

Brief Summary of the Concerns over the Christotelic Hermeneutical Method

All of Scripture is both “Christocentric” and “Christotelic”. The term Christotelic is not inherently problematic. Christ is the *telos* or end goal which all of redemptive history points to. At the same time Scripture is Christocentric, because Christ is the heart of redemptive history at every point. As Geerhardus Vos taught us, redemptive history is an organic progress of God’s supernatural revelation that has both “historic continuity and multiformity”.¹ In this statement Vos is emphasizing both the organic unity between the Old and New Testaments, as well as the development in which more and more of God’s redemptive plan is being revealed as you move from the Old to the New Testament. Those who appreciate the term Christotelic often wish to highlight the progress and multiformity present in redemptive history.

Nevertheless there are dangers with some forms of a Christotelic hermeneutical method, especially in light of our commitment to the Westminster Confession of Faith.

1. A Christotelic hermeneutical method that creates disunity between the Old Testament and New Testament is inconsistent with the Westminster Confession of Faith.³

While the Old Testament writers may not have fully understood everything that they were writing, the New Testament writer’s use of the Old is never in conflict or contradiction with the Old Testament meaning. WCF 1:5, states that there is “the consent of all the parts,” which emphasizes the unity of Holy Scripture. No doubt that there are difficult passages that must be studied carefully, yet we can be assured of this unity because the human authors are writing under divine inspiration.

2. A Christotelic hermeneutical method that creates disunity between the human and divine authors is inconsistent with the Westminster Confession of Faith.

The original or historical meaning of an Old Testament text cannot be reduced to the human author’s meaning alone. At every point the divine author is functioning because, as WCF 1:4 states, “God ... is the author thereof; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the word of God.”

3. A Christotelic hermeneutical method that denies the presence of Christ in the Old Testament is inconsistent with the Westminster Confession of Faith.

¹ Geerhardus Vos, “The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and as a Theological Discipline,” in R. B. Gaffin Jr. (ed.), *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos* (1980), 15.

The original meaning of the Old Testament cannot be isolated such that on its own terms the text does not point to Christ. WCF 7:5 & 8:6 affirms that Christ was revealed and signified in the Old Testament.

Westminster Theological Seminary seeks to maintain our confessional commitment, as it reflects the teaching of Scripture, and presents Christ as the center and *telos* of redemptive history.

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