

## A HERMENEUTICAL EVALUATION OF THE CHRISTOCENTRIC HERMENEUTIC

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*How to study and teach the Bible are of utmost importance for a pastor. The Christocentric hermeneutic has proposed a modification to a grammatical-historical hermeneutical approach. This article maintains that such an alteration is not scripturally warranted and that the grammatical-historical method is not only justified by Scripture but also more than sufficient to discover the glories of Christ as perfectly presented in God's Word. Accordingly, a Christ-centered ministry not only honors Christ in the pulpit by proclaiming Him but also in the study by handling His Word the way He demands.*

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Preaching occupies a central place in the pastor's ministry. It is mandated by God (2 Tim 4:1–2) for every season (2 Tim 4:2b) in order to feed and equip the flock (2 Tim 4:2b; cf. Eph 4:12; John 21:15). It is vital for the church (Eph 4:12–13), pivotal in one's ministry (1 Tim 4:16), and of the utmost importance to God (2 Tim 4:1; cf. 2 Tim. 2:14–15). For this reason, God demands we rightly divide His Word (2 Tim 2:15). We need to care about interpreting the text rightly as much as God does. However, what does it mean to “get it right”? Some have argued that preaching that is not Christocentric is sub-Christian. It falls short of Paul's declaration that he preaches Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor 2:2). Such an allegation is of the utmost seriousness as it strikes at the core of one of the most important tasks for a pastor.

This dilemma illustrates the need not only to have an exegetical process or hermeneutical knowledge but, even more, hermeneutical *conviction*. We need to be convinced our hermeneutical approach is one that rightly divides the Word of Truth. The goal of this article is to evaluate the claims of the Christocentric hermeneutic to that end, to give us confidence and boldness that a grammatical-historical method not only honors what God has commanded us to do, but also brings the greatest glory to Christ.

### Hermeneutical Definitions

As we begin to investigate the Christocentric method, we need to be familiar with two hermeneutical concepts: meaning and significance. These ideas are critical in articulating how any approach believes a text works and how we should understand it.

Meaning refers to the particular ideas within the text in a given context.<sup>1</sup> Within this we encounter two issues. First, we must define who/what sets the boundaries for what a text legitimately communicates. Options include author, text, reader, or community.<sup>2</sup> Second, we must also define how the dual-authorship of Scripture plays into determining meaning. This wrestles with whether God's intent matches the human writer's intent or if He intends more than what was communicated in the original context. These issues help us understand the goals and methodological limits within a hermeneutical approach.

Significance is another major concept in hermeneutics. Significance refers to the implications and applications a text can have. Put differently, meaning, like any idea, has consequences and significance is the sum of all those various consequences. The major issue within significance is how one articulates the connection between meaning and significance. After all, not every possible implication legitimately corresponds to the meaning of a text.<sup>3</sup> One must prove the proposed inference is valid because it matches the nature of what is said and why it is said. How (if at all) an approach does this is another key matter in evaluating a hermeneutical viewpoint.

In sum, meaning and significance are two important ideas in assessing a hermeneutical approach. We want to know if a method puts the locus of meaning with the author, text, reader, or community. We also want to know how it frames how dual-authorship operates in this. In addition, we want to assess how an approach draws implications from a text. By answering the questions of meaning and significance, we can better grasp how a method works and thereby where the points of contention might be.

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<sup>1</sup> E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), 11–13; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 252–53; Robert L. Thomas, “The Principle of Single Meaning,” in *Evangelical Hermeneutics*, ed. Robert L. Thomas (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 155–56.

<sup>2</sup> Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wong Publishing, 1975), 27; P. B. Payne, “The Fallacy of Equating Meaning with the Human Author's Intention,” *JETS* 20 (1977): 249; H. G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed. (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1975), 388; Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 204–5.

<sup>3</sup> For example, one cannot simply say a valid inference of “love one another” is to support people in their sin because that is the loving thing to do. John's definition of love would not tolerate that extrapolation (cf. 1 John 4:8–10). Another might be that since the Bible describes God having a “hand” (cf. Deut 4:34) that He must have a physical body (cf. John 4:24). The purpose the author has in describing God's hand does not intend for that type of inference.

## Explaining the Christocentric Hermeneutic

With this in mind, we can proceed to contemplate the Christocentric hermeneutic. In doing so, we need to remember hermeneutical systems are not just a set of interpretative rules but are often driven by theological frameworks which justify a system's goals and method. Accordingly, to adequately grasp their approach, we need to wrestle through three major issues: *what* is the Christocentric hermeneutic, *how* it achieves its goals, and *why* it aims for such interpretation. In dealing with these three questions we can have a complete picture of how the Christocentric hermeneutic works.

### What Is the Christocentric Hermeneutic?

The Christocentric approach has a long and varied history. The focus of this article concerns modern developments of this perspective. Even within this variation exists.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, modern-day proponents stress certain features which distinguish their movement. Understanding these characteristics help us see the defining marks and goals of their hermeneutic. I would suggest there are at least six emphases that comprise the *sine qua non* of Christocentric hermeneutics.

1. The Christocentric approach fundamentally desires to present every text in its relation with the person and work of Christ.<sup>5</sup>

2. The Christocentric approach stresses the unity of Scripture. Because of this, it is sometimes called a redemptive-historical hermeneutic (however, some use the term without referring to a Christocentric model).<sup>6</sup>

3. The Christocentric approach emphasizes the theology of Scripture. It contrasts "moral models" which preach narratives as purely examples of ethical behavior. As opposed to morality, the Christocentric view desires to preach doctrine and theology, a theology of Christ and the gospel.<sup>7</sup>

4. The Christocentric approach stresses the need for grammatical-historical interpretation as a foundation for its method. It contrasts itself with allegorical systems in the early church as well as in recent history. To its supporters, viewing Rahab's red scarf as a symbol of Christ's blood is an illegitimate interpretation and use of a

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<sup>4</sup> See Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 76–99; Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015), 70–92.

<sup>5</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 279; Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Model* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 203–5.

<sup>6</sup> Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "Walt Kaiser on Christ-Centered Hermeneutics," in *Christ-Centered Preaching and Teaching*, ed. Ed Stetzer (Nashville, TN: Lifeway, 2013), 14–15; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 203–5; David Murray, "David Murray on Christ-Centered Hermeneutics," in *Christ-Centered Preaching and Teaching*, 9.

<sup>7</sup> Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 294; Murray, "David Murray on Christ-Centered Hermeneutics," 9.

text.<sup>8</sup> As we will further discuss, while they desire to proclaim a theology of Christ in every text, they desire to do so with some sort of expositional base.<sup>9</sup>

5. At the same time, the Christocentric approach acknowledges the need to move beyond grammatical-historical hermeneutics to a theological method. It contrasts itself with a Christotelic approach which abides within a grammatical-historical framework. The Christotelic view upholds the original meaning of a text while acknowledging a text's implications may ultimately link with Christ.<sup>10</sup> The Christocentric method views this as not enough.<sup>11</sup> To it, Christ is *in* every text. He is somehow the *topic* of every passage. Scriptural texts prefigure Christ's work or intentionally show who Christ is or is not.<sup>12</sup> Some caution here is required, for not every supporter of the Christocentric hermeneutic agrees on exactly how this works.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, they agree that a Christotelic/grammatical-historical approach is not sufficient.

6. The Christocentric approach emphasizes its *Christian* nature. It is Christian because it focuses upon the gospel and so is at times called gospel-centered preaching. It is Christian because it derives from the apostles and so is at times called apostolic preaching.<sup>14</sup> Christ-centered teaching is what makes teaching Scripture distinctively *Christian*. Accordingly, language of preaching and teaching the Bible as Christian Scripture is also adopted.<sup>15</sup> To be clear, just because one uses such language or terminology does not automatically mean one engages in the Christocentric hermeneutic. Nevertheless, such phraseology is found in the movement.

These six emphases comprise key elements in the movement. It endeavors to proclaim how every text relates to Christ and His work. It stresses the need for an expositional foundation to explain a distinctively Christian theology (as opposed to morality). Although it acknowledges the need to avoid allegory, it still believes Christ is the subject of every text. This marks true Christian preaching.

<sup>8</sup> Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 88.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 279–85; Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 75–79.

<sup>10</sup> Daniel I. Block, “Daniel Block on Christ-Centered Hermeneutics,” in *Christ-Centered Preaching and Teaching*, 6.

<sup>11</sup> Murray, “David Murray on Christ-Centered Hermeneutics,” 10; Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 24–30.

<sup>12</sup> Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 24–30; Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 76–79; Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 11. Although some might want to qualify how one sees Christ in every text, Greidanus sums up the sentiment well: “Since the literary context of the Old Testament is the New Testament, this means that the Old Testament must be understood in the context of the New Testament. And since the heart of the New Testament is Jesus Christ, this means that every message from the Old Testament must be seen in the light of Christ,” *Preaching Christ*, 51.

<sup>13</sup> See discussion in Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 76–99.

<sup>14</sup> Bryan Chapell, “Bryan Chapell on Christ-Centered Hermeneutics,” in *Christ-Centered Preaching and Teaching*, 18–19; Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures*, 1st ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2007), 62–238.

<sup>15</sup> Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 15–21; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 39–43.

## How the Christocentric Hermeneutic Achieves Its Goals

Having established key ideas in the Christocentric approach, we can cover how promoters of this view practically achieve those goals. We can frame such methodology in terms of meaning and significance. Regarding meaning, as mentioned, the modern Christocentric approach rejects allegorical methods found throughout church history. Adherents frequently distance themselves from the school of Alexandria, known for its spiritualizing hermeneutic.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, as noted above, this approach rejects analogies of Rahab's red scarf or the formation of Eve as a prophecy of the formation of the church.<sup>17</sup> Christocentric advocates repeatedly state the concern for "right interpretation" and not a "forced interpretation."<sup>18</sup> Along that line, the Christocentric position asserts the need for exegesis and expositional preaching. It affirms the need to understand the author's intent and thereby to understand it in its context.<sup>19</sup> Hence, relative to meaning, this view would initially advocate authorial intent.

When it comes to significance, the approach becomes more complex and, as we will see, complicates how it precisely defines meaning. The Christocentric hermeneutic concentrates on a variety of practical techniques to connect a text to Christ. Initially, it would point out how texts work in God's plan in history, which culminates with Christ. Hence, one can show how certain ideas of the Old Testament will have repercussions in progressive revelation that impact our understanding of Christ. These methods are technically Christotelic in nature. As discussed, the Christocentric hermeneutic does not disregard these ideas but says they do not go far enough. They are not the only tools in the arsenal for a preacher or teacher.<sup>20</sup>

For this reason, proponents suggest additional frameworks to show a more direct association with Christ. One deals with a fallen condition focus, which shows how a text addresses some kind of issue resulting from our fallen state. As a result of this, since Christ deals with that condition, we can show every text points to Christ and the gospel.<sup>21</sup> Every text operates as a window into the gospel.<sup>22</sup> Another method is to make an analogy between an event of the past and the work of Christ. Yet another method sets forth a contrast between particular characters or events and who Christ is and how He succeeds when they fail.<sup>23</sup>

One particular method singled out by the Christocentric hermeneutic is typology. This is slightly different than analogy because analogy deals strictly with the

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<sup>16</sup> Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 76–90; Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 75–77; Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 103–5.

<sup>17</sup> Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 76.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>19</sup> Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 75.

<sup>20</sup> Murray, "David Murray on Christ-Centered Hermeneutics," 9–10; Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 106.

<sup>21</sup> Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 269–75.

<sup>22</sup> Chapell, "Bryan Chapell on Christ-Centered Hermeneutics," 19.

<sup>23</sup> Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 310–12; Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 106–8; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 191–205.

area of significance, but typology deals with both meaning and significance. Typology understands how a person, event, or item reflects a certain theological idea or function which culminates in Christ. It discovers patterns in the Scripture and shows how such repetition (type) was always depicting the culmination of the idea (anti-type).<sup>24</sup> Within this, there is some aspect of intentional foreshadowing.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, typology is not merely an implication but part of what the texts discuss and purpose. One should read a typological text about Christ because, in fact, it is.

At this point, one may not have too strong of an objection to what the Christocentric hermeneutic proposes. After all, redemptive history does move to Christ (Acts 13:13–41; Rom 10:4; Gal 4:4). Texts at time do show people’s fallen condition and by implication, their need for Christ (Gen 3:1–15). Old Testament entities like the sacrificial system reflect a theology of God’s holiness, which Christ satisfies (cf. Leviticus 1–4; Hebrews 9:1–13)—a typological relationship. The controversial matter is not “how” one generally may link a text with Christ or even how it works in certain examples. Rather, the controversy ensues when these frameworks are put on every text of Scripture. Because the Christocentric hermeneutic insists that *all* texts must speak of Christ, the way they interpret and/or apply certain passages may make some uncomfortable.

For instance, a fallen condition focus points to how God’s forgiveness of David in the Bathsheba incident shows David’s need and dependence upon the gospel.<sup>26</sup> He is fallen as we are and needs God’s grace in Christ. Wisdom literature points out how we are sinful and how we need the One who embodies wisdom, Christ (Prov 8:22; cf. Col 1:15).<sup>27</sup> Analogy (both positive and contrastive) and typology generate some interesting results. The darkness surrounding Abram at the founding of the Abrahamic covenant parallels Christ’s own darkness at the cross (Gen 15:12; cf. Matt 27:45).<sup>28</sup> Israel’s exodus is a “faint shadow” of the spiritual exodus believers experience in Christ.<sup>29</sup> Achan’s trouble and punitive death (Josh 7:24–25) correlates with Jesus’ own death on a cross.<sup>30</sup> Samson’s rejection by his tribe mirrors how Jesus would be rejected.<sup>31</sup> Samson’s victorious death is a picture of the victorious death of One who would not fail as Samson did.<sup>32</sup> David and Goliath become a picture of how the ultimate David would vanquish sin, Satan, and death because all of those are derivations of how the Seed would crush the serpent’s head.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, just as

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<sup>24</sup> Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 105–14; Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 200–15.

<sup>25</sup> Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 77.

<sup>26</sup> Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 307.

<sup>27</sup> Edmund P. Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1988), 175–76.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 50–51.

<sup>29</sup> Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 298–99.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 311. Technically, this is part of a greater discussion on how Proverbs 15:27 interrelates with Christ’s life. Nevertheless, the connections between that text, Achan, and Christ are difficult to sustain.

<sup>31</sup> Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery*, 17.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 30. The OT does make a connection between Gen 3:15 with other messianic texts. Interestingly enough, it uses consistent language to do so (cf. Num

David's men brought him water that was precious (2 Sam 23:16), so the new David brings us the precious water of life (John 4:10–11).<sup>34</sup> David's refusal to curse back when cursed (2 Sam 16:5–12) mirrors the Messiah who is also subjected to curse without resistance.<sup>35</sup> Naboth's death at the hand of false witnesses (1 Kings 21:13–14) parallels Jesus' own death with false witnesses.<sup>36</sup> Esther's willingness to lay down her own life (Esth 4:16) foreshadows the readiness of Christ to do the same with His own life.<sup>37</sup> The admonition in Proverbs to not take bribes (Prov 15:27) can only be truly fulfilled in Christ who can redeem us from our partiality.<sup>38</sup> After all, Jesus' own redeeming death occurred by bribery (Matt 27:1–20) but overcame such corruption to give us life.<sup>39</sup>

What is wrong with the above suggestions? Some may argue the assertions above seemed "forced." We can be more specific than that. The problem revolves around how significance (implication) relates to meaning. As discussed, valid implications must match what the author said and why he said it.<sup>40</sup> In the examples above, the implications seem to go out of the bounds of what the author purposed. The author of 2 Samuel does not seem to intend for God's forgiveness of David to show something about the gospel. Rather, the focus seems to be upon the fall of the Davidic dynasty (cf. 2 Sam 12:11–14).<sup>41</sup> Likewise, the author of Proverbs states that his proverbs are to instruct about righteous living (Prov 1:1–7), not show our iniquity as the Christocentric hermeneutic suggested.<sup>42</sup>

The same logic applies to the analogies made above between Christ and Abraham, Achan, Samson, David, Esther, or Naboth. The authors of those texts do not seem to discuss any sort of foreshadowing or paralleling.<sup>43</sup> Thus, it appears the Christocentric hermeneutic is not deriving these implications from the author's intent but

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24:17; Ps 68:21; 110:5–6; Hab 3:13). In other words, one cannot merely see the crushing of the head and make the association. The bar of proof must be higher since the OT itself has formulaic language to indicate a messianic reference.

<sup>34</sup> Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery*, 159.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>36</sup> Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 311. See above; Johnson appeals to Naboth as part of a chain of texts dealing with bribery and links that with Christ's death, which redeems the believer from such corruption.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 279.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 311. Johnson technically here appeals to other stories in the Old Testament that involve bribery to prove his point. The question is whether Proverbs 15:27 is incorporated by the author of those texts and whether in fact those texts (like Naboth) have intentionally links with the New. In other words, Johnson has appealed to a series of correlations (significance) which are questionable. This is in fact the main issue of the Christocentric hermeneutic.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> The focus upon authorial intent is because the Christocentric hermeneutic itself advocates such a position. See above discussion.

<sup>41</sup> Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 371–73.

<sup>42</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1–15*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 176–80.

<sup>43</sup> As will later be discussed, this is not to say parallels could not be made. For example, one could talk of David's link with the Davidic covenant which has bearing upon Christ. This could for example be how Judas relates to Psalm 69:25 and 109:8. Those passages contextually build off of the Davidic covenant (cf. 2 Sam 7:9–14; Ps 69:13 [Heb., v. 14], 16 [Heb., v. 17]; 109:21, 26). Even more, language of those

from something else.<sup>44</sup> That is why such interpretations or applications seem forced, which is the very opposite of what the Christocentric hermeneutic desires.<sup>45</sup>

Hence, the Christocentric hermeneutic has a practical method for seeing how a text discusses Christ. Within this we begin to see the problem. The problem is not initially with its viewpoint on meaning. The Christocentric hermeneutic affirms authorial intent. The problem is with how it frames the significance of a passage. Their instance on making every text speak of Christ and their way of accomplishing this produce implications that do not seem to fit with the main purpose of a passage. This imprecise connection between meaning and significance is the main dilemma in the Christocentric hermeneutic. In fact, the misconnection between meaning and significance is at times so great the suggested implications seem to give a new thrust to the text. In those cases the proposed significance appears to rewrite the meaning of the text and thereby undermine the Christocentric hermeneutic's emphasis on authorial intent. Thus, the Christocentric hermeneutic's claim to adhere to authorial intent seems to be at odds with the applications it suggests.

### Why It Aims for Such Interpretation

The way the Christocentric approach resolves the tension between meaning and significance is through its theological framework. Advocates of the hermeneutic appeal to specific passages as well as a larger biblical theological rationale to show that their goals and method are justified.

We can begin with looking at the specific passages cited by the redemptive-historical hermeneutic. They remind us Paul proclaims Christ crucified (1 Cor

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psalms is used by the prophets of the Messiah (cf. Ps 69:13 [Heb., 14]; Isa 49:8). Hence, one can demonstrate an intentional establishment of Davidic theology originally in those psalms, which not only potentially has legitimate implications on Messiah but also that the prophets have confirmed. The dots connect toward the New Testament. If one could prove that a narrative explicated a certain theological idea that has ramifications upon later revelation, that would be legitimate. However, that is not how the Christocentric hermeneutic frames the argumentation to these issues. See next footnote for an example. Furthermore, with the argumentation in this note, a different emphasis on the Old Testament would ensue. The primary emphasis would be upon mastering the theological concepts the author established so that when its implications are connected with Christ, one can see the full import that has on Christology. In other words, without studying thoroughly the Old Testament text exegetically, one lessens the theological weight that is attributed to Christ when a connection is made. This is a repeated problem that will be highlighted through this article.

<sup>44</sup> That is indeed the case. See Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 30–31. In dealing with the preaching of 1 Samuel 17 (David and Goliath), Goldsworthy argues both a moral approach (David as model) and a typological approach (David's victory a picture of Christ's victory) are valid. The reason he provides is "the overwhelming evidence of the New Testament is that the testimony of the Old Testament to Christ has priority over its testimony to the authentic Christian life in today's world... Jesus is thus the primary goal of all the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament" (30–31). Note that Goldsworthy's argumentation is not based upon anything within 1 Samuel 17 itself that sets up for a parallel in some way but a greater deductive theological framework that produces the result. This will be further discussed in the next section.

<sup>45</sup> See previous discussion on the priorities of the Christocentric hermeneutic.

1:23).<sup>46</sup> The apostle even states he determined to know nothing among the Corinthians except Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor 2:2).<sup>47</sup> Later in 2 Corinthians, Paul repeats the sentiment, stating his proclamation that Jesus is Lord (2 Cor 4:5). These statements suggest Christ is the exclusive proclamation of the apostle. This is strengthened by his statement in Colossians 1:28: “Him [Christ] we proclaim.”<sup>48</sup> Such statements seem to define the nature of Paul’s ministry. Accordingly, those in the Christocentric camp claim Paul is Christ-centered in all of his work and preaching. This demands everything relate to Christ. *Every* text must be read about Christ because to those in the Christocentric approach, Paul demands every text be about Christ and His redemptive work.<sup>49</sup>

Advocates for the Christocentric hermeneutic also argue this accords with Jesus’ own hermeneutic. In Luke 24:27, they claim Jesus explained all the Scripture in light of Himself. The phrases “Moses and the prophets” as well as “all Scripture” in that verse demonstrate Christ is found comprehensively throughout the Old Testament. Through and through, it speaks of Him.<sup>50</sup> Along that line, the Christocentric view also argues from Ephesians 1:10. Goldsworthy contends since Christ is the summation of *all* things (Eph 1:10), everything in creation and history is always categorically about Christ.<sup>51</sup> Everything explains and points to the One who fulfills everything.<sup>52</sup> Hence, the Scripture is typological and so everything in creation and revelation reflects Christ.

As we noted above, part of the Christocentric hermeneutic’s problem results from the determination to find Christ in *every* text. The counter is simply that the statements of the New Testament demand such a goal. This is what Jesus and Paul mandate. Thus, this is the way interpretation and preaching must overall operate. Scriptural claims support the goal of the Christocentric hermeneutic.

In addition, the redemptive-historical hermeneutic appeals to a biblical theological rationale in Scripture to justify its practical method. Overall, it points to the unity of Scripture. The Bible is one book, written ultimately by one divine author, dealing with the overarching theme of God’s redemption in Christ. For this reason, God wills that every text contributes in some way to that theme. That is inherent of every text

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<sup>46</sup> Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 80; Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 1, 32.

<sup>47</sup> Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 1, 32; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 5.

<sup>48</sup> Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 75.

<sup>49</sup> Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 80. Chapell nuances this by saying “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. The particulars of a passage need to be related to the overall purpose of Scripture.”

<sup>50</sup> Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 46–48, 84–85.

<sup>51</sup> Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 187–88.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

as scriptural revelation.<sup>53</sup> Because this is the way Scripture works, seeing implications about Christ and redemption in every text is not foreign to the author's intent but completely compatible with God's intent in the text.

Such logic serves as a partial basis for typology. The unity of Scripture and God's sovereignty over His plan support that God intended the events and persons of the Old Testament to operate typologically. Scholars point to typological patterns like Christ and Adam (Rom 5:12–21) as well as the sacrificial system and Christ's death (Heb 9:9–12) to initially argue the Scripture works typologically.<sup>54</sup> They also observe how the Old Testament in and of itself works typologically. The first exodus leads to a second (Hos 11:1–11), physical circumcision pointed to a circumcision of the heart (Deut 30:6), creation leads to new creation (Isa 65:17), and David leads to a new David (Hos 3:5).<sup>55</sup> The Christocentric view uses this to argue the Old Testament has an inherent typological nature that sets up for the New Testament. With that, proponents of the redemptive-historical hermeneutic contend God intentionally designed all things in His plan to discuss Christ. Even if the human author was not aware, they were intended by God.<sup>56</sup> Accordingly, drawing typological inferences about Christ abides in authorial intent because God ordained it this way.

For the Christocentric hermeneutic, all of this comes together in the way the New Testament uses the Old. Redemptive history, unity of revelation, and the typological operation of Scripture are all part of the interpretative framework of the apostles. They point to numerous examples where the New Testament writers seem to reinterpret the Old and change its meaning to talk of Christ. For instance, Hosea 11:1, which discussed Israel's exodus, now talks of Christ's deliverance from Herod (Matt 2:15). Jeremiah 31:15 spoke of Israel's exile but now discusses the tragic circumstances surrounding Christ's birth (Matt 2:18). The list can go on.<sup>57</sup>

The Christocentric approach argues these examples reflect a hermeneutical shift that occurred in the Christ-event. Christ's coming unveils the full meaning of a text and allows the apostles to see it. His explanation of Scripture on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:24–26) reoriented the disciples' worldview and hermeneutic. It unlocked the symbolic meaning of the Old Testament. It showed the final ramifications of Scripture's unity, its ultimate horizon.<sup>58</sup> It established the Christ-event, the gospel, as the hermeneutical key for all revelation.<sup>59</sup> Paul expresses this sentiment in describing the Old Testament as that which makes one wise unto *salvation* (2 Tim 3:15).<sup>60</sup> Thus, the New Testament should be the interpretative grid over the Old and "every message

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<sup>53</sup> Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 3–5; Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 67–86.

<sup>54</sup> Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 224–29.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 228–29.

<sup>57</sup> Robert L. Thomas, "The New Testament Use of the Old Testament," *MSJ* 13, no. 1 (2002): 79–98. Thomas provides a list of when the apostles potentially re-read the OT.

<sup>58</sup> Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 138–39.

<sup>59</sup> Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 54, 84.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

from the Old Testament must be seen in light of Jesus Christ.”<sup>61</sup> Accordingly, the apostolic (and even Christ’s own) hermeneutic shows that typology and the unity of Scripture are not merely incidental or just limited to certain examples. Rather, these form the framework of how the New Testament writers read Scripture, how Scripture operates, and what God always meant them to signify.<sup>62</sup> Hence, the Christocentric hermeneutic contends this is how New Covenant believers must read sacred writ if they are to abide by God’s intent.

As we have seen, the problem of the Christocentric approach concerns how its proposed implications (significance) do not tightly correspond with the author’s intent. Advocates resolve this by clarifying how intent works in Scripture. In doing so, they deal with one of the major questions about the nature of meaning: the way dual authorship operates in Scripture.<sup>63</sup> Their response is that while they believe in authorial intent, they distinguish the divine author’s intent from the human writer. This allows them to draw implications that may not cohere with the human author’s purpose but match God’s greater agenda. For the Christocentric hermeneutic, this model is based upon what the Scripture demonstrates in biblical theology as well as claims in specific passages. Consequently, objections against such an approach ignore the theological realities established in redemptive history and are more a product of the enlightenment as opposed to what God demands.<sup>64</sup>

### Evaluating the Christocentric Hermeneutic

#### The Question Posed: Are There Exceptions to the Rule?

In thinking through the Christocentric hermeneutic we can find much to applaud. For instance, its stress on the need to teach Scripture’s theology is important in an age that depicts the Bible as a self-help book that is devoid of truth and doctrine. Its stress on Scripture’s unity and redemptive history is also important in countering the destructiveness of higher criticism as well as supporting the positive rediscovery of biblical theology. Furthermore, its stress on Scripture as the grounds for how we interpret Scripture is an important reminder. That should drive us back to Scripture to make sure our hermeneutical framework matches what the Bible demands.

In doing so, how should we think through the Christocentric proposal? The question, “Are there exceptions to the hermeneutical rule?” is a good way to frame the matter. On one hand, from the discussion above, we observe the Christocentric hermeneutic affirms traditional hermeneutics as the “rule.” It explicitly affirms exposition, exegesis, and authorial intent. It upholds grammatical-historical interpretation as the core.

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<sup>61</sup> Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 51; Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 54, 84; Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 137.

<sup>62</sup> Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 153.

<sup>63</sup> See above discussion. Concerning meaning, two critical questions exist: the determiner of meaning in a text and the relation of dual-authorship in the biblical text.

<sup>64</sup> Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 138–40.

This emphasis is commendable for it is biblical. Even the most basic observations from sacred writ confirm a literal-grammatical-historical approach. Scripture is literal in that its meaning is the author's intent. The Scripture expresses its ideas as "thus says the Lord" (Exod 4:22; Isa 7:7), "as the prophet says" (Acts 7:48), and the very communication of God (2 Tim 3:16). The Bible asserts its meaning, not whatever the reader desires, the community imposes, or what a text could denote. Rather, it is what the author said, authorial intent. That intent is expressed through language (grammar) in light of the facts of history. The biblical writers demonstrate this in how they pay attention to words (Josh 23:14; Heb 4:1–11), phrases (Jer 26:18; Mark 1:1–3), and even grammatical features (Gal 3:16). They have a linguistic approach to the text. Similarly, the biblical writers acknowledge the historical background of Scripture by discussing history (Deut 1:1–3:29), explaining historical backgrounds (Mark 7:1–11), as well as being aware of their place in God's redemptive historical plan (Neh 9:1–38; Acts 13:13–41). The Scripture affirms the principle of grammatical-historical interpretation. Again, the Christocentric hermeneutic places this at its core. There is no controversy in that regard. Proponents acknowledge and champion grammatical-historical approach as the hermeneutical rule of Scripture.

On the other hand, the question the Christocentric hermeneutic approach raises is whether there can be exceptions or modifications to that rule. This brings us back to the central dilemma within the Christocentric approach: the connection between meaning and significance. The Christocentric hermeneutic has proposed an adjustment to traditional methodology. Although we should seek the author's intent, the divine intent can overshadow the human author's purpose, which facilitates widespread typology and the fullness of meaning the New Testament brings to the Old. Consequently, the proposed significance of a text may not totally correspond with the human author's original meaning; however, it does correspond with the divine intent.

So should we have such exceptions to the rule? As discussed, the redemptive-historical hermeneutic argues the Scripture demands these exceptions. This is based upon specific texts of Scripture as well as a biblical theological rationale. To determine whether there should be exceptions, we need to tackle both lines of thought.

#### *Are There Exceptions to the Rule?: A Look at Particular Passages*

In light of this, we can first deal with the specific texts cited by the Christocentric hermeneutic, beginning with the texts that discuss preaching "Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor 1:23; 2:2; 2 Cor 4:5; Col 1:28). What is interesting is the movement itself recognizes the need to qualify their claims about these passages. If we are to preach Christ and Him crucified alone, should we never preach Him resurrected? Later on in 1 Corinthians, Paul's emphasis on the resurrection makes such a proposal preposterous (cf. 1 Cor 15:12–14). Proponents of the view argue Paul was contextually talking about the resurrected Lord in the phrase "*Christ* and Him crucified."<sup>65</sup> That may be the case, but even that does not solve all the issues. Should one never talk of sin (1 Cor 15:3), Christ as Lord (Rom 10:9), or Christ's second coming (2

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<sup>65</sup> Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 6.

Thess 1:7–10)? Paul discusses these matters. Does he contradict himself? Even advocates of the redemptive-historical hermeneutic suggest people preach Christ in these ways.<sup>66</sup> In light of this, advocates place additional qualifications on “Christ and Him crucified.” They contend the statement does not exclude teaching the whole counsel of God’s Word.<sup>67</sup> All of this demonstrates Paul’s statement in and of itself is not an exhaustive declaration. The proponents of the Christocentric hermeneutic admit this.

These qualifications demand we look at the purpose of these statements. What is Paul’s intent in making them? In 1 Corinthians 1:23 and 2:2, Paul deals with those who are factious based upon their pride (1 Cor 1:12–13).<sup>68</sup> Hence, he points to specific aspects of his message to show how the gospel demands the opposite of that. In 2 Corinthians 4:5, Paul confronts false teachers who exalt themselves and he shows how the gospel message exalts Christ and not man.<sup>69</sup> In Colossians 1:28, Paul deals with those who would downplay the preeminence of Christ and states that he does the opposite: he preaches Christ.<sup>70</sup> Christ is not one we are ashamed of but, we proclaim Him. In each of these contexts, Paul’s purpose is rhetorical and polemical. His statements of “preaching Christ” fight against pride and a low view of Christ. They are a call to champion Christ when some are ashamed. They are a reminder to champion the “foolish” message of the gospel and be humble and unified (1 Cor 1:18).

Consequently, the use of these texts by the supporters of the Christocentric hermeneutic are not exactly accurate. They understand these texts to show how Paul knew only Christ in his preaching, as opposed to anything else in Scripture. However, in context, the apostle contrasts preaching Christ versus preaching human wisdom (Col 2:8) or one’s self (2 Cor 4:5a). He is not contrasting preaching Christ versus the rest of the ideas of sacred writ. Paul never intended these statements to be exhaustive of all he did in ministry. Rather, they were more to show what his ministry was centrally for and thereby against. This is precisely why these statements do not contradict any other declarations he makes about preaching the whole counsel of Scripture (2 Tim 2:15; 2 Tim 4:1–2; cf. Acts 20:27) or how his epistles deal with a variety of issues outside of Christ and Him crucified. Taken in their original context and purpose, these statements do not rule out other biblical and theological discussions. They rule out worldliness, pride, and human wisdom. Accordingly, these verses do not imply all the Christocentric hermeneutic inferences.

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<sup>66</sup> Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery*, 19–85; Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 178–82, 239–71.

<sup>67</sup> Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 75.

<sup>68</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 172, 211.

<sup>69</sup> Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2005), 331; Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1998), 79.

<sup>70</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1984), 86. Bruce also notes that even Col 1:28 holds Christ’s centrality in tension with the whole teaching of Scripture. After all, Christ may be the center of Christ’s message, but Paul still needs to give further instruction as the participles in the verse relate. See also, Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1998), 88. O’Brien’s discussion of wisdom that must qualify certain statements of preaching Christ. The idea is more *telic* in nature.

Likewise, Luke 24:27 does not indicate a hermeneutical shift. Luke does not state Jesus talks about Himself in every passage of the Old Testament. The precise wording states Jesus explains “in all the Scripture *the things* concerning Himself” (τὰ περὶ ἑαυτοῦ, emphasis mine). The idea is simply that Jesus comprehensively discussed the Old Testament texts which were about Him.<sup>71</sup> This is not the same as reconfiguring every text to speak about Him. Again, the advocates of a Christocentric hermeneutic have taken this text too far. In fact, in context, Luke 24:27 proclaims the opposite of what they assert. Our Lord declares the disciples were foolish to not recognize what the prophets had spoken (Luke 24:25). With that statement, Jesus does not claim a hermeneutical shift. He does not reinterpret the prophets or give the “true meaning” of what they said but rather simply affirms what they said.<sup>72</sup> He upholds what the human authors of Scripture meant. In doing so, Luke 24:24–26 better supports a grammatical-historical hermeneutic as opposed to a Christocentric hermeneutic.

Finally, Ephesians 1:10 has been used to prove all things in heaven and earth are about Christ, for He sums them all up. If all creation is about Christ, then typology is appropriate, for everything in some way depicts Him.<sup>73</sup> What does “summed up” (ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι) denote? The idea of the word may have the idea of a summary in rhetoric.<sup>74</sup> Just as a summary shows how a variety of ideas coalesce around one central point or main idea, so everything in creation is designed to point to Christ.<sup>75</sup> However, this is not the same idea as what the Christocentric approach proposes. A summary does not claim all the lines of argument are the same as the main point. It only shows how all the distinctive lines of argument link with and support the main idea. In the same way, the context of Ephesians 1:10 does not describe creation as various representations of Christ. Rather, it demonstrates how Christ is the main point as He subjects all things under His feet and they give glory to Him (Eph 1:21–23). The notion stresses Christ’s chief importance. Accordingly, the idea of Ephesians

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<sup>71</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1978), 897; Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 848. Green stresses the *telic* nature of the OT relative to Christ and His suffering and glory.

<sup>72</sup> D. A. Carson, *Collected Writings on Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2010), 283. “The New Testament writers, for all they understand that acceptance of who Jesus is comes as a gift of the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:14), never stint at giving *reasons* for the hope that lies within them, *including reasons for reading the Bible as they do*. The ‘fulfillment’ terminology they deploy is too rich and varied to allow us to imagine that they are merely reading in what is in fact not there. They would be the first to admit that *in their own psychological history* the recognition of Jesus came before their understanding of the Old Testament; but they would see this as evidence of moral blindness. As a result, they would be the first to insist, with their transformed hermeneutic (not least the reading of the sacred texts in salvation-historical sequence), that *the Scriptures themselves can be shown to anticipate a suffering Servant-King, a Priest-King, a new High Priest*, and so forth.” Carson’s quote illustrates the shift in hermeneutics is not methodological per se but rather ontological. It is the shift from those reading with moral blindness to those who can see what the Scriptures intended. The hermeneutical shift pushes the believer to read the Scripture according to authorial intent, according to what was truly originally intended.

<sup>73</sup> Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 187–88.

<sup>74</sup> Peter O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 111.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*; Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 261; A. T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 33.

1:10 is not symbolic but telic. It does not teach a Christocentric idea that everything *is a portrait of Christ* but rather a Christotelic idea that everything ultimately *points to Christ* in worship. Yet again, the Christocentric hermeneutic has pushed the implication of Ephesians 1:10 too far.

This subsection dealt with the particular passages that advocates of the redemptive-historical hermeneutic use to support their approach. The problem with their proof texts is that they have inferred ideas that go beyond what was stated and why it was stated. The meaning of the text does not justify the full extent of the implications they have drawn. This is the exact problem the approach has had all along. For this reason, the particular passages cited by the Christocentric hermeneutic do not support their goal of making every text speak of Christ. To the contrary, their use of Scripture only illustrates the problem of their approach.

### *Are There Exceptions to the Rule?: A Look at the Biblical Theological Rationale*

The Christocentric hermeneutic also argues from a biblical theological rationale based upon the New Testament's use of the Old. To them, the apostles' hermeneutic warrants a shift in our own hermeneutical approach. They claim New Testament writers' interpretative approach indicates the final way the unity of Scripture works in typological connections. The apostles reveal the full, divine intent of the text that we must recognize if we are to honor authorial intent. This justifies their method of seeing Christ in every passage.

Conversely, the apostles' introductory formulae provide a different picture. Rather than claiming a full or hidden insight into the text, the apostles say they reason "according to the Scripture" (κατὰ τὰς γραφάς, 1 Cor 15:3), "as it is written" (καθὼς γέγραπται, Rom 1:17), "for it is written" (γέγραπται γὰρ, Matt 4:6), "as the prophet says" (καθὼς ὁ προφήτης λέγει, Acts 7:48), "the word God spoke" (τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπὸ κυρίου, Matt 2:15), or observe how the Scriptures "are fulfilled" (τότε ἐπληρώθη, Matt 2:17).<sup>76</sup> Such language indicates the apostles desired to be consistent with the meaning of the Old Testament. They claimed their arguments were legitimate inferences that harmonized with what was written.

In addition, the formulae mentioned above suggest the apostles do not view divine intention as separate from human intention. They introduce Scripture as both the message of a particular prophet (Matt 8:17) as well as the divine author (Matt 1:22).<sup>77</sup> They appeal to the human and divine authors interchangeably because they

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<sup>76</sup> "Fulfilled" does not always denote the technical category of prophecy-fulfillment. In the cases of "fulfilling the law" (Gal 6:2) or Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac "fulfilling" Gen 15:6 (James 2:8), fulfillment does not have those ideas. Instead, it denotes the accomplishing or the maturation of a concept. Fulfillment of prophecy is a subset within that category and having that idea allows one to rightly see the apostles' claims. See Robert L. Thomas, "The New Testament Use of the Old Testament," in *Evangelical Hermeneutics*, ed. Robert L. Thomas (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 262–64; Douglas J. Moo, "The Letter of James, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 138; Douglas J. Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 191.

<sup>77</sup> In the case of Matthew 1:22 and 8:17, Matthew quotes from Isaiah and in one case says Isaiah spoke those words but in another case says God spoke those words. This implies both spoke the message of Isaiah and their intents are interchangeable and thereby identical.

knew what the prophet said is what God said and vice versa. This is consistent with their assertions that the prophets spoke from God; their message is His own (2 Pet 1:21; 2 Tim 3:16; cf. Exod 4:15–16; Isa 7:7; Amos 3:7).<sup>78</sup> Accordingly, it does not appear the apostles believed divine intent carried a fuller meaning than what the human author said. Thus, the apostles' introductory formulae do not point to a deeper meaning in Scripture or indicate a hermeneutical shift took place but the opposite: the apostles continued the logic of their predecessors.

The apostles practiced what they proclaimed. To see how they continued the prophets' logic, we need to begin with the prophets' hermeneutical work in the Old Testament. The prophets maintained the meaning of prior revelation. They claimed to do this (Josh 1:8; Pss 1:1–3; 119:15; Isa 8:20) and their job mandated it (Deut 13:1–18; 18:15–22).<sup>79</sup> A variety of examples illustrate their fidelity to the author's intent, including the way the prophets condemn Israel for its idolatry (2 Kings 17:5–23; Dan 9:5–6; Neh 9:29–33), confront it for twisting Scripture (Ezek 18:1–32), and maintain the Abrahamic promises of land, seed, and blessing (Mic 4:1–6; Ezek 36–48; Ps 72:3–17).

While maintaining the meaning of a text, the prophets also deal with its significance or ramifications. In doing so, they not only draw implications consistent with the original meaning but are even consistent with how their predecessors used the text. For instance, the prophets elaborate on how the Davidic Covenant will be fulfilled using the same language to build upon what past prophets have developed (Mic 5:2 [Heb., 5:1]; 7:14, 15, 20; cf. Hos 2:15; Amos 9:11–14). They also appeal to the exodus as a demonstration of God's love (Exod 4:22) which gives hope to the suffering (Ps 80:8, 15) and drives a new eschatological deliverance (Hos 11:1). The Old Testament is filled with examples that show how the prophets soundly developed theology.<sup>80</sup>

Thus, there is a hermeneutical logic in the Old Testament. The prophets uphold the original meaning of a text and hone in on very specific applications of a text, often times continuing the way their predecessors used a text. Their applications do not grow broader as revelation progresses but more narrow and refined. Accordingly, by the end of the canon, the implications of previous revelation are quite particular.

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<sup>78</sup> The language the men "spoke from God" (ἐλάλησαν ἀπὸ θεοῦ) indicates the prophets act of speaking was the very message of God Himself. See Richard J. Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, WBC (Dallas: Word Incorporated, 1998), 233.

<sup>79</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 126. "In no case, however, do later Old Testament writers reverse Moses' teaching (cf. Deuteronomy 13, 18)." The whole point of Deuteronomy 13 and 18 is that Israel and the prophets were to uphold God's law.

<sup>80</sup> Although these examples are far from comprehensive, the nature of progressive revelation and Old Testament theology support how the prophets develop particular applications. Progressive revelation moves from general to specific just like the prophets develop specific implications from the general statements of previous revelation. Old Testament theology traces the progression of different themes, which is only possible if the prophets' development of those ideas is consistent and compounding in nature. See Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 55. All of this suggests the prophets did not take Old Testament ideas in random, disconnected, and dispersed directions. The implications of Old Testament concepts did not become broader as revelation progressed but more narrow and refined. Accordingly, by the end of the canon, the implications of previous revelation are quite particular.

The apostles do not depart from the logic of the Old Testament but pick up on and continue it. Two major observations suggest this. First, the apostles' clearly contextual uses of the Old Testament reflect their consistency with the prophets. Scholars acknowledge that the majority of the apostles' predominant use of the Old Testament is unquestionably contextual in nature.<sup>81</sup> The New Testament writers contextually use the Old Testament to show Jesus' birthplace (Mic 5:2 [Heb., v. 1]; cf. Matt 2:1), His penal substitutionary death (Isa 53:5–10; cf. Mark 10:45), His kingship (Num 24:17; cf. Matt 2:1), as well as the nature of eschatology (Dan 11:31; cf. Matt 24:15), God's holiness (Lev 19:2; cf. 1 Pet 1:16), and God's dealings with His people (Ps 95:6–8; cf. Heb 4:4–9).<sup>82</sup> In these cases their use abides by the original (human) intent of the Old Testament. In fact, the apostles at times even group Old Testament texts together that the prophets previously connected (cf. Rom 3:10–18; Ps 14:1–3; Isa 59:7; see also Gal 3:6–11; Gen 15:6; Hab 2:4). These particular contextual usages evidence the apostles knew exactly how the prophets wove the Old Testament together. They followed the prophets' logic closely.

Second, the apostles' consistency with each other also evidences how they continued the prophets' logic.<sup>83</sup> They all interpret and apply Isaiah 53 to the Messiah and His death (cf. Mark 10:45; Rom 5:19; Heb 9:28). They all understand the Stone that was rejected is Christ and that has ramifications upon God's people (Ps 118:22; Matt 21:42; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet 2:4–7). They all understand the goal of the law is love for neighbor (Lev 19:18; Matt 19:19; Rom 13:8; Jas 2:8). They all applied Israel's wilderness wanderings as a warning (1 Cor 10:1–11; Heb 3:10–19; Jude 5). All of these uses are not only consistent with each other but also consistent with the original intent of the prophets. In fact, the apostles' use of Israel's wilderness wanderings even matches how the prophets use those same passages (Pss 78:1–72; 95:8–11). The unity of the apostles' conclusions stems from how closely they followed the Old Testament. They applied Scripture the same way because they applied it along the lines the prophets specified. Consequently, the apostles had a unified method, one that was rigorously contextual.

At this point, we can observe that the vast majority of the apostles' use of the Old Testament does not support a hermeneutical shift but rather hermeneutical continuity. Thus, at best the Christocentric hermeneutic cites exceptions to the rule to demonstrate a hermeneutical shift. Nevertheless, even these supposed exceptions do not prove their point.

For example, scholars cite Matthew's use of Hosea 11:1 to prove Matthew read Hosea typologically and christocentrically. In addressing this issue, an important question arises. If Matthew just wanted to compare Israel's exodus with Christ's escape from Egypt, why does he cite Hosea? He could have chosen a more obvious text like Exodus 4:22 to make the comparison. Matthew's citation of Hosea is not random

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<sup>81</sup> G.K. Beale, "A Surrejoinder to Peter Enns," *Themelios* 32, no. 3 (2007): 18.

<sup>82</sup> For more examples see Thomas, "The New Testament Use of the Old Testament," 2002, 243–47.

<sup>83</sup> B. Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic: The Doctrinal Significance of the Old Testament Quotations* (London: SCM Press, 1961); C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Substructure of New Testament Theology* (UK: Fontana Books, 1965). Lindars argued for a sort of *testimonia* which cataloged and systematized the church's use of the OT. However, no such evidence of *testimonia* exists.

but strategic and picks up on how Hosea used the exodus. In context, Hosea 11:1 uses the Exodus to show how God's love in the first exodus will drive a second one (Hos 11:11) led by Messiah who functions like a new Moses (Hos 1:11 [Heb., 2:2]; 3:5).<sup>84</sup> Matthew picks up on this point perfectly. He depicts Jesus as the One who will lead that new exodus for He, like Moses, was delivered from a king who desired to kill Israel's children (Matt 2:13).<sup>85</sup> How did Matthew then reach his conclusions? It was not simply because he merely read Israel's history with a typological lens or saw a deeper meaning in the text. Rather, he draws upon certain implications of the exodus highlighted by Hosea. Matthew's exegesis is ultimately textual and not typological.<sup>86</sup>

Similarly, some argue Matthew used Jeremiah 31:15 typologically for it originally talks of Israel's exile but now Matthew applies it to Messiah's circumstances.<sup>87</sup> Conversely, in the context of Jeremiah, a variety of factors point out how Jeremiah's words seek to depict the pain of the entire exile. For example, in context, Rachel's weeping continues to the time exile ends (Jer 31:23–40).<sup>88</sup> Accordingly, Jeremiah was not re-applying Israel's exile to Messiah. Rather, the slaughtering of the infants legitimately fits into what Jeremiah describes about the exilic period as a whole. Even more, the text in Jeremiah focuses upon the conclusion of exile and the inauguration of the New Covenant. This also fits with what Matthew discusses in Matthew 2. Christ's deliverance from Herod facilitates the realities of the end of exile and the New Covenant (cf. Matt 26:28). In that way, the circumstances of His birth coincide and complete what Jeremiah describes about exile. Jeremiah 31:15 is thereby fulfilled. Matthew's use of Jeremiah is based upon the rationale the prophet had. Matthew does not simply read in a parallel between Israel and Christ (even if that is involved). The grounds for Matthew's use of Jeremiah is not a typological grid but Jeremiah's own logic.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> G. K. Beale, "The Use of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15: One More Time," *JETS* 55 (2012): 703–5; Duane A. Garrett, *Hosea*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1997), 222.

<sup>85</sup> Dale C. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 166–69.

<sup>86</sup> See below. It is important to establish the right hermeneutical scheme of causation behind the apostles' conclusions. To be sure, Matthew does parallel Christ, Moses, and Israel. However, the question is why. The answer is not because he had a typological grid but because he understood Hosea and its implications. Hosea made these parallels and Matthew is expounding upon those ideas. Identifying what is happening helps us to identify Matthew's biblical theological rationale and see he is not necessarily validating the Christocentric approach. Rather, his hermeneutic is much more textual and grammatical-historical in nature.

<sup>87</sup> Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 209. Johnson views that Israel's suffering is recapitulated in Christ such that a typological relationship exists between Christ and Israel.

<sup>88</sup> F. B. Huey, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 274. The geography mentioned regarding exile is used throughout the Old Testament of exile in its beginning and end. The participle for Rachel's weeping implies ongoing action. These factors indicate Jeremiah's description is endemic of the entire era of exile of which Christ's birth is a part and climaxes.

<sup>89</sup> Although typological recapitulation and corporate solidarity may be a part of what is going on in Matthew, it is not entirely what takes place. Matthew is not merely citing Jeremiah as a description of exilic suffering and Jesus a repetition of that. If that were the case, Matthew could have chosen quite a few other texts that are more to the point (cf. Hos 10:14, 13:16). Instead, Matthew cites Jeremiah 31:15 not only to discuss exilic suffering, which legitimately then relates to Christ born in exile, but also to discuss how Christ's birth in exile concludes such suffering as prophesied by Jeremiah. That is the contextual point both in Jeremiah 31:15 and Matthew. As such, the whole connection between Matthew and Jeremiah

Space prevents me from being exhaustive. Nonetheless, scholars have gone through the most debated examples and shown how the New Testament continues the logic of the Old.<sup>90</sup> In fact, the problem is not that the apostles had a revolutionary interpretative approach but rather our lack of understanding of the Old Testament.<sup>91</sup>

Consequently, even the supposed exceptions to the apostles' contextual hermeneutic do not support a new (Christocentric) hermeneutical rule. The Christocentric hermeneutic has proposed a biblical theological rationale where the apostles saw a fuller Christological significance of Old Testament texts. However, this study has shown a different biblical theological rationale. The apostles uphold the meaning of the Old Testament and remain consistent with the theological significance developed by the prophets. They hone in on particular implications that the prophets discussed. Because of this, the apostles' hermeneutic does not justify reading everything in the Old Testament typologically. Instead, it demands a very close textual reading of the Old Testament. The way the Old Testament connects with the New and Christ have already been established by the prophets and apostles. We do not need a new hermeneutical (typological) grid to read over the text. We just need to follow the connections biblical writers set forth and identify their Christological ramifications as they

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is much more precise than just an Israel-Jesus typology. Matthew's use of Jeremiah is not merely reading a one to one correspondence (or even a one to one heightened correspondence) between Israel's history and Christ. Matthew's use of Jeremiah recognizes Jesus' role in Israel's history as the One who accomplishes what Jeremiah predicts. There are more reasons and factors involved in relating Jesus with Israel's exile than merely "Israel typifies Jesus." Accordingly, Matthew's use of Jeremiah does not quite substantiate a typological grid over Israel's history. Instead, it substantiates understanding Christ's role *in* Israel's history. It also shows Matthew did not understand Jeremiah typologically but according to its intent and applied it precisely to the prophet's intent. The typological approach claimed by this text is too simplistic and omits the full intent of what is taking place in Old and New Testaments.

The same logic goes for David to new David (Hos 3:5). In context, Hosea and his predecessors recount the collapse of the Davidic dynasty (cf. Amos 9:11). Hence because the Davidic dynasty falls, a new David is required to raise up the kingly line. In other words, the rationale behind a David to new David is not simply David was intended to be a foreshadowing of Christ. Rather, redemptive history and God's plan triggered events that paved the way for Jesus to assume David's role. Furthermore, seeing how progressive revelation develops, technically David is not predicting Jesus as much as Jesus is recapitulating David. Put differently, David is not called in Scripture a proto-Jesus but rather Jesus is called a second David. David is not made to portray Jesus as much as Jesus is meant to portray and fulfill David. In this way, typology also has a sort of reverse directionality with how the Bible articulates categories and the direction of progressive revelation. See also, Eugene H. Merrill, "The Sign of Jonah," *JETS* 23, no. 1 (March 1980): 23–30. The same rationale goes for even the sign of Jonah (cf. Matt 12:39). Merrill rightly notes Jesus does not say Jonah himself is a type or analogy of Christ but rather they offer the *same sign*. The emphasis is not on Jonah as a foreshadowing but on the nature of the sign that verified his ministry. Just as Jonah's deliverance was a testimony of his validity, so Jesus' resurrection will be a testimony that He is the Messiah. In this case, Jesus does not provide a typological reading of Jonah *per se* but one which see a point of analogy between the signs they offer. In fact, that is the language our Lord uses. He talks of offering the sign of Jonah. He will provide the same sign Jonah did. That has no connotation of typological foreshadowing as much as analogy and parallel.

<sup>90</sup> See G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007). See also, Abner Chou, *The Prophet, Apostolic, and Christian Hermeneutic: Learning Biblical Interpretation from the Writers of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Kregel, forthcoming) for expanded argumentation found throughout this section.

<sup>91</sup> Beale, "Hosea 11:1 in Matthew," 697–715. Beale demonstrates the resolution to the Hosea 11:1 issue deals with squarely with properly understanding Old Testament context.

are *textually expressed* in the intertextuality of Scripture. This will be developed in the next section.

At this point some may desire some more examples to support this thesis. How can we be sure a hermeneutical shift did not occur? The simplest answer to these questions is Christ Himself. If we look at His use of the Old Testament, He talks about a multitude of subjects. He uses past revelation to discuss the resurrection (Exod 3:6; cf. Matt 22:32), eschatology (Dan 11:31; cf. Matt 24:15), loving God (Deut 6:5; cf. Luke 10:27), loving one's neighbor (Lev 19:18; cf. Mark 12:31), marriage (Gen 2:24; cf. Matt 19:5–6), divorce (Deut 24:1–4; Matt 19:7–8), Israel's judgment (Gen 19:1–24; cf. Matt 10:15), and honoring father and mother (Exod 20:12; cf. Matt 15:4). Jesus does not make any of these passage speak directly of Himself. In fact, the apostles follow suit, declaring how the Old Testament is profitable (2 Tim 3:16), serves as a model for us (1 Cor 10:6), and provides us instruction and hope (Rom 15:4). Christ's own hermeneutic is followed by the apostles and they all acknowledge texts can speak of issues that are not Christological in nature. The Christocentric hermeneutic's goal of making every text speak of Christ is not Jesus' goal, or the apostles' for that matter.

Moreover, the way Jesus uses these texts is thoroughly contextual. Ellis even notes:

Contrary to some misguided modern interpreters, there is never any suggestion in the Gospels of Jesus opposing the Torah, the law of God, the OT. It is always a matter of Jesus' true exposition of scripture against the misunderstanding and/or misapplication of it by the dominant scripture-scholars of his day. This becomes apparent in Jesus' encounters with such rabbis in numerous debates, a number of which the Evangelists are careful to retain.<sup>92</sup>

These observations coincide with what we earlier observed in Luke 24:25. Jesus affirms what the prophets spoke. He drew legitimate implications of Old Testament texts, which were based upon His careful reading of phrases (Exod 3:6; cf. Matt 22:32), words (Dan 11:31; cf. Matt 24:15), and His understanding of history (Deut 24:1–4; Matt 19:7–8) and God's plan (Luke 18:31–32).<sup>93</sup> Our Lord had a grammatical-historical hermeneutic.

Overall, adherents of the redemptive-historical hermeneutic have used the New Testament's use of the Old Testament to justify their reading of Scripture. However, the apostles' use of Scripture does the opposite. The apostles claimed to follow the meaning of Scripture. They believed human and divine intent worked confluent.

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<sup>92</sup> E. Earle Ellis, "How Jesus Interpreted His Bible," *Criswell Theological Review* 3, no. 2 (1989): 350.

<sup>93</sup> In the case of Exodus 3:6, Jesus understood the phrase "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" in its covenantal context. See Darrell L. Bock, *Luke Volume 2: 9:51–24:53*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 1624. Jesus paid attention to the term "abomination" as used in Daniel when dealing with eschatology in Matt 24:15. He understood the redemptive-historical situation of Israel when Moses gave the law concerning divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1–4. He also grounded His viewpoint of the cross in Scripture, explicitly stating His arrival in Jerusalem marked the fruition of what was written by the prophets (τὰ γεγραμμένα διὰ τῶν προφητῶν).

Their use of prior revelation bears this out. They do not draw artificial or illegitimate implications because of a fuller understanding of a text's meaning. Instead, they hone in on very particular ramifications of a text that past scriptural writers have focused upon. This is even true in the supposed "exceptions." Such refined inferences further demonstrate how closely the apostles knew and understood the Old Testament. In addition, this discussion shows that such a hermeneutical mentality is not just among the apostles but also Christ and the prophets. They too practiced a grammatical-historical approach and did not read Christ into every text but discussed a variety of topics. Hence, the way Scripture uses Scripture does not substantiate the Christological method but actually shows the sufficiency of grammatical-historical hermeneutics. Put it this way, the biblical writers from the prophets to apostles to Christ Himself interpret in this manner. There is no other hermeneutic validated by Scripture.

### Ramifications of the Christocentric Hermeneutic

One might wonder if this discussion is purely theoretical and academic. What harm results from a faulty hermeneutic? The problem in essence is known as a "canon within a canon." The phrase refers to how, although the entire Scripture is the canon, one can privilege a certain portion of or idea within Scripture above others. In focusing on one section or theme of Scripture, we may exclude other parts or topics of the Bible. As a result, we create a new canon within the canon of Scripture.

By honing in on Christ as the controlling idea of a text's meaning and significance, the Christocentric hermeneutic has created a "canon within a canon." To be clear, focusing on Christ and the gospel is not bad. However, what can that focus exclude and confuse? For one, it can confuse and distort the Trinity. Concentrating on Christ alone can cause one to neglect discussing the Father and the Spirit. It can even lead to confusion to the roles within the Godhead. Even more, it can distort the gospel which the Christocentric movement desires to proclaim. After all, the gospel is Trinitarian in nature (cf. Eph 1:3–14). If one thinks these are speculative allegations, those in the movement acknowledge the danger. Greidanus warns against Christomonism where the focus is "primarily on Jesus in isolation from God the Father."<sup>94</sup> Christocentricism can create a canon that can deemphasize the Trinity.

The Trinity is not the only doctrine at risk. Since the Christocentric approach often focuses upon Christ and soteriology, every other doctrine in systematic theology is at risk. Topics like eschatology, theology proper, ecclesiology, Israel, suffering, sanctification, and holy living may be overlooked or deemphasized. In addition, certain doctrines can become imbalanced as recent debate over "grace/gospel based" sanctification illustrates.<sup>95</sup> Again, those within the movement acknowledge these dangerous excesses generated by their interpretative approach. Some warn Christocentric proponents are "not Christ-centered enough" because they do not talk about

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<sup>94</sup> Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 178.

<sup>95</sup> Tullian Tchividjian, *Jesus + Nothing = Everything*, Second Printing (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 137, 188–92. If one has a gospel-centered hermeneutic, one may exclude commands for obedience and personal labor required in sanctification. As a result, the presentation of sanctification becomes out of balance. A canon in a canon essentially rules out certain truths about a given topic, resulting in an imbalanced theology.

Christ in His other roles outside of soteriology.<sup>96</sup> Others remind that even if “moral models” are wrong, one still needs to preach moral imperatives in light of Christ and the gospel.<sup>97</sup> Such warnings indicate the canon within a canon can strip out theology from the Scripture, the very opposite of what the Christocentric method desires to do.

Consistently, a canon within a canon inherently denigrates Scripture. As Kaiser rightly observes, the redemptive-historical approach, in its haste to see Christ, jettison details of certain texts.<sup>98</sup> Accordingly, such a canon within a canon neglects and excludes that which God has inspired. It may inadvertently reflect a low view of Scripture, as Block observes.<sup>99</sup> Along this line, Block also states the Christocentric method results in showcasing “the creative genius of the preacher than the divinely intended message of the biblical authors.”<sup>100</sup> In effect, the Christocentric hermeneutic has moved from author-based meaning to reader-based meaning, the very opposite of what it desired. Once again, the Christocentric movement recognizes this danger. This is precisely why they demand careful attention to detail.<sup>101</sup> They want to ensure pastors are not just jumping straight to Christ and neglecting how a text amplifies or adds to the theology about Christ.<sup>102</sup> These exhortations reflect a danger of a canon within a canon: the flattening and devaluing of all of Scripture’s beauty.

Perhaps most ironic of all, the Christocentric hermeneutic can actually diminish Christ. This can occur because faulty connections can skew true connections that exalt the Savior. Block notes how the connection between Joshua and Jesus is artificial. It actually blocks how God is the One who saved Israel in the conquest and how Jesus *is* that God because He will save His people from their sins (Matt 1:21).<sup>103</sup> Similarly, although Moses and Christ share certain roles, one cannot let that obscure how Jesus is the One who gives the law from the mountain (Matt 5:1–2) as God Himself did at Sinai (Exod 20:1).<sup>104</sup> By making hasty connections, one may fail to see certain associations which lead to a high Christology or discredit the way Christ is legitimately in the Scripture.

Along this line, the deemphasis of Trinitarian, bibliological, and other doctrinal matters leads to emptying Christ’s glory. Put simply, by not expositing the entire Scripture, one cannot see the full picture Christ fulfills and so He is less glorious. For example, if one merely focuses upon His soteriological work in the first advent, then he fails to see the eschatological glory of Christ. One does not behold His eschatological majesty as King (Rev 19:11–13) who is exalted as the climactic hero by

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<sup>96</sup> Murray, “David Murray on Christ-Centered Hermeneutics,” 11; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 179–81.

<sup>97</sup> Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 294.

<sup>98</sup> Kaiser Jr., “Walt Kaiser on Christ-Centered Hermeneutics,” 15.

<sup>99</sup> Block, “Daniel Block on Christ-Centered Hermeneutics,” 6–7.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>101</sup> Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 279–85; Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 70–81; Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 379–403.

<sup>102</sup> Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 276–77; Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 125–26.

<sup>103</sup> Block, “Daniel Block on Christ-Centered Hermeneutics,” 7.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

heaven and earth (Rev 4–5) as well as restores the nations (Isa 60:3), Israel (Isa 2:2–4), and creation to rights (Isa 11:1–10). By not teaching eschatology or other doctrines, we see less of Christ. As noted above, proponents of the Christocentric hermeneutic have understood this danger for they warn of not being “Christ-centered” enough. They write on the danger of only viewing Christ as Savior as opposed to prophet, king, warrior, deliverer, and sympathetic high priest.<sup>105</sup> Their own words indicate the Christocentric hermeneutic’s focus may end up producing an emaciated Christology, the very opposite of what they desire.

Overall, the Scripture is God’s Word. It thereby has a perfect articulation of what it says and how it says it. A hermeneutic that restricts this message is bound to produce unbalanced results. That is precisely what a canon within a canon demonstrates. Although the Christological hermeneutic desires to teach Christian theology and exalt Christ, what happens is that people may not learn the entire Bible’s theology and end up with a lesser view of their Savior. The only way to handle life in all of its demand on our daily lives, worldview, and decisions is to know the whole council of God’s Word (Acts 20:27; cf. 2 Pet 1:3). A canon within a canon inherently cannot produce that.

### **Establishing the Sufficiency of Grammatical-Historical Hermeneutics**

So if one desires to preach Christ in His full glory, how should he do it? The answer is grammatical-historical hermeneutics. This is the hermeneutic prescribed by Scripture, and this is the hermeneutic that leads to a full exposition of Scripture’s message that honors Christ.

As we briefly have observed, the Old Testament writers established particular implications of the text that set up for the New Testament. Within this, the prophets establish trajectories of thought that link with Christ. This is important for two reasons. First, the fact the prophets talk of Christ demonstrates the authors of the Old Testament were aware about and discussed the Messiah early on. This counters higher critical notions that the Messiah was a late concept in Israel’s history and thus, the prophets really did not intend to talk of Christ.<sup>106</sup> Instead, the Old Testament is a document that discusses Christ. So one can preach Christ based upon the prophets’ intent. Second, the fact the prophets talk of Christ in particular ways demonstrates there are set pathways to proclaim Christ from the Old Testament. Contrary to the Christocentric hermeneutic, one does not need a new grid to see connections between previous revelation and the Savior but to see what the authors have established. This is at the heart of grammatical-historical hermeneutics and by doing this, we can preach Christ.

Others in this series more thoroughly comment on the way Christ is in the Old Testament and how to proclaim Him. Others works have discussed this topic more

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<sup>105</sup> Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery*, 91–105; Murray, “David Murray on Christ-Centered Hermeneutics,” 11.

<sup>106</sup> T. Longman, “The Messiah: Explorations in the Law and Writings,” in *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, ed. S. E. Porter (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2007), 16–23.

thoroughly.<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless, I can point out at least three major ways the grammatical-historical approach can bring out Christ from the Old Testament.

First, the Old Testament *prophesies* directly of Christ. Starting with Genesis 3:15, the prophets have written of Christ (Gen 49:10; Num 24:17; Pss 72; 110). The interconnectedness of the Old Testament may assist in anchoring these texts as messianic. If a later text of Scripture is linked with a clearly messianic text, arguably that text speaks to the Messiah as well. Hence, when later texts talk of an eschatological king crushing the head of his foes like a serpent (Num 24:17; Pss 68:21 [Heb., v. 22]; 72:9; 110:5–6; Isa 27:1; Hab 3:13), scholars recognize this deals with Genesis 3:15 and the Messiah.

Consequently, there are numerous prophecies about Christ in the Old Testament and they are not merely just a set of random predictions. Rather, they show how certain theological concepts will be fulfilled in Christ. For instance, Isaiah 53 incorporates Psalm 22 (Isa 53:3; cf. Ps 22:6 [Heb., v. 7]) as well as the sacrificial system (Isa 53:8–11; cf. Lev 5:14–19) to discuss the Davidic king’s ultimate redemptive suffering. Daniel 7 draws upon creation (cf. Gen 1:26–28) to show how one like the son of man is the ultimate ruler of all the world. This sets up for Christ’s own use of “Son of Man” (cf. Luke 21:27). Zechariah speaks of how the Messiah will return to and split the Mount of Olives in half (Zech 14:4). In light of the past defeats at the Mount of Olives (cf. 2 Sam 15:30), the prophet reminds us how the Messiah will have final eschatological victory over all defeat. He is the final and definitive conqueror. Old Testament prophecies are not just foretelling but thoroughly theological. In this way, direct prophecies contribute to a rich Christology.

Second, a grammatical-historical hermeneutic can trace how the Old Testament *prepares* for Christ. As opposed to Christocentrism, this is Christotelicity. As discussed, the Old Testament connects itself together, which connects certain texts and ideas with Christ. This happens on two levels. On a macro level, Old Testament writers interconnect their writings to form an overarching story or narrative. Various passages recount this story line (Deut 1:3–3:26; Josh 24:1–12; Ps 78:1–72; Neh 9:1–37), which sets up for the New (cf. Acts 7:1–60; 13:13–41).<sup>108</sup> Hence, one can see how texts connect and climax in Christ as they contribute to that storyline. Every event moves the story closer to Christ and thereby prepares the way for Him. One does this by not zooming in and forcing details to conform to Christ but zooming out and seeing how a text plays in the bigger picture.

On a micro level, the prophets weave specific Old Testament texts together to connect with Christ. One can see how the sacrificial system and its theology intersects Christ’s death in Isaiah 53. One can observe how parts of David’s life will be recapitulated in the ultimate David who is born in Bethlehem (Mic 5:2 [Heb., v. 1]) and

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<sup>107</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1995); Philip S. Satterthwaite, “David in the Books of Samuel,” in *The Lord’s Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. Philip E. Satterthwaite (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 41–65; James M. Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation Through Judgment* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

<sup>108</sup> Paul R. House, “Examining the Narratives of Old Testament Narrative: An Exploration in Biblical Theology,” *WTJ* 67 (2005): 229–45.

must sojourn in the wilderness like David (Mic 1:15; cf. 1 Sam 22:1; Matt 4:1).<sup>109</sup> One can see the theology of the Davidic Covenant expressed further in Psalms (cf. Pss 22; 69; 72; 109; 110), which then has inherent applicability to Christ, the final Davidic king (Hos 3:5; Isa 11:1–10; 53:1–11; Matt 27:24–66; Acts 1:20).<sup>110</sup> One can see how the commands and blessings bestowed to Adam (Gen 1:26–28) are disseminated to Noah (Gen 9:1), Abraham (Gen 12:1), and David (2 Sam 7:9–13; Ps 8:4), which again leads to Christ (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:22; Heb 2:6–9).<sup>111</sup> In addition, one can observe how the New Testament draws upon the Old Testament to show the theological significance of aspects of Christ's life. For instance, Jesus' temptation alludes back to Adam and Israel in the wilderness (cf. Luke 4:1–13). He succeeds where they fail. His work in Nain (Luke 7:11–17) parallels the work of Elijah and Elisha highlighting His superior ministry and His outreach to the Gentiles.<sup>112</sup> Accordingly, a better understanding of Adam, Israel, Elijah, and Elisha has implications for better understanding Christ, even if passages about these men do not directly prophesy about Him. All these cases of intertextuality illustrate that specific texts do link with Christ and they do so in ways that are not up to the reader but revealed by the writers of Scripture. Following these specific connections shows how the theology established in certain texts legitimately connects with Christ.<sup>113</sup>

Thus, in the cases of how the Old Testament prepares for Christ, a grammatical-historical hermeneutic helps produce a rich Christology in two ways. First, as discussed, it is sensitive to how the biblical writers make connections between the Old Testament and Christ on both the macro and micro levels. That allows us to connect the dots to show that what we are saying is what the Scripture says and not our own imagination. Second, a grammatical-historical approach ensures that we have studied a text with the right emphasis which in turn appropriately sets up for its connection with other texts and Christ. If we do not understand the Old Testament deeply, then when the New Testament draws on the Old Testament to speak of Christ, we will not know the full import of what is taking place. Because New Testament Christology draws from the Old Testament, a shallow understanding of the Old Testament leads to a shallow Christology. Even more, without a thorough and proper awareness of

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<sup>109</sup> Kenneth L. Barker, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 60, 96.

<sup>110</sup> Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "Psalm 72: An Historical and Messianic Current Example of Antiochene Hermeneutical Theoria," *JETS* 52, no. 2 (2009): 257–70; Waltke, *Old Testament Theology*, 888–89.

<sup>111</sup> Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, NSBT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 71–72, 77–78, 147.

<sup>112</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Luke Volume 1: 1:1–9:50*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 653.

<sup>113</sup> In these instances, later applications of texts do not change the fundamental meaning of prior revelation. In fact, later usages depend upon that original meaning in order to have the theology of that text to apply to Christ. Even in the example of Jonah, Luke's claim is *not* that Jonah is a prophecy of Christ. Rather, later usages apply the information already established to Christ. Within this, the examples above show how the connections are not arbitrary but legitimate. They do not occur because the reader observed them but because they are logically explained in Scripture itself. As stated before, the logic of the connections are found textually through the intertextuality of Scripture. As Scripture uses one text repeatedly, it explains why and how it applies it providing the rationale for such an implication being accurate. Tracing connections this way works well because it works with the way authorial intent and progressive revelation operate.

the Old Testament, we might miss more subtle yet legitimate connections the New Testament makes with the Old. As a result, we miss the theological weight that brings us to the majesty of Christ. A grammatical-historical approach allows us to see the breadth and depth of Old Testament theology on a micro and macro level. This in turn allows us to see the glory of Christ from a variety of angles.

Finally, Christ is in the Old Testament because He is at work in history. The Old Testament does not merely predict or prepare for Him but depicts the Son as a *participant* in that part of Scripture. The Angel of YHWH is a good example of this. Exegetical details establish a tension concerning this being. On one hand, these details suggest the Angel of YHWH is God Himself. He receives worship (Exod 3:2–4) and God identifies Himself as such (Gen 22:11–12; Judg 6:21–22). On the other hand, other details point to how God is distinct from the Angel. God, presumably in heaven, looks down through the Angel in the pillar of cloud (Exod 14:24). God sends the Angel and puts His name upon the Angel (Exod 23:20–21). Thus, the Angel of YHWH is God Himself yet distinct from Himself. However, the Old Testament specifies this further. God identifies the One who guided Israel through the wilderness as the Rock (Deut 32:4), a title given later on to the Messiah (Isa 8:13–14; 26:4; cf. 28:16). All of this together suggests that the Angel is God yet distinct from God because He is the second person of the Trinity, the Son. If this is the case, then the Son’s glory is revealed in the Old Testament as He speaks to Abraham, calls Moses, and leads Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land.

Other “Christophanies” occur in the Old Testament (Gen 32:25–30; Josh 5:13–15) brought out by similar exegetical details and tensions.<sup>114</sup> Accordingly, a grammatical-historical hermeneutic can point to Christ not only as the Old Testament climaxes in Christ, but also because He is part of what drives Old Testament events. He is not merely revealed in the end but present in the process.

This list is certainly not comprehensive in either categories or texts. Nevertheless, it reminds us the Old Testament speaks of Christ and speaks of Him in particular yet varied ways. Bottom line, we are those who explain Scripture and not write Scripture (2 Tim 4:1–2). Our job is to say what the texts say, what the biblical writers say. Consistently, we want to speak about Christ based upon what the biblical authors said of Him as opposed to what is not in the text. This is why a grammatical-historical approach is so important. It enables us to see the variety and details of the theology in the Old Testament. It allows us to see the numerous ways the biblical writers connect the weight of that theology with Christ. It thereby allows us to say of Christ what the biblical writers said of Christ, to speak of Him in His complete glory as revealed by all Scripture in its breadth and depth.

## Conclusion

How do we honor Christ in our study and proclamation of Scripture? We have observed we must honor Him both in the means and in the end. We revere Christ not only by exalting Him in the pulpit but also by hermeneutical obedience in the study.

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<sup>114</sup> James A. Borland, *Christ in the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1978), 65–72. See also, K. A. Matthews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, NAC (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2005), 558; David M. Howard, *Joshua*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1998), 157.

After all, the Scripture mandates that the exegete seeks the author's intent as communicated through precise language and in light of historical background. It does not warrant exceptions to this method. This is the way the prophets and apostles interpreted Scripture. This is also seen in Christ Himself who affirmed what the prophets spoke and used Scripture to speak to a variety of issues according to what was written. He does not demonstrate a Christocentric hermeneutic but a grammatical-historical hermeneutic. In this way, God shows consistency in His care for the way we reach our conclusions as much as the conclusions themselves.

There is good reason for this. We have seen how faulty hermeneutics can create a canon within a canon. This leads to unbalanced formations of theology and even an emaciated Christology. We can inadvertently ignore the complete glory of Christ by forcing texts to speak only of Him or even a specific facet of His ministry. A grammatical-historical approach allows the Scripture to speak to all issues, which brings out not only a balance in ministry and theology but the total glory of the Savior as revealed in the connections of Scripture.

So we need to have confidence the method prescribed in Scripture is sufficient to showcase the complete glory of Christ. We also need to invest the time and effort in seeing the way the biblical writers connect God's Word with the Word. Then, as we exposit the full counsel of God, we can glorify Christ in hermeneutical obedience as we proclaim Him fully.