusion is based primarily on three things within the passage. First, the language indicates that, in contrast to other places in the prophetic corpus, this ruler is a singular shepherd who solely embodies the throne. Second, this shepherd is David. The language of the passage does not indicate a resurrection of David himself, rather another solitary person who embodies the dynasty. Third, the shepherd will hold the title "servant of the LORD," further equating him solely with the eternal Davidic line and covenant (cf. 1 Kings 11:34). Block, therefore, concludes,

> The messianic promise of David the prince taking his place among the people of Israel is sealed with an expanded version of the divine self-introductory formula. The statement is deliberately inserted to reinforce confidence in the present prophetic pronouncement and Yahweh's irrevocable commitment to David. Accordingly, Yahweh's restoration of his flock and the appointment of David is not motivated primarily by pity for the bruised and battered sheep of Israel, but from his covenant with his people.[31]

This interpretation is strongly grounded in historical and grammatical evidence. It does not, however, consider how this prophecy plays out across the rest of the OT canon, the Intertestamental period, and the NT.

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[30]Daniel Block, "Bringing David Back: Ezekiel's Messianic Hope," in *The Lord's Anointed*, ed. Philip Satterthwaite, Richard Hess, and Gordon Wenham (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1995), 175.

[31]Ibid., 177.

Overall, the developmental view is helpful for understanding messiah in the OT. It is true that it is weak in the area of terminology, balance of inspiration, and focus on the proclamation of the church. It is also weak in its understanding of typology and its explanation of the NT use of the OT, particularly in relationship to the Second Temple hermeneutical context and practices. However, its emphasis on both ANE historical backgrounds and tangible exegesis and meaning of OT passages give this position great strength and credibility.

Bateman, Bock, Johnson

Taking both these strengths and critiques into account, Bateman, Bock, and Johnson hold a unique and promising view for understanding messiah in the OT. Perhaps more than anyone to date, they present a comprehensive developmental approach to understanding Christ in the OT. Their thesis is that understanding the Messiah in the OT should be viewed as a puzzle.[32] The overall, complete picture of that puzzle is always in God's purview. How the individual pieces of the puzzle fit into the overall picture, however, is not necessarily evident to the humans seeing these fragments and attempting to put them together into a unified sum. This ambiguity is especially true earlier in the process of revelation. But, as more pieces of the puzzle are considered and connected over time, they culminate in Jesus Christ being presented as the Messiah. This specific presentation provides an unambiguous and ultimate picture of God's grand salvific design.

It is important, however, to note that for Bateman, Bock, and Johnson, individual pieces of the puzzle are valuable in and of themselves. They represent real and

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[32]Bock originally suggested the idea of a puzzle as a model for viewing messianic revelation. Darrell L. Bock, "A Progressive Dispensational Hermeneutic," in *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism*, ed. Herbert Bateman IV (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1995), 85–101.

accurate historical contexts and events the way that a plain reading of an OT text portrays them. They also have a particular meaning for the immediate context to which they refer. But, at the same time, these individual pieces are often worded in such a way that they also have a function beyond the immediate contexts to which they refer. They implicitly contain messianic prediction, or at least provide patterns of redemption, that point towards God's ultimate salvation strategy in Jesus Christ. The original OT authors and audiences would not always understand these individual pieces of the puzzle as predictive of the Messiah. But, over time, the overall picture became clearer and more comprehensible to God's people, particularly when Jesus is presented as the Messiah in the NT.[33]

Presuppositions. One important presupposition for Bateman, Bock, and Johnson is that one must start the process of understanding messiah in the OT by asking the "right questions." In their view, four questions are specifically important for evangelicals:

> How did the First Testament portray the promise of a messiah? Was the portrait of the messiah in the individual texts as explicit and clear to the original readers as it became later in the Psalms and the prophets or as a part of Jesus' work? Or was the full messianic potential of many passages more implicit, especially in the earliest passages, while the full legitimate Messianic meaning of these passages only became more explicit as more elements of this promise was revealed in later passages and subsequent Jewish history, whether from the First Testament or as a result of Jesus' own revelatory work? Does the First Testament reveal Christological clarity at the moment each text was introduced?[34]

The appropriate way to answer these questions involves a second crucial presupposition. Bateman, Bock, and Johnson hold that there must be balance in views of the inspiration of Scripture. But they argue that this is not the case for many evangelicals. Their propensity is to stress either the divine or human side of revelation. This imbalance

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[33]Herbert Bateman IV, Darrell Bock, and Gordon Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2012), 21–23.

[34]Ibid., 21.

naturally leads to a misunderstanding of messiah in the OT. For those emphatic on the divine side of revelation, the tendency is to find Christ in the OT in ways that are often not grounded within the context of the OT.[35] On the other hand, those emphasizing the human side of inspiration are bound almost exclusively to what the original OT author and audience would be able to ascertain within OT texts. The result is that there is little room for God's grand design and the progressive revelation of that plan over time.

Bateman, Bock, and Johnson believe that most evangelicals tend to focus on the divine side of inspiration and fail to grapple with the "human journey." The human aspect of inspiration means taking into account how an original author and audience would understand an OT text within their own immediate historical, literary, and theological context. Such meaning is primarily located in the words of the OT, particularly through what can be discovered by historical-grammatical exegesis. These factors naturally require that the starting point of the human journey of inspiration is the OT text itself. And when the OT text is considered in this light, the answers to the four questions above become clearer. Within the confines of the OT itself, the concept of the Messiah as presented in the NT is most often not apparent, and many of the passages listed as messianic in the NT were not likely understood in the same way by the original authors and audience of the OT.[36]

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[35]"Many people today unfortunately fail to grapple with the human journey of discovery about 'Messiah.' Many preachers who preach sermons about Jesus as the Messiah often over emphasize their theological system with limited or even no consideration of any progress of revelation in human history. Others may read the text historically, often looking exclusively to the long-term reality. But in their quest for a singular historical-contextual meaning throughout all of Scripture, they argue that what a First Testament human author said about Jesus the Messiah equals that which is stated about Jesus the Messiah in the Second Testament. They tend to suggest that Jesus and the apostles assert that the Hebrew Scriptures testify directly and (or more importantly) exclusively about him . . . . Thus they stress the work of the divine author and thereby over emphasize an unambiguous continuity between the Testaments. The idea is that most or all of these texts need to be direct prophecies to work for Jesus being the messianic fulfillment in the way the Second Testament describes. Thus the argument is this: Jesus the Messiah is explicitly present very early on in a model that more often than not argues for direct prophecy in many specific First Testament texts, often exclusively directed at Jesus. There is but one single, unambiguous meaning concerning Messiah and that all authors, human and divine, are unified as to who that referent is. Clearly, they argue, he is Jesus." Bateman, Bock, and Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 24–25.

[36]Ibid., 24–26.

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With the OT itself not clear as to messianic expectation, Bateman, Bock, and Johnson present an important third presupposition regarding the human journey of messianic revelation. They contend that too many evangelicals are prone to overlook the value of the Intertestamental writings as well as the hermeneutical context of Christ and the early church for understanding messiah in both Testaments. Though the Intertestamental writings are not part of God's inspired works, they provide key information as to how Jews began to piece together messianic meaning based on the promises of the OT. This point is particularly true in relation to promises involving kingship. In light of the lack of a Davidic monarch on the throne during this time period, much focus is given to the status of the monarchy and God's promises regarding his kingdom.[37]

In fact, generally speaking, Bateman, Bock, and Johnson believe the sweep of OT history and the foundations of a biblical theology can roughly be summarized in five broad progressions focused on the monarchy: The first move is the promise of kings to Abraham in Genesis and the movement of that promise towards completion in the Pentateuch and the early prophets. The second movement picks up in 2 Samuel 7 with the promise to the Davidic line. This line, however, is left in peril in the third movement with the Exile and the loss of the monarchy. But in a fourth movement, the prophets give hope for the restoration of the Davidic dynasty. Daniel especially furthers this particular hope in a fifth movement with the introduction of "the Son of Man." This figure possesses both divine and human traits, within a particular focus on the restoration of God's kingdom.[38]

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[37]Bateman, Bock, and Johnson center their study of messiah in the OT on kingship. They note, "We focus on kingship because the anointed deliverer is tied to a kingdom and the rule of a king. To be sure, other topics, such as salvation and the eschaton also can and do have messianic meaning. However, the bulk of the key features about Messiah surface in the claims tied to kingship and kingdom . . . . What we find interesting is this: when we get to the time of Jesus and the early Christians, these other themes are often folded into the backdrop of kingship and Messiah, so not much is lost in our keeping this kingship as our primary focus." Bateman, Bock, and Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 31–32.

[38]Ibid., 22–33.

With the lack of further details after the close of the OT canon, a significant gap remained before the writing of the NT. It was during this time span that various individuals and communities pondered the promises of God. Part of this reflection involved attempts at weaving together the various promises and past acts of deliverance in OT Scripture in light of their specific contextual dilemma. Over time, though there was not complete consensus across Judaism, a more focused picture of God's promises began to emerge.

By the time of Jesus' birth, Bateman, Bock, and Johnson believe enough pieces of the messianic puzzle were in place to allow Christ and the early church to make a "grand fusion" of what God said in Scripture.[39] Then later, in light of the life, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus, the early church was given an even "wider context" by which to understand the OT. The church was left with the task of making sense of what God said in the OT in light of Christ. As a result, they utilized a combination of *peshat*, *midrash*, typology, and various other interpretive techniques acceptable within their hermeneutical context to do so. The difference in their perspective in comparison with many who hold a Second Temple approach to understanding messiah in the OT, however, is that Bateman, Bock, and Johnson do not consider these hermeneutical approaches to constitute atomistic exegesis of the OT.[40] Rather, they believe they are contextually appropriate. The presentation of Christ as the Messiah justifies the NT interpretation of the OT. This is primarily because he is viewed as the fulfillment of the broad OT context.[41]

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[39]Bateman, Bock, and Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 23.

[40]Bock, "Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents," 105–51.

[41]"They are not dealing with exegesis of a specific book in its initial context alone, but rather performing exegesis across a collection of books, seeing God's Word as still active, alive and speaking to the new historical setting. Furthermore, they are dealing with more than an individual verse. Instead they are dealing with theological concepts that appear throughout Hebrew Scriptures and are reflected upon and written about during the latter part of the second temple period." Bateman, Bock, and Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 29.

Methodology. To ensure a proper balance of both sides of inspiration, Bateman, Bock, and Johnson suggest a three-fold hermeneutical approach for understanding messiah in the OT. They label the first stage of their methodology as "contextual-canonical." This term represents two distinct readings of OT texts. The contextual reading takes into account " . . . what the original human author meant and understood in his original historical setting." This phase primarily involves historical-grammatical exegesis. The intended goal of this step is that "we read the passage as an ancient Hebrew in light of his historical background, antecedent theology, and literary context."[42]

Within this step it is essential to note the purpose and function of specific OT language. It is here that the term "messiah" in the OT is given significant clarity. For Bateman, Bock, and Johnson, in a contextual reading, both this word and related concepts can only denote what it would have meant to the original author and audience of an OT text. But, it is also crucial to observe that the language of many specific terms, promises, and action patterns within the OT are also implicitly open for further development and deeper meaning beyond their initial significance. In fact, the roots of how "messiah" was understood in the OT after Jesus was revealed as the Messiah is grounded in a wide range of flexible language located within various developing promises, prophecies, and patterns across the OT.

An important step in understanding this further development occurs during the canonical reading of an OT text. A canonical reading primarily involves reflection on the progression and the narrowing focus of divine revelation. A significant portion of this increasing clarification centers on action patterns across the OT, particularly those related to promises of kingship and deliverance. In a canonical reading, it becomes apparent that most OT promises and acts of deliverance can be viewed as applications of the initial

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[42]Bateman, Bock, and Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 27.

promises related to the monarchy made in Genesis 17:1-8 and later specified in 2 Samuel 7. When viewed in this light, patterns and themes begin to emerge across the OT, which then begin to disclose further revelation. Bateman, Bock, and Johnson note, "although any passage has a referential meaning in its original context, many biblical themes are not static but dynamic in the gradual historical unfolding of Scripture." More specifically, "in the progress of biblical revelation, God develops theological themes across time and in history." Thus a canonical reading, in essence, sees OT passages in a widening salvific context as the storyline of Scripture progresses.[43]

But here, Bateman, Bock, and Johnson are careful to delineate contemporary understandings of "canonical," such as that of Sailhamer, with their specific view. Whereas Sailhamer "merges contextual and canonical into a single reading and thereby argues for a fully developed messianic eschatology," they distinguish original meaning with what they refer to as "later canonical significance."[44] This term recognizes that the OT has a definitive implication for the audience it was originally addressing within their specific context. At the same time, it is also conscious of how an OT text or theme develops across the framework of the canon, and what this further development reveals about God's unfolding fulfillment of initial promises to the patriarchs.

During the canonical stage of the hermeneutical process, a contemporary person attempts to read the biblical texts as though he were a Jew living in the early post-exilic period. This step primarily involves reading the earlier parts of the OT in light of

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[43]Bateman, Bock, and Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 27. "Initial statements made by human authors allow the principle of God's design and activity to be appealed to again at a later historical moment. Patterns of application of God's promise become clearer as salvation history unfolds in the sacred texts and as the patterns earlier texts described reappear" (ibid.).

[44]Ibid. See also John Sailhamer, "Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:15," *WTJ* 63 (2001): 87–96. Note the response from McCartney and Enns: Dan McCartney and Peter Enns, "Matthew and Hosea: A Response to John Sailhamer," *WTJ* 63 (2001): 97–105.

the Psalms and the Prophets by attempting to "draw on the understanding of themes, and messianic themes, as they stood at the time of a later Jewish reading in Israel's history."[45]

The second step in Bateman, Bock, and Johnson's hermeneutical approach for understanding messiah in the OT takes into account how the interpretation of OT texts evolved within Judaism beyond the time frame of the writings of the OT. This step specifically focuses on Intertestamental literature and its comprehension and portrayals of OT passages and concepts. It is during this time period that Jews attempted to piece together the promises and actions of God in the OT in light of four major historical events: the collapse of the monarchy at the start of the Exilic period, the rebuilding of the temple (515 BC), the desecration of the temple and its reopening (167-164 BC), and the rise and fall of the Hasmonean dynasty (143-67 BC).[46]

The goal of this step in the hermeneutical procedure is to observe the promises and deliverance patterns of the OT through the thought process of Jews living during the latter part of the post-exilic timeframe. Here, there is a specific focus on both why and how these promises and patterns were pieced together into various eschatological messianic portraits. Despite a variety of significant differences across the spectrum of Judaism concerning what an eschatological messiah meant and would entail, it is once again crucial to be open to how the language of OT promises and acts of deliverance were flexible enough to allow for the reflection and contextualization of these texts in various post-exilic Jewish communities.[47]

The third step in understanding messiah in the OT builds on the contemplation of "messianic options" by those in the Intertestamental period. It examines how an OT text plays out in the NT. The NT provides the ultimate portrayal of everything God

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[45]Bateman, Bock, and Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 28.

[46]Ibid.

[47]Ibid., 28; 33–34.

directly prophesied in the OT, as well as what he alluded to and patterned in his dealings with Israel. This final step, therefore, enables one to clearly see both the OT trajectories towards the Messiah, as well as how these individual parts of the OT fit into the whole of God's salvific design plan. Bateman, Bock, and Johnson refer to this as a "Christological approach" to the OT. Such methodology combines OT "scriptural hope together with the light of the ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus the Messiah."[48]

An important part of this endeavor is examining how the authors of the NT interpreted the OT. Sometimes, the OT is taken in a literal fashion. Other times, the messianic significance of an OT passage is revealed through pneumatic revelation.[49] Further, because of the combination of their hermeneutical context and the conviction that Jesus is the fulfillment of OT promise, the authors of the NT utilized Second Temple exegetical methodology in their effort to properly comprehend the meaning of the OT. To primarily focus on their specific hermeneutical methodology, however, is to miss the nucleus of the early church. The early church was centrally focused on identifying and understanding its roots in OT Scripture and the claim that this Scripture prophesied about Jesus, the Messiah. It was not primarily concerned with what specific hermeneutical tactics to use.

For contemporary evangelicals, the most crucial question related to the apostolic interpretation of the OT is not whether the early church used these interpretive techniques. Rather, it is how did these methods work hermeneutically at such a late stage in the development and understanding of Jewish Scripture, and did they constitute a legitimate interpretation of the OT? Bock's response is lengthy but vital for both

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[48]Bateman, Bock, and Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 28.

[49]"In some cases passages are reused in ways that makes their full force clear. In many cases the messianic understanding is assumed as present by revelation and vindicated by God so that the portrait is developed with a fullness and clarity that it had lacked but now can be seen to have been there all along." Ibid., 28–29.

contemporary apologetic purposes and understanding the early church's interpretation of the OT:

> Their most fundamental move was to bring together in a more unified manner, themes that the entire Hebrew Scripture had raised in a more variegated way. Such readings used some of the configurations that the period of expectations had also contemplated. Other moves were fresh, as God's actions in Jesus were seen as revelatory of his promised Word read as a unified whole. The key point here is that the early church was not merely exegeting texts as individual, isolated lines of passages within individual books, but appealing to how these pieces fit into the larger world of the promises as a whole. The whole sum of related parts was most important. This meant that the early Jewish texts of promise moved in certain directions later sacred texts were seen to pick up, develop, and explain. It was all God's single and singular story of promise. Some of these directions had already surfaced in expectations in specific segments that second temple Judaism has explored. Others were new. Yet all of it was rooted in the claim that what God had revealed, he had shown both in word and act, in Scripture and through Jesus. These two revelations reflected and refracted onto each other making each clearer, by revealing the promises and the patterns of divine activity and fulfillment.[50]

Therefore, because of the revelation of Jesus as the Messiah, the writers of the NT, guided by the Holy Spirit, where then able to use a variety of contemporary hermeneutical methods in a legitimate fashion to further clarify and identify what was evident from the OT.

Of special importance in regard to the NT interpretation of the OT is the meaning and usage of typology. For Bateman, Bock, and Johnson, typology is predictive pattern fulfillment.[51] "This kind of prophetic fulfillment argues that the past has a pattern of activity that events tied to Jesus replicates." Moreover, "God designs the pattern of the near event and the realization in Christ. One mirrors or patterns the other event. The prophetic element is seen in the mirror of the divine design."[52] This method, more than most, fueled the early church's Christological reading of the OT.

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[50]Bateman, Bock, and Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 355–56.

[51]Bock gives detailed treatments of this topic in reference to the Gospel of Luke. See Darrell Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987).

[52]Bateman, Bock, and Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 345. Bock distinguishes three types of typology in the NT. The first is "simple typology" or "authoritative illustration." This form of typology centers on exhortation as opposed to prophecy. The second category is "typological-PROPHETIC fulfillment." Here, there is a passage that is not fulfilled, or is only partially fulfilled, to the degree that it is

But, it must be recognized overall that whatever hermeneutical form that a Christological reading of the OT took in the NT, whether typological, *peshat*, *pesher*, or *midrash*, each is contextually grounded in the original text and meaning of the OT. Bock specifically explains that an OT text has a single meaning but multiple contexts and referents that play out in a variety of ways across history. But any further development or application of an OT text is always grounded in its initial meaning:

> There is a sense (a basic principle or subject matter) in which meaning is stable. There is a fundamental meaning to the text. Such meaning can be clearly stated. What can shift is that to which the meaning applies. Linguistically this shift of meaning is associated with what is called the referent, since a new context often means fresh referents. However, in that later application of meaning, the original meaning is still at work and it is still developing. What is more, once the additional meaning becomes clear, that later meaning can refract in a way on the earlier text to give it fresh understanding. All of this development is the function of multiple contexts being at work with the meaning, a factor that impacts the theological force and application of the textual meaning, giving that meaning additional depth . . . as we move through the OT era and enter the era of realization in Christ, God commits himself to what he will do in promises that are stable for those whom they were originally given. However, such stability does not mean that he cannot come on the scene later and expand the scope of his commitments and blessings.[53]

Such a view can be labeled as *sensus plenior*. But, as Kaiser points out, this is not the connotation of *sensus plenior* some advocate. Many believe that *sensus plenior* implies that a different, divine meaning overrides the original meaning of an OT passage in its historical context.[54] In the case of Bateman, Bock, and Johnson's use of the term, however, there is a direct and complementary working relationship between what an OT author consciously stated and understood and any divine meaning that is later clarified in

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obvious that full completion will have to take place in the future. Here the future-prophetic aspect is clear. An example of such usage would be the Servant Songs of Isaiah (42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12). The third category is "TYPOLOGICAL-prophetic" fulfillment. This category does not hint in the contextual meaning of the passage that something should be anticipated. Only the fulfillment of the pattern brings the realization that the past event was prophetic. Block list Hos 11:1 and Matt 2:15 as an example of such usage. Bock, "Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents," 119–21.

[53]Bock, "Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents," 146–47.

[54]Walter Kaiser, "Response to Bock," in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 154.

the NT.[55] This perspective leads them to use "both/and" language in reference to many OT passages. This language implies that the wording of many OT texts refers to both the contemporary context or near future, as well as the ultimate fulfillment of the same passage in Jesus.[56] In this light they conclude that not all OT prophecy exclusively points to Jesus, "just ultimately."[57]

One of the major questions stemming from their methodology is whether the contemporary church should mimic the authors of the NT in their hermeneutical approach to understanding messiah in the OT? Bock, for one, argues that the answer is yes. In fact, he states that believers already instinctively engage in such practices whether they are conscious of it or not. He contends that by believing in Christ, an individual automatically brings a theological framework to the OT that is centered on the fact that Jesus is the Messiah and that the OT predicts his advent. This framework then, by default, causes believers to seek and find Christ in the OT in similar fashion to the early church. Accordingly, since it is impossible otherwise, and since the early church leaves modern believers patterns to follow in this endeavor, it is appropriate for the contemporary church to mimic the authors of the NT in their interpretation of the OT.

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[55]One example is found in Ps 2: "The Second Testament proclaims this fuller sense (*sensus plenior*) and ultimate messianic reference (vis-à-vis *references plenior*) was divinely designed within the text's wording. Simply because the ancient Israelites did not grasp this full messianic potential does not mean it was not there all along. It was a messianic mystery, awaiting the full realization of the language and the incarnation of Jesus, especially his resurrection and ascension, for this heightened sense to be fully recognized for the first time." Bateman, Bock, and Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 80. Bock observes that those he labels as "conservatives" and "liberals" both fail to adequately explain the divine inspiration of Scripture by erring on the side of either narrowing too sharply on contextual exegesis or going the opposite direction with claims of atomistic exegesis. Both, in different ways, only focus on the human side of inspiration. He calls for a holistic approach that accounts for both divine and human authorship. Bock, "Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents," 149–51.

[56]Examples of the way "both/and" language works in interpretation are their perspective on the term "seed" across Genesis, the prophecy of Gen 49:8-12, and Num 24:14-19. See Bateman, Bock, and Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 39–40, 54.

[57]Ibid., 26.

Bock gives two caveats for any conscious endeavor to approach the OT in this manner. The first is that attempts at fresh, Christological readings of the OT are only legitimate "as long as this is done within the framework of the theological grid that Scripture give us."[58] The second is that associations with Christ and OT passages cannot be arbitrary or lack tangible evidence presented in an OT text. Rather, they must be grounded in the original meaning of the OT, verifiable, and "well thought through."[59]

Analysis. Bateman, Bock, and Johnson present a thesis that advances the traditional developmental position by addressing some of the main issues associated with this perspective. For instance, one of the strengths of their position is that they carefully define the terms "messiah," "typology," and "canonical." This clarification makes their position on understanding Christ in the OT more unambiguous than many others holding a developmental view.

A second strength of their position is that they take into account thematic and theological development across the OT canon, as well as during the Intertestamental and later Second Temple eras. Where many holding a developmental position are often prone to focus on ANE and historical backgrounds to the detriment of these other matters, Bateman, Bock, and Johnson bring a measure of balance to all these foci.

A third strength is that Bateman, Bock, and Johnson also present a more blended approach to inspiration than many. Their position is focused on identifying and allowing the intention of the human authors of the OT to be central to any Christological interpretation of these texts. At the same time, they are also conscious of the divine side of inspiration. This point is primarily seen by recognizing OT language, promises, and actions that are in line with the human author's intended meaning, but are also implicitly

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[58]Bock, "Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents," 147.

[59]Ibid., 148.

open to further divine development as salvation history progresses across the canon, Intertestamental period, and in the NT.

Because of such balance, Bateman, Bock, and Johnson conclude that during the apostolic period there was a medley of hermeneutical approaches to understanding Christ in the OT that fit under a broad, contextual framework. Therefore, the Christological function of any OT text must be considered on an individual basis, in light of evidence located in both the OT and NT passages, not in view of any preconceived assumption. All Christological readings of the OT, however, are compatible, at some level, with the original intention of the human authors. This conclusion aligns neatly with what Douglas Moo exegetically demonstrates in his study of the NT use of the OT.[60] This confirmation reinforces their position.

A fourth strength of Bateman, Bock, and Johnson's theory is that they give attention to the proclamation of the church. Where this factor is minimized in the thinking of some holding a developmental position, they realize the importance for understanding Christ in the OT in the life of the contemporary church. This significance is primarily seen in their addressing whether or not contemporary believers should mimic the hermeneutical approaches of the Apostles and the early church to the OT. It is also apparent in various comments and emphases in their work.[61]

While much of Bateman, Bock, and Johnson's approach to understanding Christ in the OT is strong, one of its weaker points is the call to read biblical texts "like an ancient Jew" within various contextual time frames. While the spirit of this request is admirable, whether it is possible to accomplish this task is questionable. One important issue is that their thesis gives little attention to text-critical considerations. Sailhamer is

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[60]Douglas Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," in *Hermeneutics, Authority, Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 209–11.

[61]See especially Bateman, Bock, and Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 24–25.

right, however, to point out that such factors are vital for understanding, identifying, and interpreting OT texts within various historical periods.[62] This thrust is crucial for Bateman, Bock, and Johnson's ability to reconstruct, read, and interpret the OT at different stages of its development.

This point is especially true during a canonical reading, where they propose interpreting earlier Hebrew texts in light of the Psalms and the Prophets. Rentorff accurately points to the difficulty, and likely impossibility, of accurately dating, identifying the original *sitz im leben*, and tracing the canonical redactions of various psalms and prophetic works. Without certainty about these factors, it is nearly impossible to identify the availability, form, and function of many of these texts during a specific time period.[63] These dynamics often render a large portion of their canonical approach impractical.

It must also be questioned whether it is possible to put Christian influence and bias aside to read the OT like an ancient Jew at any point during the hermeneutical process. Bock essentially argues that it is not possible for contemporary believers during the final stage of the hermeneutical process.[64] But, what he seems to miss is that this predisposition permeates the entire hermeneutical process, not just the final stage. This point is precisely what those who highlight the inherent presence and dangers of feedback loops claim must be admitted and taken seriously when considering messiah in the OT.[65]

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[62]John Sailhamer, *How We Got the Bible* (Grand Rapids,: Zondervan, 1998), 13ff.; idem, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*: A Canonical Approach (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 86–114, 199–224.

[63]Rolph Rendtorff, *The Canonical Hebrew Bible*: A Theology of the Old Testament (Leiden: Deo Publishing, 2005), 738–39.

[64]Bock, "Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents," 147–150. Reimer furthermore challenges the value of Bock's theory that the church should mimic apostolic hermeneutical approaches to Christ in the OT. "The New Testament writers may have operated under the assumption that the Scriptures looked forward to Jesus, applied the Scripture to him, and thus found information about him in the Scriptures, but such assumptions do not control the modern reading of those Scriptures." Reimer, "Old Testament Christology," 393.

[65]Barton, "The Messiah in Old Testament Theology," 371. Goldingay comes to a similar

A final weakness is Bateman, Bock, and Johnson's singular focus on promise through kingship as the center of OT messianism. They admit that there are other relevant messianic themes in the OT. But, for them, the monarchy essentially encompasses all others. Such an approach, however, is essentially what Hasel identifies as a "cross-section" approach to OT theology and the relationship between the OT and the NT. He rightly argues that no one single concept is broad enough to account for the variety found in OT thought, history, and belief.[66] The choice to focus solely on promise through kingship can artificially narrow and drive the results of what they discover about messiah in the OT.

Conclusion

The developmental view, particularly in light of the advances Bateman, Bock, and Johnson put forth, presents a reasonably solid perspective on understanding messiah in the OT. In particular, its focus on the historical and textual meaning of the OT gives this position great credibility. However, even with the advances of Bateman, Bock, and Johnson, room remains for adjustment and clarity.

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conclusion. John Goldingay, *Theological Diversity and the Authority of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1987), 186–87.

[66]Gerhard Hasel, *Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 47–51. Also, see Goldingay, *Theological Diversity and the Authority of the Old Testament*, 1–5; Vern Poythress, "Kinds of Biblical Theology," *WTJ* 70 (2008): 129–42.

CHAPTER 7

PROPOSAL

With the plethora of evangelical hermeneutical approaches for understanding messiah in the OT, it is appropriate to consider the value of their sum. The goal of this chapter is to take into account the strengths and weaknesses of the common evangelical positions examined in this dissertation, and based on these items, to propose a brief hermeneutical model.

In the course of this study, several important points have surfaced. The first point is the need to clarify key terms. Many of the proposals examined in this dissertation are clouded by unclear and diverse uses of common words whose meanings are often taken for granted by those using them. Particularly important in this regard are the words "messiah," "eschatological," "typology," "canon," "midrash," "pesher," "prophecy," "allusion," and "intertextuality." The way these terms are defined often dictates and explains how an individual understands messiah in the OT. In fact, it is sometimes the case that when definitions are carefully delineated, persons who seem to have contrasting views are not addressing the same issues.[1]

Second, one's specific view of inspiration also helps determine how messianic the OT is. Those who lean towards emphasizing the divine side of inspiration tend to

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[1] One example of this phenomenon can be illustrated by how the term "messiah" is defined. For some, such as those holding a developmental view of messiah in the OT, this word most often refers to a contemporary figure at or near the original context of the author. Later, in OT and post-OT history, the term takes on various other connotations. For others such as Kaiser, the term must mean the same thing in both OT and NT. This point serves to illustrate that the terms are not used in the same way and are, at times, not even addressing the same issues. Boda points to similar issues with the word "eschatological." Mark Boda, "Figuring the Future: The Prophets and Messiah," in *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, ed. Stanley Porter (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 43.

identify more frequent prediction of the Messiah in the OT. This point is often true of those holding a Christocentric position, for example. But, those who lean more heavily towards emphasizing the human side of inspiration, such as persons holding a developmental view, tend to identify less indication of the messiah in the OT.[2]

Third, the perceived value and role of history determines much about messiah in the OT. Those who see the OT primarily as a part of a tightly connected biblical metanarrative or biblical theology tend to downplay the importance of OT history—except how it relates to Jesus Christ. Such persons have a propensity to find direct links and prediction of the Messiah often across the OT. Among those who emphasize the importance of OT history, however, there is less direct indication of messiah—at least in the NT sense of the term. Their view is that OT history reveals a steady move towards the Messiah. This progression is brought about through contemporary historical situations of the people of God to whom the OT works are written. These works have historical value in and of themselves but do not necessarily contain large amounts of explicit predictions about the Messiah.

Fourth, the importance and role of Intertestamental and Second Temple hermeneutical methodology is also a major determining factor for understanding messiah in the OT. In previous chapters, it was pointed out that some positions are prone to overlook this evidence or downplay its importance (e.g., Christocentric, Epigenetical views). Others, however, put much stock into the period as an important factor in the development of messianism and as a key for understanding the NT use of the OT (e.g., Second Temple). One's perspective on the value of these items guides much of what one

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[2]The epigenetical perspective is interesting in this regard. Kaiser, for example, gives great attention to the human side of inspiration. Yet, he also finds a fair amount of explicit evidence of the Messiah in the OT. However, he often has to read more into OT texts than is there in order to find the Messiah in the OT. Regardless, compared with the Christocentric position, Kaiser finds less indication of the Messiah in the OT. See pp. 119ff.

believes about messiah in the OT, particularly as it pertains to the NT authors' interpretation of the OT.

Fifth, the need for and value of tangible OT textual evidence is a key consideration for understanding messiah in the OT. This category, perhaps more than any other, highlights apologetic issues. Nearly all evangelicals hold that the idea of the Messiah must be grounded in OT passages. The major issue, however, centers on how much understanding of messiah must be grounded in explicit evidence ascertained by historical-grammatical exegesis of an OT text, and subsequently how much OT interpretation should be aided by the NT revelation that Jesus is the Messiah. Within Goldsworthy's Christocentric approach, for example, passages such as Luke 24:27 and Ephesians 1:9-10 give credence that virtually every verse in the OT points to Christ. As a result, the requirement of explicit, tangible evidence is seen as a humanistic prerequisite that skews the proper interpretation of many OT texts. In contrast, those such as Block, who hold a developmental view, contend that God speaks clearly through the words of Scripture. Therefore, it is an abuse of his word to make an OT text say something that cannot be determined from that passage itself.

Sixth, the identification of the appropriate launching pad for understanding messiah in the OT drives much about how one understands this topic. For those such as the Christocentric approach, the NT represents the definitive starting point for interpretation of the OT. For others holding the developmental, canonical, and epigenetical views, the NT must be the fulfillment and outgrowth of what is said in the OT, not vice versa. These differences naturally result in diverse perceptions about messiah in the OT.

Seventh, consideration of the contemporary church is an important issue related to understanding messiah in the OT. For those who place high value on the normative role of the OT in the life of the contemporary church, the tendency to find explicit indication of the Messiah in the OT goes up. On the other hand, those who

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primarily approach OT Scripture in the contemporary church as descriptive, often trend in the opposite direction.[3] A related issue, as pointed out in chapter 3, is if or how the contemporary church should interpret the OT today in light of Second Temple hermeneutical practices.[4]

Each of the previous seven categories justify more space than can be devoted to them in this dissertation. However, it cannot be overemphasized that the selection of stances on these key hermeneutical issues determines and drives how one understands messiah in the OT.[5] Because of this importance, table 2 below helps navigate the broad findings of this dissertation up until this point.

General Finding

Up until this point, it has been the general finding of this dissertation that the developmental view has more strengths than other evangelical positions for understanding messiah in the OT. There are three main reasons for this conclusion. First,

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[3]Sailhamer's canonical view is somewhat of an exception. As pointed out in chap. 5, his theory focuses heavily on descriptive issues and gives little thought to the contemporary church. At the same time, he sees the OT as highly messianic. See pages 148ff. above, and John Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995). As Block points out, however, Sailhamer does not go as far as those who look for the Messiah on every page of the HB. So, in some sense, he does find less evidence of messiah in the OT. Daniel Block, "My Servant David," in *Israel's Messiah in the Bible and thee Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Richard Hess and M. Daniel Carroll (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 19.

[4]See the opposing views of Longenecker and Beale. Richard Longenecker, "Negative Answer to the Question 'Who Is the Prophet Talking About?,'" in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 375–86; G. K. Beale, "Positive Answer to the Question Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 387–404.

[5]This finding is in line with McConville's observation that messianism in the OT is primarily hermeneutical. McConville concludes that there are three broad categories that relate to how one understands messiah in the OT. The first is perspectives on Scripture, the second is the relationship of the OT to the NT, and the third is the identity and interpretation of specific texts. This dissertation has not only confirmed McConville's statements, but also narrows and identifies specific hermeneutical considerations prevalent among evangelicals. It also specifies more detailed findings that are in line with his broad categories. J. G. McConville, "Messianic Interpretation in Modern Context," in *The Lord's Anointed*, ed. Philip Satterthwaite, Richard Hess, and Gordon Wenham (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1995), 1–17.

the developmental perspective starts with the OT. In contrast with the Christocentric view, as both Kaiser and Sailhamer point out, this point is apologetically necessary since the NT claims to be the fulfillment of what was prophesized in the OT (e.g., Matt 2:17-18; 4:14-16; Luke 3:4-6; 1 Cor 15:3-8).[6]

Table 2. General tendencies of evangelical approaches to messiah in OT

Category	Clarity of Key Terms	Emphasis on Inspiration	Importance of OT History	Importance of Second Temple Data	Importance of Tangible OT Textual Evidence and Apologetics	Start-ing Point
Christocent-ric	Unclear on: typology, messiah, messianism	Divine	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal	NT
Second Temple	Unclear on: typology, allusions, intertextuality	Human	Minimal	Strong	Moderate	NT
Epigenetical	Unclear on: typology	Human	Moderate	Minimal	Strong	OT
Canonical	Unclear on: typology, intertextuality	Human	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	OT
Develop-mental	Unclear on: messiah, typology, eschatological and canon	Human	Strong	Moderate	Strong	OT

Second, the developmental view, in comparison with the epigenetical, Christocentric, and canonical views, also gives greater focus on tangible evidence from OT texts. In essence, it lets the OT speak for itself more than other views. By doing this, it shows a respect for the fact that God's word is divinely inspired, but at the same time,

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[6]Walter Kaiser, "The Lord's Anointed," *JETS* 42, no. 1 (1999): 99–102; John Sailhamer, "The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible," *JETS* 44, no. 1 (2001): 5–23.

is clearly communicated by humans through the written words of OT Scripture. It is within the plain meaning of these words that revelation is found—not within various other frameworks being imposed on the OT text. Again, it is through identifying evidence in OT texts that many apologetic concerns are largely resolved.

Third, the developmental view also has a higher view of OT history than the other perspectives in this dissertation. This statement is primarily based on two important factors. The developmental view first recognizes that the OT is addressing the contemporary context of the people to whom it was originally given. As Block points out, God spoke to the people whom each OT book was originally addressed to, in their specific historical context. Most often, therefore, those books had an immediate and purposeful meaning for those addressed.[7] Next, it also respects the ANE context of the OT. It is easy to overlook, as some of the other positions analyzed in this dissertation do, that Israel was not formed in a vacuum. It was shaped by the global context in which it was situated.[8] This particular background and influence had a tremendous impact on the people of God and shaped Israel's concepts of many things. Recognizing and accounting for this background is crucial for understanding messiah in the OT.

However, the traditional developmental position is not without weakness. One of the main flaws is that it is often not clear on some key terminology. Related to understanding messiah in the OT, these terms primarily include: messiah, typology, and canon. Another weakness is that it often focuses more heavily on the ANE background of the OT to the detriment of the development of theological reflection and understanding

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[7]Block, "My Servant David," 21.

[8]See Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, trans. G. W. Anderson (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 21–95; Moshe Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 45–66. Block notes that while messianic expectations and hermeneutical approaches during the Intertestamental and NT time frames are certainly important, and even likely drove, to some degree, the arrangement of the final form of the OT canon, "we do well to recognize that the Old Testament consists of a collection of compositions deriving from a specific ancient Near Eastern cultural context and addressed to specific historical and religious circumstances." Block, "My Servant David," 20.

beyond the OT—in the Intertestamental period—and around the time of the NT. The social and hermeneutical contexts of ancient Israel are certainly important, but the immediate context of Jesus and the early church is also crucial for comparing and understanding messiah in the OT. Finally, there is minimal consideration of the role of the OT in the normative life of the contemporary church.

Bateman, Bock, and Johnson, as seen in the previous chapter, greatly advance the traditional developmental position by addressing most of the problematic issues associated with it for understanding messiah in the OT. But their advances still leave room for growth and clarity. Further, it is also crucial to note that simply because the developmental position has more strengths than other positions examined in this dissertation does not imply that those others do not contribute to an overall evangelical understanding of how to understand messiah in the OT.

Proposal

Indeed it is the case that based on the analysis of all the views presented in this dissertation, particularly the advances of Bateman, Bock, and Johnson's developmental perspective, that an appropriate hermeneutic for understanding messiah in the OT begins to emerge. The goal of this section is to present a brief proposal based on the overall findings of this dissertation.

Essential presuppositions

Presuppositions are an essential part of an appropriate hermeneutic for understanding messiah in the OT. There are several that must be addressed.

Bias. It is essential to start the search for understanding Christ in the OT by admitting one's interpretive bias. Bock is accurate to note that for any believer in Jesus Christ, it is impossible to approach the OT without a Christian theological framework.[9]

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[9]Darrell Bock, "Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents," in *Three Views on the New*

This predisposition, as pointed out above, naturally permeates the entire hermeneutical process regardless of intention.[10] By acknowledging this reality upfront, there is a level of openness, honesty, and accountability brought to biblical interpretation. This openness, in turn, forces interpreters to thoroughly examine, contend, and dialogue about any messianic interpretation of the OT. As a result, the opportunity for misunderstanding or misuse of Scripture is lessened.[11]

Clarity in illumination. It is also essential to acknowledge the necessity and function of the Holy Spirit in guiding believers into a proper understanding of truth (e.g., 2 Cor 4:4; John 14:26; 16:13). Both these points are widely accepted among most evangelicals.[12] However, a high level of clarity and balance is essential between views of the perspicuity of Scripture and the illumination of truth by the Holy Spirit. Presently, among evangelicals, there is not a strong consensus on the precise relationship between these two doctrines.[13] Since both are present in Scripture, perspicuity and the need for illumination must be viewed as functioning in tandem. Luther, therefore, appears right to

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Testament Use of the Old Testament, ed. Stanley Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 147–50.

[10]Barr's critique of Childs points out the difficulty of Christians not bringing bias to the OT, even when consciously trying to avoid doing so. James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 258.

[11]McConville, "Messianic Interpretation in Modern Context," 12–13. "People bring a certain pre-understanding to the reading of texts, which informs how they read them; the text in turn exercises an influence on the reader, whose 'pre-understanding' is thus slightly modified as s/he continues to read. And the process can continue in what is known as the 'hermeneutical circle' . . . . It bears repeating that these things are not said to suggest that various readings have merely relative importance. It does mean, though, that claims to represent the true interpretation of texts and traditions need to be contended for." VanGemeren holds a similar position. See Willem VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 20.

[12]E.g., Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 644–46; Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 301–14; Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 252–53; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 644–45.

[13]For a recent overview of various perspectives and nuances, see M. X. Seaman, *Illumination and Interpretation: The Holy Spirit's Role in Hermeneutics* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2013), 22–27.

speak of both external and internal levels of perspicuity. External perspicuity, to him, recognizes that the words of Scripture are clear and understandable in and of themselves. Because of the corruption of human thought brought about by sin, however, this meaning is clouded. As a result, an internal perspicuity (i.e. illumination) is needed from the Holy Spirit in order to accurately understand it.[14]

Luther's perspective is largely in line with the Christocentric view. The fundamental difference, however, is that the Christocentric position is often prone towards making illumination mean the production of hidden or additional messianic revelation or interpretations that are not tangibly grounded in the text of the OT. But, Klooster and others point out illumination does not provide new or additional revelation. It simply brings clarification to what is already perspicuously located within the words of Scripture.[15] This point aligns with Bateman, Bock, and Johnson's thesis that the NT's interpretation of the OT is, and must be, rooted in the actual wording and meaning of the OT. Thus, the Holy Spirit illuminates the understanding of messiah and messianism in the OT, but this illumination must be grounded in the intended authorial meaning of OT texts. It is not to be a product of unfounded typology, pneumatic exegesis, or any other methodology brought about in an attempt to find Christ in every verse of the OT.[16]

[14]Martin Luther, *On the Bondage of the Will: To the Venerable Mister Erasmus of Rotterdam*, trans. E. Vaughan (London: A. Appelgath, 1823), 106–28.

[15]Fred Klooster, "The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Hermeneutic Process: The Relationship of the Spirit's Illumination to Biblical Interpretation," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 449–72; R. C. Sproul, *Scripture Alone: The Evangelical Doctrine* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2005), 133; Seaman, *Illumination and Interpretation*, 18–20.

[16]Much like Block, both Bock and Pate contend that any search to find Christ in every text of the OT is not justified by Luke 24:13-35. Bock maintains that what Jesus references about himself in the Law, Prophets, and Writings are very specific messianic prophecies. These prophecies are not explicitly identified in the Emmaus Road narrative, but, according to Bock, are specifically stated in the earlier parts of Luke. Darrell Bock, *Luke* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 612–16. Pate describes the Emmaus encounter as simply a quick survey of the OT that had in mind specific messianic passages. He further argues that the specific passages in mind were likely those accepted by the early church as messianic, and listed in the NT. C. Marvin Pate, *Luke* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1995), 474. Also, see Block, "My Servant David," 21.

Starting point. The starting point of an understanding of messiah in the OT must be the OT itself. Even when granted that interpretations of the OT are further specialized by the NT, the NT must be the outgrowth and fulfillment of the OT, not vice versa. This premise, as most persons holding the epigenetical, canonical, and developmental approaches argue, means that any messianic meaning in the OT must be tangibly grounded in the original words and meanings of these texts. Other positions fall short of explaining and defending how the NT can be viewed as a legitimate fulfillment of the OT if the contextual meaning of the OT is not the launching pad for understanding messiah.

Parameters. Bateman, Bock, and Johnson rightly insist that it is important to elucidate the parameters for a hermeneutical approach to messiah in the OT. Their four questions are helpful for evangelicals in accomplishing this goal.[17] The most important of these questions, however, is the first. If one accepts that the OT must be the launching pad for any understanding of messiah in Scripture, then the question "How did the First Testament portray the promise of a messiah?" is fundamental.[18] The inherent value of this particular inquiry is that it causes the OT to set the parameters about messiah, in and of itself, with as little effect from a preconceived Christian theological framework as possible.[19]

It also serves to help limit and answer another crucial question, "what, or who, is one looking for when examining messiah in the OT?" Bateman, Bock, and Johnson frame the issue well by noting that evangelicals who approach the OT in an attempt to

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[17]See p. 185.

[18]Bateman, Bock, and Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 21.

[19]Barr points out that questions from Christians regarding the OT naturally tend to "Christianize" these texts. This point is why it is important to speak in terms of minimizing the influence of the Christian theological framework brought to the OT as opposed to totally "setting it aside." The latter is not possible. Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology*, 258–60.

find Jesus Christ exclusively and directly often disregard the original historical and

authorial intention of these passages.[20] Since persons tend to consciously or

subconsciously "find what they are looking for," in turn, those looking exclusively for

Christ often are prone to abuse the intended meaning of the OT.[21] Consequently, they

also devalue the NT's declaration that Jesus fulfilled exactly what the OT clearly

proclaimed. A safer approach, as Bateman, Bock, and Johnson's question implies, is to

let the OT dictate the parameters of what "messiah" means before considering how the

concept was understood or clarified later in history.

Clarity in terminology. An important part of establishing parameters that

protect the integrity and meaning of the OT involves bringing clarity to key terms. There

are several words that are especially important to elucidate. The first are messiah and

messianism.[22] As pointed out earlier in this chapter, often those holding the views

examined in this dissertation are neither in unison nor explicitly clear as to what these

terms mean in the OT. Some evangelicals, as Routledge points out, adopt a broad

understanding of these words that identifies a plethora of messianic texts throughout the

OT, including many direct, exclusive predictions about Jesus Christ. Others take a more

narrow view of messiah and messianism, believing that only a few, post-exilic OT texts

can be considered messianic in line with the NT. Most OT passages, in their view of

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[20]Bateman, Bock, and Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 24–26.

[21]That individuals tend to find "what they are looking for," especially in relation to messiah in the OT, is largely the point of both McConville and Barton. McConville, "Messianic Interpretation in Modern Context," 15–17; Barton, "Alttestamentliche Theologie Nach Albertz? *Oder Theologie Des Alten Testaments*," in *Religionsgeschichte Oder Theologie Des Alten Testaments* ed. B. Janowski and N. Lohfink (Neukirchen: Neukirchen Verlag, 1995), 25–34; John Barton, "The Messiah in Old Testament Theology," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John Day (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 370–79.

[22]Here "messiah" is being used to represent both the word and associated concepts in the OT. As some point out, there are few who argue that one cannot speak of messiah or messianism in the OT without explicit presence of the word משיח. See McConville, "Messianic Interpretation in Modern Context," 2–5; Block, "My Servant David," 25.

messiah, are not directly or exclusively related to Christ, but rather to contemporary OT figures. For the former group, their perspective often results in imposing a NT messianic interpretation on OT texts that were likely not meant to be understood in this manner. It also presents "a one dimensional picture of Israel's future hope" that ignores the historical development and pathway of redemption.[23] For those holding the latter view, messianism is restricted to such an extent that many of the NT's claims about Jesus from the OT can hardly be legitimate.

Here, Wallace's perspective on clarifying an evangelical understanding of messiah in the OT is helpful. He foremost recognizes that the invasion of Christian ideas onto OT data only leads to confusion and the corruption of the intended meaning of messiah in the OT. He also keenly notes that a restricted, singular meaning is not sufficient for the way "messiah" is used across the OT. The same is also true in the Intertestamental and NT periods.[24] Any use of the word or concept must be based on contextual usage in individual texts across biblical history and the Intertestamental period. The allowance for the fluidity and development of this concept is more faithful to the original OT text and subsequent interpretations of it, and again, minimizes the ability of a Christian predisposition to corrupt the use of the term or idea.[25] In clarifying messiah in the OT, then, a two-stage approach is needed. The first is identifying what each individual use of the term meant in a particular OT context. This involves considering both original and later canonical contexts. The second step analyzes how such usage relates, if at all, to messiah in the Intertestamental period as well as in the NT.

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[23]Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 282.

[24]David H. Wallace, "Messiah," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 764–65.

[25]Joseph Fitzmyer, *The One Who Is to Come* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 5ff.

Overall, then, the use of "messiah" in reference to the OT should generally be understood as referring to an anointed human. This meaning is most in line with the original intent of the OT authors and the understanding of the OT audiences. But, in light of additional revelation given by the NT, it is also clear that God often sovereignly imbedded truth pointing to the Messiah within the contextual meaning of many OT passages. In this light, "messiah" in the OT points to and culminates in "the Messiah" in the NT.

A second term that needs clarity is prophecy. Scholars such as Block, Bateman, Bock, and Johnson are helpful in pointing out that most OT prophecy is not strictly predictive of the distant, eschatological future.[26] Further, it is not exclusively nor directly focused on the advent of Jesus as the Messiah. Yet, for many evangelicals these assumptions are axiomatic in hermeneutical approaches to understanding messiah in the OT. However, these ideas are often inaccurate based on biblical evidence.[27] Accordingly, VanGemeren is correct to state that such "oversimplication has often led to a disregard of the distinctive features of the prophet as a human being in a historical context and as God's messenger sent to meet the particular needs of God's people in that context."[28] Vos confirms this statement by defining an OT prophet as a guardian of the contemporary, unfolding theocracy.[29] Most prophecy has a long, complicated transmission and

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[26]Daniel Block, "Bringing David Back: Ezekiel's Messianic Hope," in *The Lord's Anointed*, ed. Philip Satterthwaite, Richard Hess, and Gordon Wenham (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1995), 168–69; Block, "My Servant David," 21; Bateman, Bock, and Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 25–26.

[27]Bateman, Bock, and Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 24. They advocate Fee and Stuart's observation that only 2 percent of OT prophecy is messianic, less than five percent pertains to the new covenant time frame, and less than 1 percent concerns "events yet to come." The overwhelming majority relates to contemporary events in the life of the prophet. See Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book: A Guided Tour* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 165–66.

[28]Willem A. VanGemeren, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1996), 42.

[29]Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 204.

interpretive history. Without the knowledge of such items, any contextual, canonical, or Christological approach to the OT is difficult, if not impossible, to fully understand.[30] Any interpretation of prophecy, and messianic prophecy in particular, therefore, must be rooted in and derived from the events contemporary to each prophet. Prophecy should not be taken for granted as pointing exclusively to Christ. Here Bateman, Bock, and Johnson's point that all prophecy does not exclusively point to Christ, just ultimately, is an appropriate distinction.[31]

OT prophecy, then, should generally be understood as a divine message consistent with and relevant for the original OT audience to whom it is presented. However, as further revelation clarifies, deeper sovereign significance may shed new light on the ultimate intention of the divine author.

A third term that must be clarified is typology. Perhaps more than any other word, typology is used in a variety of ways in reference to understanding messiah in the OT. Because of the complexity and diversity of opinions about this hermeneutical approach, it is vital to first identify on what scholars agree. The consensus of most is that typology is "a biblical event, person, or institution which serves as an example or pattern for other events, persons, or institutions."[32] Most also agree that the foundation of typology is God's sovereign, consistent nature and action patterns in both Testaments.[33]

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[30]On the complexity of OT prophecy in general, and messianic prophecy in particular, see Robert Wilson, "Early Israelite Prophecy," in *Interpreting the Prophets*, ed. James Luther Mays and Paul J. Achtemeier (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 1–13; Daniel Schibler, "Messianism and Messianic Prophecy in Isaiah 1-12 and 28-33," in *The Lord's Anointed*, ed. Phillip Satterthwaite, Richard Hess, and Gordon Wenham (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1995), 103–4; H. G. M. Williamson, "The Messianic Texts in Isaiah 1-39," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John Day (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 238–70.

[31]Bateman, Bock, and Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 26.

[32]David Baker, "Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994), 327.

[33]Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1993), 47.

Disagreement ensues over five crucial issues for a hermeneutical approach to understanding messiah in the OT. First, is typology prospective or retrospective? Second, akin to the previous question, is typology prophecy, exegesis, both, or neither?[34] Third, must typology be grounded in actual historical events, persons, or institutions?[35] Fourth, what parameters exist for identifying types?[36] Fifth, how or should contemporary believers seek to practice typology?[37]

The answers to most of these questions are fiercely debated. And this overall lack of consensus constitutes an even greater issue when considering typology as a hermeneutical approach for understanding messiah in the OT. It demonstrates that contemporary evangelical typological approaches to the OT are highly subjective in nature. Baker, for instance, states that there is no set methodology or system to identify typology in Scripture or among scholars.[38] But, if there are no such parameters, what

[34]Davidson argues that typology has traditionally been seen as predictive. Bateman, Bock, and Johnson's definition of "predictive pattern fulfillment," and Moo's listing it as a form of "promise-fulfillment confirms this tradition. Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series 2 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981), 94; Bateman, Bock, and Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 345; Douglas Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," in *Hermeneutics, Authority, Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 196; Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 18–20. Others such as Baker and Foulkes do not believe that typology necessarily indicates predictive prophecy or is a form of exegesis. Rather, for them, it is more akin to a retrospective interpretation of history. Francis Foulkes, "The Acts of God," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 365–71; Baker, "Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament," 324–25.

[35]Goppelt, Baker, Moo, and Osborne, for example, say that typology must be grounded in historical reality. Goppelt, *Typos*, 18; Baker, "Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament," 327; Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," 195–97; Walter Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), s.v. "Typology," by Grant R. Osborne. Barr and von Rad, however, do not. Gerhard von Rad, "Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament," in *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics*, ed. Claus Westerman, trans John Bright (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1964), 20–38; James Barr, *Old and New in Interpretation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 103–48.

[36]Baker points out that the church fathers had a well-developed typological system, but their methodology is widely rejected today. Baker, "Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament," 325.

[37]Osborne lists the debate between the value of innate types and inferred types as the center of modern debate on this topic. Osborne, "Typology," 1223.

[38]Baker, "Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament," 325.

prevents the abuse or misuse of the OT? Further, what helps decide between differing opinions over which OT texts contain predictive types and which do not? Though Baker argues there are a few broad restraints that can be utilized, both he and Osborne concede that contemporary identification of types in the OT is strongly subjective. A large portion of this subjectivity stems from the fact that modern interpreters do not have the infallible revelatory guidance that the authors of the NT enjoyed. Because this superior position is now lacking, contemporary use of typology best serves as little more than illustrating doctrine. It is not to identify doctrine or produce evidence that forms doctrine.[39]

This subjectivity highlights the need to distinguish between types that merely illustrate messianic truth and types that prophetically predict messianic truth.[40] The former can abound across the OT as long as it is in line with truth presented across Scripture. The latter, however, requires a high level of caution. Because of the subjectivity and potential for the abuse or misrepresentation of OT Scripture and the lack of consensus over many major aspects of typology, the most firm way to recognize predictive OT Christological types is to limit them to what is explicitly identified as such in the NT. Otherwise, one cannot know whether a person, event, or institution is a divinely appointed predictive type or not.[41] G. E. Wright and others have argued for a similar approach, but many reject it today.[42] Bateman, Bock, and Johnson, however,

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[39]Osborne, "Typology," 1223; Baker, "Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament," 324–30. Walvoord is in line with this perspective as well. John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 18.

[40]Bock argues for a similar distinction. Bock, "Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents," 119–21.

[41]Moo argues that even the authors and audiences of the OT would not recognize many OT types. The same is even true of modern day believers. "Without confining valid types to the New Testament, then, it is nevertheless true that we would not know some types had the New Testament not revealed them to us and that any types we may suggest lack the authoritative status enjoyed by those singled out by the inspired authors." Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," 197.

[42]On the discussion of inferred types vs. explicit types, see George Ernest Wright, *God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital* (London: SCM Press, 1952), 66; Patrick Fairbairn, *The Typology of Scripture* (Philadelphia: Smith and English, 1854), 32ff.; Kaiser, "Single Meaning, Unified Referents," 60–72; Osborne, "Typology," 1223.

appear correct in largely limiting their discussion of predictive types (i.e. predictive pattern fulfillment) to those OT patterns, persons, and institutions identified as messianic by the NT.[43] In other words, instead of identifying predictive types in the OT on their own, they generally allow these types to be identified for them by those with a firmer revelatory stance. From there, they seek to understand the type's function in the OT and in similar patterns across Scripture. Until further research provides a more complete system for identifying predictive types, this pattern appears to be a safer path to follow in order to prevent misreading the OT.

Typology, therefore, should be understood as those people, patterns, events, and institutions that either illustrate or point towards Christ. For the latter category, these can only definitively be made evident by further divine revelation in subsequent Scripture.

A fourth term that needs clarity is canon. VanGemeren, Kaiser, and Sailhamer are right to speak of the value of the canon in understanding messiah in the OT.[44] Bateman, Bock, and Johnson, however, are correct to distinguish between "canonical significance" and the direct or exclusively messianic interpretations of many texts in final form of the canon. In light of this difference, it is best to adopt their concept of "canonical significance" as opposed to forcing the OT to speak directly and exclusively of Jesus Christ alone.[45]

Second Temple data. The tendency among many evangelicals is to ignore or downplay the value of Second Temple data in understanding messiah in the OT. Bateman is especially helpful because he articulates the problems many evangelicals have against

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[43]Bateman, Bock, and Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 345; 363–64, 389.

[44]VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 31; Kaiser, "Biblical Theology and the Interpretation of Messianic Texts," 206; Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 86–115.

[45]Bateman, Bock, and Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 24–27.

utilizing such evidence. He is also helpful in debunking them.[46] He and others, such as

Longenecker, are accurate to note the value of this information.[47] It is important to note

that works outside the Christian canon are not inspired or authoritative. But they do give

great help in understanding how the OT was interpreted in the Intertestamental period

and around the time of Christ, as well as how the understanding of OT meaning

developed.

Center of OT and NT. Various theories about the central theme of Scripture

and their bearings on understanding messiah in the OT have arisen throughout this

dissertation. The same is true in regards to methods of connecting the Testaments. Since

the OT is the starting point for understanding messiah in all of Scripture, it is important to

first seek any central theme there. Hasel provides an overview of the diverse suggested

centers of the OT.[48] But, as he points out, traditionally there is not one theme that most

agree is wide enough to encompass all of OT Scripture in its diversity, much less both

Testaments. He and various others suggest that the most likely central OT theme is "God,

or an aspect of God" and his interaction with humanity.[49] This broad thrust, in their view,

"provides the possibility to describe the rich and variegated theologies and to present

various longitudinal themes, motifs, and ideas." It is advantageous because it "cannot be

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[46]Bateman, "Three Obstacles to Overcome, and Then One," 211–52.

[47]Enns, "Fuller Meaning, Single Goal," 167–217; idem, "Apostolic Hermeneutics and an Evangelical Doctrine of Scripture," 263–87; idem, "Response to Kaiser," 96–101; Darrell Bock, "Use of the Old Testament in the New," in *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation*, ed. D. Dockery, K. Mathews, and R. Sloan (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 97–114.

[48]Gerhard Hasel, *Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 139–71.

[49]Ibid., 168–71. Hasel provides a list of others who also advocate God as the central theme of OT theology. See Ibid., 168 fn. 157. Also, it is important to distinguish God's interaction with humanity from Christopher Wright's thesis that the central theme of the Bible is mission to the nations. Both of these themes share the idea of God interacting with the world. However, Wright's viewpoint is more narrowly focused on a particular salvific mission, while Hasel's is broader and not as constricting. Compare Christopher Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995); idem, *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006).

forced into a static organizing principal" which is likely to limit or corrupt the intended meaning of OT Scripture.[50] Rather, it allows for cohesive unity among a diversity of materials and themes, such as wisdom literature, that are often problematic in both OT theology and in understanding messiah in the OT.

If this theme is the general focus of the OT, it also can explain the unity and relationship between the Testaments. Hasel, Moo, and Greidanus are helpful in pointing out that often the question of the relationship between the Testaments causes individuals to identify one of several narrow themes (e.g., monarchy, covenant, mission, etc.) and one main way to connect such themes across Scripture (e.g., typology, promise-fulfillment, *sensus plenior*, etc.). However, the reality is that multiple longitudinal themes and diverse approaches are in play when considering Christ in the OT.[51] If these diverse approaches and themes are centered on understanding God and his actions with humanity, as opposed to a more strict, narrower center, then two important advantages are presented to evangelicals.[52]

First, one can more objectively seek and confirm what Hasel labels as the "hidden inner unity" of Scripture among the diversity of material located in both Testaments. This heightened objectivity is largely the result of not forcing an OT text to fit a static, narrow theme, or ignoring other parts of God's word that are not in line with one's selected central theme.[53] Second, it also makes possible the alignment of the

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[50]Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*, 171. Poythress is right to argue "differences in peoples' interests lead to differences in their selection of facts and to differences in theme when people talk about the same subject matter." Vern Poythress, *Symphonic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2001), 20. This point is in line with Hasel's warning against selecting a single, narrow theme that can force meaning onto the OT.

[51]See Douglas Moo, *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives* (Sheffield, England: The Almond Press, 1983); Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," 209-11; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 203-25; Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*, 207.

[52]For the role of the Trinity in interpretation, see Vern Poythress, *God Centered Biblical Interpretation* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1999).

[53]"A seemingly successful way to come to grips with the question of unity is to take the various major longitudinal themes and concepts and explicate whether and how the variegated theologies

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contextual meaning of the OT with NT Christocentric interpretations of it (cf. Luke 24; John 5:39).[54] Hasel is right in explaining how such alignment between the testaments should be identified and operate:

> Initially, therefore, we do not begin from the NT and its manifold reference to the OT. This method has often been adopted, most recently again by B.S. Childs. It has also led all too often to contrasting the Testaments with a sharpness that does not do justice to the great hermeneutical flexibility of the relationship between them. A proper method will then initially be an attempt to show characteristic ways in which the OT leads forward to the NT. The NT then, on the basis of this initial approach, also enlightens the content of the OT.[55]

Methodology

This proposal requires approaching messiah in the OT in a systematic fashion. Bateman, Bock's, and Johnson's three-step hermeneutical approach to the OT provides an appropriate path to follow both in light of the scheme Hasel proposes and because of the importance of honoring the contextual meaning of the OT. Since their methodological steps are fully covered earlier in this dissertation, there is no need to repeat them in detail here. There are, however, some slight ways to build on their approach that should be highlighted.

Contextual. As noted by many of those analyzed in this dissertation, the historical, grammatical approach is crucial for understanding messiah in the OT. Mare's observation ". . . that a personal God has verbally communicated to personal man in time and space" in a way that is understandable to him through "the two foundation stones of grammar, language, and historical background" is foundational to evangelical

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are intrinsically related to one another." Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*, 207.

[54]Plummer reiterates the importance of the Christocentric nature of the entire OT. Robert Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, ed. Benjamin Merkle (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic and Professional, 2010), 151–66.

[55]Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*, 183.

interpretation.[56] In addition to Bateman, Bock, and Johnson's observation that an OT text should foremost be examined for what it meant to the original authors and audiences, several other scholars are helpful in giving more specific detail as to what this first hermeneutical step should take into consideration. VanGemeren and Sailhamer, for instance, are right to point out the value of taking into account text-critical issues in understanding messiah in the OT.[57] This point is generally given lip service by evangelicals, but is most often ignored in practice, and factors little into Bateman, Bock, and Johnson's work as well. Further, persons such as Block point out the value of knowing the broad ANE and native Israelite historical contexts that surround the OT.[58] The importance of taking into account the literary character of the OT is also accepted by many evangelicals.[59] All of these textual, grammatical, literary, historical, and contextual factors are necessary and appropriate for understanding the original message of God's word and should not be overlooked or downplayed.

Canonical. While Bateman, Bock, and Johnson combine contextual and canonical into one step, it is best, for the sake of distinction, to separate them into different stages. It is during the canonical step that Kaiser's consideration of antecedent theology is an important factor. He is right to maintain that later Scripture brings clarity

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[56]Harold Mare, "Guiding Principles for Historical Grammatical Exegesis," *Grace Journal* 14, no. 3 (1973): 14–25.

[57]VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 29–30; Sailhamer, "Biblical Theology and the Composition of the Hebrew Bible," 426-30.

[58]Block, "My Servant David," 20.

[59]VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 29-31; Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 199–216. Also, see Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 2nd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2011); idem., *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, 2nd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2011). Though less certain, some advocate the study of speech-act theory as another dimension of understanding Scripture. See, for example, Richard Briggs, *Words in Action: Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2004); Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture & Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002), 127–202; Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 215–16.

to earlier texts, but cannot usurp their original meaning.[60] Bateman, Bock, and Johnson are also correct to argue that the long-range canonical significance of an OT passage must not ignore that the original OT text has a definitive implication within the specific context of the audience it initially addressed. But, at the same time, it is also necessary to consciously begin to note how an OT theme or pattern develops and expands in significance across the framework of the OT. This point is true even if these themes or patterns are developing or expanding in specific ways that the original author was not completely aware. It is here that the presence of longitudinal themes and related actions such as promise, mission, covenant, monarchy, deliverance, and many of the other items identified by theologians as central to the OT begin to emerge. Their presence begins to shape trajectories moving towards the Messiah under the framework of God and his interaction with humanity.

Intertestamental development. The visibility and implications of these trajectories continue to develop across Judaism during the Intertestamental period. Reflection on God and his past action with Israel and humanity led many within Judaism to diverse and often cloudy conclusions regarding what the OT said about messiah. However, there are some broad, common denominators of agreement that begin to emerge from their reflections on OT trajectories.[61] Despite the fact that the writings and expectations during the Intertestamental time frame do not enjoy infallible, divine status, many of these common denominators are nonetheless a part of the developing understanding of what the OT said about messiah. It is important to carefully take note of the trajectory route of these developments towards the presentation of the Messiah in the NT.

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[60]Walter Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 18ff.

[61]Bateman, Bock, and Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 23.

Christological. With the disclosure of Jesus as the Messiah, the first believers were given a new Christological orientation for understanding the OT.[62] Their Christological lens led the authors of the NT to an interpretation of the OT, under the guidance and illumination of the Holy Spirit, which was infallibly recorded in the writings of the NT.[63] For contemporary believers in Christ, therefore, Christological readings of the OT should foremost seek to understand how the authors of the NT were divinely led to interpret the OT.

The presuppositions of the early church as well as an awareness of the Jewish hermeneutical context and methodological approaches to Scripture are vital to this step.[64] These items afford the modern reader the knowledge and ability to understand the logic behind the NT authors' interpretations of the OT. When properly considered in this light, Moo's study demonstrates that no single type of interpretation encompasses the totality of how the NT authors approach the OT.[65] There are multiple ways that can only be identified and verified individually. Some of these approaches include plain readings of the OT as brought about by historical-grammatical exegesis. Yet, Moo notes that more frequently Christological interpretations of the OT are only made obvious through subsequent revelation. This later clarification is brought about through the recognition of

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[62]Donald Juel, *Messianic Exegesis* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1992), 29.

[63]Ellis and Longenecker list this type of charismatic or *pneumatic* exegesis as the foundational authority for the apostolic interpretation of the OT. E. Earl Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1978), 180; idem, "How the New Testament Uses the Old," in *New Testament Interpretation*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1977), 215; Richard Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1999), xxxi.

[64]For a discussion of the early Christian presuppositions, see Ellis, "How the New Testament Uses the Old," 199–219. For the Jewish hermeneutical context and methodology see Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 6–35.

[65]Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," 209–10.

typology, longitudinal themes, promise-fulfillment, *sensus plenior*, and readings influenced by theology and canonical considerations.[66]

For evangelicals, because of the doctrines of inspiration, inerrancy, and infallibility, it is particularly important to insist that any interpretation of an OT text that cannot be definitively ascertained by historical-grammatical exegesis be "based on and compatible with the meaning intended by the human author."[67] But, for apologetic purposes, it is not enough to simply insist that Christological interpretations of the OT are true based on the doctrines of inspiration and inerrancy. It is also vital to contend for the validity of NT truth from the OT Scripture. There are two key factors that must go into validating Christological interpretations of the OT.

First, it is important to label and clarify operational aspects of Christological interpretations of the OT. Robert Thomas explains that NT interpretations of the OT can be broadly labeled as either historical-grammatical or *sensus plenior*.[68] Because *sensus plenior* is often used to depict an atomistic approach to the OT, to prevent misunderstanding, he suggests adopting the language of an "inspired *sensus plenior* application" of the OT. He explains this phrase in the following manner:

> It is "inspired," because along with all Scripture, the NT passage is inspired by God. It is "*sensus plenior*" in that it gives an additional or fuller sense than the passage had in its OT setting. It is an "application" because it does not eradicate the literal meaning of the OT passage, but simply applies the OT wording to a new setting.[69]

The majority of this phrase respects the contextual meaning of the OT and, at the same time, accounts for the doctrines of inspiration, inerrancy, and infallibility in

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[66]These multiple approaches are compiled from various sources including: Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 203–25; Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*, 183; Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," 192–210.

[67]Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," 209.

[68]For Thomas, *sensus plenior* broadly refers to any interpretation that goes beyond the historical grammatical meaning of an OT passage.

[69]Robert Thomas, "The New Testament Use of the Old Testament," *TMSJ* 13, no. 1 (2002): 80.

Christological interpretations of the OT. The word "application," however, is contentious. For Thomas, the word "fulfillment" implies a direct prophecy in English parlance. The essence of *sensus plenior*, however, is not a literal or direct prediction. "Application," in his view, better describes how the NT is merely a related outworking of the single meaning of the OT in another context. Its authority is strictly grounded in the NT, not the OT.[70] In response, however, "application" does not appear to be the most appropriate word choice for the Christological interpretation of the OT. This term tends to imply that the stated fulfillment of an OT prophecy in the NT is distantly, not directly, related to the intention of the OT passage. But, this direct relationship is essential to numerous Christological interpretations of the OT in the NT.[71] Further, it downplays the sovereignty of God in the balance of inspiration.[72]

As a result, a better way of describing interpretations of the OT that cannot be determined by historical-grammatical exegesis is "inspired, *sensus plenior* fulfillment" of the OT. With this language, the single meaning of an OT text is retained, but with multiple referents and contexts.[73] This particular terminology has the added clarity of Thomas' phrase, but keeps the emphasis on the sovereignty of God in predicting the

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[70]Thomas, "The New Testament Use of the Old Testament," 96. "Such observations lead to the conclusion that it is unwise to use fulfillment terminology in connection with the OT passages to which the NT assigns inspired *sensus plenior* applications. Frequently, expositors and commentators have used such expressions as "initial fulfillment," "partial fulfillment," "near fulfillment," or something comparable to speak of Peter's use of Joel 2:28-32 in his Acts 2 sermon. That language gives the wrong impression because the OT passage did not predict what was to happen on the day of Pentecost. What happened on that day was an ISPA of Joel 2, an application whose authority was the Acts passage, not the Joel passage. The phenomena on the day of Pentecost were in no sense a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, a prophecy that pertained to the people of Israel, not to the church. The relevance of the happenings on that day were an ISPA of the Joel passage to an entirely different situation by Peter who spoke and Luke who recorded the words. It is misleading to call them in any sense a fulfillment of Joel." Ibid.

[71]While the language of fulfillment need not always be related to exclusive, direct messianic prophecies, Moo notes that the validity of the argument of numerous Christological interpretations of the OT are dependent on the OT text being cited with its "proper, authoritative meaning." Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," 191–92.

[72]See pp. 207ff. above.

[73]Bock, "Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents."

messiah through divine inspiration, as well as retaining the necessary direct and authoritative relationship between the Testaments.

Second, one must also contend for the contextual meaning of Christological interpretations of the OT through comparative textual analysis. The most appropriate way to satisfy this requirement is to conduct an examination of each Christological use of the OT in the NT. A diverse team of evangelical scholars recently collaborated on such a work.[74] However, their study leaves room for more work to be done in this area.[75] Regardless, their study appears to confirm Moo's argument that when taking into account further revelation, inspired illumination and guidance, and the broader theological context, the result appears to be sufficient to dispel any lack of continuity with the OT.[76] The confirmation of this truth is necessary for both understanding and defending every multi-plex Christological interpretation of the OT.

Clarification of the OT and proclamation. Once an OT passage is considered in light of its contextual meaning and how this original meaning develops across the OT canon, the Intertestamental period, and the NT, one may then cycle back again to the OT and understand it better. This fuller understanding must again, as Kaiser argues, elucidate what was originally there all along. It cannot produce hidden meaning that is not akin to the historical-grammatical intention of the human author. Further, once this ultimate, elucidated meaning is established, it allows proclamation to the church that satisfies the hunger for relevancy of God's word in line with VanGemeren's proposal.[77]

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[74]D. A. Carson and G. K. Beale, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

[75]This work is excellent. But, because of space and the diversity of those working on the volume, much of the analysis is kept to a minimum.

[76]Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," 211.

[77]VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 17.

This clarified meaning, however, must never outweigh or overtake the place of the contextual meaning of the OT.

The most pertinent question that must be addressed for contemporary believers is whether or not they can, or should, mimic the hermeneutical approaches of the apostles beyond a literal (*peshat*) reading of the text when understanding messiah in the OT. Although the answer to this question is divisive among evangelicals, three items indicate that they should not. Thomas keenly notes that the gift of Apostleship, the revelatory stance of the authors of the NT, and the priority and defense of the singular meaning of Scripture, all argue against it.[78]

Conclusion

McConville is right that understandings about messiah and messianism in the OT are highly dependent on hermeneutics.[79] The OT does indeed point to Jesus Christ as the Messiah. This realization is firmly located in and aligned with the words, themes, and action patterns of the OT. Yet, the ultimate messianic intention of these items is not always immediately visible in the OT in and of itself. Further, these things are not always exclusively and directly pointing to Christ. Rather, often in his sovereignty, God makes their ultimate messianic purpose known through subsequent forms of divinely inspired revelation. The most appropriate evangelical hermeneutical model for understanding messiah in the OT, therefore, is one that is grounded in the contextual meaning of OT passages ascertained through historical grammatical exegesis. Yet it also allows for the inspired, progressive development of the concept of messiah from the OT to its ultimate fulfillment in the NT. This ultimate fulfillment is realized in line with the contextual meaning of the OT through a variety of OT words, themes, and patterns that fall under

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[78]Thomas, "The New Testament Use of the Old Testament," 86–88.

[79]McConville, "Messianic Interpretation in Modern Context," 4–5.

the broad umbrella of God's actions with humanity. These are perfectly clarified and made evident through the inspired interpretations of the OT located in the NT.

Areas for Further Research

McConville and Sailhamer, in different ways, affirm that the evangelical understanding of messiah in the OT is not only a crucial field of study, but also one that appears to be in the early phases of renewed interest.[80] Because of the importance of this issue to evangelical faith, McConville rightfully points out there is a plethora of work that can, and should be done in this area. This dissertation attempted to give a survey and analysis of current evangelical hermeneutical approaches to this topic. Based on these, it also gave a brief hermeneutical model for understanding messiah in the OT.

Nevertheless, there is still much room for further work. Three particular items that are well beyond the scope of this dissertation rise to the top of the list. The first item is a more detailed analysis of typology. The amount of disagreement on this topic, as well as its increasing popularity among many evangelicals for understanding messiah in the OT, demands for attention that moves evangelicals towards a consensus on this issue. The second item, as pointed out above, involves the thorough analysis and categorization of each use of the OT in the NT. It also includes the specific identification of the relationship between the two. Carson and Beale's team makes massive strides in this area, but also do not thoroughly cover every important matter. A thorough analysis of this nature would be complex and take a significant amount of time to complete. But, it is too valuable to neglect. The third item is to take into account newer movements and areas of interest among evangelicals. These include, but are not limited to, the TIS movement, speech-act theory, and canonical studies. These things should be considered as to what, if

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[80]McConville, "Messianic Interpretation in Modern Context," 1–17; Sailhamer, "The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible," 5–23.

any, benefit they bring in understanding messiah in the OT. All three of these items are

necessary to an evangelical hermeneutical approach for understanding messiah in the OT.

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ABSTRACT

A SURVEY AND ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY EVANGELICAL
HERMENEUTICAL APPROACHES TO UNDERSTANDING
MESSIAH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Jason Alan Motte, Ph.D.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015
Chair: Dr. T. J. Betts

There is great diversity among evangelicals about how to understand messiah

in the Old Testament. Many of the differences are largely related to hermeneutical

choices. This study examines evangelical hermeneutical approaches to this issue from the

time of Sigmund Mowinckel (1956) to the present. It identifies various positions

represented by evangelicals, and lists major, relative works within each category. Then it

analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. Based on such analysis, in the

final chapter, a brief hermeneutical model for understanding messiah in the Old

Testament is presented. This study concludes that the best hermeneutical model for

understanding messiah in the Old Testament is one that is grounded in historical

grammatical exegesis of Old Testament passages, and that allows for the inspired,

progressive development of the concept of messiah from the Old Testament to its

ultimate fulfillment in the New Testament.

VITA

Jason Alan Motte

EDUCATIONAL
        Diploma, Corner High School, Corner, Alabama, 1996
        B.A., Southeastern Bible College, Birmingham, Alabama, 2000
        M.Div., Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama, 2004

MINISTERIAL
        Student Pastor, First Baptist Church, St. Petersburg, Florida, 2004-2006
        Student Pastor, CrossPoint Baptist Church, Trussville, Alabama, 2006-2010
        Associate Pastor, Maple Grove Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky, 2010-2013

ACADEMIC
        Adjunct Faculty, Mid Continent University, Mayfield, Kentucky, 2012-

ORGANIZATIONAL
        Society of Biblical Literature