

FOREWORD BY PHILIP YANCEY

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GOD

A JOURNEY WITH JESUS
FROM EAST TO WEST

MATHEW P. JOHN

THE
UNKNOWN
GOD

A JOURNEY WITH JESUS
FROM EAST TO WEST

MATHEW P. JOHN

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transforming lives together

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Chapter 1

FOLLOWING THE STAR

I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not
ask for Me;

I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not
seek Me.

I said, “Here am I, here am I,”

To a nation which did not call on My name.

—*Isaiah 65:1*

Your eyes will see this and you will say, “The LORD
be magnified beyond the border of Israel!”

—*Malachi 1:5*

In the southern tip of India, there is a tiny state called Kerala. Sandwiched between an ocean and a mountain, it features one of the most scenic landscapes in the tropical region. The exquisite terrain of Kerala once inspired *National Geographic* to run an exclusive feature that described this land as “the Jewel of India’s Malabar coast.”¹

Kerala is believed to be the point of entry for Christianity in India. According to tradition, Thomas, the disciple of Jesus Christ, arrived in Kerala in 53 CE and planted the seeds of Christianity in the country. A couple of centuries later, a group of Syrian traders discovered this remote Christian community and brought it under the folds of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Antioch.

I was born into one of these “Orthodox” families, which claimed its Christian heritage all the way back to the first century. But I did not want anything to do with the God of Christianity. I grew up thinking that He was a racist.

Can God be a racist?

I was taught in Sunday school that the Jews are the “chosen people” of God. “Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession,” says God to the Jews.² This didn’t make sense to me. What kind of a God would choose one nation over others and call them “My people”? What kind of a father would pick a favorite among his children?

God’s preoccupation with the Jewish nation made me feel invisible and insignificant. How, I wondered, could God be so blatantly biased toward one particular ethnic group? If Jews are God’s people, then who are Indians (or Asians, Africans, or Caucasians, for that matter) to God? Why didn’t He choose any of us?

Don’t get me wrong. India boasts one of the earliest settlements of the Jewish diaspora, and I have had the privilege to have many Jewish friends and neighbors.³ They are a wonderful people, of course. But as a child growing up in India, I did not understand why their story filled every page of the Bible, as if nothing happened

elsewhere in the world. Why are the Jews considered “special” in the eyes of God?

It was in the midst of this internal wrestling, when I was about fourteen, that something eye-opening happened at my school.

I studied at a rural school in India, which enrolled over a thousand students from middle-class families. Funded by the local government, our student body did not have the luxury of organizing any type of recreational events. So we often turned to roadshow runners and street performers to provide us with our periodic dose of entertainment.

One day, a traveling magician presented an impromptu show at our morning assembly. He started with token tricks, such as pulling out candies and balloons from an empty hat, and soon proceeded to a more formal routine.

In the middle of the act, the magician called for a volunteer from the audience. All of us looked at each other. No one dared to go. We had seen magicians tossing their assistants across the stage, cutting them in half, and even making them disappear. What if he tried one of those menacing tricks on us?

The magician called out again, this time warning that if no one volunteered, he was going to randomly pick an assistant from the audience.

We crouched lower behind the seats as his eyes scanned the audience, avoiding eye contact as much as we could. After a few seconds of nerve-racking silence, we heard his voice:

“You, the one in the blue shirt, come up.”

I looked up with a sigh of relief. Thank God, I was wearing a white shirt.

I turned around, looking in the direction the magician was motioning. There he was, the boy in the blue shirt—the chosen one. He was a chubby little kid whom all the bullies loved to pick on. He usually sat in the back of the class, ate his lunch alone, and spent most of his recess hours in the bathroom. The audience began snickering the moment they saw who it was.

As the boy in the blue shirt climbed onto the stage, the magician began pouring some milk into a glass, filling it up to the brim. He set it on a table in the center of the stage and turned toward his new assistant. “You are going to drink this milk through the air.”

The magician handed an empty straw to the boy, who held it between his quivering lips. “Drink up, my friend,” commanded the magician, waving his wand over the glass of milk with an enchanting gesture.

The boy stood there, befuddled, for a long second. The glass was at least twenty-five feet away from him and he had only a six-inch straw. His predicament was becoming highly entertaining to all of us.

All he could do was suck in air through the straw, and that is what he did. Suddenly the magic began to be unveiled. To our surprise, the milk in the glass started disappearing as he sucked on the straw. The audience gasped in disbelief. Was he actually siphoning the milk through thin air?

The milk finally reached the bottom of the glass. Even though he hardly knew what had just happened, the chosen one stood there triumphantly with a victorious smile on his face.

This might have been the end of the story. But the real magic happened only after the magician left the school premises. That

dorky, friendless kid in the blue shirt suddenly became a superstar in the school. How in the world could he have drunk milk from that glass unless he had acquired some mysterious power from the magician?

The school journal ran a cover story on his extraordinary adventure. Girls began chasing their new heartthrob in the hallways. An entourage now protected the celebrity from his unruly fans. Even the teachers began to regale each other with the legend of the boy in the blue shirt.

A hero was born.

As far as the magician was concerned, the boy in the blue shirt was an arbitrary choice. He was not chosen because he was special. But he became special because he was chosen.



The history of Israel begins like most movie trailers: “One man, on a journey, to a land unknown ...”

God picks a man. His name is Abraham. God establishes a covenant with him: “And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing.”⁴ Today, Abraham is considered a father figure to three major religions in the world: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—the members of which surpass half the world’s population.

Why did God choose Abraham over anyone else? I have no idea. Why did the magician choose the boy in the blue shirt? I don’t know that either. One thing I do know, however, is that the act of choosing had nothing much to do with the merits of the chosen one.

The Hebrew Scriptures do not always paint a particularly flattering picture of Abraham. There is an incident, for example, where Abraham and his nomadic tribe arrive in the land of Egypt. He fears that his beautiful wife, Sarah, will attract unnecessary attention from the lustful eyes of Pharaoh. If the king comes to know that she is married to him, his life will be in danger. So Abraham forces Sarah to pretend that she is his sister.⁵

Later, as the story unfolds, Pharaoh finds out that he is about to commit adultery by marrying Sarah. The conscience-stricken king cries out in distress: “What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife ... so that I took her for my wife?”⁶ Who is morally superior in this story—the chosen one who tried to trade his wife or the pagan king who refused to take the bait?

It is the mystery of God’s election. He does not pick anyone based on his or her qualifications. God’s choosing is always an act of grace. God did not pick Abraham because he was special. But, like the boy in the blue shirt, Abraham became special because he was chosen.

We often have a problem with the idea of choosing because our rational mind is trained to think in a dualistic paradigm. We tend to look at the selection of something in conjunction with a “rejection” of everything else. But that is not necessarily true in this case. The arbitrary selection of one assistant does not imply the rejection of the rest of the audience. Both the volunteer and the audience are equally important to the magician. As a matter of fact, the non-chosen ones are the true beneficiaries of the act being performed by the chosen one.

In a sense, Abraham is the boy in the blue shirt. He was called to demonstrate God's "magical" power to the rest of the world. God's covenant with him, if you read it closely, came with a footnote: "In you *all the families of the earth* will be blessed."⁷ In other words, *the Jews were chosen for the sake of the Gentiles* as well and were meant to be a channel of God's blessings to everyone in the world.

The Jews are born into the center stage of God's magic show as it unfolds in time and space. A Jew is, by default, God's lovely assistant, and is equipped to function as a channel of His grace to "all the families of the earth."

The status of the chosen one has to be special, however. Whatever happens to the assistant invariably affects the course of the magic act. So the magician has to make sure that the assistant is rendered whole and invincible throughout the act. To do so, he establishes a "covenant" with him—a binding promise between the magician and the chosen one that ensures the best possible performance of the magic act.

Here is the catch. If we think that being "chosen" is a privileged status that comes with a platinum credit card and special lounge access, we couldn't be further from the truth. In our morally compromised world, chosen ones tend to have privileged status, and they get away with all the mistakes they make. But the Jews are not called into a privilege; rather, they are assigned a responsibility. The responsibility comes with a certain set of privileges, of course, but only because they are necessary to accomplish the given mission.

The magician has to pay a heavy price even for the most inadvertent mistakes made on the stage. Therefore, the assistant has to be maintained flawless and exemplary. That is the burden of

his calling. The audience, on the other hand, need not be perfect, and their imperfections remain unobserved.

The chosen one has to be perfected on a continual basis. This is perhaps why the Jews have become the most persecuted people in the world and Israel the most misunderstood nation in human history.

Now I say under my breath: “Thank You, God, for *not* choosing Indians.”

Let the boy in the blue shirt take the limelight. I would much rather watch him from the comfort of my balcony seat. I don’t complain because I know God is equally interested in me, and His magic act is being performed for my sake as much as it is for the sake of everyone else in the world.



I grew up in a small town in India called Piravom. The word Piravom comes from the root word *piravi*, which literally means *birth* or *nativity*. According to legend, Piravom is the hometown of one of the magi, or Wise Men, who visited Jesus at His birth. It has a majestic cathedral dedicated to the magi, aptly named “The Church of the Holy Kings.”⁸ Even today, Piravom maintains a thriving Christian community that traces its history all the way back to the time of the magi.

At the time of Jesus’ birth, India was one of the few cultures that had mastered the art of interpreting the cosmic connection between the stars and human destiny. It is believed that the Persian magi initially studied under Hindu sages, whom they described as the “magi of India.”⁹ The *Encyclopedia Britannica* postulates that at least one of

the magi who visited Christ was from India, and this theory is widely accepted in the Christian tradition.¹⁰

Whatever the case may be, one fact remains indisputable: the Wise Men of the East, the earliest religious figures to worship Jesus, did not belong to the so-called “Judeo-Christian tradition.” They were outsiders. They came from far outside the realm of the covenant God had established with Israel, His chosen nation.

How was this possible? How did the knowledge of the most pivotal moment in human history, God’s descent into the earthly realm, reach the Eastern world before it did the Promised Land? How did these Gentile diviners figure out the birth of the Messiah, which the Jewish scribes and priests have still not recognized?

It is an irony that the “exclusive” covenant God established with Israel was, in fact, “inclusive” at its very heart. Although it was addressed to Abraham, as we have already seen, the covenant was meant for “all the families of the earth.” In other words, the selection of Israel does not imply God’s exclusivity to a particular nation; it rather demonstrates a sweeping inclusivity of the whole wide world.

God’s first covenant came to Noah, elegantly wrapped in a rainbow. This was an “everlasting covenant between God and *every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.*”¹¹

But the universal language of the covenant changed its tone and vocabulary by the time it reached Abraham. The Abrahamic covenant was addressed to a specific group of people at a specific time in history. Why, just a few short generations after the covenant with Noah, was God suddenly disinterested in the rest of the world? Why did He decide to work exclusively with a particular racial group?

We find the answer to this question in the book of Genesis. In an episode entitled “Babel,” we see a cultural calamity of seismic proportion happening in the world. Not so long after Noah’s descendants repopulate the earth following the great flood, the people decide to build a tower to protect themselves from future disasters. It triggers a de-globalization process of sorts, resulting in cultural chaos and emergence of unique languages.

God could not have communicated to this cacophonous culture by picking up a megaphone and yelling at the crowd. He had to choose a specific group and entrust them with His message, hoping they would communicate it to the rest of the world. For reasons best known to Him, this is the way God prefers to operate in the world even today.

In any case, God chose Abraham, the boy in the blue shirt, as the bearer of His message. And He sent him out as His ambassador to the world. The tone of the revelation now changed from universal to particular, but the intended recipient of the covenant remained the same—“all families of the earth.”

Abraham’s descendants soon deceived themselves, however, into thinking that they were God’s personal favorites. They overlooked the fact that being chosen had brought them not into a privileged status but into a crucial responsibility. The assistant ignored the audience and began to indulge in his newfound stardom.

The prophets kept reminding Israel that their mission was to be “a light for the Gentiles” so that they could bring God’s salvation “to the ends of the earth.”¹² The sacred temple in Jerusalem, the epicenter of God’s presence on earth, was not a Jewish temple, they declared; it was rather a “house of prayer for *all nations*.”¹³

Jews are not the only “people of God” in the world; God addresses even the Egyptians, the archenemy of the Israelites, as “My people.”¹⁴ The God who delivered Israel from the oppression of Egypt also delivers Egypt from its “oppressors.” The God who promised the Messiah for Israel also promises “a Savior and a Champion” for Egypt. He who brought Israel out of Egypt also brings “Arameans from Kir” and “Philistines from Caphtor.”¹⁵

The Israelites, however, didn’t want to hear about the inclusive nature of God’s message. Egyptians, Arameans, and Philistines were all hard-nosed enemies of Israel, sworn to wipe out the chosen people from planet earth. Egyptians enslaved Israel for nearly four centuries, and Arameans fought the kings of Israel sporadically. Remember the iconic evil giant, Goliath? He was a Philistine. How could the God of Israel act as an agent of salvation for these savage nations?

As one theologian puts it, Israel “largely forgot the fact that they were meant to be a missionary nation and their calling was meant to be translated into dynamic outreach.”¹⁶ So God scattered them among the nations. The Jews became a nomadic people wandering all over the world, moving from one tent to the next. God remained faithful, however, dispensing His grace and glory through them wherever they went.

When the assistant (Israel) walked off the stage and wandered among the audience, the Magician walked with him. As a result, everyone got to see the magic, up close and personal. In a strange and mysterious way, the Magician used even the apparent flaw in His assistant’s character as an opportunity to demonstrate His dedication and commitment to the audience. The flickering flames of the “light of salvation” suddenly illuminated the whole auditorium.

The Bible is the story of God's magic act in the world, but it is written from the perspective of Israel. It is a view of the stage given to us through the eyes of His assistant. It is the best narrative we can have and the only one we need.

But that does not mean we have the whole picture. There are numerous eyes staring at the stage, and they all have their own stories of the magic to tell. In the end, the magic transcends all narratives. God goes beyond all stories.



What if God were to ask a televangelist to go and preach repentance to the jihadists wreaking havoc in the Middle East? I wonder if he would go.

And yet God once asked something very similar of a prophet named Jonah. In fact, the poor preacher was forced against his will to go and preach to the Assyrian city of Nineveh.

“Should I not have compassion on Nineveh?” God asks Jonah.¹⁷ Jonah does not respond, but the answer in his mind would have been a resounding “*No.*”

First, the Assyrians didn't worship the God of Israel. So why, Jonah might have wondered, should He be interested in their miserable lives? Second, they were a notoriously wicked nation that, by the standards of earthly justice, deserved neither mercy nor compassion. Third, they were the same people who would march into the Promised Land just a few decades later and obliterate the kingdom of Israel from the face of the earth.¹⁸ Why would God want to save them?

And yet Jonah does, eventually, do what the Lord asked him to do. He goes to Nineveh and delivers the message, ultimately leading the Assyrians to repent from their evil ways. This is only one of the many instances in the Hebrew scriptures where God intervenes on behalf of people who are outside the chosen nation of Israel.

In the Chronicles of the kings of Israel, we meet the Egyptian king Neco leading a campaign against the Chaldeans. Josiah, the king of Judah, comes against him at Megiddo. But Neco does not want to wage war against Judah. “What have we to do with each other, O King of Judah?” asks Neco. “I am not coming against you today but against the house with which I am at war, and God has ordered me to hurry. Stop for your own sake from interfering with God who is with me, so that He will not destroy you.”¹⁹

It is important to remember that Josiah was one of the very few righteous kings of Judah. Unlike most of his ancestors, he zealously followed the law of God. While Josiah reigned, God’s favor was upon Judah and its king. So what authority does Neco possess by which he can claim to be God’s spokesperson to Josiah? If God wants to speak to the king of Judah, He should rather send a legitimate prophet from His fold, not an alien king who worships the idols of Isis and Osiris.

Naturally, Josiah discredits the counsel of Neco and marches against Egypt. This decision happens to cost him not only his kingdom but also his life. In the surprising climax of the story, we realize that the Egyptian king was, in fact, speaking on behalf of the God of Israel. This is how the narrator describes the event: “nor did he listen to the words of Neco *from the mouth of God.*”²⁰ The words

that came out of the mouth of the pagan king, we are told, actually were the very words of God.

In another instance, Abraham comes across a pagan priest named Melchizedek.²¹ He greets Abraham in the name of his god, El Elyon.²² Abraham does not insist that he should be greeted in the name of the “real” God, Yahweh. Instead, he gives his tithe, God’s portion of his wealth, to Melchizedek. Later in the Scriptures, David prophesies that the Jewish Messiah would come as a priest in the line of Melchizedek, not in the line of traditional Levitical priesthood.²³

Is the God of Abraham the same as the god of Melchizedek? Could it be that Yahweh and El Elyon are two different names of the same God? We will consider many such questions over the course of our journey through different religions in the world.

In the pages of the Bible, we meet many Gentile characters who seem to play active roles in God’s redemptive plan for the world. Jethro, Moses’s father-in-law, was once a priest to the pagan deities of Midian. But he acted as chief counsel to Moses in the Exodus mission.²⁴ Rahab, a prostitute, and Ruth, a Moabite, were women born miles outside the sphere of God’s covenant. Yet they became pivotal figures in the history of Israel, finding their way into the genealogy of the ultimate Jewish hero, King David (and of Jesus Christ).

The Queen of Sheba was commended by Jesus Himself for her eagerness to learn from the wisdom of Solomon. King Hiram of Tyre, a pagan king, partnered with Solomon in building the first temple of Jerusalem.²⁵ King Cyrus of Persia, another Gentile ruler, received a divine appointment to build the second Jewish temple and was even called God’s “anointed.”²⁶

It seems to me that God has been actively involved in the history of many nations outside the geographical borders of Israel. His reach includes the whole world. He is certainly interested in all of us.

Salvation may have been “from” the Jews, but it is not exclusively “for” the Jews.



In the gospels according to Mark and Luke, we find an encounter between Jesus’ disciples and a young man who performs miracles in His name.²⁷ Impressed by his devotion and dedication, the disciples offer him an invitation to join their team.

Being part of the disciples’ band meant working closely with Jesus. It would have been a dream come true for an aspiring minister. But the man declines their invitation. A Christ-follower who refuses an invitation to literally follow Christ? How could someone refuse to follow Jesus and still perform miracles in His name?

The disciples report the incident to Jesus, saying, “We tried to prevent him because he was not following us.” After all, someone needs to safeguard the community against unaccredited preachers and their heretical teachings.

Jesus’ response, however, is sobering: “Do not hinder him,” says Jesus. “For he who is not against us is for us.”²⁸

In another instance, Jesus said that He had “other sheep, which are not of this fold.”²⁹ Is this young man one of those sheep from the other fold? What, I find myself wondering, is this mysterious other fold?

Could there be a group of sheep that has never met the shepherd yet belongs to Him anyway?

I can offer various conjectures, but in the end, no one has any convincing answers to these questions. I have learned one thing from this story, however: God's providential grace in the world cannot be confined to the boundaries of a specific community. As passionate as I am about my church and the purity of its doctrines, who am I to say that whoever does not follow Christ with me does not follow Him at all?

It is true that God's offer of salvation is in one sense "exclusive"—it is not revealed to all religions and all cultures. But it is also "inclusive" in the sense that it originates in one community and flows into others. Few are chosen, so that many may receive.

The universal reach of the New Covenant was first revealed to the church when God asked Peter to visit a man named Cornelius.³⁰ This man was not a Christian, yet he was a "devout man" who "feared God with all his household" and "prayed to God continually."

It comes as a big surprise to Peter to know that God is interested in the prayers of those who are neither Jews nor Christians. He gets a rude awakening through a dramatic vision, in which God commands, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy." This incident was likely foremost on Peter's mind as he wrote in his epistle that God does not wish "for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."³¹

To be elected in Jesus Christ means to be incorporated into God's mission of establishing His kingdom on earth. The kingdom of God is meant for all people. "There is no distinction between Jew

and Greek,” says Paul. “For ‘whoever will call upon the name of the LORD will be saved.’”³²

This “inclusive exclusivity” of the gospel is further amplified in Paul’s letters, which reiterate the fact that God is “the Savior of *all* men.”³³ He desires that “*all* people everywhere should repent,”³⁴ and for “*all* men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”³⁵

As a Christian, I believe that the ultimate revelation of God comes to humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. I am now entrusted with the task of taking it to the four corners of the world. Like Israel became “a light to the Gentiles,”³⁶ Christians are appointed to be “the light of the world.”³⁷ Today, many Christians have fallen into the same trap that snared the children of Abraham. We also delude ourselves, at times, into thinking that those who are outside the realm of this covenant do not matter to God at all. Let us not forget the fact that salvation is a call to responsibility, not to privilege. We are chosen not for our own sake, but for the sake of others.



“In Him we live and move and have our being.”³⁸

This is one of the most beautiful verses in the Bible. I often hear it quoted in liturgies, benedictions, and worship songs. I see it printed on bumper stickers and painted on church buildings. In a silent yet eloquent voice, this verse reminds us of the invisible presence of God in our everyday life.

Did you know that this verse actually comes not from the mouth of God, but from a pagan source? It is an excerpt from *Cretica*, a

poem written by the Greek philosopher Epimenides, in the seventh century BCE.³⁹ Here is the full version:

They fashioned a tomb for you, holy and high one,
Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies.
But you are not dead: you live and abide forever,
For in you we live and move and have our being.⁴⁰

The writer of this poem, when he wrote about the “holy and high” god in whom “we live and move and have our being,” was not thinking about the Christian God. He was, in fact, referring to the Greek god Zeus.

I wonder why Paul decided to incorporate the voice of a pagan poet into his Holy Spirit–inspired sermon. Further, why would Luke, the writer of the Acts, record it in a book that we revere as the Word of God? How could a pagan prophecy find its way into the sacred Scriptures of Christianity?

Let us rewind to the beginning of the story. The episode starts with Paul exploring the city of Athens as he waits for his colleagues at Mars Hill.⁴¹ The idols in the city provoke his spirit. But instead of condemning the idolatry, Paul goes on to do a “show and tell” sermon, using one of their own idols for an object lesson.

The god at the center of Paul’s message is “*Agnostos Theos*,” or “the unknown god.” The legend behind the unknown god was not unknown to the Greeks.⁴² It had its origins in a plague that spread through Greece at the time of Epimenides, which created a nationwide pandemonium. People offered sacrifices to appease the angry gods, as usual, but the plague continued to spread. There must be

yet another god who was still not pleased, they thought, but no one knew who he was. So they built new altars in the name of an “unknown” god and offered blood sacrifices. As the story goes, the epidemic came to an immediate stop, and a new god found his way into the already crowded Greek pantheon.

“What you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you,” says Paul to the Athenians, pointing to the altar of the unknown god.⁴³ He is not preaching a new god; instead, he is revealing the “hidden” God embedded in their own sacred stories.

The unknown god of the Athenians, all of a sudden, becomes a signpost that points to the God of the Bible.

The Mars Hill sermon, of course, is not a proof for Paul’s endorsement of idol worship, nor does it show his indulgence in syncretic missional practices. It is, however, an affirmation of God’s ubiquitous presence in every religion and in every culture.

This truth hit home when I started reading the Rig Veda, the four-thousand-year-old Hindu sacred text. One of the hymns of this ancient scripture is titled, believe it or not, “To the Unknown God.”

To the Unknown God

(Mandala X Hymn 121 Rig Veda)

In the beginning there arose the Golden Child
 As soon as born, he alone was the lord of all that is.
 He established the earth and this heaven:
 Who is the God to whom we shall offer sacrifice?
 He who gives breath, he who gives strength,
 Whose command all the bright gods revere,
 Whose shadow is immortality, whose shadow is death,

Who is the God to whom we shall offer sacrifice?
He who through his might became the sole king
Of the breathing and twinkling world,
Who governs all this, man and beast
Who is the God to whom we shall offer sacrifice?⁴⁴

Who is this “unknown god” to whom the Hindu *rishis* were offering sacrifices? Did the Agnostos Theos of the Athenians present himself in other religions and cultures as well?

Now I am beginning to understand how the Wise Men of the East discovered the trail of redemptive grace that led them all the way from the lingering shadows of darkness to the ultimate “Golden Child” who established the heavens and the earth. If the God of Israel revealed Himself outside the geographical borders of His covenant, it only makes sense that the “good news” of the arrival of His Son would spill outside the traditional boundaries of the church and stream into the hearkening ears of genuine seekers everywhere, including my ancestors.

In the following chapters, we will embark on a spiritual journey in the footsteps of the Wise Men, all the way from the East to the West. In this pilgrimage through six major religions in the world, we will encounter the silhouettes of the unknown god emerging from the deep recesses of their sacred scriptures. We will discover a resonating chord beneath the surface-level dissonance in their theology—a scarlet thread of redemption woven into the spiritual fabric of different cultures and religions across the world.

As we go through the belief systems and worldview assumptions of each tradition, watch for the traces of “hidden revelations”

embedded deep within their religious consciousness. Jesus might appear incognito as an unknown god—an *avatar* in Hinduism, a *bodhisattva* in Buddhism, the living *shabad* in Sikhism, a prophet in Islam, and the Messiah in Judaism. Let the Star of the Savior shine brightly in your path and lead you from the unknown god of other religions to the revealed God of the Bible.

I am not one of the Wise Men, of course, but I am here to accompany you on the same trail traversed by them. All I can promise you on this journey is some stories for the road. I hope they will help you discover the vignettes of truth God has secretly implanted in world religions to prepare us all for His grand entrance into our world in the person of Jesus Christ.