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CHRIST-SATURATED PREACHING: A HERMENEUTICAL AND
HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS OF CHRIST-CENTERED
PREACHING AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
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May 2016

APPROVAL SHEET

CHRIST-SATURATED PREACHING: A HERMENEUTICAL AND
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PREACHING AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

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PREFACE

Southern Seminary is the place where I have had the great privilege to be a godly man before my Lord Jesus Christ. I am deeply indebted to many who have made this journey possible and who have prayed for me to reach this glorious final destination.

I thank my parents, Haksun Lee and Youngchoon Kim, who trusted and supported me and prayed for me. Especially, I thank my father who is in heaven now. I also thank my parents-in-law, Jumsik Shin and Youngja Yang, who reared my wife and supported and prayed for me and my family. I am grateful for my seminary professors and pastors who have consistently prayed for me and given their wise advice. Rev. Bonghee Cho encouraged me to do my best. Dr. Changkoon Chung challenged me to study preaching and to finish this journey. They are my mentors, friends, and faithful godly leaders.

My dissertation committee members, Dr. Vogel, Dr. Garrett, and Dr. Chancellor, helped me make this dissertation what it is. I am especially indebted to Dr. Vogel. Studying under Dr. Vogel has been God's blessing to me. He is the man who led me, taught me, and challenged my thinking and helped me do my best. His sincere prayers always touched my heart and helped me stand before God. Dr. Garrett did not hesitate to share his insight into the Old Testament. Learning the Old Testament from Dr. Garrett opened my eyes to the Bible. Dr. Chancellor has a warm heart toward international students. His insight opened my heart to non-Christians and helped me see God's heart for them. All my committee members graciously and kindly accommodated my schedule.

Our two lovely children, Yebin and Jeremy, have sacrificed much and have been the joy and power for me to complete this dissertation. Their smiles, prayers, and

sacrifices were my strength. I cannot express enough my thankful heart to my lovely wife, Seungyoun. Without her I could not have finished this journey. She always trusts me and prays for me. She has not stopped her support for me, and she gives me her wisdom and love. She is a godly mother and wife. Above all, I pray that I may glorify my God and my Lord Jesus Christ with my life both now and forever.

Hongkil Lee

Louisville, Kentucky

May 2016

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Jesus Christ changes one's identity. In him, one becomes a new creature (2 Cor 5:17; Acts 26:18; Eph 5:8; 1 Thess 5:5). One who believes in Jesus as the only savior can call God "Abba! Father!"¹ No wonder apostolic preaching mainly focused on Jesus Christ, including his birth, death, and resurrection.² Preaching Christ has been widely practiced in the pulpit. David Larsen contends, "What was true for the early fathers, the Reformers, the Puritans, John Wesley, and Alexander Maclaren is no less true for us. A sermon without Jesus is a garden without flowers."³ Preachers who have a passion to preach Christ have diligently proclaimed him in order that people may believe in Jesus as savior.⁴

Most preachers, however, preach Christ exclusively from the New Testament, hesitant to select a sermon text from the Old Testament. Sidney Greidanus regrets such a lack of preaching from the Old Testament:

Statistics are hard to come by, but from reports of several denominations it is safe to conclude that fewer than 20 percent of the sermons the average church member

¹"For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!' (Rom 8:15)." Unless otherwise indicated, all biblical quotations in this document are from English Standard Version (ESV).

²Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 4.

³David L. Larsen, *The Anatomy of Preaching: Identifying the Issues in Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 165. See also Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 111-51. According to Greidanus, reformed theologians such as Luther and Calvin, Spurgeon, and modern evangelical homileticians have preached Christ.

⁴Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007), 28.

hears are based on an Old Testament text. This figure is all the more telling when we remember that the Old Testament constitutes about three-fourths of the Christian canon.⁵

Greidanus identifies higher criticism in Old Testament studies as one reason for the lack of preaching in the Old Testament. Since “higher criticism concentrated on source criticism, form criticism, and history of religion,” the study of the Old Testament has been focused on recovering “the history of Israel, the history of its literature, and the history of its religion.”⁶ As a result, preachers find it difficult to preach from the Old Testament.

Another major reason for the lack of preaching from the Old Testament is related to the obstacles that preachers encounter when preaching from it.⁷ In order to preach from the Old Testament, preachers have to overcome the historical-cultural gap between ancient Israel and the contemporary audience. In addition, preachers face theological difficulties such as continuity and discontinuity between the two testaments. Preachers are confronted by many ethical issues such as the massacre of the Canaanites. These genuine difficulties when preaching from the Old Testament cause preachers to lean toward preaching from the New.

Further, preachers find it difficult to locate Christ in the Old Testament or to show how each text relates to Christ. Greidanus believes that this is caused by a lack of a proper hermeneutical method.⁸ Allegorical and typological interpretations prevailed from the third century to the sixteenth as a common way to preach Christ from the Old Testament.⁹ Greidanus, however, believes that allegorical and typological approaches to

⁵Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 15. See also Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Preaching from the Old Testament* (Louisville: John Knox, 1989), 21.

⁶Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 17.

⁷Ibid., 22-25.

⁸Ibid., 108-9.

⁹Ibid., 70-90.

preaching failed to preach Christ accurately from the Old Testament. Allegorical interpretation neglects the literal-historical meaning of the text and seeks the supposed spiritual meaning. In addition, typological interpretation faces “the danger of degenerating into typologizing,” which can “slip into allegorizing.”¹⁰ Thus, in order to preach Christ from the Old Testament, proper hermeneutical methods are necessary to avoid the errors of allegorical and typological interpretations.

Some homileticians suggest interpretive methods for preaching Christ from the Old Testament. In his doctoral dissertation, *Sola Scriptura*, for instance, Greidanus suggests his redemptive-historical approach to preaching Christ from the historical narrative texts.¹¹ His concern for preaching Christ then moves another step to argue for preaching Christ from every text. In his second book, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, Greidanus shows his holistic framework for interpretation, drawing together literary, historical, and theological aspects.¹² In this book, Greidanus lays down a foundation for a redemptive-historical Christocentric method of interpretation and demonstrates how to preach Christ from Hebrew narratives, prophetic literature, the gospels, and the epistles.¹³ In *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, Greidanus pays more attention to preaching Christ from the whole Old Testament. He shows how preachers can preach Christ in the Old Testament (1) by way of redemptive-historical progression, (2) by way of promise-fulfillment, (3) by way of typology, (4) by way of

¹⁰Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 97.

¹¹Greidanus’ dissertation aims to expose weaknesses of exemplary approach to preaching and to suggest biblical interpretation based on the redemptive-historical context, Sidney Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts* (Toronto: Wedge, 1970), 1-2.

¹²Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 48-121.

¹³Ibid., 188-341. Greidanus classifies biblical genres into seven. It is not clear why Greidanus only dealt with four genres here, but he chose two genres from the Old Testament and the other two from the New Testament. Ibid., 23.

analogy, (5) by way of longitudinal themes, (6) by way of New Testament references, and (7) by way of contrast.¹⁴ With his following publications, Greidanus then attempts to do justice to preaching Christ from the individual books of the Old Testament based on his redemptive-historical Christocentric interpretation.¹⁵

Such an effort, together with others of like mind, challenges preachers to select not only a sermon text from the Old Testament but to preach Christ from the Old Testament.¹⁶ Others, however, dispute the validity of their methods. Ken Langley points out some weaknesses of Greidanus's redemptive historical interpretive methods by saying that the Christocentric approach to preaching is "not a sufficient base from which to work on every text."¹⁷ Langley contends that Christocentric interpretation forces preachers to interpret some texts incorrectly. The issue is "how" to preach Christ from the Old Testament.¹⁸

¹⁴Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 234-77.

¹⁵Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Daniel: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012); idem, *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); and idem, *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

¹⁶Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 282. See also John Goldingay, *Key Questions about Biblical Interpretation: Old Testament Answers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 233-37. Such movement can be also shown in Goldsworthy's works. Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundation and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012); idem, *Gospel and Kingdom: A Christian Interpretation of the Old Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1981); idem, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Biblical-Theological Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006); and idem, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

¹⁷Ken Langley, "When Christ Replaces God," *Evangelical Homiletics Society* (October 2008): 10. Abraham Kuruvilla also points out the hermeneutical problems of redemptive-historical approaches to preaching. See Abraham Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text: A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2013), 239-58.

¹⁸Because the New Testament is considered God's Christocentric revelation, advocates for preaching Christ from every text pay attention to preaching Christ from the Old Testament. And this study will focus on how they develop Christ-centered approaches to preaching in the Old Testament.

Willem VanGemeran argues, “Christian students of the Old Testament *must pass by the cross of Jesus Christ on their return to the Old Testament*, and as such they can never lose their identity as a Christian.”¹⁹ Edmund Clowney contends that preaching without the cross of Jesus Christ is not a Christian sermon but a “synagogue sermon.”²⁰ According to VanGemeran, Christ is the center of the Bible, so every sermon should be Christ-centered.²¹ VanGemeran’s argument clearly shows his passion to preach Christ, but matters of approach are still debated. Thus, it is right to say that preaching Christ from every text is one of the most challenging issues in evangelical hermeneutics and homiletics.

Statement of the Problem

The Problem of Definition

Concerning preaching Christ from every text or a Christ-centered approach to preaching, the place to begin is to define what preaching Christ means.²² Admittedly, defining a term can be difficult, but it is essential for the work at hand. Greidanus admits such complexity and confusion in preaching Christ:

Often Christocentric preaching is misunderstood as “Jesuscentric” preaching, that is, every sermon must somehow make reference to Jesus of Nazareth, his birth, life, death, or resurrection. That endeavor itself is not wrong, but its imposition as a

¹⁹Willem VanGemeran, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation from Creation to the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 21, emphasis in original.

²⁰Edmund Clowney introduces ‘synagogue sermon’ as preaching the Old Testament without Christ when he states, “Preaching Christ from the Old Testament means that we preach, not synagogue sermons, but sermons that take account of the full drama of redemption, and its realization in Christ. To see the text in relation to Christ is to see it in its larger context, the context of God’s purpose in revelation.” Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in all of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 11.

²¹VanGemeran, *The Progress of Redemption*, 27.

²²I choose “Christ-centered preaching” as a broad concept to cover the various terms regarding preaching Christ such as “Christocentric preaching” and “preaching Christ from every text.” A more specific definition of each term will be explored in chap. 3. At the same time, the phrase “Christ-centered preaching” implies the final goal of preaching Christ, which is to proclaim Christ in every text on every Sunday.

methodological principle on every text is wrong, for it leads to forcing parallels between the text and Jesus.²³

Elsewhere, he writes,

Strange as it may seem, we are not at all clear on what it means to “preach Christ.” Although the meaning seems simple on the surface, it is complicated by several factors, not the least of which is that Christ is both the eternal Logos, who is present from the beginning (John 1:1), and Christ incarnate, who is present only after Old Testament times (John 1:14). This complexity reveals itself in the wide variety of meanings that have attached themselves to the phrase “preaching Christ.” For some, preaching Christ means preaching “Christ crucified” in the sense of linking every text to Calvary and Christ’s atoning work on the cross. Others broaden the meaning to preaching “Christ’s death and resurrection.”²⁴

Greidanus then defines preaching Christ as “preaching sermons which authentically integrate the message of the text with the climax of God’s revelation in the person, work, and/or teaching of Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament.”²⁵

Along with Greidanus’s effort to define preaching Christ, many different definitions and approaches to Christ-centered preaching can be found. Goldsworthy, for instance, argues that preaching Christ means to show how Christ completes the kingdom of God in the text through his whole redemptive work.²⁶ In Goldsworthy’s sermons, the full story of the gospel, which is Christ’s redemptive work, is repeatedly explained.

Langley recognizes correctly that some confused and complicated definitions of and approaches to Christ-centered preaching exist.²⁷ According to Langley, “theocentric preaching” and “Christocentric preaching” are incorrectly used as the same or at least synonymous in Greidanus’s works.²⁸ Langley believes that “theocentric

²³Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 118.

²⁴Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 3. See also Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 76.

²⁵Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 10.

²⁶Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 74-75.

²⁷Langley, “When Christ Replaces God,” 1-2.

²⁸Ibid. See also Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 177-83.

preaching embraces a broader and therefore more adequate theological vision” than Christocentric preaching.²⁹

Greidanus himself creates confusion between Christocentric preaching and theocentric preaching. In *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, Greidanus argues that because of Christ’s fulfillment of the Old Testament, “Christocentric preaching is more than theocentric preaching.”³⁰ However, he apparently changes his position in *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, arguing that because Christ was sent by God, accomplished the work of God, and sought the glory of God, a “Christ-centered sermon” is “God-centered.”³¹

In addition, “redemptive-historical preaching” is often used as an alternative term for “Christ-centered preaching.” Langley, however, argues that while redemptive-historical preaching is a God-centered approach to preaching in the historical narrative texts, Christ-centered preaching is a Christocentric approach to preaching in every text.³² Furthermore, some homileticians such as Greidanus alternate among “preaching Christ from every text,” “Christocentric preaching,” and “Christ-centered preaching.”³³ Thus, to avoid such confusion of Christ-centered preaching, finding a proper or relevant definition of and approaches to Christ-centered preaching is the essential and urgent task.

Hermeneutical Issue

Charles Spurgeon, well-known English preacher, once taught a young minister, saying,

²⁹Langley, "When Christ Replaces God," 3.

³⁰Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 118-19.

³¹Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 177-83.

³²Langley, "When Christ Replaces God," 1-2.

³³Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 36-37.

Don't you know young man that from every town, and every village, and every little hamlet in England, wherever it may be, there is a road to London? . . . And so from every text in Scripture, there is a road to the metropolis of the Scriptures, that is Christ. And my dear brother, your business is when you get to a text, to say, now what is the road to Christ? . . . I have never yet found a text that had not got a road to Christ in it, and *if I ever do find one that has not a road to Christ in it, I will make one; I will go over hedge and ditch but I would get at my Master, for the sermon cannot do any good unless there is a savour of Christ in it.* (emphasis mine)³⁴

This illustration shows Spurgeon's passion to preach Christ but suspicion over his approach to preaching Christ is raised.³⁵ Joseph Parker, another well-known preacher in Spurgeon's era, criticized Spurgeon's lack of analysis of the text.³⁶ In addition, different opinions of Spurgeon's hermeneutics and sermons exist among advocates for preaching Christ. Dennis Johnson praises Spurgeon's passion to find Christ in every text. For Johnson, Spurgeon successfully showed that every text of Scripture is on a road that leads to Christ.³⁷ Greidanus, however, criticizes Spurgeon's attempts to make a road to Christ in every text. Greidanus evaluates Spurgeon's sermons as follows: "Spurgeon often pushes typological interpretation into the details and ends up with a form of typologizing which blends into allegorizing."³⁸ He concludes,

Spurgeon makes many errors in his interpretation of Scripture . . . His single-minded concern to preach Jesus Christ often leads him to reading Christ back into the Old Testament text. He generally uses the life of Jesus as a grid for interpreting

³⁴Charles H. Spurgeon, "Christ Precious to Believers" (a sermon delivered at Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, March 13, 1859), accessed November 1, 2012, <http://spurgeon.org/sermons/0242.htm>. See also David L. Larsen, *The Anatomy of Preaching*, 168.

³⁵Larsen, *The Anatomy of Preaching*, 168; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 160. John Talbert also demonstrates shortcomings in Spurgeon's interpretive methods by arguing that Spurgeon usually uses Jesus to interpret the Old Testament. John David Talbert, "Charles Haddon Spurgeon's Christological Homiletics: A Critical Evaluation of Selected Sermons from Old Testament Texts" (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989), 160-70.

³⁶David L. Larsen, *The Company of the Preachers: A History of Biblical Preaching from the Old Testament to the Modern Era* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998), 585.

³⁷Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 16. Goldsworthy also challenges preachers to apply the sermon practice of Spurgeon. Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 32.

³⁸Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 157-58. Greidanus continues showing how Spurgeon did typologizing in a sermon on Abraham offering Isaac.

the Old Testament. In other words, he frequently fails to do justice to the literal sense and the historical context of the Old Testament passages. He does not ask about the intention of the original author; he does not inquire about the message for Israel.³⁹

If Spurgeon's approach to preaching Christ failed to interpret the text faithfully, is there a proper way to do justice to Christ-centered preaching?

According to biblical theology, Christ is the fulfillment of God's redemptive work, so the Old Testament should be understood not only in its historical context, but also in the redemptive-historical context. This means that without understanding Christ's redemptive work, the meaning of the text cannot be fully discerned.⁴⁰ Accordingly, Christ-centered preaching features Christ from every text through biblical theology and its redemptive-historical approach. In other words, according to biblical theology, because Christ is the center of the Bible, every sermon should be focused on Christ.⁴¹

Whether or not biblical theology is the grid to interpret the meaning of the text is, however, questionable. Walter Kaiser believes that the discipline of biblical theology must be related to exegesis. Kaiser, however, does not mean that biblical theology affects the meaning, the significance, or implications of the text. Kaiser expounds on his position related to preaching Christ:

Subsequent developments in the revelation of theology (subsequent to the passage we have under consideration) may (and should, in fact) be brought into our *conclusion or summaries after* we have firmly established on exegetical grounds precisely what the passage means. We do, in fact, have the whole Bible; and we are speaking (usually) to a Christian audience. Therefore, in our summaries we should point out these later developments for the sake of updating and putting everything in its fullest context. However, in no case must that *later* teaching be used exegetically (or in any other way) to unpack the meaning or to enhance the usability of the individual text which is the object of our study.⁴²

³⁹Ibid., 160. See also Talbert, "Charles Haddon Spurgeon's Christological Homiletics," 170-79.

⁴⁰Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 179, 185; Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 226.

⁴¹Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 81, 84, 95.

⁴²Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 140, emphasis in original.

Jason Allen correctly points out that, according to Kaiser, biblical theology is “a matter of sequence and of interpretive weight,” but does not define the meaning of the text.⁴³

In addition, as preaching Christ is defined in various ways, biblical theology encounters the problem of definition.⁴⁴ Depending on how one understands biblical theology, the interpretive methods of and approaches to Christ-centered preaching are very different. Goldsworthy argues this saying that there is no consensus to pin down what the method should entail.⁴⁵ This implies that biblical theology is neither God’s inspiration nor *the* theology, but *a* theology. Then how can one utilize biblical theology to confirm the meaning of the text? Thus, a special concern in this study is to compare the hermeneutics of Christ-centered preaching and to evaluate hermeneutical issues in Christ-centered preaching.

Homiletical Issue

A significant concern in Christ-centered preaching is how to connect the text to Christ. As mentioned above, Christ-centered preaching is heavily influenced by biblical theology. The goal of Christ-centered preaching is thus to show how Christ completes God’s redemptive plan in every text.⁴⁶ In a broader sense, Chapell contends that Christ-centered preaching is to show how each text relates to Christ.⁴⁷ However, for some, it seems that the text is like a springboard to jump to Christ. This is obviously shown in Goldsworthy’s sermons. Goldsworthy usually selects a few chapters or even a whole

⁴³Jason Keith. Allen, "The Christ-Centered Homiletics of Edmund Clowney and Sidney Greidanus in Contrast with the Human Author-Centered Hermeneutics of Walter Kaiser" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011): 34.

⁴⁴T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, "Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 3-26.

⁴⁵Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 35, 38-49, 76-77; Langley, "When Christ Replaces God," 1-2.

⁴⁶Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 74-75.

⁴⁷Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 279.

book as a sermon text, and he moves quickly to Christ and the gospel from the text.⁴⁸

But where is application in Christ-centered preaching? Hendrik Krabbendam criticizes redemptive-historical preaching:

Indeed, preaching in the redemptive-historical tradition is often comparable to a ride in a Boeing 747 high above the landscape with its hot deserts, its snowpeaked mountains, its wide rivers, its dense forests, its open prairies, its craggy hills and its deep lakes. The view is panoramic, majestic, impressive, breathtaking, and always comfortable. But there is one problem. The Christian is not “above” things. He is in the middle of things. He is trekking through the landscape.⁴⁹

As Krabbendam points out, redemptive-historical preaching emphasizes mainly God’s redemptive work in Christ as the overarching theme throughout the whole of Scripture and in a sermon with a resultant lack of practical application. Concerns over the lack of application in redemptive-historical preaching are also shown in John Frame’s regretful expression:

I get the impression that some who stress redemptive history really want to avoid “practical” application. They want the whole sermon to focus on Christ, not on what works the believer should do. They want it to focus on gospel, not on law. So they want the sermon to evoke praise of Christ, not to demand concrete change in people’s behavior. In their mind, Christocentricity excludes any sustained focus on specific practical matters.⁵⁰

A position similar to Frame’s is held by Daniel Doriani, who points out his concern over application in redemptive-historical preaching:

⁴⁸Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 223. Goldsworthy selects 1 Kings as a sermon text titled “Blessing to the Nations” and 1 Kings 3-4, titled “Solomon and Wisdom.” Graeme Goldsworthy, “Blessings to the Nations” (a sermon delivered at Hunter Gospel Ministries Preaching Conference, Australia, September 2, 2004), Christian Library Resource, accessed November 26, 2012, <http://www.christianlibrary.org.au/audio/goldsworthy.html>; idem, “Solomon and Wisdom” (a sermon delivered at Hunter Gospel Ministries Preaching Conference, Australia, September 2, 2004), Christian Library Resource, accessed November 26, 2012, <http://www.christianlibrary.org.au/audio/goldsworthy.html>.

⁴⁹Hendrick Krabbendam critiques a certain extreme in the redemptive-historical homiletical tradition. Hendrick Krabbendam, “Hermeneutics and Preaching,” in *The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Samuel T. Logan, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1986), 235.

⁵⁰John Frame, “Ethics, Preaching, and Biblical Theology,” Third Millennium Ministries, accessed October 15, 2013, http://thirdmill.org/magazine/article.asp/link/http:%5E%5Ethirdmill.org%5Earticles%5Ejoh_frame%5EPT.Frame.Ethics_Preaching_BT.html/at/Ethics,%20Preaching,%20and%20Biblical%20Theology.

The zeal to trace each passage to its culmination in Christ can obliterate the distinctiveness of particular passages. At worst, RHP [Redemptive Historical Preaching] repeats one sermon, albeit a very good one, every week.

Some advocates of RHP are wary of any specific application, fearing that calls to change behavior will usurp the Spirit's role in application and drift into anthropocentric moralism. Zeal to avoid moralistic readings of narrative leads some to refuse all moral uses of narratives. But narratives edify too. Indicatives precede imperatives, but there *are* imperatives.⁵¹

Others, such as Greidanus, contend that Christ-centered preaching does not lack application. For Greidanus, application is merely exposition of the text, ending with Christ. He believes that the explication of God's Word itself becomes application. In *Sola Scriptura*, he argues:

Because the Word is applied, because Scripture is kerygma, it is incorrect to see the sermon as an objective explication of this Word to which an application must be added to make it relevant. . . . Accordingly, the whole sermon from A to Z is explication, while from the very first sentence it is also addressed in an applicatory way.⁵²

Greidanus contends that if the text is understood and explained in Christ, the sermon itself becomes application without an additional component. In *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, Greidanus further explains his understanding of application:

To focus the sermon on Christ is not to narrow relevance. True relevance lies precisely in the biblical theocentric-Christocentric message and its required response. Moreover, with the focus on Christ, the possibilities of application are as broad as life itself. John Stott gives us a hint of the relevance of Christ for all of life: "To encounter Christ is to touch reality and experience transcendence. He gives us a sense of self-worth or personal significance, because he assures us of God's love for us. He sets us free from guilt because he died for us, . . . and from paralyzing fear because he reigns. . . . He gives meaning to marriage and home, work and leisure, personhood and citizenship."⁵³

In conclusion, Langley worries about a negative impact of Christ-centered preaching, stating that it may (1) fail to honor God the Father as he deserves to be honored, (2) misunderstand the gospel, (3) learn an inaccurate way of interpreting

⁵¹Daniel M. Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2001), 296.

⁵²Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 157.

⁵³John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 154, as quoted in Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 291.

Scripture, (4) grow bored with sermons that all seem to say the same thing, and (5) practice a privatized or Jesus-only pop spirituality.⁵⁴

Thesis

This dissertation presents a Christ-saturated approach to expository preaching, one which resolves some of the inherent hermeneutical and homiletical difficulties in prevailing models of Christ-centered preaching. A Christ-saturated approach does not nullify the contributions of Christ-centered preaching, but suggests an alternative definition of preaching Christ. In addition, Christ-saturated preaching pays attention to homiletical needs such as pastoral context, which some Christ-centered approaches to preaching neglect. In other words, a Christ-saturated approach to expository preaching claims that preaching Christ is not to find the meaning of every text in Christ, but to show how to apply the meaning of the text in a Christ-saturated context. Thus, this dissertation evaluates the definition, hermeneutics, and homiletics of Christ-centered preaching and then establishes valid disciplines in hermeneutics and homiletics for a Christ-saturated approach to expository preaching.

Methodology

A special concern in this study is to identify valid hermeneutical and homiletical methods for Christ-saturated preaching for contemporary preachers. To fulfill this goal, this study explores prevailing models of Christ-centered preaching. For prevailing models of Christ-centered preaching, I have chosen Edmund Clowney, Sidney Greidanus, Graeme Goldsworthy, and Bryan Chapell, due to their prominent contributions to Christ-centered preaching. The books, articles, lectures, and sermons of these homileticians are carefully analyzed and compared. Audio and published sermons

⁵⁴Langley, "When Christ Replaces God," 1.

of these scholars are used to demonstrate how they utilize their hermeneutical and homiletical methods in their sermon practices.

Background

Interest in redemptive-historical preaching has been raised in Korea, starting with the translation of *Preaching and Biblical Theology* by Clowney into Korean in 1982. Greidanus's *Sola Scriptura* was translated into Korean in 1989, and Chapell's work, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, was translated in 1999. Goldsworthy's book, titled *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* was translated in 2002. Korean theologians and pastors also have written many books and articles regarding redemptive-historical preaching and Christ-centered preaching since 1982. I have been challenged to preach Christ since my seminary years in Korea.

At the same time, however, I have asked myself, "Is it right to preach Christ in every text on every Sunday?" Does a Christ-centered approach to preaching have a proper hermeneutical method? If I deliver a Christ-centered message in the pulpit every Sunday, does it meet the needs of my audience? Such a concern regarding the hermeneutics and homiletics of Christ-centered preaching has been my consistent interest and challenge whenever I preach.

In addition, I wrote a paper regarding Geerhardus Vos and his preaching when I took a doctoral seminar at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 2010. The main reason why I chose Vos was his influence over homileticians such as Edmund Clowney and Dennis Johnson, who applied Vos's biblical theology to preaching. Moreover, the sermons and lectures of Clowney and Johnson at Westminster Theological Seminary have influenced the evangelical American pulpit. Accordingly, my doctoral seminar paper on Vos was an initial step to answering my concerns regarding the hermeneutics and homiletics of Christ-centered preaching.

Furthermore, while I have been wrestling with the issues surrounding the hermeneutics and homiletics of Christ-centered preaching during my doctoral work with professor Vogel, his lectures and insights have enlightened my understanding of Christ-centered preaching. Thus, this dissertation will explore the hermeneutical and homiletical methods of Christ-centered preaching in order to find a proper discipline for preaching Christ.

CHAPTER 2
SURVEY OF DUTCH REDEMPTIVE-HISTORICAL
PREACHING AND CHRIST-CENTERED
PREACHING

Introduction

The interpretive methods of Christ-centered preaching vary among homileticians; nonetheless, understanding of the Bible based on God’s redemptive history in Christ is the shared hermeneutical kernel of Christ-centered preaching. That is, every part of the Bible should be interpreted in a redemptive-historical context in order to find the meaning of the text.¹ Such an emphasis on the redemptive-historical context is not a new idea. Like Christ-centered preaching, redemptive-historical preaching, which has predominated in the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in the Netherlands (GKN), has emphasized the importance of God’s redemptive history in Christ since the 1940s.²

Because of its geographical position, lying between Germany, France, and England, the Netherlands was heavily influenced by the reformed theologians, especially John Calvin.³ In church services, the main focus of liturgy was the sermon.⁴ The ethical

¹Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1961), 87-92.

²Sidney Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts* (Toronto: Wedge, 1970); C. Trimp, *Preaching and the History of Salvation: Continuing an Unfinished Discussion*, trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman (Dyer, IN: Mid-America Reformed Seminary, 1996); and James Visscher, “Redemptive-Historical Preaching Revisited,” in *Unity in Diversity: Studies Presented to Prof. Dr. Jelle Faber on the Occasion of His Retirement*, ed. Riemer Faber (Hamilton, Ontario: Senate of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches, 1989), 97-114.

³Stephen E. Smallman, *What Is a Reformed Church?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003), 8. The influence of reformed theologians prevailed throughout this country, and people looked at the world through a theological prism. See also W. C. van Unnik, *The Present Position of Dutch Protestant Theology* (Richmond, VA: Union Theological Seminary Press, 1961), 7. Unnik introduces a Dutch saying, “One Dutchman a theologian; two Dutchmen a church; three Dutchmen a separation” to show how the reformed theology influenced the people of the Netherlands.

emphasis of the sermon, however, had gradually come to prevail in the pulpit, and exemplary preaching reached its peak among most ministers in the Netherlands during the 1920s and 30s.⁵ Redemptive-historical preaching then appeared as a reaction to exemplary preaching, which interprets the historical texts as an illustration or example. Redemptive-historical preaching argues that a biblical figure is not a model Christian whom one has to imitate, but one who reveals God's redemptive work.⁶ Redemptive-historical preaching then influenced the American pulpit through Reformed homiletics such as Clowney and his followers in the 1960s.

In addition, by publishing *Sola Scriptura*, which deals with the controversy between exemplary preaching and redemptive-historical preaching in the 1940s, Greidanus contributed to an increasing interest of American reformed theologians and homiletics in Dutch redemptive-historical preaching. Since then, Christ-centered preaching has replaced or been often used as an alternative term for redemptive-historical preaching. In this sense, exploring Dutch redemptive-historical preaching in comparison to exemplary preaching offers a historical background for Christ-centered preaching. Therefore, as far as tracing the development of Christ-centered preaching is concerned, the Netherlands is a good starting place.

This chapter traces the historical development of Christ-centered preaching back to the controversy between the exemplary preaching and redemptive-historical preaching that raged in the Dutch Reformed Church in the 1940s. The historical examination provides one with important features of exemplary preaching and redemptive-historical preaching. At the same time, I explore how Dutch redemptive-historical preaching and other sources influenced the American pulpit through

⁴Unnik, *The Present Position of Dutch Protestant Theology*, 8.

⁵Unnik, *The Present Position of Dutch Protestant Theology*, 16.

⁶Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 39-42.

Geerhardus Vos, Edmund Clowney, Sidney Greidanus, Graeme Goldsworthy, and Bryan Chapell.

Dutch Theology and Its Impact on Exemplary Preaching

The Protestant Reformation heavily influenced the Netherlands.⁷ The reformed theologians understood preaching as explication and application of the Bible.⁸ This reformed heritage faced serious challenges raised by evolutionary theory and liberal theology, and the churches in the Netherlands were no exception. First, Darwin's *Origin of the Species* was a bombshell to those who advocated God's design in nature, as expressed in Scripture. Darwinian evolutionary theory eventually attained great popularity and became the leading scientific interpretation of the origins of life.⁹ However, Darwin's view of natural selection conflicted with the traditional view of divine design, which had been widely accepted, and his influence brought about different approaches to the Bible, especially the book of Genesis, among Dutch theologians.¹⁰

Second, more to the point, in the nineteenth century, theological liberalism and its consequences swept throughout the Netherlands, creating doubt about what the Dutch

⁷I am deeply indebted to Sidney Greidanus, who summarizes the controversy between exemplary preaching and redemptive-historical preaching in the Netherlands. Above all, his academic research and translation of Dutch sources are helpful to understand the controversy in 1940s. In addition, Trimp gives a balanced view over redemptive-historical preaching. Trimp does not completely concur with what Greidanus concluded regarding the controversy in *Sola Scriptura*. Trimp thus summarizes and compares several perspectives of the redemptive-historical group and gives a direction to redemptive-historical preaching.

⁸Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 92.

⁹Harold Miller, "The Voice of God: Natural or Supernatural," in *Preaching in American History*, ed. DeWitte Holland (Nashville: Abingdon, 1969), 222.

¹⁰For further information regarding the debate of creation and evolution among the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, see Abraham C. Flipse, "The Origins of Creationism in the Netherlands: The Evolution Debate among Twentieth-century Dutch Neo-Calvinists," *Church History* 81, no. 1 (March 2012): 104-47. The issue about whether the story of the fall (Gen 2-3) should be taken literally was raised among the Reformed Church in the 1920s.

Reformed Church had held since John Calvin. Under theological liberalism, the authority of the Bible was gradually ignored, and higher criticism became a major method to interpret or study the Bible. Van Unnik points out the noticeable change of an interest in theology among Dutch theologians: “Methods in scientific work on the Bible have been more generally accepted by all schools than before.”¹¹ Liberal Protestantism prevailed among preachers, and its consequences led to the secession of the Dutch Reformed Church in 1834.¹² In addition, “anthropology” gradually took the place of theology under liberal theology and an interest in Christian ethics gradually grew.¹³

James Visscher specifically points out how liberal theology influenced not only theology, but also preaching among the Dutch reformed preachers. According to Visscher, liberal theology after the 1920s caused pastors to interpret the historical narrative texts moralistically and to preach each event or character as a model Christian.¹⁴

¹¹Unnik, *The Present Position of Dutch Protestant Theology*, 13. Hughes Old also recognizes the influence of liberal theology on preaching in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For instance, Joannes H. Scholten (1811-1885) was a leading professor of systematic theology at Leiden University and taught rationalistic theology and higher criticism. In addition, even young Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), who later became a highly respected leader among the Reformed churches in the Netherlands, was heavily influenced by liberal theology when he studied at Leiden University, but he later became a conservative theologian through his pastoral experience at Utrecht. See Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church: The Modern Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 45-50.

¹²Unnik, *The Present Position of Dutch Protestant Theology*, 8. During the scientific and theological challenges in the nineteenth and twentieth century, the Secession occurred in the Netherlands in 1834, which dramatically changed the Reformed Church. I, however, do not explore the Secession of 1834 because it was not a major reason to change preaching in the Reformed Church in the Netherlands. For more information about the Secession of 1834, see Jasper Vree, “The Dominating Theology within the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk after 1815 in Its Relation to the Secession of 1834,” in *Breaches and Bridges: Reformed Subcultures in the Netherlands, Germany, and the United States*, ed. George Harinck and Hans Krabbendam (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 2000): 33-47, and Al Janssen, “A Perfect Agreement? The Theological Context of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church in the First half of the Nineteenth Century,” in *Breaches and Bridges: Reformed Subcultures in the Netherlands, Germany, and the United States*, ed. George Harinck and Hans Krabbendam (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 2000), 49-60.

¹³Unnik, *The Present Position of Dutch Protestant Theology*, 14.

¹⁴Visscher, “Redemptive-Historical Preaching Revisited,” 98. Visscher also claims that “Moving from popularized theology to the more scholarly front, we see that there too exemplarism continues to be promoted. An examination of the hermeneutics of liberation theology reveals that its treatment of the exodus, of the poor, of the history and institutions of the Old Testament, is largely devoid

This is how Bultmann understood the historical texts. Bultmann interpreted a historical event in the Bible as “one which belongs to human existence,” arguing, “We can see our image mirrored in the O.T.”¹⁵ There is no doubt that Bultmann preached the historical texts using the exemplary approach.¹⁶ Even though Bultmann’s influence on Dutch theology is less than that of Barth, Unnik agrees that Bultmann’s writings were enough to influence Dutch reformed theologians and homiletics who read and studied them.¹⁷ Thus, it is correct to claim that the reformed preachers, who preferred exemplary preaching, were directly and indirectly influenced by Bultmann’s exemplary approach to the historical texts.

In addition, neo-orthodoxy and the religious experience promoted by Karl Barth completely swept the Netherlands and heavily influenced preaching.¹⁸ Before Barth appeared, Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) led the Calvinistic movement in the Reformed Church. In Kuyper’s time, sermons were full of solid exposition of the Bible. A hortatory moral address was avoided; instead, a message derived from faithfully exegeting the text was delivered in the pulpit.¹⁹ The theological mood changed, however. As Kuyper grew old and faded from sight, Barth became “a new hero.”²⁰ The reformed preachers who

of redemptive-historical insight and perspective.” Edmund Clowney, “Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures,” in *The Preacher and Preaching*, ed. S. T. Logan Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1986):182-83.

¹⁵Rudolf Bultmann, *Glauben und Verstehen*, I, 336, as quoted in Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 11.

¹⁶Greidanus argues that because of his theology, Bultmann had no choice but to preach in exemplary manner from the historical texts, and that is just what Dutch exemplary preaching did. See Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 12.

¹⁷Unnik, *The Present Position of Dutch Protestant Theology*, 14.

¹⁸Rudolf Van Reest, *Schilder's Struggle for the Unity of the Church*, trans. Theodore Plantinga (Neerlandia, Canada: Inheritance, 1990), 31-37, 40ff., 143, 162, 165, 181-87. According to Reest, no student at the Free University was inspired by Abraham Kuyper and his works, and Barth replaced Kuyper in the early 1920s. Because Kuyper, who founded the Free University, died in 1920, this trend demonstrates that the influence of Kuyper in the Netherlands rapidly declined after Barth’s appearance.

¹⁹Unnik, *The Present Position of Dutch Protestant Theology*, 7-8.

²⁰Thomas Geoff, “Learning from the Life of Dr. Klaas Schilder (Part I),” *Banner of Truth*,

were influenced by Barth paid more attention to the religious experience of dialectic theology in preaching. Brillenburg Wurth warned of such a theological movement:

This emphasis on “the Christ of experience” had another consequence. [The young generation’s] faith in Christ was ultimately grounded in what they had been able to experience of Him personally. This meant that they came to take a much freer stand in relation to the Bible and were much less apprehensive than the Reformed were when it came to Biblical criticism, which was always advancing in their time. . . . They regarded faith as inconceivable apart from the Word of God. But for them that Word of God did not coincide with the Bible; ultimately, the Word of God was Christ Himself. Therefore they often reduced the Scripture to the testimony they contained concerning Christ. . . . As for the rest of the Bible’s contents, they had no great objection to historical-critical investigation of them, even if such investigation ended in far-reaching negative results.²¹

Under the influence of Barth, the reformed preachers were interested in a religious experience of Christ. Encountering Christ became *the* goal of the sermon. The reformed preachers thus emphasized subjective applications to evoke religious experience through directly applying the experience of the biblical figures to their audiences.²² Because of such an emphasis on religious experience, the role of the audience was changed. The people in the pews became central. Thus, it can be said that liberal theology’s view of the Bible and Barth’s emphasis on religious experience had a significant impact on Dutch exemplary preaching in the historical narrative texts among the reformed homileticians during the 1920s and 30s.²³

(January 1999), under “The Post War Years in Holland,” accessed May 7, 2013, <http://banneroftruth.org/us/resources/articles/1999/learning-from-the-life-of-dr-klaas-schilder-part-i>. See also George Harinck, “The Early Reception of the Theology of Karl Barth in The Netherlands (1919-1926),” *Zeitschrift für Dialektische Theologie* 17, no. 2 (2001): 179-80.

²¹Reest, *Schilder's Struggle for the Unity of the Church*, 44-45.

²²The subjective application is to draw parallels between the biblical figures and the contemporary audience and then to evoke religious experience. See Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 96.

²³William Young, “Historic Calvinism and Neo-Calvinism,” *Westminster Theological Journal*, 36, no. 1 (Fall 1973): 49. One of leaders of exemplary preaching, Dijk argues that the apostolic preaching is normative for exemplary side because it is always preaching Christ and Him crucified. In other words, like redemptive-historical preaching and neo-orthodoxy of Karl Barth, exemplary preaching pays attention to Christ and his redemptive work as a central theme in a sermon. See also Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 1, 106.

Proponents of exemplary preaching then argued that exemplary preaching was biblical. Exemplary preacher as well as reformed theologian, Huyser, asserted that exemplary preaching was not *a* way to preach in the historical texts, but *the* way: “We cannot do without ‘exemplary’ preaching. Holy Scripture leads the way. Even if there had been no one in the whole Christian church who had followed Scripture in this, we would still count it our duty to proceed in a deductive—‘exemplary’ manner in explicating and applying historical texts.”²⁴

For Huyser, exemplary preaching was a hidden treasure that preachers must utilize to understand the historical text, to explain it, and to apply it to their audiences. Elsewhere, Huyser argued that even Jesus used examples as ethical models or lessons: “On principle the example of the preachers in the Old and New Testament is normative for everyone preaching the Word of God. Prophets, apostles, sages, psalmists, and especially Christ used ‘exempelen’ time and again in their preaching. We must conform ourselves to these examples.”²⁵ With this argument, Huyser pointed out that not only did prophets and apostles employ historical texts as examples, but so did Jesus Christ.

Greidanus claims that such an exemplary approach to the Bible had been practiced in the early church. According to Greidanus, Clement understood the Bible as a “Book of ethical models,” or a “picture gallery,” and Justin Martyr encouraged the readers to follow the examples in the Bible.²⁶ A Lutheran theologian, Johann Reu, claims that an exemplary approach to the Bible was followed by Reformed theologians such as Luther and Calvin. Luther understood that the Bible is full of fine examples. For instance, Reu quotes from one of Luther’s sermons: “[W]e read Moses for the sake of the fine

²⁴P. J. Huyser, “‘Exemplarische’ Prediking,” *Gereformeerd Theologisch Tijdschrift* 51 (1951): 17, as quoted in Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 103.

²⁵P. J. Huyser, *Het Exempel in de Prediking* (Groningen Germany: Niemeijer, 1952), 174, as quoted in Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 103.

²⁶Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 10.

examples of faith, love and the cross in the good holy fathers Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and so on to the end, by which examples we are to learn to trust and love God.”²⁷ Reu also argues that Calvin presents the saints of the Old Testament as “patterns and warning examples.”²⁸ Proponents of exemplary preaching thus say that exemplary preaching is not a new way to preach the Bible, but it follows the traditional style practiced in Church history.

The Controversy between Exemplary Preaching and Redemptive-Historical Preaching

A change in preaching was noticed among reformed preachers after 1935. After H. Dooyeweerd’s publication of *Philosophy of the Law-Idea*, the Association for Calvinistic Philosophy was formed in 1935. According to Greidanus, most advocates of redemptive-historical preaching were members of this association and criticized exemplary preaching by arguing that every event in the Bible should be interpreted in its redemptive-historical context.²⁹ This criticism provoked the controversy between exemplary preaching and redemptive-historical preaching among reformed preachers in the Netherlands during the 1940s.³⁰

²⁷Johan M. Reu, *Homiletics: A Manual of the Theory and Practice of Preaching* (Chicago: Wartburg, 1922), 278.

²⁸Reu, *Homiletics*, 280.

²⁹Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 23. See also Cornelis Pronk, “Preaching in the Dutch Calvinist Tradition (1),” *Banner of Truth* (July 2006), “The New Direction,” accessed May 7, 2013, <http://banneroftruth.org/us/resources/articles/2006/preaching-in-the-dutch-calvinist-tradition-1>.

³⁰Greidanus lists five objections to exemplary preaching: objections to the exemplary view of Scripture, the exemplary method of interpreting historical texts, the exemplary preaching of historical texts, exemplary-subjective preaching, and using the preachers in Scripture as examples. Visscher points out 6 critiques of exemplary preaching: anthropocentric, much emphasis of moralizing and spiritualizing, lack of biblical unity, lack of uniqueness of historical narratives, lack of progressive revelation, and lack of whole context of the Bible. However, there are three common areas between Greidanus and Visscher, the view of the Scripture, hermeneutics, and homiletics. In order prevent confusion, Greidanus introduces proponents of exemplary preaching, who are J. H. Bavinck, K. Dijk, J. Douma, Ph. J. Huyser, J. Schelhaas, and N. Streefkerk and of redemptive-historical preaching, who are Schilder, Holwerda, Van’t Veer, Herman Bavinck, and Van Dijk. Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 42, 56-120; Visscher, “Redemptive-Historical Preaching Revisited,” 99-102.

The main concern over exemplary preaching in the historical narrative texts is whether or not the preaching text itself can be used as an illustration or example. Specifically speaking, exemplary preachers argued that the persons in historical narrative texts were shown as good examples to be imitated or warning examples to be shunned. Huyser writes, paraphrasing 2 Timothy 3:16: “Everything recorded in Scripture about persons and other matters is indisputable truth, profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”³¹ It is not clear whether or not Huyser argued that Scripture was all about persons and other matters. It is, however, true that for Huyser, everything about persons and other matters in the Scripture is indisputable and practical truth. In this sense, exemplifying the biblical figures or their actions is a legitimate biblical method.

Redemptive-historical preachers, however, argued that exemplifying certain truths in the historical texts failed to explain the specific purpose of those texts. Klass Schilder, a pioneer of Dutch redemptive-historical preaching, claimed that the purpose of the historical texts was to reveal God’s redemptive work: “All history is sacred history because all history is in reality God working toward his goal.”³² For Schilder, God has worked in history for his ultimate goal, so all history, sacred or profane, represents God’s redemptive work. In addition, redemptive-historical homileticians understood that history is unified in the sense that it moves toward the ultimate goal of God’s redemptive work in Christ.³³ It means that no event is independent, but rather that it is related to God’s ultimate goal, redeeming his people through Christ. For redemptive-historical preachers, exemplifying certain truths was not only to degrade redemptive history to profane history, but also to separate individual biblical events from God’s redemptive work.

³¹Huyser, *Het Exempel in de Prediking*, 177, as quoted in Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 57.

³²Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 122.

³³*Ibid.*, 123.

Another reformed preacher, Holwerda, inspired by Schilder, also criticized the view of Scripture in exemplary preaching: “[W]hen one has chosen a historical text as preaching-text, that text must be taken in accordance with its own nature and no longer as illustration.”³⁴ The nature of the historical narrative texts is, according to Holwerda, not to present illustrations, but historical facts. These historical facts have been closely interwoven with God’s redemptive works in Christ. Thus, it is safe to say that for the redemptive-historical side, every historical fact is unified under God’s redemptive work in Christ, and preachers should reveal God’s redemptive work in every historical text.

In summary, reformed preachers stuck to *Sola Scriptura*.³⁵ They believed that the Bible was the Word of God and authoritative for the faith and practice of Christians. The exemplary group of reformed preachers, however, had a different view of Scripture. They believed that the purpose of the historical texts was to present biblical lessons to Christians by presenting the biblical figures as an illustration or example while those in the redemptive-historical camp argued that the historical texts should be understood in the whole scope of God’s redemptive work. That is because the historical texts have been recorded to show how each biblical event is related to God’s redemptive work in Christ.

Redemptive-Historical Preaching in the Netherlands

From the survey of the controversy, one can see common emphases of redemptive-historical preaching in three areas: the view of Scripture, hermeneutics, and homiletics. These emphases are explored as the characteristics of redemptive-historical preaching in the Netherlands because these common emphases of Dutch redemptive-historical preaching became shared hermeneutical and homiletical methods of Christ-centered preaching in the American pulpit.

³⁴B. Holwerda, *Begonnen Hebbende van Mozes* (Terneuzen, The Netherlands: Littooku, 1953), 87, as quoted in Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 132-33.

³⁵Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 1, 60.

The View of Scripture: The Unity of the Bible in Christ

The redemptive-historical side presupposed the unity of the Bible as setting forth God's redemptive work in Christ to save the world.³⁶ Schilder explained redemptive history as "the successive realization in time of God's thoughts of peace for us according to his fixed plan, and the fulfillment in time of this work-program which Father, Son, and Spirit decided upon before time."³⁷ His explanation introduces some core ideas of redemptive history and of the Bible. According to Schilder's expression, God's redemptive plan is fixed before time and fulfilled based on the time set by God. Further, God's redemptive plan is unified, decided by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In addition, Schilder's expression "the successive realization in time" refers to progressive development of redemptive history.³⁸ Even though a single event occurs in a different redemptive-historical stage, each biblical event moves toward God's complete redemption in Christ. Any single event cannot be separated from Christ, who completes God's redemptive work. This implies that Christ is the center of the historical texts. Thus, the redemptive-historical side argued that God's redemptive history is "a progression in unity and a unity in progression."³⁹

The redemptive-historical side, however, limited the emphasis of redemptive history to the historical texts.⁴⁰ Redemptive-historical preachers railed against exemplary

³⁶C. Trimp, *Preaching and the History of Salvation: Continuing an Unfinished Discussion*, trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman (Dyer, IN: Mid-America Reformed Seminary, 1996), 64-66, 73.

³⁷Klass Schilder, "'De Spits' der Passchprediking: Geen Openbarings-, doch Heils-historie," *De Reformatie*, 21 (1946): 225, as quoted in Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 123. Schilder also regarded the characteristic of God's redemptive history as "the progression in the work and Word of God." Trimp, *Preaching and the History of Salvation*, 83.

³⁸Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 124.

³⁹*Ibid.*

⁴⁰Redemptive-historical side distinguishes the historical texts from the other genre such as the Prophets and the Epistles, which consist of dogma and ethics. See Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 131-33.

preaching because they thought that exemplary preaching ignored the historical purpose of the historical texts, namely God's redemptive plan in each event. The redemptive-historical side thus narrowed the debate to the historical texts, not the whole Bible. Schilder continued, "Historical texts have another purpose; in them God reveals 'his coming to the world in Christ.' So if one desires to preach about, e.g., the internal struggle of a Christian, he must select 'another text, and then by all means use illustrations from history.'"⁴¹ Schilder's argument demonstrates that the redemptive-historical side does not deny a possible way to use historical texts as illustration. The historical texts are, however, designed to reveal God's redemptive history in Christ as a unity.⁴²

Hermeneutics: Organic and Synthetic Interpretation

Organic and synthetic interpretive methods are adopted by the redemptive-historical side to view the historical texts as a unity and as God's progressive revelation. Organic interpretation views the historical texts in the whole of redemptive history by emphasizing their unity. Schilder explained the organic interpretation as follows: "[O]ne must view the text in immediate connection with one general scheme, namely the unity of redemptive history, the unity of God's grand, never shattered, never fragmented, single self-revelation in the Logos."⁴³ The general scheme is God's complete redemption in Christ. So this organic interpretation demonstrates that the meaning of the historical texts can be understood by connecting it with the totality of redemptive history, which is fulfilled in Christ.

⁴¹Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 132-33.

⁴²Ibid., 151.

⁴³Klass Schilder, "Iets over de Eenheid der 'Heilsgeschiedenis' in Verband met de Predking," *De Reformatie* 11 (1930/31): 373, as quoted in Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 135.

In addition, synthetic interpretation seeks to understand the specific relationship of elements within the text. Compared to the alleged atomistic interpretation of exemplary preaching, synthetic interpretation, on the one hand, similarly focuses on elements within the text; on the other hand, it sees the text or elements “as a unit and not as a collection of separate elements.”⁴⁴ Holwerda expounds, “[E]very historical text is a unit, composed, indeed, of a variety of elements, but these elements have formed a very specific synthesis at this point. This special synthesis gives to every text a unique place within the totality of revelation. Thus every text has its own unique content and its own unique application.”⁴⁵

In Holwerda’s words, one can find three important emphases of redemptive-historical interpretation in the historical texts. First, elements in each text are synthetically interwoven. No element is isolated from other elements. Rather, every element works together to reveal God’s redemptive work within a specific redemptive context. Second, because each event occurs in a specific time and place, each event is unique. Third, this uniqueness is meaningful when it is connected to the fullness of redemptive history. The third fact is related to organic interpretation in understanding each event within the whole of redemption.

In summary, the redemptive-historical side attempted to overcome the perceived hermeneutical weaknesses of exemplary preaching. Redemptive-historical preachers synthetically interpreted the historical texts to understand elements within the text. The redemptive-historical side also wanted to see the text in the whole redemptive-

⁴⁴Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 138.

⁴⁵Holwerda, *Begonnen Hebbende van Mozes*, 92, as quoted in Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 138. Elsewhere Holwerda defines application as “making the content of the text concrete for the church here and now. Accordingly, the whole sermon from A to Z is explication, while from the very first sentence it is also addressed in an applicatory way.” This indicates that for Holwerda, application is not an additional statement, but explication can be application. So, if the content is unique, application is also unique. See Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 157.

historical context. It explored how each event was related to other redemptive-historical events in Christ. Thus, it is worthy to note how Greidanus summarizes Dutch redemptive-historical interpretation:

[T]he text (event) must be seen as part of the totality of redemptive history. This brings about both the Christo-centricity and the continuity of this event with all other events in the one redemptive history. This organic interpretation finds its complement in the synthetic interpretation which brings out the uniqueness of the text in the specific synthesis of elements at that particular place in history.⁴⁶

Homiletics: Christocentric Preaching and Applicatory Explication

The redemptive-historical side critiqued what they considered to be the anthropocentric approach of exemplary preaching. For the redemptive-historical side, the historical texts are intended to reveal God's redemption in a given context. Redemptive-historical preaching focused on the role of God in a given context. Redemptive-historical preaching dealt with the biblical figures but significantly focused on how God works through the lives of these figures to reveal His redemption. In this sense, redemptive-historical preaching is theocentric preaching concerned with God and His redemptive work.

In addition, the redemptive-historical side defined its approach to preaching as Christocentric. They emphasized the role of Christ, who has fulfilled God's redemption from the beginning to its completion. The work of Christ cannot be separated from God in any redemptive stage.⁴⁷ Schilder defined Christocentric preaching as preaching Christ, who is "the theme" as "God's office-bearer reaching a certain 'point' of his work-program."⁴⁸ Holwerda also argued that because Christ is the center of redemptive history

⁴⁶Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 140.

⁴⁷Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 141-42, 224.

⁴⁸Klass Schilder, "Iets over de Eenheid der 'Heilsgeschiedenis' in Verband met de Predking," 373, as quoted in Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 143.

and works throughout history, “The whole O.T. is Christocentric.”⁴⁹ Accordingly, because the whole Old Testament is Christocentric, preaching must be Christocentric.

Furthermore, the redemptive-historical side objected to exemplary preaching because of its emphasis on ethical lessons. Advocates of redemptive-historical preaching defined preaching as a “redemptive event” that is “a moment in the ever progressing redemptive history.”⁵⁰ Preaching is to proclaim the Word of God, which is closely related to Christ’s redemptive work. For them, God’s redemptive story is the center of the Bible and understanding God’s redemptive works is sufficient application for one’s audience. They thus argue that added application is not needed because the explicated message becomes an application.⁵¹ In the story of Gideon, for instance, preachers can apply the text not with reference to Gideon’s actions but with God who is the same then and now.⁵² It is not a parallel between then and now, but a parallel between “what God did then and what God does today, and even between the people through whom God worked then and the people through whom the same God will work today.”⁵³ This is a theocentric and applicatory explication. In this connection, Trimp correctly explains the homiletical characteristics of Dutch redemptive-historical preaching:

[In redemptive-historical preaching,] “application” is not the actual word at the end of the sermon. In the whole sermon the Holy Spirit is busy giving us salvation in Christ. “Application,” therefore, is not a part or concluding paragraph of the sermon, but ought to be its characteristic. Undoubtedly the congregation ought to be aware of that; it should not wait for a practical, concrete instruction, but make the whole sermon its own. . . . The whole sermon as ministry must be “applicable.” “Ministry”

⁴⁹B. Holwerda, *De Wijsheid die Behoudt* (Goes, the Netherlands: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1957), 159, as quoted in Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 144. See also B. Holwerda, “The History of Redemption in the Preaching of the Gospel,” *Spindleworks*, accessed May 17, 2014, <http://www.spindleworks.com/library/holwerda/holwerda.htm>.

⁵⁰Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 155.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 157.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 158.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 159.

and “application” are obviously the same word. It is not: ministry=exegesis and application. But in the exegesis, it is ministry=application.⁵⁴

In Dutch redemptive-historical preaching, preachers do not need to add applications to the Word, but only to proclaim the Word. The proclaimed Word becomes application to the persons in the pew through the work of the Holy Spirit as God’s redemptive work in Christ is declared.⁵⁵

In summary, above all, redemptive-historical preaching was a reaction to exemplaristic preaching, which viewed the historical texts as sources of illustration or example. Redemptive-historical preaching disputed the exemplary model, creating the controversy during the 1940s. Opposing the exemplary approach to the historical texts, these advocates suggested a redemptive-historical approach to the historical texts in the view of Scripture, hermeneutics, and homiletics.

Christ-centered Preaching in America

Concerning the history of Christ-centered preaching in America, three lines can be traced. The first is the Geerhardus Vos and Edmund Clowney line, the second is that of Sidney Greidanus, and the third is from Australian theologian Graeme Goldsworthy.⁵⁶

Geerhardus Vos and Edmund Clowney

First, the influence of Clowney upon Christ-centered preaching in America cannot be underestimated. Clowney taught preaching at Westminster Theological Seminary beginning in 1952 and served as its president from 1966 to 1984. Under his

⁵⁴C. Trimp, “Applicable Preaching,” *Diakonia* 2 (1988): 24, as quoted in Visscher, “Redemptive-Historical Preaching Revisited,” 112.

⁵⁵Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 155. This paper discusses the view of redemptive-historical preaching regarding application in detail chap. 5.

⁵⁶The distinctive features of the three lines of Christ-centered preaching in America are examined and discussed in the following chapters. This section explores the flow of Dutch redemptive-historical preaching to Christ-centered preaching in America.

influence, Christ-centered preaching earned popularity among seminarians and alumni of Westminster Theological Seminary and conservative evangelicals in America. Even though he had no opportunity to learn biblical theology directly from Vos, Clowney was completely influenced by Vos's biblical theology and applied it to preaching.⁵⁷

Vos taught at Princeton Theological Seminary from 1892-1932. In his view, biblical theology is the proper method to interpret the Bible through understanding first *how* God reveals Himself in the Bible and then *what* God reveals through His self-disclosure in the Bible. Through biblical theology, Vos recognized the movement of God's revelation and its fulfillment through Christ in history, the Old and New Testaments. For Vos, biblical theology is the hermeneutical tool to interpret and find the meaning of the text.

In this sense, Vos's biblical theology is "God-centered" because God revealed Himself in the Bible through "the incarnation of his Son, the glorious and eternal second person of the Godhead."⁵⁸ God plays the main active role in redemption history through Christ. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. agrees with Vos, saying that biblical theology deals with "the form and contents of revelation from the point of view of the revealing activity of God himself."⁵⁹

While following Vos's approach to biblical theology, in *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, Clowney points out the imbalance in Dutch redemptive-historical preaching. He sought to give place to both redemptive-historical and ethical approaches:

⁵⁷In Dennis E. Johnson's memory of Edmund Clowney, he was a leading Christ-centered preacher who caught the key of Vos's biblical theology. See Dennis E. Johnson, *Heralds of the King*, ed. Dennis E. Johnson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 11-12.

⁵⁸James Dennison, "Introduction," in *The Letters of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. James T. Dennison (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2005), 38.

⁵⁹Geerhardus Vos, "The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and as a Theological Discipline," in *Redemptive history and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980), 6-7.

We do well, then, to avoid setting up a false antithesis between the redemptive-historical approach and what might be called an ethical approach to the Scriptures, particularly in the historical passages. The redemptive-historical approach necessarily yields ethical application, which is an essential part of preaching the Word. Whenever we are confronted with the saving work of God culminating in Christ, we are faced with ethical demands. A religious response of faith and obedience is required. But that response must be evoked by the truth of the particular revelation which is before us.⁶⁰

To Clowney, while exemplary preaching ignored God's redemptive history in the historical passages for ethical application, Dutch redemptive-historical preaching is problematic because of its lack of application. Thus, the Christ-centered preaching that Clowney pursued was a kind of corrective of Dutch redemptive-historical preaching.

Sidney Greidanus

While Clowney's Christ-centered preaching connected with Dutch redemptive-historical preaching through Vos, Greidanus directly introduced Dutch redemptive-historical preaching to the American pulpit in 1970 when he published his dissertation, *Sola Scriptura*. His dissertation dealt with the controversy between exemplary preaching and Dutch redemptive-historical preaching during the 1940s. Greidanus evaluated exemplary preaching and introduced redemptive-historical preaching and its hermeneutical and homiletical methods.⁶¹ After earning his doctoral degree, Greidanus taught at Calvin Theological Seminary and later published *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* in 1988. While the former introduces Dutch redemptive-historical preaching to the American pulpit, the latter contains Greidanus's own approach to preaching Christ in historical narrative, prophetic literature, the Gospels, and the Epistles.⁶² His influence on Christ-centered preaching has continued through subsequent publications: *Preaching*

⁶⁰Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 79-80.

⁶¹Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 121-233.

⁶²Greidanus does not offer preaching Christ from every genre, but from four genres out of seven genres, which he finds in the Bible (narrative, prophecy, wisdom, psalm, gospel, epistle, and apocalypse). Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 23.

Christ from the Old Testament (1999), *Preaching Christ from Genesis* (2007), *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes* (2010), and *Preaching Christ from Daniel* (2012).⁶³

Interestingly, his publications demonstrate that Greidanus's main interest in preaching is to preach Christ not only from the historical texts, but from the whole of Scripture.

Graeme Goldsworthy

Goldsworthy was not influenced by Dutch redemptive-historical preaching. Rather, he was fully inspired by British scholar Donald Robinson. In *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, Goldsworthy expresses his special gratitude to Robinson who discerned the three stages of revelation in the Bible.⁶⁴ Robinson defines typology as the "three stages of revelation" which is the typological structure to see the Bible through Christ and his gospel.⁶⁵ Goldsworthy agrees with Robinson's typological approach to the Bible and develops his macro-typology to understand the Bible through Christ and the gospel.

Goldsworthy's approach to Christ-centered preaching has strongly influenced the English-speaking world since the 1980s, particularly through his teaching and writing ministries. Above all, Goldsworthy's primary concern is a biblical theology that understands the Bible through an overarching theme such as the kingdom of God, the gospel, and Christ-centeredness.⁶⁶ Preaching, for Goldsworthy, is how to deliver his biblical theology through the text every Sunday.

⁶³Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Daniel: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012); idem, *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); idem, *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); and idem, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

⁶⁴Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundation and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 3.

⁶⁵Ibid., 171.

⁶⁶Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom: A Christian Interpretation of the Old Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1981); idem, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Biblical-Theological Foundations and*

Bryan Chapell

Bryan Chapell is one who has been indirectly influenced by Clowney. Chapell published *Christ-Centered Preaching* in 1994 and coined the term “Christ-centered preaching” as an alternative to “redemptive-historical preaching.” Chapell was not taught by Clowney, but his seminary professor, John Sanderson, was trained by Clowney. According to Chapell, Sanderson emphasized the necessity of focusing on the gospel in preaching and provided Chapell with a view of Christ-centered preaching. His seminary training was a time to formulate his Christ-centered approach to the Bible in the pulpit.⁶⁷

Chapell has also been influenced by Greidanus’s writings. Though in seminary Chapell’s preaching was shaped by Sanderson, who was trained by Clowney, during his early pastorate, he was inspired by Greidanus’s writings.⁶⁸ Chapell recalled that Greidanus’s writings saved him from the powerlessness of his preaching to help struggling people apply Scripture to their lives.⁶⁹ Chapell, however, distinguishes his approach to the Bible from Clowney and Greidanus. According to Chapell, Clowney and Greidanus emphasize Christ-centered interpretation in every text; Chapell’s approach is instead pastoral.⁷⁰

Conclusion

Redemptive-historical preaching arose in the Netherlands as a reaction to exemplary preaching. Dutch redemptive-historical preaching warned that exemplary

Principles (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006); and idem, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

⁶⁷Bryan Chapell, e-mail message to author, June 10, 2014.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Bryan Chapell, “Christ-Centered Preaching and Teaching,” *Christianity Today*, accessed May 7, 2013, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2013/july/bryan-chapell-on-christ-centered-preaching-part-one.html?paging=off>.

preaching brought legalism. Even though the historical narrative text stressed God's redemptive work, exemplary preaching, which moralistically interpreted the historical narrative texts and preached each event or character as a model Christian, neglected God's progressive revelation and continuity in the historical narrative texts and only imposed a heavy burden on audiences. Thus, the effort of Dutch redemptive-historical preaching is to redeem biblical preaching that prevailed before Darwinian evolutionary theory and theological liberalism swept through the Netherlands.

In addition, Dutch redemptive-historical preaching, which emphasized God's progressive revelation and continuity in Christ, has influenced the American pulpit through the teaching and writing ministries of Clowney and of Greidanus. Clowney and Greidanus not only played a significant role in introducing Dutch redemptive-historical preaching to the American pulpit; they also endeavored to resolve the weaknesses of Dutch redemptive-historical preaching and to provide an appropriate approach not only to the historical texts, but also to all of Scripture. Goldsworthy is not directly related to Dutch redemptive-historical preaching, but his Christocentric interpretation and preaching have influenced the American pulpit. Chapell, in addition, indirectly influenced by Clowney and Greidanus, introduced Dutch redemptive-historical preaching to the American pulpit and committed himself to promulgating a Christ-centered approach preaching. The definitions and practices of Christ-centered preaching, as seen in these preaching scholars, are developed more fully in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 3

DEFINITIONS AND JUSTIFICATIONS OF CHRIST-CENTERED APPROACHES TO PREACHING

Introduction

Concerning Christ-centered preaching, the first question is “What does it mean to preach Christ?” Since Jesus directed his apostles to spread the gospel in the New Testament era,¹ preaching Christ is a core aspect of Christianity. Homileticians, however, articulate various and complicated terminologies for and approaches to preaching Christ.² After Clowney introduced his approach to redemptive-historical preaching through his teaching and writing ministries in the 1960s, continued interest in a redemptive-historical approach to preaching has persisted.³

Greidanus, who researched Dutch redemptive-historical preaching in his doctoral study, developed redemptive-historical interpretive methods and preaching on

¹Matt 28:19-20; Rom 10:13-15; and 1 Cor 1:17; 2:2.

²Ken Langley, "When Christ Replaces God," *Evangelical Homiletics Society* (October 2008): 1-2.

³Dennis Johnson asserts that Clowney has developed Geerhardus Vos's redemptive-historical hermeneutics and influenced preachers by his teaching and writings. Johnson also argues that Sidney Greidanus, Bryan Chapell, and Graeme Goldsworthy merged into this redemptive-historical movement. In addition, Greidanus has argued, “[C]ontemporary biblical preaching is nothing less than a redemptive event.” Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 9. See also Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 51-67. In addition, Goldsworthy asserts, “[T]he nature of preaching . . . can only be truly defined in terms of the setting forth of the way of salvation.” Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 124. Chapell also states, “Preaching that is true to the Christocentric nature of all Scripture discloses a text’s relationship to Christ’s messianic character and redemptive purposes.” Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 303. See Dennis Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007), 47-48.

biblical literature in *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*. There he contends that the Old Testament as well as the New Testament is definitely Christocentric. So, in *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, Greidanus focuses on how to preach Christ from the Old Testament in order to demonstrate that one can and should preach Christ from every text.⁴ His redemptive-historical approach to preaching is thus identified as Christocentric.⁵

Goldsworthy expresses his ideas about a redemptive-historical approach to preaching in his three books: *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (2000), *Gospel-centered Hermeneutics* (2006), and *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology* (2012).⁶ For Goldsworthy, preaching is an application of Christ-centered biblical theology in the pulpit. Goldsworthy calls his redemptive-historical approach to preaching “gospel-centered preaching.”⁷

In addition, building upon Clowney’s redemptive-historical preaching and Greidanus’s Christocentric preaching, Chapell develops his approach to Christ-centered preaching. In *Christ-Centered Preaching* (1994), Chapell attempts to identify how Christ can be the remedy for the fallen condition of sinners in every text.⁸

⁴For this purpose, Greidanus has continued his writing ministries since 1999. Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Daniel: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012); idem, *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); and idem, *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

⁵Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 118-19. His Christocentric preaching is closely related to theocentric preaching, which concerns God.

⁶Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012); idem, *Gospel-centered Hermeneutics: Biblical-Theological Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006); and idem, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*.

⁷Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 84-96; idem, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*.

⁸Chapell states that Clowney’s preaching influenced his Christ-centered preaching: “When Christ-centered Preaching was published ten years ago, I was launching my redemptive preaching canoe on small stream fed by a few headwaters—the likes of Geerhardus Vos, Edmund Clowney and John

All of the aforementioned authors agree that preaching should be redemptive, so its goal is to preach Christ from every text. Nevertheless, such varied approaches to Christ-centered preaching often not only bring confusion but also may lead preachers to misuse Christ in their sermons. Thus, it is essential to understand first what Christ-centered preaching is and what it is not. This understanding is accomplished by a comparison of the published views of its leading proponents. I have chosen Edmund Clowney, Sidney Greidanus, Graeme Goldsworthy, and Bryan Chapell, due to their prominent contributions to the redemptive-historical approach to preaching. Their teaching and writing ministries and sermons have led many preachers to preach Christ from every text.

Various Terms for Christ-Centered Preaching: Definition and Justification

Christomonistic Preaching

Advocates of Christ-centered preaching reject Christomonistic preaching. According to Goldsworthy, Christomonistic preaching separates Jesus Christ “from God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.”⁹ Greidanus also states that Christomonistic preaching aggressively draws “lines to Christ by way of typology.”¹⁰ Both Goldsworthy and Greidanus believe that Christomonistic preaching fails to represent trinitarian theology but exclusively focuses on Christology as the singular representation of God in a sermon.¹¹

Sanderson.” Bryan Chapell, “The Future of Expository Preaching,” *Presbyterian* 30, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 74.

⁹Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 65. For an understanding of Christomonism, see Paul Knitter, “Christomonism in Karl Barth’s Evaluation of the Non-Christian Religions,” *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 13, no. 1 (1971): 99-121. Knitter explains that Christomonism is Christ in isolation from God: “Barth’s vision of Christ was too narrow, too ‘monistic,’ . . . he set undue limitations on Christ—he missed the breadth of God’s plan of salvation and the religions’ role in this plan. Barth’s understanding of religion and the religions is Christomonistic.” *Ibid.*, 99.

¹⁰Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 8.

¹¹Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 65, and Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and*

Greidanus cites some examples of Christomonistic preaching from Charles Spurgeon and Wilhelm Vischer: “[Spurgeon’s] single-minded desire to preach Jesus Christ isolates the person and work of Christ from the person and work of God the Father.”¹² Greidanus continues that because Vischer ignored God’s progressive revelation, he identified the Old Testament with the New Testament by exclusively focusing on Christ in the Old Testament by typologizing.¹³ Greidanus then concludes that Vischer’s preaching is Christomonistic.¹⁴

The arguments of Goldsworthy and Greidanus indicate that because of its exclusive focus on Christ in isolation from God, Christomonistic preaching ignores God’s progressive revelation, eisegetes the text by Christ, and aggressively moves to Christ from every text without showing any relationship between God and Christ. Rather, preaching Christ should show how Christ has completed God’s redemptive work to avoid the errors of Christomonism.

the Ancient Text, 118.

¹²Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 162. According to Greidanus, Spurgeon often makes many errors in his interpretation of the Bible by reading Christ back into the Old Testament and by using an unwarranted way such as typologizing to find Christ. So, to Spurgeon, the Old Testament is a springboard to move to Christ.

¹³Ibid., 174. Greidanus quotes G. C. Berkouwer: “Vischer presents parallels without making plain the redemptive-historical perspective and, for that reason, his exegesis strikes us as arbitrary. He is not sufficiently aware that the Old Testament witness to Christ is embedded in a long history in which the witness concerning redemption is related to God’s guidance of Israel.” G. C. Berkouwer, *The Person of Christ*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 128, as quoted in Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 175.

¹⁴For Christomonism of Vischer, see Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 163-76. Vischer interpreted the Old Testament texts through Jesus Christ. Greidanus agrees that this is Vischer’s contribution. Greidanus, however, argues that Vischer did not connect the text with God the Father, but only with Jesus Christ.

Edmund Clowney: Redemptive-Historical Preaching

Biblical justification of redemptive-historical preaching. Clowney, who utilized Vos's biblical theology in preaching, finds the authority of preaching from the authority of the Word of God, which is embodied in Christ. Since God's sovereign Word was revealed in the course of God's deliverances of His people and fulfilled by Christ, Clowney argues, the authority of God's Word, which is the basis of all authority in preaching, is unfolded in Christ-centered biblical theology.¹⁵ Clowney means that since God's Word was fulfilled by Christ, not only the New Testament, but so too the Old Testament witnesses to Christ.

Concerning Luke 24:25-45, Clowney asserts that Jesus himself taught the disciples to read the Old Testament through Christ.¹⁶ Clowney shows how Christ fulfilled the OT promises by his sufferings and resurrection.¹⁷ In addition, God's sovereign Word, God's covenant, God's prophecy, and all teachings of the Old Testament, which were fulfilled by Christ, show Christ-centeredness.¹⁸ Above all, Clowney insists that Christ's coming as Messiah fulfilled "the Old Testament pattern of objective revelation and authoritative teaching."¹⁹ Clowney means that because all of the Old Testament is

¹⁵Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), 30. Clowney argues, "The authority of the written Word, which is unfolded in biblical theology as the basis of all authority in preaching, is denied or minimized. For a genuine renewal of authority in preaching, the biblical theology of verbal revelation must be studied."

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 30-31. See also Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 39.

¹⁷Clowney explains that many passages in the New Testament demonstrate how Christ fulfilled the Old Testament through his sufferings and resurrection. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 31-33.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 33-50.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 50.

completed by Christ and the New Testament definitely witnesses to Christ, Christ is “subject of the Scriptures.”²⁰

Definition and description of redemptive-historical preaching. Based on his understanding of biblical theology, Clowney developed redemptive-historical preaching. Dutch redemptive-historical preaching emphasizes that because the historical narrative texts concern God’s redemptive work in Christ, preachers must interpret the historical texts in their larger redemptive-historical context.²¹ Clowney, however, believes that because God’s redemptive work in Christ prevails throughout all of Scripture, every text refers to Christ’s completion of God’s redemptive plan.²² So Clowney expands the range of redemptive preaching to include all of Scripture.

Clowney asserts that preaching without Christ is not a Christian sermon, but a “synagogue sermon.”²³ Clowney’s preaching goal is to present Christ, who is discovered from every text by biblical theology. In this sense, Clowney’s redemptive-historical preaching is a homiletical application of biblical theology, which interprets every biblical text in God’s redemptive history and emphasizes the centrality of Christ in redemptive

²⁰Ibid., 33.

²¹For an understanding of Dutch redemptive-historical preaching from the historical narrative texts, see Sidney Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts* (Toronto: Wedge, 1970).

²²Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 11. Clowney continues, “If you are tempted to think that most Old Testament texts do not present Christ, reflect on both the unity of Scripture and the fullness of Jesus Christ. Christ is present in the Bible as the Lord and as the Servant.” For understanding of how Clowney interprets every text by Christ, see Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 74-86. In addition, Clowney’s redemptive-historical interpretation will be discussed in chap. 4.

²³Clowney defines the term “synagogue sermon” as preaching the Old Testament without Christ when he states, “Preaching Christ from the Old Testament means that we preach, not synagogue sermons, but sermons that take account of the full drama of redemption, and its realization in Christ. To see the text in relation to Christ is to see it in its larger context, the context of God’s purpose in revelation.” Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 11.

history. Thus, for Clowney, redemptive-historical preaching is not optional but essential.²⁴

Sidney Greidanus: Christocentric Preaching

Biblical justification of Christocentric preaching. Greidanus regrets the lack of preaching of Christ from the Old Testament and finds three possible reasons why it is not done.²⁵ Greidanus then explores the characters of the Old Testament in order to preach Christ from the Old Testament. The Old Testament is the Christian Bible, and it should be interpreted from the perspective of the New. Further, the Old Testament witnesses to Christ.²⁶ These findings indicate that every text is related to Christ and that a single redemptive history can discover Christ, who is the link between the two testaments. Particularly, Greidanus emphasizes the role of Christ. Since a single redemptive history is fulfilled by Christ, every text in the Old Testament witnesses to Him.²⁷

According to Greidanus, the apostles and Jesus practiced Christocentric preaching. Greidanus asserts that because “Christ is the heart of apostolic preaching,” preaching Christ from every text is just following the tradition of the apostles.²⁸ In addition, Jesus’ explanation of his sufferings and death in Luke 24:44-49 and John 5:39 are based in the Old Testament. Greidanus writes, “[In Luke 24:27,] Jesus refers to the three main sections of the Old Testament; not just a few prophecies but the whole Old

²⁴Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 74-77.

²⁵Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 33-34. Greidanus analyzes here possible reasons: (1) the temptation of human-centered preaching, (2) the concern over forced interpretation, and (3) the separation of the Old Testament from the New.

²⁶Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 39-62.

²⁷Ibid., 49, 53-62.

²⁸Ibid., 4. Greidanus argues that because the object of the New Testament verbs for “preach” is Christ, Christ is the heart of apostolic preaching. Concerning apostolic preaching, see Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 167-238.

Testament speaks of Jesus Christ.”²⁹ Greidanus continues his argument based on his interpretation of John 5:39: “Not just a few isolated messianic prophecies, but the whole Old Testament bears witness to Jesus.”³⁰ Greidanus then concludes the necessity to preach Christ from the Old Testament: “The point for contemporary preachers is this: *if the Old Testament indeed witnesses to Christ, then we are faithful preachers only when we do justice to this dimension in our interpretation and preaching of the Old Testament. . . .* If we fail to preach Christ from the Old Testament, we have missed its essence.”³¹ To Greidanus, preaching Christ from every text is biblical and imperative, not optional.

Definition of Christocentric Preaching. According to Greidanus, to preach Christ is to “proclaim some facet of the *person, work, or teaching* of Jesus of Nazareth so that people may believe him, trust him, love him, and obey him.”³² Instead of an exclusive focus on Jesus as in Christomonistic preaching, Greidanus attempts to relate Christocentric preaching to theocentric preaching. So, to understand his view of Christocentric preaching, one must first understand what theocentric preaching is. Greidanus argues that the Bible is about God.³³ By this he means that interpreting the Bible is possible based on the presupposition that “God intends to tell us about himself.”³⁴ So, theocentric preaching pays attention to God, understands the text in God’s

²⁹Ibid., 56.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 62, emphasis in original.

³²Ibid., 8, emphasis in original.

³³Ibid., 177.

³⁴Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 114.

redemptive history, and discovers how God reveals himself in the text and controls history.³⁵

In addition, theocentric preaching places God at the center. So theocentric preaching does not find a connection between the text and Christ, but rather concentrates on God's work. Greidanus introduces Calvin as a model of theocentric preaching:

Calvin's sermons on the Old Testament are best described as theocentric There is no doubt that Calvin deeply believes in Christ's presence in the Old Testament. He speaks of Christ as the "fundamentum," "anima," "vita," "spiritus," "finis," and "Perfectio" of the Law. But for some reason he does not feel obliged to bring this out explicitly in every sermon.³⁶

According to Greidanus, Calvin failed to bring out Christ from every text in every sermon. Greidanus points out that if Calvin really recognized that Christ was in the Old Testament as well as in the New, he would have moved from theocentric preaching to Christocentric preaching.

Greidanus describes Christocentric preaching as "the preaching of God's acts from the perspective of the New Testament."³⁷ In other words, a text should be interpreted in its historical context and in a New Testament perspective, which is centered in Christ:

Over against the extreme of Christomonism in preaching, we have observed the New Testament principle that Christ-centered preaching must be God-centered. The opposite extreme . . . is that of preaching the Old Testament in a God-centered way without relating to God's ultimate revelation of himself in Jesus Christ. Over against the extreme, the New Testament offers the corrective that Christian preaching must be Christ-centered.³⁸

³⁵Robert L. Reymond, *The God-Centered Preacher: Developing a Pulpit Ministry Approved by God* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2003), 55-98. Reymond argues that theology is "God-centered." The Old and New Testaments clearly show how God controls history.

³⁶Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 146-48. Greidanus explains Calvin's lack of Christ-centered emphasis to be due to Calvin's understanding of the triune God, his emphasis on historical interpretation, and avoidance of repetition of Christ-centeredness on every Sunday.

³⁷Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 119.

³⁸Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 182.

According to Greidanus, Christian preaching is not either theocentric or Christomonistic or Jesuscentric. While Christomonistic preaching exclusively concentrates on Jesus Christ without relation to God,³⁹ theocentric preaching fails to preach Christ incarnate from the Old Testament.⁴⁰

Christocentric preaching discovers God and his redemptive work in relation to Jesus Christ “through reading the Old Testament in the light of [the] crucified and risen Lord.”⁴¹ In other words, Christocentric preaching discovers how the Old Testament points to Christ in redemptive history. The point is that to preach Christocentrically one must preach Christ incarnate not only from the New Testament but also from the Old, which is God-centered but does not have the complete picture of the coming Messiah.⁴² Thus, according to Greidanus, Christocentric preaching is both Christ-centered and God-centered.

Graeme Goldsworthy: Gospel-Centered Preaching

Biblical justification of gospel-centered preaching. Goldsworthy argues that if the Bible is God’s word, it is “the message” from “God” to “human beings created in the image of God.”⁴³ Since Jesus is the one mediator between God and man, Goldsworthy writes that “the communicator [God], the message [God’s word] and the receiver [humanity] are all united in the God/Man who is himself the message.”⁴⁴ This statement

³⁹Ibid., 178.

⁴⁰Ibid., 183.

⁴¹Ibid., 185. Greidanus argues that reading the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament is rooted in Jesus and his apostles.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 43-44.

⁴⁴Ibid., 62.

implies that the meaning of the text can be detected through Jesus Christ, the one mediator.

Such emphasis on Jesus is more obvious when he interprets Luke 24: 27, 44-45 and John 5:39-40, 46.⁴⁵ According to Goldsworthy, Jesus himself claims to be the subject of all Scripture. Goldsworthy means that the meaning of the text is unlocked only “by the death and resurrection of Jesus.”⁴⁶ Further, the gospel is a specific expression of what Jesus Christ has done through his incarnation, death, and resurrection.⁴⁷ Goldsworthy articulates that the gospel is not only a New Testament reality; it is also related to all Scripture as “its center”.⁴⁸ “There is nothing in the Bible that can be truly understood apart from the gospel.”⁴⁹ So Jesus and the gospel are the hermeneutical keys.⁵⁰ Therefore, Goldsworthy’s biblical theology is Christ-centered and gospel-centered.⁵¹

Definition of gospel-centered preaching. Goldsworthy’s gospel-centered hermeneutic is the basis of his approach to preaching. In *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, he expresses concerns about contemporary preaching. According to

⁴⁵Luke 24:27 reads, “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” and Luke 24: 44-45, “Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.” See also Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 21, 54.

⁴⁶Ibid., 54.

⁴⁷According to Goldsworthy, the gospel is “the event of Jesus Christ that begins with his incarnation and earthly life, and concludes with his death, resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father.” Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 58.

⁴⁸Ibid., 63; idem, *Gospel and Kingdom: A Christian Interpretation of the Old Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1981), 87-88.

⁴⁹Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 95.

⁵⁰Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 63. See also Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 84-85.

⁵¹For the nature and character of Goldsworthy’s biblical theology, see Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*.

Goldsworthy, contemporary preaching has lost its purpose and its central role in the church.⁵² Since the purpose of preaching is to convert people to Christ, Goldsworthy argues that sermons preached in the church every Sunday have to deal with the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁵³ Accordingly, Goldsworthy emphasizes the necessity of gospel-centered preaching based on his biblical theology and the need of the church.⁵⁴ The gospel is not only the starting point for doing biblical theology; it should also be the main theme of every sermon and practical application of the text to convert people to Christ.⁵⁵ For Goldsworthy, preaching exists to deliver the message, which is interpreted by the gospel and concludes with the gospel, for the conversion and edification of the congregation.

In this sense, preaching which Goldsworthy prefers proclaims the person and the work of Jesus Christ in order for listeners to repent and to believe in Jesus.⁵⁶ Preaching is not only to explain the gospel itself but also to expound “the benefits of receiving the gospel and the perils of ignoring it” and to bring about “spiritual growth.”⁵⁷ Gospel-centered preaching is thus to preach every text focusing on the gospel as the center of the Bible so that sinners may repent of their sins, be saved by Jesus Christ, and grow spiritually. Goldsworthy’s gospel-centered preaching is a homiletical application of his gospel-centered hermeneutics or Christ-centered biblical theology.

⁵²Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 31-32.

⁵³Goldsworthy defines the nature of preaching in terms of “the setting forth of the way of salvation.” *Ibid.*, 124.

⁵⁴In fact, Goldsworthy does not mention the term “Gospel-centered preaching,” but his homiletical approach to preaching is gospel-centered. Such preaching is necessary for Goldsworthy to challenge the congregation to repent their sins and to be saved.

⁵⁵Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 32-33, 124-25. Elsewhere, Goldsworthy claims that as the gospel is the center of biblical theology, Jesus Christ is “the centre of biblical theology.” Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 31.

⁵⁶Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 174.

⁵⁷Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 95.

Bryan Chapell: Christ-Centered Preaching

Biblical justification of Christ-centered preaching. In *Christ-Centered*

Preaching, Chapell justifies Christ-centered preaching. Since the entire Bible is Christ-centered, preaching should be Christ-centered:

[T]he entire Bible is Christ-centered because his redemptive work in all of its incarnational, atoning, rising, interceding, and reigning dimensions is the capstone of all of God's revelation of his dealing with his people. Thus, no aspect of revelation can be thoroughly understood or explained in isolation from some aspect of Christ's redeeming work.⁵⁸

This demonstrates that the redemptive work of Christ is the key to interpret every text and that Christ is the center of every meaning. Without Christ's redemptive work, Chapell asserts, God's revelation cannot be fully interpreted.⁵⁹ Preaching must thus explain the meaning of the text not only in its historical but also in its redemptive-historical context and apply it to the audience. Accordingly, Chapell's approach to preaching Christ is justified as a biblical theological matter.

Definition of Christ-centered preaching. By introducing the Fallen Condition Focus (FCF), Chapell differentiates his Christ-centered approach to preaching from other Christ-centered sermon styles. He argues that if a passage has a purpose, preaching exposes its purpose in the pulpit.⁶⁰ Chapell then argues that the general purpose of the Bible is to sanctify believers for God's glory.⁶¹ Because of their sinful nature, not only contemporary Christians, but all human beings are fallen. This indicates the fallen condition of human beings. Chapell defines the FCF as "*the mutual human condition that*

⁵⁸Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 276.

⁵⁹Ibid., 79.

⁶⁰Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 48-51.

⁶¹The apostle Paul writes, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17). From his understanding of this passage, Chapell argues that we are "incomplete," so preaching is to demonstrate how the Bible completes us to glorify God. Ibid., 49.

contemporary believers share with those to or about whom the text was written that requires the grace of the passage for God's people to glorify and enjoy him."⁶² God sent His beloved son Jesus Christ to save sinners. Because of humanity's fallen condition, all God's people needed, need, and will need Jesus Christ. If this is what the Bible says, every text has a purpose to show how God saves and completes man through Christ. This is the purpose of preaching; the FCF provides the impetus to Christ-centered preaching. So preaching must deal with one's fallen condition and offer biblical solutions through Christ. Since Christ is the answer to the fallen condition of human beings and the center of every sermon, this approach to preaching is called "Christ-centered preaching." Without Christ, preachers can neither find the FCF nor provide biblical solutions to sinners.⁶³

Outlining the FCF and Christ-centeredness in the Bible, Chapell suggests a broad approach to Christ-centered preaching: "*Christ-centered preaching rightly understood does not seek to discover where Christ is mentioned in every text but to disclose where every text stands in relation to Christ.*"⁶⁴ This means that not every text includes direct reference to Christ but that many texts contain indirect reference to Christ through interpretation of the text in a redemptive-historical context. This demonstrates that Christ-centered preaching has two approaches to every text.

First, if a text contains a direct reference to Christ, preaching is Christ-centered. Second, even if a text contains no direct reference to Christ, preaching should show the

⁶²Ibid., 50, emphasis in original.

⁶³Ibid., 80. Chapell claims that Christ is the key to interpret the text and we are forced to interpret the text through Christ: "[Paul] believed he was always preaching about the person and work of Jesus. This must be the goal of expository preaching. The particulars of a passage need to be related to the overall purpose of Scripture . . . It is sufficient to note that preachers need to interpret biblical texts in the light of Scripture's whole. This will *inevitably force* us to consider how a particular passage functions in revealing, preparing for, or reacting to the person and work of Christ" (emphasis added).

⁶⁴Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 279, emphasis in original.

relation between the text and Christ.⁶⁵ Chapell continues, “The goal of the preacher is not to find novel ways of identifying Christ in every text (or naming Jesus in every sermon) but to show how each text manifests God’s grace in order to prepare and enable his people to embrace the hope provided by Christ.”⁶⁶ Chapell’s Christ-centered preaching introduces Christ either as the meaning of the text or as a biblical solution to sinners, so they live for God’s glory.

Comparison and Contrast of Christ-Centered Preaching on Justification and a Definition

Though the various Christ-centered approaches to preaching strive differently to do justice to preaching Christ from every text, broad similarities are perceived. The various terms of Christ-centered approach to preaching, have the same purpose, which is to preach Christ from every text and emphasize Jesus Christ in every sermon. The person and work of Jesus Christ is the pivotal message of Christ-centered sermons. In addition, all Christ-centered approaches to preaching understand the text through biblical theology, which emphasizes God’s progressive revelation and the unity of Scripture in Christ.⁶⁷ These similarities serve as the core of Christ-centered preaching in hermeneutics and homiletics.

Similarities among Christ-Centered Approaches to Preaching

Christ-centeredness. There is an agreement among all Christ-centered approaches to preaching that Christ is the center of hermeneutics and of homiletics. Above all, Chapell’s Christ-centered preaching and Greidanus’s Christocentric preaching

⁶⁵According to Chapell, every text contains the FCF, which provides biblical context and its solutions only through Christ. *Ibid.*, 48-52.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 279.

⁶⁷Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 11.

strongly emphasize Christ by their names. Both argue that Christ is not only the hermeneutical key to interpret the text, but also the center of every sermon. While Greidanus understands every message as needing to be Christ-centered, Chapell finds a biblical solution for the FCF of every text through Christ. Greidanus claims, “The Christocentric method complements the theocentric method of interpreting the Old Testament by seeking to do justice to the fact that God’s story of bringing his kingdom on earth is centered in Christ. In preaching any part of Scripture, one must understand its message in the light of that center, Jesus Christ.”⁶⁸

Elsewhere, Greidanus argues that preachers should formulate the sermon’s theme in light of the whole canon, which ultimately points to Christ.⁶⁹ Chapell is not different when he argues,

[T]he entire Bible is Christ-centered because his redemptive work in all of its incarnational, atoning, rising, interceding, and reigning dimensions is the capstone of all of God’s revelation of his dealing with his people. Thus, no aspect of revelation can be thoroughly understood or explained in isolation from some aspect of Christ’s redeeming work.⁷⁰

Both Greidanus and Chapell point out that Christ should be central. Every message should focus on Jesus Christ, who is the fulfiller of God’s redemptive work.

Like Chapell’s Christ-centered preaching and Greidanus’ Christocentric preaching, Clowney’s redemptive-historical preaching claims that every text should be interpreted in the whole redemptive context, which is completed by Christ. This means that God’s redemptive work cannot be isolated from Christ. So Christ is the required key to interpret the text. In other words, in spite of its emphasis on God, God’s redemptive

⁶⁸Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 227

⁶⁹Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 138.

⁷⁰Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 276.

work, and Christ's fulfillment, redemptive-historical preaching argues that without Christ, the meaning of the text cannot be detected.⁷¹

Goldsworthy's gospel-centered preaching is so named because it stresses Christ's salvation of sinners as the purpose of preaching. The gospel is what Christ has done for one's salvation. Christ plays the pivotal role in fulfilling the gospel, so gospel-centered preaching places Christ at the center. Christ is the only mediator between God and man and completes the gospel. In addition, Goldsworthy argues that the Bible is a book about Christ, and Jesus Christ is "the subject of all Scripture."⁷² Elsewhere, Goldsworthy asserts, "How much detail a teacher gives is a matter of the pedagogic strategy required in any given situation. Whatever the strategy, Christ remains the starting point and the goal."⁷³ Therefore, Goldsworthy's gospel-centered preaching is definitely Christ-centered. Accordingly, it is right to conclude that all Christ-centered approaches to preaching place Christ at the center in hermeneutics and homiletics. According to Jason Allen, who evaluates the sermons of Clowney and of Greidanus, all Christ-centered approaches to preaching agree that "Jesus Christ is the focal point of the Bible."⁷⁴ The entire Bible points to and ends with Christ. So the message should end with Christ whatever the preaching passage may be.

The necessity of Christ-centered biblical theology. All approaches to preaching Christ in every text utilize biblical theology to connect the Old Testament with

⁷¹Langley, "When Christ Replaces God," 1-2.

⁷²Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 21.

⁷³Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 196.

⁷⁴Allen says, "Redemptive-historical preaching asserts that the Bible is replete with prescriptive and descriptive accounts that make the injunction to preach Christ from all of Scripture, including the Old Testament, binding . . . Jesus is the focal point of the Bible." Jason Keith. Allen, "The Christ-Centered Homiletics of Edmund Clowney and Sidney Greidanus in Contrast with the Human Author-Centered Hermeneutics of Walter Kaiser" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011), 5-6.

the New. God planned to save His people and sent Jesus Christ who fulfilled God's redemptive work in history. God's revelation is continuous throughout the two testaments, so the meaning of the text can be found not in an immediate context, but in the broader context, that is, the redemptive-historical context.⁷⁵ Thus biblical theology is the secure and safe bridge needed to bind the two testaments in Christ.

Goldsworthy describes Christ's central role in biblical theology when he states, "The lack of a Christocentric perspective leads . . . to the eclipsing of Christ as the centre of biblical theology."⁷⁶ He continues, "Biblical theology is the study of how every text in the Bible relates to Jesus and his gospel."⁷⁷ He clearly describes the character of Christocentric biblical theology: "The soundest methodological starting point is the gospel since the person of Jesus is proclaimed as the final and fullest expression of God's revelation of his kingdom. Jesus is the goal and fulfillment of the whole Old Testament and, as the embodiment of the truth of God, he is the interpretive key of the Bible."⁷⁸

Clowney also notes that because "the witness of the Scripture to Christ is the reason they were written,"⁷⁹ biblical theology, which shows God's progressive revelation and continuity in Christ, is "not a method," but "an essential step in the interpretation of the Bible."⁸⁰ Greidanus and Chapell also express that biblical theology is Christ-centered.⁸¹

⁷⁵Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 87-92.

⁷⁶Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 31.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 40.

⁷⁸Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 25.

⁷⁹Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 44.

⁸⁰Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 87.

⁸¹Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 227. One of Greidanus's interpretive methods is to find longitudinal themes by biblical theology. Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 67-72; *idem*, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 266-67. See also Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 276.

Fuller sense of the text. Proponents of Christ-centered preaching argue that because of God’s progressive revelation and continuity, the human authors did not fully understand the meaning of the texts they wrote. Rather, the later authors deeply and fully understood the text in accordance with the divine Author’s intent.

Clowney argues that because biblical theology rests upon God’s progressive revelation and its continuity, there is the organic unity of Scripture that is intended and designed by the divine Author.⁸² Such unity of Scripture guides interpreters to find a fuller sense of the text, which the human authors did not know. In doing so, interpreters, who realize Christ’s fulfillment of God’s redemption may find a fuller sense of the text in God’s total redemption.⁸³

Greidanus agrees with Clowney, saying that because the heart of the New Testament is Jesus Christ, every message from the Old Testament must be interpreted in Christ.⁸⁴ That is, biblical theology gives the text a fuller sense of the meaning in Christ. He articulates, “Whatever name we use, the important point is that a passage understood in the contexts of the whole Bible and redemptive history may reveal more meaning than its author intended originally.”⁸⁵

Elsewhere, concerning fuller sense, Greidanus expounds, “[O]ne cannot present as gospel truth a message at a certain stage of its development but must follow it through the whole of the Bible, from seed to plant to flower. This deeper, fuller level of meaning has been called the *sensus plenior* [the fuller sense].”⁸⁶ Quoting William LaSor, Greidanus emphasizes the divine Author’s intent concerning fuller sense, insisting that

⁸²Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 87.

⁸³Ibid., 88.

⁸⁴Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 51.

⁸⁵Ibid., 233.

⁸⁶Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 71, emphasis in original.

“fuller sense” is “not a reading into the text of theological doctrines and theories, but a reading from the text of the fullness of meaning required by God’s complete revelation.”⁸⁷ Greidanus means that the text reveals a more profound meaning that the human authors did not intend⁸⁸ and that there are meanings of the text that the original authors did not know. So, in order to find a fuller sense of the text, interpreters must see it in the context of the whole Bible and understand it in accordance with the divine Author’s intent.

According to Goldsworthy, Jesus Christ and the New Testament give “fuller expression,” which the original authors did not know, to the Old Testament.⁸⁹

Goldsworthy expounds *sensus plenior* (fuller sense), arguing,

The *sensus plenior* of an Old Testament text, or indeed of the whole Old Testament, cannot be found by exegesis of the texts themselves. Exegesis aims at understanding what was intended by the author, the *sensus literalis*. But there is a deeper meaning in the mind of the divine Author which emerges in further revelation, usually the New Testament. This approach addresses the question of how a text may have more than one meaning.⁹⁰

Chapell is no exception. To Chapell, the meaning of the text in God’s total redemption is the text’s more accurate and full meaning, which the original authors did necessarily not know. He argues, “Although the concept of the *sensus plenior* remains controversial in conservative circles, preachers regularly make interpretations based on matters such as how frequently a word is used throughout Scripture, which would not always have been evident to the original writers.”⁹¹ Chapell encourages interpreters to find the full meaning of the text not only in the historical context but also in God’s total

⁸⁷Ibid, 111.

⁸⁸Ibid., 112.

⁸⁹Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 47.

⁹⁰Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 244.

⁹¹Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 76n27, emphasis in original.

redemption; “[N]o aspect of revelation can be thoroughly understood or explained in isolation from some aspect of Christ’s redeeming work.”⁹²

Thus, it is safe to say that advocates of Christ-centered preaching agree that because of God’s progressive revelation and continuity the text has a fuller sense recognized in light of the New Testament. In other words, a fuller sense, which is related to Christ and his fulfillment, is already in the text, but the human authors did not necessarily know that. Thus, fuller sense provides interpreters with the hermeneutical justification to find Christ and his fulfillment from every text and to preach Christ accordingly.

The message: the person and work of Christ. Preaching Christ is usually regarded as a message about Christ, but just mentioning the name of Christ is not enough. Rather, preaching Christ is to preach something about Christ. For Clowney, Christ-centered preaching presents Christ, who died for one’s sins and rose from the dead for one’s eternal life. He argues, “We need to instruct the church concerning the person and work of Jesus.”⁹³ Goldsworthy adds his voice to Clowney’s: “Proper interpretation of any part of the Bible requires us to relate it to the person and work of Jesus.”⁹⁴

Likewise, Chapell agrees with them when he argues, “Somehow, though Paul addressed many issues of daily living, he believed he was always preaching about the person and work of Jesus. This must be the goal of expository preaching.”⁹⁵ He continues, “Preachers need to interpret biblical texts in the light of Scripture’s whole. This will inevitably force us to consider how a particular passage functions in revealing, preparing

⁹²Ibid., 276.

⁹³Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 50.

⁹⁴Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 84.

⁹⁵Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 80.

for, or reacting to the person and work of Christ, which is the ultimate message of the scope of Scripture.”⁹⁶

Greidanus, however, categorizes the Christ-centered message in three parts. Preaching Christ is “to proclaim some facet of the *person, work, or teaching* of Jesus of Nazareth so that people may believe him, trust him, love him, and obey him.”⁹⁷ First, preachers need to preach Jesus Christ, who is God’s only son and “the climax of God’s revelation about himself.”⁹⁸ Christ-centered messages link the text to the person of Christ, who is “the Son of God, the Messiah, our Prophet, Priest, and King.”⁹⁹ Second, a Christ-centered message is to proclaim what Christ has done for one’s salvation. The Bible is about God who sent Jesus Christ to save sinners. So, to preach Christ is to link the text to Christ’s redeeming work, incarnation, death, and resurrection. Third, Greidanus emphasizes Jesus’ teaching: “Although the teaching of Christ could be considered part of the work of Christ, Jesus’ teaching is often overlooked in discussions on preaching Christ from the Old Testament.”¹⁰⁰

According to Greidanus, Christ ordered his disciples to teach people what he commanded them in Matthew 28:19-20. Greidanus then claims, “The teaching of Jesus is an indispensable component for preaching Christ from the Old Testament, for the Old Testament was Jesus’ Bible, and he based his teaching on it.”¹⁰¹ Greidanus stresses that Jesus’ teaching focuses not merely on Himself, but more broadly features “teachings

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 8, emphasis in original.

⁹⁸Ibid., 9.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 9.

¹⁰¹Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 10.

about God, God's kingdom, God's covenant, and God's law (e.g., Matt 5-7), and the like."¹⁰²

Despite Greidanus's concern about a lack of interest in the teaching of Jesus, other advocates of Christ-centered preaching pay attention to the teaching of Jesus in their sermons. In other words, the person and work of Christ contains Jesus' teaching such as his mission, his coming again, and God's kingdom. For instance, for Goldsworthy, the kingdom of God is "the theme of Jesus' teaching."¹⁰³ This means that Jesus' teaching features God's redemptive work, so the teaching of Jesus is not isolated from his person and work.

Differences among Christ-Centered Approaches to Preaching

In spite of some shared points, differences can be found among Christ-centered approaches to preaching. These differences can introduce confusion and complexity to one's attempt to understand Christ-centered preaching. Thus, it is helpful to explore how they differ from one another.

Exegetical or pastoral approaches to Christ-centered preaching. Advocates of Christ-centered preaching argue that the Bible itself requires preaching Christ from every text. The common biblical foundation of Christ-centered preaching among them is rooted in Jesus' explanations to his disciples in Luke 24:27-45 and John 5:39-40, 46.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰²Ibid. The teaching of Jesus is so important to Greidanus's Christocentric preaching. Because God's kingdom is one of the key teachings of Jesus, Greidanus equates theocentric preaching, which is centered in God and God's kingdom, to Christocentric preaching, which emphasizes Christ's fulfillment of bringing of God's kingdom on earth. Ibid., 227.

¹⁰³Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 55.

¹⁰⁴They believe that Jesus' view on these passages enables them to understand the two testaments as one Christian Bible in Christ. For each interpretation on Luke 24:27-45 and John 5:39-40, 46, see Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 59-60; idem, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 39; Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom*, 87-88; idem, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 63; idem, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 21, 54; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 56, 202-03; and Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 20.

They believe that in these texts Jesus located himself at the center of all Scripture.

In spite of his agreement with the central role of Jesus Christ, Chapell states, “This does not mean that every phrase, punctuation mark, or verse directly reveals Christ but rather that all passages in their context disclose his nature and/or necessity.”¹⁰⁵ According to Chapell, every text describes the fallen condition of sinners, who need Christ.¹⁰⁶ Chapell argues that finding Christ in every text is neither the purpose of the Bible nor a requirement of Christ-centered preaching. The purpose of the Bible is to fully sanctify sinners for God’s glory.

Chapell insists that 2 Timothy 3:16-17 shows God’s intention to complete sinners to serve his good purposes.¹⁰⁷ In addition, Romans 15:4 declares that God intends for each passage to give one hope “by focusing his grace on a facet of our fallen condition in every portion of his Word.”¹⁰⁸ The purpose of the Bible is not to identify Christ in every text but to show how each passage enables sinners to realize their fallen condition and to find biblical solutions through Christ. This is the hope that sinners need, that they may be complete for the glory of God. This is Chapell’s pastoral approach to Christ-centered preaching. He explains,

I mention my path because it is somewhat different from the ones previously described by the wonderful theologians who have already contributed to this conversation. Their starting point for examining Christ-centered preaching was primarily exegetical and hermeneutical—seeking faithfully to analyze and interpret texts; mine was pastoral.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 279.

¹⁰⁶For the fallen condition focus and its biblical solution through Christ, see *ibid.*, 48-52.

¹⁰⁷Paul writes, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work (2 Tim 3:16-17).” From his understanding of this passage, Chapell argues that we are “incomplete,” so preaching is to demonstrate how the Bible completes us to glorify God. *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁰⁹Bryan Chapell, “Bryan Chapell on Christ Centered Preaching: Exegesis, Eisegesis, and Redemptive Context,” *Christianitytoday*, accessed October 18, 2014, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2013/july/bryan-chapell-on-christ-centered-preaching-part-one.html?paging=off>.

While other advocates of Christ-centered preaching exegetically find Christ or a connection to Christ in every text, Chapell moves from the text to Christ by providing biblical solutions for the fallen condition of sinners described in every text.

Clowney, Greidanus, and Goldsworthy advocate Christ-centered preaching based on Luke 24:27-45 and John 5:39-40, 46 and exegetically discover Christ from every text. Second Timothy 3:16-17 and Romans 15:4 challenge Chapell to find the fallen condition of sinners and its biblical solution through Christ from every text. In this sense, Chapell's Christ-centered preaching emphasizes Christ in his role as the biblical solution for sinners. Thus, while Chapell's approach to Christ-centered preaching is pastoral, others' Christ-centered approach is exegetical.

Overarching theme and epochal structure. Two aspects of Christ-centered biblical theology are God's progressive revelation and continuity. As mentioned above, God's progressive revelation reaches its climax in Christ. The goal, which advocates of Christ-centered preaching seek, is to understand "the nature of the diversity within the unity" so that one can see how every text testifies to Christ.¹¹⁰ This is the goal of Christ-centered biblical theology, but different opinions exist regarding how every text testifies to Christ. Clowney and Goldsworthy divide the Bible into several epochs and show how an overarching theme moves from one epoch to the last epoch found in Christ whereas Greidanus and Chapell do not include an overarching theme and epochal structure.¹¹¹

Clowney expounds that God's progressive revelation is developed in each epoch and reaches its climax in Christ:

¹¹⁰Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 73.

¹¹¹Greidanus and Chapell interpret the Old Testament text in its historical context and in God's total redemptive-historical context. They agree that multi-themes can be found in the Bible. Therefore, they do not need any epochal structure to justify an overarching theme. See Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 222-24; Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 275.

The Bible records revelation given in the course of history. . . . It was given progressively, for the process of revelation accompanies the process of redemption. Since redemption does not proceed uniformly but in epochs determined by God's acts, so revelation has an epochal structure, manifested and marked in the canonical Scriptures.¹¹²

Clowney recognizes six different biblical epochs based on God's covenant in redemptive history: the period from the creation to the fall, the antediluvian period from the fall to the flood, the period from the flood to the call of Abraham, the patriarchal age from Abraham to Moses, the period from Moses to Christ, and the coming of Christ.¹¹³ By this epochal structure, Clowney demonstrates how every text reveals God's covenant in an epoch and reaches to Christ.

Goldsworthy also agrees with the necessity of epochal structure verified by an overarching theme, the kingdom of God. Goldsworthy divides the Bible into three epochs according to theological history: the kingdom revealed in Israel's history, the kingdom revealed in prophetic eschatology, and the New Testament witness to the kingdom revealed in Christ.¹¹⁴ Concerning the role of epochal structure, Goldsworthy asserts that identifying whether the text relates to one of three epochs is important because the text and its genre should be understood within the epoch of revelation.¹¹⁵ Once the text and its genre are recognized in an epoch, interpreters unfold the text up to the climax, which is Christ.

¹¹²Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 15.

¹¹³Ibid., 16, 89. As Clowney admits, he follows Geerhardus Vos's biblical theology who divided the Bible into 6 epochs in accordance with God's covenants. Clowney adds "Creation and Fall" to Vos's epochal structure. Vos divided the biblical epochs into six, the period of Noah, the period between Noah and the patriarchs, the period of Abraham to Moses, the period of Moses, the prophetic epoch, and the New Testament epoch. Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1948), 52-429. See also Richard C. Barcellos, *The Family Tree of Reformed Biblical Theology: Geerhardus Vos and John Owen-Their Methods of and Contributions to the Articulation of Redemptive History* (Owensboro, KY: RBAP, 2010), 43.

¹¹⁴Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 26; idem, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 112, 138-39.

¹¹⁵Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 138. For instance, Goldsworthy expounds that Gen 4-11 belongs to the first epoch as the historical narrative text. Ibid., 141.

No consensus among scholars exists concerning the overarching theme and epochal structure of Scripture.¹¹⁶ Greidanus claims that there is no overarching theme that encompasses all biblical themes. Agreeing with Gerhard Hasel, Greidanus contends that many themes in the Old Testament recognize God as the center without epochal structure.¹¹⁷ Further, Greidanus warns that an overarching theme as a foreign system may distort the text. Instead of finding an overarching theme within epochal structure, Greidanus prefers multi-themes or longitudinal themes that cover individual books and the whole Bible: “My point is that for the sake of doing justice to the biblical material, the interpreter must try to visualize and classify the complex relationships and interrelationships among themes—constantly guarding, of course, against imposing a foreign system on the biblical material.”¹¹⁸

Chapell agrees with Greidanus, arguing that there are multi-redemptive themes that unite all of Scripture’s particulars.¹¹⁹ Such redemptive themes have been variously developed throughout the Bible.¹²⁰ Therefore, identifying an overarching theme and epochal structure is not the agreed upon method for Christ-centered preaching.

¹¹⁶For discussion about an overarching theme in the Old Testament, see Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downer Groves, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 36. Dempster agrees that it is difficult to find a single overarching theme: “The goal of biblical theology is to grasp the big theological picture through analysis of the theological views of the various biblical texts. Many scholars working in the area of biblical theology have given up on this task, due perhaps to an admission that there is not one theology but many.”

¹¹⁷Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 70. Cf. Gerhard Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 155. Hasel argues, “It is evident that even the most carefully worked out single center or formula will prove itself finally as one-sided, inadequate, and insufficient . . . therefore will lead to misconceptions” (ibid.).

¹¹⁸Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 70.

¹¹⁹Concerning multi-themes of the Bible, Chapell argues, “I have more fully explored how redemptive themes can be variously developed using the different periods and types of biblical literature.” Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 16.

¹²⁰Ibid., 79-80.

God-centered and Christ-centered preaching. Ken Langley claims that “theocentric preaching” and “Christocentric preaching” are incorrectly used in Greidanus’s works.¹²¹ In *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, Greidanus argues that Christ is “present and active in Old Testament times” and “the fulfillment of the Old Testament,” so theocentric preaching, which concerns God’s acts, should end with Christ.¹²² God’s redemption cannot be completed without Christ while, at the same time, Christ’s redemption cannot be explained without God. Elsewhere, Greidanus argues that because Christ was sent by God, accomplished the work of God, and sought the glory of God, “a God-centered sermon is Christ-centered”¹²³ and “a Christ-centered sermon” is “God-centered.”¹²⁴

Chapell also identifies theocentric preaching with Christ-centered preaching, asserting, “Theocentric preaching inevitably becomes Christocentric not because a sermon simply cites the name of Jesus or draws to mind an event from his life but because the sermon demonstrates the reality of the human predicament that requires divine solution and identifies that solution.”¹²⁵ To put it differently, every text contains God’s redemptive work, discloses the fallen condition of human beings, and requires Christ as a divine solution. Chapell continues, “A focus on God’s redemptive activity sets the stage for Christ’s work. . . . When we see God at work, Christ’ ministry inevitably comes into view.”¹²⁶ Theocentric preaching should proclaim God’s acts in Christ who is

¹²¹Langley, “When Christ Replaces God,” 1-2. See also Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 177-83.

¹²²Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 118-19.

¹²³Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 3. Greidanus again states, “God-centered preaching is implicitly Christ-centered since Christ is God.” *Ibid.*, 36.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, 177-78.

¹²⁵Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 304. See also Sidney Greidanus, “Redemptive History and Preaching,” *Pro Rege* 19, no. 2 (December 1990): 12-13.

¹²⁶Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 304.

the center. Like Greidanus, Chapell means that God's acts should be proclaimed with Christ, who fulfilled God's redemptive work. In doing so, Greidanus and Chapell identify theocentric preaching with Christ-centered preaching.

Langley, however, believes that "theocentric preaching embraces a broader and therefore more adequate theological vision" than Christocentric preaching.¹²⁷ Even though Christ fulfilled God's redemptive work, it does not follow that what Christ has done is equal to what God has done. Contrary to Greidanus and Chapell, it is hard to say that theocentric preaching is equal to Christocentric preaching.

On the contrary to Greidanus and Chapell, Clowney and Goldsworthy do not identify Christ-centered preaching with theocentric preaching. They instead concentrate on Christ-centeredness in preaching. Their main interest in preaching is how to quickly move to Christ from every text. In other words, the text seems to function as a stepping stone to reach Christ. Goldsworthy's interest in Christ-centered preaching is comparable to Clowney's. Goldsworthy introduces his macro-typological interpretation to connect every text to Christ in the final epoch, the kingdom fulfilled in Christ.¹²⁸ The main function of macro-typology is not to discover the historical meaning of the text, but to find a typological connection to Christ in every text. Goldsworthy asks, "Is it possible to preach a Christian sermon without mentioning Jesus?" Since Christ is in every text and is the subject of every sermon, preachers should mention Jesus in every sermon.¹²⁹

Conclusion

While using different terms for Christ-centered approaches to preaching, Clowney, Greidanus, Goldsworthy, and Chapell together argue that preaching Christ is to

¹²⁷Langley, "When Christ Replaces God," 3.

¹²⁸Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 184-89.

¹²⁹Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 115-22.

discover Christ-centeredness in the text and to preach him in the pulpit. To accomplish this Christocentric sermon goal, advocates of Christ-centered preaching attempt to justify preaching Christ from every text biblically and theologically. Exploring definitions and justifications of Christ-centered approaches to preaching disclose not only similarities, but also differences.

First, Christ's central role in hermeneutics and in homiletics is broadly recognized. To argue for Christ-centeredness, proponents of Christ-centered preaching explain how the Bible, at every turn, points to Christ. Christ-centered biblical theology plays a significant role to demonstrate how every text witnesses to Christ. Christ-centered biblical theology traces the relationship between the two testaments and discloses a theological connection between an overarching theme or multi-themes between the two testaments.

Second, Christ-centered biblical theology also expects a fuller sense of the text. Contending for a Christ-centered biblical theology that asserts God's progressive revelation and continuity, its proponents assume that there are meanings in the text that the human authors did not know. Later revelation discerns a fuller sense to the text in accordance with the divine Author's intent. This fuller sense of the text helps interpreters find Christ in the text or to determine its relationship to Christ.

Third, to find Christ or a connection to Christ in every text is to present the person and work of Christ. According to Clowney, preaching Christ is to present Christ, who completed God's redemption from every text.¹³⁰ Further, Greidanus states that preaching Christ is to preach Christ incarnate from every text.¹³¹ Goldsworthy believes that to preach Christ is to proclaim the person and the work of Christ.¹³² According to

¹³⁰Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 11-20.

¹³¹Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 183.

¹³²Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 174.

Chapell, the person and work of Christ provides sinners with God's grace to resolve their fallen condition.

Fourth, in addition to similarities, there are points of disagreement with justification for Christ-centered preaching. While an exegetical or theological approach to the interpretation of every text through Christ is common, the issue of the necessity for a pastoral approach to Christ-centered preaching is raised by Chapell.¹³³ As he mentioned, Christ is the solution for the fallen condition of sinners. Christ not only saves sinners; he also enables sinners to live having received God's grace through Christ's redemption. So Chapell's Christ-centered preaching is pastoral.

Fifth, making an effort to identify God-centered preaching with Christocentric preaching distinguishes Greidanus and Chapell from Clowney and Goldsworthy. The former emphasize the historical meaning of the text more than the latter. Since the Bible is about God, both God-centered preaching and Christ-centered preaching provide Greidanus and Chapell with the theological conviction to preach Christ from every text. If one emphasizes the historical meaning of the Old Testament, one should also realize the God-centeredness of the Old Testament. In addition, since God's redemption cannot be separated from Christ's redemption, God-centeredness should be Christ-centeredness. Accordingly, Greidanus and Chapell identify God-centeredness with Christ-centeredness.¹³⁴ Contrary to Greidanus and Chapell, Clowney and Goldsworthy understand every text through Christ-centeredness, so they do not need to equate God-centeredness with Christ-centeredness.

¹³³Not only Chapell, but Allen argues for homiletical approach to Christ-centered preaching, saying, "Since redemptive-historical homileticians hold to the prior commitment that the message of Christ is the apex of biblical revelation, finding it possible to preach Christ from the entire Bible is not enough. Rather, given this presupposition, preachers must preach Jesus from the entire Bible, thereby creating a homiletical necessity." Allen, "The Christ-Centered Homiletics of Edmund Clowney and Sidney Greidanus in Contrast with the Human Author-Centered Hermeneutics of Walter Kaiser," 11.

¹³⁴Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 304; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 178-85.

Sixth, while Greidanus and Chapell do not identify a theological epochal structure and overarching theme, Clowney and Goldsworthy do. Clowney and Goldsworthy believe that epochal structure and an overarching theme are essential not only to understand the text, but also to find Christ from every text.

Nevertheless, the question remains over whether or not placing Christ at the center of every text and in every sermon is being faithful to the author's intended meaning of the text. Thus, the next chapter explores how each of these four proponents of Christ-centered preaching finds Christ or a connection to Christ in every text, with a focus on their hermeneutical approaches.

CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS OF HERMENEUTICS OF
CHRIST-CENTERED APPROACHES
TO PREACHING

Introduction

Preaching Christ from every text is the ultimate goal of Christ-centered homiletics. The message of Christ-centered preaching consists primarily of the person and work of Christ. In fact, whatever the preaching passage is, advocates of Christ-centered preaching attempt to conclude the message with Christ and his redemptive work for sinners. The urgent issue is what legitimate interpretive methods can be used to find Christ in a text or a connection between the text and Christ.

The understanding of hermeneutics is varied among scholars.¹ After exploring diverse approaches to hermeneutics, Robert Thomas defines hermeneutics as “a set of principles” for the interpretation of the Bible.² Thomas also defines interpretation as “an

¹Varied approaches to hermeneutics among evangelical scholars show its difficulty to define what hermeneutics is. For more definitions of hermeneutics, see Millard J. Erickson, *Evangelical Interpretation: Perspectives on Hermeneutical issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 9; Elliott E. Johnson, *Expository Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 15-70; Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 24; Stanley E. Porter, Jr. and Beth M. Stovell, *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 27-132; Moisés Silva, “Who Needs Hermeneutics Anyway?” in *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, ed. Walter C. Kaiser and Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 15-26; Robert L. Thomas, “Current Hermeneutical Trends: Toward Explanation or Obfuscation?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39, no. 2 (June 1996): 241-56; Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1991), 19-22; and William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 3-21.

²Robert Thomas divides the current hermeneutical trends into four categories: (a) a philosophical and linguistic mind-set, (b) a set of principles, (c) an interpretive use of these principles, and (d) an application of the resulting interpretation to contemporary situations. Thomas, “Current Hermeneutical Trends,” 247.

understanding of the authorial intention.”³ Article IX of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics describes hermeneutics as the process not only to find what the text meant (exegesis), but also to disclose what the text means for us today.⁴ Norman Geisler explains, “[H]ermeneutics is more than biblical exegesis. It is not only the science that leads forth the meaning of a passage but also that which enables one [by the Holy Spirit] to understand the spiritual implications the truth[s] of this passage has for Christian living.”⁵ Thus, hermeneutics can be defined as the process used to find the meaning of the text, including its authorial intention and its significance for relevant application.

Concerning the hermeneutics of Christ-centered preaching, the issue is whether or not the author intended to say something about Christ in every passage. Is finding Christ in every text exegetically based? Does every text witness to Christ? While sharing one goal to preach Christ from every text, advocates of Christ-centered preaching introduce diverse interpretive methods not only to find the meaning of the text and its authorial intention concerning Christ, but also to discern significance for today’s audience. Clowney utilizes Christ-centered biblical theology to interpret every text. Symbolism and typology are the two primary methods he uses to find Christ from every text. Greidanus proposes seven ways to interpret a text so that it testifies to Christ.

³Thomas, “Current Hermeneutical Trends,” 249. According to Thomas, William Klein, Grant Osborne, Moisés Silva, Walter Kaiser support this definition of interpretation. *Ibid.*, 248n81.

⁴“International Council on Biblical Hermeneutics Statement,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25, no. 4 (December 1982): 399. It states, “We affirm that the term hermeneutics, which historically signified the rules of exegesis, may properly be extended to cover all that is involved in the process of perceiving what the biblical revelation means and how it bears on our lives.” See also Norman L. Geisler, “Explaining Hermeneutics: A Commentary on the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics Articles of Affirmation and Denial,” in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984): 894-95, and J. I. Packer, “Exposition on Biblical Hermeneutics,” in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984): 908-11.

⁵Geisler, “Explaining Hermeneutics,” 894.

Goldsworthy claims that macro-typology is all that is needed to interpret the text in Christ-centered preaching. Chapell, likewise, offers three interpretive methods to decipher redemptive signals and to connect the text to Christ.⁶

This chapter explores the hermeneutics of Clowney, Greidanus, Goldsworthy, and Chapell by comparing and contrasting their interpretive methods and their means to find the meaning of the text, its authorial intent, and Christ. A list of similarities and differences will be noted and, together with other criteria, will provide a helpful standard to evaluate their hermeneutical approaches to Christ-centered preaching.

Edmund Clowney and a Redemptive-Historical Hermeneutic

Dennis Johnson asserts that Clowney's primary concern is "to reveal Jesus' presence throughout the Bible."⁷ Clowney's redemptive-historical hermeneutic shows his understanding of the meaning of the text and of Christ-centered biblical theology used in Christ-centered preaching.

Clowney and Christ-Centered Biblical Theology

The biblical theology of Vos guided Clowney to understand the Bible as redemptive history. Vos defines biblical theology as a branch of exegetical theology because exegetical theology, he argued, was the general scientific method of interpreting the Bible as the word of God while biblical theology was "the study of the actual self-disclosures of God in time and space."⁸ For Vos, exegesis looks for the meaning of the

⁶Chapell offers three expository approaches to the text to uncover a redemptive focus: textual disclosure, type disclosure, and context disclosure. Chapell states that these expository approaches lead to faithful exposition of a text. Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 280-88.

⁷Dennis E. Johnson, *Heralds of the King* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 18.

⁸Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1948), 5. Vos subjected biblical theology and exegesis under exegetical theology. In doing so, he distinguished biblical theology from exegesis. For Vos, exegesis looks for the meaning of the Bible;

text; biblical theology understands the Bible as God's progressive revelation and continuity in Christ.⁹ Clowney, following Vos, insists that God's revelation was given "in epochs determined by God's acts" and has "the organic relation of these successive eras, as developing manifestations of one gracious design."¹⁰ By this statement, Clowney means that the Word of God was revealed progressively in the successive eras and reached its climax in Jesus Christ. Thus, biblical theology not only seeks to show the character of God's progressive revelation; it also shows the completion of God's redemption in Christ's work. Since Christ is in every text, Clowney believes, Christ-centered biblical theology discerns how every text relates to Christ in its redemptive-historical context.¹¹

Jesus' explanation to his disciples in Luke 24:25-45 also convinced Clowney of his seeing Christ in every Old Testament text. Clowney insists that Jesus himself taught the disciples to read the Old Testament in light of him.¹² Clowney continues, "If all the Scriptures testify of Christ, Christ also is subject to the Scriptures."¹³ Elsewhere,

biblical theology first seeks the process of God's revelation in the Bible and becomes a steppingstone in the process of exegetical theology, and finally, exegesis.

⁹Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 5.

¹⁰Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), 15.

¹¹Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 10. Clowney argues that Christ is presented in the whole Old Testament. He means that because Christ is in the New Testament through his incarnation, death, and resurrection, Christ is in the whole Bible. Elsewhere Clowney insists that Christ's presence in the Old Testament as the Lord and as the Servant is "direct." Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 99. Clowney understands the term *Kyrios*, Lord, which is applied to Jehovah in the Old Testament, points to Jesus Christ. In addition, the righteous servant in the Old Testament prefigures the true Servant, Jesus Christ. For his understanding of Jesus Christ as the Lord and as the Servant, see Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All Scripture*, 11-20.

¹²Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 30-31; idem, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 39.

¹³Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 33. Biblical theology shows how Christ is present as the Servant of and the Lord of the Covenant throughout the Bible.

Clowney states, “The witness of the Scripture to Christ is the reason they were written.”¹⁴ When the text says nothing about Christ, Clowney adds, “the biblical theological approach will open the way to resolving our difficulties.”¹⁵ Clowney argues that interpreters fail to understand the text rightly until they find Christ in the text. Accordingly, interpretation of the text is completed when interpreters discern the relationship between the text and Christ. Here again, Christ-centered biblical theology shows how every text is related to Christ in the redemptive-historical context. Thus, biblical theology, which Clowney employs, is definitely Christ-centered. Clowney concludes the following regarding the role of Christ-centered biblical theology in hermeneutics:

Biblical theology is not a method in this sense. If its principle is grasped, it cannot be optional or superficial. Its approach is rather an essential step in the interpretation of the Bible. Neither exegesis on the one hand, nor systematic theology on the other, can ignore the progressive unfolding of revelation in the history of redemption, and it is the task of biblical theology to study that revelation without losing sight of either its continuity or its progressive and epochal structure.¹⁶

Clowney and the Meaning of the Text

Clowney finds that the authority of preaching comes from the authority of the Word of God, which is embodied in Christ. Since God’s sovereign Word was revealed in the course of God’s deliverances of His people and fulfilled by Christ, Clowney argues, the authority of God’s Word, which is the basis of all authority in preaching, is unfolded in Christ-centered biblical theology.¹⁷ Clowney means that because Christ-centered biblical theology concerns how God’s redemption was progressively developed and

¹⁴Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 44.

¹⁵Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 74.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁷Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 30. Clowney means that since God’s Word was fulfilled by Christ, the emphasis of God’s Word is “on its authority in the history of redemption.” *Ibid.*, 34.

fulfilled by Christ, interpreters must find the meaning of the text in the redemptive-historical context.

Since discerning the author's intended meaning of the text is at the forefront of hermeneutics, Clowney synthesizes his hermeneutical approach into two steps: "Since each incident is set in an ever-expanding series of horizons that reach to the great epochs of biblical revelation, it is well for the preacher to develop first the more immediate horizon found in the setting of the text, and then to relate this to the broad epochal structure of Scripture."¹⁸ First, Clowney interprets the text in its immediate theological horizon. Clowney expounds that the first step is to find "the principle of contextual interpretation" in its immediate theological horizon.¹⁹ This immediate theological horizon is not an immediate historical context of the text, but one of six great epochs.²⁰

His interpretation of the passage about the healing of Naaman by Elisha (2 Kings 5) demonstrates this approach. Clowney explains that this event must be seen "in relation to the broad horizon of the theocratic kingdom."²¹ Since "Elisha's ministry is distinct from Elijah's but forms a unity with it," Clowney remarks, preachers must interpret this passage "in the biblical-theological perspective given in the Lord's commission to Elijah at Horeb."²² Clowney describes the theological principle of this event as "[God's] judgment on Israel through the nations, with blessing to the Gentiles as

¹⁸Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 89-90. Clowney similarly expresses this process, "Our hermeneutical method, therefore, must always begin by finding the immediate theological horizon and then relating that to the broader biblical-theological perspectives." *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁹Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 88.

²⁰Clowney identifies 6 great epochal periods: the period from the creation to the fall; the antediluvian period from the fall to the flood; the period from the flood to the call of Abraham; the patriarchal age from Abraham to Moses; the period from Moses to Christ; and the coming of Christ. The theological horizon of the event in II Kings 5 is the period from Moses to Christ. *Ibid.*, 89.

²¹*Ibid.*, 90.

²²*Ibid.*

one of its consequences.”²³ Clowney then expands the theological horizon of this passage to the period of Moses: “This theme goes back to the curses of Ebal and culminates in the prophetic predictions of exile.”²⁴ He again moves to the period of Jesus, saying that Jesus reminded the Jews of the ministries of Elijah and of Elisha (Luke 4:25-26).²⁵ Thus, the immediate theological horizon of 2 Kings 5, which Clowney utilizes in the first step, is not the historical context of this passage; it is instead the period of Moses to Christ. The theological principle of this passage in its theological horizon is God’s judgment on Israel by means of other nations and blessings given to the Gentiles. This fact demonstrates that Clowney’s hermeneutical interest in the first step is to discern the theological principle of the passage in one of six great epochs.²⁶

Clowney’s critique of Greidanus demonstrates this interest:

While Greidanus might have drawn together his separate ‘ways’ to advantage, he opens the doors to textual interpretation that focuses on the meaning of the text to Israel, the original hearers. Even this commitment to original meaning cannot be made supreme in application to the Word of God. The prophetic richness of Old Testament Christology goes beyond any grounding in the address to Israel.²⁷

This argument implies that Clowney’s main hermeneutical interest in the first step is to discern the meaning of the text in relation to Christ, the fuller sense, rather than to limit his understanding to the original, more limited meaning of the text.

²³Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 91.

²⁴Ibid., 90.

²⁵Ibid., 91. Clowney argues that Jesus’ ministry in Nazareth (Luke 4:25-26) has the same theological principle of the healing of Naaman by Elisha, which is God’s judgment on Israel through nations and blessings to the Gentiles.

²⁶Clowney, for another example, argues that the prophecy of Jonah is related not only to Abraham and Moses but also to the prophetic role of Elijah and Elisha who brought God’s blessings to the Gentiles in connection with judgment upon Israel. In addition, Clowney finds the deep to symbolize Christ’s resurrection from the deliverance of Jonah. Thus, the immediate theological horizon of the message of Jonah is the period of Abraham to Christ. Ibid., 92-98.

²⁷Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 44.

Second, once interpreters understand the text in its theological horizon, they are ready to interpret the text in relation to God's total revelation.²⁸ Clowney means that, at this point, the Old Testament can be fully understood in relation to the New. The saving work of the Lord in the Old Testament was not complete, so "it has a prospective reference pointing forward to the great day of culmination."²⁹ Clowney expounds,

Because of the continuity of God's work of redemption, the connection between salvation in the Old Testament and the New is organic. There is one saving Lord, and one true Israel, the people of God. But because of the epochal progression of redemption and revelation to fulfillment in Christ, there is a dependence of the partial on the total, of the provisional on the final, of the old on the new.³⁰

To Clowney, Christ is presented in the Old Testament as Lord and as Servant. While his saving work in the Old Testament is partially revealed, the New Testament fully expounds upon Christ's saving work.

Clowney and Primary Tools for Finding Christ in the Old Testament

While Christ-centered biblical theology offers a core hermeneutical approach to every text through God's progressive revelation and continuity, symbolism and typology are specific ways to find Christ as the Lord and Servant of the Covenant.³¹ Clowney rejects the idea that one can see a type only when the New Testament identifies it, arguing instead that such a narrow approach to type and anti-type results in "hermeneutical bankruptcy."³² Since the New Testament authors found types, Clowney argues, preachers can also find types that refer to Christ by using methods of symbolism

²⁸Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 98-100.

²⁹Ibid., 99.

³⁰Ibid., 100.

³¹Ibid., 11-20.

³²Ibid., 31. Typology seeks the correspondence between type and anti-type based on God's consistent work in history, but also agrees that anti-type is greater and more complete than type because type is completed in Christ.

and typology.³³ Both symbolism and typology are methods used to show how Christ exists in the Old Testament as a type and appears in the New Testament as its antitype.³⁴

Clowney's symbolism. Clowney understands that symbolism operates “with a double reference.”³⁵ He means that the symbol in the Old Testament is completely satisfied by the earlier event or person and later fulfilled by Christ. Thus, a symbol foreshadows its reality in Christ. The continuity of God's progressive revelation functions as the structure of symbolism. Clowney describes the role of symbolism: “It is evident, then, that symbolism is of particular importance in relating the revelation of the ‘past ages’ to the fulfillment in Christ. Symbols abound in Scripture, not incidentally, but because of the structure of the history of redemption which is at once organic and progressive.”³⁶ Clowney suggests that interpreters discern a symbol and its reality in Christ by analyzing redemptive history. Given this method, he uses four principles to interpret biblical symbols.

First, a symbol is distinct from its reality. Since symbolism has a double reference, the distinction between the symbol and its reality is maintained. Second, a relation between the symbol and its reality exists. When the author utilizes a symbol, which is related to one's thought and experience, “all the categories of thought and experience offer relations which symbolism may use.”³⁷ Clowney, for instance, finds the relation between Christ and his church in the union of husband and wife. This human

³³Clowney utilizes the principle of analogy to connect Christ in the Old Testament with Christ in the New Testament. Symbolism and typology are a form of the principle of analogy. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 100.

³⁴Clowney argues, “If there is no symbolism, there can be no typology.” Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 31.

³⁵Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 100.

³⁶Ibid., 101.

³⁷Ibid., 105.

fellowship expresses the closest relationship that points to union with Christ. Third, the reference of the symbols of Scripture is divinely established in God's revelation. He further argues, "The symbolism of Scripture is communicated in word revelation, and its elements have rational meaning. . . . Rather than there being a wholeness of imagery which baffles thought, the symbolism is organized coherently and conceptually."³⁸

Clowney explains the way to find the divinely established reference from the symbol: "The interpreter of biblical symbols needs therefore to seek the meaning of the individual elements of symbolism in the context of scriptural use. As in all exegesis the historical setting must be examined. The whole context of the period of revelation is always significant."³⁹ Symbols should be disclosed not only in their historical setting, but also in their canonical context.

Fourth, Clowney classifies the symbols of Scripture into four groups: divine, institutional, prophetic, and historical.⁴⁰ The divine symbols directly make them "signs of God's presence and power."⁴¹ Institutional symbols are related to religious reference. Circumcision, for instance, symbolizes the mark of God's people. Prophetic symbols are related to the divine symbols and include prophetic actions. Historical symbols are closely related to God's ongoing work of redemption.⁴²

Symbolism and typology. Clowney perceives the relationship between symbolism and typology in accordance with Vos, who argues that every type has a symbol. Vos identifies symbolism with typology:

³⁸Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 106.

³⁹Ibid., 107.

⁴⁰Ibid., 107-10. Later Clowney reclassifies the symbols of Scripture: ceremonial symbols, official symbols, and historical symbols. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 23-29.

⁴¹Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 108.

⁴²Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 24.

The things symbolized and the things typified are not different sets of things. They are in reality the same things, only different in this respect that they come first on a lower stage of development in redemption, and then again, in a later period, on a higher stage. Thus what is symbolical with regard to the already existing edition of the fact or truth becomes typical, prophetic, of the later, final edition of that same fact or truth. From this it will be perceived that a type can never be a type independently of its being first a symbol.⁴³

While symbolism and typology ultimately look at the same reference, the difference between them is hermeneutical sequence. What an event, institution, or person symbolizes finally typifies its later truth, Christ’s fulfillment. In this sense, to Vos, typology begins with the interpretation of symbols in Scripture.

Clowney develops Vos’s understanding of symbolism and typology, arguing, “[I]f there is symbolism in the account, we can rightly infer typology. If there is no symbolism, there can be no typology.”⁴⁴ In other words, if typology is a way to find

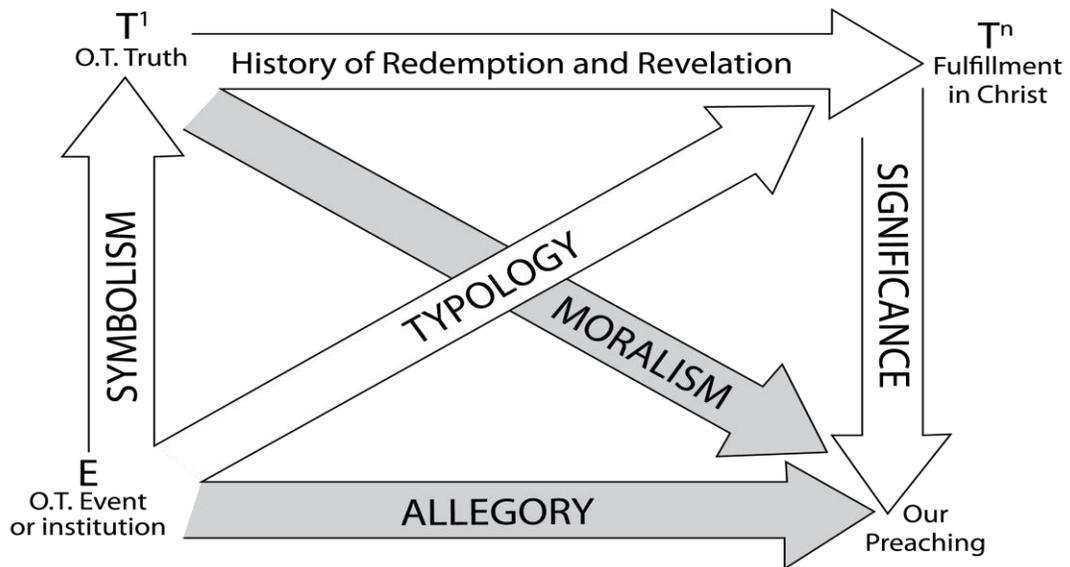


Figure 1. Clowney’s typology chart

⁴³Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 145.

⁴⁴Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 31.

Christ, interpreters have to start this process by interpreting symbols. Clowney's rectangle diagram shows how a person, event, or institution found in the Old Testament points to Christ's fulfillment through symbolism and typology.⁴⁵

As mentioned before, Clowney insists that a symbol has a double reference. The thing (E) symbolizes the earlier event, institution, or person, which is the truth (T¹) manifested in a particular period. The symbolized truth typifies the fullness of that truth revealed in Christ (Tⁿ). Therefore, an Old Testament event, institution, or person is a type that symbolizes the truth in the Old Testament and finally typifies Christ's fulfillment. Clowney argues, "All truths come to their realization in relation to Christ."⁴⁶ Thus, to Clowney, typology begins with symbolism and ends with Christ's fulfillment.

Further, Clowney warns of moralism and allegory. Moralism, Clowney defines, is finding significance "directly from the Old Testament[']s revealed truth, with no reference to the fulfillment of the truth in Christ."⁴⁷ Allegory is to explain a text "by picking something in it and giving it an interpretation that is unrelated to the context or meaning."⁴⁸ According to Clowney's diagram, moralism and allegory do not have any reference to the fulfillment of the truth in Christ, but they mistakenly seek to find significance to Christians directly, either from revealed truth or from an Old Testament event, person, or institution. Clowney's diagram shows that an Old Testament event, person, or institution symbolizes the revealed truth in the Old Testament and finally typifies Christ's fulfillment. Symbolism and typology work together to interpret the text. In particular, for Christ-centered preaching, typology, which is related to Christ, is the core method.

⁴⁵Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 32.

⁴⁶Ibid., 32.

⁴⁷Ibid., 33.

⁴⁸Ibid., 34.

Sidney Greidanus and a Christocentric Hermeneutic

In *Sola Scriptura*, Greidanus asserts the weakness of exemplary preaching through examining the controversy between Dutch redemptive-historical preaching and exemplary preaching. His work also enabled him to realize the shortcomings of Dutch redemptive-historical preaching.⁴⁹ First, he contends that redemptive-historical preaching easily overlooks the historical aspect of the text by focusing too much on redemptive history. Second, tracing in detail God's progressive revelation causes preaching to be speculative. Third, redemptive-historical preaching pays more attention to the past rather than the present. Fourth, in reaction to exemplary preaching, redemptive-historical preaching ignores the human characters. To overcome these shortcomings and to suggest biblical interpretive methods, Greidanus published *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* in 1988.

Greidanus and Redemptive-Historical Christocentric Interpretation

In *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, Greidanus names his interpretive method "theological interpretation." Since theology refers "to God, specifically, the revelation of God and the revelation about God," theological interpretation seeks to hear "God's voice in the Scriptures."⁵⁰ Later Greidanus characterized his theological interpretation as one that falls somewhere between Calvin's theocentric method and Luther's Christological method.⁵¹ He writes, "The Christocentric method complements the theocentric method of interpreting the Old Testament by

⁴⁹Sidney Greidanus, "Redemptive History and Preaching," *Pro Rege* 19, no. 2 (December 1990): 13-14.

⁵⁰Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 103.

⁵¹As Calvin focused every text on "the sovereignty and glory of God," Greidanus interprets every text in the redemptive-historical context which is theocentric. Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 137. In addition, as Luther interpreted every text in the light of the New Testament, Greidanus connects every text to Christ who is the center of the Bible. *Ibid.*, 120, 227.

seeking to do justice to the fact that *God's* story of bringing his kingdom on earth is centered in *Christ*: Christ the center of redemptive history, Christ the center of the Scriptures.”⁵²

Greidanus believes that every text, especially Old Testament texts, should be understood in Christ, who is the center of the Bible. Greidanus suggests two steps: first, to understand the passage in its historical context and, second, to understand the message in its redemptive-historical context.⁵³ The first step is to find the original, historical meaning of a passage, which includes literary, historical, and theocentric interpretation of the text.

Literary interpretation examines the literary genre of the text and finds the meaning of the text in its particular context, finally finding the particular function of the text in the context of the book. Historical interpretation explores the author's intended meaning for the original hearer. Interpreters analyze “who wrote this text? to whom? when? where? and why?”⁵⁴ Under historical interpretation, interpreters disclose the original author's relevance for the original hearer. Greidanus argues that historical interpretation is so significant for preachers because the original relevance of the text “will form the bridge to present [textual] relevance.”⁵⁵ Theocentric interpretation discovers how the text speaks about God and his will. In making this discovery, Greidanus attempts to understand the text in its own historical context, and his goal within the first step is to find a theocentric concept, which is what the passage says about God, to serve as a bridge to Christ.

⁵²Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 227.

⁵³Ibid., 228-34.

⁵⁴Ibid., 229.

⁵⁵Ibid.

The second step is to interpret the text in its redemptive-historical context. Greidanus claims that the text in the Old Testament speaks not only about God, but also about Christ: “In preaching any part of Scripture, one must understand its message in the light of that center, Jesus Christ.”⁵⁶ Greidanus continues, “Christian preachers cannot preach an Old Testament text in isolation, but must always understand the text in the contexts of the whole Bible and redemptive history.”⁵⁷ The second step moves from the question “What does the passage discover about God and his will?” to the question, “What does this passage uncover about Jesus Christ?”⁵⁸

Greidanus asserts that interpreters can find additional meaning in the text that the original author did not know.⁵⁹ This additional meaning can be found because the original human author did not know how Christ completed God’s redemptive plan in the New Testament, which implies that Christ is already in that text in accordance with the divine Author’s intent, though the human author did not know it. Thus, if the Old Testament is about God and his redemption, Christ is in that text as the fulfiller of God’s redemption. Greidanus’ final hermeneutical goal is to verify how Christ is in the text by revealing how he completes God’s redemption in the New Testament. His seven interpretive methods show how the Old Testament can be understood in light of Jesus Christ.

Seven Interpretive Methods

Greidanus interprets the text in its historical context and then in God’s total redemptive-historical context. While the first step is to find a theocentric concept, which

⁵⁶Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 227.

⁵⁷Ibid., 230.

⁵⁸Ibid., 232.

⁵⁹Ibid., 233.

is about God and his redemption, the second step is to find its Christological significance. Greidanus utilizes seven methods to find a connection to Christ in every text, especially in the Old Testament.

The way of redemptive-historical progression. Greidanus claims that redemptive-historical progression is the foundation of Christ-centered preaching.⁶⁰ Since God progressively revealed his redemptive plan that reached its climax in Christ, the Old Testament cannot be separated from Christ. So interpreters should understand the Old Testament in the context of redemptive history to show its entire movement to Christ.⁶¹ The redemptive-historical progression shows how Christ works to reveal God's redemption in the Old Testament. For example, in 1 Samuel 16-17, David was anointed king and saved the Israelites from the enemy by killing Goliath. David's victory over his enemy Goliath can be connected to Christ who defeated his enemy, Satan. Just as David defeated Goliath to save God's people, Christ conquered and will conquer Satan to save sinners.⁶²

The way of promise-fulfillment. The way of promise-fulfillment finds God's promise in the Old Testament and its relationship to Christ's fulfillment in the New Testament. According to Greidanus, the redemptive-historical progression enables interpreters to see the connection between promise and fulfillment. God first promised His redemptive plan in the Old Testament and then fulfilled His promise progressively through Christ.⁶³ So God's promise and Christ's fulfillment are closely related to, and

⁶⁰Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 234.

⁶¹Ibid., 237-38. For instance, Greidanus introduces three steps to show the movement to Christ: God's redemptive acts in Israel, God's redemptive acts in Christ, and God's redemptive acts in church and world history.

⁶²Ibid., 238-39.

⁶³Ibid., 240-42.

cannot be separated from, each other. In addition, as redemptive-historical progression shows, because Christ fulfilled God's Old Testament promise, Greidanus argues that Christ already existed in God's promise in seed form.⁶⁴

The way of typology. Greidanus utilizes typology to find Christ in the Old Testament. Greidanus is aware of the danger of misusing typology. Such dangers include typologizing and allegorizing.⁶⁵ Typologizing overextends the use of typology "by searching for types in rather incidental details in the text."⁶⁶ Since typologizing creates rather than discovers types in the text, typologizing can slip into allegorizing. Greidanus writes, "[A]llegorizing is a bridge from then to now that fails to bear the weight of the text: it fails to bring across the plain meaning of a passage in its historical context and thus falsifies the message."⁶⁷ Both typologizing and allegorizing ignore the historical facts of the text and aggressively force parallels between the text and Jesus Christ.

Regarding the role of typology, Greidanus asks the question: "Is an Old Testament type [as] predictive as prophecy is or is it discovered retrospectively? The answer is not an either-or, but both-and."⁶⁸ On the one hand, typology is predictive because a type often points forward to further fulfillment. Moses, for example, built the tabernacle, which is a sign of God's presence, and this type points forward to a further fulfillment in Christ, that is, "God's presence in the midst of his people through his Son Jesus."⁶⁹

⁶⁴Greidanus shows an example of promise-fulfillment in Isa 61:1-4: God's promise, return of remnant, Jesus' First coming and dawn of Jubilee, and Day of Judgment and full Jubilee. Ibid., 243.

⁶⁵Typologizing and allegorizing are forced interpretation. Ibid., 36.

⁶⁶Ibid., 97.

⁶⁷Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 160.

⁶⁸Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 251.

⁶⁹Ibid., 252.

On the other hand, typology is retrospective. Greidanus argues, “[T]ypological interpretation is not reading meaning back into the event described in the text but simply understanding this event in its full redemptive-historical context.”⁷⁰ Greidanus further writes that typological interpretation does not add new meaning; it discovers the fuller meaning of the text intended by the divine Author.⁷¹ Thus, preachers need to find the fuller meaning of the type in Christ.⁷² While typology may be prospective or retrospective, Greidanus concludes that typology generally moves backward from the New Testament to the Old Testament. He means that a type of Christ is already in the Old Testament and is discovered only from a New Testament perspective.

Greidanus explains his rule for using typology in six ways: (1) always precede typological interpretation with literary-historical interpretation, (2) look for a type not in the details but in the central message of the text concerning God’s activity to redeem his people, (3) determine the symbolic meaning of the person, institution, or event in OT times, (4) note the points of contrast between the OT types and the NT anti-type, (5) carry forward the meaning of the symbol even as its meaning escalates, and (6) do not simply draw a typological line to Christ, but preach Christ.⁷³ These rules for using typology reflect the nature of typology: (1) God’s repeated work in history between type and anti-type and (2) escalation or heightening in the anti-type.

⁷⁰Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 252.

⁷¹Ibid., 233. Greidanus also defines typological interpretation as an interpretation which requires “redemptive history because the analogy and escalation between type and antitype are drawn within redemptive history.” Ibid., 91. In addition, Greidanus criticizes typological interpretation, saying, “[T]ypological interpretation faces the danger of degenerating into typologizing, that is, overextending the use of typology by searching for types in rather incidental details in the text. Ibid., 97.

⁷²Greidanus argues, “Whatever name we use, the important point is that a passage understood in the contexts of the whole Bible and redemptive history may reveal more meaning than its author intended originally.” Ibid., 233.

⁷³Ibid., 257-60.

The way of analogy. Greidanus uses analogy as an interpretive method for Christ-centered preaching. Greidanus notes that because of the unity of redemptive history and the continuity between Israel and the church, analogy has been considered as a method of applying the text to the church today. As God spoke to Israel, the Word of God can be addressed to the church today by analogy.

Greidanus, however, claims that the way of analogy is “further than relevant application of Old Testament messages.”⁷⁴ In saying this, he means that because there is a gap between then and now, the Word of God cannot directly be applied to the church today. Rather, interpreters must understand an analogy between God’s work and Christ’s work. He argues, “[W]e need to stress that the unity of redemptive history adheres in Christ; the continuity between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church is accomplished only in Christ.”⁷⁵ Since Christ is the center of redemptive history, he enables interpreters to discern the similarities between Israel and the church today.

In his reflection, Todd Murray describes Greidanus’s method of analogy: “With this method, the preacher is not looking for anything specific or prophetic pointing to Christ, but merely observes the relational pattern of how God deals with his people in the OT and its similarity to God’s work in Christ.”⁷⁶ Thus, Greidanus does not use analogy for direct relevant application, but for the way to discern the parallels between God’s work for Israel and God’s work in Christ for the church. If interpreters find this continuity in Christ by analogy, the congregation also “catches the connection—only in Christ.”⁷⁷ Thus, interpreters need to discern the analogy between what God is and does

⁷⁴Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 262.

⁷⁵Ibid., 262.

⁷⁶Todd J. Murphy, a review of *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method*, by Sidney Greidanus, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44, no. 2 (January 2001): 331.

⁷⁷Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 263.

for Israel and what God in Christ is and does for the church.⁷⁸ The pivotal position of Christ enables interpreters to use analogy to apply the Old Testament message to the church today.⁷⁹

The way of longitudinal themes. Greidanus also uses longitudinal themes to connect the Old Testament to the New. Greidanus does not seek *the* overarching theme that runs throughout the whole Bible, but he instead argues that many themes in the Old Testament cover individual books and the whole Bible.⁸⁰ Greidanus asserts that the way of longitudinal themes is related to the history of revelation or “God’s relevant proclamation to his people at different stages of redemptive history.”⁸¹ God’s proclamation is directly relevant for Israel, but, because the New Testament develops many themes derived from the Old Testament, these themes need to be traced through the New Testament to establish a relevant message for the church today. Greidanus describes longitudinal themes as “highways” that lead to “the person, work, and teaching of Christ.”⁸² Greidanus suggests several major longitudinal themes that lead to Christ, including “the kingdom of God, the providence of God, covenant, the presence of God, the love of God, the grace of God, justice, redemption, law, sin and guilt offerings, God’s concern for ‘the poor,’ mediator, the Day of the Lord, and so on.”⁸³

⁷⁸Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 263.

⁷⁹Ibid., 262.

⁸⁰Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 70. Greidanus warns that an overarching theme as a foreign system may distort the text (ibid.).

⁸¹Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 266.

⁸²Ibid., 267.

⁸³Ibid.

The way of New Testament references. As New Testament authors use Old Testament passages to support their messages, Greidanus argues, so too preachers may consider New Testament references to link an Old Testament passage to Christ. He does not mean, however, that such apostolic interpretation of the Old Testament in the New is a definitive method of interpretation of the Old Testament: “We must remember . . . that we cannot always follow New Testament writers in their use of the Old Testament: when we preach on 1 Chronicles 3, we cannot use Matthew’s number fourteen (David), and when we preach on Sarah and Hagar (Gen 21:8-21), we cannot use Paul’s ‘allegory’ in Galatians 4.”⁸⁴ As Greidanus mentions, this limitation is because New Testament authors quoted the Old Testament passage to support their messages rather than to develop hermeneutical principles.

Nevertheless, Greidanus believes that apostolic interpretation of the Old Testament passages helps interpreters preach Christ from the Old Testament in two ways. First, the use of New Testament references confirms what interpreters already discovered by the ways of promise-fulfillment, typology, or longitudinal themes. Second, interpreters carefully use the New Testament references or allusions to find Christ.⁸⁵ Greidanus asserts that New Testament references are not a major way to find Christ in every text, but that New Testament references and allusions may be used as “an unexpected link to Christ in the New Testament.”⁸⁶ Greidanus gives an example to show the use of New

⁸⁴Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 269.

⁸⁵Ibid., 269. Greidanus says that preachers do not need to agree with New Testament authors in their use of the Old Testament. So, preachers need to remember that New Testament references are not a definitive interpretation of the Old Testament.

⁸⁶Ibid. Greidanus continues, “If preachers had failed to discover these ways [of promise-fulfillment, typology, or longitudinal themes], these New Testament references are a good corrective of oversights” (ibid.).

Testament references from Genesis 22 and John 3, noting that Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22:2 can allude to John 3:16, God's love in Christ.⁸⁷

The way of contrast. The method of contrast suggests that, for any change between the two Testaments, Christ plays the central role in explaining the contrast. Greidanus explains, "Because of the progression in the histories of redemption and revelation, it should not come as a surprise that the message of an Old Testament text will sometimes stand in contrast to that of the New Testament."⁸⁸ He means that because Christ completely accomplished God's progressive revelation, there is a contrast between the Old and New Testaments. Such contrast not only shows the difference between the two Testaments, but also demonstrates Christ's central role in making a change between them. Thus, Greidanus asserts, "The way of contrast centers in Christ, for he is primarily responsible for any change between the messages of the Old Testament and those of the New."⁸⁹

Greidanus, for instance, explains that Jesus' death on the cross as a sacrifice, once for all filled up the ceremonial laws of sacrifice that required repeated actions.⁹⁰ Another example of contrast can be found between "imprecations" in the Psalms and Jesus' teaching to "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you" (Luke 6:27-28).⁹¹

Greidanus divides these seven ways of Christocentric interpretation into two principles. While the history of redemption enables preachers to use the ways of

⁸⁷Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 270.

⁸⁸Ibid., 271.

⁸⁹Ibid., 272.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid.

redemptive-historical progression, promise-fulfillment, typology, and analogy, the history of revelation enables preachers to use the ways of longitudinal themes, New Testament references, and contrast.⁹² The history of redemption shows how God first planned to save sinners, and how He completed the salvation of sinners through Christ. The history of revelation holds that God revealed His redemption at each stage of history but made a difference in Christ. The history of redemption and the history of revelation are closely related to each other.

None of these seven methods are to be understood as mutually exclusive, however. Greidanus writes, “Because of overlap between these ways, our concern should not be whether we have stuck to the precise perimeters of a particular way. Our concern should rather be: Does this sermon preach Christ?”⁹³

Graeme Goldsworthy and Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics

Goldsworthy defines hermeneutics as the formal discipline about “communication, meaning, and understanding.”⁹⁴ He means that hermeneutics finds how God communicates His Word (the message) with His people (the receiver).⁹⁵ In this sense, the hermeneutic of Goldsworthy is a discipline used to understand God’s communication through Jesus and the gospel for His people. Thus, to understand Goldsworthy’s hermeneutic, the starting point should be to understand the role of the gospel.

⁹²Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 266.

⁹³Ibid., 276.

⁹⁴Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Biblical-Theological Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 24.

⁹⁵Ibid., 30-38. Goldsworthy argues that the message that God communicates is both “Jesus Christ and the Bible as God’s word.” Ibid., 35.

Goldsworthy and the Gospel

Goldsworthy argues that the kingdom of God is a controlling theme and that Jesus' ministry focuses on the kingdom of God. He notes that Jesus Christ shows God's "salvation-historical event" through his incarnation, death, and resurrection.⁹⁶ So Christ is the goal of God's sovereignty and of the kingdom of God. Since the gospel is what Christ has done for sinners, the gospel is the way to understand the kingdom of God. By this, he means that the gospel is the hermeneutical norm for the whole Bible.⁹⁷ Since, throughout the Bible, God revealed progressively His plan to save sinners from every nation, Goldsworthy believes that the ultimate goal of interpretation is to understand the Bible through the gospel.⁹⁸ So he argues that the gospel is the hermeneutical key to interpret the whole Bible: "By referring to the gospel as the hermeneutical key I mean that proper interpretation of any part of the Bible requires us to relate it to the person and work of Jesus."⁹⁹

Elsewhere, Goldsworthy locates Jesus Christ as the ultimate meta-narrative that runs throughout Scripture: "If Jesus is the one mediator between God and man, then he must mediate the meaning of the whole of God's communication to us."¹⁰⁰ Since the gospel is the specific expression or reality of what Christ has done for sinners, it is the hermeneutical norm for the whole Bible. Goldsworthy writes,

The Bible makes a very radical idea inescapable: not only is the gospel the interpretive norm for the whole Bible, but there is an important sense in which Jesus Christ is the mediator of the meaning of everything that exists. In other words, *the gospel is the hermeneutical norm for the whole of reality*. All reality was created by Christ, through Christ and for Christ (Col. 1:15-16). . . . Only through the gospel can

⁹⁶Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 52.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 51-52.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 81-85.

⁹⁹Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 84.

¹⁰⁰Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 62.

we know what it means for humans. . . . Hence the ultimate interpretation of the meaning of everything is found only in Christ. This includes every text of the Bible.¹⁰¹

To Goldsworthy, the gospel is not only the final and fullest expression of God's revelation in Christ; it also structures salvation history in the whole Bible.¹⁰² Thus, without the gospel, interpreters cannot fully understand the Bible. So, as he insists, the gospel is the key to interpret every text of the Bible.¹⁰³

Macro-Typology and Epochal Structure

Goldsworthy divides God's redemptive revelation into three stages or epochs in accordance with the typology of Donald Robinson.¹⁰⁴ These stages are as follows: the kingdom revealed in Israel's history, the kingdom revealed in prophetic eschatology, and the New Testament witness to the kingdom revealed in Christ.¹⁰⁵ A type or a text should be understood in its epoch and then connected to its fulfillment in Christ. Interpreters thus need to examine any text in one of three stages of salvation history and then find the theological connection between a type and its antitype in Christ.¹⁰⁶ If a type occurs in the first stage, for instance, the second stage is typological of the first stage and becomes a type of the third stage. The second stage then recapitulates the first and the third stage

¹⁰¹Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 63. Goldsworthy also claims that the centrality of Christ is core to understand the Bible. *Ibid.*, 249.

¹⁰²Goldsworthy also believes that the gospel is not only the center of the Bible, but also forms the structure of the Bible. Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 86-94. See also Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991); *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundation and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012); and *idem*, *Gospel and Kingdom: A Christian Interpretation of the Old Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1981).

¹⁰³Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 84.

¹⁰⁴Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 170-74. These stages divided by Robinson are: God's promise to Abraham and David; the Prophets; and Jesus to New Creation.

¹⁰⁵Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 112, 138-39. See also Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 26.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 113-14.

recapitulates the first and the second.¹⁰⁷ To put it differently, the first and second epochs prepare, predict, continue, and represent the third epoch of Christ's fulfillment.¹⁰⁸

Macro-typology explains this inner typological relationship of the entire Bible and shows how the gospel bridges the text to Christ. In *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, Goldsworthy explains the biblical history as God's salvation history in light of promise-fulfillment and then considers typology as a broad pattern to connect the Old Testament to Christ. He asserts, "[A]ll texts in the whole Bible bear a discernible relationship to Christ and are primarily intended as a testimony to Christ."¹⁰⁹ According to Goldsworthy, macro-typology discovers this discernible relationship between all aspects of Old Testament salvation history and Christ.¹¹⁰ He defines macro-typology as "a way of showing the comprehensive nature of the fulfillment of God's promises in Christ."¹¹¹ Macro-typology, then, is the way to show the typological relationship between every text and Christ and guides interpreters to understand the full scope of God's redemptive work in salvation history.

To understand the typological relationship between every text and Christ, macro-typology uncovers a broader theological connection between a type in a particular epoch and its relationship to Christ. Macro-typology is concerned with the overall correspondence of the epochs and shows the theological pathway among the epochs. Goldsworthy thus argues, "When we allow the Old Testament categories to expand to

¹⁰⁷Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 26.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 25-27, 170-78, 184-89.

¹⁰⁹Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 113.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 112. Elsewhere Goldsworthy argues, "There is no limit to types." Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 183.

¹¹¹Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 184.

their full potential, antitype is shown to be broader than the mere fulfillment of certain explicit types and promises.”¹¹²

According to Goldsworthy, the main purpose of interpretation is not to find a type and its antitype in every small detail: “The removal of limits to typology does not mean that anything goes, or that we take a cavalier attitude to finding types of Christ in every little detail on the basis of some association of ideas.”¹¹³ Goldsworthy rather emphasizes the context of typology, which is “the entire stage of revelation in which it occurs.”¹¹⁴ He writes, “The typological value of a person, event or institution is governed by the role that each plays in the theology of the redemptive revelation within the stage of revelation in which it occurs.”¹¹⁵ Thus, by macro-typology, Goldsworthy aims to understand a person, event, or institution in its redemptive-historical stage and to discern its typological value in the entire stage of revelation.

To understand the way of macro-typology, it is worth looking at how Goldsworthy finds a type from Genesis 1:1-2:3:

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 new earth (Isa. 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.¹¹⁶

¹¹²Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 184.

¹¹³Ibid., 186-87. For instance, Rahab’s red cord should not be seen as a type of Jesus’ blood.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 187.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 189. Greidanus, however, asserts that Gen 1:1-2:3 does not have a type of Christ. Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 50.

Since the new creation accomplished by Christ in the third epoch recapitulates God's creation in the first epoch, Goldsworthy believes that God's creation in Genesis 1:1-2:3 can be recognized as a type by macro-typology.

Macro-Typology: Genre and Theological Epochs

In *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, Goldsworthy shows how macro-typology interprets a text for Christ-centered preaching.¹¹⁷ The first step is to understand the genre of the text and its distinctive characteristics so that interpreters can find what the genre is intended to do.¹¹⁸ He argues,

Whether these passages are found in the context of formally identified genres is not the most important consideration. The preacher needs to be able to identify how the particular literary expression is intended to function . . . [B]eing able to label the genre is not as important as understanding the nuances of each literary expression and what the author wants to achieve by it.¹¹⁹

Goldsworthy argues that because the Word of God is communicated in different genres, understanding the text through its genre enables interpreters to respond rightly to the text exegetically and to find how it fits into biblical revelation.¹²⁰

The author's intent, according to Goldsworthy, in using different genres is to show how the text "testifies to Christ and is given its final significance by Christ."¹²¹ Thus, interpreters need to consider literary genres "for their relationship to the progression of redemptive history, with a view to providing the biblical-theological context for individual texts."¹²²

¹¹⁷Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 135-244.

¹¹⁸Goldsworthy divides the major biblical genres into narrative, law, prophecy, wisdom, psalm, gospel, epistle, and apocalypse. *Ibid.*, 140-244.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, 136-37.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, 135-37.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, 138.

¹²²*Ibid.*

The second step is to understand how the salvation history of the text has been progressively revealed throughout the Bible. This second step reveals the theological function of the text. Because of the progression of salvation history, the theological function of a biblical text is different from those of other biblical texts. Goldsworthy, for instance, writes, “[T]he theological function of a proverbial saying in one of the Gospels may be very different from the function of the proverbial sayings in Proverbs.”¹²³ Their functions are different because those two proverbial sayings occurred at different points in salvation history. Thus, Goldsworthy argues that interpreters have to understand the text in the perspective of God’s progressive revelation.¹²⁴ By doing so, interpreters must link the text to salvation history and understand the text in the canonical context.

The third step is to identify the salvation epoch of the text. Macro-typology plays a significant role in this step. Goldsworthy emphasizes the theological movement from the text in its salvation epoch to the final epoch in Christ. Goldsworthy states that identifying the epoch of the text is essential:

The genre of the text will help us identify its function within that epoch of revelation. We attempt to identify that function in terms of its theological contribution to the overall kingdom revelation of that particular epoch. We then move to identify the way this theological contribution comes to its fruition and fulfillment, that is, how it testifies to Christ and is given its final significance by Christ.¹²⁵

This argument shows that Goldsworthy’s main interest in hermeneutics is to connect the text to Christ in the final epoch, the kingdom fulfilled in Christ. Thus, the third step is pivotal in his gospel-centered hermeneutic and is always incorporated into his sermons.

The story of Noah (Gen 6-9), for instance, occurs in the first epoch, from creation to the first part of Solomon’s reign. Goldsworthy reasons that because the

¹²³Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 138.

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵Ibid., 138.

historical narrative texts cover the first two epochs of salvation history, the story of Noah also shows the characteristics of historical narrative.¹²⁶ He argues that since the genre of the story of Noah is historical narrative, its emphasis is “on the way of salvation and the nature of the kingdom of God”.¹²⁷

We have noted the way Genesis 4-11 acts as a preparatory stage to the calling of Abraham and the giving of the covenant promises. These promises to Abraham provide the basis for the unfolding of all subsequent events up to the climax with King David. The promises to David in 2 Samuel 7 find immediate, if partial, fulfillment in Solomon, who actually rounds off the glory of David’s reign with the building of the temple.¹²⁸

This argument demonstrates how Goldsworthy interprets the story of Noah by considering its genre and then by considering the progression of salvation history, which has been developed from David and to Christ. Goldsworthy states, “The story of Noah is more than one of obedient faith in that it is part of the larger picture of God preserving a people for himself in a direct line to Abraham, and thus to David and to Christ.”¹²⁹ Thus, the story of Noah has a salvific theme that is related to Christ’s salvation in the final epoch.

Goldsworthy gives another example in the Psalms. In the exegesis of the Psalms, interpreters need to understand the unique features of the individual psalms in their theological perspective and their significance within the context of the canonical book as a whole. He argues, “[T]he fact that many of the psalms are praises in response to what God has revealed of himself in his great saving acts for Israel suggests that the theological expression will be salvation oriented.”¹³⁰ He means that the exegesis of the

¹²⁶Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 141.

¹²⁷Ibid.

¹²⁸Ibid. The characteristic of the historical narrative is God’s progressive revelation and continuity to save sinners through Christ.

¹²⁹Ibid., 144. Jesus quotes the story of Noah as “the final day of salvation and the coming of the Son of Man” in Matt 24:36-39.

¹³⁰Ibid., 200.

Psalms needs to be related to the overall pattern of redemptive history as it finds its fulfillment in Christ. Psalm 1, for instance, is considered a wisdom or didactic psalm and even though the salvation history of Psalm 1 is not specific, its main theological concern is “the contrasting of two ways to live” and showing that a righteous man is “a foreshadowing of the righteous Man for us, Jesus Christ.”¹³¹

In summary, the Bible is God’s progressive revelation of the salvation of sinners. Goldsworthy asserts, “That the whole Bible testifies to Christ is what we mean when we say that Christ is in all the Scriptures.”¹³² If Christ is in all the Scriptures, the gospel is identified in every text of the Bible. Macro-typology traces the typological relationship between the text and Christ in the final epoch and reveals the gospel in every text. So, it is right to say that, for Goldsworthy, interpreters need to find the gospel in every text through macro-typology, which is the major method for preaching Christ in every text.

Bryan Chapell and the Hermeneutic of Christ-Centered Preaching

According to Chapell, preaching aims to challenge God’s people to be like Jesus and to glorify God.¹³³ Because of the fallen condition of sinners, to experience this aim they need the divine solution provided by Christ. Chapell expounds, “God rescues his people from their broken nature and world by his grace alone in order for them to experience his goodness and express his glory.”¹³⁴ Thus, Chapell’s hermeneutical and homiletical foundation for Christ-centered preaching is the fallen condition focus.¹³⁵

¹³¹Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 203.

¹³²Ibid., 138.

¹³³Ibid., 54.

¹³⁴Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 14.

¹³⁵Ibid., 48-57.

Fallen Condition Focus (FCF) and Its Biblical Solution, Christ

Timothy Warren states that as a theological concept, Chapell's fallen condition focus provides "the key" to Christ-centered preaching.¹³⁶ Chapell argues, "The Bible assures us that every passage has a purpose, and it clearly tells us the basic nature of this purpose."¹³⁷ Concerning the purpose of the Bible, Chapell explains, "God designed the Bible to complete us for the purposes of his glory."¹³⁸ Because of the fallen condition of sinners, Chapell means that all God's people have become imperfect and failed to glorify God. They need God's aid and God's grace to enable them to glorify Him.

Chapell writes, "He responds with the truths of Scripture and gives us hope by focusing his grace on a facet of our fallen condition in every portion of his Word."¹³⁹ Chapell means that every text has a FCF, which identifies the human context and its divine biblical solutions provided in Christ. He asserts,

The preacher who identifies a passage's FCF for a congregation automatically moves the people to consider the Bible's solutions and instructions for contemporary life. Therefore, biblical preaching that brings an FCF to the surface also recognizes the need for application. . . . Application makes Jesus the source and the objective of a sermon's exhortation as well as the focus of its explanation.¹⁴⁰

Every text has the purpose of showing how God has saved sinners, who recognize their fallen condition, and how sinners may glorify God by overcoming their fallen condition through Christ, who provides divine biblical solutions. Just as the original reader of the text needed Christ, so too Christians today need Christ.

¹³⁶Timothy S. Warren, a review of *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, by Bryan Chapell, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152, no. 606 (April-June 1995): 253.

¹³⁷Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 49.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*

¹³⁹*Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 53-54.

Interpretive Methods of Christ-Centered Preaching

To accomplish the purpose of the text and sermon, Chapell emphasizes the power of God’s Word, which is manifested in Christ. Accordingly, Chapell describes his view of expository preaching: “[T]he preacher’s mission and calling is to explain to God’s people what the Bible means.”¹⁴¹ In order to find the meaning of the text, Chapell suggests three principles for interpreting a passage: (1) use the grammatical-historical method, (2) observe the historical, cultural, and literary context, and (3) determine the redemptive context.¹⁴²

The first step is to find the original meaning of the text by examining its grammar and history. Concerning the grammatical-historical interpretation, Chapell argues that literal interpretation seeks “what a biblical writer meant, not what his words may connote outside their context.”¹⁴³ He means that the words should be understood in their linguistic context. For this principle, Chapell cites Walter Kaiser’s explanation of the grammatical-historical method. Kaiser explains that grammatical and historical interpretation ascertains “the specific usage of words as employed by an individual writer and/or as prevalent in a particular age.”¹⁴⁴ Thus, in the first step, Chapell determines the literal meaning of the text by “analyzing the background and grammatical features of what the authors said.”¹⁴⁵

The second step is to interpret the text in its historical, cultural, and literary contexts. While the first step focuses on grammatical composition and historical analysis

¹⁴¹Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 30.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*, 75-80.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁴⁴Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 88.

¹⁴⁵Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 77.

of a text in its immediate context, the second step interprets the text in its broader context by considering genre. Chapell writes that the second step is required for “accurate interpretations.”¹⁴⁶ He seems to argue that the original author’s intended meaning of the text requires consideration of its context: “Preachers should examine what chapters and verses surrounding a passage say in order to determine what a biblical writer intended to communicate through particular words.”¹⁴⁷ Romans 14, for instance, functions as a conceptual context to understand those called “weak” in Romans 15.¹⁴⁸

Further, Chapell articulates that identifying the genre is required to interpret the text. Chapell points out that without knowing the genre, interpreters can easily make mistakes: “Many an error has been made by interpreting proverbs as promises, prophecy as history, parables as facts, and poetry as science.”¹⁴⁹ Proverbs, for instance, are prescriptive, not predictive. By contrast, prophecies are predictive, not prescriptive. Chapell rightly argues that “prophecies, parables, and poetry, as well as other types of biblical literature, have their own unique uses in Scripture, and each genre should be interpreted according to the specific nature and purposes intended by its author and context.”¹⁵⁰ Accurate interpretation, however, is completed neither by the first step nor by the second, but needs a third step.

The third step is to see the literal meaning not only in the historical, cultural, and literary contexts, but also in the context of the entire Bible. Chapell argues that the

¹⁴⁶Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 78. Chapell distinguishes the second step from the first step, which indicates the original intended meaning. That means that, to Chapell, the historical-grammatical meaning of the text, which is literal interpretation, is the original meaning. But the second step is also necessary to find the original author’s intended meaning. In this sense, the meaning found in the second step is more accurate.

¹⁴⁷Ibid. “A passage,” for Chapell, means not a single verse, but a sermonic text.

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., 79.

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

third step is required for accurate interpretation: “An accurate interpretation requires preachers to ask, How does this text disclose the meaning or the need of redemption?”¹⁵¹ Chapell believes that the meaning of the text is completed only when interpreters can connect the literal meaning of the text to Christ’s redemption.¹⁵² Since God designed the Bible to help sinners glorify God, interpreters need to disclose how the text is related to Christ’s redemption, which fulfills God’s grace. Just as Paul preached about the person and work of Jesus, Chapell asserts, this too must be the goal of expository preaching.¹⁵³ Thus, this final step, which interprets the text in its redemptive context, is crucial for Christ-centered preaching in order to challenge God’s people to be like Jesus and to glorify God.

Chapell claims that his interpretation of the text in the redemptive context does not add anything to the text, which is not already there.¹⁵⁴ According to FCF, every text reveals some aspect of man’s fallen condition and includes biblical solutions for it. Since Christ has met the need of man’s fallen condition and the gospel is what Christ has done for sinners, “expository preachers,” Chapell argues, “can mine gospel gold from every biblical passage without added anything to the text.”¹⁵⁵ Chapell’s argument implies that if the text reveals the fallen condition of sinners, Christ or the gospel is already there as a biblical solution. In this sense, Christ or the gospel is embedded in every text, and the task of interpreters is to find Christ, who provides biblical solutions, or the gospel, which provides for the needs of sinners. Through these three steps, Chapell remarks, interpreters

¹⁵¹Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 79-80.

¹⁵²Chapell also claims that because “context is part of text,” preachers must interpret the text in the broader context in order to find the text’s full meaning. *Ibid.* 275.

¹⁵³*Ibid.*, 80.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*

can propose the theological truths of the text for all ages, that is, they can find the redemptive signals in every text.¹⁵⁶

Christ-centered Biblical Theology and Redemptive Signals

Christ-centered biblical theology. Chapell's effort to find the redemptive signals from every text is performed through Christ-centered biblical theology. Chapell argues that interpreters need to decipher the redemptive signals embedded in every text. The redemptive signals are God's redemptive actions that are completed by Christ. In fact, Chapell does not believe that Christ is explicitly mentioned in every text but that every text is closely related to Christ: "*Christ-centered preaching rightly understood does not seek to discover where Christ is mentioned in every text but to disclose where every text stands in relation to Christ.*"¹⁵⁷ Chapell means that even though every text does not explicitly mention Christ, every text has a clue to reveal the redemptive signals in relation to Christ. If interpreters find the redemptive signals in a text, they can relate that text to Christ. Furthermore, Chapell argues that the text may have the redemptive features "in seed form," so interpreters need to discover the seed in the text and its fullness in the entire Bible.¹⁵⁸ In this sense, the entire Bible is related to Christ's redemption.

Chapell then introduces three ways to discern the relationship between the text and Christ. First, "If the text has a direct reference to Christ or to an aspect of his messianic work," the text is explicitly Christ-centered.¹⁵⁹ This would include, for instance, a gospel account in the New Testament that specifically mentions Christ or clearly shows

¹⁵⁶Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 143-49, 273-88.

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 279.

¹⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 276.

¹⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 281.

its relation to Christ. Thus, interpreters must “explain the reference in terms of the redemptive activity it reveals.”¹⁶⁰

Second, typology reveals the relationship between the text in the Old Testament and Christ. Chapell defines typology as “the study of the correspondences between persons, events, and institutions that first appear in the Old Testament and preview, prepare, or more fully express New Testament salvation truths.”¹⁶¹ In spite of the difficulty of properly utilizing typology, Chapell notes that typology may be utilized “where the New Testament writers specifically cite or unmistakably echo how an Old Testament person or feature prefigures the person and work of Christ—as with Adam, David, Melchizedek, the Passover, and the temple.”¹⁶² Chapell assumes that a type in the Old Testament can be explicitly understood only through the New Testament: “Types allow a preacher to approach appropriate Old Testament passages with a biblically certified pre-understanding of their redemptive connotations. These connotations may not be apparent if the texts are examined without the New Testament information.”¹⁶³

Third, Chapell notes that many biblical passages do not have direct reference to Christ.¹⁶⁴ So interpreters need to decipher the redemptive signals through context. Every text shows God’s redemption for the original reader, and Christ has fulfilled God’s redemption. So, if interpreters can identify God’s redemption in a text, they can then relate the text to Christ.

¹⁶⁰Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 281.

¹⁶¹Ibid.

¹⁶²Ibid. Chapell does not agree with typologizing, but acknowledges types that are recognized and informed by the New Testament in order to disclose the ultimate purpose of the text. Cf. G. P. Hugenberger, “Introductory Notes on Typology,” in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994): 338-41.

¹⁶³Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 282.

¹⁶⁴Ibid.

Context disclosure of redemptive signals. Chapell utilizes four ways to recognize God’s redemption in a text that has no direct reference to Christ. The first way involves texts in which the work of Christ was predicted. Some passages such as messianic psalms predict God’s redemption with specific words or phrases that are completed by Christ.¹⁶⁵ This feature of redemptive signaling requires understanding the Old Testament in light of the New and, according to Chapell, “[T]he expositor assumes an unnecessary and inappropriate blindness when attempting to handle such texts without this illumination.”¹⁶⁶

Second, some passages prepared the original reader to understand “aspects of the person and/or work of Christ.”¹⁶⁷ This reality is closely related to Chapell’s FCF. God prepared for Christ’s work by reminding the original reader of their fallen condition and of their need for Christ. Chapell notes, “God prepared for Christ’s work by planting the perception of need in the hearts of Old Testament saints. He also prepared them [and us] by helping them to understand how the need would be satisfied.”¹⁶⁸ Once the way in which the text points to Christ is found, interpreters can connect it to Christ, showing how God prepared the original reader to see his or her need satisfied. Chapell, for instance, argues that the eighth commandment of the Decalogue, which is not to steal, is “a theological lens picturing the frailty of the soul.”¹⁶⁹ Accordingly, the eighth commandment prepares God’s people to understand their need of faith in the Redeemer based on their fallen condition.

¹⁶⁵Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 283.

¹⁶⁶Ibid.

¹⁶⁷Ibid.

¹⁶⁸Ibid.

¹⁶⁹Ibid.

Third, Chapell expounds that a text that does not have any direct reference to Christ can be interpreted reflectively and that this is the most common tool to discern redemptive signals.¹⁷⁰ Interpreters disclose how the text reflects God's love and humanity's fallen condition. Chapell writes, "A preacher who asks the following basic questions takes no inappropriate liberties with a text: *What does this text reveal of God's nature that provides redemption? What does this text reflect of human nature that requires redemption?*"¹⁷¹ The first question is related to God's grace, the second question is about the fallen condition of people. Interpreters connect the text, which reflects God's grace toward sinners, to Christ, who completed his redemptive work.

Fourth, a text may contain the result of what Christ has done. Obedience, for instance, is not a condition for God's people to receive God's blessing; it is instead a blessing that "results from God's love for us."¹⁷² Chapell explains, "Blessings of obedience cannot be rightly interpreted without an explanation that makes them an ultimate result of what Christ has done."¹⁷³ Obedience in the Old Testament text can thus be interpreted as a blessing that results from God's love for sinners and relates to what Christ has done for sinners.

Analysis and Assessment of Hermeneutics of Christ-Centered Approaches to Preaching

In exploring the hermeneutics of Christ-centered preaching, two features are prominent. First, the goal to preach Christ in some fashion from every text is agreed upon by Clowney, Greidanus, Goldsworthy, and Chapell. Second, the goal to preach Christ requires legitimate interpretive methods to find Christ or a connection to Christ in every

¹⁷⁰Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 284.

¹⁷¹Ibid.

¹⁷²Ibid., 286.

¹⁷³Ibid., 287.

text. The urgent issue is what the legitimate interpretive methods are. In fact, the interpretive methods of these four are different from one another. Of course, this does not mean that they are completely different. Though there are similarities in their approaches, there are also conflicts and disagreements regarding their Christ-centered hermeneutics. Thus, it is necessary to explore where these proponents agree and disagree with each other in five common areas—biblical justification of Christ-centered preaching, theological justification of Christ-centered preaching, the meaning of the text, redemptive-historical interpretive methods, and typology—all of which are addressed by these advocates of Christ-centered preaching. In addition, the merits of their respective hermeneutical approaches must be assessed.

Biblical Justification of Christ-Centered Preaching

Proponents of Christ-centered preaching find their primary justification in the Bible, and their hermeneutics are developed based on this biblical justification. Goldsworthy, for example, argues that because the Old Testament is about Jesus Christ and because Jesus Christ is its center, every passage testifies to Him.¹⁷⁴ He lays out his conviction about gospel-centered preaching in his interpretation of Luke 24: 27, 44-45 and John 5:39-40, 46, arguing that Jesus himself claims to be the subject of all Scripture.¹⁷⁵ Greidanus also writes, “[In Luke 24:27] Jesus refers to the three main sections of the Old Testament; not just a few prophecies but the whole Old Testament speaks of Jesus Christ.”¹⁷⁶ He continues his argument based on his interpretation of John 5:39: “Not just a few isolated messianic prophecies, but the whole Old Testament bears

¹⁷⁴Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 21. See also Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 63; idem, *Gospel and Kingdom*, 87-88.

¹⁷⁵Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 21, 54.

¹⁷⁶Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 56.

witness to Jesus.”¹⁷⁷ Clowney has a similar approach to Luke 24, asserting that Jesus himself taught his disciples to read the Old Testament through Christ and that this is the key to interpreting the Old Testament.¹⁷⁸ Even though Chapell’s main justification for Christ-centered preaching is his FCF, he asserts that all Scripture is about Christ: “This does not mean that every phrase, punctuation mark, or verse directly reveals Christ but rather that all passages in their context disclose his nature and/ or necessity.”¹⁷⁹

Advocates of Christ-centered approaches to preaching agree that Luke 24:27, 44-45 and John 5:39-40, 46 show the necessity of Christ-centered interpretation and preaching, particularly concerning the Old Testament.

It is, however, still debated whether or not Jesus meant that *all* the Old Testament Scriptures concerned him. Some evangelical theologians and homileticians provide a different interpretation of Luke 24 and John 5. Joel Green argues that the things concerning himself in Luke 24:27 are “the things outlined in vv 19b-24,” which refer to Christ’s suffering and death prophesied in the Old Testament.¹⁸⁰ Green continues, “Moses as the first of the prophets and all of those raised up after him by God” prophesied Christ’s suffering and death in the Old Testament so that the things about Jesus Christ prophesied by Moses and all the prophets are in need of interpretation.¹⁸¹ Thus, according to Green, Luke 24:27 does not show that every text should be interpreted

¹⁷⁷Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 56.

¹⁷⁸Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 39. See also Klyne Snodgrass, “The Use of the Old Testament in the New,” in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994): 31; and Vern Sheridan Poythress, “Divine Meaning of Scripture,” in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994): 106-7.

¹⁷⁹Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 40, 279. “It perceives the whole of Scripture as revelatory of God’s redemptive plan and sees every passage within this context—a pattern Jesus himself introduced (Luke 24:27).”

¹⁸⁰Joel Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 3, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, and Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 848.

¹⁸¹*Ibid.*

to refer to Christ but that the things about Christ prophesied in the Old Testament must be interpreted through Christ and his fulfillment. Robert Stein also argues that “all the Scriptures” in Luke 24:27 refers not to “the whole of Scripture,” but to “Moses and all the Prophets” because the term “all” is a Lucan exaggeration.¹⁸² Stein then claims that everything that is written about Jesus Christ does not refer to every passage, but demonstrates that “the central message of the OT is seen as focusing on Jesus.”¹⁸³ This shows that Jesus Christ does not argue that every text in the Bible is about him, only that prophetic texts throughout the Bible are about his suffering and death and are in need of interpretation through Christ and his fulfillment.

Dale Davis presents a balanced view of Luke 24:

[T]he whole Old Testament bears witness to Christ; and, the Old Testament does not bear witness only to Christ. . . . I agree with making an extensive inference from Luke 24:27 and 44 but hold that an *intensive* inference is illegitimate. . . . I think Jesus is teaching that *all parts* of the Old Testament testify to the Messiah in his suffering and glory, but I do not think Jesus is saying that *every* Old Testament passage/text bears witness to him. Jesus referred to the things written about him in the Law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms—he did not say that every passage spoke of him (v. 44). Therefore, I do not feel compelled to make every Old Testament (narrative) passage point to Christ in some way because I do not think Christ himself requires it.¹⁸⁴

For Davis, Luke 24 does not support the view that every text in the Bible, including every narrative text in the Old Testament, speaks of Jesus Christ.

Abraham Kuruvilla also argues that Luke 24 does not show that every text should be interpreted by Christ. According to Kuruvilla, the subsequent statements by

¹⁸²Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, New American Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville: B&H, 1992), 612. Stein continues, “Time would not have permitted Jesus to refer to ‘all’ the Scriptures that referred to him” (ibid.).

¹⁸³Ibid., 619.

¹⁸⁴Dale Ralph Davis, *The Word Became Fresh: How to Preaching from Old Testament Narrative Texts* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2006), 134-35, as quoted by Abraham Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text: A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2013), 249-50, emphasis in original.

Jesus to his disciples indicate that “all the Scriptures” in Luke 24:27 means “*every portion of Scripture*,” which refers to the major divisions: Law, Prophets, and Psalms or writings.¹⁸⁵ Kuruvilla explains,

“Moses and all the prophets” is equated with “all the Scriptures” (24:27); and “law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms” with “all that was written” (24:44). The two verses balance each other precisely. In addition, “all that the prophets spoke” (24:25) is likely parallel to the corresponding elements in 24:27 and 44, . . . All three are linked by $\pi\alpha\sigma\varsigma$. . . Thus “prophets” in 24:25 . . . functions as a metonym for all of written Scripture; after all, Israel’s Scriptures *as a whole* were the product of prophetic witness to Yahweh’s will. Thus Luke’s use of “Moses,” “prophets,” and “Psalms” indicates that the major portions of Scripture—specific verses therein—are Christologically focused, and not that every word, verse, and story is.¹⁸⁶

Kuruvilla then concludes that Jesus’ words concern not the whole of Scripture, but the things prophesied in the Old Testament: “Jesus is not finding himself in all the texts of Scripture, but rather finding *just those texts that concern himself* in all the major divisions of Scripture.”¹⁸⁷

In addition, concerning John 5:39-40, 46, it is not clear that Jesus suggested that the all Scripture testified about him. As Luke 24:27, 44-45 shows that the Old Testament points to Jesus as fulfiller of God’s promise, John 5:39-40, 46 says that the Scripture witnessed to Christ Jesus. This passage, however, does not mean that Christ is in every text. Like Luke 24, John 5 demonstrates that Jesus as the Messiah was prophesied in the Old Testament.¹⁸⁸ In addition, even Clowney and Chapell do not cite

¹⁸⁵Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 248.

¹⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 249.

¹⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 250.

¹⁸⁸Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1-11*, New American Commentary, vol. 25A (Nashville: B&H, 1996), 246-47; Ernst Haenchen, *John 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 1-6*, Hermeneia (Fortress: Philadelphia, 1984), 264-65; J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 4 (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2010), 331-36; and Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 292-95. Daniel Doriani also explains that Luke 24:27, 44-45 and John 5: 39-40, 46 show signs pointing to Jesus. See Daniel Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2001), 20, 54-55. See also Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 56.

John 5:39-40, 46 in order to justify their Christ-centered approaches. This omission by some Christ-centered proponents shows that even they may not agree that John 5:39-40, 46 supports preaching Christ from every text.

Therefore, it is safe to argue that Luke 24:27, 44-45 and John 5:39-40, 46 demonstrate two things: first, Christ's sufferings and death are prophesied in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New. A Christ-centered hermeneutic enables interpreters to handle faithfully Christ's sufferings and death throughout the whole Bible. Second, Christ is not the theme of every text, but he is rather an overarching theme of the Bible. Thus, while a biblical justification of limited Christ-centered preaching may be based on Luke 24 and John 5, the extensive view of Christ-centered approaches is not warranted by these texts.

Theological Justification of Christ-Centered Preaching

Christ-centered biblical theology provides interpreters with the theological foundation for Christ-centered sermons. God progressively revealed his redemptive work from the Old Testament to the New. In particular, since Christ's redemption is the pinnacle of the Bible, the text in the Old Testament needs to be interpreted in the entire redemptive-historical context, finally reaching to the person and work of Christ. Such emphasis of biblical theology on Christ enables advocates of Christ-centered hermeneutics to understand the Bible as a whole and is mutually identified by Clowney, Greidanus, Goldsworthy, and Chapell.

Clowney argues that biblical theology is "not a method, . . . [but] an essential step in the interpretation of the Bible," which ultimately reaches to Christ and his fulfillment.¹⁸⁹ He further explains that because God's progressive revelation and its continuity run throughout the Bible, the text should be understood at its biblical epoch

¹⁸⁹Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 87.

and ultimately connected to Christ who sums up all things.¹⁹⁰ Goldsworthy agrees with Christ-centeredness of biblical theology, arguing that Jesus and his gospel are not only the overarching theme, but also the hermeneutical key to interpret every text.¹⁹¹ He writes, “Biblical theology is the study of how every text in the Bible relates to Jesus and his gospel.”¹⁹² By this statement he means that a Christ-centered biblical theology enables interpreters to uncover how “the riches in Christ are inexhaustible” in every text.¹⁹³

Greidanus and Chapell also stress that biblical theology is Christ-centered. Greidanus asserts that God’s redemptive history of “bringing his kingdom on earth is centered in *Christ*.”¹⁹⁴ Since Greidanus describes biblical theology as a theological discipline “to uncover the theology which the Bible itself contains,” he utilizes a Christ-centered biblical theology to disclose a theological connection of major themes and concepts, which finally reach to Christ and his fulfillment of these themes.¹⁹⁵ Chapell also concludes, “No aspect of revelation can be thoroughly understood or explained in isolation from some aspect of Christ’s redeeming work.”¹⁹⁶

Christ-centered biblical theology: A theology. Biblical theology does not provide the theological justification for the extensive use of Christ-centered approaches to textual interpretation for three reasons. First, Christ-centered biblical theology is not

¹⁹⁰Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 88-89.

¹⁹¹Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 63. See also Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 84-85.

¹⁹²Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 40.

¹⁹³Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 30.

¹⁹⁴Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 227, emphasis in original.

¹⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 266-67; Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 67.

¹⁹⁶Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 276.

the theology inspired by the Holy Spirit, only *a* theology.¹⁹⁷ In other words, the goal of biblical theology is to find a central theme throughout the entire Bible, but there is no consensus among scholars.¹⁹⁸ It is true that biblical theology makes a great effort to seek a central unifying theme and to show how God works in Christ to save sinners.¹⁹⁹ Such an effort shows the inner-relationship between the Old and New Testaments and is helpful to understand the whole Bible as unified Christian Scripture. Advocates of Christ-centered preaching regard God's redemption in Jesus Christ as the theme, so they may attempt to interpret every text through Christ in the redemptive-historical context.²⁰⁰ It does not mean, however, that biblical theology is the theology for every single text. Biblical theology is not enough to support the claim that every single word, phrase, or sentence shows God's redemptive work in Christ. The fact that there is no consensus about a central theme over the entire Bible demonstrates that a theme offered by biblical theology does not work for every single text.

¹⁹⁷Grant Osborne argues that biblical theology is one of the theologies that finds the meaning of the text through the hermeneutical spiral. Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 350-51.

¹⁹⁸In spite of his effort to find a unifying theme, Stephen Dempster acknowledges the difficulty in finding a single overarching theme in Scripture: "The goal of biblical theology is to grasp the big theological picture through analysis of the theological views of the various biblical texts. Many scholars working in the area of biblical theology have given up on this task, due perhaps to an admission that there is not one theology but many." Robin Routledge also criticizes Eichrodt's overarching theme that centers on covenant: "The fact that many possible themes have been put forward over the years, but without any real consensus, indicates that the search may be a fruitless one." Though Routledge does not deny the possibility of finding relevant themes that cover the Old and New Testaments, he does think that finding an overarching theme that encompasses the whole Bible is not possible. Stephen Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 36; and Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 34.

¹⁹⁹Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 350.

²⁰⁰For instance, for Goldsworthy, Christ is the hermeneutical key to interpret every text. Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 63; idem, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 84-85.

Christ-centered biblical theology: A danger of a forced theology. Second, according to Osborne, biblical theology provides “the categories and overall scriptural unity behind one’s interpretation of individual passages.”²⁰¹ To complete this mission, biblical theology studies “the theology of an individual book,” determines “the individual theological emphases of each book and of each author,” and unites the theological themes into a whole.²⁰² A Christ-centered biblical theology, however, reverses the process and regulates the exegetical task in order to find Christ or to show how every text testifies to Christ through an overarching theme.

Osborne warns against Christological approaches to biblical theology:

[T]here are greater dangers than strengths in this movement. Nearly all practitioners allegorize and spiritualize Old Testament texts to fit preconceived “types of Christ” or some such thing. The Old Testament as the history and record of God’s salvific dealings with this covenant people Israel is lost. . . . The intention of the text, the Old Testament as canon in its own right and the validity of the religious experiences of the Hebrews as the chosen people of Yahweh are all sacrificed on the altar of “relevance.”²⁰³

Instead, Osborne employs a trinitarian approach to the Bible:

[T]he Old Testament has historical priority and the New Testament Christological authority, with both Testaments grounded in the unity of the Godhead—Father, Son and Spirit. When this is augmented with a promise-fulfillment perspective, the relationship between the Testaments is given a much stronger foundation. The Old and New Testaments stand on their own as the record of God’s covenant with his two peoples—Israel and the church—yet are united into a single Bible via the Christ event.²⁰⁴

Each book of the Bible has its unique features and theological focus, which is continued throughout the Bible. A Christ-centered biblical theology ignores the uniqueness of each text, of each book, and of each author’s theology and forces one to see Christ in some way in every single text. Kuruvilla points out the problem of a Christ-

²⁰¹Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 350.

²⁰²Ibid., 373.

²⁰³Ibid., 368-69.

²⁰⁴Ibid., 369.

centered biblical theology: “The potential problem with this approach is that the specific thrusts of individual OT texts may get neglected in the rush to correlate the OT with the NT, making the value of preaching from the OT doubtful, at best.”²⁰⁵

Edward Klink and Darian Lockett, in addition, describe the Christ-centered biblical theology of the Philadelphia school:

[It] is more than the sum of theological themes running through the text; it constitutes an overarching theological superstructure for the biblical story. Thus (Christ-centered) biblical theology is more than a “bridge.” The center focus of this superstructure is Jesus himself. The Philadelphia school argues that his focus is theologically (i.e. hermeneutically) required because all Scripture is about Jesus (Luke 24:44-47). . . . [F]or the Philadelphia school, biblical theology regulates the exegetical task itself.²⁰⁶

As mentioned above, Luke 24:44-47 does not validate the idea that every single text in the Bible is about Jesus Christ. Christ is not the theme of every text. Thus, biblical theology should pay attention to the unique features of each book and its theological focus rather than force one to interpret every single text to see Christ in some way.

A Christ-centered biblical theology and multi-themes. Third, a lack of consensus concerning the overarching theme also indicates that a Christ-centered biblical theology does not strongly warrant the extensive view of Christ-centered hermeneutic approaches to preaching. While it is true that a Christ-centered biblical theology makes a great effort to seek a central unifying theme such as God’s redemptive work in Christ to

²⁰⁵Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 239.

²⁰⁶Edward W. Klink III and Darian R. Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 72. Edward Klink and Darian Lockett categorize biblical theology into five groups: biblical theology of historical description, of history of redemption, of worldview-story, of canonical approach, and of theological construction. Proponents of Christ-centered preaching belong to biblical theology of history of redemption, which “discern the historical progression of God’s work of redemption through an inductive analysis of key themes developing through both discrete corpora and the whole of Scripture” (61). In addition, with regard to this type of biblical theology, there are three schools. D. A. Carson belongs to the Chicago school, Vos, Clowney, and Goldsworthy belong to the Philadelphia school, and Eugene Merrill and Roy Zuck belong to the Dallas school. *Ibid.*, 65-73.

save sinners,²⁰⁷ even that theme is not agreed upon among evangelical theologians. Dempster notes the difficulty to find a single overarching theme: “The goal of biblical theology is to grasp the big theological picture through analysis of the theological views of the various biblical texts. Many scholars working in the area of biblical theology have given up on this task, due perhaps to an admission that there is not one theology but many.”²⁰⁸

As mentioned above, a Christ-centered approach to biblical theology is one of many theologies. Thus, a theological theme discovered by a Christ-centered biblical theology may not be the overarching theme but may instead be one theme out of many. In other words, certain themes can be Christ-centered, but every theme and every text are not necessarily Christ-centered.

In addition, a theme cannot affirm that Christ is in every text or Christ is the center of every text. Greidanus is right when he utilizes a Christ-centered biblical theology to find major theological themes in relation to Christ. To Greidanus, a Christ-centered biblical theology does not warrant belief that every text testifies to Christ, but it does validate that the Old Testament has major themes that lead interpreters “to the person, work, and teaching of Christ.”²⁰⁹ Greidanus means that a single overarching theme does not exist but that multi-theological themes provide a theological justification to understand texts in relation to Christ.

²⁰⁷Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 350.

²⁰⁸Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 36. Robin Routledge also criticizes Eichrodt’s overarching theme that centers on covenant, saying, “The fact that many possible themes have been put forward over the years, but without any real consensus, indicates that the search may be a fruitless one.” Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 34. Routledge does not deny the possibility of finding relevant themes which cover the Old Testament and the New Testament, but he does think that an overarching theme cannot cover the whole Bible.

²⁰⁹Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 267.

Osborne also agrees with the difficulty to find a single overarching theme and its theological function to sum up all things in Christ: “[C]ertain ideas bridge the gaps between the individual witnesses. However, it is very uncertain whether any single theme, unites all the others.”²¹⁰ In other words, even if a single overarching theme may be found, its existence does not prove that every text testifies to Christ.

The Meaning of the Text

As chapter 3 noted, all proponents of Christ-centered preaching agree with two things concerning the meaning of the text. First, because of God’s progressive revelation and continuity, the text should be interpreted not only in its historical context, but also in the context of God’s total revelation. Proponents of Christ-centered preaching assume that there is more meaning or added meaning(s) in the text of the Old Testament that the original authors did not know.²¹¹ Raymond Brown defines this fuller sense as “additional, deeper meaning,” which is intended by God but not clearly intended by the human authors.²¹² Brown argues that this fuller sense presupposes a development of the literal sense of the passage.²¹³ However, a fuller sense of the passage can be understood only in light of the New Testament. Second, the fuller sense of the text is related to Christ and his fulfillment of it. Goldsworthy argues, “That the whole Bible testifies to Christ is what we mean when we say that Christ is in all the Scriptures.”²¹⁴ Thus, if a text has a fuller sense

²¹⁰Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 371.

²¹¹Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 276; Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 15; Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 244; and Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 233.

²¹²Raymond Brown, *The Sensus Plenior of Sacred Scripture* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 92.

²¹³Ibid.

²¹⁴Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 138.

in relation to Christ as part of a divinely intended meaning, it must be discovered by interpreters so that they can preach Christ, who is in every text.

The fuller sense of textual meaning. The fuller sense sought by advocates of Christ-centered preaching is a matter of debate. Jack Riggs explains the concept of fuller sense (*sensus plenior*), which argues that grammatical-historical exegesis “does not yield the full meaning of certain OT texts where a *sensus plenior* is involved.”²¹⁵ Riggs’ point is that a fuller sense of the text implies that there is “an additional sense to the text of an OT passage” that the human authors did not know and that a text contains “more meaning than can be gained” by the exegetical process.²¹⁶ The implication that there is an additional meaning of or fuller sense to the text that can be discovered only by later revelation and the later authors must be qualified.

The core debate over fuller sense is how to interpret the text in relation to Christ. In other words, fuller sense indicates that the text contains meaning related to Christ and his work, which the original human authors did not know, and that only later authors fully understood. Proponents of Christ-centered preaching further hold that every text in the Old Testament has a fuller sense that can be explicitly revealed in light of the New Testament. A Christ-centered biblical theology is their method to trace such this fuller sense of the Old Testament passage in relation to Christ.

According to Greidanus, fuller sense implies the existence of more meaning in a text than its original author intended.²¹⁷ He means that even though Christ can be found in the Old Testament text, the human authors did not realize it. His seven Christocentric interpretative methods assume that Christ is in a text and that these certain interpretative

²¹⁵Jack R. Riggs, “The ‘Fuller Meaning’ of Scripture: A Hermeneutical Question for Evangelicals,” *Grace Theological Journal*, 7, no. 2 (Fall 1986): 217, emphasis in original.

²¹⁶Riggs, “The ‘Fuller Meaning’ of Scripture,” 217.

²¹⁷Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 233.

paths are required to trace this fuller sense to Christ.²¹⁸ Chapell also agrees that everything was not evident to the original authors: “[P]reachers regularly make interpretations based on matters such as how frequently a word is used throughout Scripture, which would not always have been evident to the original writers.”²¹⁹ Not only a word, but also the gospel is not always evident to the original writers. He writes, “[P]reachers can mine gospel gold from every biblical passage without adding matter to the text that is not already there.”²²⁰ He means that the gospel has a fuller sense that is already in every text, was not known to the original authors, but can be discovered by later revelation or later authors through the perspective of the New Testament.

Human author’s intended meaning. Walter Kaiser warns against the fuller sense of Christ-centered hermeneutics, arguing that the author’s intended meaning is neither changed nor discovered by later revelation. Instead, he articulates that the author’s intended meaning, which is found by grammatical-historical interpretation, is not different from the divine Author’s intent.²²¹ Regarding the meaning of the text, Kaiser utilizes E. D. Hirsch’s distinction between meaning and significance. Hirsch states,

Meaning is that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence; it is what the signs represent. *Significance*, on the other hand, names a relationship between that meaning and a person, or a conception, or a situation, or indeed anything imaginable Clearly what changes for them is not the meaning of the work, but rather their relationship to that meaning.

²¹⁸For instance, Greidanus’ promise-fulfillment shows that God’s promise in the Old Testament should be interpreted in view of Christ’s fulfillment. It assumes that the original human authors knew God’s promise but not Christ’s fulfillment when they wrote. However, the later authors realized that when God’s promise was revealed in the Old Testament, Christ’s fulfillment was included, so they found meaning in the light of Christ. *Ibid.*, 240-49..

²¹⁹Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 76n27.

²²⁰*Ibid.*, 80.

²²¹Water C. Kaiser Jr., “Legitimate Hermeneutics,” in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 127.

Significance always implies a relationship, and one constant, unchanging pole of that relationship is what the text means.²²²

According to Hirsch, the meaning intended by the author cannot be changed; significance can be varied when interpreters apply the unchanged-intended meaning to different contexts.²²³ Concerning the meaning of the text, Hirsch also emphasizes its sharable attribute, arguing, “Verbal meaning is, by definition, *that aspect of a speaker’s ‘intention’ which, under linguistic conventions, may be shared by others.* Anything not sharable in this sense does not belong to the verbal intention or verbal meaning.”²²⁴ Thus, significance derives its legitimacy from the author’s intended meaning, which is unchanged and understood by others. This fact implies that if any change occurs, the meaning has not changed at all, only its significance.

In addition, Peter Juhl equates the meaning of the text to the author’s intent by emphasizing the logical connection between them:

[A] fact will be evidence for the meaning of a literary work if and only if it is evidence for the meaning of what the author intended to convey If a literary work conveys or expresses certain propositions, . . . the real author is committed to the truth of those propositions and to the corresponding beliefs; that is, the propositions a work expresses or conveys are expressed or conveyed by not “implied author,” but rather the real, historical author Any (and only) evidence of the author’s intention is *ipso facto* evidence of the meaning of the work.²²⁵

Juhl’s argument demonstrates that the author’s intent and the text’s meaning are inseparable such that the meaning of the text guides interpreters to discover the author’s intent.²²⁶ Thus, according to Hirsch and Juhl, the author’s intended meaning of the text is not changed by later revelation.

²²²E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), 8, emphasis in original.

²²³*Ibid.*, 61-63, 140-44.

²²⁴*Ibid.*, 218.

²²⁵Peter Juhl, *Interpretation: An Essay in the Philosophy of Literary Criticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 13-15.

²²⁶*Ibid.*

Earl Radmacher warns that to separate the meaning of the text from the author's intent can result in multiple meanings and even no meaning, leading to “hermeneutical nihilism [as a] result.”²²⁷ Radmacher argues that the biblical authors did not mechanically record the Word of God, which they did not understand, but were taught by the One who alone knows the deep things of God.²²⁸ Radmacher agrees with Bruce Vawter: “The Word of God has been spoken through the enlightened judgment of a human writer. Therefore the literal sense could now be recognized in its proper dignity and significance. What this human writer had intended to say was itself the very Word of God, the genuine meaning of Scripture.”²²⁹

Applying Hirsch's distinction to biblical hermeneutics, Kaiser asserts, “[T]he supreme rule of interpretation is to discover . . . what the human writer had intended to express by the words he used as a result of receiving the revelation of God.”²³⁰ Kaiser then asks, “Could God see or intend a sense in a particular text *separate* and *different* from that conceived and intended by his human instrument?”²³¹ Kaiser answers that if the implication of the text is different from grammatical interpretation, different meanings exist between the human author and the divine Author, but that concept is not supported by the Bible.²³² Kaiser states his view of the meaning of the text as follows:

²²⁷Earl Radmacher, "A Response to Author's Intention and Biblical Interpretation," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984): 433.

²²⁸*Ibid.*, 436-37.

²²⁹Bruce Vawter, “The Fuller Sense: Some Considerations,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (January 1964): 88, as quoted in Radmacher, "A Response to Author's Intention and Biblical Interpretation," 437.

²³⁰Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “A Response to Author's Intention and Biblical Interpretation,” in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 442.

²³¹*Ibid.*

²³²Kaiser argues that finding a double sense or more meaning in any text should be avoided “since that term usually means two different senses which have little or no relationship to one to another.”

God did not exceed the intention of the human author either through a retrojection of the whole of the canon on an earlier text or by means of a hidden freight of meaning which awaited our discovery of it many centuries later [T]here must be an objective basis in the individual text itself with the extension of that meaning into our contemporary culture consisting of the same, not a separate or different thing than what was mentioned in the text.²³³

Elsewhere, Kaiser expresses his view of the meaning of the text in the broader context of Scripture:

[I]n our summaries we should point out [later theological] developments for the sake of updating and putting everything in its fullest context. However, in no case must that *later* teaching be used exegetically (or in any other way) to unpack the meaning or to enhance the usability of the individual text which is the object of our study.²³⁴

Here Kaiser admits to later theological developments of the meaning of the text, but he insists that later development is not a new idea or that it infers added meaning(s) in that text. The meaning discerned by the later authors in a text is always based on the meaning intended by the original human author.

Disagreeing with the fuller sense notion of Christ-centered preaching, Kaiser offers an alternative view, insisting that later revelation fully explains the author's intended meaning. He expounds,

From the work of biblical theology, we are taught that the Bible has an overall plan, purpose, and unifying story The parts of God's revelation can best be seen in terms of the overarching cohesive whole This means that the truth of God may be spoken in earlier texts in seed form, but that seed will continue to build as God's revelation progresses to become a full plant in full bloom by the time it comes to its full maturation.²³⁵

Riggs agrees with Kaiser:

This alternative view to the *sensus plenior* in evangelicalism is that there is a single meaning for all of Scripture, which meaning is the literal meaning intended by both God and the human authors. There are passages of Scripture which have later

See Kaiser, "A Response to Author's Intention and Biblical Interpretation," 442.

²³³Ibid., 445-46.

²³⁴Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 140.

²³⁵Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Recovering the Unity of the Bible: One Continuous Story, Plan, and Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 218.

implications in the progress of revelation. Such later implications are the developments of objectively given data in the earlier texts, and consequently, they are not some sort of *superadditum* or *sensus plenior* to the human authors' understanding and intent as expressed in their own words.²³⁶

Riggs goes on to express concern over finding a fuller sense in the text:

If more was meant than what was said, is there not the danger that this “more” that needed to be said might turn out to be a corrective to the earlier revelation? . . . If the use of the grammatical-historical method does not produce the full meaning of certain texts, how can one be sure that the fuller meaning is in fact discovered by the application of that same method to later texts supposedly revealing the fuller meaning of the earlier texts? If grammatical-historical exegesis is suspect at one point, should it not be suspect at all other points of its application?²³⁷

William LaSor, however, argues that the grammatical-historical method does not yield the fuller sense to the text intended by the divine Author.²³⁸ LaSor explains that because God's revelation often includes some future development, such as punishment for disobedience or blessing for faithfulness in some future time, “the fullness of meaning,” which the original authors did not know, “can be discovered by attempting to relate the situation and the prophecy to the on-going redemptive purpose of God.”²³⁹ For LaSor, fuller sense is an added idea and adds meaning to the text, which the human author did not know.

J. I. Packer suggests a more careful approach to finding a fuller sense based on the meaning of the human author's intent. Packer argues that the fuller sense, “which can be known through further revelation, is simply extension, development, and application of what the writer was consciously expressing.”²⁴⁰ The fuller sense is not an unknown

²³⁶Riggs, “The ‘Fuller Meaning’ of Scripture,” 226.

²³⁷*Ibid.*, 226-27.

²³⁸William S. LaSor, “The *Sensus Plenior* and Biblical Interpretation,” in *Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation: Essays presented to Everett F. Harrison*, ed. W. Ward Gasque and William S. LaSor (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 19078), 267.

²³⁹William S. LaSor, “Prophecy, Inspiration, and Sensus Plenior,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 29 (1978): 55.

²⁴⁰J. I. Packer, “Infallible Scripture and the Role of Hermeneutics,” in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson, and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 350.

idea, but an extended meaning of the text that the human author perceived in some way. After reviewing several approaches to the fuller sense, Douglas Moo, on the one hand, feels the necessity of using the traditional *sensus plenior* model in some texts and, on the other hand, agrees that fuller sense does not add meaning to the text that the human author did not know.²⁴¹ The meaning, which the later author finds in the Old Testament, is “really in” the Old Testament, according to Moo.²⁴² The fuller sense intended by the divine Author relates to the literal sense intended by the original author.²⁴³

Concerning Psalm 16, for instance, Moo argues, “What is apparently happening here is not that Psalm 16 takes on added meaning in the light of further revelation but that further revelation enables us to understand for the first time the ultimate significance of David’s words.”²⁴⁴ Moo thus concludes,

[I]t is important to insist that this “deeper meaning” is based on and compatible with the meaning intended by the human author [W]e should be very cautious about suggesting “deeper meanings” in the text that are not clearly enunciated within Scripture We have seen that many apparently “new” meanings discovered in the Old Testament texts by New Testament authors are no more than the literal sense of those passages when read against the “informing” theology that precedes them Acts 2 makes clear that the prophecy of the resurrection that Peter finds in Psalm 16 was David’s intended meaning—a specificity of meaning that cannot be demonstrated from exegesis of the psalm the meaning Peter finds is not incommensurate with the original purpose and language of the psalm.²⁴⁵

Thus, fuller sense is closely related to the meaning of the text intended by the human author and fully explains the original meaning of the text. In this sense, fuller sense should be understood as an extension of the original author’s intended meaning

²⁴¹Douglas Moo, “The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*,” in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John Woodbridge (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 201-10.

²⁴²*Ibid.*, 187.

²⁴³*Ibid.*, 201.

²⁴⁴Moo, “The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*,” 209.

²⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 210-11.

rather than the excessive view of Christ-centered preaching, which looks for an added meaning in every text.

Redemptive-historical Interpretive Methods

Christocentric movement. Proponents of Christ-centered preaching offer varying interpretive methods to understand the text and to move to Christ. Clowney utilizes symbolism and typology to find Christ, who is the Lord and Servant of the Covenant. Goldsworthy finds Christ in every text by using macro-typology. Greidanus offers seven redemptive-historical Christocentric interpretive methods to understand the text in God's total redemption fulfilled by Christ. Chapell also employs a redemptive-historical interpretation of the text and suggests four ways interpreters can move to Christ from the text. Their redemptive-historical interpretative methods attempt to provide theological movement from the text to Christ, but that theological movement is often subjective.

Subjective movement to Christ. Timothy Warren criticizes at least some Christ-centered interpretive methods to move from the text to Christ. Regarding Chapell's Christ-centered approach to the text, Warren argues, "[T]here is little explanation as to when and how the preacher is to deal with theological truth[s] without somehow merging them with either the exegetical interpretation or the homiletical application."²⁴⁶ Warren's concern over Chapell's Christ-centered interpretation is that since the FCF is the key to finding the need of God's grace and to connect the text to Christ, Chapell should explicitly develop how and when the fallen condition of sinners is theologically related to Christ. In other words, as a theological bridge, the FCF should be more fully developed and related to the move between the text and Christ by showing

²⁴⁶Timothy S. Warren, review of *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, by Bryan Chapell, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152, no. 606 (April-June, 1995): 253.

why Christ and his fulfillment in the New Testament is relevant to the text in the Old Testament.²⁴⁷ Interpreters, he contends, need to perceive a theological connection between the text and Christ in the New Testament in accordance with the original author's intent. If interpreters do not find a theological connection between the text and Christ as the author intended, that connection to Christ can be too subjective and arbitrary.

Regarding Greidanus' Christocentric interpretation, Warren also expresses concern over a theological movement to Christ. Warren argues that Greidanus's interpretive method "overreaches exposition in its demand that Christ be preached from every passage."²⁴⁸ Greidanus, for instance, choosing Genesis 6:9-8:22, explains how six interpretive ways connect the text to Christ in the New Testament.²⁴⁹ Greidanus, however, does not explain whether or not the divine Author intended to use multiple ways in order to communicate the Word of God to His people.

David Peterson sharply points out the weakness of Greidanus's interpretation: "The problem with Greidanus' approach is determining which 'way' to follow and deciding which line of interpretation should take priority. He does not show the link between these perspectives, other than to say they center on Christ."²⁵⁰ Above all, even though Greidanus suggests several ways to move to Christ in a preaching passage, it is not clear whether or not the divine Author intended to explain the text in relation to Christ in these ways. If Greidanus argues that a single preaching passage may have multiple ways to move to Christ, he must prove how one can know that the divine Author intended to use those ways to connect the text to Christ.

²⁴⁷Warren, review of *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 253.

²⁴⁸Timothy S. Warren, a review of *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons*, by Sidney Greidanus, *Homiletic* 32, no. 2 (Winter 2007): 32-33.

²⁴⁹Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 319-25. The six ways are redemptive-historical progression, typology, analogy, longitudinal themes, New Testament references, and contrast.

²⁵⁰David Peterson, *Christ and His People in the Book of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 19.

Clowney and Goldsworthy face a similar criticism. Goldsworthy uses macro-typology, which approaches the text with a broad typological pattern. Goldsworthy's macro-typology pays much attention to the overall correspondence of the epochs. Whenever interpreters discover the typological pathway among the epochs, people, events, or institutions in an epoch, it can be a type of Christ.²⁵¹ Because Goldsworthy already finds the typological correspondence among the epochs, everything in an epoch can be connected to Christ and his gospel.

According to Clowney, because of God's progressive revelation and continuity, the divine Author's intended meaning is more significant than the human author's intent.²⁵² Thus, rather than move to Christ in accordance with the meaning of the text and its author's intent, Clowney interprets the text from a New Testament perspective and connects the text to Christ. Clowney, for instance, argues that it was Christ who descended the stairway of Jacob's dream and came to Nathanael in order to tell him of the glory of his second coming.²⁵³ Leon Morris, however, asserts that though the Gospel of John insists on Jesus' heavenly origin and incarnation,²⁵⁴ Christ, in John 3, has nothing to do with Jacob's dream and does not speak of his second coming. Nevertheless, Clowney connects Jacob's dream with Christ in John 3, assigning dubious meanings to both texts.

Typology of Christ-Centered Preaching

Among varied redemptive-historical interpretive methods, typology is comprehensively utilized by Clowney, Greidanus, Goldsworthy, and Chapell. To

²⁵¹Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 111.

²⁵²Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 87.

²⁵³Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 84.

²⁵⁴Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 197-98.

Clowney and Goldsworthy, preaching Christ from every text is impossible without typology. To Greidanus, typology is an interpretive method among others, to understand a text in relation to Christ. Chapell endorses a more restricted typology. Thus, it is worthwhile to explore how each proponent of Christ-centered preaching uses typology and then to evaluate its legitimacy for Christ-centered preaching.

Definition of typology. Approaches to typology in hermeneutics and homiletics vary, but most scholars agree that the word *τύπος* (type) in the New Testament shows how the New Testament authors use persons, events, and institutions of the Old Testament in the New. David Baker surveys the biblical use of the word *τύπος* (type) and its variations—*τυπικός* (typical), *αντίτυπος* (antitype), and *ὑποτύπωσις* (type)—and concludes that *τύπος* means “example, pattern.”²⁵⁵ The theological basis of *τύπος* is God’s consistent work in history. Baker argues that “the history of God’s people and of his dealings with them is a single continuous process in which a uniform pattern may be discerned.”²⁵⁶ This is not a new approach; it confirms what Patrick Fairbairn and Leonhard Goppelt find as the nature of typology.²⁵⁷

In contrast to allegory, Fairbairn states that typology requires that “the same truth or principle be embodied alike in the type and the antitype. *The typical is not properly a different or higher sense, but a different or higher application of the same sense.*”²⁵⁸ In other words, the same sense, which type and anti-type have in their

²⁵⁵David L. 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), 319-21.

²⁵⁶Baker, “Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament,” 322.

²⁵⁷Patrick Fairbairn, *The Typology of Scripture: Viewed in Connection with the Whole Series of the Divine Dispensations*, vol. 1 (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1900); Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. Donald H. Madvig (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1982).

²⁵⁸Fairbairn, *The Typology of Scripture*, 3, emphasis in original.

respective contexts, makes it possible for interpreters to perceive the relationship between type and anti-type. In addition, Goppelt adds his insight on typology to Fairbairn's foundation, arguing that typology consists of two factors: God's consistent work in history and its completeness in Christ.²⁵⁹ Typology, Goppelt argues, first considers "historical facts—persons, actions, events, and institutions"; yet, "words and narratives can be utilized only insofar as they deal with such matters."²⁶⁰ Typology seeks the correspondence between type and anti-type based on God's consistent work in history but also holds that anti-type is greater and more complete than a type because a type is completed in Christ. Agreeing with the significant role of typology, the interpretive understanding of typology is varied among Clowney, Greidanus, Goldsworthy, and Chapell.²⁶¹

Typology: A way to Christ. Greidanus argues that typology is not *the* method, but one of his seven interpretive methods to understand the text in relation to Christ. So Greidanus asserts that typology should be limited "to discovering specific analogies along the axis of God's acts in redemptive history as revealed in Scripture."²⁶²

Contrary to Greidanus, Clowney and Goldsworthy completely rely on typology as *the* method to interpret the text. Both believe that type is not limited. To Clowney, typology enables interpreters to find a type and its anti-type in every text and that there is

²⁵⁹Goppelt, *Typos*, 198-205.

²⁶⁰Ibid., 17-18.

²⁶¹In this paper, typological interpretation is different from typologizing, but is considered as typological approach to the text in typological relationship between the text and Christ. Cf. Greidanus argues that typological interpretation faces the danger of degenerating into typologizing, which is overextending the use of typology by searching for types in rather incidental details in the text. See Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 97. Greidanus continues that finding types in every detail led interpreters straight into the chaos of allegorizing or typologizing. Ibid., 253.

²⁶²Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 249.

no limitation of type.²⁶³ According to Clowney's diagram of symbolism and typology, Old Testament person, event, or institution has a symbol that ultimately typifies Christ and his fulfillment.²⁶⁴ If interpreters ignore Christ's fulfillment of a symbol in the Old Testament, that symbol will be an allegorized or moralized message. Clowney argues, "All truths come to their realization in relation to Christ."²⁶⁵ His argument indicates that persons, events, or institutions in the Old Testament can be a type that surely presents Christ.

Goldsworthy also agrees with an unlimited number of possible types, but his approach differs from Clowney's approach to typology. For Goldsworthy, typology is not intended to find the correspondence between type and its anti-type but between whole epochs of revelation. He argues, "When we allow the Old Testament categories to expand to their full potential, antitype is shown to be broader than the mere fulfillment of certain explicit types and promises."²⁶⁶ Goldsworthy explains that types in biblical history are seen in "the three stages of revelation."²⁶⁷ Since the first stage is a type of the final stage in Christ, anything in the first stage can be interpreted as a type and typologically related to Christ in the last stage. He further asserts, "[T]ypology 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."²⁶⁸ Not surprisingly,

²⁶³Glenny believes that Clowney finds unlimited types in the Bible. See W. Edward Glenny, "Typology: A Summary of the present Evangelical Discussion," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40, no. 4 (December 1997): 630.

²⁶⁴Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 32.

²⁶⁵Ibid.

²⁶⁶Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 184.

²⁶⁷Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 185.

²⁶⁸Ibid.

Goldsworthy argues that without typology no one can truly understand the Bible as a whole.²⁶⁹

Chapell agrees with Greidanus's careful use of typology. He argues that typology is utilized whenever interpreters identify a type and its anti-type in Christ.²⁷⁰ Chapell's context disclosure, moreover, has some typological features. Chapell's context disclosure does not identify a type in every text, but explains how the context of Christ-silent texts predicts, prepares, reflects, or results in the work of Christ. In other words, these four foci of context disclosure show a typological feature which seeks the correspondence between the context of Christ-silent texts and Christ based on God's consistent work in history.²⁷¹ In addition, Christ's fulfillment of God's redemption in Christ-silent texts premises the eschatological movement to Christ. In this sense, Chapell's context disclosure has typological features. In this way, Chapell broadly utilizes typology or typological interpretation to connect a text to Christ.

Typologizing. Exploring the typology of Christ-centered hermeneutics demonstrates that typology is broadly utilized to find the relationship between the text and Christ.²⁷² Above all, Clowney and Goldsworthy typologically identify Christ in every text. Such a typological approach to the text between the two testaments is called "typological interpretation." Neil B. MacDonald remarks that typological interpretation is

²⁶⁹Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 112. Based on Robinson's typological theory and method, Goldsworthy asserts that there is no limit to types. Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 183.

²⁷⁰Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 281-82. Chapell argues that an Old Testament passage does not contain a type every time.

²⁷¹God's consistent work in history is the theological basis for typology. Baker, "Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament," 319-21.

²⁷²Of course, there is no consensus regarding how to use typology to interpret a text. Clowney and Goldsworthy utilize typology to find Christ from every text. Greidanus carefully employs typology in certain texts. Chapell is cautious not to abuse typology, but his context disclosure interprets Christ-silent texts typologically.

“based on the presupposition that the whole Old Testament looks beyond itself for its interpretation.”²⁷³

Typological interpretation, which seeks types of Christ not only in certain texts but also from every text, may result in unbridled typologizing.²⁷⁴ Clowney, for instance, argues, “There is a real connection between Jacob’s wrestling in the darkness of Peniel and Christ’s agony in the darkness of Gethsemane. The differences between Jacob and Jesus are great, but Jesus did fulfill without sin the calling that sinful Jacob could only foreshadow.”²⁷⁵

Greidanus, however, warns that understanding Jacob’s wrestling at Peniel as a type of Christ’s wrestling at Calvary is typologizing.²⁷⁶ Connecting the type in Jacob’s wrestling to its antitype in Christ’s wrestling is just “forcing parallels.”²⁷⁷ Clowney’s interpretation of Jacob’s wrestling is but one example, but it demonstrates that typologizing may be involved heavily in some practices of Christ-centered hermeneutics.

Goldsworthy’s macro-typology, which finds types of Christ in every text, is another example of typologizing. As mentioned above, Goldsworthy’s macro-typology discovers the discernible or typological relationship between all aspects of Old Testament

²⁷³Neil B. MacDonald, “The Philosophy of Language and the Renewal of Biblical Hermeneutics,” in *Renewing Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig G. Bartholomew, Colin J. D. Greene, and Karl M. Ller (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 123.

²⁷⁴Greidanus defines typologizing as “overextending the use of typology by searching for types in rather incidental details in the text.” See Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 97. He also warns that typologizing easily blends into allegorizing, which ignores the historical meaning of the text and produces arbitrary and subjective interpretations. *Ibid.*, 157.

²⁷⁵Edmund Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1988), 76. Clowney and Goldsworthy believe that types are unlimited and Christ exists in every text. Glenny, “Typology: A Summary of the present Evangelical Discussion,” 630 and Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 185.

²⁷⁶Sidney Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts* (Toronto: Wedge, 1970), 83.

²⁷⁷*Ibid.*

salvation history and Christ.²⁷⁸ Using macro-typology, an epoch has a typological relationship to Christ in the final epoch. In other words, because macro-typology forms a typological relationship among epochs, everything in an epoch has a typological relationship with Christ. Jesus, for instance, is considered the wise man in the New Testament. According to Goldsworthy, because “God has made Jesus Christ to be our wisdom” in Paul’s argument (1 Cor 1:18-30), “the glory of the kingdom of David and Solomon and the temple, [which] saw the flowering of wisdom,” should be understood typologically.²⁷⁹

Typologizing should be avoided because it neglects the author’s intent and forces typological parallels between the text and Christ. Greidanus rightly argues that types in typologizing “come to be created rather than discovered” and devolve easily into allegorizing.²⁸⁰

Conclusion

Advocates of Christ-centered hermeneutics are committed to finding ways to connect the text to Christ. Nevertheless, not all Christ-centered approaches to hermeneutics are equally warranted. The comparisons and analysis in this chapter have produced mixed results. First, a Christ-centered biblical theology is a legitimate way to understand the Bible as a whole. God’s progressive revelation and continuity are helpful to see the relationship between the two Testaments and how Christ completed God’s redemptive work in the New Testament. A Christ-centered biblical theology enables interpreters to understand the Bible through its eschatological movement to Christ. In

²⁷⁸Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 112. Elsewhere Goldsworthy argues, “There is no limit to types.” Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 183.

²⁷⁹Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 164.

²⁸⁰Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 97. In addition, to avoid typologizing, Greidanus suggests several rules for using typology. *Ibid.*, 257-60.

doing so, a Christ-centered biblical theology may discern many theological themes that bridge the two Testaments.

Second, like Dutch redemptive-historical preaching, Christ-centered biblical theology enables interpreters pay attention to God's redemption and Christ's fulfillment in hermeneutics rather than merely to imitation of biblical figures. As Luke 24 and John 5 explain, Christ-centered hermeneutics may faithfully handle the Old Testament texts which refer to Christ's sufferings and death. In addition, by emphasis of God's redemption and Christ's fulfillment, Christ-centered hermeneutics discloses God's grace which guided the biblical figures in the narrative texts.

Nevertheless, Christ-centered hermeneutics face several criticisms. First, contrary to Christ-centered hermeneutics, the Bible does not support the assumption that Christ is the center of every single text. Even though Luke 24 and John 5 say that the Old Testament concerns Christ's sufferings and death, this argument does not mean that Christ is the theme or center of every text. Rather, those texts infer that Christ is an overarching theme of the whole Bible. Thus, limited Christ-centered preaching is possible in accordance with the meaning of the text, but the extensive view of Christ-centered preaching is not warranted by the Bible.

Second, the idea of a fuller sense in Christ-centered hermeneutics seemingly enables interpreters to find Christ or Christological significance in a text, even though the original authors did not specifically and explicitly know Jesus Christ. However, as Kaiser and Riggs point out, the divine Author and the human authors together intended to communicate a single meaning for all of Scripture.²⁸¹ Thus, fuller sense should be understood as an extension of and development from the original author's intended meaning rather than the excessive view of Christ-centered hermeneutics that seeks added

²⁸¹Kaiser, "A Response to Author's Intention and Biblical Interpretation," 445-46; Riggs, "The 'Fuller Meaning' of Scripture: A Hermeneutical Question for Evangelicals," 226.

meaning in every text. If Christ-centered hermeneutics seeks a fuller sense, which has added ideas that the human authors completely did not know, such interpretation may lead to hermeneutical bankruptcy and subjective interpretative results in relation to Christ.

Third, the interpretive methods of Christ-centered preaching are varied and may contribute to finding ways to discern how Christ exists in a text or how the text testifies to Christ. If the text explicitly reveals Christ or his Messianic features, such methods enable interpreters to find Christ or Christological significance. If the text does not make a direct reference to Christ, however, interpretive methods of Christ-centered preaching can often neglect or violate the original author's intent in order to move to Christ. Since the goal of interpretation is to discern authorial intent, Kuruvilla rightly warns that Christocentric interpretation neglects "the specific theology of individual texts in rush to correlate the OT with the NT, making the value of preaching from the OT doubtful, at best."²⁸² Christocentric interpretative methods need to explain how, when, and why interpreters move to Christ from the text in accordance with the author's theology. If the authors intended to place Christ at the center, the text should give some hermeneutical clues such as messianic prophecy to find how Christ is in fact the center. If not, the original authors' intended meaning of the text should be respected and interpreted as they intended.

Fourth, though typology is a preferred method for Christ-centered hermeneutics, it must find the balance between the text and Christ only in accordance with the original author's intent. If typology neglects the author's intent and forces typological parallels between the text and Christ, it becomes typologizing. In this sense, Clowney's typology and Goldsworthy's macro-typology often exceed the intention of the

²⁸²Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 239.

human author either through reading back to the text or by means of finding a fuller sense to the text, which is discerned by later revelation.²⁸³

In summary, the fact that Christ is the central theme of the Bible is true, but it does not demonstrate that Christ is the center of every single text. In addition, the original authors did not intend to locate Christ at the center of every text. Rather, Jesus' explanation of Luke 24 and John 5 that the Old Testament concerns Christ's sufferings and death means that the Bible has an eschatological movement to Christ and his work that runs throughout Scripture. But this theological emphasis, though valid, is not the whole of a balanced hermeneutic.

²⁸³Kaiser, "A Response to Author's Intention and Biblical Interpretation," 445-46.

CHAPTER 5
ANALYSIS OF THE HOMILETICS OF
CHRIST-CENTERED APPROACHES
TO PREACHING

Introduction

Klass Schilder, a pioneer of Dutch redemptive-historical preaching, claimed that the purpose of the historical texts was to reveal God’s redemptive work. He wrote, “All history is sacred history because all history is in reality God working toward his goal.”¹ Dutch redemptive-historical preaching showed how God saved sinners by preaching Christ in the historical narrative text. Dutch redemptive-historical preaching, however, faced sharp criticism over its lack of application.² Despite such criticism, advocates of Christ-centered preaching argue that preaching Christ from every text is necessary and biblical.

This chapter studies selected sermons of Clowney, Greidanus, Goldsworthy, and Chapell, focusing on sermonic main points, the explanation of the text, the meaning of Christ-centeredness, and application. In addition, this study shows how these men preach the Old Testament text, which seems to be Christ-silent, in way that is Christ-centered.

¹Sidney Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts* (Toronto: Wedge, 1970), 122.

²See Krabbendam, who critiques a certain extreme in the redemptive-historical homiletical tradition. Hendrick Krabbendam, “Hermeneutics and Preaching,” in *The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Samuel T. Logan, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1986), 235. See also John Frame, “Ethics, Preaching, and Biblical Theology,” *The Third Millennium Ministry* 1, no. 11 (May 1999): 1, accessed March 7, 2013, http://thirdmill.org/magazine/article.asp/link/http:%5E%5Ethirdmill.org%5Earticles%5Ejoh_frame%5EPT.Frame.Ethics_Preaching_BT.html/at/Ethics,%20Preaching,%20and%20Biblical%20Theology.

Edmund Clowney and Homiletics of Redemptive-Historical Preaching

Clowney pastored from 1942 until his death in 2005. At the same time, he was an author, professor, and president of Westminster Theological Seminary.³ Under his influence, Christ-centered preaching earned popularity among seminarians, alumni of Westminster Theological Seminary, and conservative evangelicals in America. The general purpose of Clowney's redemptive-historical preaching is to present Christ from every text. His published sermons show how he utilizes what he finds in the text via symbolism and typology. To demonstrate how his Christ-centered hermeneutic guides his redemptive-historical preaching, several of Clowney's published sermons on Old Testament passages are evaluated.

Genesis 22:1-19

In a sermon on Genesis 22:1-19 entitled "See What It Costs," Clowney explains Abraham's trial to sacrifice Isaac on Mt. Moriah. Abraham was asked to sacrifice Isaac, who was the gift of God's covenant to Abraham. Clowney focuses on the cost that Abraham paid for his faith in God.⁴ Abraham feared God and was ready to give everything for Him. As he clung to God in faith, God provided him with a ram. Abraham, in the end, did not pay anything. In other words, even though Abraham did pay everything in terms of his faith, because of God's provision, the cost was nothing—God paid. Isaac was Abraham's "by birth and his by redemption."⁵

Clowney connects God's redemption in Abraham's sacrificing Isaac to Christ by arguing that the ram "symbolized not only consecration but atonement in the blood of

³Dennis E. Johnson, ed., *Heralds of the King* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 11-12.

⁴Edmund Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 74-75.

⁵*Ibid.*, 75.

a substitute.”⁶ The Lamb typifies the Lamb of God, the Son of God, who fulfilled God’s redemption: “Abraham rejoiced to see the day of Jesus Christ. He rejoiced with Isaac in his arms. He rejoiced because God had seen the Lamb, and Abraham knew that no word of promises was too wonderful for God. With the eyes of faith, Abraham too saw that another Isaac must come, the Lamb of God, the Son of God.”⁷

Clowney connects the cost of Abraham to the grace of God’s provision through Christ. As God saved Isaac by a substitute, the Son paid the price on Calvary, showing God’s love and grace. Clowney then applies God’s love to believers: “Only his grace can enable us to receive it. God’s fine print is bright with the glory of his love, love that draws us to love him and moves us to love others.”⁸ It appears that Clowney does more than just point out a typological connection to Christ here. God strengthened Abraham’s faith through testing. Accordingly, Clowney is theocentric in his approach and is not afraid to see practical analogies between an historic character such as Abraham and contemporary believers.

Genesis 28:10-22

In a sermon from Genesis 28:10-22 entitled “When God Came Down,” Clowney depicts how Christ is present in Jacob’s dream. Jacob realizes that the Lord came down and stood with him. Because of this vision, Jacob was assured that as God was with his forefathers, so too God’s promise to him was secure. The promise of God’s being with Jacob and his forefathers was fulfilled in Christ. So, for example, Bethel is the land God promises and the gate of heaven; the stairway, where the Lord ascended and descended, is the house and the city of God, and Christ’s incarnation completed God’s

⁶Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 75.

⁷Ibid., 77.

⁸Ibid., 78.

covenant in Jacob's dream.⁹ Thus, according to Clowney, Christ is the one who was in Jacob's dream and fulfilled God's covenant to his forefathers.¹⁰ In addition, Jesus came to earth in God's glory again. Clowney explains,

[T]he Lord who came down the stairway of Jacob's dream is the Lord who came down to be born of Mary. Here on earth he could tell Nathanael that he knew him, and had seen him under the fig tree. He could also tell him of the glory of his second coming. The angels of Jacob's dream will come with him then. They had come to the shepherds to announce his birth. They will come with him when he comes in glory.¹¹

Clowney then typologically reminds us that the Lord symbolized a heavenly being and typifies Christ. As he was with Jacob, Christ came down and was with Nathanael. Clowney suggests that Christ comes to believers and is with them here and now: "You will see Jesus when he comes with his angels. But he sees you now and comes to you—the Lord is in this place, and you did not know it! This is your Bethel, the house of God. Come home!"¹² Because of God's promise, as Christ was with Jacob, Christ, who speaks to us in his Word and in the preaching of it, is with us. Clowney's emphasis on Christ's being with believers as well as with Jacob shows Christocentric features in his sermon. Thus, as Jacob was saved out of a desperate situation when he perceived Jesus' being with him, Clowney encourages believers to perceive Christ's being with them as Immanuel.

Genesis 32

In a sermon from Genesis 32 entitled "The Champion's Strange Victory," Clowney finds Christ through the image of God, who came to Jacob at the Jabbok River.

⁹Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 82-83; idem, *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1988), 67.

¹⁰Clowney argues that Jesus revealed the significance of this passage in his calling of Nathanael. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 83-84.

¹¹Ibid., 84.

¹²Ibid., 85.

Jacob wrestled with God until the breaking of the day; he finally won the wrestling match with God. God, however, touched Jacob's hip socket and changed his name to Israel. Jacob was in danger and saw God face-to-face, but his life was spared. Jacob knew the Lord and saw the face of the Lord. Clowney describes this scene: "Jacob has deeper fellowship with the Lord, for he caught the vision of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor 4:4).¹³

Clowney then explains that Jacob is a type of Christ in several ways. Jacob was a winner by God's grace; the Lord was the Victor of grace.¹⁴ In addition, after wrestling with Jacob, God touched Jacob's hip socket and changed his name to Israel. Since the thigh in the Old Testament refers to the organ of generation, Jacob's suffering of the crippling touch refers to Christ who was born of his descendants. While Jacob is the father of the Israelites, Christ is the true Israel. Christ is foreshadowed in Jacob, not only as the "Angel of the Lord," but also as the "Seed of the Promise" and the "Servant of the Lord."¹⁵ Furthermore, Jacob's wrestling with the Angel of the Lord foreshadowed "Christ's wrestling in the agony of Gethsemane's garden":¹⁶ "The Father hides his face from him in the darkness of Calvary that we might see his glory. He is the Victor because he is the Victim. Dying, he lives; struck down, he is exalted over all. He will not let go till he has received the blessing. His prayer to the Father is that one day we might see his glory."¹⁷

¹³Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 92.

¹⁴Ibid., 93.

¹⁵Ibid. "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor" (Isa 49:3, NIV).

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

In application, Clowney encourages believers to remember Christ's death for them. Christ died on the cross for sinners, is with sinners as Immanuel, and has blessed those with a desperate faith just as he blessed Jacob at the Jabbok River.

Exodus 34:1-9

In a sermon from Exodus 34:1-9 entitled "Can God Be among Us?" Clowney deals with the issue of God's presence among Israel.¹⁸ While Moses was gone on the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments, the Israelites worshipped a golden calf and were punished by God. God did not want to stay among the Israelites. Moses then prayed to God, beseeching him to remain with Israel, and God heard Moses' prayer.

Clowney mentions the tabernacle of the Lord, which refers to God's dwelling among the Israelites. This tabernacle symbolizes Jesus Christ in two ways. First, the tabernacle represents God's dwelling among his people. Second, the tabernacle symbolizes the way of approach to the Lord. He states, "The empty seat of the throne of God in the tabernacle was reserved for Jesus Christ."¹⁹ Christ fulfilled the reality of the tabernacle, which symbolized God's dwelling, grace, and mercy. Just as the tabernacle represented God's dwelling among his people, Christ, who is the true tabernacle, dwells among sinners.

In application, Clowney encourages believers to be with God: "Can God dwell in the midst of us? Yes! In Christ we are made temples for the dwelling of Christ (2 Cor 6:19)."²⁰ Christ pours out his love in the hearts of believers and is with them by his Spirit. This is the reason that believers can cling to Christ and have a deeper fellowship with him. "Now and forever, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."²¹

¹⁸Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 95-102.

¹⁹Ibid., 100.

²⁰Ibid., 101.

²¹Ibid.

Joshua 5:13-15

In a sermon from Joshua 5:13-15 entitled “Meet the Captain,” Clowney introduces Christ as one who appeared as “the Angel of the Lord to deliver his people and to bring judgment on his enemies [in the Old Testament].”²² In Joshua 5, Clowney points out that the Angel of the Lord appeared to Joshua and his people “to show his rule over Israel and the nations.”²³ Thus, the Captain, who delivered his people and brought judgment on his enemies, typifies Jesus Christ. The Angel of the Lord fought for the Israelites. Accordingly, the victory depended not on the Israelites, but on the mighty power of the Angel of the Lord. Thus, the Captain deserves praise for the victory. Just as the Captain fights for the Israelites, because Jesus is with believers, believers need not fear man.

Second, Clowney connects the conquest of Jericho to Jesus’ judgment: “One day every wall shall fall before the coming of the Lord. Jesus Christ has disarmed the principalities and the powers at the cross. The battle has been fought and won. Jesus the Victor ascended in triumph and now, at the right hand of God, rules all things.”²⁴ The conquest of Jericho symbolizes the spiritual battles against Satan in this world. As the Angel of the Lord conquered and defeated Jericho, Christ, who died on the cross, won spiritual battles. The trumpet will sound to announce Christ’s return. Jesus Christ prepares for “the day when the battle will be finished on earth, as it is in heaven The Captain received the spear-thrust to win his battle. Before him we fall down with Joshua and say with Thomas, ‘My Lord and my God.’”²⁵ In this way, the Captain, who symbolizes and typifies Christ, shows the Christ-centeredness of this sermon.

²²Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 103.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., 107.

²⁵Ibid., 108.

In application, since Christ will return with the final triumph of God's people, and God's judgment will be executed upon the powers of this world, Clowney encourages believers to cling to him who will finish the battle on the last day. Thus, this sermon is Christocentric in that it emphasizes Christ's final victory over Satan through salvation and judgment.

2 Samuel 23:13-17

In a sermon from 2 Samuel 23:13-17 entitled "Surprised by Devotion," Clowney emphasizes the devotion of David's warriors who brought water to David from Bethlehem. Surprisingly, king David poured the water out on the ground. David, who was so sensitive to the devotion of his men, however, committed adultery with Bathsheba, murdered her husband Uriah, the loyal man, and covered up his sin. Nonetheless, God showed his mercy toward the murderer David and sent Christ.

This surprising story of David's warriors turns to God's mercy as the main Christological theme in this sermon. Clowney says, "Our text is all about *chesed*, even though the word does not appear."²⁶ He continues, "Yet in mercy toward us, in *chesed* beyond understanding, the Lord has provided a king worthy of our devotion. The Lord himself comes as our Savior King. Yes, he comes and he seeks our devotion."²⁷ Then Clowney introduces Jesus who healed the ten lepers. Only one leper returned to Jesus, who asked, "Where are the nine?"²⁸ The nine lepers did not come back and thank Jesus for healing them. Clowney shows that believers need to surprise God by spontaneous devotion like that of David's warriors, who brought him water from Bethlehem.²⁹

²⁶Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 110.

²⁷Ibid., 114.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid., 115.

Jesus has bound himself to be our Savior; the great surprise is not our response of devotion to him, but rather his devotion to us.³⁰ As David poured out the water from Bethlehem, so too Jesus pours out not only the devotion of believers, but also his blood before the Father in heaven to show his devotion toward believers.³¹ Jesus Christ is the real *chesed* of God. As Clowney states, “He is the anointed Warrior who breaks through the hosts of darkness to bring us water from Bethlehem. But for Jesus, it is not water at the price of blood. It is the cup of the New Covenant in his blood, blood from Calvary, shed for many for the remission of sins.”³²

The main Christological theme of this passage is devotion. The devotion of David’s warriors is connected to the devotion of Christ to show God’s mercy. Thus, Christ appeared in two forms. First, Christ devoted himself to God and to sinners. Second, Christ represented God’s mercy toward sinners. In application, Clowney encourages believers to request God’s mercy and devotion. The great surprise is not one’s devotion to God, but God’s devotion to him or her. Our Savior loved first and showed his devotion first, that is, God’s surprising devotion.

Analysis and Assessment of the Homiletics of Clowney’s Redemptive-Historical Preaching

As mentioned above, the main purpose of Clowney’s redemptive-historical preaching is to present Christ from every text. His sermons exemplify his approach to presenting Christ. As he instructs, symbolism and typology are useful to find Christ in a text. As God was in the tent among Israel, for instance, Christ is among believers (Exod 34:1-9). For Clowney, it does not mean that a person always symbolizes and typifies Christ. Rather, a concept such as cost (Gen 22:1-19) or devotion (2 Sam 23:13-17) can

³⁰Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 116.

³¹*Ibid.*, 115.

³²*Ibid.*

symbolize and typify Christ and his work. He understands that an Old Testament event, institution, or person as a type can symbolize the truth in the Old Testament and can ultimately typify Christ and his work. However, Clowney often uses symbolism and typology regardless of the meaning and context of a passage. In this sense, it is right to say that Clowney's main interest is to present Christ from every text, but it is necessary to evaluate his approach.

Sermonic Purpose and the Explanation of the Text

What does Clowney intend to accomplish by preaching Christ from every text? Of course, to Clowney, Christ-centered preaching presents Christ so that the audience may encounter him. Clowney meets his *sermonic purpose* to make a connection to Christ and to present Christ from every text, even when that requires adding a new idea.³³

Christ, in his sermons, however, often seems to be separate from the meaning of the text. For instance, in his sermon on Exodus 34:1-9, Clowney finds Christ through the symbol of the tabernacle, which refers to God's dwelling among his people. Clowney then states that the tabernacle has an empty throne, the center of the golden cover, which was reserved for Jesus Christ.³⁴ The tabernacle and its empty throne symbolize and typify Christ. The text, however, does not say anything about the tabernacle. Rather, it is a story about Moses' making of new tablets. Even if one considers all of Exodus 34, there is nothing about the tabernacle. Clowney adds a discussion of God's renewal of his covenant by giving his tabernacle to Israel.³⁵ If Clowney adds the tabernacle story to this sermon, Christ, in this sermon, is apart from the meaning of and the context of Exodus 34:1-9.

³³Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 11.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 100.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 99.

In another instance, Clowney focuses on the spontaneous devotion of David's warriors in 2 Samuel 23:13-17, finding devotion and a surprised action in this passage. Referencing David's adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, Clowney argues that even though David lost his sensitivity to his men's devotion, God showed mercy toward him. Clowney puts these ideas together and says that God surprisingly shows his mercy through Christ's devotion to believers. The surprising thing is not one's devotion to God, but God's devotion to him or her. In other words, God's mercy through Christ's devotion is surprising to believers.

God's mercy by Christ's devotion is not, however, the main idea of this passage. Clowney adds God's mercy by Christ's devotion to the meaning of the text in order to present Christ. It is true that David's warriors devoted themselves to David, but David did not show mercy to his men. So, Clowney adds God's mercy into this sermon by mentioning David's adultery with Bathsheba, though this account is not part of the text. Clowney mentions Uriah as one of David's thirty-seven mighty warriors as the basis for linking the two narrative accounts.

These examples show that Clowney may use forced parallels between the text and Christ to present Christ from every text.³⁶ Adding a new idea to the text enables Clowney to create a typological relationship between the text and Christ regardless of the author's intended meaning of the text. Greidanus describes such an effort as forced parallels between the text and Christ, arguing that types in typologizing "come to be created rather than discovered."³⁷ How does one know whether or not an added idea to

³⁶Of course, Clowney presents Christ through symbolism and typology without adding ideas or texts. The lamb (Gen 22) symbolizes and typifies Christ who died on the cross and saved sinners. The Lord in Jacob's dream (Gen 28) is a type of Christ who became incarnate and was with his people when he was born of Mary. The Angel of the Lord in Joshua 5 is also a type of Christ who came to us and fought against Satan.

³⁷Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 97.

the text is the divine Author's intent? For instance, if preachers interpret 2 Samuel 23:13-17 in God's total redemptive history, should they find Christ as Clowney has done? Can one say that the divine Author's intent in 2 Samuel 23 is that Christ fulfilled God's grace and mercy?

In fact, since Clowney often finds Christ from added ideas or texts, whether or not Clowney's published sermons are faithful to the author's intended meaning of the text is a matter of debate. If he presents Christ by neglecting or adding a new idea to the text, the preached passage becomes a springboard to jump to Christ.

Christ-Centeredness

As Clowney argues, his sermons are filled with Christ and are explicitly Christ-centered.³⁸ Since Clowney adds a new idea or texts to the preaching passages in order to present Christ, his sermons are Christ-centered. However, when he is faithful to the meaning of the text, that sermon is not Christ-centered. Genesis 22, for instance, shows that God strengthened Abraham's faith by testing. God is the major player in this narrative story. Even though Clowney finds Christ in Genesis 22, his main concern in this sermon is to show how God strengthened Abraham's faith through testing. Accordingly, Clowney is theocentric in his approach to Genesis 22. This example of Genesis 22 shows that all of his sermons are not Christ-centered and that Clowney's Christ-centeredness may be a result of a forced theology rather than the meaning of the text.

Application

Clowney's emphasis on God's redemption is influenced by Dutch redemptive-historical preaching. As Dutch redemptive-historical preaching sought to find God's grace throughout the historical narrative text, Clowney pays attention to God's grace fulfilled by Christ rather than promoting works righteousness. In his sermon from

³⁸Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 11.

Genesis 22, Clowney explains how Abraham was asked to sacrifice Isaac and obey God's commandment. Clowney, however, does not pay attention to Abraham's behavior, but instead emphasizes God's grace fulfilled by Christ.³⁹ In *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, his other sermons also show his emphasis on God's grace and Christ's fulfillment.

However, his emphasis of God's redemption and grace is repeated and the lack of application is recognized. If Clowney was influenced by Dutch redemptive-historical preaching, it is no surprise. Reacting against supposed excessive emphasis on ethical lessons in exemplary preaching, its preachers placed God's redemptive story at the center of the Bible.

For Clowney's redemptive-historical preaching, understanding God's redemptive work is not only found through proclaiming God's Word, but also through applying it. So, added application is not required in redemptive-historical preaching.⁴⁰ In this sense, Clowney follows the Dutch approach to application. After he connects the text to Christ, his homiletical goal is accomplished. In this sense, his application is also to present Christ.

For instance, in the sermon from Genesis 22:1-19, the application is to present Christ who "endured the cross, despising that shame, and is enthroned with the Father."⁴¹ Additionally, in the sermon from Genesis 28:10-22, he explains how Christ fulfilled God's covenant in Jacob's dream by his incarnation. The angels of Jacob's dream came to the shepherds to announce Jesus' birth. He concludes with the following application: "Jesus sees you now and comes to you—the Lord is in this place, and you did not know

³⁹Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 71-78.

⁴⁰Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 157.

⁴¹Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 78.

it!”⁴² Applying Genesis 32, Clowney encourages believers to remember Christ’s death for them. Christ died on the cross for sinners, is with sinners as Immanuel, and blesses those with a desperate faith. Thus, Clowney’s application presents Christ, who died on the cross, was raised from the dead, and will have the final victory. This similar theme and application is repeated in his other sermons.⁴³

Daniel Doriani criticizes the weakness of redemptive-historical preaching in application: “The zeal to trace each passage to its culmination in Christ can obliterate the distinctiveness of particular passages. At worst, [redemptive-historical preaching] repeats one sermon, albeit a very good one, every week.”⁴⁴ Kuruvilla also argues that preachers must drill down “to the specifics of a text” and a particular message may be preached repeatedly.⁴⁵

Presenting Christ is not necessarily application. Application is specific and practical. John Broadus argues that application should be specific, practical, suggestive, and persuasive.⁴⁶ Haddon Robinson also says the following about application: “Think about specific ways this biblical truth about God and people would actually work out in experience.”⁴⁷ Judged by these critics, Clowney’s application is lacking.

⁴²Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 84-85.

⁴³His sermon from Exod 34:1-9 also presents Christ who died on the cross and has dwelled among us. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 95-102.

⁴⁴Daniel Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2001), 296.

⁴⁵Abraham Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text: A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2013), 241.

⁴⁶John A. Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, ed. Edwin C. Dargan (1871; repr., Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2000), 246-57.

⁴⁷Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 95. He continues, “The most effective sermons are those that do this in a specific, not a general, way. If you do not apply the Scriptures to people’s life experience, you cannot expect that they will do it” (ibid.).

Sidney Greidanus and the Homiletics of Christocentric Preaching

In *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, Greidanus recognizes seven genres in the Bible—narrative, prophecy, wisdom, psalm, gospel, epistle, and apocalypse. Greidanus then shows how to preach the genres of Hebrew narrative, prophecy, gospel, and epistle. In his early work on Christ-centered preaching, Greidanus omits wisdom, psalm, and apocalypse. Indeed, his Scripture index does not contain a single citation from Ecclesiastes! Elsewhere Greidanus admits that it is difficult to preach a Christ-centered message from the wisdom literature.⁴⁸

In *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, Greidanus argues for Christocentric preaching using a redemptive-historical Christocentric interpretive method. For wisdom literature, Greidanus writes that an analogy between the wisdom literature and Jesus' teaching, combined with a redemptive-historical progression of Scripture, qualifies an approach as Christocentric.⁴⁹ In *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes*, Greidanus demonstrates that preaching Christ from wisdom literature is also biblical and necessary.

Greidanus describes his Christocentric preaching as “sermons which authentically integrate the message of the text with the climax of God’s revelation in the person, work, and/or teaching of Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament.”⁵⁰ He uses seven methods to find Christ or a connection to Christ in God’s total redemption and to preach Christ from every text. His published sermons, especially his sermon

⁴⁸Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 240. “Wisdom literature is notoriously difficult for Christ-centered preaching, but here also redemptive-historical progression can at times open up an approach” (ibid.).

⁴⁹Ibid., 265-66.

⁵⁰Ibid., 10.

expositions on Genesis and Ecclesiastes, are good examples of how he preaches Christ from the text.⁵¹

Genesis 1:1-2:3

Greidanus's sermon on Genesis 1:1-2:3 is titled "The King of the Universe."⁵² The main theme and goal of this sermon is to comfort Christians with the knowledge of God who is the sovereign Creator and controls the world's destiny and theirs.⁵³ His outline lists four ways one could turn this passage into a Christ-centered message. As God created the earth as his kingdom, Christ fulfilled the kingdom of God. In addition, as God comforted his people with his sovereignty, Christ encourages believers with his words. As God created the earth, Christ recreates the earth through his incarnation, death, and resurrection. Furthermore, Christ in the New Testament refers to God in creation, such as is seen in the parallels between Genesis 1:1 and John 1.⁵⁴

In this sermon, Greidanus shows that just as the sovereign Creator God comforted his fearful people throughout redemptive history, Jesus Christ, who was with the sovereign Creator God in the beginning, comforts God's people. Even though Greidanus finds Christ from this passage in four different ways, he does not give any specific explanation as to how Christ comforts believers today. Greidanus emphasizes that God created everything with his word and has provided his creatures with comfort.⁵⁵

⁵¹Greidanus did not preach regularly in the pulpit, but he gives some sample sermons in his published works. See Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Daniel: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012); idem, *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); and idem, *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

⁵²Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 478-84.

⁵³Ibid., 478.

⁵⁴Ibid., 49-52, 481.

⁵⁵Ibid., 478-84.

In this way, his sermon is theocentric. In addition, he applies the text by arguing that knowing that God is sovereign over the earth is enough for Christians to secure their safety.

Genesis 4:1-26

In his sermon on Genesis 4:1-26 entitled “The Big Battle Begins,” Greidanus states that the sermon’s theme is that “God’s people fear for the continued existence of the church under the onslaught of secularism and persecution.”⁵⁶ According to Greidanus, this passage relates to Christ in several ways. Redemptive history proves that the seed of the woman is Christ. Abel, who obeyed God and offered God a better sacrifice by faith than Cain did, is a type of Christ. As God assured Israel, Christ assures his church. The battle between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman, which is a longitudinal theme, shows the battle between Satan and Jesus continues until the final defeat of Satan. Some New Testament passages such as Matthew 23:35 and Hebrews 12:24 connect Abel to Christ.⁵⁷

Greidanus focuses on the battle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Greidanus then explains how the big battle raging throughout human history began when Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s command after being tempted by Satan. After their disobedience, God set “enmity between its seed and the seed of the woman” and the battle between Cain and Abel occurred.⁵⁸ As a descendant of sinners, Cain persecuted Abel and killed him. The battle between Cain and Abel was extended to the battle between Christians and the powers in the world. God, however, protected “the line of the seed of the woman.”⁵⁹

⁵⁶Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 485.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 89-91.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 486.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 491.

Greidanus further writes, “As disciples of Jesus, we are all involved in this battle.”⁶⁰ However, the seed of the woman will win this battle “because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”⁶¹ In other words, Christians, who have God in them, do not fear the powers in the world, but will enjoy the final victory on the last day.⁶² For application, Greidanus encourages the audience, who are under the onslaught of secularism and persecution, to remember God’s faithfulness to his people.

Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:26

The theme of Greidanus’s sermon on Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:26 is “to encourage people to find enjoyment in God’s daily gifts of food, drink, and toil.”⁶³ As for the author of Ecclesiastes, Greidanus argues that the Teacher is not Solomon but pretends to be Solomon “to give his important message greater impact.”⁶⁴ In addition, Greidanus believes that Ecclesiastes was written to people during the Babylonian exile who were “preoccupied with all sorts of social and economic issues.”⁶⁵

Greidanus finds several ways to trace Christ in the text. “Enjoyment in God’s daily gifts of food, drink, and toil” has been traced through redemptive history, and Jesus provides believers with meaning, joy, and even gain. King Solomon is a type of the great King of peace, Jesus Christ.⁶⁶ Just as the reader of Ecclesiastes found enjoyment in God’s provision, Jesus also taught his disciples to rely on God’s provision. Ecclesiastes and the

⁶⁰Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 492.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid., 493.

⁶³Ibid., 58.

⁶⁴Ibid., 59.

⁶⁵Ibid., 10.

⁶⁶Ibid., 56-59.

New Testament deal with the love of money, which is the root of all kinds of evil.⁶⁷

The Teacher, with great wisdom, tried to find the meaning of life, but he discovered that enjoyment in God's provision is better than anything the world offers. All worldly endeavors are futile, for all efforts apart from God are vanity and useless. So, Greidanus states, "We ought to find enjoyment in the gifts God gives us every day."⁶⁸ Greidanus also shows that just as the figure of Solomon gave a lesson, Christ embodies the better lesson. Greidanus argues that Jesus Christ gave the better lesson to enjoy God's gifts: "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."⁶⁹ In conclusion, Greidanus introduces the teaching of Paul, "[W]hatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col 3:16-17).⁷⁰ In application, Greidanus encourages believers to enjoy God's gifts and to thank him every day for these wonderful gifts.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

In his exposition of Ecclesiastes 3:1-15, Greidanus states that the sermon's theme is "The sovereign God set the times forever so that people will stand in awe before him."⁷¹ Greidanus finds a connection to Christ, utilizing redemptive-historical progression and longitudinal themes, by arguing that God sent his Son Jesus to this world

⁶⁷Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 54-58.

⁶⁸Ibid., 67.

⁶⁹Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes*, 68.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid., 79.

in the fullness of time. He continues, “Jesus began his ministry by preaching, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near.’”⁷²

Greidanus lists all the times that are related to Jesus in the New Testament. For instance, the time when Jesus was born was under God’s sovereignty.⁷³ In God’s time, Jesus will return to restore the kingdom of God. As Jesus taught, no one knows the time God set, so all should know their limitations and stand in awe before him. The fact that God is in control of the times, which requires “all [to] fear him,”⁷⁴ is what Jesus taught in the New Testament. For instance, Jesus said, “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”⁷⁵ In application, Greidanus encourages believers to approach God with awe by saying, “Whether we seek God in personal prayer or worship him with his people, whether we study his word or study his creation, there is only one way to approach God—and that is with reverence and awe.”⁷⁶ Greidanus’s approach to application, then, is theocentric rather than Christocentric.

Ecclesiastes 4:7-16

The purpose of Ecclesiastes 4:7-16, according to Greidanus, is “to persuade our hearers not to go it alone but to cooperate with others.”⁷⁷ Greidanus utilizes analogical and longitudinal themes as well as New Testament references to see Christ in the text. The Teacher warns readers about the vanity and uselessness of selfish

⁷²Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes*, 77.

⁷³Ibid., 84.

⁷⁴Ibid., 86.

⁷⁵Ibid., 87.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid., 114.

individualism. The Teacher gives a concluding message—“A threefold cord is not quickly broken”—in order to emphasize cooperation.⁷⁸ Greidanus then asserts, “God created human beings for companionship—as social beings.”⁷⁹ Greidanus connects the text to Christ via the need for cooperation. Just as God emphasizes companionship, Jesus teaches his disciples to care for their neighbors: “If you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you” (Matt 18:16). In this way, Greidanus argues that Jesus also refuses to remain a solitary figure, but gathers his disciples around him.⁸⁰ Greidanus also points out that the early Christians were communal, not solitary.⁸¹

In verses 13-16, Greidanus emphasizes the importance of cooperation by saying that the foolish king should be wise and be with people, but because he was foolish, he isolated himself. People followed the young ruler who replaced the foolish king. That young ruler, however, will also be rejected by those who come later. Jesus Christ is that young ruler who was welcomed but later rejected. The Teacher concludes, “This also is vanity and a chasing after wind” (Ecc 4:16). Greidanus applies this message to Christians using ethical instructions: “Thus the Teacher challenges us not to work just by and for ourselves but to work humbly with and for others. To go it alone is futile. To work together offers many advantages.”⁸²

Ecclesiastes 9:1-12

In his sermon on Ecclesiastes 9:1-12 entitled “Have a Good Day!” Greidanus states that the theme is as follows: “In view of the certainty of death and the

⁷⁸Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes*, 117.

⁷⁹Ibid., 118.

⁸⁰Ibid., 118.

⁸¹Ibid. Greidanus quotes Acts 2:44-45: “All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.”

⁸²Ibid., 121.

unpredictability of life, enjoy to the fullest the days God gives you.”⁸³ According to Greidanus, Israel in the third century BC faced rapid changes that robbed people of the joy of living.⁸⁴ Thus, the Teacher encouraged them to enjoy to the fullest whatever days God gave them. Jesus also teaches his disciples to enjoy life to the fullest.

Greidanus identifies Christ by redemptive-historical progression, longitudinal themes, analogy, New Testament references, and contrast. In creation, God provides food so people can enjoy life.⁸⁵ However, because of Israel’s sin, God sent them into exile, and they could return to Jerusalem only by God’s grace. God promised the remnant that he would create a new heavens and a new earth. They, however, could not avoid the reality that “the certainty of death remained.”⁸⁶ The Teacher realizes that all die and the dead have nothing. Life is unpredictable, and death comes unexpectedly. Since life is vain, the Teacher encourages people to enjoy whatever days God gives them.

Redemptive history shows Jesus’ coming into this world. Because of Jesus, death is not the end; life exists beyond death. Jesus also speaks of Joy (John 15:10-11). Greidanus realizes that Jesus also enjoyed what God provided him. Jesus enjoyed eating and drinking. Jesus teaches believers not to worry about food and drink. Jesus provides bread for people to enjoy.⁸⁷ Enjoyment is not limited to eating and drinking, however. Greidanus also advises Christians to enjoy their marriages and work because God provided them with these gifts. Jesus honors marriage with his presence at the wedding in Cana. Jesus also challenges his disciples to work hard: “We must work the works of him

⁸³Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes*, 317.

⁸⁴In contrast to Greidanus, who holds a late date for Ecclesiastes, I hold that it was written earlier. Concerning the early date for Ecclesiastes, see Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, The New American Commentary, vol. 14 (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 257-67.

⁸⁵Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes*, 225-27, 317-21.

⁸⁶Ibid., 225-27.

⁸⁷Ibid., 324. See Matt 14:13-21; 15:32-39.

who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work” (John 9:4).⁸⁸

Greidanus concludes, “Because Jesus died and rose to save us from our enslavement to sin and to reconcile us to God, we can begin to live as God intended at the beginning: enjoying our food and drink, enjoying life with our spouse, and enjoying our work.”⁸⁹ In application, Greidanus advises believers not to waste their days by worrying and being fearful of death. Instead, believers must enjoy each day as if it were their last.

Analysis and Assessment of the Homiletics of Greidanus’ Christocentric Preaching

Greidanus’ main interest in preaching is to preach God’s acts from a New Testament perspective.⁹⁰ His published sermons and sermon expositions clearly show how Greidanus preaches Christ from Old Testament texts, using this approach. Greidanus develops his Christ-centered sermons in three steps. First, he elaborates the original author’s intended meaning. Second, he lists some ways in which Christ can be connected to the text. Third, he gives some application. His efforts and passion to find the meaning of the text and to preach Christ are praiseworthy.

However, while exploring his sermons, some homiletical issues are detected. One of them is that repeated sermon themes and goals often appear in his sermons. In addition, Christ, in his sermons, is detached from the text. Furthermore, his application is often not practical, but an extension of his sermon’s exposition.

Sermon Theme and Goal

In reviewing *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, Kuruvilla criticizes Greidanus for significantly duplicating the goals of his sermons:

⁸⁸Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes*, 324.

⁸⁹Ibid., 325.

⁹⁰Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 119.

The Sermon Goal of Gen 28:10–22: *To comfort God’s people with his promise that he will be with his people wherever they go* (288), is no different from the goal of Gen 46:1–47:31: *To assure God’s people that God goes with them wherever they go* (441), and resembles that of Gen 39:1–23: *To assure God’s people of his presence with them in times of prosperity as well as times of adversity* (386). The Sermon Goal of Gen 37:2–36: *To comfort the church with the knowledge that God can use even evil human deeds to fulfill his plan of salvation* (347) was spotted earlier in Gen 29:1–35: *To encourage God’s people with the message that their sovereign God can fulfill his promises even through human deceit* (306); it crops up again with Gen 38:1–30: *To assure God’s people that God can accomplish his plan of salvation even through human disobedience and deception* (368), and with Gen 43:1–45:28: *To comfort the hearers with the message that the sovereign God is able to use even evil human deeds to accomplish salvation* (420–1).⁹¹

Of course, if these sermon themes and goals are faithful to the text, such repetition is not a problem. Kuruvilla’s concern is that because Greidanus seeks to move to Christ from every preached passage, his sermon goals fail to develop the author’s theology and the distinctiveness of a particular passage.⁹² For instance, Kuruvilla argues that because Genesis 46:1-47:31 is about “Agents of divine blessing, obediently trusting God for blessing in their own lives and extend God’s blessing to others,” the goal of this text must be to show how to enjoy God’s blessings and how to be a blessing to others.⁹³ However, since Greidanus pays attention to preaching Christ from every text, similar sermon goals are repeated week after week. It is true that Greidanus has one overarching

⁹¹Abraham Kuruvilla, “A Review of *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons*, by Sidney Greidanus,” *Homiletix*, accessed October 7, 2014, <http://homiletix.com/preaching-resources/reviews/preaching-christ-from-genesis-foundations-for-expository-sermons-by-sidney-greidanus-grand-rapids-eerdmans-2007>.

⁹²Kuruvilla, “A Review of *Preaching Christ from Genesis*.” Kuruvilla’s concern can be recognized in other publications of Greidanus. For example, his sermon goal for Eccl 1:12-2:26—“to encourage people to find enjoyment in God’s daily gifts of food, drink, and toil”—is similar to the sermon goals of Eccl 5:8-6:9—“to encourage them to enjoy God’s daily gifts”—and Eccl 9:1-12—“to urge the hearers, in view of the certainty of death and the unpredictability of life, to enjoy to the fullest the days God gives them.” Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes*, 58, 146, 228.

⁹³Abraham Kuruvilla, *Genesis: A Theological Commentary for Preachers* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014), 553. Duane Garrett also agrees with Brian McKenzie, who argues that Gen 47:1-27 develops “the theological theme (first encountered in Genesis 12:3a) of God blessing those who bless his elect.” Brian A. McKenzie, “Jacob’s Blessing on Pharaoh: An Interpretation of Gen 46:31-47:26,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 45, no. 2 (Fall 1983): 386-90, as quoted by Duane Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis: The Sources and Authorship of the First Book of the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Mentor, 2000), 176.

goal, namely to preach Christ and his sermons often neglect the author's intent and the particular message of each text.

The Meaning of the Text and Christ-Centeredness

Greidanus defines preaching Christ as “[preaching] which authentically integrates the message of the text with the climax of God’s revelation in the person, work, and/or teaching of Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament.”⁹⁴ To meet this definition, Greidanus emphasizes first the historical meaning of the text, devoting extensive portions of the sermon to explain it. He then moves to connect the meaning of the text to Christ by his seven methods. Greidanus argues that the goal of sermon is for people to believe in Christ, trust him, and follow him.⁹⁵ So, each sermon ultimately shows how Christ completes God’s redemption and how the text leads people to finally believe in him.

His explanation of how the text connects to Christ, however, causes homiletical problems. His connections to Christ are often invalid and, far from using them to find the meaning of the text, they are merely illustrations. His sermon on Ecclesiastes 3:1-15 highlights these weaknesses. Greidanus points out that the theme of the passage is that the sovereign God set the times forever so that people will stand in awe before him.⁹⁶ Greidanus further argues that God controls the times, and Christ came to earth in the fullness of time, which was set by God. Jesus also rose from the dead and will return to earth at God’s appointed time. According to Greidanus, Christ’s fulfillments can support the fact that God set the times so that people will stand in awe

⁹⁴Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 10.

⁹⁵Ibid., 8.

⁹⁶Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes*, 79.

before him.⁹⁷ Christ is not the theme of the message but an illustration to support God's control of time.

It may be said that Greidanus confuses Christ with Christ-centeredness. In other words, most examples given by Greidanus are examples to support the sermon's theme, which is related to God-centeredness. In this sense, finding a connection to Christ in every Old Testament text is not always necessary.

In addition, the goal of Ecclesiastes 4:7-16, according to Greidanus, is "to persuade our hearers not to go it alone but to cooperate with others."⁹⁸ In this sermon exposition, Greidanus suggests two subpoints under the central theme. The first is the importance of cooperation, and the second is the vanity of chasing political fame. Greidanus then connects those two subpoints to Christ.

Greidanus explains that Jesus refused to remain a solitary figure and instead gathered disciples around himself.⁹⁹ Jesus' being with disciples, however, does not mean that he emphasized cooperation. In addition, Greidanus argues that because Jesus also taught his disciples to care for their neighbors, cooperation can play a role to connect the text to Christ.¹⁰⁰ Cooperation is, however, different from loving and caring for neighbors. Thus, this connection is invalid. Second, just as the king was rejected by people, Greidanus argues, Christ was rejected by people and forgotten.¹⁰¹ The argument that political fame is short indicates vanity, but Christ did not seek political fame. Christ was rejected by people to save sinners. This truth is not vanity, but good news for sinners. Thus, even if cooperation and the vanity of chasing political fame in some way connected

⁹⁷Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes*, 84-86.

⁹⁸Ibid., 114.

⁹⁹Ibid., 118.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 121.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 120.

the text to Christ, those connections to Christ are not exegetical. His efforts to connect the text to Christ may be a discretionary illustration, but they ultimately fail to show a homiletical necessity for faithful exposition.

Greidanus, in another instance, argues that the theme of Ecclesiastes 9:1-12 is to enjoy life to the fullest. To connect it to Christ, Greidanus insists that Christ fulfilled the idea of enjoyment of one's days by saying that Jesus experienced "eating and drinking" (Matt 11:18-19) and provided bread for the masses to enjoy (Matt 14:13-21).¹⁰² The masses might enjoy the surprise bread, but Jesus did not intend enjoyment in this passage. Rather, Jesus had compassion on the masses and did not want them to leave without eating while they were in the wilderness, so he provided the masses with bread (Matt 14:14). Again Greidanus finds a connection to Christ: "Jesus turned plain water into good wine for people to enjoy at a wedding (John 2:9-11)."¹⁰³

The issue here is whether or not these Christological connections are authentically intended by the human authors and the divine Author. The examples above demonstrate that these Christological connections may illustrate the point in Ecclesiastes, but they are not a part of the text's meaning. Furthermore, even though Greidanus relies heavily on redemptive-historical interpretation to find the meaning of the text, his Christological connections in the New Testament are nothing more than illustrations. These shortcomings demonstrate that Greidanus often fails to find a connection to Christ in accordance with the meaning of the text and the author's intent. Thus, even though his seven ways enable preachers to find Christological connections, his connections to Christ are often not requirements of the meaning of the text; instead, they are merely illustrations. As Warren asserts, a theocentric message without mention of Christ in every

¹⁰²Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes*, 324.

¹⁰³Ibid., 324.

text can be sufficient.¹⁰⁴ Illustrations of Christ may surely be appropriate, and even desirable, but not required for faithful exposition.

Application

The major portion of Greidanus' sermons is always the exposition of the text. After his introduction, Greidanus begins exposing the text by following the textual sequence of the points to the end. Each point is closely related to the main point. Greidanus occasionally uses illustration to explain the meaning of the text. His main concern is faithful exposition of the text, usually verse-by-verse.

Since the goal of his Christocentric sermon is for people to believe in Christ, his sermon application is used to persuade his audience to believe in and follow Christ.¹⁰⁵ Christ is significant to the meaning of the text and to its application. For Greidanus, exposition of the text and of what Christ has done for sinners becomes the application. Greidanus calls it "applicatory explication."¹⁰⁶ His applicatory explication enables him to pay attention to God's grace fulfilled by Christ and to avoid moralism, which leads the audience to imitate biblical models.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, his emphasis on God's redemption causes Greidanus to discard the moral instructions of the text, which can act as practical applications. Greidanus's sermon on Ecclesiastes 4:7-16, however, shows the necessity of moral instructions for practical applications. In this sermon, Greidanus emphasizes the importance of cooperation with others.¹⁰⁸ Contrary to his approach to application, this sermon is full of ethical instructions. For instance, Greidanus encourages

¹⁰⁴Timothy S. Warren, a review of *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons*, by Sidney Greidanus, *Homiletic* 32, no. 2 (Winter 2007): 33.

¹⁰⁵Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 8.

¹⁰⁶Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 138.

¹⁰⁷Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 117.

¹⁰⁸Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes*, 114.

the audience to remember the brevity of our legacy on this earth, to work together with others, and not to be individualists.¹⁰⁹ Christians should follow such imperatives of the text, which are derived from the meaning of the text and the author's intent.

Graeme Goldsworthy and the Homiletics of Gospel-Centered Preaching

Before examining the sermons of Goldsworthy, it is worth noting that Goldsworthy's main interest is not preaching, but interpretation of the Bible in redemptive history.¹¹⁰ Goldsworthy does not preach regularly. Nevertheless, he has influenced many homileticians who seek to preach Christ-centered sermons by his publications and teaching ministry. Goldsworthy reveals his intention to preach Christ from every text on every Sunday in the following:

We would all like to see the whole congregation there every Sunday. The reality is rather different. If half are there on a weekly basis we are probably blessed. There will be a proportion who attends regularly, where "regularly" means perhaps once a month. There are those who come sporadically, and there are those who enter at a venture for whatever reason and without any firm intention to repeat the experience. Such a congregational make-up indicates that every sermon should not only preach Christ and him crucified, but that it should be clearly perceived so to do.¹¹¹

Goldsworthy here demonstrates his passion to preach Christ. He stresses the necessity of preaching Christ from every text on every Sunday not only because Christ is in every text, but also because the audience should hear the gospel. Thus, it is worth exploring how he preaches Christ from every text based on his Christ-centered biblical theology and his pastoral passion.

¹⁰⁹Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes*, 121.

¹¹⁰This is what Goldsworthy expressed to me through our email correspondence. His publications are about a Christ-centered hermeneutical approach to the Bible. Graeme Goldsworthy, e-mail correspondence with the author, September 13, 2013.

¹¹¹Graeme Goldsworthy, "The Pastor as Biblical Theologian," in *Interpreting God's Plan: Biblical Theology and the Pastor*, ed. R. J. Gibson (Adelaide, South Australia: Openbook Publishers, 1997), 126-27.

Numbers 10

Goldsworthy preached two sermons from Numbers 10-11. His sermon from Numbers 10:1-9 is entitled “The Trumpet Shall Sound.”¹¹² The sermon’s theme is that one should look forward to the final trumpet sound and the ultimate victory of Christ. Goldsworthy expounds on what the trumpet itself is and what the trumpet sound signifies throughout the entire Bible. In Exodus, God gathered the Israelites by the trumpet and spoke to them. Leviticus shows that the trumpet sound is related to a holy gathering. The leaders of the Israelites also blew the trumpet to gather them for specific purposes such as announcements and battles.

In addition, the trumpet sound signifies judgment and salvation. In Leviticus 25, when the Israelites heard the trumpet sound on the Day of Atonement, they were to consecrate the fiftieth year, proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants, and celebrate a jubilee. Isaiah 18, Jeremiah 4, and Joel 2 all indicate that the trumpet sound relates to God’s judgment.

Goldsworthy then connects the trumpet of Israel’s priest to Christ and his coming for judgment and salvation. He also explains how Christ fulfilled God’s judgment and salvation. In Revelation, the trumpet sound signifies God’s judgment and salvation. He says, “When the trumpet will sound, we will be changed.”¹¹³ The last trumpet will sound to call God’s people. As the Israelites gathered with the sound of the trumpet when the trumpet blew on the Day of the Lord, so too God’s people will gather and see God’s judgment and salvation. Thus, Goldsworthy moves the text to Christ through the significance of the trumpet sound.

¹¹²Graeme Goldsworthy, “The Trumpet Shall Sound” (a sermon delivered at Moore Theological College, Australia, October 3, 1997), *Moore Library Resource*, accessed November 26, 2012, http://myrrh.library.moore.edu.au/handle/10248/806/browse?order=ASC&rpp=20&sort_by=-1&value=Goldsworthy%2C+Graeme+L.&etal=-1&offset=20&type=author.

¹¹³Goldsworthy, “The Trumpet Shall Sound.”

In terms of application, Goldsworthy does not give specific application for the audience to exercise in their lives. His sermon ends by introducing the gospel of Jesus Christ because his main purpose is to link the text to Christ, who is man's savior. This fits his sermon's purpose, namely that the audience needs to listen to the gospel every Sunday.

Numbers 11

In a sermon on Numbers 11:1-16 entitled "The Bread of Life," Goldsworthy states that Israel complains about lacking meat rather than trusting in God.¹¹⁴ This story shows Israel's lack of faith, which the last Adam overcame, and God's judgment. This story also shows that trust in the Lord brings safety because of God's faithfulness to his covenant.

The theme of the sermon is that Jesus is the last Adam who gives eternal life. Goldsworthy connects the manna, which the Israelites ate in the wilderness, to the bread provided by Jesus in the wilderness. First, Goldsworthy explains the origin of the manna in Exodus, which shows God's provision. All Israelites praised God, but they turned to complain against Moses and God. In Deuteronomy, Moses reminded the Israelites of their parents' rebellion and said that man does not live by bread alone, but lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord (Deut 8:3).

Citing Deuteronomy 8:3, Goldsworthy then connects this story with Jesus, who is the son of God, true Israel, and the last Adam. Jesus enters into the wilderness, is tempted, but trusts in God. Jesus also fed people in the wilderness and introduced himself by saying, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:48). Goldsworthy then encourages his audience to look forward to Jesus (1 Cor 10).

¹¹⁴Graeme Goldsworthy, "The Bread of Life" (a sermon delivered at Moore Theological College, Australia, October 10, 1997), *Moore Library Resource*, accessed November 26, 2012, http://myrrh.library.moore.edu.au/handle/10248/806/browse?order=ASC&rpp=20&sort_by=-1&value=Goldsworthy%2C+Graeme+L.&etal=-1&offset=0&type=author.

For application, Goldsworthy reminds pastors of their aims of study, sermon preparation, and ministry by saying that they might minister to people with the bread of life. He encourages them to bring the bread of life to God's people and feed them by asking Christ into their hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

1 Kings

Goldsworthy often delivers Christ-centered messages in the chapel at Moore Theological College. In 2000, he delivered several sermons from 1 Kings: "Solomon's Wisdom and the Temple" from 1 Kings 5-6 and "The Dedication of the Temple and Solomon's Prayer" from 1 Kings 8.¹¹⁵ He again preached four Christ-centered messages from 1 Kings in 2004 at Hunter Gospel Ministries Preaching Conference: "Solomon and Wisdom" from 1 King 3-4, "Solomon and Temple" from 1 King 5-7, "Solomon's Prayer" from 1 Kings 8, and "Blessing to the Nations" from 1 Kings.¹¹⁶

Despite the different sermon texts, an overarching theme and repeated message runs throughout his sermons on 1 Kings. God's covenant with Abraham reached its climax with Solomon and was fulfilled by Jesus Christ. In his sermons on 1 Kings 5-6 in

¹¹⁵Graeme Goldsworthy, "Solomon's Wisdom and the Temple" (a sermon delivered at Moore Theological College, Australia, August 15, 2000), *Moore Library Resource*, accessed November 26, 2012, http://myrrh.library.moore.edu.au/handle/10248/806/browse?order=ASC&rpp=20&sort_by=-1&value=Goldsworthy%2C+Graeme+L.&etal=-1&offset=20&type=author; idem, "The Dedication of the Temple and Solomon's Prayer" (a sermon delivered at Moore Theological College, Australia, August 22, 2000), *Moore Library Resource*, accessed November 26, 2012, <http://myrrh.library.moore.edu.au/handle/10248/806/browse?value=Goldsworthy%2C+Graeme+L.&type=author>.

¹¹⁶Graeme Goldsworthy, "Solomon and Wisdom" (a sermon delivered at Hunter Gospel Ministries Preaching Conference, Australia, September 2, 2004), *Christian Library Resource*, accessed November 26, 2012, <http://www.christianlibrary.org.au/audio/goldsworthy.html>; idem, "Solomon and Temple" (a sermon delivered at Hunter Gospel Ministries Preaching Conference, Australia, September 2, 2004), *Christian Library Resource*, accessed November 26, 2012, <http://www.christianlibrary.org.au/audio/goldsworthy.html>; idem, "Solomon's Prayer" (a sermon delivered at Hunter Gospel Ministries Preaching Conference, Australia, September 2, 2004), *Christian Library Resource*, accessed November 26, 2012, <http://www.christianlibrary.org.au/audio/goldsworthy.html>; and idem, "Blessings to the Nations" (a sermon delivered at Hunter Gospel Ministries Preaching Conference, Australia, September 2, 2004), *Christian Library Resource*, accessed November 26, 2012, <http://www.christianlibrary.org.au/audio/goldsworthy.html>.

2000 and 1 Kings 5-7 in 2004, Goldsworthy argues that king Solomon intended to build the temple for God's name and that the building of the temple is central to Solomon's wisdom.

Goldsworthy expounds on God's covenant with Abraham from Genesis 12. In Exodus, God dwelled among the Israelites through the tabernacle. In Deuteronomy 16, the temple is the place where God dwells. God gave wisdom to king Solomon and the craftsmen, who built the tabernacle in the wilderness and who built the temple in Solomon's era. Thus, building the temple of God is closely related to God's wisdom that king Solomon had.

However, this temple had been destroyed and restored again and again. Jesus cleansed the temple and mentioned the destruction of the temple and that he would restore it (John 2:19). This is another temple restored by Christ's fulfillment of every requirement of the covenant of the law. Because of Christ's crucifixion, sinners can be made righteous. This great obedient servant Jesus has become the new temple for believers; he was born on earth and dwelled among men. Because Christ fulfilled the requirement of God's covenant, believers can keep his covenant perfectly, and they are accepted by God. Accordingly, Goldsworthy proclaims the gospel to his audience so that they can keep God's covenant.

In a sermon from 1 Kings 8 entitled "The Dedication of the Temple and Solomon's Prayer," Goldsworthy states that the Lord comes to the temple and there is rejoicing.¹¹⁷ When the tabernacle was built in the wilderness, the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle (Exod 40:34). When the temple was built, the glory of the Lord filled the temple (1 Kgs 8:11).

Goldsworthy then connects the temple and Solomon's prayer to Christ. On the last day, the temple of God would be raised in the resurrection. In Hebrews 7, there is the

¹¹⁷Goldsworthy, "The Dedication of the Temple and Solomon's Prayer."

new Temple, Jesus Christ. In addition, Solomon is a kingly figure and the royal wise man. Goldsworthy then fully explains what Christ has done for sinners.

Overall, while Solomon built the temple with his wisdom, Christ, as Solomon's antitype, fulfilled God's covenant with his wisdom and salvation.¹¹⁸ Solomon's wisdom alludes to and relates to Christ's wisdom to accomplish God's covenant. In every sermon from 1 Kings, Goldsworthy connects the text to Christ by showing that God's covenant is fulfilled by Christ's wisdom and salvation.¹¹⁹

Goldsworthy's sermons reiterate his biblical theology from the pulpit. Furthermore, his sermon entitled "Blessings to the Nations" from 1 Kings again deals with God's covenant fulfilled by Christ and his wisdom. Such repetition of biblical theology demonstrates that despite preaching from different texts out of 1 Kings, the sermon messages are the same—God's covenant is fulfilled by Christ.

In terms of application, Goldsworthy usually does not give a specific application. He instead insists that the audience listen to the gospel, the purpose of his sermons. In this respect, his sermons meet his goal, which is to preach Christ from every text on every Sunday.

Analysis and Assessment of the Homiletics of Goldsworthy's Gospel-Centered Preaching

Preaching Text

The preaching text range of Goldsworthy is very different from other advocates of Christ-centered preaching. The basic preaching text for Goldsworthy is a means to connect the text to Christ and the gospel.¹²⁰ In reality, the range of preaching

¹¹⁸Graeme Goldsworthy, "Wisdom and Its Literature in Biblical-Theological Context," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 15, no. 3 (2011): 47. Goldsworthy also argues that "1 Kings 3-10 represents the high point in wisdom theology in relation to the covenant promises of God" (ibid.).

¹¹⁹For instance, Christ's incarnation completed God's covenant, and Christ's wisdom surpassed Solomon's wisdom.

¹²⁰Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of*

texts in Goldsworthy's sermons varies from several verses to the entire book.¹²¹

Goldsworthy's dependence on biblical theology is noticeable when he selects his text. Put differently, Goldsworthy selects a passage to preach the gospel, moves from the gospel to the text, and interprets the text by the gospel.

Goldsworthy, for instance, chose to preach the entire book of Song of Solomon in one sermon. He explains, "The theme is timeless, and from the perspective of biblical theology the question is how it testifies to Christ."¹²² Genesis 6-9 is another example. Goldsworthy writes, "[Gen 6-9 shows] how God preserved a people for himself in a direct line to Abraham, and thus to David and to Christ," which is biblical theology.¹²³ In addition, he selected 1 Kings for a sermon entitled "Blessing to the nations." The sermon's message is just the gospel rather than an exposition of and application of 1 Kings. His gospel-centered sermons are consistent with his theological convictions: "[E]xpository, biblical preaching is always an exposition of the gospel and its implications."¹²⁴ Thus, Goldsworthy's selection of a text shows his passion to preach Christ and the gospel.

Christ-Centeredness

Christ-centeredness in Goldsworthy's sermons is obvious. His *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology* shows how Christ is the center in the Bible and in his sermons. Goldsworthy divides biblical history into three stages: Abraham to David, David to Jesus, and Jesus to New Creation.¹²⁵ Every text in each stage looks forward to Jesus Christ.

Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 121.

¹²¹Ibid., 160-63, 172-79, 188-90, 215-18, 238-43.

¹²²Ibid., 191.

¹²³Ibid., 144.

¹²⁴Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 144.

¹²⁵Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundation and*

Since he believes that persons, events, and institutions should be read in typological structure and finally connected to Christ, the Old Testament text is Christ-centered.¹²⁶

In his sermons from Numbers, Goldsworthy emphasizes that Christ will bring in the final victory and that Christ is the last Adam who will bring eternal life to sinners on the Last Day. Furthermore, in his sermons from 1 Kings, Goldsworthy diligently links Solomon, the temple, and his wisdom to Christ and his wisdom to fulfill God's covenant. Indeed, Goldsworthy's sermons always end up pointing to Christ. His message is simply biblical theology and the gospel. Christ is the center of Goldsworthy's sermons.

But is Goldsworthy's Christ-centeredness derived from the meaning of the text or his gospel-focused intention? Kuruvilla warns against Goldsworthy's approach to Christ-centered preaching:

[S]eeing a text in the wider historical context of the canon . . . is not the same as seeing how a particular pericope makes a specific transhistorical demand of its reader Big canonical pictures tend to miss the small pericopal miniatures. And it is these miniatures . . . that are essential for the week by week life-changing transactions of homiletics.¹²⁷

In order to preach Christ while also being faithful to the meaning of the text, preachers should know whether or not the text is Christ-centered. Otherwise, Christ-centeredness becomes a forced interpretative method and ignores the original author's intended meaning.

One Message in Christ

Goldsworthy is concerned about the danger of predictability and sameness in Christ-centered preaching.¹²⁸ Unfortunately, his concern is realized in his sermons. As

Principles (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 26.

¹²⁶Ibid., 185.

¹²⁷Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 114.

¹²⁸Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 55.

mentioned above, for Goldsworthy, the gospel is everything in interpreting the text; preaching exists only to explain the gospel. His messages are an expression of his biblical theology. Accordingly, his audience has an opportunity to listen to the gospel every Sunday; his sermons seem to have a repeated similar message. His sermons from 1 Kings, for instance, clearly show this similarity. His sermon on 1 Kings 3-4 entitled “Solomon and his wisdom” and his sermon on 1 Kings 5-7 entitled “Solomon and Temple” have the same message regarding Christ’s wisdom, which fulfilled God’s covenant. In his sermon entitled “Aim of Sermons on the Old Testament,” Goldsworthy states that the purpose of preaching the Old Testament is to demonstrate the unity of the two testaments through Christ’s salvation.¹²⁹

By preaching Christ from every text Goldsworthy sometimes neglects the pastoral context. Goldsworthy needs to heed Doriani’s criticism of redemptive-historical preaching: “The zeal to trace each passage to its culmination in Christ can obliterate the distinctiveness of particular passages. At worst, RHP [Redemptive-historical preaching] repeats one sermon, albeit a very good one, every week.”¹³⁰ If the message is faithful to the text, predictability may not be a great flaw. However, if preachers ignore the particular message from the text in order to preach Christ, such textual distortion is a problem.

Application

Goldsworthy warns against giving ethical instruction to the audience: “The message of the Old Testament is too easily reduced to the imitation of godly example and

¹²⁹Graeme Goldsworthy, “Aim of Sermons on the Old Testament” (a sermon delivered at Hunter Gospel Ministries Preaching Conference, Australia, September 2, 2004), *Christian Library Resource*, accessed November 26, 2012, <http://www.christianlibrary.org.au/audio/goldsworthy.html>.

¹³⁰Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work*, 296.

the avoidance of the ungodly example.”¹³¹ He argues that the legitimate application of the text is the gospel:

[T]he application of the meaning of any text must proceed theologically via application it has to Christ . . . [A]ny attempt to relate a text directly to us or our contemporary hearers without inquiring into its primary relationship to Christ is fraught with danger. The only thing that controls the matter of the relationship of the text to us is its prior relationship to Christ.¹³²

Elsewhere Goldsworthy explains his understanding of the relationship between exegesis and application:

The nature of the sermon is to apply the word of God to the wills of the hearers with a view to moving them to want to conform to that word. Exegesis is an important aspect of the preparation of any sermon, but exegesis is not the sermon. Exegesis seeks to understand what the text means in its own immediate context. A sermon must move from the meaning of the text to the legitimate application of that meaning to our contemporary context in the light of the gospel.¹³³

Accordingly, Goldsworthy distinguishes application from exegesis and offers the gospel as an application. His approach to application is exactly that which Doriani critiques in some redemptive-historical preaching. Doriani argues, regarding the application of redemptive-historical preaching, that

some advocates of RHP are wary of any specific application, fearing that calls to change behavior will usurp the Spirit’s role in application and drift into anthropocentric moralism. Zeal to avoid moralistic readings of narrative leads some to refuse all moral uses of narratives. But narratives edify too. Indicatives precede imperatives, but there *are* imperatives.¹³⁴

Accordingly, Doriani believes that the narrative text has its unique application for the contemporary audience. An application consists of more than merely introducing Jesus and the gospel. As Goldsworthy argues, just imitating godly examples is a danger of promoting works righteousness. Goldsworthy, however, should listen to Doriani’s advice

¹³¹Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 5.

¹³²Ibid., 113. Goldsworthy also states that the application is only achieved “in terms of the gospel.” Ibid., 125.

¹³³Ibid., 121.

¹³⁴Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work*, 296, emphasis in original.

that the Bible has many imperatives that the audience should put into practice in their lives.

Bryan Chapell and a Homiletics of Christ-Centered Preaching

Chapell delivers his Christ-centered sermons via four steps. First, Chapell introduces one's need for Christ, showing the fallen condition of sinners. Second, he explains the meaning of the text. Third, he shows God's grace, and fourth, he appreciates how Christ fulfills God's grace. Among them, the fallen condition focus (FCF) is the main key for his audience. Fallen condition focus not only shows one's need of Christ, but it also demonstrates how Christ fulfills that need. Thus, Chapell's sermons can be explored using four questions. First, what is the sermon's main point? Second, how does Chapell explain the meaning of the text? Third, how does Christ fulfill the need introduced by FCF? Fourth, what is the application for FCF? Chapell regularly preaches and publishes his sermons; so, his published sermons preached on Old Testament texts, which contain some issues of Christ-centered preaching, will show how he preaches Christ.

Judges 6-8

Chapell's Christ-centered message entitled "Use for the Useless" from Judges 6-8 is about how God uses the useless for his glory.¹³⁵ The FCF introduced by Chapell is that like Gideon, Christians are useless. Gideon had fears, frailties, and flaws. Gideon was a coward and a son of an idol worshiper. He was not leadership material. God, however, chose and used the useless Gideon to save the Israelites for his glory.

In this message, by way of illustration, Chapell mentions how a single nurse cared for the Chinese leader Jiang Zemin "in the name of Jesus," which resulted in the

¹³⁵Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Sermons: Models of Redemptive Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 41-54.

significant growth of Christianity in China.¹³⁶ Just as God used Gideon and the single nurse who were “useless,” God also uses believers for his glory. Chapell proclaims, “Though fears, frailties, and flaws may characterize where you have been, they need not characterize where you are going.”¹³⁷ Chapell repeats the sermon’s main point several times: “God uses the useless for his glory.”

Chapell, however, does not mention how Christ fulfills God’s using of the useless. Chapell clearly shows an FCF that believers are the useless, but he does not explain how Christ can be a biblical solution for this FCF. In other words, Chapell does not use his context disclosure, which may be predictive of, preparatory for, reflective of, or resultant of the work of Christ in order to find a connection to Christ in this Christ-silent text. This sermon is all about God and his grace; so it is theocentric rather than Christ-centered.

Numbers 20:1-13

In Chapell’s Christ-centered sermon entitled “A First Repenter” from Numbers 20:1-13, the FCF is that leaders of God’s people cannot obey God and be God at the same time.¹³⁸ Christian leaders should worship God, but can be easily tempted to worship themselves. That is the reason why Moses could not enter the Promised Land. As Chapell expounds, Moses was the role model of godly leaders, but, because of anger, he did not uphold God’s holiness before the Israelites. Moses failed to appreciate God’s authority before the people. So the FCF shows that because of their failure, Israel and Moses would face God’s judgment. Despite Moses’ failure, however, God provided his people with water. God also provided for Moses. Moses led Israel, wrote their history, and met Jesus

¹³⁶Chapell, *Christ-Centered Sermons*, 49.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, 54.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, 113.

on the Mount of Transfiguration, despite his sin.¹³⁹ This demonstrates God’s grace in working with his flawed leader.

Chapell then connects God’s provision and grace to Christ, who was the “only [true] Redeemer of Israel” found in the books of Moses.¹⁴⁰ Chapell does not explicitly explain how he connects this text to Christ by contextual disclosure, but he seems to use a “preparatory” method whereby he prepares the people of God to understand aspects of the person and work of Christ for God’s grace.¹⁴¹ Otherwise, Chapell’s second step of interpreting the text in the broader context provides a connection to Christ. As God provided for Israel and Moses, God too blesses believers by his grace in Christ. And as Moses repented of his sin, Chapell asks his audience to repent of their sins and to enjoy God’s grace in Christ.¹⁴²

Daniel 1

In his Christ-centered sermon entitled “The Undefined” from Daniel 1, the FCF is that there are risks to holiness.¹⁴³ Holiness in the world is risky business and should not be minimized. Daniel and his friends risked not eating the king’s food that was offered to them. By way of illustration, Chapell mentions the experience of John McCain in the Vietnam War. Chapell reminds believers that, in the real world, “doing the right thing is no guarantee of good results.”¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹According to Chapell, the fact that God used Moses continuously even after his sin shows that Moses confessed his sin, and God restored him to lead Israel. Chapell, *Christ-Centered Sermons*, 125.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

¹⁴¹Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 284.

¹⁴²Chapell, *Christ-Centered Sermons*, 125-26.

¹⁴³Bryan Chapell, *The Gospel according to Daniel: A Christ-Centered Approach* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 15.

¹⁴⁴Chapell, *The Gospel according to Daniel*, 17.

Despite risk, however, there are biblical reasons for Christians to be holy. God is not abandoning them but preparing them for greater work in the future. Daniel's efforts to avoid defiling himself with idolatry demonstrates how Christians can be holy through God's grace. God prepares and protects his people who want to be holy in the world.¹⁴⁵ In addition, God rewards his people with personal welfare and enables them to witness to others.¹⁴⁶ When God protected Daniel, He reminded Israel of his grace and faithfulness.

Chapell then argues that Christ came through God's preserving Daniel and Israel.¹⁴⁷ In other words, God saved not only Daniel, but also Israel by Daniel in order to send Jesus Christ to save us. Chapell here uses a preparatory method that prepares the people of God to understand aspects of the person and work of Christ. Chapell then concludes his message with a practical application, saying, "We know the risks, but we also know the eternal rewards of a holy purpose."¹⁴⁸ Since Christians strive to be holy in the midst of an unholy world, they may face suffering, but they can look to Christ's promise of eternal rewards.

Daniel 4

The Christ-centered message entitled "Me with You" from Daniel 4 shows God's grace toward those who stand against him. The FCF is the need for those who have hard hearts. The central theme is that God's grace comes upon those who have failed to stand with him in the past.¹⁴⁹ The story is about king Nebuchadnezzar, who experienced God's work in his life but refused to worship him. So God taught the king that he was in

¹⁴⁵Chapell, *The Gospel according to Daniel*, 19-22.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., 22-25.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., 25.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., 26.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., 71-72.

charge. God controls his creation with grace and love. No one can guarantee earthly success by one's efforts.

Chapell then connects the failure and recovery of the king to Christ with a brief mention of Christ's redemption. King Nebuchadnezzar received God's grace and love without his own efforts. Indeed, good works "diminish the necessity of the cross and the redeeming love of the Savior."¹⁵⁰ In this sermon, Chapell does not use his contextual disclosure to find a connection to Christ, but he reminds his audience that good works obviate the need of Christ and his work on the cross.

Then Chapell returns to God's grace by saying that God's love is greater than any sin. God changes believers no matter how great their sin and no matter how hard their heart.¹⁵¹ The fact that God changed the heart of king Nebuchadnezzar emphasizes that Christians should never "give up believing in the power of God's grace to soften a hard heart."¹⁵² His sermon ends up with a story about a stubborn old man who finally confesses faith in Jesus Christ on the eve of his death. God's grace truly comes even to those who stand against God.

Psalm 139:11-16

Chapell's message entitled "God's Knitting" from Psalm 139:11-16 speaks of the value of life in the womb. Chapell addressed this message to the Missouri Pro-Life community. The FCF concerns abortion, which is practiced not only by the secular world, but also by Christians. Chapell proclaims what the church must say about abortion in two ways: first, the unborn child is "a work of God" and, second, the unborn child is "a wonder of God."¹⁵³ The child in the womb is made by God, seen by God, and known by

¹⁵⁰Chapell, *The Gospel according to Daniel*, 84.

¹⁵¹Ibid., 85-86.

¹⁵²Ibid., 88.

¹⁵³Bryan Chapell, "God's Knitting," in *The Hardest Sermons You'll Ever Have to Preach*, ed.

God. In addition, the psalmist proclaims, “I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps 139:14).

Chapell gives specific instructions to prevent abortions. First, the church must teach the truth about each child. The babe in the womb is a wonder of God, not an option. Second, the church must preach grace. All human beings are sinners. Chapell says, “For we are all fallen creatures in a fallen world, and if we must discard or kill what does not please us, then we will find there is no value in the old, the infirm, the incapable, or in our own imperfect lives.”¹⁵⁴ God’s grace teaches that the child in the womb is loved by him. Third, the church must demonstrate God’s love toward abortionists by identifying their sin and warning them of judgment. Love does not mean silence in the face of evil: “To warn of sin’s consequences and still to love is our calling, and it is the power of the gospel against the greatest of evils.”¹⁵⁵ Fourth, Chapell encourages Christians to pray for victory over the actions of abortionists. Lastly, he explains the power of prayer. These instructions are his practical application against abortion. However, he does not show how he connects Psalm 139:11-16 to Christ.

Analysis and Assessment of the Homiletics of Chapell’s Christ-Centered Preaching

In accordance with the stated goal of *Christ-Centered Preaching*, Chapell diligently finds and applies “the truths of a specific biblical passage” in his sermons.¹⁵⁶ His redemptive-historical interpretation and FCF enable Chapell to preach Christ while preaching expository sermons. To accomplish this goal, Chapell interprets the text in its historical context and in God’s total redemptive history and discloses its FCF.

Bryan Chapell (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 25-26.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., 31.

¹⁵⁵Ibid., 32.

¹⁵⁶Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 30.

The FCF in Christ-centered sermons reflects a Christian's need and helps him or her find biblical solutions in Christ. In Chapell's sermons, he opens with his FCF and closes by showing how Christ is the biblical solution. Preachers should introduce the need of the audience based on the FCF and provide the biblical solution, which is what Christ has done for sinners.¹⁵⁷ The FCF plays a significant role in interpreting the text; Chapell argues that without the FCF, one cannot even understand the text.¹⁵⁸ Thus, the FCF is key to understanding the need of the characters in the text and to connect the text to Christ as the biblical solution. The FCF is the most important feature of Chapell's Christ-centered approach to preaching. Thus, to evaluate Chapell's sermons, the FCF is a good starting point. In what follows, I identify the strengths and weaknesses of his approach.

Fallen Condition Focus (FCF)

Chapell explains that a Christ-centered message discloses God's redeeming nature, which is accomplished in Christ.¹⁵⁹ God discloses the fallen condition of sinners and how the biblical solution is Christ. This idea is the core concept behind Chapell's Christ-centered sermons. Moreover, the FCF connects the two testaments. Chapell draws an analogical parallel between people in the text and his contemporary audience—both are in a fallen condition and need God's grace. The Old Testament also speaks to the contemporary audience about their FCF.¹⁶⁰ For instance, in the sermon on Judges 6-8, Chapell identifies that not only does Gideon have fears, frailties, and flaws, but Christians

¹⁵⁷Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 50-51.

¹⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 50-51.

today do as well.¹⁶¹ In his sermon on Daniel 4, Chapell finds that like king Nebuchadnezzar, believers today also have hard hearts and need God's grace.¹⁶²

Elsewhere Chapell asserts that every preaching passage has many FCFs rather than *the* FCF:

A preacher must be able to demonstrate that the text addresses the FCF as it is formulated for this particular sermon, not that this sermon's phrasing of the FCF is the only way of reflecting on this text. The truth of the text does not vary, but the significance of that truth can vary greatly and be stated in many different ways that are appropriate for difficult situations.¹⁶³

In this argument, Chapell understands that the FCF, with its relation to Christ, is more a matter of significance and application than of interpreting the meaning of the text.

Chapell argues that the FCF "reveals the Spirit's own purpose for the passage, and we should not presume to preach unless we have identified his will for his Word."¹⁶⁴ Accordingly, the FCF reveals the divine Author's intent as well as the human author's intent. If the FCF is related to the main idea of the text, then Christ becomes the center of the sermon. Chapell argues that even if preachers do not specifically mention Jesus Christ and his work in a sermon that sermon can still be considered Christ-centered.¹⁶⁵ As he mentions, some of his sermons do not present Christ as the biblical solution for the FCF, but those sermons are theocentric rather than Christocentric.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶¹Chapell, *Christ-Centered Sermons*, 41-54.

¹⁶²Chapell, *The Gospel according to Daniel*, 71-89.

¹⁶³Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 52.

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 303.

¹⁶⁶See his sermons from Judges 6-8, Dan 4, and Ps 139. These sermons are not Christocentric, but theocentric.

Meaning of the Text and Christ-Centeredness

The subtitle, *Redeeming the Expository Sermon in Christ-Centered Preaching*, shows Chapell's main focus. His interest in expository preaching is seen in his interpretation of the text and in its explanation of his sermons. It is true that Chapell pays attention to the meaning of the text and spends time explaining it in the pulpit. His efforts to redeem the expository sermon are praiseworthy.

His definition of expository preaching is also expanded to include preaching Christ from every text. As mentioned above, Chapell utilizes the FCF to find the need of sinners and then presents Christ as the biblical solution. His pastoral concern also requires that the audience encounter Christ and become increasingly sanctified. However, Christ often appears as an illustration only, instead of the biblical solution for the FCF. Chapell argues that every expository sermon can be Christ-centered even though Christ is not mentioned. However, some of his sermons have neither a Christocentric theme nor a Christ-centered connection, causing one to wonder how such sermons can be called Christ-centered.

In Judges 6-8, for instance, Chapell states that the FCF is that like Gideon, we are useless.¹⁶⁷ Just as God uses the useless Gideon for his purpose, God uses believers today for his purpose. Chapell then connects this text to Christ by introducing an illustration. A single nurse once cared for a little boy "in the name of Jesus."¹⁶⁸ The single nurse had no power, but God used her for his glory. Chapell, however, does not explain explicitly why Christ is the biblical solution for the FCF. He would most likely say that the way to connect this text to Christ reflective of contextual disclosure.¹⁶⁹ God

¹⁶⁷Chapell, *Christ-Centered Sermons*, 41-54.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., 49. This is the only mention of Jesus in this sermon.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., 284-86.

graciously used a useless Gideon. Even though God's redemption assumes Christ's fulfillment of God's grace, the FCF requires Christ and his work as the biblical solution. However, Chapell does not explain how Christ can be the biblical solution for that FCF. Thus, this sermon is theocentric rather than Christocentric.

For another example, in Daniel 4, the FCF is about those who stand against God. God changed Nebuchadnezzar's hard heart by his grace and love. Chapell, however, does not explain the prediction, preparation, reflection, or result of the work of Christ. He does not demonstrate explicitly how Christ fulfilled God's grace and love to change hard hearts. Chapell mentions only that good works do not guarantee God's love, but "diminish the necessity of the cross and the redeeming love of the Savior."¹⁷⁰ The majority of the sermon is about how God's love and grace changed Nebuchadnezzar's stubborn heart on his timetable. So Christ is not the biblical solution for that FCF. Though he does not mention Christ, he sufficiently shows how God's grace and love changes the hard heart. In this sense, his sermon is God-centered, not Christ-centered.

Another sermon of Chapell's, using Psalm 139:11-16 as the text, is also theocentric.¹⁷¹ The whole sermon is about God's creation of the unborn child and the responsibilities of the church against abortion. The sermon's main idea is the practical and spiritual means by which the church can prevent abortion.

In summary, the FCFs in Chapell's sermons introduce the needs of the audience and how those needs should be related to Christ, who is the biblical solution. In reality, however, Christ is not always given as the biblical solution for the FCF. In some sermons, Christ is merely an illustration, and Christ-centeredness is lacking. In addition, it is not shown clearly how Chapell finds a connection to Christ through his contextual disclosure in Christ-silent texts. Thus, the question can be raised "Isn't it enough to

¹⁷⁰Chapell, *The Gospel according to Daniel*, 84.

¹⁷¹Chapell, "God's Knitting," 21-36.

preach God's grace for his people without mention of the Messiah's coming?" It may be enough to say that despite man's fallen condition, God's grace will restore man and use him for his glory.

Application

Unlike other advocates, Chapell's Christ-centered preaching is application-focused. Chapell states, "The preacher who identifies a passage's FCF for a congregation automatically moves the people to consider the Bible's solutions and instructions for contemporary life. Therefore, biblical preaching that brings an FCF to the surface also recognizes the need for application."¹⁷²

Since the only remedy for the FCF is what Christ has done for sinners, application is closely related to Christ. Thus, Jesus is the center of his application. Chapell writes, "Application makes Jesus the source and the objective of a sermon's exhortation as well as the focus of its explanation."¹⁷³ Application focusing on Christ makes the sermon Christ-centered because Christ is the only answer for the FCF.

In addition, application leads the audience to encounter Christ who is their Savior. Chapell continues, "Application that addresses an FCF clearly rooted in the textual situation necessarily directs people to the presence and power of the Savior as they seek to serve him."¹⁷⁴ Elsewhere Chapell states that the goal of the preacher should be "to show how each text manifests God's grace in order to prepare and enable his people to embrace the hope provided by Christ."¹⁷⁵ By this, he means that application should lead the audience to acknowledge the biblical solution for all their needs is Christ.

¹⁷²Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 53.

¹⁷³Ibid., 54.

¹⁷⁴Ibid.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., 54.

Thus, for Chapell, application enables the audience to encounter Christ, who is the biblical solution for the FCF, in order that they may enjoy God's grace.

Despite his emphasis on application, Chapell's sermons also face criticism on this front. Chapell gives specific applications such as ethical instructions to his audience. This application is necessary, but it often does not make Jesus the source and the objective of his sermon's exhortation as some Christ-centered preaching requires. In other words, he fails to present Christ as the biblical solution for every FCF. Chapell sometimes explains God's grace and love without mentioning what Christ has done for sinners. For instance, in "God's Knitting" (Ps 139:11-16), Chapell gives some specific instructions as applications. The church has to speak out about abortion. The church must teach that the unborn child is a wonder of God. She must also preach against abortion, that is, to teach the truth about a child, to preach God's grace, to demonstrate love, and to exercise spiritual power in prayer.¹⁷⁶ These instructions would seem to be good application without a forced reference to Christ. So this sermon is about God's creation of the unborn child and the specific responsibilities of the church to fight against abortion. This sermon is theocentric and has good practical application, but is not Christ-centered.

Further, application is not only about Christ as the biblical solution, but it is also about the ethical commands for Christians to follow as God's people. Kuruvilla states, "Scripture is more than just a witness to the fulfillment of messianic promises; there are ethical demands therein as well that must be brought to bear upon the lives of God's people."¹⁷⁷ Chapell would agree with Kuruvilla, but if Chapell adheres to Christ-centered preaching in every text and, at the same time, aims to give a specific ethical application, he should show how Christ is the biblical solution for the FCF and explain

¹⁷⁶Chapell, "God's Knitting," 21-36.

¹⁷⁷Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 244.

that following ethical commands is not graceless, but the outworking of a grace-driven life.

Conclusion

Exploring the sermons of Christ-centered preachers reveals their homiletical characteristics in positive and negative ways. First, Christ-centered sermons diligently present Christ from every text. Such passionate sermons encourage one's audience to read the Old Testament as Christian Scripture. Greidanus finds reason to preach Christ from the Old Testament—the relationship between the two testaments. The Old Testament, writes Greidanus, is the Christian canon and testifies to Christ.¹⁷⁸ All proponents of Christ-centered preaching agree with Greidanus.¹⁷⁹ So they claim that because the Old Testament is the Christian canon, preaching Christ from the Old Testament is not an option, but a must. Accordingly, Christ-centered preaching suggests some possible ways to preach Christ from the Old Testament.

Second, proponents of Christ-centered preaching pay attention to God's redemption and grace. By emphasizing God's grace in the biblical figures, Christ-centered preaching avoids the danger of moralism, which demands the audience simply try to work hard, and enables the audience to see the text as a whole rather than focus merely on an individual's behavior. Accordingly, Christ-centered preaching attempts to overcome the mistake of some exemplary preaching to promote works righteousness.

Third, because of Christ-centered preaching, the audience has an opportunity to listen to the gospel. This is a simple statement, but practically significant. As mentioned above, the sermonic goal of Goldsworthy is to preach the gospel on every

¹⁷⁸Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 25-32.

¹⁷⁹Clowney, Goldsworthy, and Chapell interpret the Old Testament in God's total redemptive history, which finds an inner relationship between the two testaments in Christ. Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 269-95; Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 9-62; Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 31-45.

Sunday.¹⁸⁰ The gospel is the most significant truth in Christianity. Because of the gospel, sinners come to church to worship God. Accordingly, Christ-centered preaching demonstrates how to preach Christ and the gospel and challenges preachers to find hermeneutical and homiletical ways to preach Christ and the gospel from the Bible. These positive contributions of Christ-centered preaching are well recognized and should be praiseworthy.

Nevertheless, because Christ-centered preaching seeks to preach Christ from *every text*, it can be homiletically problematic. First, Christ-centered hermeneutics, which attempts to find a connection to Christ in every text, puts preachers under considerable pressure to neglect or distort the meaning of the text to present Christ in their sermons. Kuruvilla criticizes the biblical theology of Greidanus and Clowney:

The potential problem with this approach [Greidanus' Christocentric interpretation] is that the specific thrusts of individual OT texts may get neglected in the rush to correlate the OT with the NT, making the value of preaching from the OT doubtful, at best. For example, when preaching the seventh commandment of the Decalogue that prohibits adultery, Clowney wants the "biblically grounded preacher" to connect this command with Jesus' statement on adultery and, even further, his commandment to love. "Love for neighbor flows from love of God, and love for God is our response to His love for us," which leads Clowney to the cross: "Only at the cross do we know the real meaning of love—of God's redeeming love." But one does not need the seventh commandment to arrive at this NT summit.¹⁸¹

This mirrors Warren's critique of Greidanus' Christocentric interpretation and homiletics.¹⁸² As Kuruvilla mentions, Christ-centered preaching sacrifices the historical meaning and context of the text. Kuruvilla continues, "[B]ig canonical pictures tend to miss the small pericopal miniatures. And it is these miniatures (e.g. the theology of the individual pericopes) that are essential for the week by week life-changing transactions of

¹⁸⁰Goldsworthy, "The Pastor as Biblical Theologian," 126-27.

¹⁸¹Goldsworthy, "The Pastor as Biblical Theologian," 239. See also Edmund Clowney, "Preaching Christ from All the Scripture," in *The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Samuel T. Logan, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1986), 183-84.

¹⁸²Warren, "A Review of *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, by Sidney Greidanus," 33.

homiletics.”¹⁸³ It is fair to say that for the Christ-silent texts in the Old Testament it is enough for preachers to identify the text’s meaning and specific application without Christ-centeredness.

Second, even proponents of Christ-centered preaching criticize the lack of application in redemptive-historical preaching. The reason is that Christ-centered sermons are homiletical products of Christ-centered hermeneutics. Because Christ-centered hermeneutics pay much attention to God’s redemption and grace, some homileticians overlook ethical instruction as moral examples for believers. With the exception of some of Chapell’s sermons, the Christ-centered preachers studied above—Clowney, Greidanus, Goldsworthy, and Chapell—often fail to give specific and practical applications derived from the meaning of the text.

Jason Hood points out that because of the redemptive-historical emphasis in every text, Christ-centered preaching disavows that ethical instruction plays a significant role in expository preaching.¹⁸⁴ He claims, “The depth of the NT’s interest in Christian moral formation requires preachers and teachers to engage such material frequently and in detail. Claims that we only teach and preach Christ and that every sermon must be focused squarely on Christ are misguided.”¹⁸⁵

Kuruvilla agrees with Hood, asserting that the New Testament employs Old Testament exemplars and that every biblical genre gives ethical instruction.¹⁸⁶ Jesus, for instance, frequently challenges his audience to imitate characters such as the wise builder

¹⁸³Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 114.

¹⁸⁴Jason Hood, “Christ-Centered Interpretation Only? Moral Instruction from Scripture’s Self-Interpretation as Caveat and Guide,” *Scottish Bulletin Evangelical Theology* 27 (2009): 58. See also Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 289-95; Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 33-34; Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 115-32; and Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 117-18.

¹⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁸⁶Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 242.

(Matt 7:24-27), David (Mark 2:23-28), and the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) in his stories and parables.¹⁸⁷ Kuruvilla argues, “[T]o label *all* preaching based on biblical characters ‘moralizing’ is not only hermeneutical suspect, it is also homiletically naïve.”¹⁸⁸

Frame also criticizes against lacking of application of Christ-centered preaching,

Should every sermon have redemptive history as its principal subject? I would say no. There is nothing in the Bible itself that requires us to restrict preaching in this way Indeed, there are many ethical passages in Scripture itself which do not explicitly focus on the redemptive-historical context. Proverbs, for example, says nothing about the semieschatological ethical tension, nor does the Mosaic Law. We should not demand that a preacher emphasize something that is not emphasized in his text.¹⁸⁹

As Frame contends, proponents of Christ-centered preaching often fail to emphasize what the text stresses in order to preach Christ from every text. Even though God’s redemption is essential to understand the entire Bible as Christian Scripture, preaching should deal with the needs of the text and of the audience. Biblical theology may not be *the* message from every text. Accordingly, Christ-centered preaching may overlook that the Bible has many imperatives that demand God’s people to obey.

Third, a homiletical problem of Christ-centered preaching comes when it ignores the context of the audience. As exploring Christ-centered sermons shows, the audience often ends up listening to similar messages every Sunday. Even though

¹⁸⁷Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 242. According to Kuruvilla, the apostle Paul and John Calvin employed biblical characters as examples for moral instruction. *Ibid.*, 244-47. See also Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 150.

¹⁸⁸Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 243.

¹⁸⁹John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life: A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), 291-92. Frame writes, “I get the impression that some who stress redemptive history really want to avoid ‘practical’ application. They want the whole sermon to focus on Christ, not on what works the believer should do. They want it to focus on gospel, not on law. So they want the sermon to evoke praise of Christ, not to demand concrete change in people’s behavior. In their mind, Christocentricity excludes any sustained focus on specific practical matters.” Frame, “Ethics, Preaching, and Biblical Theology,” 1.

preachers should repeatedly proclaim the gospel, they should consider that Christians already know who Christ is and what Christ has done for them. If Christ-centered preaching diligently insists on making a connection to Christ in every text, such a Christ-centered approach to preaching ignores the pastoral context as well as the meaning of the text. To put it differently, Christ-centered preaching fails to disclose what the text demands for the audience to follow in their practical lives as Christians.

In summary, despite its commendable commitment to preaching Christ, the extensive view of Christ-centered preaching is not warranted either by the Bible or by theology. While it is indisputable that many Old Testament texts point to Christ, the Bible does not support the notion that Christ is the center of every single passage. So the extensive view of Christ-centered preaching has a limited biblical foundation. In addition, Christ-centered biblical theology may show how Christ fulfilled God's redemption throughout the entire Bible, but it does not support the idea that Christ is the center of every single passage.

Most problems of Christ-centered preaching are derived from its hermeneutical and homiletical assumption that preaching Christ from every text is a biblical requirement. Accordingly, Christ-centered preaching often fails to pay attention to the author's intended meaning and the particular context of the text. The Bible teaches not only how one must be saved, but it also gives ethical instruction for living a godly life in the world. As an alternative to preaching Christ in expository sermons, Christ-saturated preaching will resolve the hermeneutical and homiletical shortcomings of the current practices of Christ-centered preaching.

CHAPTER 6
CHRIST-SATURATED APPROACH TO PREACHING

Introduction

Christian preachers should have two goals. First, they should proclaim the meaning of the text as the author intended. Second, they should preach Christ. Advocates of Christ-centered preaching attempt to achieve these two goals. Indeed, they stress finding Christ or a connection to Christ from the Bible and especially challenge preachers to preach Christ from the Old Testament. Such an effort provides preachers with various interpretive means of identifying Christ in the Old Testament beyond typology and allegory. Admittedly, most advocates of Christ-centered preaching emphasize a Christocentric interpretation to find Christ, but there is no consensus regarding how to find Christ in every text. Chapell's pastoral approach to Christ-centered preaching is timely and stands out among other advocates of Christ-centered preaching.¹ Nevertheless, when Christ is omitted, his preaching is not unlike that of expositors who do not follow Christ-centered models and, even when Christ is mentioned, the connections are, at times, forced.

All sermons of Christ-centered preaching are not biblically wrong. However, because of the assumption that Christ should be the focal point of every text and of the sermon, some Christ-centered preaching neglects or distorts the meaning and application of some Old Testament texts. An alternative approach to preaching Christ is needed. Accordingly, Christ-saturated preaching can be an expository method of preaching for

¹Bryan Chapell, "Bryan Chapell on Christ Centered Preaching: Exegesis, Eisegesis, and Redemptive Context," Christianitytoday, accessed October 18, 2014, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2013/july/bryan-chapell-on-christ-centered-preaching-part-one.html?paging=off>.

salvation and for believers to live godly lives in accordance with the meaning of the text. This chapter defines Christ-saturated preaching and explores its exegetical, theological, and homiletical processes in order to show how Christ-saturated preaching differs from a Christ-centered approach, how it offers a correction to the problem of Christ-centered preaching, and how it differs from and enhances traditional expository preaching.²

Definition of Christ-Saturated Preaching

Christ-centered preaching emphasizes Christ-centeredness in the text and in sermons. In contrast, Christ-saturated preaching emphasizes the meaning of the text and the text-driven application for Christ-saturated believers. Thomas Schreiner uses the word “saturated” in relation to Christ. He writes that the term “Christ-saturated” refers to the new life in Christ and a lifetime commitment to Christ.³ The word “Christ-saturated” reveals the new identity of sinners created by Christ and their process of being sanctified. Since sinners can be saved by Christ, have new life in Christ, and become God’s children, they should live for the glory of God.⁴ In this sense, a Christ-saturated approach to preaching follows the purpose of the Bible in two ways: salvation of sinners and the sanctification of sinners to glorify God. To better understand Christ-saturated preaching, it is necessary to explore its concept in justification and in sanctification.

²For examples of exegetical, theological, and homiletical outlines, see Donald Sunukjian, *Invitation to Biblical Preaching: Proclaiming Truth with Clarity and Relevance* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 27-41,

³Thomas Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 210.

⁴Rom 11:36 reads, “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.” 1 Cor 10:31 reads, “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” The Westminster larger catechism reads, “Man’s chief and highest end is to glorify God, and to fully enjoy him forever.” See Geerhardus Vos, *The Westminster Larger Catechism: A Commentary*, ed. G. I. Williamson (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), 3-5.

Concept of Christ-Saturated Preaching in Justification

Justification is the result of Christ's redemptive work for sinners. God declares sinners who confess their sins and accept Jesus Christ as their savior to be righteous in his sight. Justification describes the new identity of sinners in Christ. Frame simply answers the question, "Why God should declare me to be just?" by saying, "Christ."⁵ Because of Jesus Christ and his redemptive work on the cross, his people can be united to him.⁶ Frame continues, "God declares us righteous 'in him,' that is, by union with Christ (2 Cor 5:21)."⁷

Millard Erickson also understands the new life in Christ as union with Christ: "The most basic references in this connection depict the believer and Christ as being 'in' one another."⁸ Citing 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Ephesians 1:3-4, Erickson teaches that Christians have been created anew in Christ.⁹ Christ has brought new life and identity to sinners. The new life in Christ describes a Christian identity shaped only by and in Christ. Christ's indwelling presence refers to the permanent condition of Christians. Without Christ, no one can become a believer. Thus, the term "Christ-saturated" refers to the new status of sinners who are in Christ. John Stott is correct when he states, "Jesus Christ, we believe, is the fulfillment of every truly human aspiration. To find him is to find ourselves."¹⁰

⁵John Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013), 968.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., 969. See also John Frame, "Ethics, Preaching, and Biblical Theology," Third Millennium Ministries, accessed October 15, 2013, http://thirdmill.org/magazine/article.asp/link/http:%5E%5Ethirdmill.org%5Earticles%5Ejoh_frame%5EPT.Frame.Ethics_Preaching_BT.html/at/Ethics,%20Preaching,%20and%20Biblical%20Theology.

⁸Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 878.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 151.

Christ-saturated preaching in the perspective of justification indicates two things. First, Christ-saturated preaching aims to preach Christ for the salvation of sinners. Like Christ-centered preaching, Christ-saturated preaching emphasizes the urgent need of the gospel for sinners.¹¹

Above all, because “Christ-saturated” refers to the justified condition of sinners, Christ-saturated preaching emphasizes Christ and the gospel. So, Christ-saturated preaching believes that preaching Christ enables sinners to become believers in Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Second, Christ-saturated preaching is expository preaching performed by Christ-saturated preachers. Romans 10:14-15 explains that preachers or witnesses are those who are sent by God for the salvation of sinners.¹² While the audience can be made up of either non-believers or believers, preachers must be Christ-saturated believers. Christ-saturated preachers proclaim Christ so that the audience believes in him as their savior and becomes a community of Christ-saturated believers.

In addition, Christ-saturated preachers deliver the gospel to believers, so they can stand firm in Christ.¹³ In either case, the role of Christ-saturated preachers leads

¹¹John 20:30-31 reads, “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” Second Timothy 3:15 also says that the Bible makes you wise “for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” According to Grudem, 2 Tim 3:15 indicates that the Words of God are all we need in order to be saved. Grudem asserts that the Bible is necessary for salvation, saying, “[O]ne must either read the gospel message in the Bible for oneself, or hear it from another person.” Ibid., 118. Quoting the same verse, Haddon Robinson also asserts that God encounters sinners to bring them to salvation through preaching. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 127. Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 20.

¹²Rom 10:14-15 reads, “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?”

¹³The most impressive approach that Martin Lloyd-Jones takes is to remove the false assumption that Christians in church already know the gospel. He argues that not only non-Christians, but also Christians, who even regularly attend worship on Sunday, need the gospel. See Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 150-52.

sinner to reconcile to God and to remain in covenantal relationship with him by the Holy Spirit.

Kuruville correctly describes the role of such a preacher: “The mediation of covenant renewal between God and his people, between sovereign and subjects, is a duty of immense gravity for the theologian-homiletician, as emphasized in the mandate to Timothy: “I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus...preach the word” (2 Tim. 4.1-2).”¹⁴ Christ-saturated preaching, then, involves a sermon proclaimed by preachers who are saved by Christ, saturated in Christ, and sent by God to preach the Word of God to sinners.

Concept of Christ-Saturated Preaching in Sanctification

If the term “Christ-saturated” refers to the permanent identity of believers in Christ, it is also related to the sanctification of believers. Justification, Stott explains, inevitably leads to sanctification. Stott continues to write that the gospel has ethical implications for the individual as well as the Christian community as a whole.¹⁵ Since Christ dwells in believers, the term “Christ-saturated” indicates an ongoing relationship. Christ-saturated preaching proclaims the messages regarding how believers disclose their Christ-saturated identity by following God’s commandments in the process of sanctification. In addition, sanctification coincides with another purpose of the Bible for sinners.

Second Timothy 3:16-17 insists that preaching the Bible leads believers to do good work for the glory of God. Christ-saturated preaching understands this process as sanctification.¹⁶ Kuruville, for example, states,

¹⁴Abraham Kuruville, *Text to Praxis: Hermeneutics and Homiletics in Dialogue*, Library of New Testament Studies, ed. Mark Goodacre (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 156.

¹⁵Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 155.

¹⁶Robinson states that while 2 Tim 3:15 is about salvation, vv. 16-17 is about “richness and

2 Timothy 3:16-17 addresses the profitability of all Scripture and its efficacy in maturing God's children, aligning them progressively to divine demand. . . . This is to say that implicitly or explicitly, every pericope provides guidelines for ethical behavior before God, dealing with one facet or another of the relationship between God and man. Such imperatives are not salvific in intent or meritorious in performance. They are simply divine demands that God expects his children to obey, that his people may be like him.¹⁷

The Bible is not only about salvation through Christ but also about a transformed life leading to greater Christlikeness. God gave his Word to sinners who are in Christ in order to teach, rebuke, correct, and train them in righteousness.

Kuruvilla continues, "Scripture is more than just a witness to the fulfillment of messianic promises; there are ethical demands therein as well that must be brought to bear upon the lives of God's people."¹⁸ He indicates that preaching is not only about salvation, but it is also about sanctification for the believer to mature before God. The man of God must be competent, equipped for every good work before God. This transformation is the process of sanctification. In this sense, Kuruvilla unsurprisingly defines preaching as "the sovereign work of God in sanctification."¹⁹ Grudem, in turn, defines sanctification as "a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives."²⁰ Thus, since the Bible exists for the salvation and sanctification of sinners to the glory of God, preaching deals not only with the salvation created by Christ but also with the sanctified life in Christ. Christ-centered preaching does not deny this sermonical purpose, but because of its emphasis on

ripeness of Christian character." Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 20.

¹⁷Abraham Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text: A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2013), 194.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 244.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 258.

²⁰Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 746. Osborne also points out the purpose of sermon application in two. One is "the good news of God's love in Jesus Christ" and the other is "the abundant life he provides," which is the sanctified life. Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 453-54.

God's redemption in Christ, as examined before, Christ-centered preaching often ignores the significance of ethical instruction.

Furthermore, Christ-saturated preaching emphasizes the sanctified life by remembering justification. If the text has ethical instruction in Christ-silent texts, Christ-saturated preaching reminds believers of their Christ-saturated identity, which in turn motivates them to heed ethical instruction. This approach does not promote works righteousness, which faithful evangelical preaching rejects. In Exodus 20, for instance, God confirmed the Israelites' identity as God's people whom God brought out of the land of Egypt and commanded them to follow the Ten Commandments. Just as the Israelites kept God's commandments by remembering their identity as God's children, sinners, who are saved by Christ, should also keep the Bible's ethical instruction to live godly lives. Following ethical instruction in Christ-saturated preaching is different from law-keeping in order to be saved. Christ-saturated identity provides the audience with a motivation to keep ethical instruction.

In summary, in the context of justification and sanctification, Christ-saturated preaching can be defined as expository preaching, proclaimed by Christ-saturated preachers, which not only proclaims the gospel for the salvation of sinners to confirm Christ-saturated identity, but which also gives specific godly instructions to believers who are in Christ for their transformation. Accordingly, Christ-saturated preaching respects the meaning of the text and challenges the audience to believe in Christ and to follow Christ by remembering their Christ-saturated identity.

Therefore, Christ-saturated preaching differs from Christ-centered preaching. While the latter diligently finds a connection to Christ and places Christ at the center in every sermon, the former pays attention to the meaning of the text and, if needed, emphasizes the believer's new identity in Christ to motivate him or her to keep moral instruction. Duane Garrett gives a helpful insight to understand Christ-saturated

preaching. Garrett points out the problem of preaching Christ from every text when he discusses sermons from the Wisdom Literature. If the purpose of the sermon is “to draw the unbeliever to faith in Christ,” Garrett argues, “there is little material” for preachers in Wisdom Literature.²¹ He continues, “[I]f it is the function of Christian pastor not only to call the unbeliever to repentance but also to edify his congregation through the teaching of biblical doctrine and morality, then he must preach Wisdom.”²² As Garrett argues, Christ-saturated preaching does not draw the audience to faith in Christ in every text. Rather, Christ-saturated preaching is faithful to the meaning of the text and edifies the audience through moral instruction and biblical teaching by emphasizing who Christ is and what he has done for sinners. The next section shows how to prepare Christ-saturated sermons for salvation and transformation using exegetical, theological, and homiletical processes.²³

Exegetical Process of Christ-Saturated Preaching

The exegetical process of Christ-saturated preaching follows four steps or R.E.A.D.—Reading the text with analysis of the textual organization, Examining the context, Acquiring the meaning of the text, and Discerning the authorial intent. These steps seek the meaning of the text and its purpose not only for the original hearer but also for the contemporary audience. Christ-saturated preaching employs the process of exegetical theology instead of finding Christ at the center of every text through biblical theology.

²¹Duane Garrett, “Preaching Wisdom,” in *Reclaiming the Prophetic Mantle: Preaching the Old Testament Faithfully*, ed. George Klein (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 108.

²²Ibid. Garrett also asserts, “[P]reachers can only use Wisdom texts as springboards for moving into evangelistic messages or claim to find the gospel message in Wisdom through allegory” (108).

²³I am indebted for many of my ideas regarding the exegetical, theological, and homiletical processes of Christ-saturated preaching to Timothy Warren.

Read the Text with Analysis of the Textual Organization

As a variety of expository preaching, Christ-saturated preaching focuses on explaining the biblical text.²⁴ Even though Christ-saturated preaching aims to preach the gospel or how to live a godly life, depending on the text, the starting point should be to understand the text. To prepare a Christ-saturated sermon, preachers must first read a book of the Bible again and again to select the preaching passages, relying on the Holy Spirit.²⁵ Hershael York recommends falling in love with a book of the Bible by reading it several times in several translations.²⁶

Repeated reading helps preachers grasp the general idea and also divide the book into many preachable units. Greidanus argues, “The selected text must be a message unit—not a clause, nor a fragment, but a literary unit . . . [T]he selected text should proclaim a vital theme.”²⁷ A preachable unit may range from a verse to a full chapter, but it must contain a main idea with sub-points. Each sub-point, of course, is conjunctly related to the main idea or theme of the full text.

Diagramming the given passage helps preachers divide the text into units that consist of sub-points of the main idea. In addition, diagramming the text helps preachers discern the relationships of thoughts within the text. Kaiser suggests that a diagram

²⁴Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 75. “This is essential, this is vital; as I have said, all preaching must be expository. . . . It should be clear to people that what we are saying is something that comes out of the Bible. We are presenting the Bible and its message” (ibid.).

²⁵Walter Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 235-47. Kaiser points out the fundamental role of the Holy Spirit throughout the sermon preparation.

²⁶Hershael W. York and Bert Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance: A Solid and Enduring Approach to Engaging Exposition* (Nashville: B&H, 2003), 35.

²⁷Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 282. Duane Garrett also asserts that the sermonic text should have “a clear beginning and end in the structure of the text itself and not simply in the mind of the preacher.” Garrett, “Preaching Wisdom,” 113.

discloses “the internal operation and external interrelations.”²⁸ While diagramming the text, preachers discover the relationships among verses and between the governing idea and its sub-points. Through this preliminary study of the text, preachers identify several preaching texts and a rough outline of each text with potential main ideas and sub-points.

Examine the Context

Kaiser identifies “contextual analysis” as the first step of his interpretive methods, saying, “[K]nowledge of the context is extremely necessary and important.”²⁹ The biblical authors wrote each book of the Bible in their specific historical context. Without knowing the context, preachers will surely misunderstand the meaning of the text. Chapell is correct when he states, “Context is part of text.”³⁰ Three categories must be considered: historical, textual, and literary.³¹

First, preachers need to understand the historical context. Because of the great cultural and geographical gulf between then and now, understanding the historical background is integral to discerning the meaning of the text. The prophet Jonah, for instance, rejected God’s command to warn against the Ninevites in Jonah 1:1-17. Jonah’s sinful response can be understood when preachers know the hostile relations between the Israelites and the Ninevites in Jonah’s era. While Jonah was God’s prophet to proclaim his judgment against the Ninevites, Jonah did not want to challenge the Ninevites to

²⁸Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 99-104, 165-81.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 70, 114-21. See also Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*.

³⁰Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 275.

³¹Most homileticians consider historical, textual, and literary context for finding the meaning of the text. See Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 69-85; Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 35-56; Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 58-62; and York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 52-62.

repent of their sin and be saved. Commentaries, the Bible, and archeological works help preachers understand the context of the text.³²

Second, the textual context must be examined. The preached text should be related to its previous and following sections, sometimes even the entire book. Each book was written under the supervision of the author's theology, which related each section theologically to the entire book. Garrett explains that

the biblical writers did not write verses and sermon texts. They wrote books. The minister who claims to be an expositor of the biblical text must therefore begin at the highest level of the material, the complete book of Genesis, John, Romans, Proverbs, or song of Songs. That is, he must understand what the book as a whole is all about before he can begin to expound on any individual text.³³

As Garrett states, the biblical author had a specific intention in writing a book; he selected words and then organized the order of those words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs in accordance with his general theme or purpose, that is, his theology. Since the various sections of a book relate organically to one another, the textual context provides exegetical clues to understand the relationship of the text to the rest of the book.³⁴ Accordingly, each book of the Bible has its unique features and theological focus, which is continued throughout the Bible.

The textual context does not demand that preachers interpret every text in redemptive-historical context. Christ-centered preaching does so, arguing that because every text "points to Christ," Christ should be preached from every text.³⁵ Accordingly,

³²By studying the historical context, preachers acknowledge historical and cultural factors such as authorship, date, and recipient. For more information about the benefits of the historical context, see Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 37-39 and York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 52-62.

³³Garrett, "Preaching Wisdom," 112.

³⁴Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 83.

³⁵Goldsworthy, for instance, argues, "That the whole Bible testifies to Christ is what we mean when we say that Christ is in all the Scriptures." Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 138.

Christ-centered preaching interprets every text in God’s redemptive-historical context. As examined above, however, the Bible in Luke 24 and John 5 do not support the idea that every single passage testifies to Christ. Thus, the textual context does not require a Christ-centered biblical theology to find a connection to Christ in redemptive-historical context.

Christ-saturated preaching does not force the redemptive-historical grid on every text. As mentioned before, the goal of Christ-saturated sermon is not only to preach the gospel; it is also to lead the audience to obey divine commandments that a Christ-saturated relationship with God demands. In Christ-saturated preaching, the textual context helps preachers understand the text by its relationship to the rest of the book, instead of focusing on finding Christ or a connection to Christ in every text.

To understand Jonah’s running away from God in chapter 1, for instance, preachers have to consider Jonah’s reaction to God’s forgiveness toward the Ninevites after Jonah’s complaint in chapter 4. In verse 4:2, Jonah said, “O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.” Jonah already knew that God would forgive the Ninevites, and his thought was realized in chapter 4. Thus, the textual context helps preachers to interpret the preached text correctly.

Third, after considering the historical and textual contexts, the Christ-saturated preacher must consider the literary context of the preaching passage. Genre is an effective literary form to convey the author’s intended meaning to the reader.³⁶ Rene Wellek and

³⁶The types of genre in the Bible are varied depending on understanding of genre. Greidanus recognizes seven genres (narrative, prophecy, wisdom, psalm, gospel, epistle, and apocalypse) in Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 23. Jeffrey Arthurs pays attention to psalm, narrative, parable, proverb, epistle, and apocalyptic. Jeffrey D. Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety: How to Re-create the Dynamics of Biblical Genres* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 14. In addition, Kaiser classifies five literary types—prose, poetry, narrative, wisdom, and apocalyptic. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 91. Osborne also finds different seven genres, narrative, poetry, wisdom, prophecy, apocalyptic, parable, and epistle. Osborne, *The*

Austin Warren argue that “Genre should be conceived, we think, as a grouping of literary works based, theoretically, upon both outer form (specific meter or structure) and also upon inner form (attitude, tone, purpose – more crudely, subject and audience).”³⁷ Hirsch concurs, saying, “All understanding of verbal meaning is necessarily genre-bound.”³⁸ Hirsch continues that knowing genre is necessary to understanding the author’s meaning because the author intended to communicate through a structural pattern governed by genre.³⁹ Narrative, for instance, has a plot; poetry has various parallel structures. Robert Vogel expounds the importance of genre analysis, arguing,

For example, Ps 91:4 reads, “He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you may seek refuge.” Taken literally, the statement would be understood to describe God as existing in the material form of a bird. However, realizing that the text is poetic genre, with heavy reliance on imagery and figures to express ideas (in this case, the figure of zoomorphism), one interprets the text not to teach something of God’s material form but rather to express the fact of His providential care.⁴⁰

As Vogel explains, without genre analysis, preachers will surely misunderstand the text and proclaim a wrong message. Since the author selected a genre to convey his message, genre is a crucial factor in understanding the author’s intended meaning.⁴¹ In

Hermeneutical Spiral, 153-260.

³⁷Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (New York: Brace and World, 1956), 219. Osborne agrees regarding the important role of genre, by arguing that genre is an important point in the debate over whether one can recover the author’s intended meaning. He suggests, “Every writer couches his message in a certain genre in order to give the reader sufficient rules by which to decode that message. These hints guide the reader ... and provide clues for interpretation.” Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 9, 150.

³⁸E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), 76. See also Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible Playing by the Rules* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 56. Stein argues, “Apart from a correct analysis of the literary form of a text and an application of the rules governing that genre, a correct understanding of the author’s meaning is impossible” (ibid.).

³⁹Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 78-82, 222.

⁴⁰Robert Vogel, “Biblical Genres and the Text-Driven Sermon,” in *Text-Driven Preaching: God’s Word at the Heart of Every Sermon*, ed. Daniel Akin, David Allen, and Ned Mathews (Nashville: B & H, 2010): 171-72.

⁴¹Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “The Present State of Old Testament Studies,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 18 (1975): 78.

this way, genre functions as a valuable link between the author, the text, and the reader and is essential in textual interpretation for Christ-saturated preaching.

Acquire the Meaning of the Text

Preaching typically aims to proclaim the Word of God, which was first proclaimed to God's people, to the contemporary audience.⁴² In this sense, preaching is "speaking God's words."⁴³ What God spoke to his people is the author's intended meaning of the text. So knowing the author's intended meaning of the text is the core of sermon preparation.

"Meaning" is usually restricted to the author's intended meaning and cannot be changed.⁴⁴ Since the author intended to deliver God's Words in his writing, interpreters should find the author's intended meaning of the text by exegetical process. To know the author's intended meaning, preachers should have basic knowledge about the text. Preachers acquire preliminary information about the text by reading it, but they also need to analyze the text and its context.

Above all, preachers should know grammar and syntax, which are the most basic tools to interpret the text. At the same time, examining the words, phrases, and sentences is significant because the author used them in his historical-literary context. Accordingly, preachers understand the author's definition and usage of words, sentences, structural patterns, and parallel passages.⁴⁵

⁴²Most expository preachers offer detailed interpretive methods for the text. See Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*; Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*; Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*; Donald Sunukjian, *Invitation to Biblical Preaching: Proclaiming Truth with Clarity and Relevance* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007); and York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*.

⁴³York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 22.

⁴⁴E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), 8.

⁴⁵Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 106-8.

Preachers then pay attention to the text through its literary structure and arrangement. Preachers should know there is a “logical order” or a “thematic arrangement” that develops a particular argument, narrative, and theme within the text.⁴⁶ Literary structure and arrangement reflects the author’s flow of thought to give clues about the meaning of the text. Through this process, preachers have an exegetical outline on hand to help find the theme of the text. A variety of questions or ideas concerning the text will help preachers find the governing theme.⁴⁷

Discern the Authorial Intent: Purpose

The meaning of the text conveys the author’s intention to expect something from the reader. Kuruvilla asserts that generally an author aims to do something with what he or she is saying.⁴⁸ Sermons do not just share information about God, but expect to spark life-change based on authorial intent. York argues, “We limit ourselves to authorial intent because we believe that words have real meaning.”⁴⁹ The authorial intent embedded in the meaning of the text aims to change the life of the audience.

Such authorial intent controls application for God’s people then and now.⁵⁰ In other words, biblical application should be rooted in the author’s intended meaning of the text. When preachers determine the author’s intended meaning, they should also consider biblical application for their contemporary audience. Warren states, “The purpose which

⁴⁶York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 62.

⁴⁷Timothy S. Warren, “The Developmental Questions” (unpublished Class Notes for PM 103 Expository Preaching 1, Dallas Theological Seminary, Spring 2006), 82. Warren suggests several questions for understanding the text. (1) What does it mean? (2) What did the author explain that my audience understands? (3) What did the author assume his audience would understand? (4) What will I need to explain to my audience? And (5) what can I assume my audience will already understand?

⁴⁸Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 52.

⁴⁹York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 28.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 78.

arches over the theological process, limiting the theological reasoning, is the textual purpose. Neither the biblical nor the systematic theology can move outside the original author's intended purpose. This purpose will have been discovered in the text during the exegetical process."⁵¹

Christ in the Exegetical Process

Christ-saturated preaching argues that Christ is not in every text. However, if the text is about Christ and is related to his redemptive work, the exegetical process will reveal this. As Chapell points out, if the text has a direct and explicit reference to Christ, as in a messianic psalm or a prophetic utterance, preachers simply expound "the reference in terms of the redemptive activity it reveals."⁵² If the text is not about Christ and his salvific work, however, Christ should not be the center of the text and of the sermon. Preachers should not force a redemptive-historical grid on texts that do not point to Christ. Such forced interpretation of the text fails to find its meaning and its particular purpose for the audience.

In sum, the exegetical process aims to find the meaning of the text and the authorial intent for the original hearer, which can still be applicable for a contemporary audience. This is the exegetical goal of Christ-saturated sermons, which not only preach the gospel but also encourage the audience to follow divine commandments that a relationship with God and Christ demands.

Theological Process and Christ-Saturated Preaching

The theological process of Christ-saturated preaching aims to bridge the gap between the text and the contemporary audience. The author's intended meaning was

⁵¹Timothy S. Warren, "Definition, Purpose, and Process" (unpublished Class Notes for PM 103 Expository Preaching 1, Dallas Theological Seminary, Spring 2006), 35.

⁵²Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 281.

originally delivered to people in an historic time and place. But preachers speak to contemporary audiences, so they seek to find universal truths for all ages from the text. To complete this aim, the theological process discloses a theological principle derived from the author's intended meaning and the author's theology. Each biblical author has his own distinct theological intent, yet one that fits into the theology of the entire Bible as a whole.

The Necessity of the Theological Principle

Since the Bible is an ancient text, preachers recognize the need to bridge the gulf between the world in the Bible and the world of the contemporary audience.⁵³ Grant Osborne claims that texts are often so dependent on the ancient cultural setting that preachers may not apply them directly to today if there are no parallels between them.⁵⁴ Preachers should find relevant methods to apply the text to their audiences.

Christ-centered preaching also attempts to bridge the gulf. Greidanus, for instance, argues that because people in the text and the contemporary audience have the same covenant of grace, "the message addressed to God's people in the past can easily be shifted to God's people today."⁵⁵ Greidanus continues, "The distance between then and now can be bridged with genuine parallels because the people who first heard the word and the people who hear it today are one covenant people."⁵⁶ Chapell also understands

⁵³For example, Stott states, "The chasm is the deep rift between the biblical world and the modern world. . . . It is across this broad and deep divide of two thousand years of changing culture (more still in the case of the Old Testament) that Christian communicators have to throw bridges. Our task is to enable God's revealed truth to flow out of the Scriptures into the lives of the men and women of today" in *Between Two Worlds*, 138. See also Stott also describes the preacher as "bridge builder." John R. W. Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait: Some New Testament Word Studies* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 28.

⁵⁴Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 421.

⁵⁵Because God's grace runs throughout all ages, the message of the text can be easily applied to the contemporary audience. See Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 167-73.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 173. See Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 48-52.

that because the original recipients and the contemporary audience are all fallen human beings, they alike need Christ. To Chapell, everyone is fallen and needs Christ as savior, so the fallen condition can bridge then and now with God's redemption fulfilled in Christ.⁵⁷ In this way, Christ-centered preaching finds its Christocentric theological principle and bridges the gap. The problem is that such a Christocentric theological principle does not always reflect the particular meaning of the text.⁵⁸ The theological principle is different than the exegetical proposition, but it is the theologized exegetical proposition that is the universal truth for all ages.

The Theological Principle of Timothy Warren.⁵⁹ Warren expounds that the goal of the theological process is "to bridge the gap between the world of the ancient text (through the exegetical process) and the world of the immediate listeners (through the homiletical process) with a universally applicable statement of Truth."⁶⁰ According to Warren, the text is usually wrapped in a certain cultural form and contains a theological principle that works throughout all cultures and for all ages.⁶¹ Preachers first find the

⁵⁷Ibid. In addition, Chapell says that "redemption by grace alone" is his theological principle to bridge the gap. Ibid., 220.

⁵⁸According to redemptive-historical interpretation, every text should be connected to Christ as the center. So in a redemptive way, the particular context of the text is easily ignored, and the principle, which is God's redemption in Christ, is repeated in every sermon. Robinson criticizes such a repeated theological principle and its sermonic theme: "[W]hen we shove a passage under some broad theological abstraction without interacting with its specificity, we will end up with sermons as much alike as the repeated patterns on wallpaper." Haddon Robinson, "The Relevance of Expository Preaching," in *Preaching to a Shifting Culture: 12 Perspectives on Communicating That Connects*, ed. Scott M. Gibson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 83.

⁵⁹For more information of theological process, see Timothy S. Warren, "A Paradigm for Preaching," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 148 (October/December 1991): 463-86; idem, "The Theological Process in Sermon Preparation," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156 (July/September 1999): 336-56; and "The Theological Process," (unpublished Class Notes for PM 104 Expository Preaching 2, Dallas Theological Seminary, Fall 2006): 24-44.

⁶⁰Warren, "The Theological Process," 24; idem, "The Theological Process in Sermon Preparation," 226-37.

⁶¹Warren, "The Theological Process," 24.

meaning and purpose of the text in the exegetical process; they then detect the theological principle by separating the meaning of the text from its cultural form.

Warren aims to advance the time-bound exegetical outline and proposition through three modifying stages—stylizing, theologizing, and organizing—in the homiletical process. First, by stylizing, Warren removes a certain cultural form and exegetical language from the exegetical outline and proposition, and he expresses them with a general and less technical outline and proposition.⁶²

Second, by theologizing, Warren detects the theological principle, the universal truth cover all ages. Warren utilizes biblical, canonical, and systematic theology to find the universal truth. Biblical, canonical, and systematic theology in Warren’s theological process is different than the role of theology in redemptive-historical interpretation.

To Warren, biblical theology refers to the author’s theology that guides his writing under the Holy Spirit. Thus, through the theological process, preachers have to find a specific theological principle that fits the theology of the entire book. Of course, the theological principle or the universal truth under the author’s theology coincides with the canonical theology of the entire Bible. Each preaching text has a specific message both to the original hearer and the contemporary audience, and the theology of each book controls each specific text and its theological principle. Thus, the theological process articulates the theological truth for all ages.⁶³

Then preachers advance the theological process with canonical theology. In this step, preachers discover the interconnections between the terms, motifs, and themes

⁶²Warren, for instance, suggests an exegetical expression for Prov18:10: “The synthetic observation of the Israelite sage to The Israelites was that the righteous who sought the LORD for security found security in him” and stylizes it to “The righteous who seek the LORD for security find security in him.” Warren, “The Theological Process,” 25.

⁶³Warren, “The Theological Process,” 24-37.

of the author's theology and their counterparts in the rest of Scripture. Through canonical theology, preachers can understand the progressive development of the theological principle of the text throughout all of Scripture and recognize further reflection in the earlier text. Regarding canonical theology, Bruce Waltke argues,

The canonical process approach consciously recognizes and represents the distinct stages in that winning of the clearer and deeper significance of older texts [*sic*] through the discernment of the stages in the development of the canon rather than viewing the New Testament writers as "supernaturally" discovering the fuller, divine meaning of the text.⁶⁴

According to Waltke, the canonical theology does not change the meaning of the text, but, if recognized, provides its canonical significance, which ultimately points to Jesus Christ throughout the canon.

Warren claims, "Canonical theology enables the interpreter to separate the substantive and permanent truth expressed in the Scriptures from particular historical contexts in which the various texts expressed that truth."⁶⁵ He means that preachers can discover the common theological features of the text that prevail throughout the entire canon.

In the systematic theological step, preachers evaluate the discovered theological expression of the text by systematic statements of biblical truth. Warren considers systematic theology as the lens to account for the theological truth of the text in God's progressive revelation.⁶⁶ Systematic theology does not change the theological principle, but it tests it in the perspective of the progression of revelation. As systematic

⁶⁴Bruce K. Waltke, "A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms," in *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg*, ed. John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 8-9.

⁶⁵Warren, "The Theological Process in Sermon Preparation," 341.

⁶⁶Warren, "A Paradigm for Preaching," 477-78. Osborne defines systematic theology as a "contextualization of biblical theology, filtered the biblical teachings through the history of dogma but recontextualized for the contemporary situation and both organized and expressed in current thought patterns." Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 397.

theology confirms the validity of the theological principle, preachers consider possible applications from the theological principle for their contemporary audience.⁶⁷ Above all, by theologizing, preachers do not change the meaning of the text but articulate the theological principle with application for their contemporary audience.

Third, by organizing, Warren discloses the theological outline in logical order instead of exegetical order.⁶⁸ While the exegetical order shows the author's flow of thought, the theological outline reflects the author's theological intent. In sum, as Warren insists, preachers must bridge the text and the contemporary audience with the theological outline and principle that conveys the meaning of the text and the authorial intent to the original hearers and to all ages. In other words, for all ages, preachers hold the theological principle through stylizing and theologizing and then seeking the theological outline.

Theologizing of Abraham Kuruvilla. Kuruvilla also develops his own theological process, which generalizes the text by pericopal theology.⁶⁹ Like Warren, Kuruvilla emphasizes the necessity of deriving the theological principle from the text, but he discovers a weakness of principlizing. Kuruvilla argues, "There is also the tacit assumption in principlizing that, once one distinguishes those elements in the text that are not time- or culture-bound, these unconstrained transcultural principles are more valuable than the text itself."⁷⁰ Kuruvilla insists that preachers should honor the text and the

⁶⁷For understanding how systematic theology helps preachers apply the theological truth to the contemporary audience, see Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 24 and John Frame, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord: An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006), 79.

⁶⁸This is not necessary, but recommended.

⁶⁹Kuruvilla defines pericopal theology as "the theology specific to a particular pericope, representing a segment of the plenary world in front of the canonical text that portrays God and his relationship to his people, and which, bearing a transhistorical intention, functions as the crucial intermediary in the homiletical move from text to praxis that respects both the authority of the text and the circumstances of the hearer." Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 111.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 127-28.

author's theology in the theological process. Kuruvilla regrets that when preachers modify the exegetical proposition by removing its exegetical features and principlizing it with transcultural terms, they usually do not consider the author's theology. The theological principle may not be controlled by the author's theology, but it moves up to the highest theological level, which is too general to reflect the specificity or authorial intent of the text for all ages.

Kaiser, for instance, states, "Principles . . . must be given priority over accompanying cultural elements, especially when directed to the times and settings in which that text was written."⁷¹ Kaiser expounds his principles using the "Ladder of Abstraction" model, which is defined as "a continuous sequence of categorizations from a low level of specificity up to a high point of generality in a principle and down again to a specific application in the contemporary culture."⁷² Like Kuruvilla, Kevin Vanhoozer criticizes principlizing for potentially causing preachers to go behind the text and to divide the text into text and principle.⁷³ It seems that without focusing on specific

⁷¹Walter Kaiser, "A Principlizing Model," in *Four Views on Moving beyond the Bible to Theology*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry and Gary T. Meadors (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 21. Daniel Doriani criticizes Kaiser's principles by arguing, "Anyone who reads Kaiser's expository works knows that he is capable of handling the diverse genres of Scripture effectively. Nonetheless, his theory appears to affirm that what really counts is less the text itself than the principle expressed within the text. As a result, there can be no abiding interest in the genres of Scripture. Once the principle is extracted, the God-given form of Scripture falls away like a wheat husk or pea pod." Doriani's concern is not that Kaiser ignores the genres of Scripture in the exegetical process, but that genres continuously lead the theological process to find the theological principle. See Daniel Doriani, "A Response to Walter C. Kaiser JR." in *Four Views on Moving beyond the Bible to Theology*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry and Gary T. Meadors (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 54. Contrary to Kaiser, Kuruvilla believes that because literary elements such as genre are chosen by the author to correctly convey information, literary elements should lead the theological process. Ignoring this fact, preachers do not have the theological principle, which reflects the meaning of the text with the authorial intent. Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 102.

⁷²Kaiser, "A Principlizing Model," 24. For more information about Ladder of Abstraction, see also Haddon Robinson, "The Heresy of Application," *Leadership* (Fall 1997), 21-27. For principlizing, see also Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 152-63. Kaiser provides six helpful steps to principlize a given passage for the contemporized significance: (1) the subject of the text; (2) the emphasis of the text; (3) the main points of the message; (4) the subpoints of the message; (5) the theology of the text; and (6) the conclusion of the message.

⁷³Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "A Response to Walter C. Kaiser Jr.," in *Four Views on Moving beyond the Bible to Theology*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry and Gary T. Meadors (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 59.

theological clues, preachers easily jump into the highest general principle, which does not reflect the author's particular theology. Instead, preachers ought to discover the theological principle that mirrors the author's theology of the text.

Kuruvilla gives a specific example from Proverbs 11:1, which is about "just weights and scales."⁷⁴ The theological principle may be "honesty," "honesty in business practices," or "just weights and balances." According to Kuruvilla, even though "just weights and scales" are about honesty, honesty itself does not reflect the author's particular theology. Instead, Kuruvilla shows that because merchants usually dealt with weights and scales in the ancient near East, preachers have to understand the honesty issues faced in business or commerce. In this case, the theological principle may be honesty in commerce instead of honesty itself.⁷⁵ This example of Kuruvilla's emphasis on the theological principle within the author's particular or pericopal theology demonstrates a significant implication of the theological process of Christ-saturated preaching. That is, the theological principle does not introduce a new idea by modifying the exegetical proposition with theological terms, but it continuously honors the author's theology and provides contemporary relevance for all ages based on the author's intent.

Kuruvilla believes that Vanhoozer correctly distinguishes "theologizing" from "principlizing." According to Kuruvilla, theologizing discovers the theology/world in front of the text; principlizing finds the principle behind the text. In other words, principlizing seeks for the world behind the text, which is the history and events it represents, and its theological principle; theologizing discovers the author's theology inherited in the text and its theological principle. Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 128-29.

⁷⁴The discussion of whether or not Kuruvilla's theological principle of Prov 11:1 is right goes beyond the limits of this dissertation. Kuruvilla's interpretation and theological principle are mentioned here to show how the theological principle can be expressed within the author's pericopal theology. For more explanation of Prov 11:1, see Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, The New American Commentary*, vol. 14, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 124-25.

⁷⁵Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 133-34. Without considering the author's theology, the theological principle of Prov 11:1 may be "honesty" and its application may be integrity in marriage, academic honesty, tax filings, paying employees on time, etc. Kuruvilla, however, applies the theological principle 'honesty in business' to the audience with only integrity in paying wages, tax filings, and so on.

The Theological Process of Christ-Saturated Preaching

The theological principle of Christ-saturated preaching by the author's theology. As examined above, the theological process involves generalization to find the theological principle of the text. In this process, preachers develop the theological principle via three steps: the author's theology, canonical theology, and systematic theology. First, as Kuruvilla emphasizes, preachers modify the exegetical proposition within the author's theology to enable application for all ages. The author's theology sets up a boundary for the theological process as well as the exegetical process. So, for all ages, preachers theologize the authors' intended responses for the original hearers. Again, the theological principle is not a new idea; it is simply the universal truth of the exegetical proposition reflecting the author's theology. Such theological principles emphasize the specificity of the text as much as possible.

The fact that the Bible ultimately aims to reveal Christ cannot nullify the authorial intent or the specificity of the text. Put differently, if preachers ignore the specific message of the text in order to preach Christ, the message fails to deliver the author's intent. Unless the text is messianic, preachers should concentrate on the author's theology in the theological process as well as in the exegetical process.

For example, Micah 5:2 directly prophesied the birth of Jesus Christ.⁷⁶ In this case, preachers make an exegetical proposition regarding the Messiah, and the theological principle contains Christological significance. However, most of the Old Testament does not make direct reference to Christ. The exegetical proposition of Jonah 4:1-11, for instance, may be "The reason God forgave the Ninevites was to teach Jonah

⁷⁶As Chapell argues, there are many texts that have direct reference to Christ, such as specific mention of Jesus in a Gospel account. See Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 281. However, the Old Testament usually does not have direct reference to Christ, with the exception of passages like Mic 5:2 and Mal 4:5. See Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 273.

His love toward the Ninevites.”⁷⁷ The book ends without giving Jonah’s response, but the hearer as well as Jonah must respond and agree that God had compassion on the wicked.⁷⁸ If this is the author’s intent, a theologized principle is as follows: “The gracious and merciful God loves sinners.” There is no need to add Christ into either the exegetical proposition or the theological principle. If preachers make Christ the theological principle in Jonah 4:1-11, they neglect the meaning of the text and the author’s theology.

Theological principle of Christ-saturated preaching by canonical theology.

Preachers examine the theological principle by canonical theology.⁷⁹ The theological principle of Christ-saturated preaching is firmly anchored in the author’s theology and then advances it to canonical theology. This process discovers Christological significance for all ages if the text speaks of it.⁸⁰ If the text is Christ-silent, however, preachers do not find Christological significance by canonical theology.

It is worth noting that Kaiser points out, “[T]he truth of God may be spoken in earlier texts in seed form, but that seed will continue to build as God’s revelation

⁷⁷Abusch argues that the dialogue between Jonah and God is to persuade Jonah to take care of the Ninevites. Tzvi Abusch, “Jonah and God: Plants, Beasts, and Humans in the Book of Jonah,” *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 13 no. 2 (2013): 150-51. See also Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 220-36; Joyce Baldwin, “Jonah,” in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, ed. Thomas Edward McComiskey, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 543-90; Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 365-68; and William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 333.

⁷⁸“And the LORD said, ‘You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?’” (Jonah 4:10-11).

⁷⁹Warren, “The Theological Process in Sermon Preparation,” 340-41. Kuruvilla also argues, “Individual pericopes find their proper position in the context of the rest of the book and the canon, for there is an integrity to the whole that must not be fragmented.” Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 94.

⁸⁰Warren’s canonical theology seeks to discover the interconnections between the text and its counterparts in God’s progressive revelation throughout the Bible. See Warren, “The Theological Process in Sermon Preparation,” 341.

progresses to become a full plant in full bloom by the time it comes to full maturation.”⁸¹ Elsewhere, Kaiser insists, “Then, having gotten the meaning God revealed at that point in time, let us see how our Lord developed that same word, if there is further development, on into the rest of the Bible.”⁸² He means not that every text has a seed of Christ, but if the text has the seed form of God’s progressive revelation, its development throughout the Bible will be detected by canonical theology.

Osborne agrees that it is necessary to examine the text by canonical theology. He asserts that like other theological approaches, canonical theology is “not determinative of meaning,” but it provides possibilities for “reflection” of the text and yields parameters for other options.⁸³ Accordingly, canonical theology in Christ-saturated preaching provides preachers with canonical reflection upon the text if there is further development.

Here again, preachers must remember the core discipline of finding Christological significance in the text. That is, Christological significance has to be strongly rooted in the text, its exegetical proposition, and theological principle.

Robinson’s application shows the relationship between Christological significance and the author’s intended meaning. Robinson argues that application must be derived from “the theological purpose of the biblical writer” based on accurate exegesis.⁸⁴ He means that not only application but also any outcomes from the

⁸¹Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Recovering the Unity of the Bible: One Continuous Story, Plan, and Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 218.

⁸²Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Majesty of God in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 17.

⁸³Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 361-62.

⁸⁴Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 88.

theological process as well as the exegetical process should come from the text and reflect the author's theology.⁸⁵

If the theological principle of Jonah 4:1-11 is that the gracious and merciful God loves sinners, for instance, preachers may find a Christological significance within the author's theology through canonical theology.⁸⁶ If preachers pay attention to "*God's great and merciful love*," they may find its Christological significance relating to John 3:16, Romans 5:8, or 1 John 4:8.⁸⁷ If preachers focus on "*God's great and merciful love for sinners*," they may find Christological significance from Luke 6:27-36.⁸⁸

The point is the author's theology of the preaching text.⁸⁹ Since the Ninevites are Jonah's physical enemy, the Christological significance must reflect the author's theology regarding relationships with enemies. First John 4:8 is about God's love, but it is also about loving one's brother in Christ, not one's enemies. John 3:16 and Roman 5:8 show God's great love toward sinners like, not one's love toward enemies. In Luke 6:27-28, Jesus taught his disciples to love their enemies, saying, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you." In verses 35-36, Jesus expounds the reason to love one's enemies: "[Y]ou will be the sons of

⁸⁵This is in contrast to Christ-centered preaching. Kuruvilla criticizes Christ-centered preaching which ignores the author's theology in the Christological significance. Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 239. Cf. Clowney, "Preaching Christ from All the Scripture," in *The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Samuel Logan (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1986), 183-84.

⁸⁶The exegetical proposition of Jonah 4:1-11 is that the reason God forgave the Ninevites was that God taught Jonah His love toward the Ninevites.

⁸⁷John 3:16 is about God's great love to sacrifice His loved son for us. Rom 8:39 is about God's great love for us. 1 John 4:8 reads, "God is love" (cf. 1 John 2:5).

⁸⁸Luke 6:27-36 (cf. Matt 5:43-44) are about loving one's enemies.

⁸⁹On the contrary, Christ-centered preaching pays much attention to the perspective of the New Testament, so it overlooks the Christological significance restricted by the author's theology. Christ-centered sermons show how their practitioners subjectively find a connection to Christ regardless of the author's theology.

the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.” In this sense, the Christological significance of Jonah 4:1-11, reflecting the author’s theology, can be related to Jesus’ teaching in Luke 6:27-36 concerning “God’s great love toward the enemies.”

Theological principle of Christ-saturated preaching by systematic theology. As Warren explains, systematic theology helps preachers test whether or not the theological principle fits the biblical teaching before preaching it.⁹⁰ Systematic theology does not determine the meaning of the text. The more significant role of systematic theology is to provide specific implications and applications for the contemporary context of the audience.⁹¹ Christ-saturated preaching utilizes systematic theology to validate and contextualize the theological principle and Christological significance, if founded, for the contemporary audience.

If needed, for instance, preachers evaluate the theological principle of Jonah 4:1-11 by systematic theology and find its implication or contemporary application, which shows how God’s great and merciful love for enemies works. Preachers may find certain types of enemies in the Bible or show how biblical figures love their enemies (e.g., Joseph’s forgiveness of his brother or David’s forgiveness and love for his enemy, king Saul) and then apply the text to their contemporary audience. In addition, preachers may find implications or applications for God’s great and merciful love for enemies, comparing divine love to human love. Luke 6:32 reads, “If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.”⁹²

⁹⁰Warren, “The Theological Process in Sermon Preparation,” 342. Warren argues that while employing systematic theology, preachers may find something not to fit the biblical teaching. They have to go back through the exegetical and theological processes to discover their misunderstanding.

⁹¹Warren, “The Theological Process,” 30-31.

⁹²For more information, see William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke in the Daily Study Bible Series*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 77-80; Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke in the New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, and Gordon D. Fee,

Homiletical Process of Christ-Saturated Preaching

The homiletical process of Christ-saturated preaching aims to show how preachers motivate a contemporary audience to follow the preached message not only for salvation but also for transformation of life. To complete this aim, the homiletical process requires the general purpose of the sermon, relevant application in pastoral context, and application through Christ.⁹³

The Homiletical Purpose of Christ-Saturated Preaching

The purpose of the sermon is life transformation.⁹⁴ Just as the original author intended his hearers to respond to what he said with obedience, preachers bring the author's intention out of the text to their contemporary audience with relevant application. The only difference between the purpose of the text and the sermonic purpose is relevance or contextualization for one's contemporary audience.⁹⁵

To formulate the homiletical purpose, preachers must first discover the purpose of the text. In York's view, every sermon has a central theme that "arises from the text—which is why we say it must be discovered, coming from the main theme and thrust of the passage."⁹⁶ As mentioned before, since the author had his own intention with the text,

(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); and Wayne Grudem and Thomas R. Schreiner, "Luke," in *The English Standard Version of the Bible*, ed. Thomas Schreiner (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 1963.

⁹³In Christ-referencing texts, because Christ can be the center, as Christ-centered preaching argues, preachers can construct Christ-centered messages. In Christ-silent texts, however, preachers do not place Christ as the center. Rather, Christ motivates the audience to follow divine demand. The homiletical process of Christ-saturated preaching shows how Christ works as a homiletical motif.

⁹⁴For the purpose of preaching, see Daniel L. Akin, "Applying a Text-Driven Sermon," in *Text-Driven Preaching: God's Word at the Heart of Every Sermon*, ed. Daniel Akin, David Allen, and Ned Mathews (Nashville: B & H, 2010): 269-93; Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 26-33; Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 106-12; Sunukjian, *Invitation to Biblical Preaching*, 12; and York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 10-11.

⁹⁵Greidanus, however, distinguishes the sermonic purpose from the textual purpose because the sermonic purpose should be traced by God's progressive revelation from the Old Testament to the New Testament. See Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, 138.

⁹⁶York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 139.

preachers discover not only the meaning of the text but also the author's intention and the textual purpose in the exegetical process. In the theological process, preachers contextualize the exegetical ideas and the textual purpose for their contemporary audience with the theological principle. So, the sermonic purpose is generally the contextualized purpose of the text for the contemporary audience. In addition, the sermonic purpose of Christ-saturated preaching expects a specific response of the audience in Christ, with Christ, and through Christ. In other words, when the audience listens to relevant application in their lives, they first remember their new identity in Christ. The audience keeps application with Christ, who lives in us, and through Christ, who has power and grace.

In Jonah 4:1-11, for instance, the goal of the sermon is that the contemporary audience knows and practices God's great love in their lives. To meet this goal, preachers remind the audience of their new identity in Christ and encourage them to keep God's love by relying on the grace and power of Christ. Accordingly, the homiletical purpose is the same as the textual purpose of the author, knowing God's great love for sinners. Preachers lead the audience to know God's love through Christ who completes God's great love for sinners.

The Pastoral Context in Christ-Saturated Preaching

In distinguishing his preaching from other approaches to Christ-centered preaching, Chapell defines his preaching as pastoral:⁹⁷

I always believed (and still do) that I was preaching the content of specific biblical texts, but my commitment to expounding duty and doctrine seemed often to burden God's people rather than to equip them for lives reflecting the power and priorities of their Savior. Words that spoke powerfully to me of the way out of this dilemma

⁹⁷Bryan Chapell, "Bryan Chapell on Christ Centered Preaching: Exegesis, Eisegesis, and Redemptive Context," *Christianitytoday*, accessed October 18, 2014, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2013/july/bryan-chapell-on-christ-centered-preaching-part-one.html?paging=off>.

were in Christ's simple but profound admonition: "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).⁹⁸

To Chapell, all people are fallen, that is, hopeless without Christ. Only Christ is their hope and only he can save sinners. In this sense, Christ is the biblical solution for the FCF. So Chapell diligently includes Christ and his work in his sermons. However, placing Christ at the center of every sermon may neglect not only the meaning of the text, but also the pastoral context.

As a repeated act by pastors, week-by-week, sermon-by-sermon, preaching should be understood in the pastoral context.⁹⁹ Fred Craddock argues, "Except in the cases of itinerants and those whose ministry is via radio and television, preaching takes place in a pastoral context."¹⁰⁰ Craddock also claims that preaching is itself a "pastoral activity."¹⁰¹ Echoing Craddock, James Thompson agrees that preaching cannot be separated from the pastoral task because "preaching is inherently pastoral."¹⁰²

York states that the goal of preaching is to see "God change the lives of our listeners by the Word that is preached."¹⁰³ The audience should not only believe in Jesus Christ as their savior, but they should also respond to the preached message with obedience and become more mature Christians. Thus, preaching in the pastoral context has two goals. First, preachers proclaim the gospel for the salvation of sinners. Second,

⁹⁸Chapell, "Bryan Chapell on Christ Centered Preaching."

⁹⁹"One pericope at a time, the various aspects of Christian life, individual and corporate, are progressively and gradually brought into alignment with the will of God for the glory of God: this is the goal of preaching." See Kuruvilla, *The Privilege Text*, 112.

¹⁰⁰Fred B. Craddock, *Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 37.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 38. Craddock continues, "[P]reaching occurs in a pastoral context and is in many significant ways influenced by that context." Ibid., 39.

¹⁰²James Thompson, *Preaching Like Paul: Homiletical Wisdom for Today* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 86. Thompson's emphasis on preaching is that preaching always comes along with pastoral concern. That is, preachers, on the one hand, proclaim the gospel to the sinners, and, on the other hand, instruct the believers to be sanctified before the parousia. Ibid., 91.

¹⁰³York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 17.

preachers encourage the audience, who is already saved by Christ, to follow the divine demand to be mature Christians. Thus, the goal of preaching from every text is neither to explain biblical theology nor to present Christ as the center; rather, depending on the meaning of the text, preachers deal with the salvation of sinners or with the sanctified life of sinners.¹⁰⁴ Preachers should challenge their audiences to obey divine demands and to be mature Christians.

Preachers, then, understand preaching as something akin to the process of constructing a building.¹⁰⁵ As each step has a goal and eventually fits into the entire building process, each sermon fits the whole idea of the book and the entire Bible. Thus, preachers do not need to present Christ and his work as Christ-centered preaching does. They can simply remind their audiences of their new identity in Christ to motivate them to be mature Christians. In this way, Christ-saturated preaching leads audiences to believe in Christ and to follow godly instructions to be mature Christians rather than presenting Christ in every text with a similar message.¹⁰⁶ Accordingly, unlike Christ-centered preaching, Christ-saturated preaching respects the pastoral context as well as the entire goal of the Bible.

¹⁰⁴Kuruville understands the necessity of focusing on the greater degree of specificity for the chosen text for the week by week life-changing transactions of homiletics. Kuruville, *Privilege the Text*, 114-15.

¹⁰⁵For the image of the preacher as a builder, see Thompson, *Preaching like Paul*, 91-92.

¹⁰⁶Kuruville argues, "Preaching the text on a weekly basis, gradually unveiling the world projected by the canon. Pericopal theology, as defined here, will help bring that specific portion of the biblical text to bear upon the situation of the hearers, thereby aligning congregation to canon, God's people to God's word." Kuruville's concern about the specific context of the congregation is that the audience needs a specific message from the chosen text. Sermons on a weekly basis are perfect and are sufficient to change the life of the audience by the Holy Spirit and eventually guide the audience to the canon, the whole of God's word. Kuruville, *Privilege the Text*, 116.

Relevant Application in Christ-Saturated Preaching

Evangelical preachers are united in emphasizing the necessity of application. Application is not an option, but a must-do. Chapell correctly states, “Without application, the preacher has no reason to preach, because truth without application is useless.”¹⁰⁷ The significant point is that application should be derived from the text. York aptly points out the core of preaching regarding the proper application to the audience when he argues, “Our sermons . . . need to be saturated not only with the content of the text, but also with a practical application for our hearers.”¹⁰⁸

Robinson is also correct when he suggests that application is developed based on the author’s theological purpose.¹⁰⁹ Put differently, application is the contemporized truth for the audience’s real lives. Application has to be rooted in the theological truth derived from the text. In this sense, Wayne McDill is correct to emphasize “sameness” when he defines expository preaching.¹¹⁰ All demonstrate that application is first firmly rooted in the meaning of the text and, second, it reflects the author’s intended application, contemporized.

Christ-saturated preaching agrees that application is rooted in the text and the author’s theology. Kuruvilla’s concern about Christ-centered preaching is significant and relevant:

¹⁰⁷Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 199-200. See also Hershael W. York and Scott A. Blue, “Is Application Necessary in the Expository Sermon?” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 4 (1999): 70-84.

¹⁰⁸York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 77.

¹⁰⁹Robinson argues, “Application must come from the theological purpose of the biblical writer.” See Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 88. See also Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 120. Vines and Shaddix add their voice that practical application must be driven by theological implications, and the former can be done with integrity only when the latter is known.

¹¹⁰Wayne McDill, *12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: B&H, 2006), 8. “Expository preaching is that in which the preacher seeks to let the text speak again through the sermon with the same theological message.”

The sermon is not the place for such a display; rather, preaching is the event where the specific message of a particular text—its divine demand—is explicated and brought to bear upon the life of the children of God to transform them for the glory of God. If the preacher relates every text every Sunday to the larger theme of redemption . . . it reduces preaching to painting these big pictures every week.¹¹¹

Thus, Christ-saturated preaching definitely seeks relevant application from the meaning of the text and the author's intended application and then contemporizes it for life transformation. Thus, the pastoral context again guides preachers to find relevant application derived from the text instead of focusing on Christ in every text, for every sermon, and on every Sunday.

Christ: Homiletical Motif of Christ-Saturated Preaching

If the text has a direct reference to Christ, preachers can explicitly present Christ in a sermon as the author intended. Christ-silent texts, however, need a different approach. Christ-silent texts should make Christ-silent sermons. When the texts are Christ-silent, Christ can appear, but preachers are not required to make Christ the center of those texts. In Christ-silent texts, preachers should rely on Christ-saturated identity to motivate the audience to obey divine demands. In other words, Christ-saturated preaching reminds believers of their Christ-saturated identity, which in turn motivates them to keep ethical instruction. In doing so, Christ-saturated preaching respects the author's intent in Christ-silent texts and avoids legalism, which Christ-centered preaching rejects.

A Christ-saturated approach to expository preaching in Christ-silent texts originates from the Bible. The Israelites were required to keep God's commands after receiving their covenantal relationship with God by God's grace.¹¹² For instance, God

¹¹¹Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 240.

¹¹²This is same to the New Testament. After Paul explained Christ-saturated identity of believers justified by Christ and his death, he encouraged them to follow godly instruction. Polhill argues, "Paul used words in verses 1-2 which describe liturgical service, spiritual worship of God. Living in the world, we are not to live by its standards but to conduct ourselves with renewed minds, *the minds of God's new creatures in Christ*" (emphasis mine). See John B. Polhill, *Paul and His Letters* (Nashville: B&H, 1999), 297.

commanded the Israelites to obey the Decalogue in Exodus 20.¹¹³ Responding to divine demands with obedience is the divine mandate. Of course, obedience cannot be an attempt to gain righteousness by works. Rather, God reminded the Israelites of their covenantal relationship with Him in Exodus 20:2: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” So God had the Lordship over the Israelites and they had to respond obediently to what God commanded. In doing so, the Israelites could dwell in the Promise Land as God’s people.

According to Philippians 2:12-13, Paul demanded the hearer to obey divine instruction and to work out his or her own salvation. Human obedience is a required response of the hearer. This does not mean, however, that the hearer follows moral instruction simply by trying hard. Rather, Philippians 2:1-11 identifies that the hearer who confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord has a Christ-saturated identity. Therefore, human obedience is the response of the hearer to a divine demand after having a Christ-saturated identity.

Kuruvilla claims,

The keeping of divine demand . . . is the result of a prior relationship between God and his children: obedience, then, is a filial responsibility. It does not qualify one to become a child of God, but it behooves a child to align himself or herself to the demands of God, because he or she is already a child of God by grace through faith. Relationship demands responsibility. That responsibility . . . is the believer’s obedience of faith.¹¹⁴

The Israelites’ obedient response to the divine demand is not legalism, but grace-oriented obedience based on their covenantal identity with God.¹¹⁵ Likewise, the contemporary

¹¹³Thomas Schreiner argues, “First, God redeems Israel from Egypt, and then he gives the law, so obedience to the law is a response to God’s grace, not an attempt to gain righteousness by works.” Thomas Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 117-18.

¹¹⁴Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 208-9.

¹¹⁵Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ*, 117-18.

audience also has to respond to divine demands based on what Christ has done. Because of Christ, sinners are justified and Christ is in them.

Keller asserts that the audience cannot follow moral instruction simply by trying very hard: “The sermon shows how this practical and moral obligation is impossible to meet. The hearers are led to a seemingly dead end.”¹¹⁶ Keller means that Christians are sinners who cannot keep divine demands by their efforts. If preaching explains the meaning of the text and suggests application by simply asking the audience to obey, the audience confronts the same situation Keller mentions.

Without a Christ-saturated identity, the audience’s response to divine demands may become legalistic. In fact, without God’s grace fulfilled by Christ, no one can follow divine demands. Without Christ, no one has a reason to follow godly instructions. One who is justified by Christ, however, has a reason to conform to divine demands. Thus, Christ reminds the audience of their Christ-saturated identity and motivates them to perform divine demands through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The benefit of Christ-saturated preaching is that it makes a bridge between biblical exposition and relevant application through one’s Christ-saturated identity. Accordingly, Christ-saturated preaching enables preachers to explain faithfully the meaning of the text and to encourage their audiences to follow the message by remembering their identity in Christ, which is received only by God’s grace. The audience may fail to keep divine demands, but they realize that they still need God’s grace by remembering Christ-saturated identity. Without Christ and the consciousness of a Christ-saturated identity, the audience embraces legalism and attempts to gain merit with God through obedience to His commands. Contrarily, remembering their new identity in Christ leads the audience to practice divine demands as God’s people.

¹¹⁶Timothy Keller, “Moralism vs. Christ-Centered Exposition,” *Monergism*, accessed November 1, 2014, <http://www.monergism.com/moralism-vs-christ-centered-exposition-tim-keller>.

Kuruvilla rightly argues,

Because believers have already found new life in Christ, because they now have the Holy Spirit's empowerment, because they are now God's children, because they are impelled to live for God's glory, therefore they can now seek to obey the specifics of divine demand in each pericope that is preached. And in doing so pericope by pericope, they become progressively more Christlike.¹¹⁷

Accordingly, Christ-saturated preaching bridges the meaning of the text and application. The focal point is that because of Christ, the audience becomes God's people. Christ dwells in them, leads them, and works with them. Without remembering Christ-saturated identity, following godly instruction can become a legalistic burden. However, by remembering their Christ-saturated identity and obeying godly instruction, the audience can experience God's grace and gradually become more Christ-like. In this sense, in Christ-silent texts, even though Christ is not the central theme, the preacher motivates the audience to obey divine commands by God's grace and the Holy Spirit.

The Homiletical Process of Christ-Saturated Preaching

Preachers should remember that the audience is the target of their sermons. Two things can never be forgotten: first, the content of the sermon and, second, how they deliver the message in the pulpit. Preachers must keep their audience in mind. Finding the intended meaning of the text cannot be a sermon in itself. In other words, Christ-saturated preachers must contemporize the truth to apply it to their audience (2 Tim 3:16-17). Preaching has an object, the audience. When preachers proclaim the Word of God, God uses the message to teach, to rebuke, to correct, and to train God's people in righteousness so that they can be adequate, equipped for every good work for the glory of God. The act of preaching demands changes in the audience's lives. To achieve this purpose, preachers must pay attention to the text and develop messages with a homiletical idea and outline. In addition, remembering Christ-saturated identity is necessary for the

¹¹⁷Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 266.

audience to follow the instructions of the preached message by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

The controversy between exemplary preaching and Dutch redemptive-historical preaching during the 1940s ignited the Christ-centered preaching movement in the American pulpit. Dutch exemplary preaching, which was influenced by Darwinian evolutionary theory, theological liberalism, and its consequences in the nineteenth century, neglected God's redemptive work in the historical text and challenged audiences to follow the lives of biblical figures as models. Such efforts by Dutch exemplary preachers led to legalism.

Dutch redemptive-historical preaching criticized such an exemplaristic approach to preaching. Focusing on God's progressive revelation and continuity, Dutch redemptive-historical preaching attempted to disclose God's redemptive history, which runs throughout the historical narrative text. In other words, redemptive-historical advocates believe that the historical narrative text is designed to reveal God's redemptive history in Christ as unified rather than to introduce religious heroic acts of biblical figures. In addition, due to the reaction to the ethical emphasis of exemplary preaching from biblical figures, Dutch redemptive-historical preachers paid more attention to God's redemptive history. Such reaction to exemplary preaching, however, inevitably caused Dutch redemptive-historical preachers to neglect relevant application for their audiences. For redemptive-historical preachers, application was regarded as equal to the exposition of the preached text. Put differently, application was a response of the audience to God's redemptive work in Christ by the Holy Spirit. Redemptive-historical preachers did not ask their audiences to follow a biblical example but to acknowledge God's redemptive history.

Christ-centered preaching in the American pulpit tried not only to inherit the homiletics of Dutch redemptive-historical preaching but also to develop it in its own way. First, like Dutch redemptive-historical preaching, Christ-centered preaching pays attention to God's progressive revelation and continuity. Such a view of Scripture enables interpreters to disclose the inner-relationship between the two testaments and to understand the whole Bible as Christian Scripture.

Second, Christ-centered preaching expands the range of the preached text to the whole Bible. While Dutch redemptive-historical preaching aims to find God's redemptive history only from the historical narrative text, Christ-centered preaching attempts to apply Christocentricity to other genres as well. To accomplish this goal, Christ-centered approaches to preaching utilize Christ-centered biblical theology and find Christ or a connection to Christ in every text. Proponents of Christ-centered preaching assert that there is meaning in the text that the human authors did not know of when they wrote it. Only later revelation and later authors can decipher that meaning in relation to Christ in accordance with the divine Author's intent.¹¹⁸

Third, Christ-centered preaching aims to overcome the lack of application of Dutch redemptive-historical preaching. In reaction to exemplary preaching, Dutch redemptive-historical preaching paid more attention to God's redemptive history and neglected relevant application. Thus, Clowney, Greidanus, Goldsworthy, and Chapell together argue that relevant and concrete application is necessary.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸Greidanus, for instance, argues, "Whatever name we use, the important point is that a passage understood in the contexts of the whole Bible and redemptive history may reveal more meaning than its author intended originally." Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 233.

¹¹⁹Greidanus states, "Be concrete. Can you offer some concrete suggestions of what the hearers can do in response to the Word preached?" *Ibid.*, 350. See also Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 53; Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, 84-85; and Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 121.

Nevertheless, Christ-centered preaching faces much criticism. First, preaching Christ is the command of the Lord, but preaching Christ from every text is not warranted by the Bible. Luke 24 and John 5, which are used as proof texts for Christ-centered preaching, do not mean that every single text testifies to Christ. Rather, those texts reveal that Christ's sufferings and death, which are prophesied in the Old Testament, are fulfilled in the New.¹²⁰

Second, Christ-centered biblical theology often neglects or violates the original author's intent in order to move to Christ.¹²¹ Since the goal of interpretation is to discern authorial intent, Kuruvilla rightly warns that Christocentric interpretation neglects "the specific theology of individual texts in rush to correlate the OT with the NT, making the value of preaching from the OT doubtful, at best."¹²² As examined previously, Christ-centered biblical theology helps interpreters understand the Bible as a whole, but it does not prove that every single text is Christ-centered.

Third, the idea of a fuller sense in Christ-centered hermeneutics seemingly enables interpreters to find Christ or Christological significance in a text. However, as Riggs points out, the divine Author and the human authors together intended to communicate a single meaning for all of Scripture.¹²³ If there is more meaning of the text that the authors did not know but only the later authors could know, such interpretation may lead to hermeneutical bankruptcy and subjective interpretative results in relation to Christ. Thus, a fuller sense should be understood as an extension of and development

¹²⁰Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 250, emphasis in original.

¹²¹Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 368-69.

¹²²Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 239.

¹²³Riggs, "The 'Fuller Meaning' of Scripture," 226.

from the original author's intended meaning rather than the excessive view of Christ-centered hermeneutics that seeks added meaning in every text.¹²⁴

Fourth, even though advocates of Christ-centered preaching know the importance of relevant application, their sermons often seem to repeat the failure of Dutch redemptive-historical preaching. A Christ-centered hermeneutic pays much attention to God's redemption and grace in every text and overlooks ethical instructions as moral examples for believers. Since Christ-centered sermons are homiletical products of a Christ-centered hermeneutic, these sermons usually focus on God's redemption and grace without relevant application. Since Christ-centered preaching neglects unique features of the text and the author's theology, a similar application as well as a similar message is often repeated each Sunday.

Because of these shortcomings of Christ-centered preaching, an alternative approach to expository preaching is needed, that is, Christ-saturated preaching. Like Christ-centered preaching, Christ-saturated preaching has the goal of preaching Christ, but it differs from Christ-centered preaching in several key areas. First, Christ-saturated preaching is warranted by the Bible. Scripture teaches the salvation of sinners and the need for a sanctified life to glorify God.¹²⁵ Christ-saturated preaching, likewise, proclaims salvation of sinners through faith and encourages audiences to obey divine demands by remembering their Christ-saturated identity. Thus, Christ-saturated preaching is biblical.

Second, Christ-saturated preaching receives its theological legitimacy from justification and sanctification. Because of Christ, sinners can be saved, and, because of Christ, sinners can live for the glory of God. So, Christ-saturated preaching pays attention

¹²⁴For the limited view of fuller sense, see J. I. Packer, "Infallible Scripture and the Role of Hermeneutics," in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 350.

¹²⁵For instance, see 2 Tim 3:14-17.

to salvation through Christ and the need to live a godly life based on one's Christ-saturated identity. This point enables preachers to avoid the exemplary approach to preaching and to give a reason to their audiences to heed ethical instruction.

Third, Christ-saturated preaching does not force Christ-centered sermons on Christ-silent texts. Rather, Christ-saturated preaching pays attention to the author's intent in Christ-silent texts by stressing Christ-saturated identity as the motive and power for obedience. Christ-centered preaching, on the other hand, makes Christ-centered sermons out of Christ-silent texts, so it repeats a great single message from these texts.¹²⁶ Christ-saturated preaching, however, does not repeat a similar message, but it instead varies its message in accordance with the author's intended meaning of the text. Accordingly, Christ-saturated preaching has no burden to find a connection between Christ and the text or the need to place Christ at the center of every text.

Fourth, because of the emphasis on God's redemption and grace and reaction to legalism, Christ-centered preaching may neglect ethical instructions and resultantly face sharp criticism for its lack of application. Christ-saturated preaching, however, willingly gives specific moral instructions derived from the author's intent. Nevertheless, Christ-saturated preaching avoids legalism and challenges the audience to keep spiritual disciplines in their daily lives by helping them remember their Christ-saturated identity.

Fifth, Christ-saturated preaching enhances expository preaching by emphasizing Christ and one's Christ-saturated identity. Traditional expository preaching rightly pays attention to the author's intent and exposition of the text. Expository preaching also gives relevant application in relation to the meaning of the text. The benefit of Christ-saturated preaching is that it bridges the gap between biblical exposition and relevant application through Christ-saturated identity. Accordingly, Christ-saturated

¹²⁶Daniel M. Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2001), 296.

preaching enables preachers to explain faithfully the meaning of the text and to encourage audiences to follow the message by remembering their identity in Christ, which is received only by God's grace. Christ-saturated preaching is thus faithful to the meaning of the text and leads audiences to glorify God through their lives.

APPENDIX

COMPARISONS OF THE CHRIST-CENTERED
APPROACHES OF CLOWNEY, GREIDANUS,
GOLDSWORTHY, AND CHAPELL

Issue	Clowney	Greidanus	Goldsworthy	Chapell
Term	Redemptive-historical preaching	Christocentric preaching	Gospel-centered preaching	Christ-centered preaching
Origin	Vos and Dutch redemptive-historical preaching	Dutch redemptive-historical preaching	Donald Robinson	Clowney and Greidanus
Proof Texts	Luke 24:27-45 and John 5:39-40, 46	Luke 24:27-45 and John 5:39-40, 46	Luke 24:27-45 and John 5:39-40, 46	Rom 15:4 and 2 Tim 3:16-17
Christ-Centeredness	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Biblical Theology	God's progressive revelation and continuity	God's progressive revelation and continuity	God's progressive revelation and continuity	God's progressive revelation and continuity
Fuller Sense	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ways to Christ	Symbolism and typology	Seven ways	Macro-typology	FCF and redemptive signals
Christ-centered Messages	The person and work of Christ	The person, work, and teaching of Christ	The person and work of Christ	The person and work of Christ
Epochal Structure	Six biblical epochs	No	Three biblical epochs	No
Overarching Theme	God's covenant	No	The kingdom of God	No
Approach to Christ-centered preaching	Exegetical and biblical theology	Exegetical and biblical theology	Exegetical and biblical theology	Exegetical and pastoral approach

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ABSTRACT

CHRIST-SATURATED PREACHING: A HERMENEUTICAL AND HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS OF CHRIST-CENTERED PREACHING AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

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The primary purpose of this dissertation is to present a Christ-saturated approach to expository preaching. To accomplish this goal, I evaluate the hermeneutics and homiletics of Christ-centered approaches to preaching. In doing so, Christ-saturated preaching has all of the strengths of Christ-centered preaching while resolving some of the inherent hermeneutical and homiletical difficulties in prevailing models of Christ-centered preaching.

Chapter 1 explores some confused and complicated definitions of Christ-centered approaches to preaching, examines the current hermeneutical and homiletical issues of Christ-centered approaches to preaching, and states the necessity to present an alternative approach to preaching Christ.

Chapter 2 traces the history of Christ-centered preaching back to the controversy between the exemplaristic preaching and redemptive-historical preaching that raged in the Netherlands in the 1940s. At the same time, this chapter explores how redemptive-historical preaching influenced the American pulpit through Geerhardus Vos, Edmund Clowney, Dennis Johnson, Sidney Greidanus, Graeme Goldsworthy, and Bryan Chapell.

Chapter 3 examines various definitions and justification of Christ-centered approaches to preaching. This is an essential step toward evaluating the hermeneutics and homiletics of Christ-centered preaching in chapters 4 and 5.

Chapter 4 analyzes and evaluates the hermeneutics of Christ-centered approaches to preaching by comparing and contrasting their interpretive methods and ways to find the meaning of the text, the author's intent, and Christ from every text through Christ-centered biblical theology.

Chapter 5 explores the homiletics of Christ-centered preaching, focusing on the ways of finding Christ or a connection to Christ and of applying the text and its significance to the audience. In addition, the homiletics of Christ-centered preaching is evaluated, determining whether or not Christ-centered messages satisfy the pastoral context and the needs of the audience.

Chapter 6 suggests some disciplines of a Christ-saturated approach to expository preaching, which satisfies the pastoral context and the needs of the audience as well as the author's intended meaning and his theology. This chapter concludes that Christ-centered preaching not only neglects the unique features of the text and the author's intent and theology, but it also ignores the context of the audience. Christ-saturated preaching can be an alternative to preaching the Word of God while still respecting the text and the context of the audience.

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