

Westminster Seminary California

Redemptive-historical Hermeneutics and Applications

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Introduction

Because of the controversy between redemptive-historical hermeneutics and ethical exemplary approach, it has been presumed that the redemptive-historical preaching is antithetical to the ethical application. Some caricature redemptive-historical preaching as preaching that ignores the imperatives of Scripture, impractical, and non-applicatory. However, As B. Holwerda asserted, only by the redemptive-historical method could the meaning of the text be grasped and a sound application achieved.¹ The redemptive historical approach is synonymous with Christocentric preaching and gospel proclamation. It is not an obstacle to application, but a proper ground for sound applications. This essay presents several proofs to this thesis. In the first part, it discusses the relation between redemptive history and application, the benefit of the unity and diversity of redemptive history. The second part is on the extrospective characteristics of Christocentric application, and the issue of the objective and the subjective. And in the last, it goes further to the discussion of the relation between the law and the gospel in hermeneutics and that of knowledge and practice.

Part I. Relation between redemptive history and application

Foundational function of history

The redemptive-historical method is the root of the sound application. One of the various reasons is that biblical application is based upon the history of salvation. Redemptive history

¹ Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1961), 78.

is the real history which lays down the foundation for the construction of Christian doctrine and ethics.² It is *a priori* condition of any theological conclusion and ethical application. To use redemptive history as mere illustrations for doctrine and ethics violates this inner relation and order. Holwerda indicated, “The dogma-foundational function of redemptive-history excludes a dogma-illustrative function; for with the latter option doctrine and morals would be set forth merely as concrete illustrations and would thereby be presupposed in the historical materials.”³

For instance, “Christ died” is a historical event. It is upon this event is found the doctrine of atonement. And from here an ethical exhortation follows: since God so loved us and sent his only Son into the world, we also ought to love one another (1 John 4:10-11). The reversed way violates such inner correlation. To use the crucifixion of Jesus as an illustration of the assumed ethical topic, self-sacrifice, undermines the foundational function of the history to the doctrine and ethics. It is no different from a story in the Analects of Confucius. In the Analects, chapter 15, it says, “The man of virtue will not seek to live at the expense of injuring their virtue. They will even sacrifice their lives to preserve their virtue complete.” Even the Confucian philosophers can use Jesus’s death as an example of self-sacrifice of a man of virtue.

Unity of the redemptive history and application

The unity of the redemptive history is a better ground for application than the fragmentary illustrative approach, for it overcomes the ditch between then and now by indicating God’s one plan of salvation and the shared fallen condition of man through different ages. Although the diversity of the Scriptures is remarkably visible, as a matter of fact, the literary variety is

² Sidney Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts* (Toronto: Wedge Publishing Foundation, 1970), 131–32.

³ J Mark Beach, “Preaching Historical Texts: The Redemptive-Historical Hermeneutic and the Pulpit,” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 3, no. 1 (1987): 67.

one of the most notable characteristics of the Bible,⁴ the Scriptures are not a collection of timeless universal moral principles, but a coherent record of the progressive revelation of the unified story of God's redemptive work in Christ. The seed of *protoevangelium* in Genesis 3:15 sprouted and grew alongside of the history of Israel, finally flourished and bear fruit in the person and work of Christ. It differs from the fragmentary interpretation, which K. Schilder criticized, "[t]hey dissolve the Scripture into a series of spiritual, edifying fragments. The one Word of God is shattered into many words about God, and the one work of God is dissected into many separate works which are related somehow to God and religion."⁵ The exemplaristic method severs the historical bond between David and Abraham and ourselves. Consequently, if any application is to be made to believers today, some sort of connection must be constructed extraneously; most usually a psychological link is built.⁶ The bridge that connects the two sides of the ditch, "then" and "now" is not by reading into each story that which God did for each soul individually, and then drawing a parallel with what he does for each of our souls.⁷ The true connection is God's one redemptive plan from promises to fulfillment in Christ in which the shared fallen condition of whole humanity is its backdrop.

The connection between the story of David and Goliath and us today, for instance, is not by rendering David as perfect example of courage and faith, and exhorting people to imitate David. That battle is not a separated fragment piece, but a correlated part of the whole picture of redemptive history. In that battle, David came into the stage as the anointed representative of God's people. If he lost, Israelites would become slaves of Philistines. The battle recapitulates what happened in the Garden of Eden, where the representative of whole humanity, Adam, lost the battle with the Serpent and whole human race became slaves of

⁴ Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 2000), 68.

⁵ Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 62.

⁶ Beach, "Preaching Historical Texts," 68.

⁷ Beach, "Preaching Historical Texts," 68.

Satan. Under such slavery, what we need is *not* courage to save ourselves, but a Savior to rescue us. In fact, David did not defeat the giant merely by his courage or faith. It was God's own hand that drove the whole course of story. God used what is weak in the world, a small piece of stone, to accomplish salvation. Yet, the story is not finished. To defeat Philistines was by no means the ultimate salvation. David is not the ultimate Savior. He may crash the Philistine army, but he was completely defeated by his own sin. In the perspective of the unity of the whole redemptive history, the ultimate purpose of this battle emerges. Even David needed a Savior to deliver him from sin and death. The whole story served as a recap of Adam's fall and a type of Christ's victory. In the weakness of the cross, Christ delivered his people from the hand of the Enemy and brought them into his kingdom. The link between David and us is not psychological link, but God's redemptive work in Christ and our shared fallen condition. In the light of the redemptive-historical approach to the text, various applications can be made: call the people to trust their King of kings, Christ, whom David called his Lord, for his triumph, and live gratefully and courageously in this present evil age.

Diversity of the histories

However, there is another aspect to be considered. A legitimate question is raised: can redemptive-historical preaching offer more specific application than trust Christ and give thanks to God for his gracious redemption?⁸ The answer is affirmative. Redemptive historical method protects the particularity of each text within its particular context which gives more accurate application than monotonic exemplary exhortation. In this regard, Holwerda uses an analogy from chemistry: "If I have some water (H₂O) and wish to describe its importance and its properties, I mustn't talk about the qualities of hydrogen (H), but of H as it is combined in that very particular relationship to O. And with sulfuric acid the same is true: I'm interested

⁸ Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2007), 52–53.

not simply in H, but in the completely different relationship, H₂SO₄.”⁹ For example, the doubt of Thomas (John 20:24-29) has a particular nature with regard to the doubt of John the Baptist (Matt. 11:1-8). Whereas John the Baptist hesitated on Jesus’s Messianic mission, Thomas was in a doubt about Jesus’s resurrection. Two cannot be reduced into one sort. Holwerda’s interpretation is noteworthy:

Thomas didn’t believe the resurrection (John 11:16), and this was related to the fact that as yet they didn’t know that Christ was the Son, God-revealed-in-the-flesh (cf. John 14:5ff). Now Christ brings Thomas to a certainty of the resurrection, and thus to the confession: “My Lord and My God!” But he does this for our sake, since the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles, including Thomas. Christ intends hereby to make room for our Easter confession, one just as strong and personal. Yet, he doesn’t do this by means of an appearance, as with Thomas, but by apostolic preaching. Therefore it is written, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” Thomas is blessed: blessed are your eyes because you see. But more blessed are they who no longer need to see. This grows into an application about the richness of the current manner of the revelation of Christ—not through an Easter appearance, but through an Easter sermon. So that after the sermon everyone must say personally: My Lord and My God.¹⁰

The story of Thomas is specifically leads to an Easter Christian confession. The uniqueness of the text in such interpretation is disclosed, the different redemptive historical stages are taken into account, and consequently the application is therefore accurately made. The story of Thomas is to lead to a subjective, personal confession of faith.

In summary, Redemptive history and application are in a particular conjunction where the former is the basis of the latter. Such order is irreversible. Therefore to use the redemptive history as illustration is illegitimate. The unity and diversity of the redemptive history contribute to proper application. The recognition of the unity in God’s redemptive plan and the common fallen condition of humanity overcome the discontinuity between the past and the present, whereas the serious consideration of the diversity in different texts makes application more accurate and proper than the reductive exemplary method.

⁹ Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 138.

¹⁰ Beach, “Preaching Historical Texts,” 70.

Part II. The Characteristics of Christocentric application

The meaning of Christocentric and anthropocentric

Redemptive-historical method is nothing other than a Christocentric method. The unity of redemptive history implies the Christocentric nature and it is the history of Christ.¹¹ Jesus himself testified before his disciples, “Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms” (Luke 24:44). As Sidney Greidanus indicated, preaching Christ is more specific than preaching God, and it is more than preaching the crucifixion.¹² Non-Christocentric preaching by its nature is anthropocentric. To say anthropocentric does not mean that the sermon is completely divorced from Christ. It is possible that one preaches on Christ’s crucifixion, but substantially not preaching Christocentrically. For example, a sermon on the word Jesus said on the cross: “Father, forgive them” (Luke 23:34), or “Behold, your mother” (John 19:27), the preacher may talk about how compassionate Jesus was, or how perfect his filial love was, then exhorts the hearers to imitate the example of Jesus, or more specifically gives the advice of 5 steps to love your enemy. In this sort of preaching, Jesus can be replaced by Stephen or Gandhi. Such approach cuts off the event in text from the totality and unity of the whole redemptive history and causes the loss of Christocentric interpretation. Without the sight of the context within which a particular historical event happened, the applications are consequently limited only on what and how the hearers should do. It ends up to either repeat moral exhortations or teach some self-improvement techniques. It is the reason why exemplary approach inevitably results in anthropocentric application.

¹¹ Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 135.

¹² Greidanus mentioned about the difference between the “person and works of Christ” and the “teaching of Christ.” However, the teaching of Christ can be classified as the revelatory work of Christ alongside of his salvific work and reigning work. See Sidney Greidanus, “Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 161, no. 641 (January 2004): 5–7.

The Christocentric approach, on the other hand, does not mean that the examples are totally absent in the sermon. In fact, as Holwerda rightly stated: “Whoever interprets the historical element Christocentrically...will not forget that these things were written as examples for us, but he will rather proceed precisely from that starting point and will demonstrate to us why these things can be examples.”¹³ The reason comes from serious consideration of the whole development of the redemptive history. In the light of the context of this history, where God has already progressively revealed at many times, at many places his salvific plan, Christ came not primarily as a religious teacher or moral model, but as a new Adam, his mission was not to set up an perpetual example for humanity, but to obey the law perfectly in order to merit salvation to his people. The word on the cross demonstrates the true love for God and neighbors, even they are the enemies, which is the very substance of the law. It shows that he is the only fully righteous man who indeed merited the salvation, not for himself, but for us sinners who are incapable to love. On this foundation, the proper application can be made. It may call the sinners to give up their self-righteousness, to put their hope and confidence only in Christ, and to encourage the congregation to love their neighbors and even enemies, not out of a spirit of murmuring, but out of gratitude, recognizing that since they have received the love of Christ, they ought to love one another.

The objectivity and subjectivity of extrospective application

Such application does not lead people to look *within*, but push them to seek confidence *outside*. In Westminster Larger Catechism question and answer 155, it says: “The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of enlightening, convincing, and humbling sinners; of driving them out of themselves, and drawing them unto Christ; of conforming them to his image, and subduing them to his will.” This is exactly what the preaching should do: to help the hearers look outside of themselves,

¹³ Beach, “Preaching Historical Texts,” 66.

put their trust not in their behaviors, but rely solely on Christ's finished work. The application of such preaching is extrospective, extrinsic, external. This extrospective application nevertheless has subjective aspects. It exposes our sinful nature, reminds us our helpless situation apart from Christ. By driving our confidence out of ourselves to Christ, it simultaneously causes repentance, faith, gratitude, and love for God which are no less than personal and subjective. The problem is that today the term "subjective" has been narrowly defined as what we are interested in, what is relevant to us. In this individualistic, introspective, and impatient age, the sermons are expected to be relevant, appealing, sentimental, imagery-producing, stirring, lest the hearers lose attention. Jay Adams noticed well of this problem, and presented many useful techniques that are noteworthy.¹⁴ However, is it really a sustainable solution to our contemporary Attention-deficit disorder that indulging the impatience more and more by creating appealing stories and events?

Interestingly enough, The Gospel of Matthew does not start with imaginative stories, but with a dull, boring, irrelevant list of genealogy. What are those ancient names to do with the modernity of twenty-first century anyway? Perhaps no preacher today would start the sermon by repeating the names of the dead. Here is the difficulty for those who search "the relevance outside the Christological ... the relevance in the analogy between the man in the text and the man in the pew."¹⁵ One way to deal with these 17 verses is to skip them and jump into those texts that are more "applicatory." But it is nothing but neglecting the Word of God. The only solution is to put down our own way, and look extrospectively into the whole course of redemptive history which has been wonderfully summarized in this list of genealogy. The

¹⁴ Jay Adams gave a very interesting example of what he called "a typical nonapplicatory introduction", in which he put some of his own mental reactions in parentheses that are representatives of the problem. He ascribed a fault to the non-applicatory nature of the sermon. See Jay E. Adams, *Truth Applied: Application in Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library, 1990), 70–80; Jay Adams, "Sense Appeal and Storytelling," in *The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jr Logan and Samuel T (Phillipsburg, N.Y: P & R Press, 1986), 350–66.

¹⁵ Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 67.

true relevance is not found in bringing the text to our story, but in taking us away from our own story and bringing us into the story of God. The list depicts a series of dramatic pictures, not by imagination of man, but by the hand of God. It tells the story of God keeping his promise through centuries regardless of the weakness, unfaithfulness and unbelief of man. This is a list of sinners, adulterers, prostitutes, liars, unbelievers, idolaters, wicked kings, and power-abusers. The relevance is not in their broken life, but found in the fact that God is a faithful, his Word will not return empty but accomplish his purpose and succeed (Isa. 55:11). Even though the whole Israel was cut off because of their unfaithfulness, only left a stump, but God's promise stands still. The branch of Jesse will grow from the stump and shall bear fruit (Isa. 11:1), bringing forth the new creation. It is not a list of good and bad ethical examples, but an extrospective list where Christ is the climax. By these names of real people lived in the factual history, it calls the hearers to trust in the promise-keeping Lord. It demonstrates the covenantal faithfulness of God in contrast to man's unfaithfulness, which lead Christians to genuine repentance and consolation.

Therefore, redemptive-historical preaching is Christocentric, not in the sense that every single text must draw a line to the cross, but that grasp the whole picture of the redemptive plan of God, through the human history and fulfilled in Christ. It leads to an extrospective application which balances the objective and subjective. The subjective relevance does not mean to bring the text into our story, but to draw us to the story of God who keeps his promise in the fallen and evil age. Whatever becomes visible within individuals and the community—repentance, faith, love, and other aspects of moral renewal—is the progressive result of this definitive declaration outside of them.¹⁶

¹⁶ Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2011), 94.

In brief, Christocentric preaching is more than preaching the crucifixion, or mentioning Christ. The real Christocentric preaching leads to extrospective applications, which drives the hearers out of themselves and draws them unto Christ. It is objective and subjective at the same time. The two do not conflict.

Part III. Law and Gospel

Indicative, faith, sanctification

J. Gresham Machen made a great observation in this book *Christianity and Liberalism*. He contrasted two systems: “Here is found the most fundamental difference between liberalism and Christianity—liberalism is altogether in the imperative mood, while Christianity begins with a triumphant indicative; liberalism appeals to man’s will, while Christianity announces, first, a gracious act of God.”¹⁷ Concerning the problem of producing moral change, Machen pointed it out the strangeness of the Christian message:

But how was the life produced? It might conceivably have been produced by exhortation. That method had often been tried in the ancient world; in the Hellenistic age there were many wandering preachers who told men how they ought to live... The strange thing about Christianity was that it adopted an entirely different method. It transformed the lives of men not by appealing to the human will, but by telling a story; not by exhortation, but by the narration of an event... Could anything be more impractical than the attempt to influence conduct by rehearsing events... That is what Paul called “the foolishness of the message.”

The redemptive-historical approach has been criticized for its indicative mood and lack of the practical imperatives. The question lies on the relationship between the Law and Gospel in preaching. Some suggest that the sermons should be dominated by the Law to edify the believers, for the majority of the church participants are people who already know the gospel. This view lies on a false assumption that the gospel of Christ is only useful to convert unbelievers and once people know the gospel they do not need to hear it more. However, though the redemptive work of Christ has once for all finished, the gospel must not cease to

¹⁷ J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1923), 47.

be proclaimed. The holy gospel of Christ is not a disposable device that only used once in conversion, but the good news which the prophets has prophesied about, the Holy Spirit has preached and into which even angels long to look (1 Peter 1:10-12). The gospel is ought to be preached first and foremost to believers. Because it is the power to impulse the vehicle of the Christian life. It is the foolish indicative that changes life.

Why is it that only preaching of the gospel indicative can really change life? Because it is the only way to produce faith. “Faith is not produced by every part of the Word of God, for the warnings, admonitions and threatened judgments will not instill the confidence and peace requisite for true faith.”¹⁸ If a sermon is throughout of warnings and admonitions, it will never produce faith in the heart of the hearers. Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin (Rom. 14:23). Any ethical improvement does not come from faith is sin. Belgic Confession, in Article 24, says: “apart from it [i.e. faith] they will never do a thing out of love for God but only out of love for themselves and fear of being condemned.” The worldly wisdom believes that the way to make a donkey run is either by hanging a carrot on stick (that is self-love), or putting a tiger behind it (that is fear). In the contrast, the wisdom of God causes the donkey to run by telling a story. Not any story from the preacher’s mind, but God’s story of redemption.¹⁹ And through the proclamation of this story, the Holy Spirit works out faith. It is the uniqueness of the message of Christianity, because “it is impossible for this holy faith to be unfruitful in a human being” (Belgic Confession, art. 24).

However, it does not mean that there is no need to preach the law and imperatives. Because the gospel by definition assumes a crisis of condemnation, thus the law. “When the Word is

¹⁸ Michael Scott Horton, “Calvin and the Law-Gospel Hermeneutic,” *Pro Ecclesia* 6, no. 1 (1997): 29.

¹⁹ In his book, Jay Adams talked about how to make an applicatory introduction by creating an event or telling a story. He recognized the appealingness of storytelling, but at the same time suggested that the story of God is unattractive to people therefore preachers need to create more relevant stories to capture people’s heart. But the question is: which kind of story has the power to produce faith and good works. See Adams, *Truth Applied*, 70.

preached, the law and the gospel operate differently. The law exposes the disease of sin, and as a side-effect stimulates and stirs it up. But it provides no remedy for it...The law is, therefore, first in the order of preaching; then comes the gospel.”²⁰ The bad news of the law must be preached first in order that the good news of gospel may be appreciated. As Calvin affirmed that “[the] first step to obtain the righteousness of God is to renounce our own righteousness... [They] are opposed to one another, and cannot stand together.”²¹ The law is the will of God to humanity, therefore unchangeable. But the relationship between the law and sinners is changed by the gospel. Under the clothing of Christ’s righteousness, the law becomes a friend of sinners for their sanctification.²² The third use of the law presupposes the presence of the gospel in the sermon, not the assumption of what the hearers already know. “[The third use of the law] springs forth from the objective Gospel announcement rather than from any attempt to appease God or create an inherent righteousness by the power of the Law. And it is absolutely christocentric in its character...faith is the source of good works and the Law is the rule to which they are to be framed.”²³ The gospel is not merely for evangelism, but also sustains the Christian pilgrimage. Since we are by default Pelagians, even Christians constantly tempted to return into legalistic attitudes in the pursuit of sanctification, we never outgrow our need to hear the gospel of God’s free and sovereign grace in Christ.²⁴

Knowledge and Practice

Another aspect of this problem is that the criticism of redemptive-historical method often misunderstands the relationship between knowledge and practice. They view the preaching of redemptive history as teaching of a theory regarding only the mind but not the heart. They

²⁰ William Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying with The Calling of the Ministry*, ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1996), 52.

²¹ Horton, “Calvin and the Law-Gospel Hermeneutic,” 35.

²² Horton, “Calvin and the Law-Gospel Hermeneutic,” 35.

²³ Horton, “Calvin and the Law-Gospel Hermeneutic,” 35.

²⁴ Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2007), 55–56.

understand practical as basically synonymous with ethical, in terms of human activity. As Michael Horton observed, following the Enlightenment, the contemporary understanding of religion has shifted from God to the self and from objective doctrine to the subjective usefulness of religion and spirituality for private well-being which he summarized as “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.”²⁵ The Bible does not present a separation of knowledge and practice but rather understands knowledge as an already integrated act of acknowledgement—thinking, feeling, and doing in one simultaneous act. It is a covenantal act to know God in Christ.²⁶ Preaching is neither a discourse *about* God nor an expression of inner experience, but the proclamation of God’s own work of reconciliation. Knowledge, in this sense, is inseparable from doxology and discipleship.

So often, the term “application” is ascribed to behavior, action, and life-style. There is a tendency to focus only on what to do. But as Greidanus reminded, “application does not always consist of urging the congregation to *do* something or other.”²⁷ The biblical application is not primarily behavioral, but mental and spiritual.²⁸ In fact, the Bible has trenchantly pointed it out that the most fundamental problem of Israel was not their behaviors but their hearts. “This people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men” (Isa. 29:13). Hypocrisy is the only production of such moralistic instruction which comes from the wisdom of the world. Unfortunately, this thought has also penetrated into the church. As Robert Capon observed, “the church, by and large, has drugged itself into thinking that

²⁵ Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 99.

²⁶ Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 95.

²⁷ Sidney Greidanus, “Applying Daniel’s Messages to the Church Today,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 47, no. 2 (November 2012): 262.

²⁸ Perkins said the two kinds of application: mental and practical. In mental application, he emphasized more on the doctrine and reproof. It seems that he did not mention about the effect of the mental application and the relationship between the mental and behavioral. Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying with The Calling of the Ministry*, 61–65.

proper human behavior is the key to its relationship with God.”²⁹ He used an interesting illustration to describe the role of preacher that “the good preachers should...tiptoe up on dozing congregations, steal their bottles of religion pills, spirituality pills, and morality pills, and flush them all down the drain.”³⁰ But how? The following verses of this chapter in Isaiah gives an answer. God proclaimed the gospel through Isaiah that he will do wondrous things (v.15), and the wisdom of man shall perish (v.15), in that day the deaf shall hear, the blind shall see, and the meek shall obtain joy because of the Holy One of Israel (v.18-19). It is evident that the monotonic moralistic exhortation is powerless and produce nothing but false worship. Only the proclamation of the wondrous work of the Holy One changes hearts. In the last, the effect of this proclamation is that “they will sanctify my name; they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob and will stand in awe of the God of Israel. And those who go astray in spirit will come to understanding, and those who murmur will accept instruction” (v.23). It is only through declaration of the gospel of Christ, the proclamation of the wondrous work of God leads the true worship and holy living.

Conclusion

Redemptive-historical hermeneutics is not an obstacle of application, but a proper ground for sound applications. It respects the inner conjunction and order between the history and ethics. The unity and diversity of redemptive history contribute to connect the past to the present and make the application accurate. The Christocentric application is extrospective oriented. By demonstrating God’s faithfulness despite of the man’s failure, it drives the hearers out of themselves and draws them unto the objective story of Christ, yet nevertheless produces subjective and personal fruits. The gospel is not only for evangelism, but also for empowering the journey of Christian pilgrimage. It must be present in the sermon so that the

²⁹ Robert Farrar Capon, *The Foolishness of Preaching : Proclaiming the Gospel Against the Wisdom of the World* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 14.

³⁰ Capon, *The Foolishness of Preaching*, 14.

imperative of the law can be transformed as a proper instrument of sanctification. The knowledge of the gospel is not merely a theory but in itself practice. Acknowledgement of the person and work of Christ is a covenant act, is a confession. The application is not primarily behavior, but mental and spiritual which is essential for the true worship and holy living.

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