



AUTHOR'S PREFACE

It has been a joy to write this book. For as far back as I can remember I have loved the Bible, and for only a slightly shorter period I have tried to get others to do the same. When I was privileged to enter full-time pastoral ministry in 1947, it soon became clear to me that, as far as I was concerned, teaching the Word of God and encouraging others into an informed engagement with the Word of God occupied the centre ground. To be invited then, when 'retirement' has run a good deal of its course, to take up this task in written form has been a privilege, delight and hard work all rolled into one.

This book first appeared in 2001 under the title *The Story of the Old Testament*. The project (like so much else) started with John Stott who, in the 1950s, wrote the first *Men with a Message*, dealing with a selection of New Testament authors. This book was a superb contribution to biblical understanding, and after many years of yeoman service, was given a second lease of life by my son Stephen in 1993. It is humbling and deeply gratifying that my parallel book will now, God willing, stand alongside his, however far short my actual accomplishment falls.





I am intensely grateful to Christian Focus Publications for their willingness to give my book a new lease of life, and for the much more accurate and attractive title they have chosen. I am favoured indeed to have fallen into such expert and helpful hands. Above all, however, I feel that whatever merits this book may possess in clarity arise from the eagle eyes and comprehensive knowledge of John Stott, who has read the book in three or four versions and who has never flagged in patience or allowed me to lose the vision towards which the book aspires. Happily, our friendship of so many years has also not only survived but thrived on this experience of working together.

May our gracious God who gave us the Bible now be pleased to make his word live for many, many readers!

Alec Motyer
Poynton, 2009





A NOTE TO THE READER

One of the features the reader will immediately notice is that this book has an immense number of biblical references. I could see no other way of solving the problem that the Old Testament contains far too much material of consequence to be fitted into a book of moderate length. Others tell me that readers do not look up references, and if space allowed, I would happily write them all out. The same applies to the wonderful stories which abound in the Old Testament. Readers have pointed out that I may be assuming too much knowledge of the Bible by making unexplained allusions. The alternative would be to retell the stories, but my narrative skill would not come up to that of the inspired writers, nor would it be good use of such limited space; hence, again, references to try to fill the gap. Read this book slowly and take time to look up the references provided.

Where the Hebrew Bible has a different scheme of verification from the English Bible, I have not felt it right to take up space to note the differences.

Some of the material presented here has had a previous life. Chapter 3 has been round and about as a lecture and one





form of it is now part of a chapter in the symposium, *Preaching the Living Word* (Christian Focus, 1999). Chapters 3, 5, 6, 8 and 10, though written for this book, appeared in a much-abbreviated form in *Covenanter Witness*, the magazine of the Reformed Presbyterian Churches of Scotland and Ireland. A slightly shorter form of chapter 17 can be found in my book *A Scenic Route through the Old Testament*, published by the InterVarsity Press, and used here by kind permission.

I would hope that readers will find that the book can be used with all Bible translations, but I have tended to provide my own translations of any passages quoted at length. Where I have not done so, I generally quote from the *New King James* version.

Alec Motyer

