

INTRODUCTION

The Jesus Story

ACCORDING TO ESTIMATES, APPROXIMATELY 1.25 BILLION CHRISTIANS live in the world today. Many, if not most, have become overly familiar with their Bibles. The same can be said about how they view the Lord Jesus Christ.

A daring statement, you say? Perhaps. How can the two of us think that Christianity has become overfamiliar with the most influential person who ever lived, the most important person who ever walked planet Earth?

As you read this book, we hope you will come to the same conclusion. Better still, when you finish, we expect you will encounter the Scriptures in a fresh way. And as a result, you will encounter your Lord anew as well.

Let's face it. The Bible is often viewed as a disjointed array of stories, events, laws, propositions, truths, ethical statements, and moral lessons.

But as we will demonstrate in this book, the sixty-six books of the Bible are woven together by a single storyline. One of the best ways to look at the twenty-seven books of the New Testament may be to see

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them as a commentary on the Old Testament. The entire Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, are unified by a common narrative. And once our eyes are opened to see that narrative, everything in both Testaments gels into a coherent, understandable, and amazing story.

And what is that story? Well, it's not enough to call it "salvation history" as many people do.¹

No. *It's the story of Jesus Christ.*²

The end product of biblical Christianity is a person—not a book, not a building, not a set of principles or a system of ethics—but one person in two natures (divine/human) with four ministries (prophet/priest/king/sage) and four biographies (the Gospels). But those four biographies don't tell the whole story. Every bit of Scripture is part of the same great story of that one person and that one story's plotline of creation, revelation, redemption, and consummation.

TOWARD A NEW KIND OF BIOGRAPHY

Writing about Jesus is like matrimony: not to be entered into unprepared or lightly, but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in awe of God. Not to mention that over the last fifty years, there have been countless books telling, retelling, and reconstructing the life of Jesus of Nazareth.³ In fact, there are more biographies of Jesus than of any other human—one hundred thousand biographies in English alone.⁴

So why this book?

First, this isn't a biography. It's a theography. Even if you argue that a biography of Jesus is possible, which is hotly debated among scholars today,⁵ we are telling the story of God's interactions, intersections, and interventions with humanity through the life of Jesus. We are less concerned with every fact and detail of Jesus' life than we are about the narratives, metaphors, signs, and symbols that reveal pictures of God's touching of humanity through the person and identity of Jesus. In each major scene in the Jesus story, we try to provide "snapshots"—organic freeze-frames and visual markers of Jesus in living color and surround sound to be experienced, breathed, and lived by our readers.

This book lifts up the epic story of Jesus as the single, ascertainable

truth that triumphs over all other contingent truths. In other words, human identity is bound up with the story of an individual and the story of a community. In a world that tries to snatch an identity off the racks of an Armani store, or from the marble floor of a BMW showroom, we believe that humanity was created to find its identity in a relationship with God. The story of Jesus as found in the Bible shows us how to do that. Neither of us wants to bend the world to see things through our eyes. But we do want to entice the world to see things through Jesus' eyes.

Virtually every biography of Jesus begins with the nativity account in Bethlehem.⁶ The Jesus theography you hold in your hands begins the story of Jesus at "the beginning."⁷

FROM ETERNITY PAST TO THE SECOND COMING

According to Scripture, the Jesus story doesn't begin in Bethlehem or Nazareth. It begins in eternity past, when the Word (Jesus in His pre-incarnate state) "was with God, and . . . was God."⁸ So we will tell the Jesus story, not "from the womb to the tomb," but from eternity past (as the preexistent Son) to His second coming (as the postresurrected, risen Lord).⁹

In addition, we will rehearse the story of Jesus—the greatest story ever told—by following the plotline that stretches from Genesis to Revelation. And we will demonstrate that all the Scriptures are held together by a single narrative: the story of Jesus Christ.¹⁰

The name Jesus refers to the incarnate Christ who had a human nature. As such, the name Jesus doesn't appear in Genesis or elsewhere in the Old Testament. But that doesn't mean He wasn't present as the preexistent Son through whom, by whom, and to whom all things were created.¹¹ So in this book, we will use the terms *Jesus*, *Christ*, and *Son of God* interchangeably in a nontechnical way.¹² They all refer to the same person.

As far as we know, there is no biography of Jesus that tells His story from Genesis to Revelation. If this is correct, one may ask, "Why hasn't a book like this been written before?" The reason is simple. Biographies of Jesus have generally been written by those trying to investigate the

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historical Jesus. In general, such people aren't interested in looking at Jesus in the entire biblical canon. On the flip side, those interested in tracing the biblical narrative from Genesis to Revelation are typically disinterested in historical Jesus studies. So these two approaches have yet to converge.¹³

That's where this book comes in. It brings together historical Jesus studies with a survey of the entire biblical canon.¹⁴ In so doing, it seeks to reclaim the Jesus-shaped narrative of Scripture.¹⁵

THE CORE NARRATIVE

In many Christians' minds, the Old and New Testaments are two separate entities. Melito (second century) and Tertullian (third century) were the first to call the two halves of the Bible the Old Testament and New Testament.¹⁶ However, the Old Testament and the New Testament belong to the same inspired canon. Thus they are organically united. To underscore this unity, we will be calling the Old Testament the *First Testament* and the New Testament the *Second Testament* throughout this book.

In our experience and observation, countless evangelical, postevangelical, Reformed, charismatic, and mainline Christians are not aware that the main subject of the *entire* First Testament is Jesus Christ. But consider what Jesus Himself said about the Scriptures: "You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me!"¹⁷

It is for this reason that statements such as "according to the prophets," "as it is written," "according to the Scriptures," "that the Scripture might be fulfilled," and "in all the Scriptures" are peppered throughout the entire Second Testament. What is more, the Second Testament authors consistently interpreted the First Testament writings in the light of Christ.¹⁸

Many believe that the Second Testament writers simply used parts of the First Testament as proof texts to show that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah of Israel and Lord of the world. But this is not the case.¹⁹

The Second Testament writers consistently quoted or cited large

sections of the First Testament, using them to unfold the Jesus story.²⁰ But that's not all. The Second Testament authors used the *same* First Testament texts *independently* of one another. And they interpreted them in exactly the same way, often citing the texts in the same order.²¹

This fact alone demonstrates that the Second Testament authors shared a common method of interpreting the First Testament. The questions emerge, then: *Where did they find this method of interpretation? What was their common source?*

The answer is that Jesus Himself was the common source.²²

JESUS REVEALED THROUGH THE SCRIPTURES

The Gospels tell us that Jesus took His followers through the Scriptures and gave them a divinely inspired hermeneutic (method of interpretation) by which to understand the First Testament. In turn, the Lord's original disciples passed this interpretative key to those whom they influenced (this would include people such as Mark, Paul, and Luke).

Luke suggested this in his gospel when he rehearsed Jesus' encounter with two disciples on the road to Emmaus:

Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.²³

Note the words "all the Scriptures." This includes the First Testament—Genesis through Malachi. They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?"²⁴ Luke went on to say that Jesus opened the Scriptures to His disciples: "Now He said to them, 'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.' Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures."²⁵

In this passage, Jesus unveils Himself through the three parts of the Hebrew Bible: (1) the law of Moses (the Torah); (2) the Prophets (the *Nevi'im*); and (3) the Psalms, which represent the Writings (the *Ketuvim*).

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These three sections make up the *Tanakh*—the rabbinic name for the Hebrew Bible.²⁶ The way the Second Testament authors quoted the First Testament forms a pattern—a shared hermeneutic for understanding the First Testament.

It is easy to see, then, that the source of this common hermeneutic was Jesus Himself. Jesus taught His disciples how to understand the Hebrew Scriptures, and this is reflected throughout the Second Testament.²⁷

Jesus' use of the First Testament text was revolutionary for His time. As R. T. France points out, Jesus "applied the Old Testament in a way that was quite unparalleled. The essence of his new application was that he saw the fulfillment of the predictions and foreshadowings of the Old Testament in himself and his work."²⁸ The early Christian church "was founded on this distinctive and revolutionary use of the Old Testament"²⁹—a usage that was handed down to the apostles by Jesus Himself. Jesus clearly said that He was the fulfillment of the entire Hebrew Bible (represented by the Torah, the Writings, and the Prophets).³⁰

If you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me.³¹

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.³²

Consider this question with these texts in mind: If you were to ask Jesus what the Scriptures were about, what would His answer be?³³

R. T. France comments, "Jesus saw his mission as the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures; not just of those which predicted a coming redeemer, but of the whole sweep of Old Testament ideas."³⁴ In this regard, Jesus not only *completes* the First Testament story; He *fulfills* it. But fulfilling doesn't happen only in view of the accomplishment of its promises. As you will discover in this book, Jesus actually *embodies* the First Testament. He "fills full" the ancient Text.³⁵

In a word, Jesus is the thread that holds all Scripture together. He is the prism that breaks forth its multifaceted colors. He is the lens that puts all of it into focus, the switch that sheds light on its dimly lit quarters, and the key that unlocks its meaning and richness.³⁶

We agree with a long tradition of theologians who do not view the Scriptures as a storehouse of propositions on every imaginable subject but instead discover the place from which the Spirit of God makes Christ known.³⁷ Or as Protestant Reformer Martin Luther has put in epigrammatic fashion: “Scripture is the cradle in which Christ lies.”³⁸ Scot McKnight puts it in more current form: “We have to become a People of the Story . . . we need to immerse ourselves even more into the Story of Jesus. The gospel is that the Story of Israel comes to its definitive completeness in the Story of Jesus, and this means we have to become People of the Story-that-is-complete-in-Jesus.”³⁹

Our desire is to tell that story.

READING SCRIPTURE AS A WHOLE

Given what we have established so far, the approach we are taking to the Scriptures is both holistic as well as reductionist. It is reductionist in that we are drawing from the best findings of modern historical research.⁴⁰ Yet it’s holistic in that we are bringing the First Testament stories, events, and accounts into the core narrative of Jesus—just as the Second Testament writers did when they interpreted the First Testament.⁴¹ We are searching for the story the Gospels tell about Jesus in the story found in the First Testament.

The Bible didn’t emerge out of a vacuum. It is a historical but also metaphorical and narrative story of truth written within history. Thus, history matters in our interpretation of the biblical text. At the same time, the Bible is a collection of writings that are tied together by a common theme. Therefore, the interweaving of both Testaments also matters in our interpretation of the biblical text.

To use a metaphor, we are not only inspecting each tree in the forest (the reductionist approach) but also stepping away from the trees to view the entire landscape at high altitude, making note of how each tree connects with the others in an ecosystem (the holistic approach).⁴² And further, we reveal how we see that forest as nourishing, creative, life-giving, revelatory, and beautiful.

To put it another way, the Bible contains its own hermeneutic.⁴³ As

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usual, Augustine has put it best: “In the Old Testament, the New is concealed; in the New, the Old is revealed.”⁴⁴ This being so, the Holy Spirit often had an intention in Scripture that went beyond its authors’ present knowledge.⁴⁵

Understanding the author’s intent in a given portion of Scripture is certainly part of the task of biblical interpretation. But it’s not the whole task. As you read this book, this fact will become abundantly clear. The Second Testament authors “remain true to the main intention” of the First Testament authors.⁴⁶ But they go beyond that intention to the Spirit-inspired meaning found in Christ.⁴⁷

In our theological snapshots, we will be employing the same method of interpretation that the Second Testament writers used in their interpretation of the First Testament—a method given to them by Jesus Himself. This method of interpretation safeguards us from entertaining subjective, fanciful, and forced allegorical interpretations on the one hand⁴⁸ and completely missing Christ in the sacred Text on the other.⁴⁹

Again, the Scriptures are not a library of disjointed, independent, inspired books. The First and Second Testaments are not two separate books bound together between a single cover. Rather, they are a unified canon. All the books of that canon contribute to the plotline of God’s covenantal relationship with humanity through Jesus. You can think of the First and Second Testaments as act 1 and act 2 of the same drama. Each book, therefore, must be understood and interpreted within the framework of the greater whole.⁵⁰

Jesus Christ is the glue that binds both Testaments together. As Brevard Childs says, “The completely New of the gospel is formulated in terms of the Old. Herein lies the deep mystery surrounding the two testaments. Separate and yet undivided, two voices yet the sound is similar, an Old Word pointing to the New, yet the New is only known in the Old.”⁵¹

That said, it’s a profound mistake to detach Scripture—both First and Second Testaments—from Christ.⁵² The Bible has no real meaning unless it is grounded in Christ.⁵³ The beauty of Scripture for followers of Jesus is to reveal Christ.

THE WITNESS OF THE SECOND TESTAMENT AUTHORS

Here are just a few samples of how the authors of the Second Testament read the First Testament in the light of Christ:

Matthew quoted Hosea about a prophecy concerning Israel: “Out of Egypt I called My Son.”⁵⁴ But Matthew located its fulfillment in Jesus. He drew similar connections throughout his gospel.⁵⁵

John informed us that Philip declared Jesus to be the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets: “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”⁵⁶

John applied words from Isaiah to Jesus, equating Christ with “the arm of the LORD.”⁵⁷ John’s gospel is full of references showing how Jesus fulfills the images and events of the First Testament and of the Jewish messianic expectation.⁵⁸

According to Paul, one cannot understand the First Testament except in Christ. Jesus is the key that unlocks its meaning.⁵⁹ Three quick examples:

1. Paul stated that Adam is an image, or a model, of Jesus.⁶⁰
2. Paul argued that Israel’s festivals and food laws are embodied in Christ. They are mere shadows that point to Jesus, the reality.⁶¹
3. Paul said the rock that followed Israel represents Christ.⁶²

Paul’s epistles are rife with these kinds of connections.

The writer of Hebrews took a promise that God gave to King David and applied it to Jesus.⁶³ He also stated that the Law foreshadowed what was in the new covenant: namely, Jesus Christ.⁶⁴ This is a major theme throughout the book of Hebrews.

According to Peter, the prophets spoke of the sufferings and glories of Christ in ways that they themselves didn’t fully understand.⁶⁵ Peter applied the words of Isaiah about a stone lying in Zion to Jesus.⁶⁶

In like manner, the church fathers, the Reformers, and countless theologians and scholars of the past and present all testify to this same understanding of the First Testament. With a united voice, they declared

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that Jesus is the interpretative key of the Bible. (In the appendix, we give a sampling of these post-apostolic witnesses.)

To put it in a sentence:

In Jesus the promise is confirmed, the covenant is renewed, the prophecies are fulfilled, the law is vindicated, salvation is brought near, sacred history has reached its climax, the perfect sacrifice has been offered and accepted, the high priest over the household of God has taken his seat at God's right hand, the Prophet like Moses has been raised up, the Son of David reigns, the kingdom of God has been inaugurated, the Son of Man has received dominion from the Ancient of Days, the Servant of the Lord, having been smitten to death for his people's transgression and borne the sin of many, has accomplished the divine purpose, has seen light after the travail of his soul, and is now exalted and extolled and made very high.⁶⁷

Many who have rightly taught that Jesus is the hermeneutical key to the Bible have failed to look at *all* Scripture through the lens of Christ. What we will demonstrate in this book is that everything in the Bible points to Jesus—either His person, His work, or His character.

When we fail to see the entire Bible christologically and theographically, the door is opened for the Bible to take on a raft of contradictory interpretations. We believe, therefore, that failure to read the Bible christologically is the cause for the countless divisions among Christians. The internal unity of the Bible is its witness to Jesus. He is the Canon within the canon.

Reading Scripture through a christological and geographical lens is more radical a move than we might think at first blush. In our observation, it's rarely practiced today—even among those who claim to uphold the centrality of Christ. It's one thing to *profess* to read the Scripture christologically or to agree with it in *principle*. But it's quite another to actually *practice* it.

Many Christians read the Bible with modern or postmodern optics, then clip on "Christocentrism" sunglasses. But reading Scripture through a christological lens changes the way we see and approach the entire

Bible, as well as how we regard and handle biblical doctrine.⁶⁸ It also prevents us from making the common mistake of missing the drama for the details. Reading Scripture christologically turns Bible reading from two dimensions into 3-D. It transforms it from black-and-white into high-definition Technicolor. We are confident that as you read this book, you will better understand what we mean.

TOWARD A TRUE RED-LETTER BIBLE

Many Christians grew up reading red-letter editions of the Second Testament. Those are the Bibles wherein the words of Jesus are printed in red. Now imagine a First Testament where every reference, every prophecy, every shadow, every image, and every allusion to Christ appeared in red. If such a red-letter First Testament existed, it would glow in the dark. And if Jesus is YHWH,⁶⁹ as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, N. T. Wright, Scot McKnight, Richard Bauckham, and others have argued, then it could light up a living room.⁷⁰

As you read this book, we want you to remember the image of a red-letter Bible in which all the letters are red. The reason is because the story of Scripture is the story of Jesus. All of it, therefore, should appear in red.⁷¹

In this connection, the Bible was written in a narrative arc that ends where it began. In other words, biblical logic defies logic. The Bible was written in a circle.

For the Western mind, this is hard to hear. As the old joke goes, two Christians were once talking about their pastors. The first one bragged, “My pastor’s good at foreign languages—he uses Greek a lot.” The second one said, “My pastor’s good at geometry—he talks in circles a lot.” To say that someone “talks in circles” is not a compliment. Yet recent anthropological study and literary scholarship have revealed that when the spoken word became the written word, when bards turned into scribes, the resulting texts were written in a lost art of symmetry and elegance that is now called “ring composition.”⁷² Not just the Hebrew Bible, but ancient literature in India, Homer’s narratives in Greece, as well as texts found in such disparate places as Egypt, China, Indonesia,

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and Russia, were written in nonlinear configurations where the chapters of the story are connected not sequentially but synoptically. It's not a "story-line" but a "story-circle," where the plot relates to what is across the circle from it, not what is before or after it.

The three main features of ring composition are (1) parallelism, (2) chiasmus, and (3) latch. We are most familiar with *parallelism*, where each section mirrors what is across the circle and is often marked by parallel alliteration and resonance. *Chiasmus* is the turning point, that place in the narrative arc when a climax of meaning drives a loop back, dividing the circle into halves and overlaying one half on top of the other. The *latch* is the journey home, back to where you started, that closes the circle, not so much with a conclusion, as with an arrival home, but at a higher level of integration and increased awareness that is transformative and enchanting.

When humans started writing, why did they write in rings? Because that's how the brain is hardwired. The brain works through symmetry, balanced proportions, corresponding repetition, and parallelisms, just like ring composition. Furthermore, ring compositions are shaped not like straight lines or sine curves but like a torus (think spiral donut), the universal form of self-organizing, self-regulating, self-organizing systems. One more thing: our ancestors wrote stories as the universe moved, not in linear progression but in circles. A story that doesn't build step-by-step, chapter by chapter, book by book, but reaches a climax by syntactical rules that form relationships between parallel rungs of the text, appears odd to people used to linear storytelling.

Ring composition forces one to slow down and pay attention to the details while never losing sight of the whole. It is natural, then, that the most relational book ever written should be written in this relational and beautiful symmetry. And our theography will attempt to draw attention to those rings.

THREE KEY POINTS

In closing, we want to leave you with three key points about this book.

First, *this book is primarily written for a Christian audience*. Thus, when

we use the words “we” and “us,” we are referring either to ourselves (the authors) or to all followers of Jesus—what the Second Testament calls disciples of Jesus—those who trust in and share in the life of Christ.

There is a sign as you enter the Louvre Museum: “You do not judge the paintings; they judge you.” Part of the difference between a biography and a theography is that you move away from a critical stance and reposition yourself to be critiqued by the truthfulness and authority of the entire biblical canon. This repositioning also involves trusting the historical authenticity of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Gospels, the Epistles, and Revelation as they present the story of Jesus.⁷³

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (or more poetically, “God-breathed”⁷⁴) is the famous phrasing of 2 Timothy 3:16. This mixture of terms is not found in any previously composed biblical text. Paul coined a new term to convey how important it is to comprehend the authoritative nature of all the Hebrew Scriptures and to contend that they all interpret and illumine the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁷⁵

Consequently, the Bible is an organic, living document. As with every living organism, everything is connected to everything else. You can start anywhere and get everywhere. Each verse is a doorway or dormer that can lead into other venues that have their own portals into God’s presence. The whole Bible is a beautiful, intricately woven tapestry—or in digital terms, a measureless interconnected network—where unexpected similarities, surprising parallels, and profound paradoxes can be found. It was this kind of intimacy with the Bible that Jesus the Jew manifested in almost everything that proceeded out of His mouth.

When we interpret Scripture, we are not simply interpreting documents as dead objects, as we would analyze the rings in tree stumps. We are engaged in a transaction with a divine book that was coauthored by humans and a divine person who still lives and speaks. Interpreting Scripture, then, is not simply a scientific, secular enterprise. It requires spiritual insight. It mandates a divine imagination. For this reason Paul argued that the “natural man” cannot comprehend the things of the Spirit.⁷⁶

Jesus is the Logos.⁷⁷ He is the Word, or the self-utterance, of God. So when God speaks, it is Christ who is being spoken about. When God breathes, it is Christ who is being imparted. The Spirit is God’s breath (the

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words “Spirit” and “breath” are the same in both Hebrew and Greek). The Second Testament tells us clearly that the Holy Spirit’s job is to reveal, magnify, and glorify Christ. Thus, because the Bible is inspired, it all speaks of Jesus.

Again, *Jesus Christ is the subject of all Scripture*. He is the main character of the story. The plot revolves around Him, and the images of Christ are what make the story sing the song of truth. The real and total meaning of Scripture, therefore, is found in Jesus Christ—His person, His mission, and His work. He is the fulfillment of the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings.

Regardless of whether you prefer to view the Second Testament references to Christ as allusions, applications, types, signs, allegories, shadows, figures, extended meanings,⁷⁸ or the literal meaning of the text, Jesus Christ is the focus of the entire Bible—both First and Second Testaments. This point will become obvious as we move forward in telling the Jesus story.

Second, when we get to chapter 4, *we will begin recounting the story of Jesus from His birth in Bethlehem until His second coming*. The chronology we will follow is found in Robert Mounce’s classic *Jesus, In His Own Words*—a chronological blending of the four Gospels.⁷⁹ We have been amazed at how many problematic passages in the Gospels suddenly become clear when read in chronological sequence.⁸⁰

As we recount Jesus’ life on earth, we will be weaving into it references, images, prophecies, and events from the First Testament to show the unity of Scripture as it concerns Jesus. We hope this effort will bring the First Testament alive for you in fresh ways. Our purpose is to connect the dots of the First Testament to the Second, highlighting the Bible’s unified storyline. Among other things, you will discover that the entire story of Israel in the First Testament *repeats* itself in the life of Christ in the Second Testament. And it does so in almost every detail.⁸¹ In this regard, Jesus not only fulfills the First Testament narrative but also reenacts, relives, and replays it. This is one of the most fascinating aspects of the Bible.

At times we will quote the authors of the Second Testament in their use of the First Testament to shed light on the Jesus story. Other times we will simply make references to the First Testament without any such

quotations. The reason for this is that not all references and allusions to Jesus in the First Testament are mentioned in the Second Testament. To quote Edmund Clowney (former president of Westminster Theological Seminary), “To conclude that we can never see a type where the New Testament does not identify it is to confess hermeneutical bankruptcy.”⁸² Yet by following the same line of interpretation that the First Testament authors consistently used in their reading of the Hebrew Scriptures, we can discover Jesus Christ afresh all throughout the Bible.

Note that if we unveiled all the references, allusions, prophecies, and foreshadowings of Jesus present in the First Testament, this book would be thousands of pages.⁸³ We are forced to be highly selective in which ones we choose to highlight. Nonetheless, we hope you will pick up the pattern of interpretation we are using so that you may take it from here and find Jesus throughout the rest of the First Testament yourself.

In a world and a church that has lost the plot of the story and the *cantus firmus* of the music, we need to reclaim the Bible as a whole narrative telling one fluid, coherent story—the Jesus story. After all, the origin of the word *gospel* is *Godspell*, or the “story of God.”

Third, *we are not writing this book for scholars but for the general Christian population*. At the same time, we have provided endnotes for the benefit of scholars, academicians, and curious minds who wish to see the sources that have influenced some of our conclusions and to delve deeper into them.

One of our favorite metaphors for reframing how people see the Bible is to approach it as a movie.⁸⁴ But not any simple, straightforward movie—one filled with flashbacks, interweaving relationships and plot-lines, metaphors and narratives, multiple voices, and circles of meaning, an organic and rich symmetry of dynamic signs, a story that reveals the truth of Jesus Christ in freshness, surround sound, and living color. As with any great story, there are characters, sequence, conflict, climax, and resolution. Unlike any other story, however, this is a never-ending story. This story invites you to become part of it with its main character, who wants to merge His story with yours.

So sit back, relax, and enjoy the story. Stay in your seat. Sit at its feet. Don’t try to figure everything out or get everything right. Just let

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the story unfold. Let the Bible tell its own story to you. Trust the Jesus story as it moves from Genesis to Revelation. And see if the Holy Spirit doesn't open your eyes to see the greatness of Christ anew and afresh.

May your heart burn within you while reading it as it has ours while writing it.

—Leonard Sweet and Frank Viola

Notes

Introduction: The Jesus Story

1. References to “salvation history” to describe the Bible’s main theme did not arise until the seventeenth century. See H. W. Frei, “The ‘Literal Reading’ of Biblical Narrative in the Christian Tradition: Does It Stretch or Will It Break?” in Frank McConnell, ed., *The Bible and the Narrative Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 37–38. The Bible isn’t about salvation; it’s about Jesus Christ. Salvation is one of the things Christ does. But Jesus is far more than Savior. See our book *Jesus Manifesto: Restoring the Supremacy and Sovereignty of Jesus Christ* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010) for an unfolding of that statement.
2. In this regard, this book is really an expansion of chapter 1 of *Jesus Manifesto*. In that chapter, we point out that Jesus is the occupation of the entire biblical canon, both First and Second Testaments. *Jesus* blows that point up into an entire volume.
3. For the history of the First, Second, and Third “Jesus Quests” as well as some of the most influential works in historical Jesus studies, see Craig Evans’s *Life of Jesus Research: An Annotated Bibliography* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989) and *Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2006); Martin Hengel’s *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers* (New York: Crossword, 1981) and *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995); Dale Allison’s *The Historical Christ and the Theological Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); Ben Witherington’s *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990), and *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994); Scot McKnight’s *Jesus and His Death: Historiography, the Historical Jesus, and Atonement Theory* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005); Craig Keener’s *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); N. T. Wright’s *The Original Jesus: The Life and Vision of a Revolutionary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), *Who Was Jesus?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is* (Downers Grove, IL:

- InterVarsity Press, 1999), *The New Testament and the People of God*, vol. 1 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), and *Jesus and the Victory of God*, vol. 2 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996); Darrell Bock and Robert Webb's *Key Events in the Life of the Historical Jesus: A Collaborative Exploration of Context and Coherence* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); Darrell Bock's *Studying the Historical Jesus: A Guide to Sources and Methods* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002); Gregory Boyd and Paul Eddy's *Jesus Legend: A Case for the Historical Reliability of the Synoptic Jesus Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007); Beverly Roberts Goenta and Richard Hays's *Seeking the Identity of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007); James Beilby and Robert Price's *The Historical Jesus: Five Views* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Press, 2009); H. J. Cadbury's *The Peril of Modernizing Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1937); Richard Bauckham's *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); Nicholas Perrin and Richard Hays's *Jesus, Paul, and the People of God: A Theological Dialogue with N. T. Wright* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academia, 2011); John Meier's *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 2001); Stephen Barton's *The Spirituality of the Gospels* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992); Otto Betz's *What Do We Know About Jesus?* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968); Raymond Brown's *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* (New York: Doubleday, 1994); G. B. Caird's *Jesus and the Jewish Nation* (London: Athlone Press, 1965); James D. G. Dunn's *A New Perspective on Jesus: What the Quest for the Historical Jesus Missed* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), *Evidence for Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), and "Faith and the Historical Jesus," in *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); Bruce Chilton's *The Temple of Jesus: His Sacrificial Program Within a Cultural History of Sacrifice* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992); Stephen Davis's *Risen Indeed: Making Sense of the Resurrection* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); W. R. Farmer's *Jesus and the Gospel: Tradition, Scripture, and Canon* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); C. F. D. Moule's *The Origin of Christology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977); E. P. Sanders's *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) and *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (New York: Penguin, 1995); Craig Blomberg's *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1997); Gerd Theissen's *The Shadow of the Galilean: The Quest of the Historical Jesus in Narrative Form* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (first published London: A. and C. Black, 1911); and Luke T. Johnson's *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996).
4. Paul Johnson's *Jesus: A Biography from a Believer* (New York: Viking, 2010), 1–2.
 5. Some scholars, like Scot McKnight, believe that writing a biography of Jesus is not possible because we do not have enough information about His early life. Ben Witherington, on the other hand, discusses the difference between a modern biography and an ancient biography in his book

The Gospel of Mark (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 3–9. Mark’s gospel, Witherington argues, possesses all the marks of ancient biography. In like manner, Craig Keener argues that the four Gospels are *ancient* biographies in contrast with the genre of modern biography (*The Historical Jesus of the Gospels*, 78–83). See also Richard Burridge’s *What Are the Gospels?* and *Four Gospels, One Jesus?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), as well as N. T. Wright’s *Who Was Jesus? A Comparison with Greco-Roman Biography* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004, 73–74) and *How God Became King* (New York: HarperOne, 2012), 62–64; and James D. G. Dunn’s *Jesus Remembered*, 184–86. We believe that *The First Quest for the Historical Jesus* went wrong in trying to write a full-fledged modern biography of Jesus of Nazareth. History simply doesn’t furnish us with enough material about Jesus’ early life (from birth to age twelve, and age twelve to thirty). In addition, *The First Quest* was based on looking at Jesus purely as a human being with a human biography. We believe with the council of Chalcedon that a purely human Jesus never existed. The Jesus that existed was the One who was God’s self-knowledge in-fleshed. Thus His Deity cannot be ignored. For this reason, we will begin the Lord’s life before time in His preincarnate state as the eternal Son (see chapter 2).

6. Some of the most helpful books in this genre are James D. G. Dunn’s *Jesus Remembered*; Darrell Bock’s *Jesus According to the Scripture: Restoring the Portrait from the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002); Joseph Ratzinger’s *Jesus of Nazareth* (two vol.) (New York: Doubleday, 2007; San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011); John Meier’s *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1991); Ben Meyer’s *The Aims of Jesus* (San Jose, CA: Pickwick Publications, 2002); N. T. Wright’s *Simply Jesus: A New Vision of Who He Was, What He Did, and Why He Matters* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011); *Jesus and the Victory of God*, vol. 2 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God*; and *Who Was Jesus?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); Ethelbert Stauffer’s *Jesus and His Story* (London: SCM, 1960); C. H. Dodd’s *The Founder of Christianity* (London: Macmillan, 1970); Dale Allison’s *Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010) and *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998); F. F. Bruce’s *Jesus, Lord and Savior* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986) and *Jesus Past, Present, and Future: The Work of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998); Craig Keener’s *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels*; G. B. Caird’s *New Testament Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); A. F. Kirkpatrick’s “Christ the Goal of History,” lecture 18 in his *The Doctrine of the Prophets: The Warburtonian Lectures for 1886–1890* (London: Macmillan, 1901); Joachim Jeremias’s *New Testament Theology* (New York: Scribner, 1971); William Willimon’s *Why Jesus?* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010); Scot McKnight’s *The Story of the Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006); and Arnold Fruchtenbaum’s *Jesus Was a Jew* (Nashville: Broadman, 1974).
7. Gen. 1:1; John 1:1.
8. John 1:1.
9. At least what Scripture tells us will happen after Jesus returns.
10. Some people believe that the main subject of the biblical narrative is God. But reading the Bible as a book about God misses the point. It is a book

about God-in-Christ. The biblical understanding of God is the God we know in Christ. The biblical understanding of humanity is the humanity we know in Christ. Christ is the true humanity, and Christ is the true God. Jesus reveals the very nature and character of God. Therefore, the theological interpretation of Scripture must be a christological interpretation of Scripture. As we point out in *Jesus Manifesto*, the Father and the Spirit both continually point to the Son. We cannot contemplate God apart from Jesus. So all theology is christology, and the Scriptures are a book about Christ—God’s revelation of Himself in and through Jesus. This point will be made abundantly clear throughout this book. For further reading on how Jesus is the content of the biblical narrative, see Hans Frei, *The Identity of Jesus Christ*.

11. Col. 1:16.
12. For those who would argue that we shouldn’t call the Savior “Jesus” but “Yeshua,” we are following the example of the Second Testament writers themselves, who called Him Iesous, not Yahshua. In fact, God is never called YHWH in the Second Testament. In this connection, the Judaism of Jesus’ day and locale was Hellenized. For this reason, many of the apostles (who were Jewish) took Greek names (as did most of their Hasmonean rulers). And many of them spoke at least some Greek. Simon, Philip, and John, among others, were not exactly Hebrew names.
13. This touches on the debate between grammatical-historical criticism and canonical criticism, which we will discuss later in the endnotes. We are not against historical Jesus research. We are against historical Jesus research that somehow thinks it has a privileged theological status over canonical criticism and biblical theology. Historical Jesus studies, while helpful, are limited. And they should never control biblical theology.
14. One of the things we will be demonstrating in this book is how to interpret the Old Testament within the context of the entire biblical canon. We will be interpreting the Old Testament with Jesus, Paul, Peter, John, Mark, Luke, and Matthew at our side. When we read about Adam, for instance, we will be reading how Jesus and Paul understood Adam. So in essence, this book is a canonical approach to the life of Jesus. In it, we are asking and answering the question, what does the entire canon teach us about the life of Jesus?
15. We’ve observed that many Christians find little relevance or application for their lives in the Old Testament. They approach it as if they are reading someone else’s mail. We trust that after you read this book, you will no longer see the Old Testament as a mere historical document, but rather as a living, breathing account of your Lord.
16. In the year 170, Melito, bishop of Sardis, called the First Testament (Hebrew canon) the *palaiā diatheke* (old covenant) and the Second Testament the *kainē diatheke* (new covenant). Tertullian in the West rendered *diatheke* to be *testmentum* in Latin, thereby calling each section of the Bible “the Old Testament” and “the New Testament.” This coinage survived despite the fact that neither part of the Bible is a “testament” in the common sense of the word. See J. D. Douglas and H. Hillyer, et al., eds., *The New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), 138, and “What Is the New Testament?” <http://www.catholicapologetics.info/scripture/newtestament/ntestament.htm>.

17. John 5:39 NLT.
18. In 1 Corinthians 15:2–4, Paul described the gospel in three verses. And twice he said that it was “according to the Scriptures.” See also Acts 26:22–23, where Paul tells King Agrippa that Moses and the prophets spoke of Christ’s suffering and resurrection from the dead.
19. “When Luke says that Jesus interpreted to them all the things about himself, throughout the Bible, he doesn’t mean that Jesus collected a few, or even a half dozen, isolated texts, verses chosen at random. He means that the whole story, from Genesis to Chronicles (the last book of the Hebrew Bible; the prophets came earlier), pointed forwards to a fulfillment which could only be found when God’s anointed took Israel’s suffering, and hence the world’s suffering, to himself, died under its weight, and rose again as the beginning of God’s new creation, God’s new people. This is what had to happen; and now it just had” (Tom Wright, *Luke for Everyone* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004], 294–95). James D. G. Dunn agrees that the Second Testament authors did not use random proof-texting to make their points (Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity* [London: SCM, 2006], 94ff.). In another place, N. T. Wright states, “‘Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.’ This could never be a matter of so-called ‘messianic’ proof-texts alone. It was the entire narrative, the complete story-line” (*The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011], 162). In short, the Second Testament authors never use the First Testament out of context. The context is always in mind. But they understood the context as being fulfilled in Christ.
20. For specific examples, see C. H. Dodd’s *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-Structure of New Testament Theology* (London: Nisbet, 1952), 61–110. Dodd writes, “The method included, first, the *selection* of certain large sections of the Old Testament scriptures. . . . These sections were understood as *wholes*, and particular verses or sentences were quoted from them rather as pointers to the whole context than as constituting testimonies in and for themselves.”
21. With painstaking detail, C. H. Dodd in *According to the Scriptures* demonstrates that the Second Testament writers consistently drew from the same portions of First Testament Scriptures and interpreted them the same way, independent of one another (*ibid.*, 28–60).
22. After tracing in detail how the Second Testament authors consistently (yet independently) interpreted the First Testament texts in light of Jesus Christ, Dodd comes to this conclusion as well (*ibid.*, 108–10). Eminent New Testament scholar F. F. Bruce has this to say about Dodd’s book: “Analogy, apart from anything else, might suggest that the scheme of biblical interpretation which pervades the New Testament was similarly derived from the Founder of Christianity. The New Testament biblical exegesis is not the same as attested in the Qumran documents; both resemblances and disparities are readily recognized. But the one scheme bespeaks the influence of one powerful mind. When we observe that the main features of primitive Christian exegesis recur independently in the works of several New Testament writers, we have to look behind them for this powerful mind, and (as C. H. Dodd has remarked in his classic treatment of this subject),

Notes

- we are not compelled to reject the New Testament evidence which points unmistakably to the mind of Jesus Himself” (F. F. Bruce, foreword to R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament* [Vancouver, BC: Regent College Pub., 1998], v).
23. Luke 24:27 NASB.
 24. Luke 24:32 NASB.
 25. Luke 24:44–45 NASB.
 26. TNK (*Tanakh*) is an acronym derived from the three sections of the Hebrew Bible: Torah, Nevi'im, and Ketuvim.
 27. In his book *Jesus and the Old Testament*, R. T. France analyzes exactly how Jesus interpreted the Old Testament.
 28. *Ibid.*, 223.
 29. *Ibid.*, 225.
 30. It should be noted that the phrase “the Law and the Prophets” is often shorthand for the entire First Testament. See Romans 3:21 with 4:7. The “law” sometimes refers to the entire Hebrew canon (Rom. 3:19 with 3:10–18; 1 Cor. 14:21). The same is true for the “prophets” (Acts 13:27; 26:27).
 31. John 5:46.
 32. Matt. 5:17.
 33. Jesus believed the Hebrew Scriptures were the revelation of God and that He was the true embodiment and fulfillment of them. See E. E. Ellis, “How Jesus Interpreted His Bible,” *Criswell Theological Review* 3 (1989): 341–51.
 34. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 79–90.
 35. “As Christians standing within the light of New Testament revelation and looking back on the Old Testament, Christ himself acts as a hermeneutical prism. Looking back through him, we see the white light of the unity of the truth of Jesus Christ broken down into its constituent colours in the pages of the Old Testament. Then, looking forwards we see how the multi-coloured strands of Old Testament revelation converge in him. When we appreciate this we begin to see how the constituent colours unite in Christ and are related both to each other and to him. In this way we see how the Old Testament points forward to him. We see how sometimes one ‘colour,’ sometimes another, or perhaps a combination of them, points forward to Jesus Christ, is related to Jesus Christ, and is fulfilled by Jesus Christ” (Sinclair Ferguson, “Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,” *PT Media Paper*, vol. 2., http://www.proctrust.org.uk/dls/christ_paper.pdf).
 36. Because Jesus Christ and His church are united, the Bible is not only Christocentric; it’s also ecclesiocentric. To find Christ in the Bible is to find His house, His bride, His family—the church. This will become clear throughout this book. In this regard, we agree with Augustine’s first rule of biblical interpretation, *totus christus*: the whole Christ, Head and Body. Richard Hays unfolds what he calls Paul’s “ecclesiocentric hermeneutics” in *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 84.
 37. Karl Barth was one such theologian.
 38. Martin Luther, as quoted in Emil Brunner, *The Word of God and Modern Man* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1964), 30.
 39. Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 153.

40. In scholarly circles, this method of interpretation is known as “historical criticism” or the “historical-critical method” because it uses modern tools to critique the text in its historical setting. Historical criticism is essentially scientific exegesis that came into prominence in the eighteenth century onward. (The original sense of the word *reductionist* is *re ducere*, which means “to lead back.”) It’s a modern invention.
41. In scholarly circles, this holistic method is called “canonical criticism” because it interprets the entire biblical canon as a unified whole. It’s also called “theological interpretation” because it utilizes theology as the interpretive key to exegete the Bible. As an approach, canonical criticism says that nothing less than the whole biblical canon is adequate to properly interpret each of its parts. Theological interpretation is often associated with Karl Barth’s *Der Romerbrief*, 1919. As a method of biblical interpretation, theological exegesis is rooted in the Scripture itself. It is also known as the “christological hermeneutic.” Donald Bloesch wrote, “This approach, which is associated with Karl Barth, Jacques Ellul, and Wilhelm Vischer, among others, and which also has certain affinities with the confessional stances of Gerhard van Rad and Brevard Childs, seeks to supplement the historical-critical method by theological exegesis in which the innermost intentions of the author are related to the center and culmination of sacred history mirrored in the Bible, namely, the advent of Jesus Christ. It is believed that the fragmentary insights of both Old and New Testament writers are fulfilled in God’s dramatic incursion into human history which we see in the incarnation and atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, in his life, death, and resurrection” (Donald Bloesch, “A Christological Hermeneutic: Crisis and Conflict in Hermeneutics” in *The Use of the Bible in Theology: Evangelical Options*, ed. Robert K. Johnston [Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985], 81. Also available as “A Christological Hermeneutic,” <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=0>). See also Werner G. Jeanrond, “After Hermeneutics: The Relationship Between Theology and Biblical Studies,” in *The Open Text: New Directions for Biblical Studies?*, ed. Francis Watson (London: SCM, 1993), 85–102; John Goldingay, “Biblical Narrative and Systematic Theology,” in *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology*, eds. Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 123–42 (138); Joel B. Green, “The Bible, Theology, and Theological Interpretation,” *SBL Forum*, n.p. [cited Sept 2004], <http://sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?ArticleID=308>; J. Todd Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God: An Entryway to the Theological Interpretation of Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); Stephen Fowl, *Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009); Daniel Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008); and Kevin Vanhoozer, *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).
42. We agree with Brevard Childs when he said, “Many insights from the last 150 years made by historical-critical study also can be of great exegetical value if correctly used within a proper theological context. In a word, the hermeneutical issue is not between a critical and a non-critical reading, but rather how one makes use of all available insights in order to illuminate the

canonical scriptures without destroying the confessional context” (“The One Gospel in Four Witnesses” in *The Rule of Faith* by Ephraim Radner and George Sumner [Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1998], 55). In the same vein, Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) makes a case for the need to use *both* historical-criticism and canonical exegesis in understanding the life of Jesus (*Jesus of Nazareth*, xvi–xxiv [see n. 6]). Two twentieth-century professors at Yale, Brevard Childs and Hans Frei, championed the holistic way of viewing Scripture. Their work marked a new shift for returning to the christological way of interpreting Scripture that predates modern hermeneutics and grammatical-historical exegesis. They both pointed out that a christological reading of the First Testament is indispensable if we are to understand history as the story of God revealing Himself in Christ. They argued that the church’s understanding of Scripture is essentially found in Jesus. Therein lies the charter for christological interpretation. The holistic approach, also known as “canonical criticism,” basically says that every part of the Bible must be interpreted in its relationship to the entire canon. Therefore, when the Second Testament was created and the canon expanded, the meaning of the First Testament changed from our perspective. It became fuller because it could be completely interpreted from the standpoint of Christ. Both Frei and Childs accept historical criticism. However, their position is that historical criticism is a good beginning but a bad stopping place. We must go on to see the fullness of the canon. Consequently, reductionism (historical criticism) and holism (canonical criticism) do not constitute an *either/or* choice. It’s a *both/and* choice. We regard them as complementary. In short, historical study of the biblical text must be inserted into the larger and richer context—the existing canon of Scripture that contains a revelation of Jesus Christ. For further reading see Hans Frei, “The ‘Literal Reading’ of Biblical Narrative in the Christian Tradition” (see n. 1) and *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980); Brevard Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), *Biblical Theology: A Proposal* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), and *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979); Karl Barth, *Der Romerbrief* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1922) and *Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); Willem Van Gemeren, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation from Creation to the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1988) and “Jesus Christ the Lord and the Scriptures of the Church,” “The Nature of the Christian Bible: One Book, Two Testaments,” and “The One Gospel in Four Witnesses” in Radner and Sumner, *The Rule of Faith*.

43. Joseph Ratzinger describes the Bible’s hermeneutic thusly: “This Christological hermeneutic, which sees Jesus Christ as the key to the whole and learns from him how to understand the Bible as a unity, presupposes a prior act of faith . . . ‘Canonical exegesis’—reading the individual texts of the Bible in the context of the whole—is an essential dimension of exegesis. It does not contradict historical-critical interpretation, but carries it forward in an organic way toward becoming theology in the proper sense” (*Jesus of Nazareth*, vol. 1, xix). In this connection, we believe the modern historical reconstruction is both legitimate and important. But we do not believe that the historian’s interpretation should have some sort of primacy over

the theologian's interpretation. Consequently, we do not embrace the dominance of modern empirical epistemology in theology. The church does not have to submit its theology to the judgment of supposed neutral disciplines in modern evangelical or liberal theology. Some theologians have called this submission "the Babylonian captivity of Christian theology." We believe that modern critical study of the Scripture—linguistic inquiry and historical investigation—though important, do not exhaust the content of Scripture. To properly understand the Bible, it must be interpreted not only as a historical, literary document but also as a source of divine revelation. Both the theological unity and the historical unity of Scripture must be held together as a cohesive narrative about Jesus. Thus we cannot understand the First Testament without the Second Testament, nor the Second without the First. The historical-critical approach, when held to exclusively, seems to imply that Genesis through Malachi are not Christian books. Therefore, when Christians read them, they are reading someone else's mail. Historical-criticism by itself rejects the concept of a unified canon and turns advocates into near Marcionites. This was a charge that Dietrich Bonhoeffer leveled against this method. For Bonhoeffer, rejecting the authority of the First Testament was part of the way of thinking that prepared the way to anti-Semitism.

44. *Reply to Faustus the Manichean*, 12, 14. <http://enlargingtheheart.wordpress.com/2010/02/23/augustine-of-hippo-christ-in-the-old-testament> (no longer accessible). Luther said likewise: "There is no word in the New Testament which does not look back on the Old, where it has already been proclaimed in advance. . . . For the New Testament is nothing more than a revelation of the Old" (quoted in Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 116).
45. Andrea Fernandez coined the term *sensus plenior*, or "the fuller sense," to describe this fact. The *sensus plenior*, as developed by Raymond E. Brown in *The Sensus Plenior of Sacred Scripture* (Baltimore: St Mary's University, 1955), 92, refers to "the deeper meaning, intended by God, but not clearly intended by the human author, which is seen to exist in the words of a biblical text . . . when they are studied in the light of further revelation or development in the understanding of revelation." See also David Puckett's *John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995). One of the things that modern interpreters assume is that the only safe way to understand a text is to assert it has only one true meaning. All other meanings are either false or secondary. We do not believe this. The text has many possible but harmonious meanings, all of which can be legitimized from the Bible. Each meaning harmonizes with each other; none contradicts another. That richness is why the Scriptures can continue to speak to people in different places and at different times just as powerfully as they did for their original hearers. The notion that there is only one true interpretation of the text is a modern construction. Throughout most of church history, Christians believed that there are various interpretations of a single text. Yet we will always locate their fullest meaning in Christ. In fact, a good chunk of the Second Testament, in substance, is a christological reading of the First

Testament. Geerhardus Vos said that biblical theology draws a line while systematic theology draws a circle. That is, biblical theology is diachronic; systematic theology is synchronic. Diachronic reading treats the Bible as a historical book. And the historical context is preeminent in interpreting a biblical text. Synchronic reading treats the Bible as a complete and unified whole. Context, therefore, becomes the key to biblical interpretation. A diachronic reading of Scripture reads the Second Testament in light of the First. A synchronic reading looks at the First in light of the Second. The diachronic reading regards the First Testament as a pre-Christian book that prepares the way for the coming of the Anointed One. The synchronic reading treats the First Testament as a Christian book that prefigures Christ. We believe that the diachronic and the synchronic approach to the Bible must be taken together.

46. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*, 130. Dodd adds, “It would not be true of any literature which deserves to be called great, that its meaning is restricted to that which was explicitly in the mind of the author when he wrote. On the contrary, it is a part of what constitutes the quality of greatness in literature that it perpetuates itself by unfolding ever new richness of unsuspected meaning as time goes on. The ultimate significance of prophecy is not only what it meant for its author, but what it came to mean for those who stood within the tradition which he founded or promoted, and who lived under the impact of the truth declared” (131–32). Some modern scholars are still stuck in ’70s and ’80s “neoevangelicalism.” The neoevangelical school did a valuable service in helping us see the benefits that historical study could bring to our understanding of Scripture. But it missed the heart of the Bible by limiting one’s understanding to modern historical methodology. Medieval allegorization failed because of its tendency to dehistoricize the biblical text. But neoevangelicalism also failed because of its tendency to detextualize the history behind the text. Neoevangelicalism argued that the only meaning of the text is what was in the brain of the writer at the time that he wrote it. Neoevangelicals put the primacy on history as being the “real stuff” and the canonical text as simply being a witness to it. In his book *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury, 1975), Hans Georg-Gadamer looks at the question of hermeneutics and argues for the necessity of bringing together two horizons to accurately interpret a text. Gadamer’s thesis is that we cannot understand texts by the methods of natural science alone. They require a different sort of approach. The author of a given text was operating in his own historical horizon (of the past). We, the readers, are operating within our own historical horizon (the present). In order to understand a text, the past historical horizon of the text must be brought together with the present historical horizon of the reader. The act of interpretation is the act of bringing those two horizons together. Allegorization failed to take into account the past horizon of the original writers and readers. But neoevangelicalism also failed because it didn’t connect the past historical horizon together with the message of the entire biblical canon and the historical horizon of present readers.
47. See 1 Peter 1:10–12.
48. There is a significant difference between typology and allegory. Typological exegesis (of the “essential correspondence” school) is a legitimate

interpretation of the text, and it was used profusely by the Second Testament authors. A type is an event, object, or person that finds a parallel and deeper realization in Jesus Christ, His people, or His work. Typology “is grounded in history, and does not lose sight of the actual historical character of the events with which it is concerned. Typology may be described as ‘the theological interpretation of the Old Testament history.’ Allegory, on the other hand, has little concern with the historical character of the Old Testament words” (France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 40). Typology, unlike allegory, does not dehistoricize the text. Allegorical interpretations are highly subjective and are based on the interpreter’s imagination. Patristic allegorizing and post-Reformation spiritualizing both leapfrog over the historical realities of the First Testament text, acting as if the Hebrew Scriptures have no historical significance in their own context. To learn more about the legitimate use of typological interpretation and how it differs from allegorical exegesis, see Patrick Fairbairn, *The Typology of Scripture: Two Volumes in One* (Philadelphia: Smith & English, 1854); A. Berkeley Mickelsen’s *Understanding Scripture: How to Read and Study the Bible* (Hendrickson, 2005), where “essential correspondence” posits guidelines to keep the typology from slipping into allegorism; Leonhard Goppelt’s *Typos*; R. T. France’s *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 38–79; J. Danielou’s *From Shadows to Reality*; G. W. H. Lampe’s “Typological Exegesis,” *Theology* 56, 201–8; E. E. Ellis’s *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament*; “How the New Testament Uses the Old,” in *New Testament Interpretation*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), 201–8, “Biblical Interpretation in the New Testament Church,” *Compendia Rerum Judaicarum ad Novum Testamentum*, eds. S. Safrai et al., and “How Jesus Interpreted the Old Testament,” *Criswell Theological Review* 3:2, 1989, 341–51; Richard M. Davidson’s *Typology in Scripture* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Seminary Dissertation Series, 1981), 115–90; G. W. H. Lampe and K. J. Woollcombe’s *Essays on Typology*; Graeme Goldsworthy’s *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture and According to Plan*; A. T. Hanson’s *Jesus Christ in the Old Testament*; F. Foulkes, *The Acts of God*; James Preus’s *From Shadow to Promise*; Paul Heinisch’s *Christ in Prophecy*; Richard Longenecker’s *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*; Sidney Greidanus’s *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 111–278; F. F. Bruce’s *New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes and The Time Is Fulfilled*; Nathan Pitchford’s *Images of the Savior from the Pentateuch*; Edmond Clowney’s *Preaching and Biblical Theology* and *The Unfolding Mystery*; H. Wheeler Robinson’s *The Cross in the Old Testament*; D. A. Carson’s “Current Issues in Biblical Theology,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* (1995), 27; G. K. Beale’s *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 376ff., and *A New Testament Biblical Theology*; Sinclair Ferguson’s “Preaching Christ from the Old Testament”; Walter Wilson’s *A Dictionary of Bible Types*; Ada Habershon’s *The Study of Types*; E. W. Bullinger’s *Numbers in Scripture*; A. B. Simpson’s *The Christ in the Bible* (4 volumes) and *Christ in the Tabernacle*; Stephen Kaung’s *God Has Spoken* (8 volumes) and *Seeing Christ in the New Testament* (6 volumes); and InterVarsity Press’s *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. For older works, see C. H. Mackintosh’s *Notes on the Pentateuch* and C. H. Spurgeon’s *Christ in the Old Testament*. D. L. Moody once stated that if his entire library were to be burned and his Bible and C. H. Mackintosh’s *Notes on the Pentateuch* were to remain, those would

be sufficient. See also “Index of Allusions and Verbal Parallels” printed in the corrected third edition of *The Greek New Testament*, ed. K. Aland et al. (United Bible Societies, 1983), 901–11; and Peter Enns’s “Apostolic Hermeneutics and an Evangelical Doctrine of Scripture: Moving Beyond a Modernist Impasse,” *Westminster Theological Journal* (Fall 2003). In the latter, Enns persuasively argues for a Christoleptic hermeneutic for interpreting the Bible. Dave Moser is a blogger who has written a helpful book on Christ-centered Bible study that he offers at no charge in PDF: <http://armchair-theology.net/Christ-Centered-Bible-Study.pdf>.

49. Interpretations that stress only the historical-grammatical elements of the text miss the heart and spirit of Holy Scripture. They cause us to lose the grand narrative of the biblical canon. Interpretations that stress only the spiritual element of the text lead to “subjective hermeneutics” that spawn fanciful and erroneous interpretations. In this book, we are marrying the historical-grammatical approach with the theological/spiritual approach. The linchpin that brings them both together is the way in which the Second Testament authors consistently interpreted the First Testament. The mammoth volume *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, edited by G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), explores the different ways the Second Testament cites and alludes to the First Testament. (This commentary is 1,239 pages long.) The various ways that the Second Testament makes use of the First Testament can be understood using these different models: Promise and Fulfillment; Type and Antitype; Shadow and Reality; Beginning and Completion; History and Application; Part and Fullness. We believe each of these models is divinely intended. However, if taken by themselves, each could be misleading. But when we allow them all to be present, they complement one another and present us with a full-fledged portrait of Jesus. What we are doing in this book, in effect, is putting into action what C. H. Dodd and R. T. France have uncovered in their classic volumes *According to the Scriptures* and *Jesus and the Old Testament* (respectively). Dodd traces how the Second Testament authors interpreted the First Testament while France traces how Jesus interpreted it. As previously stated, both used the same method of interpretation. See also Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* and *The Conversion of Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel’s Scriptures*, as well as Darrell L. Bock’s *Recovering the Real Lost Gospel: Reclaiming the Gospel as Good News* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 7–21.
50. Because the historical-critical method has become so prominent today, the relationship between the First and Second Testaments has been largely lost. We agree with Henry Vander Goot’s observation: “It is not out of proportion to the reality of the situation to speak today of a crisis in Biblical theology that is owing to the fact that much Christian reflection fails to view the Scriptures as a single narrative whole. Modern Biblical theology seems unable to hold together in a positive, comprehensive, and coherent unity the Old and New Testaments” (Henry Vander Goot, “*Tota Scriptura: The Old Testament in the Christian Faith and Tradition*,” in *Life Is Religion: Essays in Honor of H. Evan Runner*, ed. Henry Vander Goot [St. Catherines, ON: Paideia, 1981], 97). In like manner, Walther Eichrodt says, “All the ever so brilliant results of historical research cannot seriously offer any substitute

- for a grasp of the essential connexion between the Old Testament and the New Testament” (Walther Eichrodt, *Theologie des Alten Testament* [Berlin, Germany: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1933], 1:4). We agree with Brevard Childs that historical and canonical criticism can live and work together. But priority must be accorded to the entire biblical canon.
51. “The Nature of the Christian Bible: One Book, Two Testaments,” in Radner and Sumner, *The Rule of Faith*, 120–21.
 52. We, along with most Christian scholars, strongly disagree with Reinhold Niebuhr’s opinion that reading Jesus into the Hebrew canon is somehow anti-Semitic. The whole notion that Christianity is simply a second story built on Judaism is incorrect. Renowned Jewish scholar Jacob Neusner eloquently pointed this out. According to Neusner, Christianity is a Judaism. But it’s a *different* Judaism than rabbinic Judaism. Both Christians and Jews interpret the *Tanakh* from a certain interpretive lens. For the rabbinic Jew, the interpretive lens is the discussion among the rabbis through the centuries—the rabbinic line of interpreters. For the Christian, it is not the rabbinic tradition of interpreters but Jesus who gives meaning to the ancient Hebrew text. So Jesus plays the role for Christians what the rabbinic tradition plays for the Jews.
 53. The theological phrase for this is “grounded christologically.” The story of Jesus is the deep structure that lies underneath all of what Paul and the other Second Testament writers wrote. They were working from the Jesus story, presupposing it and basing everything on it. Yet they did not dehistoricize the First Testament.
 54. Matt. 2:15.
 55. Matt. 2:14–15. See also Matthew 4:15–16; 8:16–17; 12:18–21; 13:35 for some examples. “Matthew has shown us how the Old Testament tells the story which Jesus completed. Then he showed us how the Old Testament declares the promise which Jesus fulfilled. Now he opens up the Old Testament as a store house which provides images, precedents, patterns and ideas to help us understand who Jesus is” (Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995], 108). Craig Keener rightly points out that the context of Hosea 11:1 speaks of a new exodus and a new era of salvation (Craig Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009, 108–9). Like Matthew, all the writers of the Second Testament highlight the narrative patterns of the First Testament, which are larger than the individual books that make up the Hebrew canon but which ultimately point to the Author behind it all.
 56. John 1:45.
 57. John 12:38.
 58. For instance, Jesus is the Lamb slain for the sins of the people (John 1). He is the reality of the tabernacle and the temple (John 2–3). He is the serpent in the wilderness who brings healing (John 3). He is the new Jacob (John 1 and 4). He is the manna sent from heaven (John 6), etc.
 59. 2 Cor. 3:14–16. According to E. E. Ellis, Paul quoted the First Testament ninety-three times in his writings. See E. E. Ellis, *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 11.
 60. Rom. 5:14.
 61. Col. 2:16–17.

Notes

62. 1 Cor. 10:1–4.
63. Heb. 7:21–24.
64. Heb. 10:1.
65. 1 Peter 1:10–11.
66. 1 Peter 2:4–7.
67. F. F. Bruce, *New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 21.
68. In his book *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism Is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2011), sociologist Christian Smith compares what he calls “biblicism” with reading Scripture Christotelically. Smith makes a compelling case that the answer to interpretative pluralism, which discounts the approach of biblicism, is reading the Scripture through the lens of Jesus Christ. See especially p. 97ff.
69. YHWH (also Yahweh) is the ancient Israelite name for God, at least from the time of the exodus (Ex. 3:14). By Jesus’ day, it was considered unholy to speak this name out loud (except for the high priest once a year).
70. YHWH is the Hebrew word that is most frequently used for God in the First Testament. In chapter 5 of *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is* (2011), Wright argues at length that “the Old Testament portrait of YHWH fits Jesus like a glove” (121). Bonhoeffer argues that “the name of Jesus Christ is the name of the very One who in Genesis is named Yahweh” (*Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 13* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004], 173). Scot McKnight points out that the name “Jesus” translates the Hebrew *Yeshua*, which means “YHWH is salvation.” YHWH-is-salvation has become “God-in-flesh-salvation” and “Jesus-is-salvation” (Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus*, 87). See also Jeremiah 23:5–6, where the prophet declares that a righteous Branch and a prospering King will be raised up. And He shall be called “YHWH our righteousness.” This text is clearly a reference to Jesus. See also Richard Bauckham’s *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 1998.
71. Some may think that the Trinity—Father, Son, and Spirit—is the subject of the Bible. But the reality is that both Father and the Spirit point to Jesus, and Jesus points to Himself as the content of all Scripture. Jesus, Paul tells us in Colossians 2:9, is “the fullness of the Godhead [in] bodily [form].” As Miroslav Volf once put it, “We worship one undivided, divine being who comes to us in three persons” (Mark Galli, “Do Muslims and Christians Worship the Same God?” *Christianity Today*, April 15, 2011; available at Virtue Online, <http://www.virtueonline.org/portal/modules/news/article.php?storyid=14283>). And we can only know this one undivided, divine being in and through Jesus Christ (John 1:18). For details, see *Jesus Manifesto*, 161–63; Erich Sauer’s *From Eternity to Eternity: An Outline of the Divine Purposes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 14ff; David Fitch’s *The End of Evangelicalism: Discerning a New Faithfulness for Mission; Towards an Evangelical Political Theology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), xxvff; and Fred Sanders’s *The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 175ff.
72. See the important work by Mary Douglas, *Thinking in Circles: An Essay on Ring Composition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010). This genre reached its height between the eighth and the fifth centuries BC.

73. To those who would question the reliability of the First Testament and the Gospel accounts therein, we recommend *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* by F. F. Bruce (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1960); *The Canon of Scripture* by F. F. Bruce (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988); *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* by Craig Blomberg (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1987); *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* by Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006); *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* by Craig Keener; *Jesus, Paul, and the Gospels* by James D. G. Dunn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011); *Memory, Jesus, and Synoptic Gospels* by Robert McIver (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011); *Jesus Legend: A Case for the Historical Reliability of the Synoptic Jesus Tradition* by Gregory Boyd and Paul Eddy (see n. 3); *Seeking the Identity of Jesus: A Pilgrimage* by Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Richard Hays; *The Case for the Real Jesus: A Journalist Investigates Current Attacks on the Identity of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007) and *The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998) by Lee Strobel; and *Gospel Perspectives* (6 volumes), eds. R. T. France, David Wenham, and Craig Blomberg (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1980–1986). See also *The Art of Reading Scripture* by Ellen David and Richard Hays (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); *Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today*, rev. and exp. ed. by N. T. Wright (New York: HarperOne, 2011); *The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read the Bible* by Scot McKnight (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2006); *Inspiration and Authority: Nature and Function of Christian Scripture* by Paul Achtemeier (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999); and *The Bible Made Impossible* (see intro., n. 68).
74. In Greek, the word used in 2 Timothy 3:16 is *theopneustos*—literally, “God-breathed.”
75. 2 Tim. 3:16.
76. 1 Cor. 2:14.
77. John 1:1. This passage climaxes by contrasting Jesus with the Torah given through Moses (John 1:17–18). Consequently, Jesus is the Word in the fullest ancient Jewish sense—the embodiment of God’s revelation in the Torah.
78. For an explanation of the “extended meaning” of a text, see G. K. Beale’s *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 376ff.
79. See Robert Mounce’s groundbreaking book *Jesus, In His Own Words* (Nashville: B & H Pub. Group, 2010).
80. Frank Viola has done the same with Acts and the Epistles, putting the story found therein in chronological order in his book *The Untold Story of the New Testament Church: An Extraordinary Guide to Understanding the New Testament* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2004).
81. Irenaeus called this principle “recapitulation.” See also Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*, 103. R. T. France wrote about God’s dealings, saying, “Thus his acts in the Old Testament will present a pattern which can be seen to be repeated in the New Testament events . . . New Testament typology is thus essentially the tracing of constant principles of God’s working in history, revealing ‘a recurring rhythm in past history which is taken up more fully and perfectly in the Gospel events’” (France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 39).

Notes

82. Edmund Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 31.
83. Also see John 21:25.
84. Robert Farrar Capon wrote a book, *Genesis, the Movie* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), in which he argues that the Bible is best approached as a movie, one whole movie, with a main character named Jesus. “You have to see the Bible as one complete story, with redemption in Christ as the underlying theme and plot, the whole point of the story from the first scene. You know what’s fun? When you watch a movie, try to identify the Christ figure. I mean the figure who makes the plot work. It doesn’t even have to be a human character. It’s the one who does for the plot of that particular film what Jesus Christ does for the world.” See Tim Brassell, “Interview with Robert F. Capon,” Grace Communion International, <http://www.gci.org/gospel/capon>.

Chapter 1: Christ Before Time

1. G. C. Berkouwer, *Holy Scripture*, trans. and ed. Jack B. Rogers (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 166.
2. There are two major views among Christians regarding time and eternity. Augustine’s view sees eternity to be timeless and nonlinear. Newton’s view sees eternity as being marked by linear time that never ends in either direction. In Augustine’s view, which was championed by C. S. Lewis and others, God is outside of and transcends time. In Newton’s view, which was championed by Oscar Cullmann and others, God’s actions are accomplished in real time before, during, and after creation. Time is infinite and never had a beginning. We agree with Augustine and Lewis that God is timeless. We agree with Einstein that time began with creation. God, therefore, is at the beginning and the end of creation at the same moment. He lives in the eternal now. Yet we also agree with the great theologian Karl Barth, who taught that God can move into time and act there, even though He stands outside of time as well (*Church Dogmatics*, vol. 2, part 1). Barth believed that eternity surrounds time on all sides. Eternity accompanies time and contains all of time’s fullness simultaneously. Because we are temporal beings, we experience events in bits and pieces in a linear fashion. So rather than seeing God’s eternity as a sort of lack of temporality, it’s more accurate to see that God is present in His fullness in all time. Does God know it’s today? Yes. He knows it’s today, but He also knows it is yesterday and tomorrow. C. S. Lewis put it this way: How can God be incarnate and the man who lives in time also be God who lives outside of time? The answer is that the incarnation is not something we work our way toward intellectually. As Bonhoeffer said, you have to begin with the incarnation. We understand God and humanity in terms of the incarnation. If we begin with a set notion of God and man and time and eternity, and try to fit God into it, it becomes impossible to resolve all the paradoxes. We must always begin with the incarnate Christ. For more on the subject of time and eternity, see *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001); *Time and Eternity: Exploring God’s Relationship to Time* by William Lane Craig (New York: Oxford University