

Chapter 3

Scripture and Fulfillment

The character of holy writings depends on the spiritual reality one posits. All of the large world religions have holy writings, but these writings represent themselves in different ways. The Quran represents itself as the revealed word of God, delivered through the prophet Mohammed. The *Bhagavad Gita* of Hinduism is in the form of heroic epic poetry, which reflects allegorically the great cosmic struggle and represents the fruit of meditation that seeks illumination about the divine. The utterly transcendent deity desires nothing of people. *The Eightfold Path* of Buddha contains the teachings that proceed from the enlightenment that no god exists as a differentiated being.

Christians and Jews share the holy writings of Israel. These writings presuppose the Creator who revealed his will and purpose by inspiring prophets over a period of centuries. They often witness to a simultaneous act of revelation in nature and history, such as the revelation of the Law of Moses in the context of the Exodus. While the Quran claims to reveal the will of God, it also insists that God never reveals himself. In the writings of Israel, however, God revealed himself in intimate ways that express the desire for loving relationship with people.

The ministry of Jesus took place at a time when the study of the Scriptures had taken a central place in the life of the Jewish people. This concern held the Jewish people together after the temple sacrificial system and the priesthood came to an end with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. As it was, the understanding of the nature and meaning of the Scriptures helped to define the ministry of Jesus and the gospel message.

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

The issue of fulfillment appears throughout Matthew's Gospel as an underlying theme. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus addresses the issue of the relationship of his ministry to the Scriptures:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets: I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. (Matt. 5:17–18)

Jesus did not challenge the Jewish understanding of the nature of Scripture; rather, he challenged the contemporary interpretation of the meaning of the Law and the Prophets. He went further than a mere exercise in hermeneutics, however, for he claimed that he personally was the fulfillment of God's will and purpose as revealed in the Law and the Prophets.

In Luke's Gospel the same theme appears in the inaugural sermon of Jesus in Nazareth. After reading from the prophet Isaiah Jesus declared, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). Later, when John the Baptist sent two of his disciples to inquire of Jesus if he was "the one that was to come" (7:19), Jesus replied:

Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. (Luke 7:22; cf. Matt. 11:5)

Again, his statement identifies himself as the One who came to fulfill the Scriptures. While the priestly party did not recognize the authority of the prophetic books, the Pharisees, who had a great following in the synagogues, regarded the Prophets as part of Scripture and looked for messianic fulfillment. John himself identified his own ministry as precursor to the appearance of the Messiah in the Gospels (John 1:19–23; cf. Matt. 3:1–3; Mark 1:2–4; Luke 3:1–6).

While the Synoptic Gospels each include the three predictions of Jesus' Passion, only Luke indicates, strictly speaking, that they

were not predictions at all (see also Matt. 26:52–54). Instead, they were teachings that “everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled” (Luke 18:31). Though the terminology of fulfillment appears only here, each of the Synoptics contains terminology in at least one of the predictions that places the announcements of the Passion in the framework of teaching (Matt. 16:21–23; Mark 8:31–33; 9:30–32; Luke 18:31–33; cf. John 18:31–32). The Gospels thus place the Passion predictions in the context of the teaching ministry of Jesus that challenged the contemporary notions of how the prophecies must be fulfilled.

Passion Teachings			
	Matthew	Mark	Luke
1	16:21–23*	8:31–33*	9:22
2	17:22–23	9:30–32*	9:44–45
3	20:17–19	10:32–34	18:31–33*

*Passages that indicate teachings related to fulfillment of Scripture.

This connection proves all the more striking in light of Luke’s postresurrection accounts of the teachings of Jesus. On the Emmaus road, Jesus declared:

“How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. (Luke 24:25–27)

Luke also indicates that Jesus taught his disciples about his relation to the Scriptures:

He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. (Luke 24:44–45)

Clearly, the fulfillment of Scripture in a way that the Jews of Jesus’ time had not expected forms a major theme of the Gospel writers.

Oddly enough, the scholarly debate over whether Jesus actually taught about his coming suffering and death as a fulfillment of Scripture does not fall within the sphere of biblical study. The question relates to the issue of what kind of God exists and, therefore, what kinds of events are possible in this universe. One's presuppositions about the universe determine how one interprets Scripture. If a person does not believe in the kind of God who reveals the future and interacts with creation, then alternative explanations must be put forward for statements such as these about fulfillment on the lips of Jesus.

The idea of the fulfillment of Scripture appears in every book of the New Testament except James, and even James refers to the Law (James 4:11–12). In the evangelistic messages of Acts, the appeal to fulfillment of Scripture appears in every address except for that given by Paul at Lystra. Even the return of Christ for judgment mentioned by Paul in Athens is a fulfillment theme. Throughout the Gospels, the life and ministry of Jesus are presented in a context of fulfillment.

The Gospel writers took great pains to show that they did not proclaim a new faith or religion. On the contrary, their stress on fulfillment demonstrates their conviction that faith in Christ stood in direct continuity with all that God had been doing since creation. Jesus did not start a new religion; he fulfilled all of the hopes and aspirations of Israel.

Mark

Mark's Gospel begins with fulfillment, for the ministry of John the Baptist forms "the beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1). Mark places the ministry of John the Baptist as fulfilling Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3. The public ministry of Jesus begins with the proclamation that "the time has come. . . . The kingdom of God is near" (1:15). That is, the fulfillment of the promise of the kingdom has begun. The many teachings of Jesus about the kingdom stand within the context of the Jewish hope for fulfillment. The confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi takes the form of conviction that the Christ/Messiah of prophecy has come (8:28–29). Mark also places the response of others to Jesus in the context of fulfillment. For example, the criticism of Jesus by the scribes and Pharisees is accounted as prophetic fulfillment:

He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written:

"These people honor me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me.
They worship me in vain;
their teachings are but rules taught by men." (7:6-7)

In describing the response of the disciples to the arrest of Jesus, Mark records these words of Jesus:

"You will all fall away . . . for it is written:

"I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep will be scattered." (14:27)

While Mark gives only a few citations of Scripture as being fulfilled, the very theme of the messianic secret that runs throughout his Gospel is a theme of fulfillment.

Luke

Luke likewise begins his Gospel with the theme of fulfillment: "Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us" (Luke 1:1). At the presentation of Jesus following his birth, Luke refers to two prophetic figures, Simeon and Anna, who prophesy (Luke 2:21-38). Like Mark, Luke also indicates that the ministry of John the Baptist fulfilled the prophesy of Isaiah (3:4-6; cf. Isa. 40:3-5). Even the form that Jesus' temptation takes comes in the context of the Jewish community's acceptance of fulfillment:

"If you are the Son of God," [the devil] said, "throw yourself down from here. For it is written:

"He will command his angels concerning you
to guard you carefully;
they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."
(Luke 4:9b-11)

As mentioned above, Luke stressed that Jesus placed his entire ministry and Passion in the context of fulfillment in the postresurrection teaching.

Matthew

While Matthew's Gospel makes many references to fulfillment, it particularly stresses fulfillment in the story of the birth of Jesus. Matthew's Gospel begins with a genealogy of Jesus, which establishes the continuity of Jesus with David and Abraham (Matt. 1:17). He explains the virgin birth as fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14 (Matt. 1:22–23). Scholars have debated whether the Hebrew *almah* should be translated literally as “young woman” or with its cultural context of “virgin.” The debate is a mute one since Matthew uses the Septuagint for his text, and the Greek text settles the question of what Matthew says had happened. Even if Isaiah meant “young woman,” Matthew declares that in fulfillment a virgin conceived.

To continue the theme of fulfillment surrounding the birth of Jesus, Matthew relates that the priests and teachers at the court of Herod believed that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, as prophesied by Micah in Micah 5:2 (Matt. 2:3–6). The account of the flight to Egypt appears only in Matthew's Gospel as the fulfillment of Hosea 11:1 (Matt. 2:14–15). The slaughter of the baby boys in Bethlehem also is described as fulfillment of prophecy (Matt. 2:16–18; cf. Jer. 31:15). Finally, the settlement of the family of Jews in Nazareth after the death of Herod also fulfills a prophecy that “he will be called a Nazarene” (Matt. 2:23).¹

Matthew likewise indicates that the ministry of Jesus fulfilled Scripture. He introduces the preaching, healing, and teaching ministries of Jesus with the testimony of Scripture (Matt. 4:12–17; cf. Isa. 9:1–2; Matt. 8:14–17; cf. Isa. 53:4; Matt. 13:34–35; cf. Ps. 78:2), which provided an external authority or verification for their legitimacy. Likewise, the establishment of the identity of Jesus as the servant of God (Matt. 13:11–17; cf. Isa. 42:1–4) and the failure of his generation to recognize him as the One who fulfilled the Scriptures (Matt. 13:11–17; cf. Isa. 6:9–10) occur within Matthew's Gospel as elements in the theme of fulfillment.

Finally, Matthew points to several events during the Passion week that fulfill Scripture. The Triumphal Entry is preceded by a brief account of the securing of a donkey for Jesus to ride. Matthew saw this episode foretold by the prophets (Matt. 21:1–5; cf. Zech. 9:9). The anecdotal account of how the priest used the money

returned by Judas also appears as the fulfillment of Scripture, but in this case, Matthew must bring together several incidents from Jeremiah to see a pattern that finds fulfillment. Here the emphasis is not on prediction, but on fulfillment (Matt. 27:6–10; cf. Jer. 18:1–3; 32:6–15).

John

John's Gospel places the life and ministry of Jesus in the context of the popular expectation of someone great whom Moses and the prophets had foretold (John 1:45). This theme resonates with the similar tone found in Luke. John indicates that Jesus withdrew from the crowds because they began to say that he was the long-expected prophet (6:14–15). This resonates with the tone set by Mark concerning the messianic secret, an issue that concerns fulfillment.

In terms of fulfillment, however, John places his emphasis on the way in which the Passion fulfilled the Scriptures. He does this in two ways. He relates specific incidents in the Passion week to specific passages of Scripture that foreshadow the events. Among these are the unbelief of the crowds (John 12:38–41; cf. Isa. 53:1; also 6:10), the betrayal by Judas (John 13:18; cf. Ps. 41:9), the dividing of the clothes of Jesus by the guards (John 19:23–24; cf. Ps. 22:18), the cry of thirst from the cross (John 19:28–29; cf. Ps. 69:21), and the quick death of Jesus that avoided the necessity of his legs being broken (John 19:31–37; cf. Ex. 12:46; Zech. 12:10).

In addition to these overt references to fulfillment of particular Scriptures, John depicts the Passion as fulfilling the meaning of the sacrificial system. From the first declaration by John the Baptist that Jesus is "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29), this Gospel proceeds to demonstrate that by his death Jesus fulfilled the Law analogically (cf. Matt. 5:17). John describes the trial of Jesus before Pilate as taking place on "the day of Preparation of Passover Week" (John 19:14). In other words, Jesus was being prepared for crucifixion as the Passover lamb was being prepared for sacrifice. Even the text John uses in reference to the bones of Jesus not being broken is a text that refers to the Passover lamb. Thus, John's Gospel stresses that Jesus has fulfilled or completed the meaning of sacrifice.

Paul

Paul's conviction that Jesus is Lord, experienced at his conversion, required a new hermeneutic for him. He came to understand how the Law and the Prophets found fulfillment in Jesus. If his former hermeneutic had failed him with respect to the coming of the Messiah, it did not adequately deal with the rest of Scripture and its meaning either. Christ and his gospel therefore formed for Paul the hermeneutic for interpreting Scripture, and Scripture formed the undergirding authority for the truth of the gospel.

As one would expect from a Pharisee schooled at the feet of Gamaliel, Scripture provided the basis for Paul's thought and the substance for his theology. Luke hints at this reliance on Scripture in his description of Paul's methodology in Acts. At Antioch of Pisidia, Paul presented his message in the context of God's dealings with Israel from the time of their sojourn in Egypt (Acts 13:16–41), a style of preaching not unlike Stephen's (7:2–60) or the litany of Hebrews 11. Rather than defend his departure from the faith of Israel, Paul used Scripture to prove that in Jesus he followed the true faith of Israel.

Romans illustrates the place of fulfillment and Scripture in Paul's thought better than his other writings because with the church in Rome Paul did not have pastoral and discipling issues to address. The gospel for all people as the legitimate fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets may very well have been his intended theme for the letter. It begins and ends with it. Paul immediately authenticated his message as one God "promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures" (Rom. 1:2) and declared that this message was intended for "people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith" (1:5). Paul concluded similarly by declaring that the gospel was "now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings . . . so that all nations might believe and obey him" (16:26).

Paul sounds similar to Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount when he declares, "Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law" (Rom. 3:31). He states the essence of fulfillment as "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (10:4). Because of Christ, Paul

had to revise his understanding of the purpose of the law. The law brings self-understanding of sinfulness rather than righteousness: “For I would not have known what it was to covet if the law had not said, ‘Do not covet’” (7:7). The idea that the Scriptures were given “to teach” (15:4) appears again in Galatians, where Paul describes the Law as a “custodian” or “schoolmaster” (Gal. 3:24 κτν). Beyond the Law and the Prophets, however, God had always intended to bestow righteousness through the goodness of Jesus: “But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify” (Rom. 3:21).

Romans, though written to Christians, might rightly be taken as a recapitulation of how Paul may have presented the gospel to non-believers. In describing his reason for writing the things he included in his letter, he stated,

I have written you quite boldly on some points, *as if to remind you of them again*, because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 15:15–16, emphasis mine)

This reminder of the gospel is accompanied by approximately sixty-three quotations of Old Testament passages.² Beyond these quotations, Paul includes lengthy commentary on the law to explain the significance of Jesus. The gospel as Paul proclaimed it relied heavily on the relationship of Jesus to the Scriptures, both in continuity with Scripture and as the culmination of Scripture.

Paul wrote another brief reminder of the gospel to the Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 15:1–8 he wrote to settle a doctrinal dispute concerning the resurrection. He appealed to the gospel for the answer, but he appealed to the Scriptures to authenticate the gospel:

that Christ died for our sins *according to the Scriptures*, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day *according to the Scriptures*. (1 Cor. 15:3b–4, emphasis mine)

This letter begins with an assertion of the power of the gospel, which Paul supports with an appeal to its fulfillment of the Scriptures (1:19, 31; 2:9, 16; 3:19–20). Rather than serving a purely doc-

trinal purpose as in Romans, however, his discussion of the gospel comes in the form of a pastoral appeal to urge unity in the church. Elsewhere in 1 Corinthians, Paul uses Scripture texts or allusions to support his exhortations to flee immorality (5:7, 13; 6:18; 10:7), to follow order in worship (11:7–10; 14:21), and to establish his rights as an apostle (9:9). Throughout, he writes from the perspective that the Law and the Prophets had a fuller meaning than is apparent from their original context. The writings were for later generations:

These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. (10:11; cf. 9:10; 10:6)

Peter

Paul's teachings on fulfillment find similar expression in the Petrine letters. In the conclusion of the recapitulation of the gospel at the beginning of 1 Peter, the role of fulfillment appears:

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things. (1 Peter 1:10–12)

HISTORICAL/THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

Over the centuries, the relative importance of the apostolic understanding of fulfillment has varied widely, depending on the context in which the church ministered. The gospel teaching about fulfillment of the Scriptures related to the church's understanding of the Scriptures as revelation. The idea of fulfillment and the related idea of revelation also raised the issue of the authority of the holy writings.

The Patristic Period

The idea of fulfillment formed a major motif in the evangelization of the pagan world during the patristic period. As the gospel spread into the Hellenistic world, it met a people unacquainted with the Scriptures of Israel, for whom the worship of one God seemed a strange and intolerant notion.

The fulfillment of Scripture provided an intellectual dimension for demonstrating the truth of the claims of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In a world of competing philosophies and religions, revealed truth from God and the fulfillment of promises by God set the gospel apart. While Judaism enjoyed official recognition, Christianity was regarded as a seditious, immoral cult. Local and regional persecution afflicted the church throughout the second and third centuries prior to the great official persecution ordered by the emperor Diocletian. Popular rumor for several centuries persisted that Christians were atheists because they had no image of the God they worshiped. They were said to practice cannibalism because they ate the body and drank the blood of a sacrificial victim. They were also thought to practice incest because they were all said to be “brothers” and “sisters” to each other. In this climate the apologists arose to give a clear explanation of Christian practices and beliefs and to make a case for the truth of the gospel.

Justin Martyr. The fulfillment of the Scriptures provided the door for Justin’s conversion to faith in Christ and went on to form the organizing theme of his work. Justin had pursued philosophy of various strands, including Stoicism and Platonism. While on a walk one day, he engaged in conversation with a man who shook his confidence in philosophy’s ability to lead a person to God. The man then informed Justin:

There existed, long before this time, certain men more ancient than all those who are esteemed philosophers, both righteous and beloved by God, who spoke by the Divine Spirit, and foretold events which would take place, and which are now taking place. They are called prophets.³

This conversation started Justin on an exploration of how Christ fulfilled the prophecies, which ultimately resulted in his conversion. He

concluded that the Scriptures provided a superior philosophy and means to God.⁴

Justin's most well-known work is the *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, written probably not long before his martyrdom under Marcus Aurelius (c. A.D. 165). This work recounts a conversation between Justin and a Hellenistic Jew named Trypho thirty years earlier. Trypho and his friends were refugees from Palestine following the Bar Chochba uprising (132–135).

The *Dialogue* contains three main sections. In the first, Justin refutes Trypho's insistence on the observance of the Mosaic Law for salvation. Justin uses Scripture to demonstrate that throughout the history of Israel and before the giving of God's law to Moses, justification before God was a matter of the righteousness of the heart rather than of the observance of ceremonies. In the second section, Justin appeals to the Scriptures to demonstrate how the gospel message of the incarnation, the death, and the resurrection of Christ fulfilled prophecies. In the final section, he argues that those who have faith in Christ who fulfill the prophecies are the true Israel and the heirs of God's promises.

In his *First Apology* Justin also relied on the fulfillment of prophecy to defend the gospel. In chapters 31–53 he expounded the significance of prophecy fulfilled and explained the nature of prophecy through the "prophetic Spirit." In laying prophecy fulfilled as the foundation for the gospel, Justin corroborated the events and significance of the gospel by the ancient message of the prophets:

In these books of the prophets, then, we find Jesus the Christ foretold as coming, born of a virgin, healing human sicknesses, raising the dead, being hated and unrecognized, being crucified, dying, rising again, ascending into heaven, and being called the Son of God.⁵

Thus, in his recapitulation of the *kerygma* Justin relied on Scripture for verification of the gospel.

Tertullian. Tertullian of Carthage appeared on the scene in the latter part of the second century as the founding force of Latin theology. While other apologists attempted to use the pagan philosophers in presenting their case, Tertullian took the offensive and

granted nothing to philosophy or heathen religion. Believing as he did that the Old Testament provided the source for the prophecies that found fulfillment in Christ, he devoted himself “to define the correct principles of hermeneutics, and perpetually discussed biblical history.”⁶ That Tertullian wrote five books in his series *Against Marcion* underscores the significance he placed on the Old Testament and its relationship to the gospel. His third book particularly expresses his conviction that God would not have manifested himself in the world without giving some forewarning. The fourth book explores the significance of prophecy in the four Gospels:

All start with the same principles of the faith, so far as relates to the one only God the Creator and His Christ, how that He was born of the virgin, and came to fulfill the law and the prophets.⁷

Feeling as he did, Tertullian depended on the Scriptures to prove the gospel of Christ, “by the evidence and antiquity of the divine books.”⁸ He reviled philosophers as enemies of truth who were seeking after personal glory.⁹ In his *Apology* Tertullian asked, “But then what have philosopher and Christian in common?”¹⁰ In *The Prescription Against Heretics* he wrote his well-known companion interrogatory: “What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the church? What between heretics and Christians?”¹¹ Tertullian believed that heresies were instigated by philosophy. He repudiated any effort to synthesize Christianity with philosophical schools of thought, as would gradually happen in later centuries when Christianity became more respectable.

In the face of persecution, Tertullian also addressed the questions of Christian behavior from his understanding of Scripture in *De Corona Militis*. He prefigured a Reformation debate in his consideration of things of indifference (*res adiaphora*). Are Christians permitted to do what the Bible does not forbid? Or, are things not expressly permitted by the Bible forbidden for Christians? Here the question of the authority of Scripture and the place of tradition began to emerge as conflicting streams. In his time, Tertullian harmonized tradition and Scripture, largely because he was addressing a practical issue of facing martyrdom.

The centrality of Scripture and the concept of a revealed religion in the thought of Tertullian eventually became the pivotal factors in his embrace of Montanism, with its stress on ecstatic prophecy. Because God had revealed himself to the prophets and the apostles, Tertullian saw no reason why revelation would have ceased with the apostles.¹² Though he had defended the place of tradition in the church, he became separated from the Christianity of his day because of his refusal to accept the traditional understanding of the end of the apostolic age and the completion of Scripture.

Origen. Fulfillment of Scripture represented a primary integrating theme in Origen's apologetic work *Against Celsus* in the mid-third century, nearly one hundred years after Justin's *Dialogue*. Origen is best known as an interpreter of the Scriptures, devoting himself particularly to the understanding of the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The *Hexapla* represents his efforts at developing the discipline of critical Bible study. It contained in six parallel columns the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew characters, and the four Greek translations of the Scriptures in use at the time.

Devoting most of his energies to biblical study and exegesis, the theme of fulfillment seemed a logical corollary to his work. Origen approached exegesis from the standpoint of typology, proceeding from the conviction that a text had a "literal or physical sense, a moral or psychical sense, and an intellectual or spiritual sense."¹³ Origen had a strong interest in demonstrating the intellectual validity of Christianity in his answer to Celsus' attacks. He wrote not only to prove that Christianity was not a seditious group, but also that it had the right to take its place as the profoundest of philosophies.¹⁴ The prophets, who Origen argued predated the Greek philosophers, lent a degree of intellectual respectability to Judaism, which Origen capitalized on while demonstrating prophecy's fulfillment in Christ.

Rather than presenting a systematic description of Christianity in *Against Celsus*, Origen answered Celsus' charges point by point. He also explained the legitimacy of suggesting that Christ fulfilled the pagan *Sibylline Oracles* as well as Old Testament prophecy.¹⁵ That Origen referred to Christ as the "only-begotten Logos or Wisdom" illustrates how he linked prophecy and philosophical ideas.¹⁶

Apart from the inspiring Logos, prophecy could not happen. This apology reflects a thorough knowledge of philosophy and religious practices, which Origen critiqued by using the arguments that philosophical schools used against each other.

To Origen, Celsus had written “to criticize the assertion that the history of Christ Jesus was prophesied by the prophets among the Jews.”¹⁷ Rather than qualify the idea of fulfillment or take some other line of defense, Origen boldly asserted his intention to “take refuge for our defense in the prophecies about Christ.”¹⁸ For him, the study of Scripture was a great philosophical or intellectual endeavor when compared with the study of other systems:

For in Christianity, if I make no vulgar boasting, there will be found to be no less profound study of the writings that are believed; we explain the obscure utterances of the prophets, and the parables in the gospels, and innumerable other events or laws which have a symbolical meaning.¹⁹

Origen firmly believed that the fulfillment of Scripture gave a dimension of credibility to Christianity that made it a strong competitor in the third-century world of ideas.

Eusebius. Eusebius wrote *The Proof of the Gospel* at a time when the church was beginning to enter a place of respectability in the empire (c. 315).²⁰ In his great apologetic work he employed a method designed to prove the truth of the gospel by appealing to the prophecies of the Old Testament.²¹ He declared his intention at the beginning:

I propose to show, by quotations from them, how they foretold events that came to the light long ages after their time, the actual circumstances of the Savior’s own presentment of the Gospel, and the things which in our own day are being fulfilled by the Holy Spirit before our very eyes.²²

Only ten of the original twenty books in this work have survived, but they give ample evidence of the type of appeal Eusebius made to Roman society.

The books present the major themes of the gospel, and Ferrar follows Lightfoot in presuming that the lost books would have addressed the resurrection, ascension, gifts of the Holy Spirit, and

the emergence of the church as fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament.²³ Rather than a new religion, Eusebius was anxious to demonstrate that though salvation comes through faith, it does not come without “logical demonstration.”²⁴ In this regard, prophecy and its fulfillment held a critical place:

But I went on to say that our conversion was due not to emotional and unexamined impulse, but to judgement and sober reasoning, and that our devotion to the oracles of the Hebrews thus had the support of judgement and sound reason.²⁵

Concluding observations. During the patristic period, a range of famous, and presumably unknown, Christians organized their presentation of the gospel around the theme of the fulfillment of Scripture. This theme provided an intellectual appeal, gave an objective basis for examining the claims of the gospel, and set Christianity apart from the mystery religions and philosophies as a “revealed” religion.

The Reformers and Scripture

A thousand years after Eusebius, Scripture once again came to prominence as the focus around which theology revolved. This is not to say that the church had ceased to believe in the Bible. The Scriptures had simply receded in importance with the growing traditions of the church. By the late Middle Ages, however, the credibility of the church had sunk to a low point as a result of a variety of abuses.

Wycliff. John Wycliff came to prominence after 1370, largely because of the publishing of views he had debated at Oxford. In his two tracts *On Divine Dominion* and *On Civil Domain* he argued that only those who enjoyed God’s grace had the right to civil dominion and the possession of property, and that monasteries had no right to possess property.²⁶ Wycliff based his arguments challenging the traditions and structure of the church on Scripture, which he understood to be God’s law. Scripture stands above the “Pope’s law” and the “King’s law,” he maintained.²⁷ Winn argues that Wycliff had two favorite themes: “The paramount authority of Scripture and the wickedness of friars.”²⁸

Wycliff addressed a church that had grown accustomed to the sale of offices, the sale of indulgences, and the accumulation of

church lands by the monasteries. The last of these presented an unusual problem. Each parish had property attached to it for the support of the priest, which he might farm or lease out for its income. Over time, the right to name the priest (the advowson) and to receive the income from the property (the glebe land) fell into the hands of religious orders, which had the vow of poverty as part of their rule. Increasingly the monasteries appointed the kind of people who would take the appointment for little pay, or they left the parish empty. In some cases a priest would accept multiple appointments in different parts of the country (plurality) and live himself in Oxford or London.²⁹ While Wycliff disapproved of the monks for their vast accumulation of wealth while theoretically under a vow of poverty, he most vigorously opposed them for failing in the primary responsibility of a priest, the preaching of God's word.³⁰

The authority of the church was so discredited by the practice of simony, the sale of indulgences, the absence of a preaching clergy, and a dissipated monastic system that Wycliff offered a superior authority whereby people might know God and salvation through Christ. The need for a reliable authority became all the more heightened in 1378 when Christendom found itself in the embarrassing position of having two popes, each claiming infallibility. Instead of a pope, Wycliff insisted that Christ "is the heed of the Chirche; and He ordeynede a lawe to men, and confermede it with his lyf, for to reule holi Chirche, and teche how that men shulde lyve. . . ."³¹

While Wycliff's controversial teachings addressed the abuses and corruption of the church and its place in society (he even went so far as to reject transubstantiation), the basis for his teachings went back to the Bible as his authority. Wycliff respected the church fathers, especially Augustine, and used their arguments for support. But he did not place the tradition of the church on the same level of authority with Scripture.³² Wycliff taught that "faith depends on the Scriptures" and that "to ignore the Scriptures is to ignore Christ."³³

Because the Scriptures were God's law, Wycliff argued that nothing should be added to them as binding on the church. Tradition added by the church should be ignored as novelties that were "contrarie to Christ's ordonaunce,"³⁴ and nothing that the law of Christ does not touch on "shulde be dun or axid to do."³⁵ This stress on

Scripture as the starting point for faith and practice had long-term expression in Wycliff's effort to send out "poor preachers," called Lollards by his opponents, to bring the gospel to the people in the vernacular. His followers also translated the Bible into English. People needed a sure and certain guide to salvation in such an uncertain time, Wycliff felt, and he found that guide only in Scripture. He personally devoted himself to preaching, for "God hath ordained them to come to bliss by preaching and keeping of God's word."³⁶

Hus. John Hus (1372/73–1415) also oriented his theological understanding around the idea of Scripture. He had begun his academic career with dreams of advancement and full participation in the ecclesiastical system as it operated in his day. He later remarked:

When I was young in years and reason, I too belonged to the foolish sect. But when the Lord gave me the knowledge of Scripture, I discharged that kind of stupidity from my foolish mind.³⁷

Spinka concludes that "it was the study of Scripture" that led to Hus's own conversion and subsequent concern over abuses in the church, which hindered others from knowing the gospel and coming to faith.

In his most important work, *De Ecclesia*, Hus declared the principal convictions of his ministry. He held that (1) the church consists of the predestined, wherever they might be, not the pope and cardinals, who may not be predestined; (2) Christ is the head of the church, not the pope; (3) the keys of the kingdom rest with the church, not the pope. Hus based these conclusions and his entire theological system on his conviction that the Scriptures given by God served as the guiding authority in matters of faith and practice.³⁸ For these convictions the Council of Constance (1415) condemned him to death by fire.

Though Hus depended on Scripture for his position on the issues he addressed, he relied on ancient expositors of the church for help in arriving at the correct interpretations. He found particular help from Augustine. To give the force of reality to his arguments, however, he made frequent reference to the checkered history of the church and the abuses of the papacy in particular.³⁹ He drew a clear line between the authority of Scripture and the authority of the

fathers and the doctors of the church: "If any one venerate any other scriptures than these which the catholic church has received or has handed down to be held as authoritative, let him be anathema."⁴⁰

The papal system had produced priests who used Scripture selectively, ignoring passages that created inconvenience by calling for "the imitation of Christ" and setting them aside "as not pertaining to salvation."⁴¹ The clergy had assumed power belonging only to God, and Hus argued that by resisting the errors of the church a person did not "resist the ordinance of God but the abuse of power."⁴² Hus and those in sympathy with him considered the abuses of the church "a plague, which is at variance with the Gospel," and they sought "to cure this infection by the Word of the Lord. . . ."⁴³ Hus himself viewed this plague of ecclesiastical abuse as the fulfillment of apostolic prophecy (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14; 2 Tim. 4:1–4; cf. Dan. 11:31–32).⁴⁴

In the face of flagrant abuses and corruption in the church, obvious to all who saw the three rival popes, where might a person go for authoritative guidance in salvation and matters spiritual? Hus answered clearly in *De Ecclesia*:

And for the reason that believing is an act of faith, that is, to put trust in—*fidere*—therefore know that to believe that which is necessary for a man to secure blessedness is to adhere firmly and without wavering to the truth spoken as by God. For this truth, because of its certitude, a man ought to expose his life to the danger of death. And, in this way, every Christian is expected to believe explicitly and implicitly all the truth which the Holy Spirit has put in Scripture, and in this way a man is not bound to believe the sayings of the saints which are apart from Scripture, nor should he believe papal bulls, except in so far as they speak out of Scripture, or in so far as what they say is founded in Scripture simply.⁴⁵

Hus exposed his life to danger for his views about the authority of Scripture, and he was eventually burned at the stake as a heretic.

Luther. Luther did not realize until his debate with John Eck at Leipzig that he was continuing the line of thought advocated by Hus.⁴⁶ He had come to his convictions about the priority of Scripture in his pursuit of salvation, a pursuit that would lead him to an under-

standing of the doctrine of justification by faith.⁴⁷ His authoritative guide to faith came from Scripture, which he regarded not so much an article of faith as a guide to faith. He rejected the allegorical exegesis of the Middle Ages in favor of a grammatical-historical interpretation that focused on the centrality of Christ in Scripture.

Luther's view of the centrality of Scripture contained a tension between Scripture as authoritative and Scripture that depended on its witness to Christ for its authority.⁴⁸ The gospel message itself made Scripture authoritative for Luther and was the source of apostolic authority. For this reason James was an "epistle of straw" for Luther because it did not have the gospel as he understood it at its core.⁴⁹ People meet Christ through his Scriptures enlivened by his Spirit. The gospel, then, became the standard for Luther's ongoing critique of the church.

While the methodology of the scholastics placed philosophy functionally in authority over Scripture, Luther's stress on the priority of Scripture forced a rethinking of theological method and theological dogmatic. He spent most of his thirty-two years as a professor lecturing on the Old Testament.⁵⁰ He avoided system-building as he remained a biblical theologian. As a biblical theologian rather than a scholastic theologian, Luther rejected dependence on philosophy, particularly Aristotelian philosophy, in the interpretation of Scripture.⁵¹ In this regard, Luther did not argue for the authority of Scripture. Rather, he argued from the authority of Scripture. Other matters were open to debate, but not this doctrine. The gospel held priority and authority over the church, not vice versa. The ministry of the Word, because of the priority of the Word, constituted the highest office in the church in Luther's theology.⁵² Through the preaching of the gospel found in Scripture, faith arose in the hearts of those who heard.

Zwingli. While Luther set Scripture at the forefront of theological discussion in Germany, Ulrich Zwingli did the same in Switzerland. Zwingli came to his view of Scripture by way of Erasmian humanism, through which he had gained a profound appreciation for the Greek New Testament.⁵³ His movement from humanist to "protestant" reached a decisive point in 1516, when he resolved "to learn the doctrine of God direct from his own Word" rather than from the traditions of the church.⁵⁴

Zwingli saw himself in a crusade to “rescue the Sacred Writings so wickedly tortured” by the preaching of the mendicant friars.⁵⁵ In his reply to the “Admonition of the Bishop of Constance,” Zwingli challenged his opponents to debate him openly “and to show definitely by the authority of Scripture, where and in what I had done wrong!”⁵⁶ While Zwingli led the reformation of Zurich in a variety of directions, the driving issue in his reform of the church and its relationship to society rested on the principle of *sola scriptura* (“Scripture alone”) as the basis for authority. This principle emerged from the pursuit of the ultimate question, “How might a person know the way to eternal happiness?”

Zwingli explained that since creation, people have sought happiness that lasts beyond the grave. While the philosophers offered too many divergent opinions to guide one to happiness, Zwingli complained of similar “confusion and vagueness” that come from the guidance of Christians who advise “human tradition” and “human notions” instead of the “mercy and promises of God.”⁵⁷ As a result, Zwingli decided “to have trust in nothing and in no words so much as in those which proceeded out of the mouth of the Lord” as his guide to eternal happiness.⁵⁸ Zwingli believed that the Bible had supreme authority in the church because God had spoken it. Thus, he insisted that “to this treasure, namely, the certainty of God’s word, must our hearts be guided.”⁵⁹ With Scripture as the foundational integrating element for his theology, Zwingli used it as his “touchstone” for assessing all the teachings and practices of the church. This approach guided him and his followers to “eternal happiness” through “the freedom of the Gospel, for by that alone are we saved.”⁶⁰

Concluding observations. During the late Middle Ages, culminating in the Reformation, the church suffered from a credibility gap in spiritual authority. With the scandal of multiple popes, a schism between the Eastern and Western churches, the sale of indulgences, the neglect of preaching, and the corruption of morals within the priesthood, people sought a source of sure guidance in salvation. The Bible provided the authoritative guidance many sought as the medieval order and its institutions were collapsing. The problem of authority, which the Reformers solved by turning to Scripture, was the “fundamental issue of the Reformation,” though it quickly moved on to other issues, once Scripture supplied it with a foundation.⁶¹

SCRIPTURE AND FULFILLMENT AS GOOD NEWS

With the rise of fundamentalism and evangelicalism, Scripture once again became the organizing principle of a theological perspective. Fundamentalism grew up as a movement within what were then called the evangelical denominations of Protestantism as a response to some views of the Bible emerging from higher critical study in the late nineteenth century. Besides the views of Scripture circulating in scholarly theological circles, fundamentalism also addressed broader cultural belief systems that began to arise as rivals to Scripture in the interpretation of reality. Darwinian evolution and Freudian psychology posed threats to the literal interpretation of the creation narratives and to the necessity of the existence of a Creator.

In terms of evangelism, Billy Graham brought his gospel messages from the perspective of the Bible as his organizing principle. While he preached Christ as the content of his message, he always used as his authority the phrase that runs through decades of his preaching: "The Bible says."

Fulfillment as the doorway for the gospel took on renewed importance through the efforts of Jews for Jesus in the latter half of the twentieth century. This organization, led by a converted Jew named Moishe Rosen, has as its primary purpose the evangelism of Jews. The theme sounded throughout their printed material presents Jesus as the fulfillment of the promises of God to the Jews.

While the church has held the Scriptures in reverence since the closing of the canon, the Bible has not always received the same emphasis. Its significance has taken on special meaning not only as the means to the good news, but also as an aspect of the good news. The idea of the existence of holy writings that reveal God, God's will, and the way to peace with God constitutes good news. Several major themes have emerged over the last two thousand years related to the Scriptures, which constitute good news.

Continuity

The early church took great comfort in the continuity of the gospel with the faith of Israel as demonstrated by the fulfillment of prophecy. For its adherents, Christianity had not appeared on the

scene as one of a number of mystery religions in the first century. Rather, it stood as the culmination of the hope and faith of Israel. Jesus had not founded a new religion. He had completed an ancient religion that the church traced back through his genealogy to the patriarchs and, indeed, to the dawn of time.

Jesus Christ had a historical context to which the apostles bore witness, but he also had an eternal context to which the Law and the Prophets bore witness. This context placed Jesus in the same category as the Exodus; in Jesus God had acted. The appeal to Scripture pointed to the eternal context because fulfillment served to justify both the truth claim of Jesus as Messiah and the truth claim of the Bible as revelation from God. The fulfillment of Scripture in Christ demonstrated the truth that Jesus was the Messiah, and the fulfillment of Scripture in Christ demonstrated the truth that the Bible came from God and could be relied upon.

Faithfulness of God

Fulfillment also makes a strong statement about the faithfulness of God. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob revealed in the Torah is a God who makes and keeps promises. In writing to the Gentiles, who did not have the benefit of schooling in the Law, Paul tended to speak of the prophecies as the “promises.” To a people who understood deity in terms of the caprices and treachery of the mythological pantheon, the idea of a faithful God who kept promises would have come as good news indeed. Fulfillment makes a strong statement about the character of God.⁶²

The ancient conceptions of a god who cannot be trusted persist in our modern day with new mythologies to bolster them. The faithfulness of God in keeping promises argues against a view of deity or fate or karma that operates in a capricious or meaningless fashion. Fulfillment speaks of a personal God who cares about people and who takes care that his word means something. A God who keeps his word is a God whose Word is worth hearing.

Nature of God

Fulfillment of prophecy also speaks about the kind of God that exists. It speaks of a God who communicates with people, who takes the initiative in communication. Thus, Scripture comes as revela-

tion rather than simply as human response to the experience of the Holy Other. While the experience of God may elicit a response that words cannot adequately utter, fulfillment speaks of a clear message communicated by God and presented through the means of a human servant who committed the message to writing.

From a backwards perspective, fulfillment makes the case for the kind of God who can communicate what will happen and who can then cause it to happen so that people will recognize fulfillment has occurred. Peter preached to a crowd who believed such things on the day of Pentecost. Such a belief system runs radically counter to the modern worldview. As the modern world gives way to the postmodern world, however, such a worldview and such a God are not necessarily irrational concepts. Fulfillment implies a personal God who cares enough about people to communicate with them and to maintain relationship with them.

Authority

In times of great social upheaval accompanied by the collapse of cultural norms and institutions, people have often sought a source of authority for ordering their lives. Scripture presents itself as a sure authoritative guide for people without one. The idea of fulfillment takes Scripture outside the realm of subjective or even culturally bound expressions of spiritual experience by pointing to a source outside itself for its own authority.

Scripture depends for its authority on the God who inspired its writings rather than on those who committed it to writing. Augustine considered the Bible “unworthy in comparison with the dignity of Cicero” until he understood that the Bible spoke to something far deeper than the superficial gratification of reader response.⁶³ This earlier comment of Augustine resembles certain late twentieth-century evaluations of the Bible by readers who view the Bible’s value only in terms of its literary style.⁶⁴ Rather than being a piece of creative literary composition, however, the Bible presents itself as God’s revelation confirmed by fulfillment of his promises from the patriarchal period through apostolic times. The authority of Scripture lies in the One who expresses himself through it, not in the humans by whose hands it was delivered. Thus, Luther’s concern that the authority of Scripture lies in its presentation of the gospel

parallels a twentieth-century concern for the authority of Scripture. Regardless of higher critical issues of authorship or redaction, the Bible's authority depends on God as revealer rather than on the church as receiver.

Fulfillment sets Scripture apart from other sacred writings as a source of authority and a guide to God. The appeal to tradition gives it no more authority than the appeal to tradition of other ancient texts by the faith groups that follow these texts. The reading of Scripture has proven to be the greatest door of faith to the people of Muslim and Buddhist backgrounds, while in preliterate societies, the repetition of the biblical story has a powerful impact.⁶⁵ The assertions of authority give no more authority to Scripture than such assertions give to other sacred texts. The authority for Scripture comes in the fulfillment of the promises of God attested by Scripture.⁶⁶

Epistemology

The notion of fulfillment challenges the popular cultural notions of what can be known and how one can know. Fulfillment makes a case for revelation and the kind of God who reveals things that he has the power to bring to pass. Apart from such a reality, the gospel message does not have the same force outside the cultural context of habitual Christianity.

Scripture contains within it the recognition that anyone can make truth claims of spiritual experience that have authority for others. That is, anyone can say that they speak for God. Israel even had the institution of the professional prophet, who had a place within the cultural system to speak a word from God when a word in time served a political purpose (1 Kings 22:1–38; Amos 7:12–14). How could people know if the word spoken actually came from the Lord? After all, people believe what they want to believe. The mob follows the one who yells the loudest. Why should one religious zealot be followed rather than another? Following the tradition of Moses, however, someone was accepted as a speaker for God if their word came to pass (Deut. 18:18–22). Only what God had revealed could come to pass. Thus, Israel followed a form of verification in the assembling of the scrolls that formed Scripture. Fulfillment meant that God had spoken through a prophet, and

whatever that prophet had to say from the Lord could be trusted. For Israel, it was an empirical way of proving that empiricism is not the only way of knowing. God speaks of the things that cannot be known otherwise.

NOTES

1. The origin of this prophesy remains a puzzle. In the first century, prophecy was not understood to mean only the specific books of the prophets.

2. The exact number may vary, depending on how one counts the Scripture fragments that Paul occasionally joins together.

3. Justin, *Dialogue*, 7.1.198.

4. Some scholars consider the episode a literary invention. See Erwin R. Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr* (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1968), 58–63. Goodenough considers the conversation a literary conversation of the time to describe the movement from one school of thought to another in the form of an idealized conversation. For a more traditional view, see L. W. Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1967), 8–11. Barnard argues that the conversation “has the ring of truth” and that the eclectic philosophical training was typical of the day. Neither of these views, however, suggests the most compelling argument for literature of this type. One must look elsewhere than pagan literature for an example of the form Justin follows. By this time the Christian form of conversation testimony had been well established. The kind of detail and situation described fit the form of recounting significant passages in one’s conversion.

5. Justin, *First Apology*, 31.

6. Timothy David Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 91.

7. Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 4.4.

8. Tertullian, *Apology, De Spectaculus*, trans. T. R. Glover and Minuscus Felix; *Octavius*, trans. Gerald H. Rendall (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1966), 199.

9. *Ibid.*, 201.

10. *Ibid.*, 205.

11. Tertullian, *The Prescription Against Heretics*, 7.
12. Barnes, *Tertullian*, 131–32.
13. Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), 1.217.
14. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1953), ix.
15. Implications of this idea will be explored in chapter 9.
16. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 458.
17. *Ibid.*, 395.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*, 12.
20. Eusebius, *The Proof of the Gospel*, ed. and trans. W. J. Ferrar (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981; reprint of New York: Macmillan, 1920), xiii.
21. *Ibid.*, 1.
22. *Ibid.*, 2.
23. *Ibid.*, xiv.
24. *Ibid.*, 5.
25. *Ibid.*, 7.
26. G. H. W. Parker, *The Morning Star* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 21–26.
27. John Wycliff, *Select English Writings*, ed. Herbert E. Winn (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1929), xxviii.
28. *Ibid.*, 118.
29. See George Maculey Trevelyan, *England in the Age of Wycliffe* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1935), 111–41.
30. *Ibid.*, xxvi.
31. Wycliff, “The Church and Her Members,” *Select English Writings*, 132.
32. John Stacy, *John Wycliff and Reform* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 81, 94.
33. *Ibid.*, 80.
34. Wycliff, “The Church and Her Members,” 138.
35. *Ibid.*, 136.
36. Stacy, *John Wycliff and Reform*, 99.
37. Matthew Spinka, *John Hus's Concept of the Church* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1966), 10.
38. John Hus, *The Church*, trans. David S. Schaff (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood, 1976), xii–xxii.
39. Schaff argues that “Hus used history to prove the truth of Scripture” (see *ibid.*, xxxvii).

40. Ibid., 132.
41. Ibid., 112.
42. Ibid., 114.
43. Ibid., 118.
44. Ibid., 241–42, 253.
45. Ibid., 71.
46. Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1988), 80.
47. Timothy George argues that Luther's understanding of justification emerged from his growing reliance on Scripture (see *ibid.*, 63–69). Rupert Davis, on the other hand, argues that Luther's reliance on Scripture emerged from the experience of justification (see his *The Problem of Authority in the Continental Reformers* [London: Epworth, 1946], 27).
48. Willem Jan Kooiman, *Luther and the Bible*, trans. John Schmidt (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1961), 225–39.
49. George, *Theology of the Reformers*, 84.
50. Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther and the Old Testament*, trans. Eric W. and Ruth C. Gritech (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 7.
51. George, *Theology of the Reformers*, 57–58.
52. Ibid., 97. George observes that “the principle of *sola scriptura* was intended to safeguard the authority of Scripture from that servile dependence upon the church which in fact made Scripture inferior to the church,” 81.
53. Ibid., 112. See also Kurt Aland, *Four Reformers: Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Zwingli*, trans. James L. Schaaf (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1979), 90–91.
54. George, *Theology of the Reformers*, 113; Aland, *Four Reformers*, 93.
55. Samuel Macauley Jackson, ed., *Ulrich Zwingli: Early Writings* (Durham, N.C.: Labyrinth, 1987; reprint of New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1912), 201.
56. Ibid., 201.
57. Ibid., 203.
58. Ibid., 204.
59. Ibid., 205.
60. Ibid., 220.
61. Rupert E. Davies, *The Problem of Authority in the Continental Reformers: A Study in Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin* (London: Epworth, 1946), 11.

62. I am indebted to Liz Radic, who stressed this implication of fulfillment in a seminar presentation at Bethel Theological Seminary in the fall of 1993.

63. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991), 40.

64. See Alan Cheuse, "Writing It Down for James: Some Thoughts on Reading Towards the Millennium" *Antioch Review* 51 (Fall, 1993): 495-96. "The organized modern religions hold no patent on expressing devotions to the universe. In fact, the pagan poets, the epic Homers of the oldest stories of the western Mediterranean, show a lot more imagination when it comes to creating great characters and overarching plots than the lyricists and lamenters of the Old and New Testaments. Some great poetry in the former, but nothing much in the latter unless you're spiritually bonded to the text. Apply the test of narrative coherence and the pagan epics win hands down. And if the response of the readers, the immersion into a story that delights and instructs in the deepest fashion we know, is any test of the presence of godliness, there's no doubt in my mind which stories shadow the mark of real deity."

65. I appreciate the insights of missiologists Herb Klem and Ronald Hill concerning recent conversion trends in predominantly Muslim and Buddhist countries. I am particularly indebted to Tint Lwin, a Ph.D. student at Southern Seminary, who helped me understand the significance of the authority of Scripture in describing his own conversion.

66. Interestingly enough, the arguments for the relativity of the Christian faith usually come in terms of the institutional structures, traditions, and violations of Scripture by Western society rather than by an examination of the claim to fulfillment. See John Hick and Paul F. Knitter, *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1987).