

Introduction

Good morning. My name is Don McIntyre, but my friends call me Mac. I am a PhD student studying Old Testament at Baptist Bible Seminary, as well as a PhD student at Liberty University studying theology and apologetics, and concurrently a DMin candidate at Knox Theological Seminary where I have had the privilege to study preaching under Dr. Bryan Chapell. I am honored to be with you, and I am looking forward to our ensuing discussion on my favorite topic, preaching the Old Testament, and attempting to persuade you that our dispensational theological method necessitates a change in our homiletical method. Particularly, I am going to argue not only that Dr. Chapell's method, properly refined, can be consistent with our dispensationalist theological method but also that our dispensational theology demands such a refinement to be consistent with our convictions. So:

What is Christian Preaching?

Preaching is a religious speech act which occurs at a specific time, in a specific place, by a particular individual, to a particular intended audience. Given the audience and occasion of this speech act, which is not preaching, I will assume a few important things. 1.) The audience is composed of dispensationalists who would agree that our preaching occurs in the church age/dispensation of grace, and 2.) that the preferred method of preaching is expository preaching. The question which lingers is how can we, as preachers in the church age, preach expository sermons in the most effective way? Before one can come to a resolution on that matter, they must first determine what the goal of preaching is.

What is the goal of Preaching?

Is the goal of preaching simply to explain the text, or is it something more? If the goal is simply to explain the text, what difference is there between preachers, seminary professors, or even unregenerate professors of ancient literature? Most homileticians assert some goal in addition to explaining the text. A selection of quotations from the most accomplished preachers of our generation seems in order to establish either a dual-goal, or at least a secondary goal for expository preachers.

David Allen states that, “The preacher’s goal is to allow the text to stand forth in all its uniqueness and power” which most would agree with.¹ However he says in another place, within that same work, that “text-driven preachers will seek to become master communicators with an understanding of their audience and communication techniques that will make for the most effective preaching of Scripture with the goal of life transformation effected by the Holy Spirit.”² Similarly, Bill Benett quotes Danny Akin who expressed that, “Southeastern Seminary is committed to engaging exposition that is Spirit anointed and Christ focused. Expounding the text accurately and applying the text clearly are twin goals that guide our approach to preaching the Holy Scriptures.”³ Danny Akin, speaking for himself in that same publication notes that, “God wants us to know Him, love Him, and obey Him. The act of proclaiming biblical truth is incomplete without the call to obey. Second, it brings balance to the information element in

¹ David Allen, Introduction, *Text-Driven Preaching* (p. 8). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

² David Allen, Chapter 5, Preparing A Text-Driven Sermon, *Text-Driven Preaching* (p. 118). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

³ Daniel Akin, in a personal note to Bill Benett, Bill Bennett, Chapter 3, The Secret of Preaching with Power, *Text-Driven Preaching* (p. 74). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

preaching. Knowing precedes doing, but knowing must lead to doing, or biblical exposition will come up short of its intended goal."⁴

Another compendium of homiletical essays, *Feed My Sheep*, includes quotes by other famous preachers like Albert Mohler who states that, "The promise of true preaching is to present every Christian complete in Christ."⁵ R. C. Sproul Jr., who may not find an overly welcome reception in this crowd, asserted that, "It is not my goal simply to transfer information from my brain to your notebook, because learning doesn't take place until it gets in your head and into your life."⁶ R. C. Sproul Jr., following the steps of his father, asserted that "The end goal is not only that we would be transformed by the renewing of our minds, but that all that we are would be transformed."⁷

H. E. Singley believes that "The concept of transformation is one of the characteristics distinguishing preaching from teaching."⁸ Richard Mayhue notes five characteristics of Expository preaching stating that: "the following minimal defining elements identify expository preaching: 1. The message finds its sole source in Scripture.⁹ 2. The message is extracted from

⁴ Daniel Akin, Chapter 11, Applying A Text-Driven Sermon, *Text-Driven Preaching* (p. 275). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

⁵ Albert Mohler, Chapter 1, The Primacy of Preaching, *Feed My Sheep: A Passionate Plea for Preaching* (Kindle Locations 286-287). Kindle Edition.

⁶ R. C. Sproul. The Teaching Preacher, *Feed My Sheep: A Passionate Plea for Preaching* (Kindle Locations 1077-1078). Kindle Edition.

⁷ R. C. Sproul Jr. Preaching to the Mind, *Feed My Sheep: A Passionate Plea for Preaching* (Kindle Locations 1426-1427). Kindle Edition.

⁸ H. E. Singley III, The Sermon in Public Worship, *The Moody Handbook of Preaching* ed. Koessler, John. (p. 45). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

⁹ R. B. Kuiper, in "Scriptural Preaching," *The Infallible Word*, 3rd rev. ed., ed. by Paul Woolley (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1967), 253, "asserts strongly, "Exposition of Scripture, exposition worthy of its name, is of the very essence of preaching. It follows that it is a serious error to recommend expository preaching as one of several legitimate methods. Nor is it at all satisfactory, after the manner of many conservatives, to extol the expository method as the best. All preaching must be expository. Only expository preaching can be Scriptural." A. Duane Litfin, "Theological Presuppositions and Preaching: An Evangelical Perspective" (Ph.D. dissertation, Purdue University, 1973), 169–70, concurs, stating, "Anything less than expository preaching is technically not really preaching at all."

Scripture through careful exegesis. 3. The message preparation correctly interprets Scripture in its normal sense and its context. 4. The message clearly explains the original God-intended meaning of Scripture. 5. The message applies the Scriptural meaning for today.¹⁰ It is that temporal deictic marker of today which will be crucial to the below conversation. Robert Thomas likewise asserted that, “Expository preaching presupposes the goals of teaching an audience the meaning of the passage on which the sermon is based and urging obedience to that meaning properly applied.”¹¹ Again, application/transformation/obedience/action is a primary goal for the preacher, and the question of how to do that properly is what I desire to discuss.

Though I believe that the above quotes are redundant and excessive, I would be remiss if I failed to mention my personal academic hero’s thoughts on preaching. Walter C. Kaiser Jr. notes that, “The conclusion is one of the most critical parts of a message. I must issue a royal (i.e., a divine) summons to specific suggestions for immediate action. There must be a call for God to change us in light of the purity of his Word. But there must also be a caution here: I must call for specific actions that are based uniquely on what is precisely taught in this passage. . . we must call for action.”¹² Therefore, if one were to ask what is the goal of preaching? The answer must emphatically include the idea of transformation, particularly in application. . . There must be a specific action for the audience called upon by the preacher. And this is the dilemma for the dispensationalist when preaching Old Testament texts, though it could be expanded to the New Testament as well.

¹⁰ Richard Mayhue, *MacArthur Pastor’s Library on Preaching*, ed. John F. MacArthur Jr., (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005), 10.

¹¹ Robert Thomas, *MacArthur Pastor’s Library on Preaching*, ed. John F. MacArthur Jr., (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005), 249.

¹² Kaiser Jr., Walter C., *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament* (pp. 58-62). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

The Problem of Preaching and Old Testament

The problems with preaching the Old Testament has been highlighted by the rise of Christocentric methods, drawing either ire or awe from across the aisles of evangelicalism.¹³ However, as Bright has noted, biblical theology is necessary for ensuring that the Old Testament can be explicated and accepted as Christian Scripture in the current age lest the Old Testament sermons turn into a case study in history of religion.¹⁴ Chapell has noted the contributions of Biblical Theology to preaching within a redemptive and Christo-centric framework while noting well that failure to utilize a Christo-centric method in light of whole-biblical theology would tend towards moralism or legalism, via principalizing, or character case studies.¹⁵ Millar has gone through great lengths to show that Old Testament characters were consistently portrayed as inadequate character examples in latter narrative context, and that true gospel change which the Christian faith looks for is not available until after Christ's death, burial and resurrection.¹⁶

Those theological schools which see discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments have frequently debated how Biblical Theology should be done. However, the practice of

¹³ See Scott Slayton, How Do I Deal with Genealogies? The Gospel Coalition: Preacher's Toolkit, July 20, 2018; accessed Thursday March 17, 2022, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/preachers-deal-genealogies;> Jen Wilkin, How Bible Genealogies Preach the Good News, Christianity Today: Views: The Beginning of Wisdom, Dec. 28, 2018; accessed Thursday, March 17, 2022; <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2019/january-february/how-bible-genealogies-preach-good-news.html> for those influenced by the redemptive model for Old Testament. For dissenting opinions see The Master's Seminary Journal, Fall 2016, vol. 27, No. 2, with entries by Abner Chou and Richard Mahue; Aubry Sequeira, Preaching Christ From the Old Testament: A Response to Daniel Block, Elliot Johnson and Vern Poythress, SBJT, m 22.3 (2018) pp. 181-195; Sam Ermadi, 3 Ways Misguided Biblical Theology Leads to Misguided Sermons, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Equip, August 7, 2020, accessed on Thursday, March 17, 2022, <https://equip.sbts.edu/article/3-ways-misguided-biblical-theology-leads-misguided-sermons/>; and Collin Hansen, Christ Centered Cautions: How do we be good, be disciplined, and be like Jesus?, Christianity Today, Nov. 16, 2009, accessed Thursday, March 17, 2022, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/novemberweb-only/146-11.0.html>.

¹⁴ John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament*, 73, where he notes there are some who see the Old Testament as only having a preparatory and pedagogical function.

¹⁵ Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 17, 261, 341, and see especially the discussion on the "Deadly Be's" on pp. 371-377.

¹⁶ J. Gary Millar, *Changed into His Likeness: A Biblical Theology of Personal Transformation*, (Downers Grove, IL: Apollos (an Imprint of Inter-Varsity Press, 2021), pp. 56 through end of book.

preaching moves beyond exegesis, biblical, and systematic theology into the field of practical theology.¹⁷ This poses significant challenges, and yet it is one that must be addressed. While Chapell and Griedanus' methods have been influenced by their hermeneutic of continuity, those who have a hermeneutic of discontinuity in exegesis have a systematic theology which requires a bridging of the chasm which discontinuity has found within the text itself.¹⁸

Charles Ryrie states that, "There is no interpreter of the Bible who does not recognize the need for certain basic distinctions in the Scriptures. The theological liberal, no matter how much he speaks of the Judaistic background of Christianity, recognizes that Christianity is nevertheless different from Judaism."¹⁹ While Reformed theologians likewise note the importance of the progress of revelation to answer the question of distinctions, reformed theologians answer these questions differently. Dispensational theology recognizes that the "dispensation of grace," requires the believer to have a different relationship with God than that which was revealed in the Old Testament.²⁰ If preaching deals with the practical application of theological principles derived from Scripture, then the Dispensational preacher must not only exegete the text to derive the original authorial intended meaning as the original audience would have understood it, within their current dispensation, but they must also posit a way in which the contemporary believer can

¹⁷ Walter C. Kaiser et al., *Four Views on Moving beyond the Bible to Theology*, ed. Gary T. Meadors (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009); 8. Feinberg, *Continuity and Discontinuity*, Location 1491

¹⁸ Elliot Johnson, *A Dispensational Biblical Theology*, (Allen, TX: Bold Grace Ministries, 2016) notes at Location 266 that "we expect added, deepened or replaced revelation to be included in the progress of revelation." Therefore, the dispensationalist would seek to show how the significance of the OT passages have been adjusted in some way for a contemporary audience as a result of progressive revelation. However, it will be argued below that this added significance must wait until after the meaning has been determined as would have been understood by the original audience in light of the original author's historical context as seen in the literary context according to the normal rules of syntax and grammar.

¹⁹ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, Rev. and Expanded. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1995), 19.

²⁰ John S. Feinberg, *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspective on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments, Essays in Honor of S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), Kindle Loc. 1704

apply truths derived from that Old Testament text which was given in a different dispensation.²¹

The failure to bridge this gap well by dispensational practitioners stems from a godly desire to be faithful to the text of Scripture.²² However, in being faithful to the text's original audience and authorial intent, many examples of Old Testament preaching has devolved into the moralism and legalism which Chapell and Griedanus have warned of. Likewise, much of the reformed preaching of the Old Testament has violated the original meaning of the text to avoid the legalistic and moralistic preaching. Is there a better way forward where the two approaches can learn from each other? As a committed dispensationalist trained to preach by a reformed seminary, I believe that there is a better way forward where dispensationalists can learn from Christocentric models if proper methodological restrictions are applied.

Suggested Contributions of Redemptive Approach

Preaching methodologies are plentiful, but Sidney Griedanus has given a commendable template in *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*.²³ Such a process is profitable for sermonizing, however, for the preaching pastor with a regular preaching ministry, the first step could be profitably modified by eliminating the subjective qualification of congregational needs, and instituting the practice of the *lectio continua*.²⁴ The second step is the most important step

²¹ Johnson, Loc. 145.

²² Abner Chou, A Hermeneutical Evaluation of the Christocentric Hermeneutic, *MSJ* 27/2, (Fall 2016), 113, who believes that the "modification to a grammatical-historical hermeneutical approach" suggested by Christocentric preaching "is not scripturally warranted."

²³ Sidney Griedanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1999), Kindle Loc. 3265

²⁴ Eric J. Alexander, et. Al., *Feed My Sheep: A Passionate Plea for Preaching* (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2008) Kindle Locations 698-704, where Derek Thomas notes one strength of expository preaching is that it "prevents preachers from unwittingly shaping the way their hearers read their Bibles. . . consecutive expository preaching can inculcate sound habits of personal Bible study. The congregation can absorb the necessary principles of sound interpretation, almost by osmosis, through such repeated forays into relatively obscure passages from week to week in the pulpit"

from an exegetical perspective, to read and reread the text in its literary context.²⁵ It is from this reading and rereading in literary context that the preacher should spend the majority of his time. The third step deals with determining the literary structure, and the fourth is the attempt to “interpret the text in its own historical setting.”²⁶ It is at this step that the basic problem with preaching the Old Testament, finding a balance between meaning and significance, seems to occur, drastically affecting subsequent steps, resulting in our current debate.²⁷ Griedanus’ fifth step is to “formulate the texts theme and goal.”²⁸ This is where the Dispensationalist would often feel comfortable stopping, however, this is unwise, for multiple reasons.

As was discussed above preaching must have an emphasis on application. It seems that the Word of God was to be preached with intended effects, and Paul describes the effects of the Word of God in summary fashion as having the purpose of equipping the man of God to be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16). Therefore, preaching must have applicability to the audience in their contemporary context. Tony Evans notes that people are looking for answers and want to know “Does God have answers, and does He have it in language that today’s person can understand and relate to? It’s our job and opportunity as preachers to guide people to answers in God’s word, to draw people back to God for answers that they desperately need– in their lives, in their families, in the church, and in society at large.”²⁹ If preaching is to be applicable to modern audiences so that they may perform good works, then all

²⁵ Griedanus, Loc.

²⁶ Griedanus, Loc. 3323.

²⁷ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, Kindle Edition, Kindle Locations 149-152; E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967, p. 8

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 3356

²⁹ Tony Evans, *The Power of Preaching: Crafting a Creative Expository Sermon*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2019), 9-10.

sermons, even those on the Old Testament, must bridge the gap to how God's truth spans the dispensations. For that reason, the last five steps of Griedanus should also be practiced, though restricted and modified.

The last five steps of Griedanus' preaching method are to understand the text of the sermon within the canon and redemptive history, and then to formulate a sermon theme and goal before determining a suitable form and outline, and lastly writing the sermon out in oral style. There are two major points of contention which dispensationalists and other discontinuity adherents will balk at, the sixth and seventh steps (understanding the message in canon and redemptive history— where Griedanus points to Christ, and formulating the sermon theme and goal). These two steps, and their possible difficulties must be addressed.

Modifications of Griedanus' Method

The first problem in Griedanus' work has been echoed by many. To seek to understand the message of a particular OT text in the context of redemptive history, placing an emphasis on Christ, has been accused of reading backwards, or seeing Christ where He is not there, and thus abusing the text.³⁰ Though there are times when proponents of Christocentric preaching may have performed the method in ways which discontinuity adherents cringe at, their stated goal is

³⁰ Mike Stallard, "A Proposal for Theological Method - Our Hope," *Our Hope* (Mike Stallard, 2009), <http://www.our-hope.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/Method2.pdf>, on p. 15, after arguing for the necessity of OT theology before whole biblical theology on p. 14, states the need for a refinement to "non-dispensational" methods, like Christ centered preaching, when he states, "The Old Testament is almost an afterthought to the nondispensationalist who uses the New Testament like the presidential power of veto over exegetical results in the Old Testament text. When the nondispensationalist comes to the Old Testament text with the New Testament in hand, the truth he finds appears to be a "scaling down" of what he already has. Consequently, there is a tendency to leave off grammatical-historical interpretation in order to make the Old Testament text sit at the "same level" of his New Testament truth. This is in stark contrast to the dispensational model which sees the priority of the Old Testament text in the formulation of Old Testament biblical theology."

never to abuse the text. The Christocentric approach can be abused, and Chapell and Griedanus have attempted to warn against such abuses. Griedanus, under the heading of “Shortcomings of Spurgeon,” addresses such practices by none other than the Prince of Preachers:

There are also obvious shortcomings in Spurgeon’s method. . . it is also clear that his single-minded concern to preach Jesus leads him to reading Christ back into the Old Testament text. . . In other words, he frequently fails to do justice to the literal sense and the historical context of the Old Testament passages. He does not ask about the intention of the original author, he does not inquire about the message for Israel. Instead, he uses the Old Testament text as a “springboard” for his message about Jesus Christ.³¹

Chapell likewise notes the importance of authorial intention when he states that “Explaining the text according to the intent of the author also requires that we not skip portions of the passage or neglect features of its context that must be understood in order for the principles the passage is teaching to be grasped.”³² Chapell also notes that the preacher must “examine the various features of a passage and discern the purpose(s) the biblical writer had for them. Only in this way will we know how to unify the particulars of a text in accordance with the perspective and priorities of the author.”³³ Since Griedanus and Chapell, presumably the most popular and easily the most widely published proponents of Christo-centric preaching, are concerned with authorial intention, and dispensationalists accept the progress of revelation and the use of antecedent revelation for interpretation, the question of Biblical theology’s role in preaching is not so much a matter of “if it should be applied to preaching” but “how.”³⁴ This is an issue of theological method.

³¹ Greidanus, Kindle Location 1866.

³² Chapell, 27.

³³ Ibid. 48.

³⁴ Johnson, Loc. 145.

Issues of Theological Method

Ken Gardoski asserts that there are three basic steps to doing theology: exegesis, biblical theology and systematic theology. Biblical theology makes attempts at “Placing the Biblical Data in their Historical Context,” which is entirely derivative of, and logically preceded by, sound exegetical work.³⁵ Köstenberger defines biblical theology stating, “Biblical theology is the theology of the Bible. That is Biblical theology is theology that is biblical- derived from the Bible rather than imposed upon the Bible by a given interpreter of scripture. . . grounded in the historical setting and the narrative context, and is inductive in nature.”³⁶ Mead similarly defines Biblical theology as seeking “to identify and understand the Bible’s theological message, that is, what the Bible says about God and God’s relation to all creation , especially to humankind.”³⁷ Old Testament theology is a subset of Biblical theology, and one in which the proponents of the Christocentric model have not adequately addressed, though this need not be a reformed dogma (the standard OT theologies having been written by reformed authors).³⁸

John Sailhamer defines the discipline when he states that, “OT theology is a certain kind of theology. It is the study of theology that has the Old Testament as its primary subject matter. Little else need be said since it is common knowledge what the Old Testament is and every reader of the Bible knows what theology is.”³⁹ This is pivotal, in that Old Testament Theology

³⁵ Ken Gardoski. “Steps to Doing Theology.” Clarks Summit, PA: Unpublished Class Notes from Doctoral Seminar TH1: Seminar in Theological Methods at Baptist Bible Seminary, Fall, 2020. p. 1.

³⁶ Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson, *For the Love of God’s Word*, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2015, Kindle Edition, Kindle Location 5598.

³⁷ James K. Mead, *Biblical Theology: Issues, Methods, and Themes*, Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2007, Kindle Location 59.

³⁸ Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001); Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1998); Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2 Volumes, London: SCM, 1967.

³⁹ John Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), p.2.

should be limited to the confines of the Old Testament, and not influenced by the New, contrary to the opinions of John Goldingay who asserts that:

By “Old Testament theology” I mean a statement of what we might believe about God and us if we simply use the Old Testament or if we let it provide the lenses through which we look at Jesus. I am prepared to say that the Old Testament’s insights must be seen in light of those of the New, but only as long as we immediately add that it is just as essential to see the New Testament’s insights in light of those of the Old. Indeed, the latter is more important given that in practice the declaration that the Old must be looked at in light of the New is generally a euphemism for the conviction that the Old must be evaluated by means of the New and discounted when it says something different.⁴⁰

Though Goldingay’s definition is useful, it has some methodological shortcomings, of which the likes were preemptively addressed decades before by Bright, in *The Authority of the Old Testament*. In summation of Bright, a view like Goldingay’s, which believes that “the Old Testament’s insights must be seen in light of those of the New,” leads to a modified Marcionism that deprives the Old Testament of its canonicity.⁴¹ However, if Goldingay’s definition is modified, and nuanced, it can prove helpful. As such, I will augment Goldingay’s definition of Old Testament theology by proceeding on the belief that “Old Testament theology is a statement of what the ancient Jewish Israelites would have believed about God and themselves derived solely from the Old Testament literary corpus, and those aspects of its historical, cultural, and literary situation which would have been understood by the original audience at the time of writing. It will further assert that Old Testament Theology must precede whole biblical theology, which Christocentric preaching works seem to neglect. For these reasons, a close reading of the text, performed by rigorous exegesis, is essential to developing an OT Biblical Theology.

⁴⁰ John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology: Israel's Gospel: 1* (Old Testament Theology Series) (pp. 20-21). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

⁴¹ Bright, 63-66.

Gerhard Hasel stated that “The distinction between what a text meant and what a text means is at the core of the most fundamental problem of OT theology, because ‘what it meant’ is not simply discovering the meaning of the Biblical text within its own canonical Biblical context; it is historical reconstruction.”⁴² Hasel’s assertion concerning what a text meant and what it currently means is the question of meaning versus significance, defined by Hirsch, which has been a critical question in all theological studies, regardless of testaments.⁴³ Walter Kaiser argues convincingly that, “We must draw that crucial distinction between ‘meaning’ and ‘significance’: ‘meaning’ is that which is represented by a text, its grammar, and the author’s truth-intentions as indicated by his use of words, while ‘significance’ merely denotes a relationship between (note well, it must be linked) that meaning and another person, time, situation, or idea.”⁴⁴

The nature of Old Testament theology requires that Old Testament theology deal primarily with meaning, and not significance, since it is based on historico-grammatical exegesis which locates meaning in the author’s intention as determined in the text’s form as the original audience would have comprehended it. Though much of the Old Testament may have enduring applicability to a modern audience (such as the decalogue perhaps), the distance of time and culture and a separate dispensation among the original and contemporary audience necessitates that any proscriptive exhortations from the Old Testament must pass through the halls of systematic theology. A proscriptive command for an audience living in a different dispensation would have been outside the purview of the Old Testament’s original author in many, if not most, cases. A single example of this, of which there are many (i.e. circumcision, sacrifices, holy

⁴² Gerhard Hasel. *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Kindle Locations 268-269). Kindle Edition.

⁴³ E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967, p. 8

⁴⁴ Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, Kindle Locations 369-372.

war) is enough to necessitate the dispensational preacher of the Old Testament to perform not only an exposition of the text, but to follow the entire process of theological method, filtering through Old Testament, whole biblical, and systematic theology before asserting any application.

The Proposed Revision to Christocentric Method: Christo-Telic Preaching

As seen above, much consternation has been levied against the Christocentric method asserting that Christ-centered preachers often fail to honor authorial intention and original audience reception in its historical and literary context. The best way to overcome this accusation against Christo-centric preaching is to ensure that exegesis has been sufficiently performed in its historical and literary context before moving to Old Testament Theology and then whole Biblical theology. Though the entire Bible is Christian Scripture, it was written in stages, and had meaning to the audiences which received it during its compilation. The meaning which that audience understood, and which that author intended, must be determined before it can be placed in its biblical theological context. The question of how a text should be placed within its canonical and redemptive context without abusing its literary and historical context is important. Perhaps the reason why Griedanus and Chapell have been accused of this abuse is because they fail to offer a methodology for sermon outline construction. Though they develop steps for a homiletical process, the process of structuring the sermon is left to each individual preacher. This seems to be where the confusion comes in. If the steps to a sermon are commonly referred to as explain, illustrate, and apply, then it seems appropriate to place canonical and redemptive placement after the explanation of the text, and before the application. The question remaining is how this canonical and redemptive situation can be appropriated throughout the sermon. To move the canonical/redemptive situation into each point of explanation is likely to confuse the hearer, and perhaps the interpreter, resulting in the obscuring of authorial intention of the

pericope under consideration. However, failing to address the canonical/redemptive situation at all can lead to the moralism and legalism addressed above. Whether each person applies a text at each point or leaves application until the end will be a matter of preference. However, relegating application to the end of the exposition of the text, a preacher can ensure that progress of revelation is honored, and that the hearer is taught to read the text in way which moves in a unified way, from beginning to end, before seeking to apply it to themselves.⁴⁵

The second problematic step of Griedanus' outline is to develop a theme and goal for the sermon. Though dispensationalists may be inclined to state that the theme and goal of the text derived in step seven should be identical to step five, this might not always be the case; indeed dispensationalism itself may prohibit that at times. For example, those portions of scripture which seem to emphasize racial distinctions for the Jews and excluding members from the assembly, such as Deut. 23:1-8, are difficult to apply to a non-Jewish western audience in the dispensation of grace. To leave such distinctions as the main theme of the sermon would be problematic devolving into a history of religion or systematic theology lecture which fails to equip a contemporary audience for good works. A better theme for this text would be one which focuses on God's sovereign election which determines who can and cannot be accepted into the community. In this dispensation, the community which offers true worship to God (John 4:21) is not geographically, or ethnically determined (Galatians 3:28) and is now offered in spirit and truth amongst the gathered assembly of God's people. Election to this community is now founded on faith alone (Eph. 2:8-9), in Christ alone for the forgiveness of sins (Rom. 4:25) and evinced by baptism as opposed to circumcision (Acts 2:38, Colossians 2:12, Gal. 5:2 etc.).

⁴⁵ Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, Kindle Locations 1881-1883.

The Christo-centric model can be useful for dispensationalists in preaching the Old Testament with some slight modifications of methodology. The suggested reservation of redemptive-canonical situation to the end the sermon, or at minimum, separated from the explanation of the text, could in fact be considered Christo-telic. Since the Scriptures end with Jesus, this may serve to assuage the fears of dispensationalists by placing an emphasis on the progress of revelation and exemplifying the proper use of antecedent revelation.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to show that preaching from the Old Testament is necessary, and that it requires careful nuancing to be applicable to a contemporary audience while avoiding the common pitfalls of moralism, legalism, or devolving into a lecture on the history of religion. This can be done through a refinement of the Christo-centric model offered by Chapell and Griedanus, whereby the progress of revelation is honored so that the explanation section of the sermon is true to authorial intention and audience reception, while the application for the contemporary audience is informed by canonical and redemptive-historical situation so that the ministry of Christ is applied to the current dispensation. In conclusion, dispensational preaching requires a contemporary application, and the current dispensation demands a discussion of what Christ has done for the believer. Likewise, the Christo-centric preacher must practice rigorous exegesis which separates the meaning of the text from the significance clearly enough that the contemporary audience is not confused by their sermons and might be better instructed on how to read their bibles. When these principles are applied systematically with nuance, even the often-considered mundane passages of the Old Testament can be found profitable for equipping the members of our congregations. Thank you.

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