

If only we could learn to preach like Peter and Paul. The wish becomes solid reality in Dennis Johnson's wonderful advocacy of preaching Jesus Christ in the twenty-first century as the apostles did in the first. Under Johnson's tutelage, preaching apostolic, Christ-centered, redemptive-historical, missiological sermons that are grace driven becomes a dream within reach.

Bryan Chapell
President and Professor of Practical Theology
Covenant Theological Seminary
Author, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*

Him We Proclaim is a masterful work that should help preachers to understand the necessary interplay between hermeneutics and homiletics that results from a comprehensive biblical theology and a deep commitment to preaching the Word of God. This book holds the promise of the recovery of biblical preaching for those who will give themselves to the demanding and glorious task of setting each text within the context of God's redemptive plan. This is a book that belongs on every preacher's bookshelf.

R. Albert Mohler, Jr.
President
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Him We Proclaim is by far the most comprehensive study of what the Bible says about preaching. Through a very wide-angle lens, Johnson is able to show that none of the popular theories of preaching says everything that should be said; but each has some insights and can be seen as an aspect of the biblical picture. The book also gives a clear and full account of the hermeneutical questions that preachers must deal with. Johnson's arguments are cogent, his evaluations sound. If I could have only one book on preaching, this would be the one.

John M. Frame
J. D. Trimble Chair of Systematic Theology and Philosophy
Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando

Every once in a while, a book comes along that is truly worth reading, and Dennis Johnson's meaty volume, *Him We Proclaim*, is one of them. Although this work is indeed about preaching, it is no mere homiletics manual, for Johnson provides rich exegetical fare and incisive theological reflection in an understandable, literate style.

In an area where considerable disagreement exists, the author's commitments are clear, but he refuses to be drawn to extreme positions, and his irenic treatment of competing views can only affect the discussion in a positive way. Even those who may not be fully persuaded by Johnson's arguments will be deeply grateful by what they have learned.

Moisés Silva
Formerly Professor of New Testament
Westminster Theological Seminary
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

Dennis Johnson has written a magnificent book that magnifies Christ in all of Scripture. Every preacher and teacher of the Scriptures should read this gem of the book.

Johnson convincingly explains and defends the thesis that Christ should be proclaimed from all of Scripture. But he also illustrates with specific examples what it looks like to proclaim Christ in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

This book is exegetically faithful, theologically profound, and practically helpful. I wish I had read a book like this when I started my theological education thirty years ago.

Thomas R. Schreiner
James Buchanan Harrison Professor of
New Testament Interpretation
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Apostolic hermeneutics? Dare we read the Scripture backward as well as forward? Dennis Johnson's answer is a marvelously informed, and convincing "yes!" Yes, we can read and interpret and teach as the apostles did. *Him We Proclaim* is sure to be widely read and discussed both in the academy and by groups of serious-minded preachers of the Word. Sure to become a staple in the homiletical discussion of the twenty-first century.

R. Kent Hughes
Senior Pastor Emeritus
College Church, Wheaton, Illinois

This book is dedicated to the memory of Edmund Clowney, who inspired many of us to find and preach Christ in all the Scriptures. Clowney was a brilliant practitioner of Christocentric preaching. The question for the rest of us is how to do it well. In a wide-ranging discussion, Dennis Johnson brings his deep knowledge of the Bible and hermeneutics together with his experience and teaching of preaching to reflect on just this question.

One need not agree with all his arguments or assumptions to appreciate the value and importance of what Johnson offers as the fruit of years of wise reflection and practice. The first part of his work defends the whole enterprise of Christological interpretation and preaching in the light of issues in present-day biblical scholarship and homiletical debates. Not content simply to theorize, he provides extended expositions of apostolic preaching and teaching, samples of Christological readings of OT and NT passages, and an appendix proposing basic procedures for moving from text to Christological proclamation.

There is much, then, to stimulate thought and to give practical help in this major contribution. Not the least part of that contribution is Johnson's persuasive argument that preaching that makes Christ its primary focus should at the same time be preaching that addresses the needs of its hearers in their particular cultural setting.

Andrew T. Lincoln
Portland Professor of New Testament
University of Gloucestershire

This is an important book, a timely book much in need of being written and one that will be read with the greatest profit. This is especially so for those who, committed to a redemptive- or covenant-historical reading of the Bible, recognize and seek to honor and proclaim as its central theme, Old Testament as well New, Christ in his person and work as the consummate revelation of the triune God.

This magnum opus, written out of the author's many years' experience of wrestling with and teaching seminarians how to preach Christ from all of Scripture, is at the same time as much a book about sound biblical interpretation. His key contention is "that the apostolic preachers through whom God gave us the New Testament normatively define not only the content that twenty-first century preachers are to proclaim, but also the hermeneutic method by which we interpret the Scriptures and the homiletic method by which we communicate God's message to our contemporaries."

This dual hermeneutical-homiletic program is articulated at considerable length and worked out with many examples, always with an eye to the ultimate goal of preaching. In particular, concerning the use of the Old Testament in the New, about which currently among evangelicals there is considerable confusion or uncertainty that threatens, however inadvertently but nonetheless inevitably, to obscure the clarity of the Bible and undermine its full authority as God's word, Johnson takes us a good distance along the only constructive way forward. For this we are greatly in his debt.

Richard B. Gaffin Jr.
Charles Krahe Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology
Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia

DENNIS E. JOHNSON

Him We Proclaim

PREACHING CHRIST FROM ALL
THE SCRIPTURES



P U B L I S H I N G

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In Memory of
Edmund Prosper Clowney
(1917–2005)
Pastor, Preacher, Professor, Leader, Mentor,
Who showed us what it means to

Preach Christ from All the Scriptures,
To Marvel at the Savior's Grace,
To Love His Church

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
BD	Bauer, Arndt, Danker, <i>Greek-English Lexicon</i>
dej	Dennis E. Johnson (author's translation)
ESV	English Standard Version
ET	English translation
HNTC	Harper's New Testament Commentaries
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
LXX	Septuagint
NAC	New American Commentary
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
SNTS	Society for New Testament Studies
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentary
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WCF	Westminster Confession of Faith
WLC	Westminster Larger Catechism
WSC	Westminster Shorter Catechism
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>

Preface

This book has been over thirty years in the making. In the summer of 1970, my wife, Jane, and I drove from California to Philadelphia for one purpose: I would take a year or two of courses in Bible, theology, and apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary before applying to grad school and becoming a college English professor—or so I thought. It is no understatement to say I did not know what I was getting us into. I knew that Westminster was Reformed in its theology and presuppositional in its apologetics, and I had an inkling of what these terms meant.

What I did not appreciate until I arrived—entering the Reformed community as I did from the broader evangelical “neighborhood”—was Westminster’s way of reading Scripture as a single Story with a single Hero. Without ignoring the obvious fact that the Bible contains many stories, spanning thousands of years, with many participants, my professors in biblical studies patiently pointed out that the individual stories were threads woven into the pattern of a single tapestry: the Big Story of the Creator-King whose inscrutable wisdom, justice, and love devised and enacted a unified, multifaceted plan to redeem, reconcile, reconquer, and recreate his rebel creatures, transforming them into his trusting children, his glad and grateful servants, his beautiful bride. And Edmund Clowney, Westminster’s president and professor of practical theology, challenged, coaxed, coached, and critiqued us as we made our first feeble, stumbling efforts to preach the wonder of this Story and the glories of its Hero, Jesus.

For me this holistic way of reading Scripture (which is not unique to Westminster or to its Reformed heritage, as we will see) was like finding a hidden treasure that had been waiting for an unsuspecting plowman to unearth it. I still enjoyed English literature, but I could

not bring myself to cut short my study of the Story for the sake of devoting my time and strength to other stories, poems, and essays, however beautiful and true they might be. Needless to say, my path led not to graduate school in English literature and a college classroom but to pulpits in New Jersey and California, where I tried to learn, as I am still learning, to preach “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27), which is to say, to preach “nothing . . . except Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2).

By the mid-1980s, I was teaching New Testament at Westminster’s “daughter” institution, Westminster Seminary California. Dr. Jay Adams, then director of advanced studies, asked me to teach an intensive Doctor of Ministry course on “apostolic hermeneutics for preaching” to accompany and complement a series of modular courses in which Dr. Clowney challenged, coaxed, and coached experienced pastors to preach Christ from all the Scriptures—Genesis through Revelation. Twice a year, Dr. Clowney would fly to California to take a group of shepherds on a week-long, whirlwind tour of Christ in the Pentateuch, or Christ in Psalms, or Christ in the Wisdom Literature, or Christ in the Prophets, or Christ in the Gospels, or Christ in the Epistles of Paul. These classes, usually taught in the morning hours, were heady trips; and one pastor, at least, was touched so profoundly by the glory of Christ radiating from the Bible’s every page that he proposed to his fellow leaders that their church be renamed, from a nondescript reference to its locale to “*Christ Community Church*.” Although these D.Min. students were mature men who had received their basic pastoral preparation in a variety of theological venues and had subsequently preached the Word for some time, some found the claim that the entire Bible, in all its diversity of eras, circumstances, authors, and genres, focuses on a single theme—on Christ, the divine agent of creation and the divine and human mediator of redemption—unfamiliar and somewhat suspect. They wondered whether this hermeneutic, built on the assumption that all redemptive history and the whole Bible were designed to drive hearts toward Jesus, might obscure important distinctions or open the door to unbridled subjectivism and wild allegorical imagination, untethered to the specifics of the biblical text. It was not that they heard such flights of fancy from Dr. Clowney; but where, they wondered, were the “guardrails” to keep evangelical

preaching “on the straight and narrow” and away from “drop offs” of medieval allegory or postmodern reader-response subjectivism?

That was where my afternoon course came in. As one charged to teach New Testament interpretation, my task was to help my fellow pastors see “the sub-structure of New Testament theology,” as C. H. Dodd aptly characterized the convictions that found expression in the apostles’ appeals to the Old Testament Scriptures as fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah.¹ Frankly, while admitting that this approach meant “swimming against the current” of the guild of academic biblical scholarship—both critical and evangelical, I tried to defend the revolutionary, somewhat countercultural concept of “reading the Bible like Peter and Paul.”² After all, Jesus was *their* instructor in biblical hermeneutics, and as evangelicals we confess that his Holy Spirit breathed out through these original witnesses his own divine, flawless testimony in the New Testament Scriptures. If loyalty to Jesus entails eager submission of our thoughts to the *theology* revealed in these apostolic writings, should we not also learn from them our *way of reading* Scripture? I have no way of gauging the influence of those courses on the preaching of all the pastors who passed through our D.Min. program, but the assignment to define and defend what *hermeneutically responsible*, Christ-centered preaching entails certainly did me good, drawing me further along a path that I had begun to follow a decade and a half earlier.

Over the last decade, two further surprising twists of providence have contributed to the writing of this book. First, in 1997 I was invited to redirect the focus of my study and instruction from the New Testament to homiletics. I gather that in some institutions such a shift of focus would be akin to leaping the Grand Canyon; but happily at the school in which I serve, the boundaries between biblical studies, theology, and the practice of ministry, although clear, are not so high or wide as to be impassable. Despite the diversity of our academic specialties, it is my privilege to serve on a team of pastors, preachers, and practical theologians, each of whom cares deeply about the communication of Christ’s gospel and the growth and health of his church. (Colleagues on the faculty of Westminster

1 C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-structure of New Testament Theology* (London: Nisbet, 1952).

2 The title of an unpublished essay distributed to Westminster Seminary California’s D.Min. students in those years, much of which has found its way into this book.

Seminary California have contributed to this book by their careful reading and critique, by their example as preachers of the Word, and through hallway and lunch table conversations too numerous to recount—thank you, brothers!)

Second, not long after my reassignment to practical theology, the congregation on whose session of elders I serve needed my services as interim pastor for a period of twenty months. To my ordinary seminary responsibilities, this assignment added the privilege of opening the Word almost weekly to the family of God with whom our lives have been interwoven for over two decades and precipitated a profound awareness of my need for prayer. If my memories of the weekly pains and joys of sermon preparation had faded since 1982, when I was called from the pulpit to the seminary lectern, the Lord had designed for me a remarkably effective “refresher course” on the realities of pastoral life in the trenches!

Although the thoughts offered below have been “brewing” slowly for over three decades, the prospect of publishing them is of more recent vintage. Preliminary discussions with P&R Publishing Company’s editorial director several years ago were encouraging, but other duties delayed my completion of the project. My hope had been to present this work to Dr. Clowney, whose example and instruction had been so instrumental in opening my eyes to Scripture’s multifaceted witness to Christ, for his loving and no doubt rigorous critique. God’s timing, however, was different and better than mine. While some of these chapters were beginning to take their present shape, in March 2005, the Christ whom Ed preached and served for a lifetime called him home to heaven. Although *Him We Proclaim* would no doubt have been a better book had it passed under Dr. Clowney’s editorial and theological scrutiny, it is offered to readers in his memory, with the prayer that it will encourage you to read the Bible with the apostles and, if you are called, to preach it as they did.

Acknowledgements

As I explain in the preface, this book has been brewing for decades. It would be futile to attempt to trace the influence of all who have contributed to it in some way and to give credit in all the places that credit is due, but I do wish to thank some whose influence and help must not go unrecognized.

I am thankful to pastors who participated in Westminster Seminary California's Doctor of Ministry program in preaching, whose pulpit experience and pastoral wisdom sharpened my thinking regarding the full-orbed nature of Christ-centered preaching as practiced by the apostles. I also thank recent classes of Master of Divinity students whose insightful questions have helped focus the book's argument and whose sharp eyes have caught many typos before the typescript reached the editors.

I thank my faculty colleagues at Westminster Seminary California, who have read portions of the typescript and made suggestions that have improved the book.

Thanks to Allan Fisher, former Editorial Director of P & R Publishing, who first expressed interest in an essay that would grow into *Him We Proclaim*; to P & R's President, Bryce Craig, and Marvin Padgett, P & R's present Editorial Director, who eventually welcomed the finished product with enthusiasm; and to Eric Anest, P & R's Associate Director for Editorial Services, who guided it through the editorial process with both dispatch and accuracy.

Special thanks to John J. Hughes, president of Bits & Bytes, Inc., who has brought to this project not only his editorial expertise and knowledge of biblical studies but also his love for the Christ-centered, redemptive-historical exposition of Scripture, as he and I together learned it from Edmund Clowney and others in the classrooms of Westminster Theological Seminary in the 1970s.

I also thank Stephen Fix, soon to graduate from Westminster Seminary California, for conscientiously checking the accuracy of biblical references and of citations from the English Standard Version.

Finally, I thank my bride of almost thirty-seven years, Jane: loving encourager, precise proofreader, incisive editor, and the loveliest “Grammy” I know.

1

Introduction Preaching the Bible Like Peter and Paul

Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit . . .” So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (Acts 2:37–38, 41)¹

And Paul went in [to the synagogue], as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.” And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. (Acts 17:2–4)

What preacher can read passages like these and not long to be able to preach the Bible like Peter and Paul? What an inestimable privilege to see God’s almighty Holy Spirit change people’s lives before your eyes through the message of the cross and resurrection of Jesus! We read the biblical accounts of sermons that gave spiritual birth to thousands and similar stories from the later history of the church, and we long for God to move in such power and mercy in our time and through us.

We are aware that the early record reports apparent defeat as well as glowing victories: “Now when they heard these things they

¹ Unless otherwise noted, Scripture citations are from the English Standard Version—ESV (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001). Citations marked “deJ” are the author’s translation.

were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him [Stephen]” (Acts 7:54). “Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, ‘We will hear you again about this.’ So Paul went out from their midst. But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them” (Acts 17:32–34).

We know that it is ours simply to plant and to water and that God alone can give growth and fruitfulness to the seed of his Word (1 Cor. 3:6; Col. 1:5–6; Acts 6:7). In our best moments, therefore, it is not merely the bountiful results of apostolic preaching that we seek but the apostles’ rich insights into Scripture’s multifaceted witness to the person and work of Christ. We long to preach “the *whole* Bible as *Christian* Scripture,” that is, to preach “*Christ* in *all* of Scripture.”² Perhaps we have heard such preaching done well and found our hearts stirred and surprised to behold the glory of the Savior in a text where we least expected to meet him, or we have heard such preaching attempted badly (even, perhaps, by ourselves) and come away feeling that the text itself was abused or ignored and its connection to Christ drawn in strained and implausible ways. You may even wonder whether it is legitimate to learn biblical hermeneutics and homiletics from the apostolic exemplars of the New Testament, because their inspiration by the Spirit of God gave them privileged access to revelatory resources not available to ordinary Christians and preachers.

Yet, the apostolic affirmation rings true: in Christ “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). Therefore, the apostolic resolve makes perfect sense: “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). Whatever our biblical text and theme, if we want to impart God’s life-giving wisdom in its exposition, we can do nothing other than proclaim Christ, “the power of God and the wisdom of God . . . our righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:24, 30).

But how? This book tries to answer that question, first by arguing in favor of reuniting insights and disciplines the apostles displayed in harmonious unity but that sadly have become disconnected since

2 Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Bible Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003). Emphases added.

then. Then it suggests perspectives and strategies to help ordinary Christians discover their Savior throughout Scripture and to equip ordinary preachers to proclaim this Savior convincingly and powerfully from the diverse panorama of Scripture's genres and eras.

Tragic Divorces

“What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate” (Mark 10:9). Jesus was speaking, of course, of the inviolable union of husband and wife in marriage as designed by God. Nevertheless, these words can be applied aptly to the major thrust of this book, which makes a case for imitating the interpretive and communicative methods employed by the apostles to proclaim Christ to the first-century Greco-Roman world as we minister in the twenty-first century. It advocates reuniting things wrongly separated between the apostles' day and ours to the impoverishment of biblical hermeneutics and pastoral homiletics. Reforging these divinely established bonds will refocus biblical interpretation on Christ, the center of gravity who holds the Bible together and the key who unlocks Scripture's meaning from Genesis to Revelation. Furthermore, the three reunions we will advocate will empower the proclamation of the gospel in a global postmodern culture that increasingly resembles the pluralism and relativism of the first-century Hellenistic environment into which the apostles first announced God's good news.³

3 Postmodernity and postmodernism are notoriously slippery concepts. Generally speaking, postmodernism perceives itself as a reaction against the Enlightenment's confidence in reason and it harbors deep suspicion toward any and all claims to be able to articulate absolute and universal truth or to provide a culture-transcending “metanarrative.” “In *The Condition of Postmodernity*, [David] Harvey observes that modernity rejected tradition and religious authority but held on to the hope that reason alone would lead us to truth. Postmoderns have given up on the illusion that reason alone will lead us to truth, but they have not recovered tradition and authority. Instead, they courageously celebrate and play amid our limitations and finitude, in a sort of cheerful nihilism” (Craig G. Bartholomew, “Postmodernity and Biblical Interpretation,” in Kevin J. Vanhoozer, gen. ed., *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005], 601). Bartholomew also cites J.-F. Lyotard's definition of postmodernity as “incredulity towards metanarratives” (Ibid., citing J.-F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984], xxiv). As in the religious and philosophical pluralism of the ancient Greco-Roman world, so also today increasing exposure to diverse cultures, each confident of its own metanarrative, fosters postmodern thinkers' skepticism toward claims of objectivity or

To testify faithfully and effectively about Jesus the Christ in the twenty-first century, as the apostles did in the first, we need to reconcile three divorced “couples” whose “marriages” were made in heaven: we need to reunite *Old Testament* and *New Testament*, apostolic *doctrine* and apostolic *hermeneutics*, biblical *interpretation* and biblical *proclamation*.

Reuniting Old and New Testaments

We need to rediscover and appreciate with deeper levels of insight the bond between God’s partial and preparatory words of promise spoken through Israel’s prophets and his final word spoken in Jesus, the Son who is the Word (Heb. 1:1–2; John 1:1, 14). The contemporary sense of estrangement of the Old Testament from the New Testament is an anomaly in the history of the church. From the apostolic period through the Church Fathers, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Reformation, the church maintained a hearty confidence that God’s role as the primary author of Scripture, speaking his message infallibly through distinctive human voices, secures the harmony and unity of the Bible’s message from Genesis to Revelation. Admittedly, some like Marcion denied that the Lord who addressed Moses on Sinai is the Father of our Lord Jesus. The church, however, condemned such aberrant repudiation of the Old Testament as contradictory to the teaching of Jesus himself. Others failed to recognize the diversity within the Bible’s unity, especially the fact that the Messiah, in bringing Old Testament promises and institutions to fulfillment, also has transformed God’s covenantal modes of relating to his people. Nevertheless, despite such anomalies in relating the Old Testament to the New Testament, the heartbeat of the church as a whole has coincided with Augustine’s pithy maxim: “The old is in the new revealed, the new is in the old concealed.”⁴

The eighteenth century “Enlightenment” (as its proponents viewed it) and its resulting historical critical hermeneutic began to

universally valid perceptions of reality (see Robert L. Wilken, *Remembering the Christian Past* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], especially ch. 2, “Religious Pluralism and Early Christian Thought”).

⁴ Cf. Christopher Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998); John J. O’Keefe and R. R. Reno, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

drive a wedge between the Old Testament and the New—a division that continues to infect much biblical scholarship today. Enlightenment scholarship's ostensible concerns were to liberate biblical exegesis from dogmatic tradition and to impose rational controls on interpreters' imaginative creativity, of which patristic and medieval allegorism offered many extreme examples. Underlying the Enlightenment's critique of its predecessors' "dogmatic" and "unscientific" interpretation, however, lay a more insidious denial of the divine authorship that earlier Christian interpreters had assumed as grounds for expecting to discover a single, God-given purpose and message in biblical documents written and received over a time span of well over a millennium.⁵

Subsequently, dispensational theologians, for different reasons and offering different arguments, adopted a hermeneutic that drove another wedge between Old Testament and New. Reacting to historical criticism's dismissal of the church's pre-critical reading of its Scriptures as subjective and imprecise, dispensationalism believed that it could establish the objectivity of its reading of Scripture by treating symbolism with suspicion and preoccupying itself with establishing the text's "literal" sense. Thus over the last three centuries, the theological substructure of apostolic hermeneutics and homiletics has been assaulted both by the "hostile fire" of Enlightenment criticism and by the "friendly fire" of Bible-believing students who sought to develop an objective hermeneutic sufficient to withstand the acidic rigors of Enlightenment doubt.⁶

Even more recently, the atrocities inflicted on the Jewish people under Nazism, before and during World War II, and the West's reaction in a salutary repudiation of anti-Semitism, together with new emphases on toleration amid religious pluralism have driven a third wedge between the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. This wedge is visible in a growing discomfort with the New Testament authors' many assertions and implications that the church, now composed of believing Jews and Gentiles, is the legitimate heir to the benefits (now magnified to eschatological dimensions) once promised to ancient Israel. Although the original apostles, Paul,

5 See chapter 4 below.

6 These assaults and their legacy in contemporary hermeneutic and homiletic discussion, especially among evangelicals and confessional Protestants, will be analyzed more fully in chapter 4.

were themselves Jewish (as was Jesus, from whom they learned to interpret the Old Testament), the “supercessionism”⁷ articulated in their New Testament writings (for example, Matt. 21:43; Gal. 3:27–29; Phil. 3:2–3; Rev. 3:9) offends many today as insensitive, arrogant, and disrespectful of the religious tradition that gave birth to the church. The problem is further compounded by the church’s abuse of the Jewish people in the centuries between the apostles and Adolf Hitler,⁸ a shameful record that seems to prove that the New Testament’s theological “supercessionism” naturally breeds virulent and violent anti-Semitic behavior. The only remedy would seem to be for the church to avoid co-opting what it has traditionally called “the Old Testament,” as though it were the church’s book, and instead to allow the Hebrew Scriptures to remain thoroughly Jewish.

Anti-Semitic prejudice and religious pride should have no credibility for Christians who *listen carefully* to the apostles’ proclamation of Jesus as the fulfillment of God’s promises to Israel and the bestower of unmerited grace to Jew and Gentile alike. The same apostle who announces that Gentiles are now Abraham’s descendents through faith in Israel’s Messiah also puts Gentiles in their place in his great apostolic discourse on God’s mysterious ways with Israel and the nations (Romans 9–11):

But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. (Rom. 11:17–18)

The same apostle laments with great pathos over the unbelief of his many kinfolk in Israel (9:1–3; 10:1) and expresses confidence that the sovereign mercy that could engraft pagan Gentiles can likewise reattach “natural branches” to the olive tree through which divine blessing flows (11:22–24). If, in fact, the insistence of Jesus and his apostles is true—that Israel’s ancient Scriptures are eschatologically directed to draw her hope forward to the arrival of her Divine

⁷ “Supercessionism” refers to the New Testament’s assertions and implications that the church is the legitimate heir to the benefits once promised ancient Israel.

⁸ For one shameful example, cf. Martin Luther, “On the Jews and Their Lies” (1543), trans. by Martin H. Bertram, *Luther’s Works*, vol. 47, The Christian in Society IV (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 268–93.

Rescuer as a Suffering Servant—to suppress such insight for fear of seeming impolite or proud would be selfish cruelty toward the Jewish people, not compassionate respect! Despite these formidable trends working against an appreciation of the unity of Old Testament and New, the church’s historic conviction—that the two testaments (two covenants,⁹ described in the Hebrew Scriptures, e.g., Jer. 31:31–34) are two chapters in one grand, true story in which the triune God is the protagonist—still has articulate defenders. In fact, some recent trends in biblical studies even encourage greater attention to the unity of Scripture as the divine-human record of a single, consistent, progressive plan for the redemption and re-creation of the cosmos.

At the risk of omitting deserving names and titles, I mention here a sampling of twentieth and twenty-first century biblical scholars whose work deepens our understanding of the Christ-focused marriage of Old Testament promise and New Testament fulfillment: Geerhardus Vos,¹⁰ Herman N. Ridderbos,¹¹ R. T. France,¹² Meredith G. Kline,¹³ O. Palmer

9 English versions have traditionally been influenced by Jerome’s translation of the Greek *diathēkē* into the Latin *testamentum*, and Western theology has likewise understood the New Testament’s references to the new *diathēkē* as drawing the analogy to a last will and testament, with its stipulations enacted subsequent to the testator’s death. More recently increased understanding of covenant arrangements between living parties suggests that in all (or almost all) uses of *diathēkē* in the New Testament, its meaning is “covenant,” consistent with the use of *diathēkē* in the LXX to translate the Hebrew *berit*, e.g., John J. Hughes, “Hebrews ix 15ff. and Galatians iii 15ff. A Study in Covenant Practice and Procedure,” *Novum Testamentum* 21 (1979): 27-96.

10 Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948); *The Self-Disclosure of Jesus: The Modern Debate about the Messianic Consciousness* (Phillipsburg: P & R, 1953); *The Teaching of Jesus concerning the Kingdom of God and the Church* (New York: American Tract Society, 1903); *The Pauline Eschatology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1930); *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos* (R. B. Gaffin, Jr., ed. Phillipsburg: P & R, 1980); *The Eschatology of the Old Testament* (J. T. Dennison, Jr. ed. Phillipsburg: P & R, 2001).

11 Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1962); *Paul: An Outline of his Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).

12 R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1971); *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989).

13 Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (South Hamilton, Massachusetts: self published, 1991); *Images of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980); *Glory in our Midst: A Biblical-Theological Reading of Zechariah’s Night Visions* (Overland Park, Kansas: Two Age Press, 2001).

Robertson,¹⁴ Raymond B. Dillard,¹⁵ Tremper Longman III,¹⁶ Iain M. Duguid,¹⁷ Willem VanGemeren,¹⁸ S. Lewis Johnson,¹⁹ Moisés Silva,²⁰ Vern S. Poythress,²¹ Gregory K. Beale,²² Christopher J. H. Wright,²³ Hans K. LaRondelle,²⁴ and Graeme Goldsworthy.²⁵

14 O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg: P & R, 1980); *The Christ of the Prophets* (Phillipsburg: P & R, 2004).

15 Raymond B. Dillard, *Faith in the Face of Apostasy: The Gospel according to Elijah and Elisha* (Phillipsburg: P & R, 1999); with Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994).

16 Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (with Raymond B. Dillard); *Immanuel in Our Place: Seeing Christ in Israel's Worship* (Phillipsburg: P & R, 2001); with Daniel G. Reid, *God is a Warrior* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); *How to Read Genesis* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005); *How to Read the Psalms* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988); *How to Read Proverbs* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002).

17 Iain M. Duguid, *Living in the Gap between Promise and Reality: The Gospel according to Abraham* (Phillipsburg: P & R, 1999); *Living in the Grip of Relentless Grace: The Gospel according to Isaac and Jacob* (Phillipsburg: P & R, 2002).

18 Willem VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation from Creation to New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988).

19 S. Lewis Johnson, *The Old Testament in the New: An Argument for Biblical Inspiration* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980).

20 Moisés Silva, *Has the Church Misread the Bible? The History of Interpretation in the Light of Current Issues* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987); with Walter Kaiser, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994).

21 Vern S. Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Brentwood, Tennessee: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1991); *God-Centered Biblical Interpretation* (Phillipsburg: P & R, 1999). See also Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton *Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible* (Wheaton: Victor, 1994).

22 G. K. Beale, ed. *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994); *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004). See also other volumes in the InterVarsity Press series, *New Studies in Biblical Theology*, as well as the stimulating older *Studies in Biblical Theology* series published in the U.S. by Alec R. Allenson and authored by scholars representing a broader theological spectrum. (e.g., Joachim Jeremias, Oscar Cullmann, Werner G. Kümmel, Eduard Schweizer).

23 Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992).

24 Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1983).

25 Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1991); *The Goldsworthy Trilogy—Gospel and Kingdom, Gospel in Revelation, Gospel and Wisdom* (Exeter: Paternoster, 2000);

In addition to the works of these scholars, who recognize Scripture's divine authorship and therefore expect its message to exhibit theological coherence, fruitful insights into the connections between Old Testament and New Testament texts are emerging in critical circles as a result of interest in the biblical authors' literary artistry in drawing intertextual allusions²⁶ to earlier Scriptures.²⁷ Although many participants in these discussions do not affirm the divine inspiration of Scripture, they often make insightful observations about the allusive employment of Old Testament wording or imagery by New Testament authors. Their studies therefore offer stimulating starting points for reflection on the hermeneutic substructure and rationale for the New Testament's use of the Old Testament.

One major theme, to which this book will return repeatedly, therefore, is the unity of the Old Testament and the New in the person and redemptive work of Jesus Christ and consequently, also, in the community composed of believing Jews and Gentiles that his Spirit is now assembling. This unity, I am persuaded, unlocks the whole of the Scriptures to the twenty-first century preacher and his hearers.

Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

26 An "intertextual allusion" is a deliberate allusion (not a direct quotation) by the author of one text to a passage in another text that has significance for interpreting the author's statement. For example, the reference in John 3:16 to "only Son" is a clear allusion to Isaac in Genesis 22:2, 12, and 16 (cf. Heb. 11:17) who, like Jesus, was offered to God as a sacrifice. (Likewise, "did not spare his own Son" in Romans 8:32 alludes to Genesis 22:16.) The interpretative importance of this is manifold. (1) Isaac is a type of Christ. (2) Like Christ, Isaac is a son of promise. (3) Like Christ, Isaac's birth is supernatural. (4) Like Christ, Isaac is the only and beloved son. (5) Both Isaac and Jesus were "suffering sons." Isaac suffered as a type of the Redeemer; Jesus was the Suffering Son who redeems. (6) Just as Abraham showed his love for and fear of God by his willingness to offer his beloved, only son, so God the Father shows his love for a fallen world by offering his beloved, only Son as an offering for sin. (7) Just as Abraham reasoned that God would raise Isaac from the dead (Heb. 11:19), so God raised his Son, Jesus, from the dead.

27 Note, however, Kevin J. VanHoozer's critique that "intertextuality" in a postmodern frame of reference displaces authorial intention and definite textual meaning with subjective and politically controlled reader-centered interpretation. *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 121–22, 132–33.

Reuniting Apostolic Doctrine and Apostolic Hermeneutics

A second “couple” that has been sadly estranged consists in the *theological truths* articulated by the apostles, on the one hand, and the *interpretive methods* by which they grounded those truths in Scripture, on the other. This issue is posed provocatively in the question that New Testament scholar G. K. Beale selected as the title for his collection of essays debating the normativeness of the New Testament’s interpretation of the Old Testament: *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts*.²⁸ The authors of some essays in this collection would answer this question affirmatively: the apostles did indeed teach right doctrine, but they supported their doctrine by appeal to inappropriate Old Testament texts interpreted by illegitimate (or no longer plausible) methods.²⁹ Other contributors argue that the flaws in the apostles’ hermeneutic also taint their theological conclusions. Beale himself, however, responds to his own question with a careful affirmation that the apostles not only taught true doctrine but also developed and supported their message from appropriate Old Testament passages that they interpreted through a credible hermeneutic that is worthy of our emulation today.³⁰

As we shall see in chapters 4 and 5, Beale’s conclusions are not universally endorsed even by evangelical biblical scholars who affirm the theological authority of the Scriptures. As additional resources and research have exposed similarities between the New Testament’s interpretation of Old Testament texts and hermeneutic methods employed widely in Second Temple Judaism³¹ (both mainstream rabbinism and fringe sects such as the Qumran community), some scholars have argued that the apostolic hermeneutic was rhetorically

28 Beale, *Right Doctrine*, cited in note 22 above.

29 E.g., Richard N. Longenecker, “‘Who Is the Prophet Talking About?’ Some Reflections on the New Testament’s Use of the Old” (Beale, *Right Doctrine*, 385): “It is my contention that . . . Christians today are committed to the apostolic faith and doctrine of the New Testament, but not necessarily to the apostolic exegetical practices as detailed for us in the New Testament.”

30 Beale, “Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? An Examination of the Presuppositions of Jesus’ and the Apostles’ Exegetical Method” (*Right Doctrine*, 387–404).

31 Second Temple Judaism (STJ) refers to the period between the construction of the second Jewish temple in Jerusalem in 515 B.C. and its destruction by the Romans in 70 A.D. STJ was a time of theological development (e.g., angelology), literary production (e.g., Dead Sea Scrolls), and the growth of various movements and sects (e.g., Pharisees) in Judaism.

and persuasively effective in its ancient time and place but is not to be emulated in our intellectual milieu.³² Interpretive devices that were credible to first-century audiences no longer are seen as cogent or persuasive today, at least in the Academy and its biblical studies guilds. To convey the gospel in our time as effectively as the apostles did in theirs requires not that we reproduce their exegetical strategies but that our reading of the Old Testament be controlled by pre-suppositions and methods widely recognized across the spectrum of contemporary Old and New Testament studies.

Others who embrace apostolic doctrine are reluctant to emulate apostolic hermeneutics for another reason. They point to the history of unbridled embellishment exemplified in the allegorical excesses of the patristic School of Alexandria and the medieval church, and they applaud the Protestant Reformation's efforts to bring sanity and restraint to biblical interpretation through its insistence that each passage has a "single sense" that is discovered through attention to linguistic features.³³ In view of the church's embarrassing track record of outlandishly and imaginatively twisting Scripture, the fact that Jesus, the Divine Son, and the apostles, speaking and writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, sometimes made surprising typological connections between Old Testament events and the Messiah³⁴ cannot justify attempts of later, non-inspired preachers to make similar links.

32 See, e.g., Richard N. Longenecker's negative answer to the question, "Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the New Testament?" *Tyndale Bulletin* 21 (1970): 3–38; and an affirmative answer by Scott A. Swanson, "Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the New Testament? Why Are We Still Asking?" *Trinity Journal* 17 (1996): 67–76. Accessed online: <http://www.bible-researcher.com/swanson.html>. See examples of Longenecker's and other evangelical NT scholars' misgivings about the contemporary credibility of exegesis that emulates the apostles' methodology.

33 Westminster Confession of Faith (1646) 1:9: "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly." The Second Helvetic Confession (1566), ch. 2) identifies the factors to be considered in deriving Scripture's meaning from Scripture itself as: its language, the circumstances in which it was set down, comparison with like and unlike passages, and conformity with Scripture's over-arching purposes, namely God's glory and human salvation. See chapter 4.

34 For example, the bronze serpent raised by Moses in the desert as a prefiguration of the crucified Son of Man (John 3:14), or the water-supplying rock in the wilderness as "Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4).

Both of these objections to the argument that allegiance to apostolic doctrine should entail humble imitation of apostolic hermeneutics are weighty and worthy of serious answers.³⁵ For the present, be “forewarned” that I shall try to make a persuasive case that preachers who believe in the gospel revealed through the apostles should proclaim that gospel in the light of Christ’s fulfillment of the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings (Luke 24:44–47).

Reuniting Biblical Interpretation and Biblical Proclamation

A third breach in what was once an intimate alliance concerns the relationship between the disciplines of *biblical scholarship* on the one hand and the churchly task of *gospel preaching* on the other. The roots of this estrangement are diverse, complex, and difficult to identify exhaustively.

The Reformation challenged the hegemony of church tradition over biblical interpretation and formulated a concept of vocation that legitimized and dignified occupations outside of ecclesiastical structures, including scholarship and education. Thus the long-standing legacy of ecclesiastically controlled biblical scholarship, which included patristic catechetical schools, medieval cathedral schools, the preservation of learning in monasteries, and the early European universities, could in principle receive competition from educational institutions that initially were no less committed to Christian convictions but were not directly under church authority nor aimed exclusively at ministerial preparation.

The rise of the Enlightenment, with its suspicion and contempt for the distorting influences of church dogma, coincided with the rise of the modern research university. As the objective pursuit of truth through experimentation unbiased by presupposition came to be viewed as the apex of intellectual certainty, the usefulness of biblical research to the church came to be treated, at least tacitly, as incidental, and sometimes as a distraction from the aims of “pure” scholarship. Meanwhile, the explosion of knowledge seemed to demand that scholars direct their energies into increasingly narrow specializations.

Even within the narrower parameters of the university divinity school and the theological seminary, institutions originally founded

35 See chapter 6.