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# The Real Presence of the Son Before Christ: Revisiting an Old Approach to Old Testament Christology

Charles A. Gieschen

Martin Luther once wrote: "All of Scripture is pure Christ."<sup>1</sup> Many Lutheran pastors learned the hermeneutical principle of christocentricity in their training and regularly teach it; namely, all of the Holy Scriptures proclaim the reality of Christ. Putting that principle into practice, especially in the exegesis of the Old Testament, is where some difficulty emerges. In practice many pastors tend to view the christological content of the Old Testament as those isolated messianic prophecies or broader typological patterns of the coming Messiah. The primary understanding of Christ in the Old Testament is one of *prophecy*, not *presence*. Some interpreters do show some boldness by asserting the presence of the Son in some Old Testament events. For example, some state that the use of the plural in the creation narrative— "Let us make man in our own image" (נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ in Gen. 1:26)— indicates the presence of the Son in creation and that the appearances of the Angel of the Lord are appearances of the pre-incarnate Christ. This "prophecy-with-a-little-presence" approach to the reality of the Son in the Old Testament has been enshrined by the nineteenth-century defender of orthodoxy, Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg, in his *Christology of the Old Testament*.<sup>2</sup> Beyond the messianic prophecy and Angel of the Lord theophanies, however, the exegetical practice of pastors sometimes has difficulty supporting the christocentricity principle they espouse, much less Luther's broad pronouncement: "All of Scripture is pure Christ."

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Luther, "Treatise on the Last Words of David" (1543), vol. 15 of *Luther's Works* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 339.

<sup>2</sup>*Christology of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1970). This popular edition is an abridgement done by Thomas Kerchever Arnold of the 1847 English translation by Reuel Keith; the abridgement excludes Hengstenberg's discussion of the Angel of the Lord texts. For the second edition of the original 1835 German publication, see *Christologie des Alten Testaments und commentar über die Messianischen Weissagungen*, 3 vols. (Berlin: L. Oehmigke, 1854-1857). For an English version of the entire work, see the 1872-1878 translation by Theodore Meyer and James Martin reprinted in three volumes by Kregel (1956).

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Nor can Lutheran pastors look to most biblical scholars for help, be they practitioners of traditional historical criticism or conservative evangelical exegesis.<sup>3</sup> The former *condemns* and the latter *cautions against* christocentric exegesis of the Old Testament as unwarranted or undue “Christianizing” of the Old Testament. These unlikely bedfellows both see such christocentric exegesis as spiritual eisegesis that reads Christ *into* the Old Testament with uncritical lenses ground and colored by the study of Jesus in the New Testament. Many critical scholars are cautious about understanding any Old Testament text, even so-called messianic prophecies, as actually speaking about Christ. Joseph Webb, for example, calls upon Christian preachers to rid themselves of notions that the Old Testament—which he prefers to call “the Hebrew Bible”—is about Christ or even God:

In Christian preaching, then, there is so much to draw on in the Hebrew Bible.... But it is not because the Hebrew Bible is about Christ—which it isn’t. Nor is it even because it is about God and what we can “learn about God.” It is because it is about the human condition, about richly textured mythic stories of naming “god,” of naming one another, of coping with good and evil, and of struggling to live together and embrace one another.<sup>4</sup>

Webb dismisses both christocentric and theocentric interpretations of the Old Testament and advocates an *anthropocentric* reading as the preferred alternative (i.e., “its is about the human condition”).

A second example of polemics against a christological reading of the Old Testament is found in a hermeneutics textbook from conservative evangelical circles that issues this strong warning:

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<sup>3</sup>“Most” obviously implies exceptions; see Anthony Tyrell Hanson, *Jesus Christ in the Old Testament* (London: S.P.C.K., 1965), James A. Borland, *Christ in the Old Testament: A Comprehensive Study of Old Testament Appearances of Christ in Human Form* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), and Ron Rhodes, *Christ Before the Manger: The Life and Times of the Preincarnate Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992). For a fine discussion of the christological interpretation of the Old Testament in the Gospels, see Richard B. Hays, “Can the Gospels Teach Us How to Read the Old Testament?” *Pro Ecclesia* 11 (2002): 402-418. For a more extensive discussion of my understanding of this aspect of Christology, see Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence*, AGJU 42 (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

<sup>4</sup>“A Revolution in Christian Preaching: From the ‘Old Testament’ to the ‘Hebrew Bible,’” *Quarterly Review* 20 (2000): 257. Cited in Hays, “Can the Gospels Teach Us How to Read the Old Testament?” 403.

At the same time, interpreters must exercise extreme caution to avoid an undue Christianizing of the OT. Parallel NT passages should not be used to make OT passages teach NT truth. The early church had the tendency – one continued by Protestants after the Reformation – to read NT theological concepts into OT passages. We must avoid this error; our first task is always to understand each text on its own terms – as its writer and readers would have understood it.<sup>5</sup>

There is something useful in this warning. Interpreters should begin with the Old Testament text and its historical context rather than interpreting a text simplistically in light of later revelation. We must, however, not ignore the fact that later revelation – especially in Jesus Christ – can indeed help us to understand the meaning of Old Testament texts in a fuller manner than that of the original author or readers.<sup>6</sup> David Steinmetz has noted that “medieval theologians defended the proposition, so alien to modern biblical studies, that the meaning of Scripture in the mind of the prophet who first uttered it is only one of its possible meanings and may not, in certain circumstances, even be its primary or most important meaning.”<sup>7</sup> The problem in understanding each text “as its writer and readers would have understood it” becomes very apparent in the illustration that immediately follows the warning quoted above:

Early in our careers one of the authors became embarrassingly aware of how prevalent this practice [i.e., “undue Christianizing”] continues to be among Christians. After preaching a sermon on Jeremiah’s call, in which he stressed insights for responding to God’s leading today, a parishioner bluntly admonished him at the door, “Young man, preach Christ!” The confident “But I did, sir!” did not reassure the indignant parishioner who felt that every OT passage has to serve as a springboard for a Christ-centered gospel message. Unfortunately, he, and many others like him, have failed to realize that God’s message in the OT for the Church today must grow out of the intended meaning of the text itself.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard Jr., eds., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993), 171.

<sup>6</sup>The understanding that the “the most primitive meaning of the text is its only valid meaning” is an assumption furthered by historical criticism and was not a characteristic of “pre-critical exegesis”; see David C. Steinmetz, “The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis,” *Theology Today* 37 (1980-81): 27-38.

<sup>7</sup>Steinmetz, “The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis”, 33.

<sup>8</sup>*Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 171.

Many Lutheran pastors would respond: "How can any Old Testament passage *not* be preached as 'a Christ-centered gospel message'?" After all, is not the basis for God's gracious word and deeds throughout history found in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus? The authors, however, carefully speak about "God's message in the OT" in distinction from "a Christ-centered gospel message"; they obviously do not want their readers to understand the *theology* of the Old Testament as *Christology*.

How, then, can pastors *practice* more of what they *confess* concerning the christocentricity of the Holy Scriptures in their exegesis of the Old Testament? First, certainly the christocentricity of the Old Testament can and should be expressed when interpreting prophecy concerning the coming Christ, both more specific rectilinear prophecy, as well as broader typological prophecy. Due to the consistency of God, we can truly say that all of the Old Testament is in some sense prophetic and reveals to us the reality of God that we see in Jesus Christ. Second, christological content should also be expressed when interpreting divine words and deeds of grace and judgment in the Old Testament because there is an organic relationship between God's grace and judgment throughout history and the Christ event; even though the Christ event is later in time, it is the source for divine grace and judgment shown throughout time. Third, *this study will demonstrate that the christocentricity of the Old Testament should also be expressed by emphasizing the real presence of the Son in the B.C. events of the Scriptures.* The adjective "real" is used intentionally, as most Lutherans will recognize. Some nebulous ubiquity of the Son by virtue of his divinity is not being asserted, but a tangible and local presence. A.T. Hanson calls the real presence of the pre-existent Christ in Old Testament history "the most important clue to the understanding of the NT exegesis of the OT."<sup>9</sup>

The "presence" of God with his people is a significant theme woven throughout the Scriptures.<sup>10</sup> The "God" present in the Old Testament,

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<sup>9</sup>Hanson, *Jesus Christ in the Old Testament*, 7.

<sup>10</sup>For a discussion of "presence" as a central Old Testament theme, see Horace D. Hummel, *The Word Becoming Flesh: An Introduction to the Origin, Purpose, and Meaning of the Old Testament* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), 78-79, and especially David L. Adams, "The Present God: A Framework for Biblical Theology," *Concordia Journal* 22 (1996): 279-94. Adams draws upon the earlier work of W. J. Phythian-Adams, *The People and the Presence* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), Yves Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, trans. Reginald F. Trevett (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1962), R. E. Clements, *God and Temple* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), and Samuel Terrien, *The Elusive Presence: Toward a New Biblical Theology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978).

however, is not always understood in light of New Testament revelation. The approach to God's presence in the Old Testament in this study takes seriously the blunt statement at the end of John's prologue: "No one has ever seen God at any time, the Only Begotten God, from the position alongside the Father, made him known" (John 1:18). How could anyone who has read the Old Testament write this statement? God is seen repeatedly, but it is "the Only Begotten God" – the Son – who is seen and has revealed the mystery of YHWH, not only *after* the incarnation but also in the *before Christ* (B.C.) events reflected in the Old Testament. This statement by John appears to be founded upon the teaching of Jesus recorded later in his Gospel: "Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; this one has seen the Father" (John 6:46). The God, therefore, who is heard and seen in the Old Testament after the fall in Eden is the Son, who is the visible "image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15).

### I. Theology, Christology, or Theology of the Son?

It is proper to begin by briefly acknowledging two significant problems that interpreters face in tackling this topic. The first is one of nomenclature that is alluded to in the title of this article: "The Real Presence of the Son *Before Christ*." Although theologians use the label "Christology" for discussing biblical teaching about the Son, exegetes encounter challenges in using this designation for the Son in the Old Testament because it is an anachronistic title: the Son really is not "the Christ" until he becomes incarnate. "Christ," similar to the personal name "Jesus," is a title used primarily for the *incarnate* Son.<sup>11</sup> It could also be used as a title for teaching about the coming Messiah but usually is not used as a title for the pre-incarnate Son. A solution, even if it is unrealistic and never gains acceptance, would be to rename this dogmatic category with a label that would lend itself to a wider usage when dealing with the Old Testament or "Before Christ" testimony of the Son's existence.<sup>12</sup> The anachronistic use of

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<sup>11</sup>Although the Old Testament uses this title (מָלִיךְ in Hebrew and Χριστός in Greek) for kings or priests, especially the one who would come and deliver Israel in the future, it is not used for the reality of YHWH present in Old Testament events.

<sup>12</sup>"Huiology," from the Greek term for "son" (υἱός) is one possibility. It is noteworthy that systematic theologians often use the theology species "Christology" (teaching about Christ) and "Pneumatology" (teaching about the Spirit), but not "Patrology" (teaching about the Father). There is a non-biblical assumption that one can understand the doctrine of the Father in the doctrine of God and quite apart from teaching about the Son. "Patrology," instead, is used as a title for discussing the early church fathers.

the name "Jesus" or the title "Christ" for the pre-incarnate Son was not, however, a problem for New Testament writers as it is for modern exegetes.<sup>13</sup>

The second problem, which is closely related to the first, is the perennial emphasis that the Old Testament contains *theology* (not Christology) and is *theocentric* (not christocentric).<sup>14</sup> A wedge, however, should not be driven between theology and Christology. This distinction is like arguing that the category "apple" should be compared with the category "fruit." To use the language of taxonomy: "fruit" is the *genus* and "apple" is a *species* within the "fruit" *genus*. "Christology" is a *species* within the *genus* "theology" and even – if the Son's testimony in John is taken seriously – the primary *species* of theology. The Son has told us: "No one comes to the Father but by me" (John 14:6). The doctrine of the Father, according to Jesus, is a very slim subcategory or *species* of theology since the Son is the one who reveals the Father. There is a strong wave of scholarship that reacts vehemently against reading the Old Testament with such a trinitarian understanding of God. The real problem here is that the New Testament is not seen as a hermeneutical guide to the Old Testament. Many modern scholars even conclude that New Testament writers often misinterpret the Old Testament.<sup>15</sup> For example, Sidney Greidanus understands the importance of the New Testament in interpreting the Old, yet cautions against using it as a hermeneutical guide:

[T]he New Testament writers did not set out to produce a textbook on biblical hermeneutics. Simply to copy their methods of interpretation in preaching on specific Old Testament passages is to go beyond their intent. Their concern clearly was to preach Christ from the Old Testament, and they did so in ways that were current at the time. Many of these ways still work today, but others do not.<sup>16</sup>

If biblical interpreters, however, take the New Testament as an authoritative guide in order to understand the doctrine of God in light of the revelation of YHWH as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, then the Old

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<sup>13</sup>This point is made by Hanson, *Jesus in the Old Testament*, 7; see 1 Cor. 10:4 and John 12:37-41.

<sup>14</sup>See discussion in Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 53.

<sup>15</sup>See the critical comments in Hanson, *Jesus Christ in the Old Testament*, 1-9.

<sup>16</sup>Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 189-190. He even prefers to call it "use" rather than "exegesis" of the Old Testament by New Testament writers; see 191, n.44.



Testament is not teaching generic "theology," but theology based upon the revelation of the Son.<sup>17</sup>

## II. The Christocentricity of the Old Testament in the History of Interpretation

This exegetical approach to the Old Testament is by no means new, but actually quite *old*, generously illustrated in several exegetes of the early Church.<sup>18</sup> Justin Martyr, who wrote in the middle of the second century, makes extensive use of a christological approach to Old Testament theophanies.<sup>19</sup> Two brief examples are included here.

Therefore, neither Abraham, nor Isaac, nor Jacob, nor any man saw the Father and ineffable Lord of absolutely all things and of Christ himself, but [saw] only him who, according to his [the Father's] will, is both God, his Son, and Angel, from the fact that he ministers to his purpose. Whom he also has willed to be born through the Virgin, and who once became fire for that conversation with Moses in the bush (*Dial.* 127.4).

God begat before all creatures a Beginning, [who was] a certain rational Power [proceeding] from himself, who is called by the Holy Spirit, now the Glory of the Lord, now the Son, again Wisdom, again an Angel, then God, and then Lord, and Word; and on another occasion he calls himself Captain, when he appears in human form to Joshua son of Nave (*Dial.* 61.1).

Justin's understanding of Christ in the Old Testament in these excerpts is based not on the prophetic promises or types regarding the coming Christ or on an allegorical interpretation, but on the understanding that the Son was *present* in the lives of God's people throughout the events of the Old Testament. When God is seen or heard in the Old Testament, Justin and several other Ante-Nicene fathers identified this divine form as the Son. As will be shown below, this presence of the Son in the events of the Old Testament was also expressed earlier by New Testament writers: Jude says

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<sup>17</sup>When the Son is not integrated into a Christian understanding of YHWH in the Old Testament, it becomes easier to hold an understanding of God that is functionally modalistic (e.g., Modalism or Sabellianism in the early trinitarian controversies).

<sup>18</sup>See representative examples from Justin to Eusebius in Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 187-200.

<sup>19</sup>See D. C. Trakatellis, *The Pre-existence of Christ in the Writings of Justin Martyr*, HDR 6 (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1976), and B. Kominiak, *The Theophanies of the Old Testament in the Writing of St. Justin* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1948).

the Lord (Jesus) led Israel out of Egypt and punished their disobedience (Jude 5); Paul says Christ was with Israel in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:1-10); John says Isaiah saw the Son in his call vision (John 12:41); and Jesus himself acknowledges that as the Son he interacted with Abraham (John 8:56-59). It is this kind of christocentric reading of the Old Testament that will be advocated and illustrated below. This *christocentric* exegesis stands in sharp contrast to the *theocentric* exegesis that characterizes much modern exegesis of the Old Testament, including many of those interpreting for the church.

Resistance to emphasizing the real presence of Christ in events of the Old Testament is not a recent phenomenon; it appears regularly throughout the history of Christian interpretation. Marcion, to cite a radical early example, sought to distance Christ totally from the events of the Old Testament by advocating a sharp separation between YHWH and Christ as distinct Gods. The Arian controversy led the post-Nicene church to back away from identifying the Son with any Old Testament angel traditions because it could lead to confusion that Christ is an angel not only according to function (i.e., a messenger) but also according to nature (i.e., a created angel).<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, one reaction of the ancient Antiochene exegetical "school" to Alexandrian exegesis included limiting the understanding of Christ in the Old Testament to prophecy.<sup>21</sup>

It was Augustine who solidified the position *against* seeing the Son, or any other person of the Trinity, as visibly present in the theophanies of the Old Testament. He argued that the manifestations of God in Old Testament events were mediated by angels:

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, since it is in no way changeable, can in no way in its proper self be visible. It is manifest, accordingly, that all those appearances to the fathers, when God was presented to them according to his own dispensation, suitable to the times, were wrought through the creature. And if we cannot discern in

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<sup>20</sup>See the discussion of R. Lorenz, *Arius judaizans? Untersuchungen zur dogmengeschichtlichen Einordnung des Arius* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 141-180.

<sup>21</sup>See the history of interpretation in Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 69-98. Greidanus, however, gives very little attention to the ante-Nicene fathers' emphasis on the real presence of Christ in Old Testament events.

what manner he wrought them by ministry of angels, yet we say that they were wrought by angels.<sup>22</sup>

Augustine, writing between A.D. 400-420, is obviously reacting against those who were using the theophanies to prove the created nature of the Son or the difference of his essence from the Father. Unlike the Formula of Sirmium in the mid-fourth century, which included anathemas against anyone who denied that it was the Son who appeared to Abraham and Jacob, Augustine called for a much more moderate understanding:

We should not be dogmatic in deciding which person of the three appeared in any bodily form or likeness to this or that patriarch or prophet, unless the whole context of the narrative provides us with probable indications. In any case, that nature or substance, or essence, or whatever else you may call that which God is, whatever it may be, cannot physically be seen; but on the other hand we must believe that by creature control the Father, as well as the Son and the Holy Spirit, could offer the senses of mortal men a token representation of himself in bodily guise or likeness.<sup>23</sup>

The contrast between a christocentric and theocentric interpretation of the Old Testament is also apparent in the exegetical approaches of Reformation leaders Martin Luther and John Calvin.<sup>24</sup> Luther certainly interpreted Christ from the prophecy and gospel content of the Old Testament. But like several early interpreters he also explicitly identified the God present in Old Testament events as the pre-incarnate Son, even "Jesus of Nazareth":

Thus it follows powerfully and irrefutably that the God who led the people of Israel out of Egypt and through the Red Sea, who guided them in the wilderness through the pillars of cloud and fire, who nourished them with heavenly bread, and who performed all the

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<sup>22</sup>*On the Trinity* 3.21-22; see also 2.23, 25, 27

<sup>23</sup>*On the Trinity* 3.25. William Graham MacDonald, in arguing against an Angel of the Lord Christology in the Old Testament, mentions anathemas 15 and 16 of the Formula of Sirmium and cites Augustine as bringing about the proper understanding of these theophanies; see "Christology and 'The Angel of the Lord,'" *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation: Studies in Honor of Merrill C. Tenney Presented by His Former Students*, ed. G. Hawthorne (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 324-335, esp. 327.

<sup>24</sup>Greidanus notes this contrast between Luther and Calvin, but favors the latter; see *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 111-151. For the focus on the Son in Lutheran Reformation exegesis of the Old Testament, see David P. Scaer, "God the Son and Hermeneutics," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 59 (January-April 1995): 49-66.

miracles Moses describes in his book, who also brought them into the land of Canaan and then gave them kings and priests and everything, is therefore God and none other than Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the Virgin Mary, whom we call Christ our God and Lord.... And, again, it is he who gave Moses the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, saying, "I am the Lord your God who led you out of Egypt; you shall have no other gods." Yes, Jesus of Nazareth, who died for us on the cross, is the God who says in the First Commandment, "I, the Lord, am your God."<sup>25</sup>

Although Calvin does acknowledge the Angel of the Lord theophanies were the pre-incarnate Son, he does not follow Luther's lead in keeping the Son as central in his interpretation of God in the Old Testament.<sup>26</sup> Calvin's "theocentric" approach established an exegetical path through the Old Testament that many within the church have followed. Although remnants of a christological interpretation of the Old Testament theophanies certainly continue to be found in the church, the historical criticism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has severely curtailed such exegesis of the Old Testament by judging it to be illegitimate and anachronistic.

### III. The Presence of the Son in Theophanies of the Old Testament

As stated above, this study will demonstrate that the numerous theophanies within the Old Testament after the creation narratives of Genesis 1-2 are manifestations of the Son.<sup>27</sup> The theological foundation for this understanding is the tension within the Old Testament between the theophanies of YHWH and the testimony that one cannot see YHWH and live. The latter point is most clearly stated by YHWH in a conversation with Moses recorded in Exodus 33:20: "You cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live."<sup>28</sup> This point is made in several of the

<sup>25</sup> Luther, "Last Words of David," *LW* 15:313-314.

<sup>26</sup> Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 127-148.

<sup>27</sup> Borland attempts to make clear distinctions between christophanies, theophanies, and the ongoing presence of God; see *Christ in the Old Testament*, 5-33. Christophanies are limited, for Borland, to manifestations of God in the form of a man. Such a narrow understanding of the Son's presence in the Old Testament appears to be largely driven by the Son's later incarnation as a male.

<sup>28</sup> "My face" (אַחַד פָּנַי) should be understood here as signifying the complete unveiled presence of God (i.e., an example of synecdoche, the part for the whole). This understanding is confirmed in the second half of the sentence which gives the rationale for the assertion in the first half: "You cannot see *my face*; for man shall not see *me* and live" (my emphasis). Notice that "my face" and "me" are in apposition.

theophanies; those who see YHWH's presence are surprised to remain alive. For example, this surprise is reflected in Hagar's reaction to the theophany she had just experienced: "Have I really seen him [God] and remained alive after seeing him?" (Gen. 16:13).

A legitimate question arises: If one cannot see YHWH and live, and yet people are seeing YHWH and not dying, then who is this visible image of YHWH that is being seen? The Old Testament texts provide some assistance to our understanding of this phenomenon by often using a distinct title for the form of YHWH that people see: they often see him who is labeled variously as the Angel of YHWH, the Name of YHWH, the Glory of YHWH, or the *Word of YHWH*.<sup>29</sup> There is some distinction between this visible form of YHWH and YHWH's unveiled presence, even though this form of YHWH is certainly not separate from YHWH. Although some interpreters are quite willing to understand the figure "the Angel of YHWH" as the pre-incarnate Son, most concept-oriented Western thinkers understand Name, Glory, and Word as abstract, non-personal attributes of God rather than as visible and personal realities. Careful study of these theophanies leads to the conclusion that it is best to understand each as a hypostasis of YHWH, namely an aspect of YHWH that is depicted with independent personhood.<sup>30</sup> These theophanic traditions testify to both the immanence and transcendence of YHWH as well as the complexity of the oneness of the God of Israel.

The New Testament helps in understanding this enigma because it functions as a hermeneutical guide to Old Testament. It will be used as such in this study by interpreting these ancient theophanies in light of New Testament evidence. The legitimacy of using later revelation as a guide to the Old Testament is set forth in the teaching of Jesus:

You search the Scriptures;... it is *they that bear witness to me*.... Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; it is Moses who accuses you, on whom you set your hope. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, *for he wrote of me*. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words? (John 5:39, 45-47).

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<sup>29</sup>For evidence, see below and especially Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 51-123. The evidence presented below is representative – not exhaustive – of traditions that help us in understanding the real presence of the Son in the Old Testament.

<sup>30</sup>For defense of using this "hypostasis" nomenclature, see Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 36-45. Most critical scholars view these labels as attempts to "spiritualize" earlier beliefs about YHWH's appearances; see Walther Eichrodt, *The Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 2:23-45.

And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself (Luke 24:17).

Paul states that the Son is "the image of the *invisible* God" (Col. 1:15). This understanding of the son as the image of God does not apply only to his incarnate state but also his pre-incarnate state; he has been the image of God seen by sinful man since the fall in Eden. Does this mean that since the Father is unseen, he is somehow unknown in the Old Testament? Absolutely not. What Jesus said about his incarnate state also applies to the Old Testament: "The one who has seen me, has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

### A. *The Angel of YHWH*

The first group of Old Testament theophanies that are to be considered the real presence of the Son are those that identify YHWH's visible presence מלאך יהוה סא ("Angel of YHWH") or those closely related to this figure.<sup>31</sup> This group of theophanies is by far the one most widely identified with the Son.<sup>32</sup> The seventeenth-century Lutheran dogmatician, Abraham Calov, even stated that anyone who denied that the Angel of the LORD in the Old Testament was the preincarnate Christ was not orthodox.<sup>33</sup> The Angel of YHWH is especially prominent in the theophanies of the Pentateuch. The distinction, yet inseparability, between YHWH and this "angel" is especially clear in these words of YHWH to Moses after the Exodus:

Behold, I send *an angel* in front of you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Be attentive to him and listen to his voice; do not rebel against for he will not pardon your transgression; for *my Name is in him*. But if you listen to *his voice* and do all that *I say*, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries (Exod. 23:20-22).

Notice that this angel possesses the Name of YHWH. One cannot separate the name YHWH from the reality of YHWH; thus, he is also YHWH. This is also shown in the fact that this angel has the power to absolve and retain sin as well as the ability to speak as YHWH.

<sup>31</sup>For further discussion, see Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 51-69.

<sup>32</sup>For example, see Rhodes, *Christ Before the Manger*, 79-102.

<sup>33</sup>A. Calovius, *Consensus repetitus fidei vere Lutherae* (1664); see discussion in MacDonald, "Christology and 'The Angel of the Lord,'" 327.

There are New Testament texts that identify theophanies related to this angel as manifestations of the Son. The most substantive testimony is found in 1 Corinthians 10, where Paul speaks of the presence of Christ with Israel as they traveled through the wilderness after the exodus from Egypt. Discussion of this christological presence has tended to focus on Christ as “the spiritual Rock” who followed Israel: “... and they all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them and the Rock was Christ” (1 Cor. 10:4).<sup>34</sup> This christological identification of the Rock as Christ may have some background in first century Jewish exegesis that identified this Rock with Wisdom, a divine hypostasis that is closely related to other angelomorphic traditions in Philo.<sup>35</sup> Paul clearly understood Christ to be the pre-existent Wisdom of God (esp. 1 Cor. 1:24 and 2:7).

Even more significant for this study is the mention that “Christ” was the one whom Israel put to the test with their disobedience: “We must not put Christ<sup>36</sup> to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by *the Destroyer*” (1 Cor. 10:9-10).

The fact that this testimony to the real presence of Christ with ancient Israel was problematic to some Christian transmitters of the Greek text is visible in textual emendations that substitute τὸν κυρίον (“the Lord”) or τὸν θεόν (“God”) for τὸν Χριστόν (“Christ”) in verse 9. The scribes obviously understood that it was the Lord or God active in the life of Israel, not Christ. But Paul understood Christ to be the agent of punishment against Israel’s disobedience who, like the angel of Exodus 23, did not pardon their

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<sup>34</sup>Old Testament evidence for this tradition is found in: Exod. 17:1-7; Num. 20:7-13, 21:17; Ps. 77:20, 104:41, 113:8; and Isa. 26:4, 48:21. For Paul’s use of this tradition, see E. E. Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity*, WUNT 118 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1978), 209-212.

<sup>35</sup>Philo identifies this Rock as Wisdom in *Quod Det* 115, *Leg All* 2.86, *Ebr* 112, and *Somn* 2.270. Wisdom is another title for Philo’s Word, the most common title used by Philo for the theophanies of YHWH in the Old Testament. Paul’s exegesis may also have been directed at rabbinic identification of this Rock as Torah following Israel; see Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic*, 209-212.

<sup>36</sup>Some manuscripts have τὸν κυρίον or τὸν θεόν here. The editors of Nestle-Aland 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> editions opted for τὸν Χριστόν as the more difficult reading that still has significant manuscript support. For a text critical analysis supporting this reading, see C. D. Osburn, “The Text of 1 Corinthians 10:9,” *New Testament Textual Criticism: Its Significance for Exegesis. Essays in Honor of Bruce M. Metzger*, ed. E. J. Epp and G. D. Fee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 201-212.

transgressions. It is possible that Paul also understood the Destroyer in 10:10 to be designation for the pre-incarnate Christ.<sup>37</sup> Paul asserts that the Corinthians could be certain of Christ's judgment of their disobedience by looking at how he punished Israel of old. Therefore, the Son is the one who both sent serpents and had Moses fashion a bronze serpent on a pole in order to heal the Israelites who were dying.

Paul is not alone in this understanding. The presence of Christ with Ancient Israel as the delivering and destroying angel is a tradition that also influenced Jude. Based upon the variant reading that is more difficult and has some significant textual attestation, this short letter maintains that *Jesus* is the Angel of YHWH who detained the fallen angels, destroyed Sodom and Gommorah, and *also struck the unfaithful Israelites in the wilderness*, "Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that *Jesus delivered* his people out of Egypt, but later *destroyed* those who did not believe" (Jude 5).<sup>38</sup>

Although we, as well as the transmitters of the text, may think it odd that the author would identify the Son in these ancient events as Jesus, the confession "Jesus is Lord" (1 Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11) and the widespread use of this personal name in worship makes this reading understandable.

### *B. The Name of YHWH*

Much less frequently recognized theophanies in the Old Testament, which should be understood as a manifestations of the Son, are those that are identified as שׁם ("Name") or שׁם יהוה ("Name of YHWH").<sup>39</sup> There are several texts—mainly in Deuteronomy, later historical books, and Jeremiah—that speak about the presence of YHWH as the Name dwelling in the midst of Israel or later in the temple. Here are two representative examples of these texts:

<sup>37</sup>For more extensive discussion, see Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 325-329. Paul also appears to identify Christ as "God's Angel" in Gal. 4:14; see Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 315-325.

<sup>38</sup>Some manuscripts have κύριος ("the Lord") or θεός ("God") in place of Ἰησοῦς ("Jesus") in this verse. This translation follows Ἰησοῦς as the more difficult reading, not κύριος as did the editors of Nestle-Aland 27<sup>th</sup> edition. For a discussion of this text that includes a text critical analysis, see Jarl E. Fossum, "Kyrios Jesus as the Angel of the Lord in Jude 5-7," *New Testament Studies* 33 (1987): 226-243, and Hanson, *Jesus in the Old Testament*, 136-138.

<sup>39</sup>See also the more extensive discussion in Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 70-78.



Then you shall bring everything that I command you to the place that YHWH your Elohim will choose, to make his *Name to dwell there* (Deut. 12:11).

So I [Solomon] intend to build a house for *the Name of YHWH my Elohim*, as YHWH said to my father David, "Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place shall build the house for *my Name*" (1 Kgs. 5:5).

Although these two texts do not record the actual theophany, they witness to the real and accessible presence of YHWH with Israel. Too often exegetes think of the designation "the Name" or "the Name of YHWH" as a concept, some words or sounds, rather than as a designation for the personal and tangible form of YHWH. We should remember that the Angel of YHWH possessed the unique "name" YHWH. The fact that the visible image of YHWH bore the Divine Name is the probable reason that some of the theophanies in the Old Testament came to be labeled "the Name" or "the Name of YHWH."<sup>40</sup>

There is testimony in the New Testament that Jesus was identified as the possessor the Divine Name and was even called "the Name" at times.<sup>41</sup> It is especially prominent theme in the Christology of John. The Name is mentioned already in the Prologue: "But to all who received him, who believe in his Name...." (John 1:12). That this is a reference to the Divine Name that belongs to the Father, and not the name "Jesus," can be deduced from Jesus' words elsewhere in the Gospel: "I have come in my Father's Name" (John 5:43). This is especially clear in the farewell prayer: "Holy Father, protect them in your Name that you have given me, in order that they be one, as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them in your Name that you have given me" (John 17:11b).

Jesus is also identified in John as the one who possesses this honoric designation or title: "Father, glorify your Name" (John 12:28). This is not simply a pious prayer about the Divine Name; it is Jesus' self-identification as the hypostasized Divine Name. This conclusion is based upon the announcement Jesus makes shortly before this prayer: "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (John 12:23). "The Son of Man" is,

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<sup>40</sup>For evidence supporting this conclusion, see Jarl E. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Concepts of Intermediation and the Origin of Gnosticism*, WUNT 1.36 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989).

<sup>41</sup>For more evidence in the New Testament, see Charles A. Gieschen, "The Divine Name in Ante-Nicene Christology," *Vigiliae Christianae* 57 (2003): 115-158.

therefore, equated with the designation "Your Name"; they are both designations for Jesus who will be glorified when he is lifted up on the cross (John 12:32). The Name as a title for Jesus is also found elsewhere in the Johannine corpus: "For they [the brethren] have set out for the Name and have accepted nothing from the heathen" (3 John 7).

Other New Testament writers understand Jesus as the possessor of the Divine Name. Two examples will suffice here.<sup>42</sup> The opening of Hebrews states: "Because he became as much superior to the angels as a Name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs" (Heb. 1:4). In the Philippians hymn, Paul states that Christ "has been given the Name that is above every name" (Phil. 2:9). In both cases, the Divine Name is the only name that exceeds all others.

### C. The Glory of YHWH

Exodus offers us a third way in which the theophanies are designated: the cloud, fire, or man-like presence of YHWH is labeled כְּבוֹד־יְהוָה ("Glory of YHWH").<sup>43</sup> In a pattern similar to the Angel of the Lord theophany at Moses' commissioning in Exodus 3, YHWH manifests himself in a fire and cloud atop Sinai:

Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. *The Glory of YHWH* settled on Mount Sinai, and *the cloud* covered it six days; and on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of *the cloud*. Now the appearance of *the Glory of YHWH* was like a *devouring fire* on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. And Moses entered *the cloud* and went up on the mountain (Exod. 24:15-18).

This theophanic designation is very prominent in other Old Testament texts, especially in Ezekiel where the prophet beholds the man-like image of YHWH on the throne (Ezek. 1:26-28). This theophanic tradition is the basis for New Testament claims that in Christ one beholds the Glory of God. This claim does not mean that Christ resembles YHWH, but that the same visible form of YHWH that Moses and Ezekiel saw is now visible in the flesh and blood Jesus. For example, this theme is reflected in both the prologue and farewell prayer in John: "And the Word became flesh and *tabernacled* among us, and we beheld his *Glory, Glory as of the Only Begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth*" (John 1:14), and "So now, Father,

<sup>42</sup>For more, see Gieschen, "The Divine Name in Ante-Nicene Christology," 127-148.

<sup>43</sup>See Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 78-88.

glorify me in your presence with *the Glory* that I had in your presence before the world began" (John 17:5).

Furthermore, John even states that the image of YHWH that Isaiah saw was the Son:

For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere: "It has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn—and I would heal them" [Isa. 6:10]. Isaiah said these things because he saw his *Glory* [the Son's] and he spoke concerning him [the Son] (John 12:39-41).

Paul shows a similar interpretation of the Sinai theophany as he compares what Moses saw to the fact that in Christ we now behold this same *Glory of God*:

Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of *the Glory of Christ*, who is the Image of God. For what we preach is not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of *the Glory of God* in the face of Christ (2 Cor. 4:3-6).

#### D. The Word of YHWH

It has already been noted that the Angel of YHWH possesses the Divine Name (Exod. 23:21). This unique "word" that he possessed, the Tetragrammaton, is probably the basis for the fact that some of the theophanies, especially those found later in the canon, identify the visible image of YHWH as *דְבַר־יְהוָה* ("the Word of YHWH").<sup>44</sup> This is especially clear in the call narratives of Samuel and Jeremiah, where YHWH's real presence is identified as "the Word of YHWH." The latter reads as follows:

Now *the Word of YHWH* came to me saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." Then I said, "Ah, *Adonai Elohim!* Behold I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth." But YHWH said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a youth'; for to all to whom I sent you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak.

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<sup>44</sup>See Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 103-114

Be not afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says YHWH." Then YHWH put forth his hand and touched my mouth; and YHWH said to me, "Behold, I have put my words in your mouth" (Jer. 1:4-9).

Too often this designation is understood as an abstraction rather than as a title for YHWH's visible image that is much like Angel, Glory, or Name. As most exegetes are aware, this theophanic designation is used in the New Testament for Christ in the opening verse of John: "In the beginning was *the Word*, and *the Word* was with God, and *the Word* was God" (John 1:1). It is also used as a title for Christ in Hebrews and Revelation:

For *the Word of God* is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Namely, no creature is hidden before him, but all creatures are bare and laid open to his eyes, who for us is *the Word* (Heb. 12-13).

His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. *He has a name written on him that no one but he himself knows*. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood and *the name by which he is called is the Word of God* (Rev. 19:12-13).

It is quite probable that use of the designation "Word of YHWH" in the Old Testament theophanies was founded upon the realization that this visible image possessed the most important "word": the Divine Name. Furthermore, in spite of the popularity of the *Logos* tradition within the Greco-Roman world of the first century, it is this Old Testament theophanic background that is the primary reason for its usage in New Testament Christology.<sup>45</sup>

#### IV. YHWH's Speaking in the Old Testament as Speech of the Son

Luther understood that the real presence of the Son in the Old Testament meant the Son actually spoke Old Testament prophecies about himself. For example, he was convinced that the Son spoke the first Gospel promise to Adam and Eve recorded in Genesis 3:15.<sup>46</sup> He even gives the exegete the following basic guidance for interpreting the referent of divine speech: "But where the Person does not clearly identify himself by speaking and apparently only one Person is involved, you may follow the rule given

<sup>45</sup>See discussion in Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 103-114.

<sup>46</sup>Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther and the Old Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Eng. ed., trans Eric W. and Ruth C. Gritsch (Mifflintown, Penn.: Sigler Press, 1997 [1969]), 201.

above and be assured that you are not going wrong when you interpret the name YHWH to refer to our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son."<sup>47</sup> Luther did not invent this understanding; it is found in the New Testament. There are Old Testament texts where YHWH is speaking that are applied to the Son by New Testament writers.<sup>48</sup> This shows that New Testament authors identified the Son within the mystery of YHWH who spoke to and through the prophets. Three examples will illustrate this identification.

First, in Isaiah 45, which is a very monotheistic portion of Isaiah, YHWH declares:

To me *every knee will bow*, and *every tongue will swear*.

"Only in YHWH," it shall be said of me,

"are righteousness and strength" (45:23b-24a).

Paul applies this text to Christ, both in the Philippians hymn and in Romans 14:11.<sup>49</sup> Note how Isaiah 45 has been incorporated into Philippians 2 in a manner that understands every knee will bow to Jesus and every tongue will confess the identity of Jesus: "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, in order that at the name of Jesus *every knee should bow*, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and *every tongue confess* that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11).

The unmistakable reference to the Divine Name in this hymn is widely recognized by interpreters: "the name that is above every other name" (2:9). The genitive relationship in τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ ("the name of Jesus") is best understood as expressing simple possession: "the name that Jesus possesses." The conclusion that the "name that Jesus possesses" is the Divine Name is collaborated by the resulting universal worship that climaxes in the confession: "Jesus is Lord" (2:11). The parallel structure and logic of 2:10-11a is clear:

*Every knee should bow* at the name of Jesus, because Jesus' name is YHWH.

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<sup>47</sup>Luther, "Last Words of David," LW 15:336.

<sup>48</sup>See esp. David Capes, *Old Testament Yahweh Texts in Paul's Christology*, WUNT II.47 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992).

<sup>49</sup>See Capes, *Old Testament Yahweh Texts*, 157-160, and Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 56-61.

*Every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, because Jesus is truly YHWH.*

This text demonstrates that Paul identified YHWH who is speaking in Isaiah 45 with the exalted Son.

A second example of this appropriation of an Old Testament YHWH text is found in Paul's use of Jeremiah 9:24, "Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord," in both of his Corinthian epistles (1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 10:17). The prophet Jeremiah records YHWH saying the following: "Let him who boasts, boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that *I am YHWH* who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, *says YHWH*" (Jer. 9:24).

Paul applies this text, where YHWH speaks of boasting in knowing him, to boasting in Christ in these two texts:

God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that do not exist, to nullify the things that exist, in order that no fleshly being boast before God. On account of him you are in Christ Jesus, whom God made our Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption, with the result that, as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:28-31).

If anyone is confident that he is of Christ, let him remind himself that as he is of Christ, so are we. For even if I boast a little too much of our authority, that the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be put to shame.... "Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord." For it not the one who commends himself that is accepted, but the one whom the Lord commends (2 Cor. 10:7, 17).

Although one may possibly conclude that the referent of "Lord" in 1 Corinthians 1:31 is "God" and not "Christ," it must be noted that Paul regularly uses the designation "Lord" for Christ and "God" for Father (e.g., 1 Cor. 1:3). The referent of "Lord" in the Jeremiah quotation as Christ is especially clear in Paul's use of this text in 2 Corinthians. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that 1 Corinthians 1:30 identifies Christ with "righteousness," one of characteristics of YHWH given in Jeremiah 9:24 (see also Jer. 23:5-6). Paul, therefore, identified the YHWH who spoke in Jeremiah as the Son.

A third example is found in the use of Zechariah 12:10 in the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation. The prophet Zechariah records this first person speech of YHWH:

And it will come about in that day that I [YHWH] will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that *they will look on me whom they have pierced*; and they will mourn for him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born. In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo (Zech. 12:9-11).

In this quotation there is the use of both the first and third person ("they will look upon *me* ... they will mourn for *him*"). Two New Testament texts clearly understand the one who will be looked upon as Christ:

But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water. And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also believe. For these things came to pass, that the Scripture be fulfilled, "Not a bone of him will be broken." And again another Scripture says, "*They will look on him whom they pierced*" (John 19:34-37).

To him who loves us, and released us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom, priests to his God and Father; to him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold, he is coming with clouds, and *every eye will see him, even those who pierced him*; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him. Even so, Amen (Rev. 1:5b-7).

Although John applies the Zechariah text to looking upon Jesus on the cross and Revelation applies this text to seeing him at his parousia, both interpret the piercing of YHWH spoken of in Zechariah as what happened at the crucifixion of Jesus.<sup>50</sup> The YHWH who says "they will look upon *me* whom they have pierced" is, therefore, understood to be the pre-incarnate Son.

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<sup>50</sup>That John understood the Son as speaking this prophecy is also confirmed by the mention of the "pouring out" of the Spirit (Zech. 12:10) and the opening of "a fountain" that cleanses from sin (Zech. 13:1), which John understands as fulfilled in the flowing of the blood and water from the side of Jesus; see Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina 4 (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1998), 504-506.

### V. Conclusion

After having looked at some of the evidence, the exegetical approach of reading these Old Testament theophanies as the real presence of the Son such as we heard in Justin rings true. This understanding of the real presence of the Son of the Old Testament is found in much early exegesis. The Son is YHWH present, visible, active, and speaking in the history of the patriarchs and Israel. He is also the visible image of YHWH seated upon throne who was seen by prophets.

If we are convinced that the Son is central to the identity of YHWH as he speaks and acts throughout the Old Testament, we can and should show forth the pre-incarnate Son when preaching from the Old Testament. To do this we do not need to have a messianic or typological prophecy in the text, nor do we need to set up elaborate comparisons between God in the Old Testament and then fast-forward to Christ in the New Testament. We can also let those to whom we preach see Christ by showing them the real presence of the Son in Old Testament events and speech. Such an understanding of the christocentricity of the Old Testament will help demonstrate the truth of Jesus' words: "For Moses wrote of me" (John 5:46). Obviously, we should not stop with Moses, for just as the New Testament helps to interpret the Old Testament, pastors must lead people forward to see that the Son's words and deeds in the Old Testament climax in the incarnate Son, who was crucified, died, and rose again on the third day. Jesus not only revealed YHWH to be Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but he gave the ultimate revelation of who YHWH truly is by mounting the cross and giving his life for the life of the world. Moreover, it is vital to help others see that this Son is still present with his church, bringing the salvation won at the cross to us through his washing, speaking, and feeding in the church today.

If Jesus and the apostolic interpreters found in the New Testament serve as our guide to the Old Testament, then our exegesis will demonstrate the truth of Luther's dictum: "All Scripture is pure Christ."