

# **Christological Preaching on Historical Materials of the Old Testament**

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Introduction by Dr. P. Y. De Jong

Preaching, a glorious and gratifying calling indeed, is always hard work. The Word of the living God is to be expounded and applied to the congregation according to the intent of the Holy Spirit. This takes faith, a faith steeped in prayer and patience which commits itself to proclaiming "the full counsel of God."

Of all the sermons (and these are of several kinds according to the Infinite riches of the Word) none requires more effort on the part of the preacher than Gospel proclamation rooted in Old Testament historical materials. Anyone acquainted with the Word can learn how to tell its stories with a degree of skill. Nor is it at all difficult to distil from many of its periscopes some moral lesson or devotional Inspiration. But this is a far cry from opening up the riches of God's revelation in Christ Jesus, which is the sum and substance of the Old as well as the New Testament. "Ye search the scripture," said our Lord to the Jews of his day, "because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me." (John 5:39) But how can the preacher find the living and life-giving Savior in those pages without reading into the specific texts what does not seem to be there at all? Here are questions, problems, issues which for most Bible students do not lend themselves to simple but satisfying resolution.

To assist the student who seeks to wrestle seriously with Holy Writ this article together with one penned by the late Prof. Benne Holwerda have been prepared.

Both articles, written originally in the Dutch language, come from a time when in the Reformed Churches (Gereformeerd) in the Netherlands these issues were being vigorously discussed.

Preaching for some generations had been a chief concern in those churches. In large measure it had occasioned the revival of spiritual life and the reformation of the congregational life both in the days of the Secession of 1834 and the Doleantie of 1886. But by the time of the death of both Dr. A. Kuyper Sr. in 1920 and Dr. Herman Bavinck in 1911 a spiritual malaise set in. Church attendance, especially among the more highly educated, declined. The faith which is unto godliness no longer gripped the hearts of many as it had done earlier.

Often doctrine was preached with little spiritual warmth and, conviction. Respectability in the eyes of fellowmen and, perhaps, of God seemed to replace true religion as a life of covenant fellowship with God. To many leaders in the churches the earlier reformations which had thrilled the hearts of thousands throughout the land seemed to stagnate. Despite intense religiously oriented activity in all areas of human endeavour -- in education, politics, missions, philanthropy, labour relations, social services, and missions -- all was not well with the churches.

But by the end of the 1920 signs of a new springtime began to show themselves here and there. Much of this gained strength during the next decade but often in the face of ever greater

opposition until the fateful decisions of the synod of 1944 irretrievably tore the Reformed Churches (Gereformeerd) of the Netherlands apart.

In the earlier and more hopeful days the leaders concentrated their attention to a large extent on preaching. For them it was the God-ordained means unto salvation for all who believed. Unless sound preaching was revitalized in obedience to Scripture itself, little hope could be held out for a true spiritual reawakening and reformation of life. And much attention in those discussions, which filled the pages of church periodicals, pamphlets and books, was directed to preaching on Old Testament historical materials. The exemplaristic, moralistic sermons on those stories of God's dealings with Israel had to make way for proclaiming the mighty words and deeds of God-in-Christ as revealed on those sacred pages. Scripture once again had to become its own interpreter. Issues dealing with exegesis, hermeneutics, and homiletics especially in their relation to the Old Testament canon came to stand in sharp relief. What first had offered so much inspiration and encouragement to many soon was marred by the rise of a vicious party-spirit. Personalities and periodicals and even institution of theological learning came to stand in strong opposition to each other in consequence of which a breach was forced upon the congregations throughout the land by the synod of 1944. And with that further fruitful discussions among those who had been one in ecclesiastical fellowship ceased. The churches which submitted to those synodical decisions began increasingly under a new leadership to choose another and, in our judgement, fatal path to restore vitality to their life.

Much of what was published until 1944, however, remains unusually informative and valuable for us as Reformed people today. Here clear positions were taken against the efforts to revive spiritual life by means of a liturgical renewal which often stressed "form" at the expense of content and at times valued the sacrament above the proclamation of the Word. At the same time especially K. Schilder and his colleagues and disciples exposed the insidious errors of the Barthians who claimed to be restoring the Old Testament to its rightful place in the life of the churches. Only against this background can the reader understand the two monographs, which have been prepared in the English language for our use here.

Far too little attention both during those years and afterwards has been paid to those instructive discussions and debates on this side of the ocean. Apart from a passing reference or two both in the Reformed and the Christian Reformed churches (largely the spiritual daughters of the Reformed Churches (Gereformeerd) in the Netherlands) these have been ignored. All of us are deeply indebted to Dr. Sidney Greidanus whose doctoral thesis, *Sola Scriptura Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts* (1970), describes, analyses and evaluates the issues involved in the discussions of those years.

For the initial translation of these two monographs we express our appreciation for the arduous work done by the Rev. John H. Piersma, presently pastor of the Pleasant Street Christian Reformed Church of Whitinsville, Mass. Translation of such material from one language into another nor the least from Dutch into English, takes a heavy toll in time and sweat and even tears.

Some slight modifications have been made. Longer and often involved sentences have at times been divided. Transitional words demanded by the Dutch but unnecessary in English have been

here and there omitted. For the sake of greater clarity as well as smoother reading a few words and phrases have been added, hopefully without doing any injustice to the original.

Today, we fear sound preaching on Old Testament historical materials is not a strong suit in the Reformed and Christian Reformed, the Protestant Reformed and the Netherlands Reformed congregations in Canada and the United States. Not without a large measure of justification many of us as preachers within these ecclesiastical fellowships which owe so much to the Secession of 1834 and/or the Doleantie of 1886 can be accused of holding to "a canon within the canon." Hopefully these two writings, together with ongoing discussions, will in some measure remedy a great and apparently growing defect. Those commissioned to preach the unsearchable riches of God's grace in Christ Jesus are to open up the "full counsel of God" as set forth in Holy Writ. And this includes, let it not for a moment be forgotten, also the historical materials of the Old Testament.

June 1983, Dr. Peter Y. De Jong.

[This material appeared in the volume entitled *VAN DEN DIENST DES WOORDS*, pp. 117-167 (1944)]

This topic proceeds from the premise that Old Testament preaching must be Christological in character, because the Old Testament itself has a Christological content. This characteristic of Old Testament preaching is not an element foreign to the content of the Old Testament, introduced from outside and added according to some autonomously established diagram into which every text must be fitted. The content of Old Testament revelation receives its just due in preaching only when it is Christological in character. All other preaching is deficient in revelation-content, and must therefore be condemned.

With this judgment we consciously take sides in the present theological discussion concerning the relationship of Old and New Testaments. However, also in that struggle our decision is prejudiced by our faith. That means, among other things, that we maintain the real unity of Old and New Testament, a unity of which the Mediator Christ is the ground, content, center, and aim. This is a confession for which faith had good grounds. However, a broader discussion of that topic lies outside of the scope of this article.

At the same time, the problem is indicated which is presented by our topic. At this point many questions arise which have recently come to the fore as a result of numerous reflections, and which, for all who embrace the aforementioned faith, are concentrated in the question: How must this Christological character be found and understood? The scientific exegete may think he can safely by-pass this question (at least for the present), and therefore can withhold his judgment for a while; the homilete, faced each week anew with his calling to instruct the congregation of Christ also in the divine revelation of the Old Testament, must declare his viewpoint here. A common complaint, however, is that many Old Testament studies published especially in recent years do not furnish the material which he seeks for his homiletics. Schreiner<sup>[1]</sup> is of the opinion that this lack is to be found in the fact that Old Testament scholars have not seen the problem of the relationship between the word of men and the Word of God which is unfolded in the gospels. In my opinion, that is not the lack. The constantly recurring embarrassment for the homilete is

occasioned rather by the fact that, in commentaries, literary-historical exegesis reigns supreme, so that the Christological character of the (Old Testament) revelation fails to receive its just due; indeed in many instances is denied. The fact that, in the concrete development of this approach, he receives no help at this point from the abundant scientific exegetical material, and must find his own way, produces homiletic embarrassment and consequent uncertainty which is so detrimental for the preaching of the Word. This also accounts for the fact that, even in the case of those who proceed from the same starting-point of faith, the practical results display not only notable variations but also painful contradictions.

We cannot separate our topic, which is a homiletical problem, from the deeper and more comprehensive question of the relation between the two Testaments or Covenants. The answer to the question concerning the Christological character of the preaching on the historical materials of the Old Testament will depend on one's conviction about the unity and the difference of the Old and New Testaments. It is necessary that we make some comments on the most important points of the debate on this subject during the past several years.

### The Relation between Old and New Testament

This is certainly not a new problem, although it has been restated recently. Paul, in his day, was forced to combat the views of the Judaizers whose interpretation of the Mosaic laws spelled a deadly peril for the gospel of liberty revealed in Christ <sup>[2]</sup>. We may speak here of an "over-rating of the Old Testament." Later schools of thought opposed the Old Testament as contrasted with the New Testament or rejected the Old Testament as being of lower order. Among these, we must first mention Gnosticism, the Christianized paganism that looked upon the Old Testament as the product of a "demiurg", an inferior God, in contrast with the Father of Jesus Christ. We must also mention Marcion, for whom the Old Testament was the revelation of a hard, stern, jealous God, contrasted sharply with the God of the New Testament as the God of love. Thus, Marcion came to a denial of the Trinity <sup>[3]</sup>. Manicheism also favored a Christianity without the Old Testament <sup>[4]</sup>.

Over against these errors, the Christian church retained the Old Testament as a part of the canon. This does not mean, however, that it has achieved complete clarity concerning its meaning and its correct usage or the exact method of its interpretation <sup>[5]</sup>. In many instances the church failed to account clearly, even to itself, for the existing problems, including those presented by its opponents. And this uncertainty remains. Think of Luther's judgment of the book Esther, which he wanted to remove from the canon, because in his opinion it presented the truth in too Jewish and too pagan a way <sup>[6]</sup>. He was unable to find Christ in the book. Thus, even then there was the question of "theological" or "pneumatic" <sup>[7]</sup> exegesis.

In recent years, however, this problem has been stated with such force that we can no longer escape it. Especially the fierce and seemingly well-grounded criticism of the Old Testament has called the church to renewed reflection. We cannot meet this criticism without answering the question why the position of the Old Testament in the canon is maintained, and what its significance is in connection with the new Testament. But this immediately touches that other question relative to the proper method of interpretation, namely, whether the Old Testament may and must be interpreted Christologically. This also includes the question whether the revelation

of the Old Testament really is Christological in character. If not, then this portion of the Scriptures is alien to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ as presented to us in the New Testament. Then we cannot possibly maintain the place of the Old Testament in the canon on the basis of principle. But if the Christological character of the Old Testament revelation is established, it must be reckoned with in every respect in the process of interpretation.

Now the question arises again: in what manner must this be done? Attention has been called to the extreme uncertainty that the church exhibits in this dispute. On the one hand there is an avoiding of Old Testament subjects in preaching; on the other hand a reaction which pushes Old Testament material to the fore, with an attempt to save the day by the use of allegory <sup>[8]</sup>. Korff calls the subject "critical" because of the condition in which the critics found theology as a science in which the Christian faith reflects on its contents. He claims that the church has never been able to state normatively what the Old Testament means. "Though this may sound strange; the more particular definition of the meaning of the Old Testament is still largely an open question in the Christian church." <sup>[9]</sup>

If this judgment is accurate, the church is faced with a task which it must assume as soon as possible, principally and fundamentally. This also explains the fact that there is so much difference of opinion, especially among those who are members "of the church."

Kahler has rightly commented that often there has been no sharp distinction between revelation and religion. <sup>[10]</sup> Many value the Old Testament only as a book about Israel's religion. That evaluation will be negative or positive, according to the standard that is used. Nevertheless, even in the latter instance, even if one agreed with R. Kittel <sup>[11]</sup> in placing the Jewish religion in advance of all non-Christian religions, one can never get beyond the point of noting a quantitative distinction from paganism. The Old Testament as God's revelation is dropped; and it is impossible to see on what grounds its place in the canon is to be assured. From this viewpoint each Christological explanation is no more than an artifice foreign to the real content. This conclusion was drawn by E. Hirsch in his book <sup>[12]</sup> published in 1936.

Hirsch considers it impossible to conceive of the Old Testament as "un-Christian." He who would do so must necessarily make the New Testament "un-Christian". Every Christian use of the prophetic word is also a use opposed to the prophetic word. They mean precisely the opposite of what we would interpret. For him the Old Testament Jewish religion is the purest expression of a law religion. Therefore the faith, obedience, and religion which are demanded there differ so essentially from what is demanded of us in the gospel of Jesus Christ that, if we use the Christian standard, it is nothing other than unbelief, disobedience, and false religion. The assertion that the prophets and the fathers also had the Christian faith is a legend. At most we find in the Old Testament a yearning for liberation from the law religion; the cross of Christ is the sharp dividing line, the unbridgeable gulf.

Must the Old Testament then be removed from the canon? Hirsch is not yet ready to suggest this, but thinks it may come to that eventually. How then should the Old Testament be used in the preaching? Here is the answer: by "Vormeditation" one must become sharply aware, on the basis of a text, of the antithesis between Old and New Testament belief. The results of the pre-meditation serve then as the starting point for the sermon-meditation. It amounts to this: never

the Old Testament texts as such, but simply and only our judgment of the Old Testament text, which we must digest in faith, is the ground and measure of a Christian sermon on the Old Testament. One who preaches on the sacrifice of Isaac must realize clearly that we are not united with Abraham in the (Christian) faith. We must see the contrast between the law-religion and the gospel of Christ in this form: we have a God who deals differently with us. Against the dark background of a view of God and Jewish faith of Genesis 22 the riches of the New Testament must increasingly be made clear. The Old Testament serves only as delineation of a contrast.

This degradation of the Old Testament has been forcefully protested especially in Barthian theology. From that quarter many writings have appeared which not only theoretically but also in a practical working out seek to arrive at a solution of the problem <sup>[13]</sup>.

At this point we must reflect more broadly on their views. In the first place, because from that quarter it is constantly being argued that the line of the Reformation, especially of Calvin, must be extended. This, in the first place, indicates the importance of the matter for us as Reformed. There is the added consideration that many preachers in our land - and here I am thinking especially of the Reformed (Hervormde) church - are being governed by the basic principles of the dialectic theology, and are reaching many church members every week by means of their sermons, meditations, and other writings. And finally, because the frequent use of familiar words and expressions, derived from the Scriptures and the Confessions, makes it difficult or impossible for many to see the principal difference between the dialectic and the Reformed (Gereformeerd) views. Too often an exegesis or sermon of Barthian content is viewed as truly Scriptural.

It is not necessary to discuss all the literature that has emanated from that camp in recent years <sup>[14]</sup>. We may omit unimportant nuances. At this time we are interested in a few main thoughts. We present these as written by W. Vischer <sup>[15]</sup> and H. Hellbardt <sup>[16]</sup>. For the sake of convenience we summarize their exposition in four points.

In the first place, the unity of both Testaments is maintained vigorously. He who rejects the Old Testament must remember that thus the Christian witness is lost, namely that Jesus is the Christ. It is precisely from the Old Testament that we learn what Christ signifies. Indeed, the apostles preached definitely that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ of the Old Testament. We may say also that the Old Testament "declares" the reality or the truth of the Gospels. From the Old Testament we obtain the certainty that the acknowledgement of Jesus as the Christ is not an invention of the first Christian church but rests upon divine testimony. Without the Old Testament one would have to reach the point of awarding the Christ-title to someone other than Jesus.

In the second place, the Scriptures are interpreted as "testimony" to God's revelation. Because only insofar as the Bible testifies that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ is it "Holy Scripture". The Scripture does not present a Jesus-image, or a Christ-idea, but speaks about Christ Jesus as a historical event, the Word made flesh. And the fact of the incarnation is origin and purpose of all history; also the center of the circle.

Now, what is meant by "testifying" and "testimony"? That is not an acknowledgement that the Scripture is God's Word because it is inspired by God's Spirit. We must see that clearly. The

error of the inspiration-theory has been brought to light once-for-all and this theory has had its day. We have now learned to know the Bible as a thoroughly human book. Here again we have the well-known expression of "the Scripture's form of a servant" In the same manner as the Son became flesh, the Spirit of God has humbled Himself through the medium of the human stylus of holy men and disposed of His majesty. The Holy Scriptures are the swaddling clothes which we have received as a sign. They are not the Child. The Scriptures also remain a human book, written in human, that is, fallible, words. The Holy Spirit must blow upon the letters or they will remain dead. Thus the human words "present testimony" to the Word made flesh - when, where, and in what manner they awaken faith through the Holy Spirit.

In the third place, we must note how the distinction between Old and New Testament is presented here. That is very important in working out our topic. Vischer formulates it in this manner: "The Old Testament states what the Christ is: the New Testament states Who He is. The Old Testament speaks of the Christ, the Messiah, the office; the New Testament tells us that this Christ was made manifest in Jesus. The unity is brought out in this: only he knows Jesus (N.T.) who acknowledges Him as the Christ (OT); and only he knows what the Christ is (OT) who knows that He is Jesus (NT). With reference to the heart of the matter, there is no distinction between the salvation presented in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. It is folly to think that we now know more about God than Abraham, 'God's friend' does. The only difference is in the distribution and presentation of the salvation."

The difference between the two Testaments is further indicated (according to Luke 4) as one of promise and fulfillment. But what does fulfillment mean in this instance? "Fulfillment" may never be interpreted to mean that the promise is now ended. That would be true if the fulfillment of the promise was not in itself a promise, and indeed a reinforced promise. The apostles and believers of the present time are conscious of their solidarity with the believers of the Old Covenant in the matter of expectation. We continue to be a waiting, hoping church.

"Fulfillment" (pleroun) means: the promise is being filled. Not: the promise as promise is past, conquered, and that which was promised has taken its place. But precisely the opposite: the promise is now in full force. Therefore the difference between Old and New Testament is that at first there was the promise, and now the full and reinforced promise. For the New Testament does not teach that the Kingdom of God has come, but that it is at hand (Mark 1:15). The fulfillment, as we constantly understand it, will be at Christ's return.

In the fourth place, let us see what to the Barthian school is the correct method of interpretation. On the one hand they note that, if Jesus is really the hidden meaning of the Scriptures, an honest philological exegesis should be able to establish this. At this point they dispute the reproach of the modern Bible scholars, who can only brand the Christological exposition of the Old Testament as an adding to, and reject this as being speculative. Over against that these scholars not only read what is written, but first construct an original connection and meaning. They explain the "testimony" as only looking back and not forward, as pointing to the Coming One. Therefore they really present something other than the written word.

On the other hand, they also remark that the Scripture, which is indeed a "historical document", does contain a "testimony." Therefore a scientific exegesis, although necessary, is not sufficient.

A "testimony" can be understood only by faith. And the Holy Spirit must lead us to that point. The author has so hidden Himself in His work that no exegesis can extract Him. He must be His own exegete. We must always keep in mind that we do not control the Holy Spirit. The demand upon us for the right Scripture exegesis is that we hold to signs that God uses in the Bible to indicate Who He is and where we must seek Him. It is required, further, that the Holy Spirit works with, among and at these signs to vitalize the dead letters, and to make the weak, fallible word of man into a Word of God, into the Word of the incarnate Son.

After this short exposition we must now answer the question whether this view, controlled by Barth's dialectics, harmonizes with the Scriptures and whether it can in principle show us the way to a solution of the problem concerning the Christological character of the preaching on the historical subject matter of the Old Testament. Those who would achieve clarity in this matter (and are not we, Gereformeerden, in the middle of the discussion?) will not shy away from an honest testing of this view, which intends to be a serious contribution to the attempt to arrive at a correct insight.

If our judgment is to be fair and correct, it will be necessary first to come to a clear realization of the true meaning of the words and content of the ideas presented. I am thinking especially of the fundamental idea "witness" (Zeugnis). Those who use this word appeal to Scripture itself <sup>[17]</sup>. However, it is a prime requisite that this word then is given no other content than it has in Scripture. Dr. Schippers has convincingly shown in his dissertation that Scripture derives the idea "witness" from the administration of justice <sup>[18]</sup>. The Old Testament impresses us with the fact that justice deals with facts. The value of a testimony is controlled entirely by the knowledge of the facts displayed by the witness, and by the most definite guarantee that this knowledge of the facts is being presented accurately. The New Testament also knows of no witnesses except those who are closely connected with the facts. The witness is subservient to bringing about justice and its rule in this world and in eternity, and he serves justice by supporting and guaranteeing the facts.

In the entire Scripture testimony is the reproduction of the fact's under the pressure of the consciousness that the course of justice must be governed by this reproduction. Therefore the testimony is eye and ear-testimony. The witness disappears entirely behind the history that he presents. An attack upon legal testimony is an attack upon history.

This is understood in an entirely different sense, foreign to Scripture, in the dialectic camp. Here one must always bear in mind that the dualism between God and man, God's Word and man's Word, is not for one moment abandoned. Their starting point is that God's Word cannot be expressed in human language and cannot be set down in a book. When it is stated repeatedly that the Scripture is God's Word this "is" may not be understood in the direct sense <sup>[19]</sup>, but only indirect, meaning: God can, if He so wills, make this word of man a Word from Him. But Scripture, as we have it, remains fallible human work, with all the faults, errors, and contradictions which cleave to every human writing <sup>[20]</sup>. We may say only that it points to (is testimony of) God's Word. The witness does not speak God's Word; his word is merely a token of it. The parallel is drawn here with the sacraments: the bread of the Lord's Supper is and remains ordinary bread, after the blessing. But it is a token of grace, not grace itself; a "testimony" to him who believes.

This interpretation of "testimony" (in the sense of a signpost) enables one to take a position not only for the right but also for the necessity of Scripture critique. The Bible, as a collection of human fallible writings, must be examined from a historical-critical viewpoint. But this historical criticism does not affect the faith. We have already seen how this view of "testimony" furnishes a basis for fierce opposition to the doctrine of inspiration. All of this results from the fact that these people operate on the basis of a totally different understanding of "testimony" than the Scriptural one. This cannot be justified over against Scripture or the church.

Closely connected with this is their mention of the "form of a servant" of the Holy Scripture. It will be remembered that Kuyper and Bavinck also made mention of this. They meant to say that the Word of God entered into the life and history of peoples and nations, and subjected itself as Scripture to the fate of all writings <sup>[21]</sup>. Also that the Word of God took form and shape not in a perfect human language, but in a defective language marred by sin <sup>[22]</sup>. But the inspiration and therefore the infallibility of Scripture was vigorously maintained by them <sup>[23]</sup>.

The Barthians, however, mean something entirely different when they speak of the fleshly character (Fleischlichkeit), the temporary definiteness (zeitliche Bedingtheit), and the historical casualness (geschichtliche Zufälligkeit) of the Scripture. With this "form of a servant" idea they want to stress the human-fallible character of the Bible. Barth speaks of "welthaftigkeit," sharing in or being part of this world <sup>[24]</sup>. That is saying that God's Word cannot assume form or shape in our human language, and that man's word can never be anything but a sign, a testimony, a pointing to, a manger and swaddling bands. This is called the humbling of the Holy Spirit, and a parallel is drawn with the humiliation of God's Son <sup>[25]</sup>. And that is called the offence or the "skandalon". Another Scriptural term is thus used but with an un-Scriptural content. Berkouwer rightly points out that offence according to the Scripture is man's sin, which is annoyed by the content of God's revelation. The cause of this "offence" is man's unbelief. But Vischer and others with him find that offence in the human form and shape of God's revelation. The cause of that offence is to be found in the form of a servant that that revelation assumes <sup>[26]</sup>. Here is a yawning chasm between Scripture and Barthian genius that cannot be bridged <sup>[27]</sup>.

This view determines the direction in which they seek the solution to this problem of the christological character of the history of the Old Testament, and therefore also of this exegetical method in dealing with redemption history. The Old Testament "testifies" of the Christ. The historical facts (whether they occurred or not!) are signs of the revelation: they are not themselves revelation. They "point" to the cross of Christ. This explains the fact that they can at this point suddenly take 'the leap' to Christ, because they see the signs everywhere. For example, Hellbardt states: "One might easily substitute the name Jesus for the name Noah; the church for the Ark; the true Israel for Abraham; Jesus, the Christ of God for Moses."<sup>[28]</sup>

This inevitably leads to systematized arbitrariness. A few examples will demonstrate this better than a theoretical exposition. We read that the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, etc. joined forces against Chedorlaomer in the vale of Siddim (Gen. 14:3). Siddim could be interpreted as "the vale of the demons". The fact that the kings chose this valley would then indicate that they feel at home here under the rule of the demons! But God will prove that He is stronger than all demons <sup>[29]</sup>. Abraham goes forth with 318 men to liberate Lot. The number 318 has a more profound significance. If the Hebrew letters of the name Eliezer are read as numbers we arrive at exactly

318. Whether there were really 318 men is of no consequence; there could have been 4000. But that number is a "testimony," a sign. The heart of the matter is that Abraham, the believer, goes to battle only with "home-born", i.e., with partners in the faith of Eliezer. Therefore not the sword but faith is Abraham's weapon <sup>[30]</sup>.

Abraham pursues the enemy to Dan. Here we are not concerned with the geographical location but with the "spiritual meaning." It is a "sign" of the boundary which has been drawn for faith. There is a borderline where the world begins, and beyond which faith cannot conquer. Abraham can conquer only in his own domain. <sup>[31]</sup>

When Melchisedek presents bread and wine to Abraham, this is again "sign" of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper as an expression of unity, a pointing" to the source of our strength <sup>[32]</sup>. Indeed, it is called a clear reference to the sacrament of the New Covenant <sup>[33]</sup>.

These examples will suffice. One can now understand why opponents have spoken of an amazing allegory, of gross arbitrariness, and the science of adding to; <sup>[34]</sup> indeed of the danger of docetism. <sup>[35]</sup>

When one reads the works and sermons of the Barthians, it seems at times as if the allegory of the first centuries and the typology of the Middle Ages have been revived in a new shape. The "literal" or "historical" meaning of a Scripture passage is of little importance. Scripture critics may freely decide in these matters. But everywhere one must see the "testimony" of the incarnate Word. It has been said truly that thus the entire Scripture becomes tautology, i.e., that it says the same thing throughout. True, the "signs" change but the "heart of the matter" is the same everywhere.

In this way the history of revelation is hard pressed. Vischer views Old and New Testament as two choirs, two circles, with differing lines drawn around one center - Immanuel. He stands in the center between prophets and apostles; all point to Him <sup>[36]</sup>. In the face of such a presentation the idea of God's revelation in history is abolished in principle. For history's course is run according to a process; it speaks of an evolution. There is a progression from the lesser to the greater. But this idea does not fit into the view of history as a circle around a center, for then the location of a word or deed on the circumference is of no importance.

Thus there is a real danger than one may continue to speak of the history of revelation, but that God's revelation in history, is no longer taken seriously <sup>[37]</sup>.

In principle the distinction between Old and New Testament thus also disappears. Both "testify" of the incarnate Word. However, the Old Testament speaks to us of the Logos asarkos, the Word that has not yet been made flesh, but will eventually become flesh. He who will not hold to that cannot present the development in the history of revelation in the proper manner, but must take refuge in an allegorical and symbolical method of exposition. The erroneous interpretation of "fulfilling" as a promise become full also abolishes the distinction between the promise of the Old and the fulfillment of the New Testament, and presents, the unity of the two Testaments as an identity. Hertrich rightly notes that the New Testament does not merely teach that the Kingdom of God is at hand, but that it has come - it is "among you" <sup>[38]</sup>.

Thus one runs the danger of dissolving Christmas eve into Advent <sup>[39]</sup>. Surely, the distinction between the two Testaments is not exhausted by the words promise and fulfillment. One shall have to ascertain what was fulfilled in the New Testament. But there is no warrant for calling "fulfillment" a "reinforced promise." That does not do justice to the all-controlling fact of Christ's coming in the flesh, which is the only justification for speaking of Old and New Testament.

This critique does not mean that Barthianism has not supplied much valuable information with reference to the Christological exegesis of the Old Testament which we may gracefully accept and use. But that may not close our eye to the fact that the principal solution offered by them is unacceptable. They start from premises that we cannot accept because in spite of their use of Scriptural terms, their real content is alien to Scripture. Similar sounding words should never betray us. The allegorical exegesis to which these scholars and their disciples resort is not an excess of an otherwise correct method, but the logical result of a wrong starting point. Scripture to them is something other than it is for us. Consequently their methods of exposition will differ from ours. In this case also, the Reformed (Gereformeerd) interpretation will have to go its own way in isolation. But these will be ways pointed out by God's Word.

Although the adherents to the Reformed confessions are united in their principal rejection of the Christological exegesis inspired by Barth's theology, this does not mean that all its adherents are mutually agreed on this point. On the contrary, there has been a spirited discussion of the problem in recent years.

In order to reduce the different viewpoints to their proper proportion it will be well to recall the common basis that unites us. This is the previously mentioned starting-point, namely, that preaching on the historical material of the Old Testament must be Christological in character, because the revelation itself is Christological. This enables us to confess the real unity of Old and New Testament, and in this same breath to state that this unity is founded In Christ. But this real unity does not short-change the existing difference between the two Testaments.

For us, unity does not become identity as we found it to be with many dialectical theologians.

It is always worth our while to listen to Calvin's comments on this material <sup>[40]</sup>. He views it as the difference between the Old and New Covenant. On this subject he says: "The covenant made with all the patriarchs is so much like ours in substance and reality that the two are actually one and the same. Yet they differ in the mode of dispensation."

He sees the unity in substance especially in three things. In the first place, fleshly riches and prosperity were not set before the Jews as a goal, for they also were chosen unto hope of eternal life. At this point Calvin takes sharp issue with those who claim that the Old Covenant merely promised earthly blessings. In the second place, also at that time the covenant was not founded on any merit of man but only upon the mercies of God. And in the third place, they also had and knew the Mediator Christ, through whom they were united with God and became partakers of His promises.

Calvin calls these three principal points the "substance" of the covenant. And that was the same in the Old as in the New Covenant. Both "covenants" therefore agree in basis, (God's mercy); in promise, and (as the following will show) in threat (eternal life and eternal death), and in the Mediator Christ and therefore in the way that leads to eternal life. This also means that we may not speak of two covenants, but of two dispensations of the same covenant of grace.

Two dispensations or phases. That does point to a difference. But this difference exists only in the administration of the covenant. Here Calvin indicates five points of difference. But these, he says, may not impair the already established unity. Especially with respect to Christ, the foundation of the promises, the equality must be maintained.

The first difference is that the Lord showed, and in a certain sense caused men to taste, the heavenly inheritance in and with earthly blessings. This was a lower method of exercise that the Lord now omits, because the Gospel has now been revealed more clearly. In these earthly possessions they already saw, as in a glass, the future inheritance, while the bodily punishments were proof of His judgment of the rejected. The second difference is that the Old Testament shows only an image and a shadow, but the New Testament presents the reality and the true body. Here he is thinking especially of the law in the shadows and of the function of the law as schoolmaster, (Gal.3:24). That was necessary, because the believers of that time could see only from afar and in the shadows. This resulted in a minimal insight. But now the full light has arisen. In the third place, we must note the distinction between law and gospel. However, this contrast is shown by way of comparison, not to indicate that there was no gospel in the Old Covenant but to show the abundance of grace that is revealed in the New Covenant. Thus there is only a difference in degree. In the fourth place, the two can be distinguished as a testament of bondage and a testament of liberty, (cf. Rom. 8:15). The old patriarchs were indeed partners of the same liberty and joy that we experience, but the fruit of the gospel was not then as unrestricted as now given to us in the full revelation of grace. The fifth difference is that the covenant is no longer restricted to one nation.

Calvin therefore accepts only a difference in degree between the two Covenants. With reference to the substance of the Covenant he forcefully maintains the unity. He rejects emphatically the idea that in Israel the Covenant was only external, and that the promise referred only to material goods <sup>[41]</sup>. If we ask how the differences are to be explained, Calvin always points to the fact that revelation increased in clarity when Christ came. That which originally was obscure has now been clarified. The twilight has given place to the full light. Thus the light of revelation has increased in power, but also in extent. That which initially was obscure has now become clear. But it is the same light. Thus Calvin is able to maintain the unity of revelation, and consequently the unity of the Covenant and the history of the Covenant. That one history includes various phases. But between those phases there is only a difference in degree.

I believe that Calvin here has shown us the way to a principal solution of the problem of the relation between Old and New Testament. The error of the identity as well as that of a difference in substance is cut off at the root. At the same time we are given the direction in which we may find the solution. We shall have to work out his basic thought more thoroughly. Then it will become evident that he has seen more clearly than the many who saw the difference between the two Testaments from another viewpoint. We cannot now enter more deeply into this matter. We

note only that the distinction law-gospel is not only inadequate but also deceptive. Especially when in this designation the law is given an interpretation that is wrongly ascribed to Luther<sup>[42]</sup> although it is found with later followers of Luther.

Neither does the idea of promise-fulfillment, which is current among us, give satisfaction, even when the Barthian view of this idea is rejected. Neither of the two parts can claim to be truly characteristic. The Old Testament cannot be fully explained by "promise," nor the New Testament by fulfillment"<sup>[43]</sup>. We also object to the distinction of the Old Testament as the period of God's preparatory coming, and of the New Testament as God's definite coming<sup>[44]</sup>. Not in God's coming, but in God's revelation do we perceive the unity as well as the difference. At the same time, the description of a preparatory coming of God detracts from the coming of God also in the Old Testament. It was better then to speak of a preparatory coming in the flesh of the Christ. When another writer says that the relation perhaps can best be stated as less-more,<sup>[45]</sup> we fully agree, provided this "less-more" is related to God's revelation or, to be more specific, to the revelation-of-God-in-Jesus Christ. Then we are again entirely in the line of Calvin, and at the same time in the line of our confessions<sup>[46]</sup>.

Only Calvin's views enable us to maintain in principle the Christological character of the preaching on Old Testament subject matter.

This is a first requirement for his views. Christ was the content also of the Old Testament revelation. This touches the unchangeable substance of the covenant. At the same time his presentation of the differences in degree of the clarity of revelation leaves room for further research into the historical process of revelation and for showing it to full advantage. We may not reproach Calvin for not having elaborated on this and, judging by his sermons, for not concretely applying it. The evolution of theological thought has not remained static during these four centuries. If we now make use of this insight and explicate the historical material in another manner, in agreement with the "redemption-history" method, no one is justified in making the charge that "the younger element" departs from Calvin. When the church, continuing to build on the results of Calvin's labors which have been acknowledged as correct, arrives at additional clarity on any one point, the demand that it remain with Calvin would be nothing less than slowing down a wholesome development of the knowledge of the truth.

In the face of all differences, the unity of the Reformed (Gereformeerd) believers is manifest in the fact that the Christological character of all revelation is being confessed. For that reason it is constantly pointed out that every sermon must be Christological in character. Already in 1918 Prof. Grosheide pointed to this, more particularly with reference to the New Testament. He lay down the rule that every passage must therefore be explicated Christocentrically. He complained also about twisting and bungling the text and condemned the practice of those preachers who mention the name of Christ only in an appropriate application. Also, when a text is treated phonetically or when the preacher enters upon "paths of allegorical and mystical exegesis". As a positive hint, he writes: "The way must be pointed by a positive awareness that the New Testament finds its unity in Christ." It is possible to find the center of every circle, and in every passage one can ultimately discover its relationship to the Christ of God<sup>[47]</sup>.

The same rule must be maintained unimpaired in preaching from the Old Testament. Prof. Ridderbos pointed to that already in 1922. He said that we may never preach from the Old Testament in the same manner as a devout rabbi or a modernist: the cross of Calvary must always be the center from which all light radiates. Now it is a fact that this demand generally creates the greatest difficulty, because, "under the old dispensation the Mediator in many respects is in the background. Nevertheless, no part of that demand may be abrogated. The way in which a solution must be found is indicated thus: If one only keeps in mind that it is always and again God, of Whom the Old Testament speaks on all its pages and in all its forms, the Christian preacher will automatically be led to the truth that this God is our God in Christ <sup>[48]</sup>.

Prof. Hoekstra also maintains that every sermon must be not only theological but also Christocentric. "Let it be shown in every sermon what is the connection between the Word of God that was chosen as a text and the central part of revelation. Even from the part of the circle that is farthest removed there is a way to the center, and this must be shown. For a sermon without Christ is not a sermon, is not a service of the Word." Again he points out that the difficulty which confronts the homilete is found especially in the historical sections. But even in the Old Testament passages this demand may not be minimized. It is worth while to observe his comment that, if the relationship with Christ is not remembered at this point, it may be possible to produce an aesthetically pleasing homily, but it will not be a service of the Word <sup>[49]</sup>.

Here then is our mutual starting point. It is our prejudice of faith in Old and New Testament we have God's revelation in Christ Jesus, and therefore every sermon must be Christological.

This pronouncement, which is a confession, also contains a problem. The question arises how this Christological character of the text must be viewed. In the discussions of recent years the terms exemplary and Christocentric have come to the fore. Holwerda has provided further explanation of these two words <sup>[50]</sup>. He calls one method exemplary "because it dissolves Biblical history into various independent stories, which are examples for us." This is not saying that the proponents of this method would refuse to place Christ in the center. The other method is called Christocentric because it "attempts to understand all of these messages in their connection with each other, in their mutual unity, in their connection with the center of redemption history, Jesus Christ." However, this method "does not forget that these things are written as our examples, but proceeds precisely from that point, and shows us why these things can be examples." The chief difference between those methods produces the question "whether we are dealing with many independent stories or with the one redemption history." For further explication of these terms and for the refutation of the misunderstandings that they have caused we refer the reader to the article from which we have quoted. We agree with the writer that we must not cling to a term. Whoever can present a better description of these two indeed existing methods will perform a real service. For various reasons my preference is for the term Christological instead of Christocentric.

Now it would be unfair to reproach the champions of one of these methods, as if they would not preach Christ fully or as if they do not acknowledge Christ as the center of sacred history. But this acknowledgement does not guarantee that justice will be done to the Christological character of a specific Scripture passage. A correct basic idea can lead to erroneous thoughts by the application of a wrong method, so that the rich and real content of the text remains obscure. One

who takes time to study the preaching methods throughout the centuries will soon be convinced of this.

The writings of the early centuries show how the apostolic fathers, the apologetes, and others have made use of the Old Testament. I am now referring only to the Scripture passages that are historical in character. In their writings the historical consideration is very much in the background. The facts mentioned in the Old Testament are generally not seen as development-stadia in the historical process of redemption-history: it is not considered significant that they happened then, in that period of time, and at that moment <sup>[51]</sup>. These writers give history "a strong paradigmatic character." Sometimes it is a picture gallery in which one group is an example for good, and another an example for evil.

All are examples, very worthy of imitation by the believers. This "exemplary" method results in an artificial addition of the Christological element rather than an inference from the Christological character of the one redemption history. It is done in the form of typology, allegory, or parallel, in which a small feature is abstracted from the story to be given a "deeper" meaning. For example, the prayer posture of Moses during Israel's battle against Amalek exemplifies Christ's position on the cross. Jacob's stiffened hip points to the rigidity of Christ on the cross. Whenever mention is made of wood, even the rods which Jacob laid in the watering troughs of the cattle, and the tree cast into the bitter waters at Marah all point to the wood of the cross. Further references to the cross and Christ's suffering on the cross are found in Rahab's red thread, Tamar's red thread, Jacob's ladder, and the wood used by Elisha <sup>[52]</sup>.

In all this we ought to appreciate the sincere striving to clarify the significance of the Old Testament for the Christian church. There may have been many failures in method, but the basic idea that governed was correct, namely, that the Old Testament is also God's revelation in Jesus Christ and can be understood only in the light of Christ.

We must remember this also when we look at typology as taught during the middle ages. Although we are tempted to illustrate at length, a few examples must suffice. Here we find again the currently popular idea <sup>[53]</sup> that Melchizedek's bread and wine point to the Lord's Supper. Eve's creation from "the side" of Adam points to Christ's pierced side on the cross. Joseph in the pit point to Christ in the grave. Isaac's carrying of the wood points to Christ's bearing the cross. Even the tree in Nebuchadnezzar's dream becomes a type of Christ; as the birds fled from the tree, so Christ is forsaken of men and angels. The joy of Darius when he beheld Daniel safe in the lion's den is a type of Mary Magdalene's joy when she saw the risen Christ <sup>[54]</sup>.

The question persists: what is the status of the Christological character of present day preaching?

In order to obtain an answer I have picked at random and examined a number of sermons by Reformed (Gereformeerd) preachers. They are sermons of the last ten years. I have purposely omitted what I found in some published sermons by Reformed (Hervormde) and Christian Reformed (Christelijk Gereformeerd) preacher, in order that we may be certain that we are dealing with authors who all honor the same principles. A short resume of the result follows. Among those who did not look for the Christological character according to the redemption-history method I seem to distinguish four nuances.

First, I point to a group of sermons which present to the church of Christ only in "exemplary" form the deeds, circumstances, relations, dispositions, etc., which are mentioned in the text. The Christological character of the text or - as Prof. Hoekstra expressed it - the way from the periphery to the center, Jesus Christ, is neither sought nor pointed out. The story of the close friendship of David and Jonathan is presented as an example of all true friendship that ought to exist among us. This true friendship can be grounded only in Christ, i.e., if together we are friends of Jesus.

Hannah's prayer for a child is cited as an example for all of us to come to the foot of the cross with our sorrows, while the answer to her prayer is a "token" for God's people of the truth that prayer is efficacious. The rest that is ours after we have prayed, as we see that rest exemplified in Hannah, is the fruit of the suffering of Christ, Who initially lacked this rest in the travail of His soul. Again, even as Hannah prayed, so we need praying fathers and mothers.

The fear of Elisha's servant, when he saw the armies that had surrounded the city, is a picture of the fear that often grips the heart of the child of God when he sees the enemies of God's church. But as the servant, upon Elisha's prayer, sees the fiery horses and chariots of the Lord, so we are admonished to cast our eyes upon the Lord and to remember that we are safe in the keeping of Almighty God Who in Christ is a faithful Father. Thus we must pray that our eyes may be open to the reality of divine aid.

When we read that David, following the disaster in Ziklag, strengthened himself in the Lord, the theme of the sermon is that we also, in times of sorrow, must seek our strength in Him. The disobedience of Jonah teaches us that we also often flee from Him. Thus we learn that Jonah was in all things like one of us. When we read how Elisha aided the widow, who had a creditor, by a divine miracle (vessels filled with oil), we are to learn the New Testament lesson that God in Jesus Christ has given us all things. Therefore, if we are in trouble, we must, even as this woman went to Elisha, go for help to Christ, our Mediator, and not expect anything from human aid.

All of these sermons dealt with historical material from the Old Testament. But the Christological character of the text was not sought out. Indeed (and this might also be an advantage), there was in these sermons no seeking for "types" of Christ. The deeds of men were transposed to fit our time, since of course it was taken into consideration that these sermons were addressed to the church of today. That was evident in both the address and the application. But the Word of God was not viewed Christologically; Christ was not the content of the text.

In other sermons such an attempt was made. Sometimes in the form that Prof. Grosheide called: "at the end of an applicatory closing phrase." All of us know the story of the disobedient prophet who prophesied against the altar of Jeroboam and was killed by a lion because of his disobedience. It was pointed out that this is an example of Satan's readiness to misuse our weakness. He did that with many devout people, also with Jesus in the wilderness. Thus we learn here that we must watch and pray. The prophet's lack of watchfulness must serve as a warning, especially for those who occupy positions of prominence. They especially, together with the whole church, must demonstrate that they are the salt of the earth. However, the fact that the lion did not devour the body is a token that the Lord was a forgiving God also for this prophet. That then is our comfort: "the Lord remains the faithful One for His people." He looks upon us in

Christ, Who remained steadfast in the midst of all temptation and was obedient unto the death of the cross. His grave is now the sign of His saving grace! We must lean upon that grace of God in Christ.

We find the same idea in a sermon on the text dealing with God's guidance of Israel to Canaan by a roundabout way. It was a longer but better way. This is now also the experience of all God's children. In many respects this serves as a mirror of God's leading of His church and His children. The Lord often leads us by a roundabout way for His own wise reasons. Israel murmured, but when they repented Moses interceded for them. Thus we must come to Christ Who is greater than Moses.

However, the Lord requires His people to go that longer way in the obedience of faith. That means travail of soul, but Christ also had to struggle, not to go the shortest way but the longest and most terrifying. Thus He rejected every temptation.

In these instances, the Christological element is looked for primarily in the form of parallel or analogy. We note this also in a description of Job's trial, where it is first stated that he sinned not but later that he cursed the day of his birth. The fact that Job sinned not with his lips was attributable to the grace of Christ. Christ stood firm in the midst of all misery and opposition, without sin. Herein lies our strength. Later Job cursed the day of his birth but was saved from the deepest fall, namely, that he should curse his God. That is God's saving faithfulness. Thus this story turns our attention to Christ in Whom our life is secure.

A third group works especially with the "type-idea." In the Old Testament we find various types of Christ. The following examples indicate how this widely accepted idea is worked out.

When Lot is saved from Sodom, he is instructed to flee to Zoar. In the language of the New Testament this means: "the Zoar of refuge, mountains of life, i.e., the hill where Christ died."

When Jacob wrestles with the Lord at Peniel and emerges haltingly it is only by God's grace that he is not consumed, because another will presently fall into the hands of the living God. Therefore Golgatha is Christ's Peniel. And from that Peniel we receive our Peniels here below. But there is a great difference! At His Peniel Christ met God's infinite wrath, but in our Peniels we find His seeking love. Jacob emerges haltingly; thus we must all pass through a Peniel where the sinner must capitulate. If we do not know a Peniel, we are not true children of the Covenant. We must pass through not once, but again and again.

Joseph especially seems to be a favorite object for typology. Dr. Kuyper Sr. once warned against looking upon Joseph as a type of Christ. But this is different. Joseph's obedience when he goes to visit his brothers in Dothan is a prophetic example of Christ's obedience when He visited the vineyard of the evil workmen. In the hatred of Joseph's brethren we see portrayed the hatred against God and His Anointed. His sale into slavery points to Christ's betrayal by Judas, and further this story presents the entire Messiah program, in an enshrouded and nebulous form.

When Joseph arrives in Egypt he receives a fourfold blessing from God, namely, the favor of his master; the prosperity of Potiphar's house, the confidence of his lord; and the blessing of his

outward appearance of a fair countenance. That, in the deepest sense of the word, is to be understood as God's blessing upon His child Jesus, for it is really God's Son who is led to Egypt. In the humiliation, after refusing Potiphar's wife, we again see the Messiah Who is first scorned and then crowned, in order that "a great people" might be saved.

Such typology is found also in the waters of Marah. It is true that Scripture does not furnish any ground for looking upon the tree that Moses cast into the waters as a picture of the cross, but it is also true that the Scripture does not forbid it. There is great similarity between the two: Christ's cross takes away the bitterness of the waters of our Marah. Therefore we must in faith cast the tree of the cross into the Marah-waters of our grief, especially in the bitter waters of death. Then the water becomes drinkable.

Another, who also points to our many Marahs (such as loss of fortune, etc.) sees Israel as the type of Christ. For Christ also (even as Israel) had to learn obedience through His suffering!

When Naomi sees Ruth as a daughter of Abraham, this is a reflection of Christ's constant discoveries, and her continued care for Ruth is a picture of Christ's care for His own.

The dying wife of Phinehas calls her child Ichabod - the glory is departed. Here we are reminded of Mary's child, Who had no form or comeliness, because "the glory of men had been taken away.

Jonathan's friendship for David is a type of the believer's greeting of Christ our Redeemer. Even as Jonathan did for David, so Christ divested Himself of cloak, bow, and belt, when He was wrapped in swaddling bands. The public tribute to David by the singing women and girls is a shadow of Christ's experience in Bethlehem, when all were astonished but did not recognize Him. So also Saul's hate for David reminds us of Herod.

The waters of the brook Cherith suggest the living water, Jesus Christ, while the quiet in which the Lord meets Elijah at Horeb finds its fulfillment in the night of Jesus' birth and is experienced by Elijah on the mount of transfiguration.

In the book Esther, Mordecai and Esther are alternately seen as types of the Christ. Indeed, we occasionally find a thought expressed which is diametrically opposed to the thought of the text.

For example, when Christ is called our "Naphtali". Naphtali means wrestler," i.e., the child for which I have wrestled, referring to the wrestling of Rachel and Leah concerning the children born to Jacob. In that sense Christ is our Naphtali, because He wrestled with a much greater envier than did Leah, namely Satan!

Finally, I would point to a fourth group. This is the frequent phenomenon in which facts are presented as constantly recurring in the life of all believers. We have referred to it in the foregoing. We are to find our own likeness in Lot. Jacob's wrestling at Peniel is a picture of our spiritual wrestling. The fleeing Hagar is an image of all sinners. The theophany of Elijah is a sign of what constantly occurs in the life of the believer. The prayer for fire from heaven upon the Samaritans is often our prayer, etc. All of this is repeated over and over again. Indeed, the world

will taunt us with the words "come down from the cross," when we are bent under the load of our sins. We add a few striking examples. Christ's knocking at the door of the Samaritan is constantly repeated in His knocking at the door of our hearts. Even as the blind Bartimeus turned to Jesus, so the Bartimeus within us must say: "Son of David, have mercy on us." We must, like the blind man, cast off our cloak, etc., and go to Jesus. And the miracle of his healing still occurs daily. Thus His call is given constantly: "Follow Me!"

We note this also in the call of Levi. Even as Christ then went out to call Levi, so He calls now through His servants. As He then said: "Follow Me," so He does now. As Levi followed Him, so we must do. Finally, I found the most striking example in the treatment of that text in which the miracle at Cana is related. Christ performed the first miracle at a marriage feast to indicate how we ought to begin at that point. For we must invite Jesus every day! Then Jesus will always change "our ordinary water into delicious wine." He first leads His disciples to the marriage feast to indicate the purpose of His coming: to lead us to the marriage so that we, like the disciples, will leave the school of John the Baptist. When Jesus changes water into wine He shows us the nature of His' work namely regeneration. Therefore, water into wine, not the reverse, shows His desire to elevate creation. And water, because this is one of the basic elements of the creation. That miracle must be repeated continuously. For that reason Jesus also calls Himself the true vine. For the vine constantly changes (rain) water into grape juice from which the wine is made.

These examples ought to suffice. I did not mention a group that sought the Christological character according to the redemption-history method, because this article will deal with that subject in greater detail. In some sermons there was a simple indication, without exerting a controlling influence on the total conception; in other instances the entire sermon was constructed according to the redemption-history method. But among those that I examined there were very few of the latter.

Let no one think that I would arbitrarily condemn all the cited examples. But I do intend to prove that a further consideration of the Christological character of preaching certainly is not superfluous. For practice clearly indicates that it is incorrect to observe of the advocates of the redemption-history method that none of us ever thinks of "treating sacred history purely according to the exemplary method" <sup>[55]</sup>.

Surely no one would defend the purely exemplary method in theory, but in these instances practice is shown to be stronger than theory.

Here we really meet with a twofold method of exegesis. The four groups that I singled out are all nuances of the so-called exemplary method. One of its defenders described this method as "the right to treat certain persons who are described in Holy Scripture individually, with the use of Scriptural givens, to picture them psychologically, to speak of their struggles and difficulties, their strengths and their weaknesses, and then to draw a parallel between what the Bible saints went through and what a present day believer must struggle through" <sup>[56]</sup>.

Now we should note carefully that we are here dealing with historical material. We are not, for example, speaking of the treatment of a text from the Psalms. Therefore we must state, in the first place, that none of us asserts that we know nothing of the soul struggles and experiences of

the believers of the Old Testament, nor that we may not work this out in a sermon. Neither do I deny that David, Isaiah, etc. are included with us in the same spiritual struggle, and that they as well as the present day believers have known their periods of unbelief, doubt, fear, strong faith, great joy, etc. The Bible furnishes sufficient material for sermons on those subjects. But this is not the controversy. However, if the historical material is treated in accordance with the aforementioned rules, the Christological character of the text and the sermon is strained. Then straight lines are drawn between Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, and others in their soul struggles and ourselves. Then this historical portion is not presented in the working out of the material as an accessory of that one history which pictures Christ in His coming into the world. Theoretically it will not be denied that each part should be seen in relation to the whole, but this does not affect the practical working out of the text. In this method of treatment the Christological element can hardly be "found" except by way of analogy or parallel, or by stressing in the "application" the fact that we are living in the new dispensation. This, however, does not begin to show the Christological character of the Scripture passage that has been treated in the sermon.

The problem is now narrowed down to the question, whether the historical material gives us the right and presents the possibility to picture specific persons, mentioned in the history, psychologically in their soul struggles. That must be the deciding factor.

Can such a presentation be harmonized with the historical description found in Old and New Testaments? We shall now enter into this question more fully.

In his Encyclopedia, Dr. A. Kuyper Sr. was so seriously concerned with the divergent character of the materials presented in Scripture that he spoke of a fourfold form of inspiration <sup>[57]</sup>. That distinction makes it necessary to explain each material according to its own nature. Portions of Paul's letters will have to be exegeted according to other rules than the historical portions of the gospels; the lyrical portions (think of the Psalms) will call for another method than the prophetic. Of course, there is a unity in this diversity. There are rules that apply equally to all materials, because Scripture in all its parts comes to us as God's revelation in Jesus Christ. As such it demands its unique exegetical method, which comes to special expression in all separate rules. For that reason F.W. Grosheide, in his Hermeneutics, presents first "the rules for all materials," and then speaks in separate paragraphs of "rules for historical materials;" of rules for demonstrative materials," "rules for prophetic materials;" "rules for parables" <sup>[58]</sup>. Thus, if we would understand and explicate a historical portion of the Scripture correctly, it will be necessary to take the specific rules for this material seriously. One of the first rules is that we seek the real meaning of the fact that is communicated to us. And since all Scripture gives us God's revelation, the question resolves itself as follows: which revelatory thought is communicated to us in this portion of Scripture?

Here we must take into account the peculiar character of historical writing in the Holy Scriptures. The historical books are written each with a distinct aim. Actually all history is written from a definite viewpoint and therefore pursues a definite aim. The facts are selected, arranged, and classified according to that aim. That writing of history is not statistical. From all material it knowingly chooses those facts that will serve the purpose of its writing. William of Orange may be described as a statesman but also as a believing Christian.

In the first instance the choice of material will differ from the second. Something that may be of no interest to one historian could well be of great importance to another. Where one will hardly refer to his conversion or perhaps only mention his dying prayer, these events will be important items in the writing of the other. It all comes down to the question of design in writing the history, and therefore from what viewpoint the facts are chosen and arranged. The historical books of the Bible relate sacred history not with historical motives but as divine revelation. They are so constructed that the plan emerges clearly. For that reason the facts are chosen, presented, and arranged from that perspective <sup>[59]</sup>.

Therefore we may speak of "the peculiar and special character of Old Testament history, in which the controlling point has an entirely different basis than the historical work that we find elsewhere." The facts presented all proceed from the viewpoint of divine revelation <sup>[60]</sup>. We are dealing with a peculiar purpose and design.

This is further discussed in introductions to the historical books. We will refer only to what has been written on this subject by H. N. Ridderbos <sup>[61]</sup>, S. Greijdanus <sup>[62]</sup>, A. Noordtzy <sup>[63]</sup>, C. van Gelderen <sup>[64]</sup>, and <sup>[65]</sup>, C. F. Keil.

Scripture sheds additional light on its recording of history by giving the theme and therewith "the tendency" of its historical writings as the struggle between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent (Gen. 3:15). We rightly call this the "protevangelium", and speak of the "mother promise", the seed, the germ, in which the entire gospel is contained.

That which is included in this "seed" is being worked out in the progress of history throughout the centuries, until the moment of fulfillment, the fullness of time. Thus in Gen. 3:15 all that follows is placed in the light of the awesome struggle between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent; between Christ, coming into the world, and Satan, the prince of this world. And it is further enlightened by the complete victory to be won by the seed of the woman.

But that confronts us with the demand that we may not think of any figure in this history or set it apart from that great struggle. The place of each is to be defined only Christologically, that of the opponents as well as of the "proponents". Only insofar as they have a place and a task in the development of this history do we find them in the Scriptural history. The facts are chosen and described from that viewpoint.

Whoever does not take that into consideration must agree with the unbelieving scientist that the Old Testament is "very tendentious" and does not do justice to the facts. For example, how much more could not be said about Ahab on the basis of historical research (excavations) than the writer of the book of Kings relates? And how totally different would not the picture be if we saw this king as a politician, an economist, etc.? But we must grant to Scripture the right which every historical writing demands to describe history according to its own viewpoint, i.e., to picture Ahab as a theocratic ruler in the battle between God and Satan, in which Christ is at stake. Thus Ahab occupies his proper place, insofar as his deeds, etc. were of importance for that purpose, and he is measured according to the standard which is derived from the Christological theme of Gen. 3:15. This applies likewise to all other persons who have a place and task in redemption-history.

This is confirmed when we see the entire Old Testament history in the apocalyptic light that is shed upon it in Rev. 12. There the history of the Old and New Testament is typified as the struggle of the woman, who was to bear the child and did bear it, with the dragon who would devour it. Only if we see history and the actors in that light, do we have the proper view.

Thus Scripture itself provides us with the key to its explication and the standard by which we are to judge. In that light this can be nothing other than redemption-history and/or Christological. If I remove a small portion in order to view it in isolation, so that it is no longer a part of the whole, I lack all certainty that the right of a correct exegesis has been accorded to that specific portion (or to that person and his acts) of the Bible.

Permit me once again to refer to the delineation of Elijah. The intention of the inspired writer, and thus of the Holy Spirit, is not to give a biography of Elijah. Anyone who attempts this on the basis of Scriptural givens will fail miserably. He is confronted with lacunae that make such a description impossible. Therefore we may never discuss in our sermons the events presented to us with reference to Elijah as fragments of his (largely unknown) life's history.

If it were possible to construct a biography of Elijah from other sources, we could not, of course, overlook the material presented in the Scripture; it contains valuable givens that may not be neglected. But in such a biography of Elijah the events related in I Kings 17ff. would have to be told in a different manner and placed in another connection, in harmony with the total purpose of the biographer.

For example, we are told about Elijah's attire. The Scripture speaks of "the hairy mantle". But we all realize that in a sermon that mantle may be mentioned only in a specific connection, namely in connection with the purpose of the Scripture passage in which this detail is given. If one should wish to write a book about the attire of the prophets in ancient Israel he might, if possible, devote a separate paragraph to that mantle and discuss it "by itself." In this case as an article of clothing, even as an official robe, and speak of the utility of such attire, etc. But that would not be a ministry of the Word; not an exegesis of that Scripture passage, in which each part must be seen in the light of the author's purpose.

This holds true also when we speak of Elijah as a man, as a devout man. In connection therewith we would describe his struggle, his faith, and his despondency. A sermon on the mantle of Elijah by itself would offend the church, in spite of all the "application" commenting on luxury of our attire, attire as proof of our sin, as a gift of God's long-suffering, and perhaps many comments about present-day styles, etc. Yet a sermon on Elijah's spiritual condition is received with eagerness by many, and is commended as very "edifying", especially when this spiritual condition is applied to our spiritual experiences, our struggles, our faith, etc.

And yet the same thing holds true for Elijah's soul as for Elijah's mantle. I am not saying that nothing is revealed about Elijah's inner life. Nor do I say that nothing has been revealed about Elijah's mantle. But even as I say that it was not the intention of the author (or if you will, of the Holy Spirit) to draw my attention to that mantle "by itself," neither was it His intention to describe the events of Elijah's soul struggles. Even as that mantle may be seen only in the light of the exact meaning and never apart for the purpose of making "application" as if it were an

independent item, so also must we deal with the religious feeling, with "the soul" of Elijah. All these details must be placed in the light of the definite purpose of the inspired author, which was "the revelation of God in Jesus Christ!"

Thus, in the treatment of every historical passage the main question (and therefore the first and decisive question) must be: what does the Lord make known to us in this passage concerning His revelation in Christ? Since this revelation in the Old Testament presents to us the Christ in His coming to and into this world, we must always ask how the Christ reveals Himself in His coming in that particular passage. To be sure, there will be various details: the place of someone's residence, the tent or the palace in which he has taken his abode; his attire; his frame of mind, and many other details but all of these appear in this portion of history only insofar as they serve to make clear this one purpose: God's revelation in that hour, by that person, and in that situation, as revelation in Jesus Christ. Anyone who treats these features independently, separating them from the context with applications for the present day, may be speaking the truth but he is not explicating that Scripture passage: he is not opening the Scriptures. He delivers a sermon for which another text or texts should have been chosen.

The consciousness that the redemption-history is one architectonic unit must save us from such approaches to historical texts. That realization must so fill us with reverence for the unity of the entire structure that we will not then treat any subdivision as an independent item. In every part the profound meaning of the great whole must find its own expression. For that reason we may not picture the persons presented in the history of revelation psychologically. If that is done, a distinct method of writing history is explained according to the rules that apply only to another kind of writing history.

If the Lord had given us a psychology of Elijah, we would be permitted to picture Elijah psychologically. But now this is as impossible and inadmissible as a biographical picture of the prophet. The outlines of Elijah's soul struggle that have been presented to us give us neither the right nor the possibility of describing him psychologically in that situation. That which has been revealed to us of Elijah's inner life does not give us a psychological description of the prophet. Neither is it a fragment of a psychology of Elijah. Instead it has a place (it may therefore not be neglected!) in the description of Elijah as a prophet, as an instrument of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, who occupied a unique place and had a unique task in that redemption-history.

Of course, this must be said also in connection with Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Stephen, etc. Only in this way can we do justice to the unity of redemption history, and can we meet the objection that has been raised that the one history of revelation is dissolved into many separate histories. In defense of the latter practice some have appealed to what was once written by Dr. F. W. Grosheide <sup>[66]</sup>. He stressed the fact that a distinct history must be seen first as a part of the whole of revelation, but that thereafter every relatively complete history may be seen by itself. However, he warns against separating these two approaches. If only for that reason, we are convinced that this appeal must fail <sup>[67]</sup>. Dr. A. Kuyper in his day pointed to the fact that not one episode in the redemption-history may be viewed apart from the whole. "An event in the life of the patriarchs, an episode drawn from David's struggles, a fragment from the experiences of God's prophets may not present an isolated scene to the church, with the addition of certain practical comments, for then general and national history would supply varying materials

concerning persons of whom we have much more detailed information, and whose activities and words are equally available for the addition of the same comments. Indeed, all of these facts and happenings in sacred history must be taken as parts of one great whole, as fragments of the grand work of God's revelation, and as being separate from all other history because of what God wrought in and through these men for the future of His church, and the revelation of His work of grace, to the glory of His Name" <sup>[68]</sup>.

And really, this is not strange, especially for those who believe in the Holy Spirit as the Auctor primarius of the Holy Scriptures, and who thereby are enabled to maintain the unity of the Scriptures so unwaveringly. The same rule is of course applied in the case of any other writing of which unity in conception and composition is accepted. In a drama or comedy we cannot judge one actor or one deed independently, apart from the whole. Only when we see the persons and their deeds in the course of the entire play can we judge rightly. And only by observing the continuity and taking into account the purpose of the play may we draw instruction from the behavior or the actors. If I isolate one episode from the whole, my explanation will fail or evaporate into fantasy. Applying this to the Holy Scriptures, it means that every part of the one redemption history can be rightly seen and explained only if this explanation is Christological. Christ is the center in Whom the entire redemption-history is the one unity and in Whom the explanation is found. Separate one part from the center and rob it of its Christological character, then at best one will have an edifying moral without even a Christian coloring.

Because one still wants to preach a "Christian" sermon, he will have to resort to some sort of artifice, certainly unintentional, in order to "produce a Christocentric sermon." The simplest way to do so is to turn to typology. But then the way is opened to unrestricted "type" producing. In my opinion at least, the typology of the Middle Ages and the search for types even in our present day sermons finds its negative origin or basis for explication in the fact that the Christological character of a definite historical portion is not perceived. Then an attempt has to be made to preserve the connection with that one history of which Christ is the center by discovering a "type" in that passage. If successful, one feels that he has been saved from an impasse. But the Christological character of a given historical portion is not preserved by discovering some "type" in it. We do not have the right to make and multiply "types;" the Lord gave them to us. We must hold to the types and typical expressions that He gave us.

Let me illustrate this with an example: the book Esther. Much has been written about the significance of this little book. Over against the sharp and often negative criticism, those who hold to the Scriptural viewpoint have constantly defended its canonical character, although sometimes hesitatingly <sup>[69]</sup>. This hesitation sprang from the fact that the Christological line in this typically Jewish-colored history could not be discerned. However the convictions that we have God's revelation in Christ also in this book prompted a continuing search for the line which runs from this "periphery to the center." It is obvious that often an attempt was made to discover some type here, because if a definite type could be found which would impart a typological character to the entire history the line leading to Christ would be indicated. In Esther we really find only two figures who could qualify as "types," namely, Esther and Mordecai. Indeed both have been so designated <sup>[70]</sup>: Esther in her call on Ahashuerus to plead for deliverance for herself and her people, and Mordecai who in his ultimate elevation by Ahashuerus would be an image of the Christ <sup>[71]</sup>. Of course; we have some reservations about this typology. In my

opinion Scripture does not give sufficient ground for it. There is a danger that this entire history will be united to the "central point" only by the thin line of this single typological feature, and will not be viewed in its Christological character, and therefore cannot be recognized as a portion of that one redemption history.

This small portion of Holy Scripture will become much more valuable if we have an appreciation for the Christological line which is found throughout this little book that is, for the Christological character of the struggle mentioned here from its first beginnings to its blessed culmination. The few lines that have been drawn by Prof. Hoekstra <sup>[72]</sup> can be further developed in various details <sup>[73]</sup>. Then it can also be clearly shown, forward as well as backward, that we are dealing here with an episode in that great struggle which dominates the centuries, not only until the first, but also until the second coming of Christ, and that this struggle, enacted between Haman and Mordecai etc., finds its explanation only in Christ.

This also furnishes the connection that binds us in our spiritual struggle to Israel of that day. This bond is not to be found in the scattered experiences of faith but in Christ; in being included in the same great struggle that enables us to do justice to the varying data (before and after Christ). Even one who moves in this direction will have to overcome various difficulties. He will sometimes go on his way "groaning." But if he listens to Scripture in faith and prayerfully asks for "the mind of the Spirit " he will be richly rewarded. We are then also armed against opinions such as Vischer's, who finds the climax of Esther in the "sign" and the "testimony" of the erected gallows, which throughout the ages would "point to" the cross of Golgotha <sup>[74]</sup>. In the theme "Gallows-Cross" wide perspectives have surely been opened for the homilete-orator, but the homilete who seeks to be Verbi Divini Minister does well to keep his distance from such "testimonies" and humbly to believe that God in Christ could and did reveal Himself in history, and thus gave us a redemption-history, a history of revelation (historia revelationes), which can be understood only Christologically.

Several years ago, Dr. K. Schilder pointed to the danger of arbitrarily creating one's own "types", when he elaborated on the article by Dr. A. Kuyper cited earlier. He warned against "wrenching apart the 'sacred history' contained in so many histories, against creating 'types' of the Christ in the way of personal fantasy, against dissolving scriptural history into monumenta ecclesiae, or in conversion stories, or in dramatic characterizations of God's incidental struggle against the powers of sin, or in reports of heroes of faith and their struggle." Over against this negative approach he sets a positive rule: "Eventually it will be the Christ Who is the 'material' because God reveals Himself in Him, and in the background we must see God's counsel (before the pedagogue can be ready to proceed). Thus the instruction will become theocentric, but also Christological <sup>[75]</sup>.

During the discussion of this subject another interesting question was raised, into which we must enter more fully for a moment. A certain group objected that an attempt was being made to make the redemption-history (Christological) method the exclusive method. This group sought a higher synthesis. Some <sup>[76]</sup> thought that there should be a union of both methods, while others pleaded for uniting redemption-history with the exemplary element or moment.

In a note appended to his doctoral dissertation, Dr. Huyser <sup>[77]</sup> stated that the element of truth on which "exemplary preaching" is based may not be disqualified. This statement helps us only if we first know what this element of truth is! Even if we could agree on that point, it would present nothing in favor of "exemplary preaching". For the question will arise whether this element of truth will not be more fully vindicated in an explication according to the redemption-history method. Surely, one would not defend the typology of the Middle Ages because of an "element of truth" on which it may well be founded. We are not now dealing with, nor interested in elements of truth, but in the Truth; therefore also in the correct method of exegesis.

An attempt has been made to substantiate the plea for the aforementioned synthesis by an appeal to Scripture, especially to the use of Old Testament material by the writers of the New Testament. It is inferred that the redemption-history method can not be found in their writings but rather that the constant reference to Old Testament believers as examples provides a principal justification of the exemplary method. Special mention is then made of I Cor. 10, Hebr. 11, and James 5.

Now a first requisite would be that we test fairly and carefully these arguments derived from Scripture. Let us begin with James 5, in which Elijah's prayer serves to illustrate the truth to which all believers subscribe, that "fervent prayer availeth much." This passage occasioned a debate between the Rev. N. Streefkerk and the Rev. D. van Dijk <sup>[78]</sup>. The latter drew a sharp difference between Elijah's prayer as it is found in I Kings 18 and as it appears in James 5. In the first instance we are dealing with an element in the redemption-history, while in James it is used as an illustration for the subject of "prayer". "Of course, I may make use of history in that manner. When I speak of the power of prayer I may reinforce it with examples, and I am on safest ground if I derive such examples from the inspired writers of history," so Van Dijk argued.

Over against this Streefkerk states: "When I speak about prayer I may think of Elijah. But if I think or speak of the history of Elijah, may I then not point to the power of prayer?" He agrees that the history of I Kings 18 may not be interpreted as an example of the power of prayer, and that the "revelation character" must be the principal point. But he does not consider it unlawful in this connection to point to the power of prayer of God's servant, even though this may not be the main thrust of the sermon. For that reason he makes a plea for the retention of the exemplary element. He does not want to contrast the two methods but to change the conjunction 'or' to 'and'. For we have not only a history of the revelation of salvation but also of "a work of God in us" <sup>[79]</sup>.

This discussion indicates that the problems are not simple. We must try to make progress together. But then a first requisite is that we understand each other. And in my opinion there was evidence of several misunderstandings in this discussion.

In the first place, we must not neglect the distinction made by van Dijk. When someone preaches on the theme of prayer, he may certainly point to Elijah as an illustration. But in doing so, he does not say that this is the specific meaning of God's revelation in the text of I Kings 18. For example, Elijah's prayer proves that man may pray, that communication has been established between God and us, but the text of I Kings 18 does not teach me that I may pray "uberhaupt". When we speak of our confession, of God's existence, or of the Lord's will to reveal Himself (for

example in speaking to agnostics), I may point to this text and a thousand others in which the Lord shows that He exists and has made Himself known, but when I preach on that text, I must not talk about God's existence or God's revelation, nor may I apply these elements by means of the exemplary-practical method. Yet no one will say that it is not "included". We may say, however, that it is not the sense and meaning of this revelation "hic er nunc." This illustrative use of history can be justified to some extent; but this is true not only of redemption history. In specific cases one may illustrate by reaching into church history: Calvin, Kuyper, and others.

It is rightly asserted by the Rev. B. Holwerda that history is dissolved into a parable if it is understood as "visual education." He presents the rule that the dogma-founding function of redemption history excludes the dogma-illustrating function. In history one deals with facts, not with parables. Historical material must therefore be taken "according to its own nature, and no longer illustratively" <sup>[80]</sup>. James indeed does not "preach" on I Kings 18, but makes mention of Elijah's prayer in an exposition on prayer. Therefore this text states nothing in support of the exemplary method.

In the second place, if a plea is made for a synthesis of these two methods, that is of the redemption-history method and the exemplary element, such a plea in my opinion relies on an erroneous insight into the nature of both methods. If these are strictly separated we should not speak of "and". It is evident that this is done for fear that the practical character of the "application" of the sermon will otherwise be hard pressed. But that indicates a misunderstanding concerning the nature of the redemption-history method. For this method does not exclude the Scriptural element of "example," but places it in its proper light (see below). If the unity of the sermon is to be maintained, a combination of these two methods is not possible. They differ in their view of the description of history in Holy Scripture, and will therefore interpret that history according to differing rules. One can obtain an exemplary element only when one has abstracted a specific event from the one redemption-history, and then draws a parallel between this abstracted situation and a similar situation in our time.

But a specific feature in a historical episode obtains its clear and correct meaning by not isolating it from that history even for a moment and never using it independently, but by always viewing it in its historical connection. Therefore we must strictly adhere to this historical connection, also in the "application." In my opinion, therefore, the "exemplary element" that one would add to the redemption-history method would be served best by a correct use of the redemption-history method itself. Otherwise the sermon will be a mixture of iron and clay.

In the third place, it is striking that the exemplary element is always sought from the viewpoint of the religious experience or in the psychic life. Those who do so say that we can also speak of "God's work in us." This would then be added to the history of the revelation of salvation. But why should the similarity be seen exactly "in that sphere?" We have previously pointed out that there are many more elements which can be "applied," if it were proper to abstract them.

Think of what is said about Elijah's body: e.g., the Lord's care for Elijah's sustenance, strengthening him for his struggles; about Elijah's apparel; about his prayer posture. Many other elements could be added: concerning God's existence, God's revelation, communion with God, God's providence, etc. But the question is whether I may abstract one of those elements from the

whole. In general, every one will combat this. I am thinking again of Elijah's mantle. No one would, "in connection with" that text, preach about "the problem of style with reference to our clothing"; nor, in connection with Elijah's prayer posture, would any one preach about "the proper posture in prayer in public as well as in private;" nor, in connection with Abraham's tent, about "man's dwellings in early and later times." But why is it then permissible (as we find in many sermon sketches) to abstract Elijah's soul and faith struggle, Elijah's difficulties and doubts, from the total complex of thoughts which together form this one episode in the one redemption-history, and to use them for a discourse on "doubt", "trial", "unbelief", etc.?

Are these elements then not to be discussed? Again I say: of course, like all other elements that have been mentioned! All of these elements have received their proper place in redemption-history; in the Christological description of history; in the history of God's revelation. And all serve to present that history more clearly in its own unique nature. Therefore they may never be isolated from the context in which the revelation places them. Only in that context is full justice done to them. "Exemplary elements" for the sake of "practical application" are evidence that the redemption-history method is not properly used. For this method, if properly applied, includes the practical, the applicatory element to a much greater degree than the exemplary method.

The Rev. B. Holwerda states correctly that in the exemplary method, the unity is sought in psychical similarity, because the historical connection has been severed. Then the question is "no longer about the significance and task of Abraham, Elijah, etc. in God's one, constantly progressing work in Christ, but contrariwise, what significance God in Christ had for them. Indeed, the Christian occupies the center here, although that is not the intention <sup>[81]</sup>.

In the fourth place, we must seek to account for the reason why James can present Elijah as an example. Is that really something that is added to the redemption history significance of Elijah? In my judgment, James can do this only because he holds to the redemption history connection, or if you will, the Christological connection. It is possible only because he proceeds from the thought that this prayer has received its place in that one redemption-history in which we are included with him.

Against this opinion, which I defended at the time <sup>[82]</sup>, the objection has been raised that James was not taking note of Elijah's place in redemption-history, as clearly evidenced by this addition: 'Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are.' Thus James presents the praying Elijah as a man, a man of like passions as we are, and we hear nothing about his special redemption-history significance, which however did set him apart <sup>[83]</sup>.

I fear that we misunderstand one another at this point. When we speak of the redemption-history significance of Elijah, we mean that we see Elijah not apart from the history in which the Lord has included him. And this is the history of God's revelation in Jesus Christ.

I can or may never (in my opinion) separate Elijah from that great struggle which is the theme of Gen. 3:15. Elijah, as the Scripture describes him, is of importance only in that struggle and with a view to the breakthrough and victory of Jesus Christ. So too, all of Elijah's deeds related to Scripture as well as his prayer. Separate these from the whole of that struggle, that Christocentric revelation, and they can no longer serve as our examples. In Christ we have the unity of history

in which Elijah stood and prayed, and in which we must stand and pray. But this also means that Elijah's and our prayers are dated.

Now when James speaks of Elijah as a man of like passions as we are, does that prove that the writer views Elijah as separate from that one history of which Christ is the center?

Surely, this is not a contrast. This man of like passions as we are has been enabled to pray thus in his place, in that one struggle in which we are also involved (see Rev. 12). He could do so, not because he was a man of like passions, or a religious nature, or any other thing, but because in faith he fulfilled his calling which was assigned to him in that one great struggle. Therefore we say with Goppelt <sup>[84]</sup> that the principle of the typological relations ("examples") is: "Interpretation of figures, events, institutions, insofar as they express a relationship to God (Gottesverhältnis), therefore not one or more separate sketches of Old Testament happenings or reports which are immanent and external to the world. However, because only Christ is the ultimate of the relationship to God (Gottesverhältnis), it is a natural consequence that the other principle is always tied in with it. All typology ("setting the example") flows through Christ and exists in Him. Thus the Old Testament serves the New Testament as "the testimony of a redemption-history of a temporary, inadequate level of redemption, and an over-arching prophecy."

It is characteristic of the New Testament that it always "presents the present in relation to the redemption-history of the past." The following sentence is also important: "Moreover, the typological view of Scripture (namely that which we find in the New Testament) placed all other use of Scripture in the great redemption-history association." In all of these of examples, therefore we are not concerned with "religio-historical parallels, but with a redemption-history relationship with one another." He calls this view "selbstverständlich" for the entire New Testament. Therefore it surely is not necessary to repeat it constantly.

This means that when the New Testament presents an example, it views the Old Testament only in the redemption-history sense. And that, exactly, is the only ground for presenting "examples."

One question remains; what does the Scripture mean when it states that these things were written as "an example" for us?

In this connection reference is usually made to two Scripture passages, namely, I Cor. 10:6 and Heb. 11. Those who do so are convinced that these texts support a treatment of historical materials according to the exemplary method. Therefore it becomes necessary to comment further on this subject.

In I Cor. 10:6 we read: "Now these things were our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted." "These things" are mentioned in the preceding verses, namely, the things that befell our fathers. "They were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea. And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat and drink the same spiritual drink, for all drank of the Rock that was Christ. But with many of them God was nor well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness." These are the things that were our examples.

In this passage what is the meaning of "example"?

In the text from I Cor. 10 the Greek word for "example" is "typos"; and these things were our "typoi". Thus we are dealing with the familiar word type, typological etc. Therefore the first question is what the word "tupos", "tupikos" would tell us. The following is obtained from the previously quoted work of Goppelt, which deals with these questions in detail. Paul uses this word in a specific sense, one in which it was not used previously. To him it is the expression of the reality that something that is to come is previously determined, pictured: in the framework of a history that occurred previously. God dealt with the generation of Israel in the desert according to "tupikos," i.e., in a manner which is a preview of His dealings with the church of the latter days (between Christ's Ascension and Return); their experiences are "typoi," types for what is now happening in the church <sup>[85]</sup>.

Thus the typology of the Scriptures acquires its own peculiar meaning and content.

Goppelt points out, in the first place, that only historical facts, i.e., persons, acts, happenings, and institutions, can be the subject of typological explanation; words and representations (Darstellungen) only insofar as they treat such historical facts. A typological explanation of these objects must take place when they are seen as examples and types, prescribed by God, of things, to come which will be greater and more complete. In this connection the distinction between typology and allegory is described thus; "The first assumes and is based upon the historicity of the events (for it deals with facts), while for the latter the historicity has no significance, because it deals with ideas <sup>[86]</sup>.

Thus it may become clear what Paul means when he states that these things were our examples. The context indicates that we are dealing with facts, happenings, and therefore happenings in the history of revelation, the history of salvation for Israel. "All these things that happened to Israel happened unto them for examples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (I Cor. 10:11). The meaning is, therefore, that Israel's level of salvation becomes the portion of Christ's church in perfect measure. There is a typological connection between the Old Testament and the New Testament people of God, which reveals to the latter (the New Testament church) the reality of its position in the plan of salvation <sup>[87]</sup>. When it is stated in I Cor. 10, for example, that our fathers were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, Paul points to the deliverance of Israel on its path through the Red Sea, which was of such basic significance for Israel's position as God's people. This event in turn is the basis of the covenant that the Lord made with Israel on Sinai (Ex. 19:4ff).

Prof. Grosheide summarizes it thus in his exposition of I Cor. 10:2: Even as Israel, through the pillar of cloud and the journey through the sea began to emerge as an independent people of God, thus also the New Testament church through the leading of Christ and baptism, as contrasts to the cloud and the journey through the sea <sup>[88]</sup>.

This deliverance of Israel, which is qualified as "being baptized unto Moses," is a type (example) of the salvation that is promised to the New Testament church, if it is "baptized in Christ." Thus it becomes clear that it is stated that this happened to them for our "example."

This typological explanation can be based only upon redemption-history. We may also say that it is possible only because the history of the Old and the New Covenant is Christocentric. It is not so that other elements must be added to the redemption-history or Christocentric method, in order to do justice to the "example." Only the redemption-history view can place the "example" in the right position, and the "example" derives its rights only from that method. In Christ the history of the Old and New Covenant is one whole. Thus I must first see a specific part of the history (text) from a Christocentric viewpoint, in order to distinguish the example, the exemplary thing contained therein. And I can read history Christocentrically only if I read it as the redemption-history.

Meanwhile the Scripture does not use the word "typos" exclusively. The objection could then be raised that everything depends upon one word. In the same sense it is stated also that for our worship service the Old Testament law is a "shadow" of things to come. And this is stated in juxtaposition to the "body"; but the body is of Christ (Col. 2:17, also Heb. 10:1) <sup>[89]</sup>.

Thus the sacrifices by the priests are simultaneously called shadow and example, but here the word for example is not "typos" but "hupodeigma" (Heb. 8:5). Tabernacle etc. are called patterns (hupodeigma) of the things that are in heaven (Heb. 9:23); in another passage they are called figures (parabole) (Heb. 9:9). Thus there is no fixed terminology, but the subject matter is the same in every case.

All of this may serve to clarify the use of the word "example." It is "a comparative relationship, which however is not quantitative as much as qualitative (abgestuft ist)." The type, the example, is in reality not a miniature picture of the antitype, but a preliminary representation from another redemption-history niveau, which now points to the sketch, the outline of the reality that is to come, and will lose its independent identity when the reality appears <sup>[90]</sup>.

One who can conceive of this meaning of "example" will undoubtedly see that we may not derive from I Cor. 10 the right to use the example, as is being done constantly in the exemplary method.

Over against this it has been observed that the adherents of the redemption-history method do not enter into the content of the text, because this leads to the admonition: "and these things were our example, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted"(v. 10). But we are not dealing with the question whether these things" were written for our admonition! The redemption-history method does not object to the element of warning, encouragement, reproof, etc. We are dealing instead with the question of what is present as "typos," what is held before me as an example. In connection with the text of I Cor. 10, Goppelt also points to the admonition that Paul addresses to the church. "In particular, God's dealing with the former will deter them from participating in the eating of food offered to the idols, fornication, etc. For this is written that they might be deterred from that which befell the older generation - "typikos" (pattern). And precisely because the writer keeps in mind this warning, he states concerning the "example" used here: "Typos does not in this instance, as in various, other passages in Paul's writings, mean performing example (vorbildliches Beispiel) in a general sense, but a previously presented redemption-history representation of what is to come (heilsgeschichtliche Vorausdarstellung des

Kommenden); by His dealing with the "fathers," God's first people, God will make known to His people "at the end of the ages "what it may expect of Him.

That is the reason why these events are recorded. It is also important to note what follows: "Here we have all events which are acknowledged as real for a New Testament typology; it deals with type and antitype about events which concern relationship with God; the former in the patterning time of redemption, and the latter at the end of the ages. From this proceeds the typological ascension that is not specifically stressed. The type (example) will, according to God's stipulation, point to the coming antitype."

We must now look into the appeal of Heb. 11. It does seem as if, in this chapter, the Old Testament believers are presented as examples in the aforementioned sense. We are not dealing here with God's gifts and the form in which they are presented to the believers in the Old and New Testament, but with the faith by which these gifts were received.

However, although the nature of faith comes to the fore in this chapter rather than the content of faith, it is always determined according to redemption-history in Heb. 11. Thus Goppelt can comment on this subject as follows: "The writer gives his view of redemption history according to the concepts of the Old and New Covenant, and therefore proceeds from God's revelation <sup>[91]</sup>. How the history of Abel, Noah, Abraham, and all others is considered from a redemption-history and Christocentric viewpoint is evidenced by the words spoken about Moses: "that he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt"(Heb. 11:26). This is another proof that the unity of the history of Old and New Testament rests only In Christ, and may be interpreted only on that basis. But also that the believers of the Old and new Testament are placed in one line, not because the psychological happenings are alike here and there, but only because in both dispensations the point at issue is the profession of faith in the one God, Who has revealed Himself in Christ.

And although this chapter is concerned primarily with the nature of faith, nevertheless the caesura which was drawn by Christ's coming is taken into account. In verse 39, all of these Old Testament witnesses, as a definite group, are placed over against us, the believers of the new day. And the benefits of salvation, which they grasped in faith and which they awaited, are the benefits that came and a fulfillment of the shadows: the shadows that were their examples of the real salvation for which they hoped <sup>[92]</sup>.

All of this proves that the New Testament leads the way in reading Old Testament history only as redemption-history. Only he who does that can assign a proper place to the "example", but "example" understood in the Scriptural sense.

It seems to me that here, in principle, the way is shown to a clear presentation of the Christological character of preaching. Therefore it is truly unnecessary that we place next to the redemption-history method another element: the exemplary element or a "truth" element which is the foundation of exemplary preaching. Indeed it is so that this "exemplary element" can be discovered only in the redemption-history method, therefore Christologically.

For that reason all preaching may derive its Christological character only from the Christologically-understood Scripture passage which has been chosen as a text.

Now if it is objected that we are confronted with enormous difficulties which are too great to be borne by one who, along with his many official duties, is also obliged to prepare two sermons per week, I will be the last to deny or minimize these difficulties. But that can never be an argument for failure to begin. The first question is whether the Scripture demands this of us. If we are convinced of that we shall have to begin in faith. Then no difficulty may be too great. For then it becomes a question of our will to obey.

But this act of obedience also provides rich promises.

#### Footnotes

1. H. Schreiner, *Das Alte Testament in der Verkündigung*, p.13 (cf.p.79)
2. Cf. especially Paul's letter to the Galatians
3. Cf. *Belgic Confession*, Art. 9
4. Cf: See a-more extensive note on this subject: J. Ridderbos, *De Beteekenis van het O.T. voor de Christelijke Religie*, p. 11ff.
5. J.L. Koole, *De overname van het O.T. door de Christelijke Kerk*, passim
6. V. Hertrich, *Theologische Auslegung des A.T.*,p.5ff
7. W. Vischer, *Das Christuszeugnis des A.T. I* p.36
8. R. Schreiner, a.w. p.7ff.
9. F.W.A. Korff, *Christologie II*, p. 8ff
10. M. Kahler, *Dogmatische Zeitfragen*, p. 139
11. R. Kittel, Die Zununtt des A. T.: *Wissenschaft* (Z.A.W. 1921 5. 34-99. Cited by V. Hertrich
12. E. Hirsch, *Das A.T. und die Predigt des Evangeliums*
13. A.R. Hulst, *How must we explain the Old Testament?* presents, on pages 45-48, a list of the published literature. This list, prepared in 1941, can be expanded considerably by this time.
14. A short survey of the various opinions is given by A.R. Hulst, p. 9-44
15. W. Vischer, *Das Christuszeugnis des, A.T., I.*

16. H. Hellbardt, *Das A.T. und das Evangelium*. Cf. also his other writings, e.g. *Abrarham's Luge*.
17. W. Vischer, for example, has derived the title of his book from John 5:39.
18. R. Schipper, *Getuigen van Jesus Christus*, p. 197,198,203.
19. G. C. Berkouwer, *Het probleem der Schriftcritiek*, p. 32ff.
20. W. Visher, op. cit., p. 19.
21. H. Bavinck, *Geref. Dogmatiek I*, p. 405ff.
22. A. Kuyper, Sr., Cf !.e., Encyclopaedie II, p.. 432; *Het werk van den H. Geest*, p. 103.
23. On this see cf. G. C. Berkouwer, op.cit., p. 353ff.
24. K. Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, I.1, S. 171 K. Schilder, *Zur Begriffsgeschichte des "Paradoxon"*, p. 342
25. W. Vischer, p. 17. Among us this parallel with Christ's humiliation has been drawn by T.L. Hairjema(e.g. *Het Woord Gods en de Moderne Cultuur*). A profound critique of this writing is given by G. C. Berkouwer, op.cit., p.365ff.
26. G. C. Berkouwer, op. cit., p. 361
27. For the Scriptural meaning of "offence" cf.K. Schilder, '\*Over het Skandalon', in *Geref. Theol. Tijdschr*, 32e jaargang, p.48-67, 97-112.
28. R. Hellbardt, p.47
29. Ibid, p.89.
30. Ibid, p.106ff.
31. Ibid, p.110ff.
32. Ibid, p.125.
33. W. Vischer, P.164.
34. A.H. Edelkoort, *De Christusverwachting in her O.T.*, p.14.
35. H. Schreiner, p.57. V. Hertrich, p.23.
36. W. Vischer, p.29, 127, 254.

37. V. Hertrich, p.23 B. Holwerda, *De Heilshistorie in de prediking, in Geref. Theol. Tijdschr.*, 43e jaarg, p. 386
38. V. Hertrich, p. 22
39. Ibid, p.21.
40. Calvin, *Institutes* II, ch. 10 and 11.
41. K. Schilder carried on a polemic on this subject against J. Thijs, when the latter would interpret the covenantal vengeance in connection with the "external" character of the covenant in the O.T. as being specifically Old Testamental. Article by Thijs, *Heraut*, 1938, and by Schilder, *De Reformatie*, Oct.-Nov. 1938, nox, 1ff.
42. Concerning Luther's idea of the meaning of the law, cf my *Catechese en catechetische stof bij Calvijn*, p.212ff.
43. In this connection. cf., F.W.A. Korff, *Christologie*, II, p.49 and B. Holwerda, op. cit., p.392.
44. F.W.A. Korff, op.cit, p.33-51.
45. B. Holwerda, p. 393..
46. *Belgic Confession*, Art.25; *Conf. Gall.*, Art.23.
47. F. W. Brosheide, *De eenheid der Nieuw-Testamentische Godsopenbaring*, p.33.
48. J. Ridderbos, *Het Oude Testament in onze prediking*, p.21
49. T. Hoekstra, *Gereformeerde Homilitiek*
50. B. Holwerda, op. cit., p. 353ff.
51. J.L. Koole. o it., p.67. for those cited and other examples from the ancient church we refer to the same work.
52. Ibid, p.110ff.
53. Ibid, p.119.
54. Cf. in this connection A. Troelstra, *Stof en methode der catechese in Nederland voor de Reformatie*.
55. J. Douma, Series of articles on "Calvin on historical material," *De Heraut*, 3292-3300 (1941).

56. Ibid, *De Heraut*. no. 3292.
57. A. Kuyper, *Encyclopaedie* II, p.475.
58. F. W. Grosheide, *Hermeneutiek ten dienste van de bestudeering van het N.T.* p.184-215.
59. Ibid, p.195.
60. G. Ch. Aalders, *De Geschiedbeschrijvins in het O T.*, p.16.
61. A. N. Ridderbos, Matt. 1, in *Korte Verklaring* p.13,14.
62. S. Greydanus, Luke 1, in *Korte Verklaring*, p. 10.
63. A. Noordtzy, Chron. II, in *Korte Verklaring*, p.40-49.
64. C. van Gelderen, Kings I, in *Korte Verklaring*, p.10-13.
65. C. F. Keil, *Die Bucher der Konige*, p.4.
66. F.W. Grosheide, *Hermaneutec*, p139, 194
67. Cf. in this connection B. Holwerda, op. cir,
68. Cf. *De Reformatie*, Jaarg. XVIII, p.313
69. Cf. among others H.R.E. 3 "\*Esther"; R.G.G. 2 "Esther"; *Christl. Encycl.* "Esther"; further, G.Ch. Aalders, *De Heraut*. 3367-3373 (1942)
70. J.J.Knap, *Esther*.
71. S.G. de Graaf, *Verbondsgeschiedenis* I, p.5,642
72. T. Hoekstra, *Gereformeerde Homiletiek*, p. 174ff.
73. Cf. my.*De Jodenhaat gedareerd na Christus*.
74. W. Vischer: "Esther"; in *Theol. Exist. heure*.
75. K. Schilder, in *Reformatie*, Jaarg. XIII, p. 281 281
76. J. Douma, in *De Heraut*, 3292-3300. Huyser:"*De Paranaese In de prediking*."
77. Huysen; op.cit.
78. Cf. among others, *Pro Ecclesia*, July 5, 1941

79. Ibid, Sept. 6, 1941
80. B. Holwerda, op. cir., p. 360ff.
81. Ibid, op.cit, p. 362ff.
82. Cf. *Geref. Mannenblad*, Oct. 1941, 19e Jaargang, p.74
83. J. Douma, *De Heraut*.
84. L. Goppelt, *Die typologische Deutung des A.T. im N.T.*, p. 244ff (italics mind)
85. Ibid, p. 5
86. Ibid, p. 19
87. Ibid, p. 170
88. F.W. Grosheide, *Kommentaar, op 1 Kor.* (ed. Bottenburg), p.329a.2.
89. L. Goppelt, op.cit.,p.214.
90. Ibid, p. 170.
91. Ibid, p. 176
92. Ibid, p. 215.