THE COVENANT
QUARTERLY

Spring/Summer 2022

CONTENTS

NORTH PARK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
IN THY LIGHT SHALL WE SEE LIGHT
EST. 1891
CHICAGO, ILL.

THE COVENANT
QUARTERLY

ISSN 0361-0934 (print)
ISSN 2380-8829 (online)
Vol. 80, No. 1
Spring/Summer 2022

THE COVENANT QUARTERLY is published two times a year (spring, fall) in Chicago, Illinois.

The *Covenant Quarterly* is the ministerial journal of the Evangelical Covenant Church. Published by North Park Theological Seminary through Covenant Publications, the *Quarterly* seeks to foster theological reflection on ministerial praxis in service to ECC pastors and the broader church.

Editorial correspondence should be sent to the interim editor, J. Nathan Clayton, c/ o North Park Theological Seminary, 3225 W. Foster Ave., Chicago, IL 60625; (773) 244-5226, jnclayton@northpark.edu.

This periodical is indexed in the *ATLA Religion Database*, published by the American Theological Library Association, 300 S. Wacker Dr., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60606; (888) 665-ATLA; atla@atla.com; www.atla.com.

This periodical is also abstracted by *Religious and Theological Abstracts*, P.O. Box 215, Myerstown, PA 17067, (717) 866-6734; admin@rtabstracts.org; www.rtabstracts.org.

Comment

J. Nathan Clayton, assistant professor of Old Testament
North Park Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois

In this issue of the *Quarterly*, we first present an essay by New Testament scholar Ron Fay, who teaches at Liberty Divinity School. Fay helps readers reflect on the theme of truth in the Gospel of John and in 1 John. Examining key texts, Fay argues for a progression on this theme: in John's Gospel, the focus is on the person of Christ *before* the cross, while in John's first epistle, the focus is on the reality of truth for the Christian community *after* the cross. At the same time, John also anticipates a time after the cross, when the Holy Spirit will enable believers to live in the truth, while 1 John is further rooted in the notion that, ultimately, salvation is found only in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Thus, truth in these two books exists both in the historical person of Christ and in its theological significance for the individual believer.[1]

In the second essay, Casey Barton, who directs the Pastoral Ministry program at Lancaster Bible College and Capital Seminary, examines the relevance of eschatology for preaching. In fact, Barton is calling for preachers to bring "the future into the present." He begins by showing readers how eschatology has been diminished in the pulpit. Taking cues from theologians such as Jürgen Moltmann and others, Casey helps readers see how eschatology should be viewed, and apprehended, more holistically in preaching. As he notes, preaching with an eschatological framework is about pursuing God's future for the present of God's people.

In the third essay, Boaz Johnson, who teaches Bible and theology at North Park University, draws on his background in India and on his

[1] For some of this author's further work on the Gospel of John, note: Stanley E. Porter and Ron C. Fay, eds., *The Gospel of John in Modern Interpretation,* Milestones in New Testament Scholarship (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2018).

own teaching experience in Ukraine to reflect theologically on the current conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and beyond. Johnson does so by examining the historical relationship between Leo Tolstoy, the well-known Russian Christian author, and Mahatma Gandhi, the seminal twentieth century leader in India, who was introduced to the Christian tradition through Tolstoy. From this context, Johnson brings out relevant lessons on nonviolent love, peace, and truth for readers, and suggests ways in which these can be applied in various contexts, including our own.

Before the final book reviews, Dwight Perry, provost at the Moody Bible Institute, and Elizabeth Pierre, who teaches at North Park Theological Seminary in the areas of pastoral care and counseling, offer a brief reflection on their 2021 book, *Even the Best of Us: Clergy Sexual Failure—the Church's Hidden Sin.*[2]

It is our prayer that the content of this issue will encourage and build up those who serve the Lord Jesus Christ in the church and in the academy.

[2] See Dwight A. Perry and Elizabeth O. Pierre, *Even the Best of Us: Clergy Sexual Failure—The Church's Hidden Sin* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2021).

Jesus as Truth: An Exegetical and Theological Reading of John, with Implications for 1 John

Ron C. Fay, adjunct professor of New Testament, Rawlings School of Divinity, Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia

At a key moment in John's narrative, Pilate asks Jesus, "What is truth?"[1] The question carries a deliciously ironic flavor in the discourse of John,[2] as truth stands as a major theme throughout the Gospel. Indeed, the question, though addressed to Christ, fixes the reader directly in its sights. Truth looms large in the Johannine theological vocabulary, and many attempts to place it in terms of Greek philosophical thought or Jewish religious (or sectarian) significance draw criticism, for the simple reason that Johannine usage of the term *alētheia* (truth) and its cognates does not align with non-Johannine usage.[3] Rather than dwelling on the possible parallels, this essay will delve into the Gospel of John itself and survey the uses, looking for a hermeneutical key. Once this is accomplished, the results will be applied to John in hopes of unlocking the import of truth in that text and thereby creating a theological reading of certain difficult passages. If this is successful, then the implications for 1 John will be considered.

[1] John 18:38. This article will not delve into questions of authenticity or historicity as the canonical significance lies at the heart of this work. For such issues see, e.g., Andreas J. Köstenberger, " 'What is Truth?' Pilate's Question in Its Johannine and Larger Biblical Context," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48 (2005): 33–62.

[2] For the irony, see below.

[3] E.g., Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary,* 2 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:418–9. Keener notes how the history of the understanding of the background of this word in Johannine studies has moved from Hellenistic, to Jewish, and points between.

Exegetical Consideration of the Passages

The Early Portions of John: Introducing the Argument

The Gospel opens with the prologue of 1:1–18, a poem that sets the interpretive stage for the rest of the book.[4] Within these opening verses, truth appears closely entwined with the person of Jesus and the message he brings. The term *alētheia* occurs in 1:14 and 17, yet it is foreshadowed by the use of the adjective *alēthinos* (true) in 1:9. Jesus comes as more than a light, he comes as the true light (*to phōs to alēthinon*, the light the true), that which gives light to all. Carson describes this as "the genuine and ultimate self-disclosure of God to man."[5] The Father sends the Son in this sense, that the Son is full of grace and truth. This phrase clearly resonates with Exodus 34:6 in the description given of God (with *hesed va emet*, "grace and truth" in Hebrew, replaced by *charitos kai alētheias*, the same in Greek), though John differs in wording from the LXX.[6] The last use of truth in the Prologue repeats the phrase "grace and truth," this time using it as a contrast between Jesus and Moses.[7] Whereas Moses merely passes on the law without originating it (note the divine passive), Jesus, in and of himself, conveys grace and truth. This opening poem, then, contends that truth comes from the *person* of Christ when he is on earth, that he is the reality about which others have testified (cf. 1:6–8, 15), and that key characteristics of God are found in him.

The interplay of light and truth reemerges in 3:21, with Jesus or the evangelist[8] commenting on how "the one who does the truth" (a literal ren-

[4] See, e.g., Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John,* 3 vols. (New York City: Herder and Herder, 1968), 1:224-32. For the poetic nature of the prologue, see R. Alan Culpepper, "The Pivot of John's Prologue," *New Testament Studies* 27.1 (1980): 1–30.

[5] D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John,* Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 122.

[6] Francis J. Moloney, "The Use of χάρις in John 1:14, 16–17: A Key to the Johannine Narrative," *Pacifica* 29.3 (2016): 261-84, here 272. Moloney does not think there is a direct connection as the phrasing and usage is too different. Here the Septuagint (LXX) is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, often called the Old Greek instead.

[7] As in Moloney, "The Use of χάρις," 272–3. Not "true grace" or any other combination, contra Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 2 vols., Anchor Bible 29–29A (New York: Doubleday, 1966–1970), 1:14 and Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 47-8.

[8] The distinction for this article is moot, though see the discussion for these comments in 3:21 being editorial in R. V. Tasker, *John*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 69. Cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel & Epistles of John*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 89. For a case for Jesus speaking the words of 3:16-21, see Brown, *John*, 1:136–7, 149.

dering of *ho poiōn tēn alētheian*)[9] comes to the light, namely Jesus (cf. 1:8–9; 3:19).[10] The purpose of coming to the light (note the *hina* clause, which typically introduces purpose or intent) is that the deeds are understood as being "in God." Doing the truth, then, points toward being in Christ (the light), just as not doing the truth points toward being in the darkness.[11] Brown phrases it as "The one who turns away is not an occasional sinner, one who '*practices* wickedness'; it is not that he cannot see the light, but that he hates the light."[12] If one holds to the Semitic understanding, that doing the truth means living or acting honorably,[13] then the Fourth Gospel seems to be pointing toward good deeds equating to being in God. If someone acts honorably, that person comes to the light in order to demonstrate he or she is in God. Thus, only those in God can act or live honorably. However, this does not make practical sense. If, instead, doing the truth referred to something else, then this wooden interpretation would not be helpful. The author makes the distinction clear in the preceding verses, namely, that those who are in the light (meaning they are in Jesus) are those who do the truth.[14] Doing the truth is a defining characteristic rather than a prerequisite for being in God.[15] Faith in Christ functions as the only important work, with the rest flowing from it.[16] The next occurrence of truth is in 4:23–24, but we will focus on this later, due to the complexity of the passage.

The Middle Portions of John: Clarifying Truth

The first definitive identification of what John means by truth is found in 5:33, where Jesus proclaims the Baptizer as the witness to the truth. Previously, John announced that God sent the Baptizer to witness to the light as he was not the light (1:7–9). The light came into the world, and this light was Jesus. The Baptizer witnesses to the incarnation, thus the

[9] For the clear parallel to 1 John 1:6, see below.

[10] Contra Stanley E. Porter, *John, His Gospel, and Jesus: In Pursuit of the Johannine Voice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 189. Porter sees "light" as an ethical or theological term, and in turn sees "truth" the same way in this passage.

[11] The obvious Pauline parallels regarding "in Christ" will not be discussed here.

[12] Brown, *John*, 1:149, emphasis original.

[13] The evidence for this view comes mostly from Qumran. See Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:407–8, and Carson, *John*, 207–8, though Carson simply names it "Semitic" without giving evidence.

[14] Cf. Carson, *John*, 208. Carson follows this argument but does not see the faulty reasoning in equating the Semitic interpretation with the words of 3:21.

[15] David F. Ford, "Meeting Nicodemus: A Case Study in Daring Theological Interpretation," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 66.1 (2013): 1–17, here 12–13.

[16] See Keener, *John*, 1:574.

truth relates directly to the incarnation (cf. 1:19–34).[17] The last verse confirms this interpretation, when Jesus states that the witness or testimony he receives is divine not human. The significance in this declaration lies in the confirmation that Jesus proclaims himself as the truth. The truth is not God, the truth is not the gospel, rather the truth is the person of Jesus Christ in the flesh according to this passage. The Baptizer functions as an additional witness to God, thus supporting Jesus's claim rather than making the claim for him. What the Baptizer declares concerning Jesus is not only true, it is the truth in that Jesus *is* the truth.

Jesus also emphasizes the importance of truth in 8:31–47. He had spoken to the crowds and then turns to address those who believed in him.[18] In 8:32, Christ tells those who believe in him that the truth will set them free, then parallels this statement in 8:36 by saying the Son sets them free. While some commentators see this usage of truth as referring to the gospel, this parallel does not allow for such an understanding.[19] The message here cannot be separated from the messenger, for the gospel concerns Christ and, in a sense, the gospel *is* Christ.[20] John conveys the truth as the actuality of Jesus, not simply the revelation referring to him, nor words about him, instead this signifies an encounter with Jesus.[21] The conditional sentence that begins Jesus's response to the believing Jews starts with the condition of remaining in Jesus as his true disciple, and this abiding enables the truth to set one free. Thus, those who are true disciples exclusively achieve freedom through the truth.[22] If truth sets one free, and Jesus sets one free, then Jesus is the truth. The rest of the dialogue follows the same idea, as Jesus continues to tell the crowd about the truth, a truth that the devil does not have in him. Having the truth, in 8:42, equates with loving Jesus. Knowledge of the Father indicates or leads to love for the Son, and thus the truth would be in them.[23] Being

[17] Carson, *John*, 260.

[18] The problems surrounding John's various uses of believe and faith are not relevant for this discussion.

[19] Contra Carson, John, 348–9; Keener, *John*, 1:747. Edward W. Klink III, *John*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 414, comes the closest to this view, but then after stating truth is relational and found only in Jesus, he also retreats to the view of truth as gospel.

[20] Tasker, *John*, 117. Tasker says, referring to the combination of 8:31 and 32, "Christ's word is indistinguishable from Christ himself."

[21] Cf. Brown, *John*, 1:355, though Brown is not clear with respect to what a "revelation" of Jesus means.

[22] Cf. Carson, John, 349.

[23] Carson, *John*, 352.

in the truth and loving Jesus are one and the same. Certainly, Satan has no stake in Jesus, and thus the truth could not be in him.

Finalizing the Argument: Truth in John Is a Person

In many respects, 14:6 serves as the lynchpin for the argument, as Jesus's statement makes abundantly clear. Throughout John, the evangelist offers clear interpretive tools, noting in 7:39 that water equates with the Holy Spirit. In 12:33 he describes what lifting up signifies, and in 3:36 he details what life entails. The Fourth Gospel makes plain the hidden symbols throughout the book, and thus the Gospel explains Jesus as the referent of the truth. The stark statement by Jesus that "I am the way, the truth, and the life" leaves little room for the interpreter to come up with an alternate meaning.[24] In speaking of Jesus, Schnackenburg states, "so that all that a human being striving for truth and salvation is looking for is to be found fully and completely in him, and him alone."[25] John looks to neither Gnosticism nor Mysticism, apocalyptic nor wisdom tradition in formulating his ideas on truth, rather he focuses the theme clearly and totally on Christ.

The next references to truth in John's Gospel are either part of an introductory formula ("I tell you the truth," e.g., 14:12; 16:7, 20, 23) or a name for the Holy Spirit ("Spirit of truth", e.g., 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). It is the latter of these phenomena that gives data to this line of inquiry. While the Spirit of truth appears as a name for the Holy Spirit only three times in John, each occurrence affirms the interpretive link between Jesus and truth. The first time Jesus speaks of the Spirit of truth, he tells of someone he will send to comfort the disciples and be with them during his absence. The purpose of the Holy Spirit is to remind believers of the teachings of Jesus, to keep his words and him alive within them (14:23–26). The Spirit of truth testifies about Jesus (15:26), indeed, that functions as the main purpose of the Spirit in John. The Spirit reinforces the work of the believers in spreading the word about Jesus. The key for understanding the Spirit of truth is found in 16:13–15. The ESV renders the passage,

> When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but

[24] Brown, *John*, 2:630. Brown understands Jesus as the revelation of the Father (e.g., 1:18), and thus the embodiment of truth.

[25] Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:237.

> whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

The truth the Spirit looks to guide the believers into is the truth of Jesus, in that it *belongs* to Jesus. What truth is this? Simply the truth of who Jesus *is*. The unity of possessions between the Father and Son in this instance highlights the importance and scope of the truth the Spirit offers: this truth is spiritual truth, and this truth is the only truth.

The last major occurrences of truth in John, outside of the testimony of the author being truth in 19:35, come in two conversations. First, Jesus's prayer in chapter 17 contains three uses of truth. Second, the conversation between Jesus and Pilate stresses the issue of truth. In John 17, the telling passage is found in verses 17–19. From the ESV, Jesus prays, "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth." God's word is truth, yet we already know from John's prologue that the word is Jesus. This, then, restates that Jesus is the truth since the word is truth and Jesus is the word. In addition, Jesus sanctifies himself in order that believers might be sanctified in the truth, something that only makes sense if Jesus is the truth. The final conversation with Pilate, then, takes on an intensely ironic tone. Jesus declares in 18:37 that he came to bear witness to the truth and that all who are of the truth listen to him. Thus, those who actually follow Jesus listen to him and Jesus came to witness about himself. When Pilate asks the question "What is truth?" the irony abounds since the answer to his question stands directly in front of him. Rather than being some sort of sardonic twist by Pilate, John uses this moment to spotlight the identity of Jesus.

John 4:23–24 and Trinitarian Worship

Truth in John, then, is not some nebulous concept, rather, truth finds itself defined in the person of Jesus the Christ. Truth is not limited to God nor to the message of the gospel, rather, both are part of what the truth is. Jesus is God's word, and this word then is also the truth. Thus, God's truth for all people is in fact Jesus. The revealer is also the revelation as Jesus comes to witness about himself to all people, and this leaves the Spirit of truth to continue his work while he is not with believers.

How does this fit John 4:23–24, which we skipped over earlier? The ESV translates this passage as, "But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." The implications should be both clear and important. The formula of "worshiping God in Spirit/spirit and in truth" conveys something important, but there is a dispute over what that is. Many take the view that this refers to recognizing that God is spirit, and also embodies truth, so no place can contain his worship.[26] Some add the idea that the worshiper must have the Holy Spirit in them and be a true Christ follower.[27]

The implications of this study, however, point in a different direction. John employs language in different and consistent ways, with key words intentionally being repeated to convey the same theme over and over.[28] To worship God in Spirit/spirit and in truth fits a Trinitarian understanding of John, if one allows John's vocabulary to remain consistent. This goes against the idea that this worship refers to a new understanding of God as spirit, and therefore having no specific place or a worship that contains some new quality that was previously missing. If true worship is Trinitarian worship, since one can only worship God by including the Spirit and the Son, then true worship also is explicitly Christian worship.[29] One should worship the Father (God) in the Holy Spirit (Spirit) and in the Son (truth), so the approach to the Father is through, or by way of, the Spirit and Son, which is a consistent teaching and theme of the Fourth Gospel. In John, the Son and Spirit want to direct all glory to the Father.[30]

Implications for 1 John: Exegesis

1 John 1–2: Simple Ideas

1 John picks up the concept of truth from John's Gospel, yet the epistle also develops the idea in a different direction. While some conclude this

[26] Porter, *John, His Gospel, and Jesus*, 189–90.

[27] See the argument in Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:438–9.

[28] "Water" being one of the more obvious examples, along with "word," "hour," "life," and "light."

[29] Strangely, Andreas J. Köstenberger and Scott R. Swain reject this reading in their book, *Father, Son and Spirit: The Trinity and John's Gospel*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 24 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 94.

[30] Note Richard Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology* (Grand Rapids: MI: Baker, 2015), 58, where he summarizes, "Jesus seeks to promote not himself but God."

supports a difference in authorship, this seems to be jumping to a conclusion without looking at the data. Truth appears in 1 John immediately after the opening and remains a major theme throughout the short book. The word *alētheia* occurs nine times in 1 John,[31] each usage carrying specific theological and practical insights.

The author of 1 John utilizes dichotomies with no gray areas. The wordplays between light and dark, love and hate, truth and lying remain as the metaphoric and communicative focal points throughout the work.[32] This method of contrasts immediately comes to the fore in 1:6, where the author parallels not doing the truth (*poioumena tēn alētheian*) with lying. The important stylistic detail of the active picture of "doing the truth" in balance with the verbal concept of "lying" strikes at the heart of 1 John's theological agenda, namely that practice shows what one believes. Faith enacted is true faith, whereas faith professed without action is no faith at all.[33] The contrast of dark and light surrounds that of truth and lies, creating a doubled metaphor to carry the author's argument. The author equates walking in the darkness with lying and not doing the truth. The opposite of these actions is walking in the light or being in the light (1:7). The idea of doing the truth, then, conveys a way of living rather than a momentary action in time. 1 John sees truth here as an enacted principle, or an internal standard used to measure external action. "Doing the truth" in this sense signifies truth as an ethical and practical concern.

In a close parallel to this usage and within the same pericope, not having the truth within oneself (1:8, *hē alētheia ouk estin en hēmin*) is parallel to self-deception. In this case, the person who claims to not have sin (the conditional phrase beginning 1:8; *ean eipōmen hoti hamartian ouk echōmen*) exists without the truth. The opening claim to be without sin likely stems from the rhetoric of the secessionists[34] and the author is replying with a correction. Those who have the truth, then, are those who sin. The logical conclusion, in a theological sense, to having sin is to seek forgiveness, which comes from God by way of confession (1:9). Truth in 1:8 marks an inverted value in that one finds truth only in those

[31] 1:6, 8; 2:4, 21; 3:18, 19; 4:6; 5:6.

[32] The abrupt shift to idolatry in 5:21 will not be handled here, as it is outside the parameters of this study.

[33] See the discussion in Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John*, Anchor Bible 30 (New York: Doubleday, 1982), 199–200.

[34] Cf. Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, Word Biblical Commentary 51 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 28–9

who have sin and confess it.

Another practical usage of truth occurs in 2:4, where truth connects with keeping God's commands.[35] In this passage, having the truth parallels keeping his commandments. One must keep his commands in order to show one does in fact know him, whereas not keeping his commands yet claiming to know him makes one a liar. As stated previously in 1:8, if one is a liar then such a person does not have the truth. This moves truth once again into a practical category, such that keeping commands displays whether one is in the truth or not. Logically, this argument concludes with 2:6, such that whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did. In this line of logic, keeping his word (2:5 *tērē autou ton logon*) restates keeping his commands (note the same verb is used in each instance) putting the previously negative statement into a positive declaration.

The next mention of truth, namely in 2:21, pushes the significance of truth to a new level. Here, the author moves from seeing truth as integral for the believer to declaring possession of truth as a salvific issue. The audience received the letter because they indeed had the truth, and this truth includes confession of Jesus as the Christ and as the Son, and whoever confesses the Son also has the Father (2:23 *ho homologōn ton huion kai ton patera echei*). Having the Father, for 1 John, equates with eternal life, as seen in 2:25, since those who have the Father receive his promises, and his promise is eternal life. Therefore, in reversing the logical flow of the thought, eternal life equates with having the Father. Also, having the Father equates with confessing Jesus as Christ and Son, and denying the Son is being a liar, and affirming there is no truth in the liar. Thus, logically, having the truth signifies in 1 John having eternal life. Therefore, possession of the truth becomes and is defined as a salvific matter. However, this does not lay out the content of truth, only the consequence of truth.

1 John 3–4: Truth Acting

In 3:18–19, truth occurs twice in a row with slightly different nuances, as the author is presenting a different argument. Truth does not reduce to an adjective in 3:18, such that the deeds are considered "sincere" or

[35] Whether the *autos* (he) refers to Jesus or God the Father is not relevant here, but see Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 253. The likely referent is Jesus since there is only a repetition of pronouns through 2:6, and there only Jesus as the antecedent makes sense of the argument.

"true" deeds,[36] rather the emphasis is on truth as an action, or truth as active.[37] The author picks up the significance of truth as seen in 1:6, such that truth refers to practical living in light of Christ. Genuine truth continues to be an active truth.[38] The reference in 3:19, however, moves to a deeper level by renewing the salvific dimension of truth. This verse does link strongly with the preceding, however, as it acts as a summary and conclusion while building to a new argument, as the author pushes beyond active faith into the means of assurance for the believer.[39] The immediate clue comes from the parallel between being of the truth (*ek tēs alētheias esmen*) and being reassured before God (*emprosthen autou peisomen tēn kardian hēmōn*, literally "persuading our hearts before him"). The heart condemns the believer before God, assailing one's confidence, yet assurance is found in doing what God commands (see 2:4), namely, believing in Jesus and loving one another. Assurance has both an inward aspect (faith) and an outward aspect (loving), both of which rely upon truth as a foundation.[40]

The other main form of assurance manifests itself in the person of the Spirit indwelling the believer (3:24). The author places belonging to the truth[41] and having the Spirit on the same level. Marshall pushes the significance one step further in stating that belonging to the truth is the same as being born of God.[42] Just as in 2:21, truth has now become a salvific seal. Speaking the truth, doing the truth, and belonging to the truth all entail a moral element, yet the salvific element carries more weight for the author of 1 John (and presumably for the readers and hearers as well). The phrase *ek tēs alētheias esmen* goes beyond identification and into the realm of theological disclosure.[43] Smalley points out that the formula of *einai ek* within 1 John (cf. 2:19, 21; 3:8, 10) displays the nature of something by referencing its origin (whether negated or

[36] See Brown's discussion, *The Epistles of John*, 451–2.

[37] I. Howard Marshall (*The Epistles of John*, New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978], 196) calls for a deeper meaning than truth as an action; rather he calls for a love that reflects the inward reality of the outward actions. This seems too much of a stretch for this type of common parallelism in the Johannine corpus without more argumentation.

[38] Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 199.

[39] Smalley, 199–200.

[40] See Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 452–3.

[41] Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 196.

[42] Marshall, 197.

[43] Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 201.

not).[44] In this instance, being of the truth entails being born of God, which in turn places truth within the sphere of God.[45] Thus, truth entails a practical matter, such that a life dedicated to truth is lived a specific way. Truth also carries a salvific flavor, such that only those of the truth can have confidence before God. Finally, being of the truth places one within the divine sphere.

The last two occurrences of truth bring the discussion in a different direction, namely truth interacting with the Spirit. The author's principle concern at the beginning of 1 John 4 is identity, who believers are.[46] Brown's taxonomy of "those who belong to God" as over against "those who belong to the world" covers 4:4–6.[47] The logic of the author's argument follows much the same as that in 2:21. Those who indeed come from God (*ek tou theou*) listen to the words of 1 John (with the obvious lockstep intent of obeying the contents) and thus prove the Spirit of truth is in them (*ek toutou ginōskomen to pneuma tēs alētheias*). The import of the identity of the spirit in 4:6 comes to the fore in asking what truth signifies in this verse. If the referent is the Holy Spirit, then a Trinitarian focus is being developed in this section. However, the only possible previous mention of the Holy Spirit appears in 4:2, and this, on the heels of a plural mention of spirit. While there are echoes of the Paraclete from John in this section,[48] the more likely reading is to see the spirit in 4:6 as a continuation of the concept referencing the *inner being* of the individual. In other words, the flow moves from talking about false prophets to testing the spirits, with the logical follow up of how to test spirits and evaluate the results of such a test, to the defeat of those not from God, finally ending with the conclusion of believing the contents of 1 John since those contents come from God. Of special importance is the *hoti* ("that" or "in order that," often introducing logical consequences of the previous statement) in 4:1, demonstrating that the false prophets are the reason for testing spirits (in the plural). One tests the false prophet not

[44] Smalley, 201.

[45] Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 197.

[46] Or who are believers versus those who are not. Cf. Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 501. Contra Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 203; and Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 215. Marshall sees the focus as the identification of spirits in terms of the spirits whereas Smalley links this to the larger picture as a condition for living as a child of God in this world.

[47] Especially Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 507.

[48] Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 507-9. However, in mild disagreement, see Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 230.

by challenging an unseen force within the prophet, rather one simply asks a confession of a specific doctrine. The argument of the passage does not call for, nor need, two specific supernatural spirits influencing all prophets, whether false or true.[49] Thus the Holy Spirit remains in the wings, and human actors retain the stage in 4:6.[50]

What, then, does this occurrence of truth actually mean? Rather than harkening back to the Fourth Gospel with Spirit of truth as a name for the Holy Spirit, this spirit of truth functions as an indicator of status or identity, as in 3:19. Each spirit of truth is not a false prophet, and thus in contradistinction each is (in this context) a true prophet from God (taking the genitives in this section as being source or origin, as in 4:2, *to pneuma tou theou*, the Spirit/spirit of God). Those who have a spirit of truth are from God, just as the author and his work are from God. Once again, truth functions as a sign of those who are saved.

1 John 5: The Difficult Section

The last passage including truth in 1 John also comprises the most difficult passage to navigate in the book, due to textual, grammatical, logical, and theological issues. The textual problems of 1 John 5:5–8 are well known and need not be entered into here, other than simply to say that the phrase *hoti ho Christos* (that the Christ) was inserted during the transmission of the text for theological, textual, or grammatical smoothness.[51] This changes the tone of the passage, making the spirit a messenger who claims Christ is the truth. Rather, the spirit here testifies concerning the truth which he himself is. If the spirit, then, is defined as truth for 1 John, does that mean that 1 John and John do indeed have different understandings of truth, such that John has truth instantiated in the person of *Christ*, and 1 John has truth instantiated in the *spirit*? While this is certainly a relevant question, asking it at this juncture nevertheless gets ahead of the discussion. First the phrase "the Spirit is

[49] Contra Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 500–1. Brown sees the "Spirit of Truth" and the "Spirit of Error" as two powers contesting over the prophets, but this certainly has no grounding anywhere else in the text or theology of 1 John and remains too speculative to defend.

[50] Thus Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 230–1. Contra Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 209, especially n. 22. Marshall states that in 4:1–3 the idea of spirit means one who is influenced by a spirit rather than direct reference to the Holy Spirit, yet he offers no argument for his position.

[51] Cf. Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 580; Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 234; and Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 273, 280.

truth" must be exegeted to make plain the intended meaning, especially in this quagmire of a text.

The author states baldly *to pneuma estin hē alētheia* (the Spirit/spirit is the truth), yet the use of this type of double articular construct (two articles used with a verb between so there is direct grammatical correspondence) within the Johannine corpus typically is restricted to describing Jesus.[52] This indicates that something slightly out of the ordinary occurs in 5:6. Often times, *hoti* can introduce indirect discourse or possibly, in this case, the contents of an implied testimony, yet the role of the spirit remains testifying about Jesus rather than testifying about himself.[53] The characterization of 1 John regarding the term spirit consistently displays the spirit as a witness to the person of Jesus, and in turn the witness to believers that they follow Jesus. However, this witness is never called the Holy Spirit nor is any indication made of something external to the believer. There are only twelve occurrences of *pneuma* in 1 John,[54] and other than the occurrences in 5:6 and 5:8 that are now under dispute, only 4:13 refers to the Holy Spirit, as the term elsewhere refers to the spirit within people in all previous passages.[55] Therefore, what warrant exists for understanding this occurrence as the Holy Spirit? Smalley argues from the appearance in 3:24, building off the concept of anointing in 2:20, 27, yet he assumes that 3:24 names the Holy Spirit. Once again, though, the context of 3:24 allows for an open interpretation as to the identification of *pneuma*, whether the intended referent is the Holy Spirit or the spirit of the individual empowered by God. In fact, taken in conjunction with the above argument concerning 4:6, it is unlikely that 3:24 points to the Holy Spirit. This spirit functions as the practical seal of salvation, in that the individual changes personal behavior,[56] exactly what the author discusses in 4:1–3 with no reference to the Holy Spirit. If there are no prior explicit references to the Holy Spirit, what about 5:8? The problem with using 5:8 ("the Spirit and the water and the blood") is that the interpretation relies upon 5:6, not to mention the difficulty

[52] Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 580. Brown notes that scholars have been saying that God is described anarthrously (without an article) in order to show *function*, whereas the articular formulations for Jesus show *essence*, concluding that any such a designation certainly goes beyond the evidence.

[53] Though appealing to the Fourth Gospel, see Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 580.

[54] 3:24; 4:1 (2x); 4:2 (2x); 4:3; 4:6 (2x); 4:13; 5:6; and 5:8.

[55] Note that the paucity of direct references to the Holy Spirit does not mean there are no references. See Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 250.

[56] Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John* 211–2.

inherent in exegeting the verse at all.[57] Marshall notes that, no matter how one slices the problem of the spirit in 5:6, the basic understanding remains that this spirit enables the individual and the corporate body to live truthfully.[58] The emphasis, then, is upon truth as an internal indicator of salvation. Even in the unlikelihood that 5:6 does call the Holy Spirit truth, the result lies in the truth being a sign of salvation.

Conclusion

Truth in 1 John indicates a status of salvation. If one has the truth, one is indeed a child of God. If one lives the truth, the practical aspect that prevails in the earlier portions of the book, then one is indeed a child of God. A test of this truthfulness is the appropriate confession that Jesus is the Christ who came in the flesh, and that he is also the Son of God the Father. Truth displays itself in the life of the individual in practical ways, yet the emphasis lies on the confession of, and adherence to, Jesus.

How does this study of 1 John fit with the study of John? In John, truth was instantiated in the person of Jesus. In 1 John, truth confirms adherence to Jesus. The Holy Spirit leading one into all truth signifies an individual being led into a saving knowledge of Jesus. The theological bridge of the cross spans the gap between John and 1 John. In other words, truth in John focuses on the person of Jesus in the flesh—as he lived and taught within an earthly, human setting. In 1 John, the stress is on truth residing within the individual, functioning as a witness to the efficaciousness of Jesus's work in one's soul. Yet this truth finds its kernel in the flesh of Jesus (cf. 4:2), namely that he came. Therefore, a progression occurs from John to 1 John, but the progression, while theological in nature, is chronological in character. John focuses on the truth *before* the cross, whereas 1 John focuses on truth *in light of* the cross. At the same time, John points toward the time *after* the cross, with Jesus's own words about truth coming from the Holy Spirit (16:13), while 1 John points to *before* the cross by acknowledging that salvation is found only in Jesus's earthly existence in real flesh. Truth, then, exists in the historical person of Jesus and in the theological comprehension of his significance for the individual. Both John and 1 John attest to this understanding of *alētheia*.

This study has focused on the term *alētheia* in both John and 1 John,

[57] See the discussion in Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 581–5.
[58] Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 234–5.

seeing if there is a development of thought, or a simple progression. In both works, the word was found to be Christocentric in origin and salvific in significance. John carefully lays out the pre-cross importance, without neglecting the post-cross meaning, whereas 1 John majors on the significance for the individual in light of Jesus's death, without ignoring his life. The implication follows that there is progression from John to 1 John, but without a development that would require a great length of time or different authors. The theological nature of 1 John finds itself complementing and filling out the picture of *alētheia* as found in John.

Preaching as Eschatology: Calling the Future into the Present

Casey Barton, director of the Pastoral Ministry Program
Lancaster Bible College and Capital Seminary, Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Twenty years of pastoral ministry has brought at least two important observations regarding the practical eschatology present both in faith journeys of average church members and in proclaimed eschatology from the pulpit. First, the eschatological hope of many church members rests in the belief that Christ will come soon to rescue them from the pain, discomfort, and cultural battles that they themselves, and the church as a whole, currently face. Broadly speaking, this reflects an escapist theology that leans into a rescue from the trials of the world over the call to transform the world through the activity of bringing about God's kingdom. Second, preaching about eschatology is largely absent or locates God in some time other than now, through casting eschatology as exclusively future, primarily past, or outside of time through allegorization. With God located sometime other than now, escapist tendencies in faith journeys are reinforced. This may reflect an underdeveloped eschatological theology on the part of the preacher as well.

This essay begins the development of an eschatological theology of proclamation that is rooted in a biblical framework proposed by theologians such as N.T. Wright and Kevin Vanhoozer which presents Scripture and theology as enacted drama. Further, it will take guidance from Jürgen Moltmann's assertion that all theology is done within the context of eschatology. Preaching must be an eschatological act of proclamation that seeks to call the future fullness of God's kingdom into the present life and experience of God's people, enacting the conditions of God's future in the world right now.

First, the diminishment of eschatology, both in theology and from the pulpit, needs exploration, along with an understanding of the consequences of this absence. In response, a biblical theology shaped by the idea of enacted drama along with Moltmann's eschatological theology can be adopted as a matrix for understanding God's story eschatologically. This matrix then provides the context for pulpit proclamation. In this light, preaching calls God's people to participate in God's story through "eschatological deeds of hope."[1] Pulpit proclamation itself becomes an eschatological act, calling God's future kingdom into history's present.

The Diminishment of Pulpit Eschatology

In 1962, biblical theologian Krister Stendahl lamented the diminishment of eschatology in contemporary theologies. In the systematic theological thought of his time, "biblical eschatology—i.e., the matrix of all NT thought—was taken care of in a 'last chapter' of systematic theology dealing with 'last things.'"[2] At times this "last chapter" occupies what may feel like an appendix at the end of a tome that has dealt with the more important doctrines of Scripture, the attributes of God, the identity and atoning work of Jesus Christ, and the Christian community. Chapters on eschatology tend to dwell on pieces of eschatological thought (the return of Christ, an interpretation of the millennium, the judgment of the dead, life everlasting), rather than presenting eschatology as a context for Christian theology and living.[3] As is the nature of much systematic thought (necessary as it is), this type of treatment of eschatology often compartmentalizes doctrine and in important ways dis-integrates it from the larger story of God's redemption of humanity.[4]

[1] See Jürgen Moltmann, "Theology as Eschatology," in *The Future of Hope: Theology as Eschatology*, ed. Frederick Herzog (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 3.

[2] Krister Stendahl, "Biblical Theology, Contemporary," in vol. 1 of *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1962), 435.

[3] For instance, Wayne Grudem's popular volume and Robert Reymond's systematic theology from a Reformed perspective both place eschatology at the very end of their volumes, somewhat compartmentalizing the doctrine in the process. In contrast, a more recent volume has sought to purposefully take eschatology as the context for the entirety of systematic theology: Thomas N. Finger, *Systematic Theology Volume 1: An Eschatological Approach* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2020). Also note Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994); Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998).

[4] I have written about this dynamic extensively in my book, *Preaching through Time: Anachronism as a Way Forward for Preaching* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017).

Theological shifts away from eschatology. Over the past two centuries many corners of Christian faith have covered over, diluted, or moved to the last chapter their proclamation of a future-oriented faith, which sees God breaking into human history in or from the future. The reasons for this shift are rooted in the Enlightenment and modern projects, especially throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which at a fundamental and philosophical level shifted the ground of being from God to humanity. For eschatology in the realm of biblical interpretation, an increasing anti-supernatural conviction and nontheistic approaches to the text in many ways neutralized traditional interpretations of biblical texts of eschatological importance. While the scope of this essay cannot fully explore these shifts themselves, their consequences, especially for the loss of an eschatological theology for the church and its proclamation, are important to note. Writing after these broad philosophical shifts and their effects on biblical interpretation and theology had occurred, Moltmann expands on some of the significant consequences for Christian faith.

Having moved through Enlightenment and modern philosophical and theological shifts, for many, "the theistic, cosmological or, as one says, mythological world view has become antiquated in its basic categories," Moltmann writes. However, these theological and philosophical shifts have not adequately addressed some of the most basic questions of human experience that Christianity has always sought to answer:

> But it is banal pathos of the Enlightenment to pass over the basic question that this world view, demythologized by Kant, Feuerbach, and now by the existential interpretation of theologians, lies a real plight of man and a real initiative to overcome it as well. The plight underlying theistic world explanation is the theodicy question: the question of the justification of God in the world.[5]

For Moltmann, a credible theology centers upon answering two foundational questions necessary to maintain a theistic worldview. These questions have been left unanswered in modernity and in the theological thought it has produced. The first, he notes, has to do with the justification of God in the world: Is God present in the midst of the suffering of history? This is the theodicy question. The second flows from it: What is humanity's identity in light of God's presence? These two questions get

[5] Moltmann, "Theology as Eschatology," 3.

to the heart of the human condition and human need. To answer these pressing human questions, Moltmann asserts that what is needed is the recovery of a theology able to appeal to a hope in a shared future, which governs the experience of the present.[6] With the loss of an eschatological voice it is worth asking whether Christianity is invested in the prospect of hope for the future:

> In the past two centuries, a Christian faith in God without hope for the future of the world has called forth a secular hope for the future of the world without faith in God.…We have arrived at a moment in history that provokes the question: Should there now be a parting of the ways in history, so that faith aligns itself with the past and unfaith with the future?[7]

Christianity suffers a crisis of credibility when eschatology is not the matrix of theological thinking. This matrix is able to hold together the tension between past, present, and future. It calls for a hope from the future that governs Christianity's experience of God and identity in the present. The question of God's presence in human misery in the modern era has shifted toward being answered by atheism, and theology has been replaced by anthropology for addressing questions of human identity.

Moltmann asserts that in this context, a dialectical unity necessary for Christianity to exist has broken down: the tension between the historical and the absolute; the appearance of God in history. He writes:

> As long as the dialectical unity of a particular history and special historical mediation with the universally relevant that pertains directly to everyone can be retained, that is, as long as the unity of Jesus with God and of God with Jesus can be retained, Christianity is alive. As soon as the dialectical unity between history and the absolute is broken, Christianity dis-integrates.…Today we stand in the midst of the disintegration of this dialectical unity.[8]

With the fracture of God with particular history, that is to say, the

[6] It is important to note that eschatology is not fully absent from Christian theology. As I will discuss below, it persists largely in futuristic, realized, and demythologized forms. These have been, however, theologies inadequate to handle these questions of theodicy and identity, because of how they tend to dis-integrate time.

[7] Jürgen Moltmann, "Hope and History," *Theology Today*, 25 (1968), 369-370.

[8] Moltmann, "Theology as Eschatology," 2

historical and the absolute, the questions of theodicy and human identity are unanswerable by Christian faith. Yet the questions still remain, answered in a sort of secular eschatology that attempts to find answers outside of a theistic framework: "After the mythological world view has been scientifically superseded, the theodicy question still remains, in its open radicality more inescapable than before, as modern atheism shows."[9]

Foundationally, for preaching and indeed for all practical theology, pastoral ministry, and Christian faith, the dialectical unity of the historical and the absolute that Moltmann points to has held together in the appearance of Jesus Christ. It is in the incarnation that God has most fully and decisively made his unity with his creation known. The inbreaking of the absolute into history in the birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and rule of Jesus Christ is the center of Christian faith in which this dialectical unity has held together. Christian faith and practical theology flowing from this unity must survive suspicion or derision from the shifts of modern thought and criticism by finding the biblical theology that can continue to hold the center.

Homiletical Moves away from Eschatology. The shifts of which Moltmann writes and their consequences have complements in the loss of eschatology in the pulpit. Writing specifically in reference to preaching, homiletician Thomas Long writes that in the nineteenth century, "among educated clergy in the churches we have come to call 'mainline,' the language of heaven, hell, Christ's coming reign, and the final judgment were recurring and important topics of sermons . . . but by the close of the twentieth century a veil of embarrassment had been thrown over the whole matter."[10]

Long goes on to give depth to the story of eschatology's diminishment in preaching. In his analysis, the predominant eschatology popular in pulpits at the time was postmillennialism which focused on the action of the church in "working for progress and enlightenment in society, gradually effecting the kingdom and its purposes in human affairs."[11] This theology offered a thoughtful biblical apocalypticism crossed with a responsibility for the progress of God's kingdom through practical engagement in the betterment of society. Long summarizes the move-

[9] Moltmann.

[10] Thomas G. Long, *Preaching from Memory to Hope* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 112.

[11] Long, 114.

ment: "History was . . . unfolding, evolving, and progressing toward the time when Christ would be all in all, and human beings had a role to play in this grand redevelopment project."[12] This unfolding and evolving aspect of postmillennialism differentiated the theology from the competing eschatology of the time, premillennialism, which displayed a greater emphasis on, and expectation for, the apocalyptic quality of last things.

Both postmillennial and premillennial eschatologies were, however, to meet societal and philosophical developments that significantly challenged their legitimacy. These nineteenth-century theologies held to foundations marked by a strong insistence on the literal accuracy of the biblical text, the uniqueness and superiority of Christianity as a religion, and a view of humans as rational beings separate from and more special than the rest of creation. These foundations, each in turn, suffered damage with the development of German higher criticism, the rise of anthropology and the comparative study of religions, and the proposal of evolutionary theory. In a new intellectual and cultural milieu marked by science and rationality, a future-oriented eschatology was largely abandoned in theological thought and consequently in the pulpit.

Whether in mainline or evangelical traditions, Long identifies surviving forms of eschatology in the pulpit existing in one of three broad categories: futuristic (often a mark of fundamentalist theologies), realized, and demythologized. Futuristic eschatology holds on to tenets of earlier theologies, elevating the future over and against the present and the past, often embracing a robust apocalypticism and making the future the real goal of one's faith or existence. This often results in casting God's presence in the future and can tend toward an escapist theology that primarily seeks removal from this world with its problems. Realized eschatology recasts the future as the past, thus diminishing the future aspect of God's drama and marginalizing hope for the renewal of all things. A demythologized eschatology, largely allegorical in nature, seeks an understanding of God outside of actual time and event, finding meaning in universal timeless narratives and categories.[13] In each treatment of the future from the pulpit, the congregation is left with the same fundamental questions of theodicy and identity.

[12] Long.

[13] Thomas G. Long, "Preaching God's Future: The Eschatological Context of Christian Proclamation," in *Sharing Heaven's Music: The Heart of Christian Preaching*, ed. Barry L. Callen (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1985), 196.

A Persistent Search for Hope. Yet, fundamental questions persist. With the absence of answers from the church, and in a media-narrated era, people are simply looking for hope in different places. The abundance of films and television shows set in postapocalyptic times in which characters are continually met with the basic questions of human misery and human identity are evidence of the longing for answers. The popular television show *The Walking Dead* (2010–2022), which traces the lives of survivors in a zombie apocalypse, regularly explores themes of human misery and human identity, both from theistic and atheistic perspectives. The show has displayed above-average longevity, running for eleven seasons. It is based on a critically acclaimed graphic novel that recently ended an even longer run of sixteen years (2003–2019). Films such as *The Book of Eli* (2010) tell stories about finding human identity in the midst of human misery.[14] *Seeking a Friend for the End of the World* (2012) comedically adopts apocalyptic themes to highlight the importance of human relationship in the midst of humanity's inescapable appointment with death. The film *A Boy Called Christmas* (2022) proposes an atheistic ground for human kindness and a hope for a peaceful present and future by dramatizing an origin story for Christmas that purposefully excises God and the Christ narrative.

These cultural artifacts begin to serve as the experiential moments in which people seek and find answers to ultimate questions. Film and religion scholar Margaret Miles has asserted that popular culture has replaced the pulpit as the primary voice shaping people's morals and values:

> "Congregations" became "audiences" as film created a new public sphere in which, under the guise of "entertainment," values are formulated, circulated, resisted, and negotiated. … [T]he representation and examination of values and moral commitments does not presently occur most pointedly in churches, synagogues, or mosques, but before the eyes of "congregations" in movie theaters. North Americans—even those with religious affiliations—now gather about cinema and television screens rather than in churches to ponder the moral quandaries of American life.[15]

[14] The twist in this film actually shows the character's identity found in Scripture and in conforming to the image of Christ.

[15] Margaret R. Miles, *Seeing and Believing: Religion and Values in the Movies* (Boston: Beacon, 1996), 25.

Long has acknowledged this trend away from the pulpit in the search for hope and meaning. He writes, "Our novelists and artists are sensing the power of the eschatological vision. So far, though, this renewal of eschatological thinking and language has bypassed the American pulpit, which remains stuck in the funeral rites of the death of nineteenth-century thought forms."[16] Popular cultural artifacts have become the sermons of the day offering a hope and identity disconnected from Christian faith. David Greenhaw echoes much of Long's eschatological longing, saying that forms of preaching devoid of the eschatological imagination assume "that God is finished with the world." Preaching without some form of eschatological hope "has lost its imagination for a new world and is circumscribed in the closed circle of extant reality… unable to transcend what is already present."[17] This type of preaching can then only provide resources for living in the present, not give hope for the future.

This reality of a homiletic that offers resources for living in the present rather than a hope for the future is observable in the last two years as many churches have moved their church services online in response to the danger posed by gathering during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, of necessity, church members have increasingly been isolated and worship has been mediated through a screen. Even as the pandemic has begun to recede, many churches have seen members not coming back to worship, preferring the screen to real presence. It is worth considering whether the mediation of morals, values, and truth in contemporary popular culture has conditioned many in the church to prefer the screen to the chancel and pew. It is equally worth considering how the diminishment of a developed biblical eschatology has reinforced a hopelessness for the world and a desire to escape. If Long and Greenhaw are correct, a homiletic with an underdeveloped eschatology during this time would focus on "living in the present," or, on just *making it through* this time of pandemic and isolation. This would be distinct from offering a robust eschatological hope that comes from the future that calls to action in the present.[18] The loss of eschatology in the pulpit is the loss of hope. A recovered eschatological voice must provide a hope for the present rooted in God's promise for the future.

[16] Long, *Preaching from Memory to Hope,* 123.

[17] David Greenhaw, "Preaching and Eschatology: Opening a New World in Preaching," *Journal for Preachers* 12.3 (1989): 3.

[18] A study of sermons preached in various churches from March 2020 through the pandemic would provide insight to this observation.

The following seeks to recover an eschatological voice for preaching specifically rooted in a theological framework that is dramatically shaped and hence, as storied, places priority on the future for the interpretation and hope in the present. A dramatic theology marked by an emphasis on God's future will help to recover an eschatological voice in the pulpit.

Theology as Eschatology: God's Coming Future

N.T. Wright's conceptualization of Scripture as an incomplete five-act play provides an interpretive framework for theology, while Moltmann's eschatological theology gives the language of promise and anticipation, as one looks for the hope of God's future and the participation it calls for in the present. While a detailed engagement of Wright's dramatic theology and Moltmann's eschatological theology are beyond the scope of this essay, an overview will help provide a theological framework necessary to begin rebuilding an eschatological voice in the pulpit.

The Gospel in Five Acts. In an extended discussion on how one might conceptualize the authoritative nature of the Bible, N.T. Wright compares Scripture to an unfinished drama in which the first four acts are extant:

> Suppose there exists a Shakespeare play whose fifth act has been lost. The first four acts provide, let us suppose, such a wealth of characterization, such a crescendo of excitement within the plot, that it is generally agreed that the play ought to be staged. Nevertheless, it is felt inappropriate actually to write the fifth act once and for all: it would be to freeze the play into one form and commit Shakespeare as it were to being prospectively responsible for work not in fact his own. Better, it might be felt, to give the key parts to highly trained, sensitive and experienced Shakespearian actors, who would immerse themselves in the first four acts, and in the language and culture of Shakespeare and his time, *and who would then be told to work out a fifth act for themselves*.[19]

Wright then goes on to draw the comparison to the Bible as an unfinished drama with the five acts unfolding as follows:

> (1) Creation; (2) Fall; (3) Israel; (4) Jesus. The New Testament would then form the first scene in the fifth act, giving

[19] N.T. Wright, "How Can the Bible Be Authoritative?" *Vox Evangelica* 21 (1991):18.

> hints as well (Rom 8; 1 Cor 15; parts of the Apocalypse) of how the play is supposed to end. The church would then live under the "authority" of the extant story, being required to offer something between an improvisation and an actual performance of the final act.[20]

In such a dramatic schema, the church in the present finds itself caught in between the revealed and authoritative story of God with his people in the historical past, as well as the destination of the whole of the story in the future.

Caught between past and future, or between promised future and the promise's fulfillment, God's people must live in fidelity to both the story as revealed so far, and in alignment with the story's future destination. As a story enacted as drama, then, priority for interpreting the past and present must be given to the future. As in all stories, the last page exercises interpretive control over all that came before. Preacher Paul Scott Wilson observes, "Life as we know it is like a book; how it ends affects the whole and implies the beginning. Each part connects with the beginning and leads to the end."[21] In this sense, the drama is understood most completely from its end.

Theology from the End to the Beginning. Moltmann's eschatological theology helps the preacher understand this priority of the future in bringing hope to the present. Central to his eschatology is the assertion that, because of God's promise for a hopeful future, both given by Christ and guaranteed in his death and resurrection, all theological thinking about God is eschatological:

> From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present. The eschatological is not one element *of* Christianity, but it is the medium of Christian faith as such, the key in which everything in it is set, the glow that suffuses everything here in the dawn of an expected new day.[22]

[20] Wright, 19.

[21] Paul Scott Wilson, *Broken Words: Reflections on the Craft of Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2004), 152.

[22] Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of Christian Eschatology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 15–16.

All theology occurs in the context of a promised future dependent on the trustworthiness of the promise-maker and reaches toward an anticipation of that future, which is continually flowing into the present. If all theology is done in the light of God's promised future exercising influence over the present, all preaching is done in this same context.

Central to the Christian narrative is the claim that God has appeared concretely in history in the person of Jesus Christ, and in Christ has promised a hopeful future. In his life, death, and resurrection Jesus both enacts God's kingdom in the present in his living and opens God's kingdom in the future in his resurrection and promised second advent: "In his words and deeds Jesus has anticipated the kingdom of God and has opened the coming of the kingdom. In the resurrection from the dead God has anticipated in this *one* his kingdom of 'life from the dead,' and has herein, through this *one*, opened the future of the resurrection and the life."[23] In his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus is the incarnation of God's future within concrete history.

Jesus is the one who has come to initiate God's promised, hopeful future, and he is the one who is presently coming, continually fulfilling the promise of a hopeful destination. One can then *anticipate* God's promised, hopeful future as something new that is continually making its way into the present. Anticipation of God's coming shifts one's perspective toward the future and looks for something new. This is different from a view of the future as extrapolated from the past, which ultimately sees the future as merely the continuation and evolution of the past and present. Nothing new can be expected from an extrapolation of the past into the future, and hope for the oppressed remains elusive. However, because Christ is actively coming even now, the future has controlling power over the present. This opens an anticipation of something new that exercises influence over the present, compelling the present to make decisions based upon its coming.

This theological conception of the church being caught in the fifth act, living out of the memory of God's promise in Christ and toward the fulfillment of that promise in a future flowing into the present, has consequences for theology, for all of church life, and indeed for preaching. These include providing answers to the questions of theodicy and identity, and compelling toward hopeful action in the present. In answer to the theodicy question, Moltmann's eschatology asserts that God has appeared

[23] Moltmann, "Theology as Eschatology," 23.

in the midst of the misery of this world concretely in the person of Jesus Christ and has suffered misery with a suffering humanity. Hope for the misery experienced in history is found in the reality of a God who has suffered, and in that suffering has promised a future filled with hope and marked by the absence of suffering. This promised future is guaranteed in God's triumph over the misery of the world in the resurrection. It is experienced as God's hopeful future that is continually coming into the world right now and which one day will be consummated. The question of human identity is answered in the person of Christ who has taken on human identity and has undergone for humanity that which will be done for all. Christ's life, death, and resurrection reveals an identity in which humanity consists of beloved children of God who will participate fully in God's kingdom, just as Christ has on behalf of all.

Creative Eschatology: Deeds of Hope. A further consequence of this dramatically shaped eschatological theology is that the end of the story places the present in a place of having to make decisions based on the kingdom that is coming. Moltmann asserts that eschatology is not a passive theology, or, as identified above, this eschatology is not escapist in nature. If God's future has been enacted by Christ and is coming into the present, anticipation of the coming future must compel the church to become fellow workers with Christ in the kingdom's appearance: "Christian eschatology is not an apocalyptic explanation of the world and also not a private illumination of existence, but the horizon of expectation for a world-transforming initiative through which the 'renewal of the world is anticipated in this age in a certain sense.'"[24] Central to eschatology is its story of hope for the present. It is a story in which God's people participate in that hope as "construction workers and not only interpreters of the future whose power in hope as well as in fulfillment is God."[25]

Moltmann refers to the world-changing initiative of a church caught in the fifth act as engaging in "deeds of eschatological hope." There are at least three avenues through which the church brings the hope of the future into the world now, centering upon proclamation of the gospel, formation of the church, and conformity to Christ.

The first deed of eschatological hope is the "proclamation of the Gospel of the kingdom to the poor … and the proclamation of the righteousness

[24] Moltmann.
[25] Moltmann, 45.

of God to Jews and Gentiles, insofar as all have sinned."[26] The gospel offers hope to all at the core of all human misery in that it offers the lost and forsaken real hope for being found and loved. Proclamation of this hope must stand as a priority for the follower of Christ and for Christ's church who seek to live now under the conditions of the future.

The second deed of eschatological hope is the founding of the church which breaks down the barriers with which people separate themselves from one another. The Christian congregation is established from among those who differ, disregarding borderlines such as race, social standing, class, and familial history. In this way the church now begins to look like the promised future kingdom.

The third deed of eschatological hope is "the creative, battling, and loving obedience ready to suffer in the everyday situations of the present world. It is the attempt, under the conditions of estrangement, to live already here out of the promised future of our true home."[27] This is a call to discipleship and the development of conformity to Jesus Christ who is the presence of God's future in the midst of history. Moltmann goes on to say that this is the "transformation of life, transformation of society, transformation of the world in the possibilities that one is afforded or that one meets, favoring the new life, the new community, the new world."[28]

Preaching As Eschatology

This dramatically shaped theology, with its emphasis on how the revealed future of the story exercises interpretive and performative influence over the present, can help give expression to the eschatological voice in the Christian pulpit today.[29] Just as all theology is eschatology, inasmuch as the sermon both occurs within the context of the tension between promise and fulfillment, and as it calls for the enactment of deeds of

[26] Moltmann, 37.
[27] Moltmann, 38.
[28] Moltmann.
[29] It is important to note that Moltmann's theology is not a return to pre-modern modes of eschatological thought. Even while rejecting some of modernity's claims and maintaining a thoroughly theistic framework, Moltmann acknowledges that moving back to a theology that existed prior to modern theological shifts is both impossible and undesirable. Yet, it is untenable to do theology in terms that exclude the historical character of biblical revelation which speaks of God in specifically historical ways. Moltmann's theology pushes away from apocalypticism and therefore shifts the conversation toward an anticipation of the future. This future gives hope for the present while avoiding pitfalls of futuristic, realized, and demythologized eschatologies by holding modes of time in tension and locating God's eschatological presence and work as continually coming into the world right now.

eschatological hope based upon that promise and fulfillment, it can be said that preaching is eschatology.

The Eschatological Matrix of Proclamation. The context for preaching in the present is both dramatic and eschatological. By virtue of their concrete moment in time, the preacher and the congregation exist in the unfinished fifth act of the dramatic story God is telling. As Kevin Vanhoozer has argued, in light of the drama's past and its coming future, the goal of Christian discipleship is to live in a fitting relationship with both how the story has developed and with where the story is headed.[30] Wright described this as an informed improvisation of the drama based upon the knowledge of the story's past and its future.[31] Proclamation within this context, then, will seek to reveal this story and give guidance for God's people who seek to fittingly live in alignment with it.

The theology laid out above represents an eschatological matrix of thought for the preacher creating the sermon. The preacher must remember that his or her moment in the drama is caught in the tension between the past and the promised and hoped for future. That future, then, continually exercises influence over how God's people are to live in and shape the present. The sermon participates in this eschatological influence by proclaiming the story of God's future and guiding the church for faithful living within its conditions now.

A biblically faithful homiletical project calls for diligent exegetical work with the biblical text. This work includes researching historical context, culture, and language and grammatical structures from the past moment of the text's writing. Importantly, the preacher's work brings that historical work into conversation with the present moment, seeking faithful ways to live according to God's story right now. An eschatological matrix for homiletics purposefully and organically considers the conditions of God's promised future in exegetical and hermeneutical work. This must be the case because God's future exercises leverage over understanding both the present and the past. Just as the preacher must exegete the past acts of God's drama and interpret this context for his or her own moment, the future of the story must be given interpretive voice. This should involve always proclaiming the hopefulness of God's future that flows

[30] Kevin Vanhoozer thoroughly expands Wright's dramatic theology in his work *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005).

[31] Wright, "How Can the Bible?" 19.

into the present and addresses earthly miseries, as we await the promise's consummation. Proclamation between Christ's first and second advents, or between promise and fulfillment, then takes into consideration that both the text and the present congregation find a common future in God's promised kingdom.[32] The dramatic and eschatological matrix of thought demands that God's future become a part of every sermon, not merely those based on texts that address "last things."

Practical engagement with eschatological theology for the preacher, then, could take the shape of shifting the sermon's traditional emphasis on *application* towards a purposeful call to *participation*. Application is a category rooted in extrapolation of the past rather than in anticipation of the future. Application in a sermon asks the question "based on what I have heard about the past of God's story (inasmuch as the preacher preaches from the text), what might I believe or do differently in the present?" Shifting toward an eschatological anticipation of God's future will have the effect of the preacher calling the congregation to *participate* in what God is doing now that flows from his promised future. Participation in God's dramatic story asks the question "based on what God has done and upon what God has promised and is doing right now as his future is coming, how might I participate in this hopeful future now?" This is a significant shift in calling for a creative Christian faith that identifies the believer as a fellow worker with God in bringing the fullness of his kingdom. This creative and participatory eschatology works directly against an escapist view that waits or longs for removal from the world or an end to history.

This shift toward an eschatological homiletic of active participation can find further guidance in its proclamation in Moltmann's deeds of eschatological hope.

Preaching as Eschatology: Deeds of Eschatological Hope. The performative nature of the sermon works toward calling the future into the present. Words do not merely say things, words *do* things. This fact casts the sermon (indeed all speech) as active and performative, calling for a response.[33] That is, the active and performative nature of the sermon calls for participation in the drama that it proclaims. Just

[32] Greenhaw, "Preaching and Eschatology," 9, notes that "The text's future and the congregation's future can thus become the common ground between two divergent worlds."

[33] Vanhoozer persuasively discusses the importance of the speech-act for theology at length. See his *The Drama of Doctrine*, 57–76.

as Moltmann sees the consequence of eschatology as the engagement in a world-transforming initiative in which the church labors to bring the conditions of the future kingdom into the present, the sermon can serve as a call to the church to engage in this work. The sermon can pull the conditions of the future into the present by calling the church to an active participation with God. As a beginning point, the sermon can call the church to participate in deeds of eschatological hope.

The first deed of eschatological hope the church participates in is the proclamation of God's righteousness to the poor, and indeed to all who are lost and forsaken. Within a dramatic and eschatological matrix, the preacher preparing the sermon can take this as a primary goal of the homiletical task: the proclamation of hope. Paul Scott Wilson has made the case that two problems contemporary sermons exhibit is that preachers rarely preach about God, and that they do not make it all the way to a proclamation of the grace of the gospel. Instead, sermons often become about humans (anthropology as opposed to theology), and they often leave the burden for receiving grace upon the shoulders of listeners who cannot intrinsically relieve that burden.[34] Preaching as eschatology sets as a priority for proclamation the eschatological context of all biblical interpretation and preaching. The coming of God's hopeful future becomes the theological context of every sermon as it is for every lived moment. This sets the goal of the sermon as the proclamation of God's righteousness, grace, and hope to all people.[35] In this way, the sermon seeks to affect the replacement of lostness and forsakenness with an identity of being loved and found.

Second, the eschatological context pushes toward the creation of Christian community that actively breaks down boundaries traditionally separating people, such as race, socioeconomic class, social standing, education, and familial origin. Preaching that seeks to create this type of church calls for active participation in activities that break down these barriers and bring healing and restoration between traditionally divided groups of people. The call for justice that replaces historical and present

[34] This is the theme of a major portion of Wilson's writing. For instance, his *The Four Pages of the Sermon* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2018) is in many ways the development of a homiletical theology designed to prevent these two mistakes.

[35] I would also affirm that the sermon is to be textual, that is, guided and governed by the intent of the author of the biblical text upon which the sermon is preached. My advocacy here is that the interpretation of the text and its proclamation take place within the eschatological reality of God's hopeful future continually coming into the present.

injustice—a mark of God's future kingdom—will become a prominent theme of proclamation. Indeed, the call to participate in attitudes and activities that are foundational qualities of God's promised future in Christ will become regular themes of worship: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22–23, ESV). As this fruit is manifest in the lives of the believer, the church will become what it will be: a community of all people worshiping together in equality before God (Rev. 7:9–12).

A third deed of eschatological hope that preaching may participate in and call for is the formation of disciples committed to living out the conditions of the future in their lives in the present. Preaching as eschatology will recognize that Christians "live not for a future which has not begun as yet, but which has already arrived in Christ and which—coming from him—will change the world."[36] Preaching, then, calls for participation in the future which Christ brings. Moltmann describes this work of discipleship:

> If the Christians hope for this future of God, they not only wait for it, but also look for it, love it, and strive for it. The eschatological will leads to decisions that are live options in the present. The decision for the goal determines the means and ways that lead to the goal. In the living correspondence of the Christians to this future, the future already finds a real form.[37]

Preaching with an eschatological voice sets as a goal the formation of the future within the lives of hearers. This is applicable not only to Christian preaching but can also set the agenda for pastoral ministry and leadership more broadly.

Conclusion

While the state of the Christian pulpit may be that the eschatological voice of a promised future has been diminished, taking eschatology as a theological context can work to resurrect the eschatological imagination of the preacher. Inasmuch as preaching takes on a dramatic framework

[36] Moltmann, "Theology as Eschatology," 46.
[37] Moltmann.

and engages in the eschatological language of promise and anticipation, it can recover an important piece of biblical proclamation in a credible way that has practical implications for the church in the present. Just as all preaching is done in the shadow of the cross, it is also done in the dawn of God's hopeful future. Preaching as eschatology calls for God's people to hope for the present because of a faith in God's coming future. This hope, established in the cross and resurrection of Jesus and the promises that it confirms becomes the ground for a world-transforming initiative of God's people actively working with God to bring his future into this moment right now.

On Putin's War and Injustices Faced by Ukrainians: Lessons on Nonviolent Love, Peace, and Truth from the Correspondence between Tolstoy and Gandhi

Boaz Johnson, professor of Hebrew Bible and theological studies
North Park University, Chicago, Illinois

I write this article while Russian bombs are falling on Ukraine. According to news reports, thousands of people have been killed and more than five million have fled Ukraine—women, children, and the vulnerable.

My heart breaks as I see the pictures of death and destruction in Ukraine. In the 1990s, I taught a few modular courses in Odessa, Ukraine. At that time, the Soviet Union had just broken up and there was much excitement in the air. Odessa is a Black Sea port city with a rich cultural and educational heritage. My classes were held a few blocks from the famous Deribasovskaya Street. This street is like Michigan Avenue in Chicago, or Broadway in New York City. Just across from this street is a short walk to the Primorsky (Potemkin) Stairs leading to the Odessa Port. I have fond memories of discussing theology with my students as we walked down Deribasovskaya Street and the Primorsky Stairs.

The economy in Ukraine was just starting to open up. I could hop into a car and pay the driver in cash to get to my destination. My lectures in Odessa were based on the interpretation of the Hebrew prophets as found in the writings of a Jewish philosopher by the name of Emmanuel Levinas.[1] In interpreting the prophets of the Old Testament, Levinas wrote about

[1] At the time of my lectures, Emmanuel Levinas's writings were not yet translated from French into other languages, and his thought was new to the English-speaking world. The following are some of his key writings: *Nine Talmudic Readings*, trans. Annette Aronowicz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990); *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism,*

encountering the face of God in the face of the "other." In general, his thought is regarded as a post-Holocaust reading of the Hebrew prophets.[2]

Many of my students were Ukrainian Jews. These were Jewish people who had fled from Russia into Ukraine because they had suffered much anti-Semitism under successive reigns of Russian regimes. On our walks down Deribasovskaya Street, we frequently encountered experiences that caused us to reflect on my lectures. We saw limousines pull up to the curb, and from those opulent vehicles emerged young families with expensive, all-leather clothing, and mink overcoats. These were the *nouveau riche* Russian mafia who ruled the economy of Ukraine. On the other side of the street, we saw Ukrainian *babusya* (grandmothers) climb into the garbage dumpster, perhaps to find a piece of bread to satisfy their hunger.

Something was drastically wrong with this picture. We discussed the ramifications for the future of Ukrainian society—while keeping the incisive thoughts of the Hebrew prophets and Emmanuel Levinas in our minds. I am still in touch with those students. The women and children have fled to Moldova and Romania while the men have returned to defend their beloved Ukraine.

In this essay, I would like to underline the importance of reading two crucial thinkers: Leo Tolstoy, one of the greatest thinkers of Russia, and Mohandas Gandhi, one the greatest thinkers of India. Both thinkers stressed peace and not war, nonviolence and not violence, life and not death, care for the low castes and outcastes[3], and not destruction of the marginalized of India and Ukraine.[4]

trans. Seán Hand (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012); *Entre Nous,* trans. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav (London: Bloomsbury, 2017). More recently, several universities and biblical forums have conducted conferences to discuss Levinas as a Hebrew Bible exegete. One such conference, the Corcoran Chair Conference, was held on March 18–19, 2012, at Boston College.

[2] See R. Clifton Spargo, *Vigilant Memory: Emmanuel Levinas, the Holocaust, and the Unjust Death* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006); Didier Pollefeyt, "Theology as Ethics: Emmanuel Levinas as Jewish Post- Holocaust Thinker," in *The Value of the Particular: Lessons from Judaism and the Modern Jewish Experience: Festschrift for Steven T. Katz on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday,* Supplements to the Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy, vol. 25 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015), 322–39.

[3] Hinduism was brought into India by the Aryans around 1750 BC. They captured and destroyed the original Indus Valley civilization, then divided society into different castes. The Aryans themselves assumed the three highest castes: the Brahmins (or priests), the Kshatriyas (or the princes and warriors), and the Vaishyas (or the business caste). The original dwellers of India were divided into the Shudras (or the low caste) and the Achoot (or outcastes/untouchables).

My Personal Background

My early years. My search for the meaning of life began quite early. I was not raised in the lap of luxury; I grew up in one of the slums of New Delhi. I saw poverty and excrement all around me. I saw high caste Hindus take poor people from the low castes into slavery—sexual slavery, carpet industry slavery, etc. To escape this reality, my parents sent me to a Hindu Grammar School, far removed from the slum. At this school, I was trained in Sanskrit and the monistic Hindu texts of the Upanishads. Historically, only the highest caste Hindu boys were allowed to open these texts. I learned the skills of *Jnana Marga*, the "way of Hindu Gnostic Knowledge." (A kindergarten version of it may be seen in yoga classes, popular today in the West).

When I walked to this school from the slum—about a six-mile walk—I faced a dilemma. I encountered two different realities. One was the reality of poverty and injustice among my low caste (Shudra) and outcaste (Dalit) neighbors and friends. The other was the reality of high caste Hindu classmates and learning. At school, I would ask the question, "How do these realities come together?" My gurus told me that the greatest goal of learning was the realization that life is *shunyata,* "nothingness," and that this "apparent life" was an illusion, *maya*. On the one hand, I was learning the reality of sciences and literature, yet on the other hand, in my *jnana marga* classes, I was taught that life was *maya*, an illusion. So, I asked myself, "If humanity and the universe were nothing, *shunyata*, what was the point of education?" The question took on another dimension when I related it to the inhumanity and suffering I saw daily when I returned to the slum where I lived. These injustices and violent crimes were meted out to low-caste and outcaste people in my slum by high caste slave-owners. I asked my guru, "Why do the poor and outcastes suffer?" He told me that human beings live in this realm of *maya* and must suffer the consequences of their *karma.* My questions kept multiplying: Should I then just overlook all that I was learning in the arts and the sciences,

[4] As of the final editorial stages of this article, we, in the USA, are engaging with devastating news of violence and killings—the killing of 10 Black people in a grocery store in Buffalo, New York, by a white supremacist; the massacre of 19 elementary school children and their two teachers (mainly Latina and Latino) in Uvalde, Texas; and the mass shooting of medical personnel in Tulsa, Oklahoma, by their own patient. This is awful. In his address to the nation on June 1, 2022, President Biden, with much pain and emotion exclaimed, "Enough, enough!" This series of killings makes it more necessary for us, in the USA, to listen to the voices of Tolstoy and Gandhi, today.

since people will suffer the consequences of their *karma* anyway? Was the goal of life just to enable the high caste "haves" to enjoy the results of learning, while "outcaste have-nots" must suffer the consequences of their *karma*? These were among the plethora of questions which formed my quest for answers about the meaning of life and learning.

In high school I encountered the writings of a woman named Pandita Ramabai. She rescued hundreds of low caste and outcaste girls during the last pandemic in the early twentieth century. She did this after her own life was transformed by Jesus the Messiah. I also met a Sikh, Bhakt Singh, whose life was also transformed by Jesus. He planted churches in the slums of India and gave poor, enslaved people freedom through Christ. He also fed them food, so that they would be nourished to free themselves from high caste slavery. I decided to follow this Jesus of Pandita Ramabai and Bhakt Singh.

My quest for theology. In my twenties, I began studying at Union Biblical Seminary in Yavatmal, India. I wanted to formulate a theology for ministry in India. However, I soon realized that Indian Christian theology was not meant for 80 percent of Indians, who are low caste and outcaste. Two philosophical frameworks have dominated the development of Indian Christian theologies. First, there was the colonial framework, espoused by those theologians trained in Western methodology. Still today, this is the majority paradigm in both mainline and evangelically oriented seminaries. Indian theological students are asked to conform to Western, historical-critical methodologies, which have antisemitic roots. These include the study of Wellhausen and Bultmann, for instance.[5] Second, there is the Brahmanical framework, which is espoused by a powerful group of theologians who came from the dominant priestly caste of Hindu society.[6] Along with the first framework, this is largely the framework of most models of biblical interpretation and Indian Christian

[5] Sadly, influential German biblical scholarship (such as Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, trans. J. S. Black [Edinburgh: A & C Black, 1885], and Rudolf Karl Bultmann, *The New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Writings*, trans. Schubert Miles Ogden [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984]) has its roots in German anti-Semitism. A good study of this phenomenon may be found in Anders Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti- Semitism: German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews, from Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann* (Leiden: Brill, 2010). This anti-Semitism is akin to high caste anti-outcasteism in India.

[6] My textbooks for the study of Indian Christian theology set up before me only high caste theologians as my heroes. These were such theologians as Brahmobandhav Upadhyay, Keshabchandra Sen, Narayan Vaman Tilak. The underlying message was that if one is low caste or outcaste, one cannot become a good Christian theologian.

theology. This is the case although more than 88 percent of Christians come from low-caste or outcaste backgrounds, i.e., *Shudra* and *Ati-shudra* families. Just 12 percent of the church in India comes from high caste families. Yet the interpretive and theological framework of the church is led by the minority group of high caste leaders and theologians.[7]

I travel quite often to India, the land of my birth. I serve as the honorary head of the Department of Advanced Theological Studies at a Christian university called Sam Higginbottom University of Agricultural and Technological Sciences (SHUATS). It is in a city called Allahabad, which means the City of Allah. There is much tension between Hindus and Muslims in this city. The state government is ruled by a Hindu nationalist party called the Bharatiya Janta Party. The same party rules the whole country from the capital, New Delhi. This government is seeking to change the names of cities like Allahabad into Hindu names and has officially changed the name of Allahabad to Prayagraj. The meaning of this new name refers to the rule of three holy rivers and the gods associated with these rivers—the Ganges, the Yamuna, and another mythical river called the Saraswati. It is also called the Triveni Sangam, the meeting of the holy trinity of rivers. Prayagraj is a crucial center of Hinduism. Every year, millions of Hindus travel to this city on pilgrimage.

In the new Hindu India, there has been a huge increase in the persecution of minorities such as Muslims and Christians. There is much violence against minorities and increasing violence against the outcastes (the Dalits) and low castes (the Shudras). I often ask these questions: What has happened to the land of Gandhi? What has happened to nonviolence? What has happened to Gandhian love? What has happened to Gandhian peace? These are the questions which consume my thoughts whenever I go back to India to teach my PhD seminars.

My two worlds and the third world. I live in two worlds: the Western world, in Chicago, and the Eastern world, in Allahabad. The above stories and resultant questions flood my mind as I now think about the ethnic cleansing unleashed by President Putin on Ukraine. I would

[7] See further Neha Sahgal, Jonathan Evans, Ariana Monique Salazar, Kelsey Jo Starr, and Manolo Corichi, "Religion in India: Tolerance and Segregation," *Pew Research Center Report*, June 29, 2021, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/06/29/religion-in-india-tolerance-and-segregation. Accessed March 30, 2022. Note also, Ariana Monique Salazar, "Eight Key Findings about Christians in India," *Pew Research Center Report*, July 12, 2021, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/07/12/8-key-findings-about-christians-in-india. Accessed March 30, 2022.

argue that the high caste Russian society seeks to eradicate a low-caste Ukrainian society. In the process, Putin is seeking to build an empire ruled by high caste Russians. This is no different from the Aryan eradication and subjugation of low-caste/outcaste and tribal societies of India. The Aryans from the Caucasus came to India around 1750 BC. They eradicated the Indus Valley Civilization and established Hinduism in India. The most vulnerable in India are still suffering the consequences of the Aryan takeover of the peace-loving peoples of the Indus Valley Civilization. Gandhi had to face this reality, first in South Africa and then in India.

Early Years of Gandhi in South Africa and Tolstoy

Gandhi was reared in a high caste family in Porbandar.[8] He gained his law degree and license in London because he was high caste and able to finance his own education. He went to South Africa in 1893 as a twenty-four-year-old lawyer for Dada Abdullah and Sons. This is where he was thrown out of a train at Pietermaritzburg, in the Zulu Natal province—a wake-up call for Gandhi. I have taken North Park students to the train station where he was thrown off the train.

In South Africa, Gandhi encountered high caste Indians who had gone to South Africa as traders. Most Indians in South Africa, low-caste and outcaste people already enslaved by high-cast Aryans in India, were taken to South Africa by the Afrikaans and British to be enslaved there. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, most of these slaves were from East and South India.

When slavery was abolished throughout the British Empire in 1833, these slaves became indentured servants. They were brought into Natal between 1860 and 1911 to work on sugar plantations and in the railroad industry of the British.

When Gandhi came to South Africa, he initially held to the same attitude toward indentured Indians and black Africans as his high caste Hindu compatriots; he held them in disregard and contempt. I believe Gandhi's conversion to nonviolence, love, and egalitarianism was gradual.

[8] I would recommend a biography by a close friend of Gandhi: Charles F. Andrews, *Mahatma Gandhi: His Life and Ideas* (Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths, 2003). Andrews was professor at St. Stephen's College, University of Delhi. Andrews also went to South Africa to encourage Gandhi to come to India. He helped launch Gandhi's nonviolent movement from the college campus in 1915.

His wholehearted conversion to these values took place only toward the end of his stay in South Africa.

Gandhi ascribes this radical change in his attitude to two thinkers: Russian writer Leo Tolstoy and English writer and social reformer John Ruskin. He writes, "Three moderns have left a deep impression on my life and captivated me: Raychandbhai by his living contact; Tolstoy by his book, *The Kingdom of God Is within You*; and Ruskin by his *Unto this Last.*"[9] Gandhi notes further, "Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is within You* overwhelmed me. It left an abiding impression on me. Before the independent thinking, profound morality, and the truthfulness of this book, all the books given me by Mr. Coates seemed to pale into insignificance."[10] Thereafter, Gandhi made a very diligent study of many writings of Tolstoy. He even writes, "I made too an intensive study of Tolstoy's books. *The Gospels in Brief, What to Do?*, and other books made a deep impression on me. I began to realize more and more the infinite possibilities of universal love."[11] One of the first tasks that Gandhi undertook was to translate Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is within You* into Gujarati: *Vaikunth Tara Hridayma Chhe*.[12]

The Gandhi-Tolstoy Correspondence

Gandhi moved to South Africa in 1893 at twenty-four years of age. At that time, he was loyal to the British Empire and espoused the negative attitudes the British had toward Black South Africans. He appealed to the Indians of South Africa to join the British in the Second Boer War (1899–1902) and the Zulu War (1906).

However, during this time, and especially after the South Africa wars, Gandhi read Tolstoy. Like Gandhi, Tolstoy came from an aristocratic family. Yet his writings were designed to rattle the power-hungry tsars of

[9] See Mohandas K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, trans. Mahadev H. Desai (Ahmedabad, India: Navjivan, 1927), 83. See further Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God Is Within You; or, Christianity Not as a Mystical Teaching but as a New Concept of Life* (New York: Noonday, 1961). Note also John Ruskin, *Unto This Last and Other Writings*, Penguin Classics (London: Penguin, 1986).

[10] Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, 127.

[11] Gandhi, 147–48. What Gandhi lists as *What to Do?* is generally called, *What Is to Be Done?* in English.

[12] See Leo Tolstoy, *Vaikunth Tara Hridayma Chhe*, trans. M. K. Gandhi (Ahmedabad, India: Navjivan Trust, 2017). Gujarati is the language of India, spoken in the state of Gujarat. A very high percentage of immigrants to the West come from this state. These are high caste Hindus.

Russia and their cruel generals.[13] This was especially true after his transformational encounter with Jesus Christ in the 1870s. Gandhi sought to get in touch with Tolstoy and wrote to him in 1909. This began a correspondence between the two that continued until Tolstoy's death in November 1910. Gandhi was forty years old. Tolstoy was eighty-one

Here is Gandhi's synopsis of the letters, which he writes in the introduction to the publication of this correspondence:

> To me, as a humble follower of that great teacher (Tolstoy) whom I have long looked upon as one ... Tolstoy's life has been devoted to replacing the method of violence for removing tyranny or securing reform by the method of non-resistance to evil. He would meet hatred expressed in violence by love expressed in self-suffering. He admits of no exception to whittle down this great and divine law of love. He applies it to all the problems that trouble mankind. ... When a man like Tolstoy, one of the clearest thinkers in the western world, one of the greatest writers, one who as a soldier has known what violence is and what it can do, condemns Japan for having blindly followed the law of modern science, falsely so-called, and fears for that country "the greatest calamities," it is for us to pause and consider whether, in our impatience of English rule, we do not want to replace one evil by another and a worse. ... If we do not want the English in India, we must pay the price. Tolstoy indicates it. "Do not resist evil, but also do not yourselves participate in evil—in the violent deeds of the administration of the law courts, the collection of taxes and, what is more important, of the soldiers, and no one in the world will enslave you," passionately declares the sage of Yasnaya Polyana.[14]

Tolstoy wrote his initial letter to Gandhi in response to the latter's letter and two issues of a Gandhi publication called *Free India*. He begins his letter to Gandhi, later published as *A Letter to a Hindu*, with a quote from 1 John 4:16: "God is love, and he that abideth in love, abideth in

[13] Some of Tolstoy's main works are: *War and Peace*, trans. George Gibian (New York: Norton, 1966), *My Confession, My Religion, the Gospel in Brief*, trans. Vera Traill (New York: Scribner, 1925), *Resurrection*, (New York: Pantheon, 1968).

[14] B. Srinivasa Murthy, ed., *Mahatma Gandhi and Leo Tolstoy Letters* (Long Beach, CA: Long Beach, 1987), 41– 42.

God, and God in him."[15] It may be noted that this verse became one of Gandhi's favorite verses from the Bible. It shaped the words of Gandhi's favorite hymn, which was often sung at Gandhi prayer meetings and is played to this day during the celebrations of India's Republic Day.

Tolstoy shows a great degree of knowledge of the oppression of the low and outcaste people groups in India, as well as the power of the colonial lords in South Africa. He urges Gandhi to address these. In his letter, Tolstoy mourns "the astonishing fact that a majority of working people submit to a handful of idlers who control their labour and their very lives is always and everywhere the same—whether the oppressors and oppressed are of one race or whether, as in India and elsewhere, the oppressors are of a different nation."[16]

Based on his earlier works of religion, Tolstoy gives Gandhi the basis of his thoughts on nonviolence. He writes, "in every individual a spiritual element is manifested that gives life to all that exists, and that this spiritual element strives to unite with everything of a like nature to itself, and attains this aim through love The mere fact that this thought has sprung up among different nations and at different times indicates that it is inherent in human nature and contains the truth."[17]

The basis of this violence, Tolstoy suggests to Gandhi, is the insecurity of the powerful. He writes, "those in power, feeling that the recognition of this truth would undermine their position, consciously or sometimes unconsciously perverted it by explanations and additions quite foreign to it, and also opposed it by open violence."[18]

Tolstoy also stresses that the only way to counter violence is to follow the teachings of Jesus and the apostles. He stresses the following biblical texts, for instance: "But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also" (Matt. 5:39 KJV), and "See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people" (1 Thess. 5:15 NASB, see also Rom. 12:17 and 1 Pet. 3:9 for similar Pauline language). He writes further, "The punishment of evil doers

[15] Leo Tolstoy, *A Letter to a Hindu*, *with Introduction by Mahatma Gandhi* (London: Renard Press Ltd., 2022). The full correspondence is part of the archives of the government of India, Delhi. See "Mahatma Gandhi and Leo Tolstoy Correspondence," in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi,* vols. 9 and 10 (Delhi: Publication Division, Government of India, 1965).

[16] Tolstoy, *A Letter*, 45.

[17] Tolstoy, 47.

[18] Tolstoy, 47.

consists in making them feel ashamed of themselves by doing them a great kindness."[19]

Tolstoy addresses the question, why were these teachings of Jesus not practiced in the Western Church? He puts the blame on western individualism. Western individualistic interpretations of Jesus ethical teaching, Tolstoy claims, keeps the Church from applying his teachings to social contexts. He writes, "The recognition that love represents the highest morality was nowhere denied or contradicted, but this truth was so interwoven everywhere with all kinds of falsehoods which distorted it, that finally nothing of it remained but words. It was taught that this highest morality was only applicable to private life—for home use, as it were—but that in public life all forms of violence—such as imprisonment, executions, and wars—might be used for the protection of the majority against a minority of evildoers, though such means were diametrically opposed to any vestige of love"[20]

Tolstoy further claims that the basis of these acts of violence was the claims of the "divine rights" of a powerful minority, the rulers. This has always been the case in various civilizations. The rulers were understood as the divine ones, who would then assume that it was their right to do violence against the majority of the people. This was true for the ancient pharaohs, as it was true among the rajahs of India, and the tsars of Russia. Thus, Tolstoy urges Gandhi to address the problem of "divine rights," which was an essential part of the high caste Hinduism, to which Gandhi belonged and which he espoused.

Tolstoy then goes on to urge Gandhi not to be fascinated by Western education and the sciences. These, he suggests, represent the newer basis of oppression. The new religion, he posits, is science. The keepers of scientific knowledge are the new "gods." They rule by the new religion of the survival of the fittest. According to this new religion, those people who have scientific knowledge have the authority to rule over those who do not have this scientific knowledge. He writes, "The unfortunate majority of men bound to toil is so dazzled by the pomp with which these 'scientific truths' are presented, that under this new influence it accepts these scientific stupidities for holy truth, just as it formerly accepted the pseudo-religious

[19] Tolstoy, 48.

[20] For this quote, see the online version of Gandhi's "A Letter to a Hindu," https://sites.google.com/a/freedomclassroom.com/freedom-classroom/learn-live-for-freedom/learn-nonviolent- noncooperation-1/-a-letter-to-a-hindu-by-leo-tolstoy-with-intro-by-gandhi. Accessed June 3, 2022.

justifications; and it continues to submit to the present holders of power who are just as hard-hearted but rather more numerous than before."[21]

Furthermore, Tolstoy urges Gandhi to employ Jesus's antidote. He urges Gandhi to develop the principle of "love." As he puts it, "Love is the only way to rescue humanity from all ills, and in it you too have the only method of saving your people from enslavement."[22]

In this way, Tolstoy urges Gandhi to forsake all forms of violence. Tolstoy had read the young Gandhi's writings, which he had written while in South Africa. He firmly warns Gandhi, "You say that the English have enslaved your people and hold them in subjection because the latter have not resisted resolutely enough and have not met force by force. But the case is just the opposite. If the English have enslaved the people of India, it is just because the latter recognized, and still recognize, force as the fundamental principle of the social order. If the people of India are enslaved by violence it is only because they themselves live and have lived by violence, and do not recognize the eternal law of love inherent in humanity."[23] This is indeed a very strong indictment of Gandhi. The great thing about Gandhi is that he learned his lessons from his teacher and guru, Tolstoy, and he learned them well.

Tolstoy highlighted this truth in a different way, when he wrote, "As soon as men live entirely in accord with the law of love natural to their hearts and now revealed to them, which excludes all resistance by violence, and therefore hold aloof from all participation in violence—as soon as this happens, not only will hundreds be unable to enslave millions, but not even millions will be able to enslave a single individual. Do not resist the evildoer and take no part in doing so, either in the violent deeds of the administration, in the law courts, the collection of taxes, or above all in soldiering, and no one in the world will be able to enslave you."[24]

Tolstoy posits that colonial modernity has complex tools to foster enslavement of the colonized. This includes the domains of the scientific revolution and education. Countering colonialism with these tools will only lead to more violence. Instead, he constantly gets back to the basic teaching of Jesus and the law of love.

This teaching was a turning point in Gandhi's thoughts. In his last words to Gandhi, Tolstoy made his thoughts based on nonviolence clearer. In his letter dated September 7, 1910, Tolstoy states the following on love:

[21] Tolstoy, *A Letter*, 53.
[22] Tolstoy, 54.
[23] Tolstoy, 55.
[24] Tolstoy, 56.

> Most clearly, I think, was it announced by Christ, who said explicitly that on it hang all the Law and the Prophets. More than that, foreseeing the distortion that has hindered its recognition and may always hinder it, he specially indicated the danger of a misrepresentation that presents itself to men living by worldly interests—namely, that they may claim a right to defend their interests by force or, as he expressed it, to repay blow by blow and recover stolen property by force, etc., etc. He knew, as all reasonable men must do, that any employment of the law of love is, and can be, no longer valid if defense by force is set up beside it. And if once the law of love is not valid, then there remains no law except the right of might. The difference between the Christian and all other nations is only this: that in Christianity the law of love had been more clearly and definitely given than in any other religion, and that its adherents solemnly recognized it.[25]

Tolstoy's Principles of the Sermon on the Mount

Tolstoy surmised that the most important goal, according to the teachings of Jesus, is the kingdom of God. He writes that this kingdom of God is "when all men will cease to learn to make war, when all shall be taught of God and united in love, and the lion will lie down with the lamb. Instead of the threats of punishment which all the old laws of religions and governments alike laid down for nonfulfillment of their rules, instead of promises of rewards for fulfillment of them, this doctrine called men to it only because it was the truth."[26]

Tolstoy contended that the core ethical code of Christ's kingdom of God is found in "five simple, clear commandments." In the following, I summarize the commandments Tolstoy derived from the Sermon on the Mount:

1. Do not make any distinctions between human beings.
2. Love your enemies, as brothers and sisters. Hatred leads to violence. Love leads to peace.

[25] Mohandas Gandhi, *Letters from One: Correspondence (and More) of Leo Tolstoy and Mohandas Gandhi; including "Letter to a Hindu,"* River Drafting Spirit Series Book 3 (River Drafting: Kindle Edition, 2011), locations 358–73.

[26] Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God Is Within You,* trans. Constance Garnett (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2006), 45.

3. Do not resist evil with violence. Violence leads to more violence. Nonresistance of evil leads to peace.

4. Do not commit adultery. Marriage should not be considered as mere cohabitation for enjoyment, but rather as oneness. This idea of marriage and human sexuality obliterates abuse of women. This leads to gender peace in society.

5. Do not swear allegiance to any human or spiritual power. Swearing is a form of spiritual, political, economic slavery. It leads to violence, based on one's allegiance to the state. Power always leads to the quest for increasingly more power and violence against the powerless.

Gandhi became completely enraptured by the five principles of Christ's kingdom of God and the two central ideas of nonviolence and peace. He first used these principles and core themes in his struggle against the unjust rule of the Afrikaans government in South Africa. He created communities in South Africa that practiced these principles. When Gandhi went back to India, after spending twenty-one years in South Africa, he built on these ideas of nonviolent struggle against the violent British rule in India, and toward peace between Hindus, Muslims, and the Sikh communities.

In this way, Tolstoy's *Kingdom of God* had a radical impact on Gandhi's life. I must mention that these teachings went against the high caste Hinduism in which he was reared. The five principles of nonviolence and peace shaped Gandhi's ethics and his movements. These principles, which Gandhi espoused and practiced, were radically different from Hinduism in the following ways:

1. Ethics of humanity: All human beings are equal and created in the image of God. This principle was the radical opposite of the Aryan Hindu caste system.

2. Ethics of nonviolence: It is fitting to note that Gandhi was violently killed by a Hindu nationalist, Nathuram Godse, who espoused the doctrine of high caste Hindu purity.

3. Ethics of love: This ethic went against the right-wing fundamentalist Hindu ideology of hatred of minority Muslims, Christians, and Sikhs.

4. Ethics of sexual purity: This principle went against the

sexual violence endured by low caste and outcaste girls and boys at the hands of high caste landlords and slave owners.

5. Ethics of speaking for the low-caste vulnerable and powerless: Power structures and religion in high caste Hinduism are designed to enslave the vulnerable low caste and outcaste people groups. Gandhi spoke out against swearing allegiance to high caste Vaishnavism and Hindu nationalism.

Nonviolence, Peace, and Truth

From Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is within You*, Gandhi learned three central ideas, which he sought to inculcate among his followers. These are nonviolence, peace, and truth.

Nonviolence and peace. In his preface to *The Kingdom of God Is within You*, Tolstoy bemoans the neglect of this central doctrine in modern Christianity as he experienced it in Russia. He writes, "The failure to acknowledge the commandment of nonresistance to evil, which more obviously than any other shows the distortion of Christ's teaching in the church doctrine."[27]

Tolstoy's (and then Gandhi's) core "nonviolence" text was, "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist evil" (Matt. 5:38–39). In this section of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:38–42 NIV), Jesus goes on to give a few examples.

1. "If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also."
2. "And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well."
3. "If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles."
4. "Give to the one who asks you."
5. "Do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you."

[27] Tolstoy, xiii.

Both Tolstoy and Gandhi came to understand Jesus's teaching to mean that violence is not an option in any circumstance at all. Tolstoy suggests that Jesus's teaching is seen clearly in his admonition of Peter, who tried to defend him with his sword when the temple guard came to arrest him. Jesus said to Peter, "Those who use the sword die by the sword" (Matt. 26:52).

Violence only leads to more violence. There is no good killing. Killing only leads to more and worse killing.

For the same reason, Tolstoy is of the opinion that Christ's teaching would be against capital punishment.[28] Tolstoy opines that first, one can never be certain regarding the ultimate guilt of a killer. And second, killing the killer does not leave room for the possibility of repentance and a change of mind and heart, which is the ultimate goal of Christ's teaching.

Gandhi was very taken with Tolstoy's literal interpretation of Christ's teaching. He came to the opinion that the teachings of Christ must be taken seriously and literally rather than explained away as a metaphor. "Turning the right cheek" to the aggressor, for example, became a literal action for Tolstoy, and then Gandhi. It was not merely a metaphor, although it could have large and varied applications. But it is first and foremost turning the other cheek in a very literal sense, even taking a double thrashing at the hands of the violent aggressor, that causes the violence to dissipate. A violent reaction to violence only leads to more and dangerous degrees of violence.

Violence spreads rapidly and leads to widespread carnage and death, whereas turning the other cheek puts an end to the violence.

Tolstoy, as did Gandhi later, resisted the prevailing idea in the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches of considering Christ's teachings in the Sermon on the Mount as hyperbole. It was popular among churchmen and theologians to regard Christ's teachings as an ideal, but not practical.

Tolstoy notes the dominant notion in the Church in Russia and the Church in the west is that Christ's teaching as found in the Sermon on the Mount is not really Christian. He asserts that both his Russian critics and western critics regard, "the doctrine of the Sermon on the Mount is only a series of very charming, impracticable reveries 'du charmant docteur,' as Renan used to say, which were good enough for the naïve and half-wild

[28] Walter Kerr, *The Shabunin Affair: An Episode in the Life of Leo Tolstoy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), is helpful in explaining Tolstoy's turning point toward his views on capital punishment, and his turning to nonviolence and Christ.

inhabitants of Galilee, who lived eighteen hundred years ago, and for the Russian peasants, Syutáev and Bondarév, and the Russian mystic, Tolstoy, but can in no way be applied to the high degree of European culture."[29]

In response to the silencing of the ethical teachings of Christ both by the secular world (which regarded the teachings of Christ to be rather ancient and irrelevant to modern, advanced culture), and by the Church (which tended to only accentuate the doctrinal aspects of the person of Christ), Tolstoy sought to emphasize the ethical ramifications of the person and work of Christ. In this light, he asserts:

> Eighteen hundred years ago there appeared in the pagan Roman world a strange, new teaching, which resembled nothing which preceded it, and which was ascribed to the man Christ. This new teaching was absolutely new, both in form and in content, for the European world, in the midst of which it arose, and especially in the Roman world, where it was preached and became diffused.…In the place of all the rules of former faiths, this teaching advanced only the model of an inner perfection of truth and of love in the person of Christ, and the consequences of this inner perfection, attainable by men—the external perfection, as predicted by the prophets—the kingdom of God, in which all men will stop warring, and all will be taught by God and united in love, and the lion will lie with the lamb. In place of the threats of punishments for the noncompliance with the rules, which were made by the former laws, both religious and political, in place of the enticement of rewards for fulfilling them, this teaching called men to itself only by its being the truth.[30]

Gandhi learned from Tolstoy that Christ's teachings in the Sermon on the Mount were tremendously practical and ought not to be regarded as hyperbole or as unattainable ideals. This was especially true regarding the teaching on "nonresistance to evil." He also learned from Tolstoy that one cannot pick and choose which of Christ's teachings one can or cannot follow. They both stress that following Christ means changing one's mind and way of life, which can be a hard thing for human beings to think and do, including Christ's teachings regarding nonviolence and

[29] Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God*, 40.
[30] Tolstoy, 45.

peace through nonviolence.

Truth. Another principle which Gandhi espoused from Tolstoy was the idea of "truth." In Gandhian thought, "truth" is the most crucial virtue. He called his movement *Satyagraha*, which means a constant quest and clinging to the truth. He called his autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*.[31]

Early in his book, Tolstoy quotes Jesus's words, "You shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). This verse is quoted often throughout the book. Tolstoy stresses that the religious and political authorities sought to kill Christ because he stood up for the truth. He writes, "No proofs of this doctrine were offered except its truth, the correspondence of the doctrine with the truth. There is only the image of truth to guide him, for inward perfection in the person of Christ, and for outward perfection in the establishment of the kingdom of God."[32] Tolstoy stressed that this ought to be the mission of every human being—to bring about the kingdom of God, through truth-keeping.

In fact, Tolstoy concludes *The Kingdom of God* with the words of Jesus that influenced Gandhi the most: "'But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you' (Matt 6:33). The sole meaning of life is to serve humanity by contributing to the establishment of the kingdom of God, which can only be done by the recognition and profession of the truth by every man. 'The kingdom of God cometh not with outward show; neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you' (Luke 7:20–21)."[33]

It is worth noting that Gandhi's translation of Tolstoy's work into Gujarati, *Vaikunth Tara Hridayma Chhe*, had consequences Gandhi may not have foreseen. This translation says a lot about Gandhi's understanding of Tolstoy and Christ. Gandhi had read Tolstoy; he knew what Tolstoy was talking about. Yet, Gandhi translated both Tolstoy and Jesus into Hindu thought, the result of which influenced how later Hindu followers of Gandhi interpreted his thoughts. It seems to me that their thoughts on what is the kingdom of God became further removed from Tolstoy and, ultimately, from Jesus Christ.

In fact, the title of the Gujarati translation of the *Kingdom of God Is within You*, *Vaikunth Tara Hridayma Chhe* means the "the kingdom of Vishnu is in your (singular) heart." *Vaikunth* is the domain of high caste

[31] See Gandhi, *An Autobiography*.
[32] Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God*, 45.
[33] Tolstoy, 325.

Hindus. It is also called *Vishnuloka*, i.e., the domain of the high caste deity called Vishnu, and his consort Lakshmi. It is a place where only high caste Hindu men would go. Perhaps this was not Gandhi's intent, but sadly, high caste Hinduism in the post-Gandhi years would not allow the kingdom of God to be a domain for low-caste Shudras and the Atishudras.

My sense is that Gandhi's thought was not successfully imported into India because Gandhi was not able to carry out the deep level of change that he envisaged in Hindu India. The title of the book suggests that this was the main thesis of Tolstoy's book, *The Kingdom of God Is within You*. There are, hence, a series of questions we should be asking: What did Jesus mean when he said, "the kingdom of God is within you"? What did Tolstoy mean? What did Gandhi mean?

More important, what did the later followers of Gandhi mean?

The problem is that today the Hindu followers of Gandhi take it to mean *Vaiakunta*, or *Vishnu Rajya*, the kingdom of the *high caste* god Vishnu. This means that there is no place for the low caste and the outcaste unless they are subject to the high caste. This means there is no place for minorities like Muslims and Christians in the kingdom of Vishnu.

Tolstoy to Gandhi on the Need for New Birth

Scholars of Tolstoy remind us that in his final years, Tolstoy became a devoted follower of Jesus and fostered the idea of rebirth as taught by Jesus in the Gospel of John.[34] He opined that true love can only come about when one follows Jesus's words, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again" (John 3:3). This was central to his book *The Kingdom of God Is within You.*

Thus convinced, Tolstoy wrote to Gandhi about the need for a "new birth"—both individual and social rebirth. Gandhi, in his response, did not see the need of a rebirth experience, and Tolstoy left it at that. Gandhi wrote, "As regards 'rebirth,' I for my part should not omit anything, for I think that faith in a rebirth will never restrain mankind as much as faith in the immortality of the soul and in divine truth and love. But I leave it to you to omit it if you wish to. I shall be very glad to assist your edition."[35]

Why did Gandhi respond like this? Many people have suggested various answers. Some have suggested that to answer otherwise would have damaged Gandhi's developing relationship with the Hindu leaders of

[34] See Hugh McLean, "Tolstoy and the Religious Culture of His Time: A Biography of a Long Conversion, 1845–1887," *Slavic Review* (2009): 713–14.

[35] Murthy, *Mahatma Gandhi and Leo Tolstoy Letters*, 28.

the Indian National Congress Party. Others have suggested that Gandhi was deeply hurt by the church in South Africa, and so did not want to be associated with the church. To the latter, I may point out that Tolstoy himself was against the organized church. He viewed the modern church as being far removed from the teachings of Christ.

Why, then, did Gandhi reject Tolstoy and Jesus's teaching of individual and social rebirth? In my opinion, Gandhi missed the most central point of Tolstoy's nonviolent teaching of Jesus: there can be no real lasting change unless it is accompanied by a social and deeply personal rebirth experience. It is only through such rebirth that the three central themes of nonviolent love, peace, and truth can truly be lived out in individuals and society.

Sometimes I wonder if the religiously based violence in India that Gandhi saw during his last days in India gave him pause to reflect on this crucial basis of Tolstoy's thought. Sadly, seventy years after Gandhi's death, India still struggles with the five issues Tolstoy and Ruskin underlined, and they are not alone. One hundred years after the correspondence between Tolstoy and Gandhi, we are seeing the death of thousands of vulnerable Ukrainians at the hands of a violent Russian army, and the flight of millions of women and children.

In this light, I wish that the three central ideas of nonviolent love, truth, and peace would be revisited in our global society today, especially based on the realities in India, Ukraine, and the USA. In the following, I summarize some key issues related to each nation:

1. Ethic of Humanity
    a. India is still plagued with the caste system. Low castes and outcastes still face many injustices.
    b. Russia is plagued with deep notions of the inhumanity of low-caste and outcaste Ukrainians.
    c. The USA is plagued with racial and ethnic hatred. My students care about the Black Lives Matter and AAPI Lives Matter (Asian Americans and Pacific Islander) movements. I think the church has much to learn from Tolstoy and Gandhi. I would urge the Church in the West to develop an ethic of humanity, based on the thoughts of Tolstoy and Gandhi.

2. Ethic of Nonviolent Love
    a. Violence against the low castes and religious minorities is still a major issue in India.

b. The world is witnessing horrible acts of violence in Ukraine. Yet, Russian Christian leaders—Orthodox as well as even some Russian Evangelical leaders—are strangely quiet about it. I pray that my Russian sisters and brothers would hear the voice of Jesus spoken through the words of Tolstoy and Gandhi, and aggressively act with "nonviolent love" responses to Russian president Vladimir Putin's violence.
c. The US president Joe Biden recently signed the Emmett Till Antilynching Act. This, I think, is a good thing. Violence against minorities is growing rapidly all over the West. I pray that the church in the USA would come up with concrete strategies of "nonviolent love" to protect our minoritized sisters and brothers from acts of violence.

3. Ethic of Love toward Enemies
   a. In India, enmity against the low castes and outcastes is at an all-time high. This enmity is significantly codified in laws against low castes, outcastes, and minorities. Reading these laws and observing this enmity, we are reminded that Gandhi did not genuinely lead Indians to Jesus. We must remember that Christ alone is the true source of the ethic of love.
   b. Nationalism and racial purity notions are at an all-time high in Russia and Europe. I have heard Russian Christian friends describe Ukrainians in very derogatory terms. No wonder some Russian Christians do not seem to be in an uproar over the wiping out of Ukrainians. I think Russian Christians need to come up with a strong ethic of love toward their Ukrainian sisters and brothers.
   c. The 2020 elections in the US demonstrated a dearth of an ethic of love. At larger cultural levels, there some times seems to be no healing in sight. I wish the American church would heed the words of Tolstoy and Gandhi, and develop strong strategies based on an ethic of love toward the "enemy."

4. Ethic of Sexuality
   a. In India, a low-caste or outcaste girl or woman is raped every twenty minutes. The COVID-19 pandemic has

caused many, many more girls to be taken into sexual slavery. The Indian government is doing nothing to protect weak and vulnerable girls and boys. I wish politicians and social/religious leaders would listen to the voice of Gandhi.

b. Women and girls are abused as a weapon of war by Russian soldiers. News reports, especially from areas that were occupied by Russian soldiers, like Bucha, Ukraine, bear this out. I wish Russian soldiers would read some Tolstoy!

c. Human trafficking of women and girls is at an all-time high in the US, especially during the pandemic lockdown. Predators have taken advantage of the lockdown for the online sexual exploitation of children.[36] The American evangelical church must come up with strong strategies to respond to this pandemic's ethics of sexuality.

5. Ethic of Allegiance to Christ and the Core Principles of Christ

   a. In India, nationalistic Hindutva (high caste Hindu rule) is governing politics. The highest caste does great injustice against the low castes and the outcastes, based on their allegiance to high caste Hinduism. It should be noted that Gandhi's assassin, Nathuram Godse, was a member of a right-wing Hindu party. I wish members of the Indian government would read Gandhi!

   b. In Russia, many Russians pledge complete allegiance to Putin and his nationalistic policies. This includes evangelical Russian Christians. I wish Russian Christians would listen to Tolstoy! I think he would say, "Don't owe allegiance to anyone except Christ and his ethics."

   c. An overwrought nationalism is at an all-time high in the US. It seems that all politicians must prove they are nationalistic in one way or another to be elected, even outdoing each other to show who is more nationalistic. I sometimes wonder if the American evangelical church is not far behind. I encourage the American evangelical

[36] See for example Lara Jakes, "Pandemic Lockdowns Aided Predators Worldwide, Especially Online, U.S. Says," *New York Times*, Nov. 10, 2021.

church to listen to the voice of Tolstoy and affirm, "We owe our primary allegiance to no one else but to Christ alone and to his core principles."

Conclusion

I recently published a book entitled *The Marys of the Bible: The Original #MeToo Movement.*[37] In this book, I seek to address a much-needed global phenomenon called the #MeToo movement. In India alone, a girl or woman is raped every twenty minutes. In the book, I narrate a horrific incident on December 12, 2012, in which a twenty-three-year-old medical student was brutally raped by six men on a public transportation bus. Because she was low caste and her boyfriend was high caste, their relationship was unacceptable. They could never get married. After brutally raping her, the men threw her out of the bus where she was found by a passerby. Eleven days after the horrible rape, she was flown to Singapore for a last-ditch effort to save her life. She died in surgery to repair her gruesome injuries.

In January 2013, I traveled to India to teach a PhD seminar made up primarily of women students. Women's groups and students across India took to the streets to ask for justice for Indian girls and women. The young medical student, Nirbhaya, was India's daughter.[38] The Prime Minister of India at that time, Mr. Manmohan Singh, said in a speech to the Parliament that there needs to be a fundamental change in the very moral fiber of India.[39]

It seems to me that Manmohan Singh, a fervent disciple of Gandhi, was asking, What has happened to the India of Gandhi? Where are the Gandhis of India today? I would ask the same question to Russians: Where are the Tolstoys of Russia today?

In the Hebrew Bible, there is a poignant narrative about the prophets Elijah and Elisha. When Elijah was taken up by a whirlwind into heaven, the cloak of Elijah fell into his hands. He was beside himself with sorrow and perplexity. He exclaimed, "Where is the God of Elijah?" (2 Kings

[37] Boaz Johnson, *The Marys of the Bible: The Original #MeToo Movement*, with forewords by Bindulata Barik, Ingrid Faro, and Elizabeth Pierre (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018).

[38] The phrase "India's Daughter" is based on a 2015 BBC documentary production based on the 2012 gang rape and murder of twenty-three-year-old medical student, Nirbhaya. Sadly, this film was banned in India.

[39] Johnson, *The Marys of the Bible*, 93.

2:14). Thankfully, Elisha got his answer soon thereafter. He simply took the cloak of Elijah and struck the waters of the Jordan, and the water was parted, as with the prophets of old, Moses, Joshua, and Elijah.

In the end, the question is not: Where is the God of Moses, Joshua, and Elijah? Today, the question for the Evangelical Covenant Church, and the Church in the West more broadly, is Where are the Moseses, Joshuas, and Elijahs of God?

An Introduction to *Even the Best of Us: Clergy Sexual Failure—The Church's Hidden Sin*

Dwight Perry, senior vice president, provost, and dean of education
Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois
Elizabeth Pierre, assistant professor of pastoral care and counseling psychology
North Park Theological Seminary and University, Chicago, Illinois

2018 was the year of the "Me Too" movement. Sexual abuse and sexual manipulation by persons, primarily but not solely men, has been the hidden sin of many major segments of our society. Whether it be the entertainment industry, business, the military, the news industry, or even the church, sexual abuse, until very recently, was something the abused would either deny or hide, especially if the perpetrator was someone in authority. The unfortunate reality is that sexual failure is also prevalent within the church, Christ's beautiful bride (the "called out" assembly). The deception of those who took a vow to shepherd God's people but acted more like wicked shepherds has caused many in Christ's church to be riddled by pain and heartbreak.

Background

In Ezekiel 34:1-10, the prophet could not have summarized this point any better when, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he shared these words, during ancient Israel's Babylonian exile:

> The word of the LORD came to me: Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord God: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, the sick

> you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered; they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them.
>
> Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: As I live, declares the Lord God, surely because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep, therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them. (ESV)

We wrote *Even the Best of Us* from this perspective.[1] In this book, we critically examine how servants of the Almighty God can, and have, fallen in the area of clergy sexual ethics. We also look at the inner life of those who are called to shepherd God's people. Unfortunately, clergy who fall in this area use their position of influence to abuse, shame, and cover over sexual sin either by themselves or by others, instead of leading well.

We also wrote this book as two ministry practitioners, who have a combined sixty years of full-time ministry experience. Thus, *Even the Best of Us* is written not only out of the wealth of that experience but also from the perspective of two persons of different genders (one female, the other male) and from the perspective of two persons of color.

I, Elizabeth Pierre, currently serve as assistant professor of pastoral care and counseling psychology at North Park Theological Seminary and University. I am also a trained clinician. I teach my students on a daily basis that "Even the Best of Us" can find ourselves in a place where we

[1] See Dwight A. Perry and Elizabeth O. Pierre, *Even the Best of Us: Clergy Sexual Failure—The Church's Hidden Sin* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2021).

have fallen into sexual failure.

And I, Dwight Perry, former dean of faculty and professor of homiletics and leadership at North Park Theological Seminary and current provost at the Moody Bible Institute, have over forty years of full-time vocational ministry experience, sharing with others, both inside and outside the classroom, how easily the enemy of our souls can trick any of us to make a choice that we regret for the rest of our lives.

In this way, we pray that readers will find that even though this book is grounded in both research and theological nuance, it is not just a book for the *head*, but for the *heart* as well. As seasoned ministry practicioners, we share from our hearts to yours.

This book focuses on the devastation to individuals that takes place within the church and within society at large when clergy or ministry leaders commit acts of sexual failure. The main issue this book addresses is the need for clergy and persons in ministry to begin to discuss openly, with both peers and their leadership teams, ways by which a spiritual leader can build effective bridges of accountability around this area.

The reader should benefit in two ways. First, they will walk away with clear, specific, and implementable follow-up action steps that will help them to stop this type of behavior. Second, the reader will develop a theology of the church that breaks down the dichotomy between clergy and laity, and that positions the church as the place in which both parties can grow together as partners to combat moral failure by clergy.

The various chapters seek to address this issue from the overriding perspective that "only by the grace of God go I." If we are not prayerful and alert to the dark side of our fallen nature, we can all fall into sexual sin. Note that I, Dwight Perry, wrote chapters 1-6 and chapter 9, while I, Elizabeth Pierre, wrote chapters 7 and 8.

Overview

Chapter One: The Church Too Movement Is Unfortunately Too Late. This chapter gives an in-depth look at the problem. Statistics that will alarm the average reader, in terms of the scope of this problem within the American church, are presented. The argument affirms that the critical issue of sexual failure among clergy is one of evangelicalism's hidden sins—sin that also includes race and class issues.

Chapter Two: Who You Are Is Not What People See on Sunday. This chapter focuses on the inward journey of the leader. In a performance-oriented culture, character and integrity come from the inside out. In

contrast, we often substitute intimacy with God for other external substitutions. Even ministers can get caught up in this performance-oriented culture if we are not careful. This chapter also explores in detail how the enemy uses falsehoods about ourselves, our society, and others to get us to believe a lie about ourselves, which then influences our choices in life. The danger of exploiting others, whether it be through pornography, incest, extramarital sexual relationships with the same or opposite sex "as long as it makes me feel good," is further examined. This section of the book also looks at the narcissistic tendencies of Western culture that impact how we think about ourselves and about sex. Finally, this chapter touches briefly on the need for spiritual leaders to develop accountable relationships.

Chapter Three: Activity without Substance. Chapter two's theme concerning the need for character is further developed. A brief exposition on James 1:2-4 details how character is never built without God, who, in his sovereign wisdom, allows hard times to come into our lives. The life of Joseph, in Genesis, is discussed as an example God bringing a person to the end of their own resources in order to build them up from the inside out—to finally be the person God is calling them to become. Finally, various types of leaders are reviewed who, if unchecked, will make decisions that not only hurt others, but also themselves.

Chapter Four: Just the Emotions, Ma'am, Just the Emotions, Ma'am. This chapter addresses the role our emotions play in our life choices. A balanced view of the role of human emotion is presented. While some say that emotions should never be listened to, it is noted here that God has given us the ability to *feel*. This is one means by which we can sense if something in our spirit is out-of-sync with God's Spirit and direction for us. This chapter also investigates the following themes: the role of emotions in humankind, the direct relationship between one's emotional development and one's family of origin, the impact of trauma on emotional development, a brief discussion on attachment theory, and the role of Satanic accusation and its impact on our emotional life.

Chapter Five: Sex Is More Than an Event; It Is a Relationship. This chapter discusses the differences between men and women in general, and in the area of sexuality in particular. The discussion is grounded not only in relevant physiological and psychological literature, but also and, most important, in Scripture. Openly and candidly, it discusses why sex is the number one need most men have in a relationship, while affection is the number one need most women have in a relationship.

This unit concludes with some practical suggestions on how to "affair proof" one's marriage.

Chapter Six: Pornography, the Hidden Evil. This section focuses on the dangers of pornography, even among clergy. Addiction to pornography is prevalent for those in ministry today. This chapter seeks to destroy the notion that pornography is harmless and only impacts the user. It concludes with some practical suggestions on how someone in spiritual leadership can experience victory in the area of pornography. This last section is applicable for those in vocational ministry and for men and women who do not serve in a vocational ministry role. A final brief section investigates whether a minister who has fallen morally can eventually be restored to ministry.

Chapter Seven: The Unique Trauma of Clergy Sexual Misconduct. This chapter examines the notion that clergy sexual failure is especially traumatic for its victims. Clergy are representatives of God, and the church is often seen as a healing space. Therefore, when there is abuse of any kind, trust is broken with parishioners within the church, with God, and with those outside the church and ministry, leaving many layers of healing to engage.

Chapter Eight: Clergy Misconduct and Recovery. This chapter examines the difficult process of recovery from clergy sexual failure. The chapter also looks at how to care well for survivors and the church community, and how to hold clergy and ministry leaders accountable for their behavior.

Chapter Nine: Concluding Thoughts. This short conclusion seeks to reinforce the "Big Idea" of the entire book. Any of us, even and especially someone who has been called to shepherd and serve Christ's church, can fall into sexual sin.

Unlike some books written on this important subject, we wanted to produce one that is easy to read and easy to understand. It is our prayer that the Holy Spirit would use this book to help not only clergypersons, but also the laity, to realize that when it comes to sexual sin, none of us is exempt. As a matter of fact, "Even the Best of Us" need to be careful, lest in thinking we are standing firm, we end up falling.

Shalom!

Book Reviews

Tala Raheb, PhD candidate at
Emory University & Ambassador Warren Clark Fellow,
Churches for Middle East Peace, Washington, DC

Scott P. Rice, resident theologian,
Highrock Church, Arlington, Massachusetts

Anna Beth Vollema, PhD candidate,
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois

Mae Elise Cannon, *Beyond Hashtag Activism: Comprehensive Justice in a Complicated Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 304 pages, $22

What is comprehensive justice? How should the Church respond to the needs of the poor, oppressed, and marginalized? Have Christians participated adequately in social justice issues? In this monograph, Mae Elise Cannon answers these questions by drawing our attention to the limits of the internet and social media, particularly hashtags, in effecting change. Her pursuit of comprehensive methodologies for social justice lead her to examine various systems of oppression, demonstrating how issues such as poverty, race, and gender intersect within an unjust system. More important, such comprehensive methodologies point Cannon to a vision of "holistic prophetic advocacy," a form of advocacy that includes the "social, legal, spiritual, political, and economic" (2-3). Through such prophetic advocacy, Cannon believes that we are transformed as individuals and as a community into God's image of compassion and justice,

which then leads to systemic transformation.

Cannon's work engages a wide spectrum of issues plaguing the American church, particularly evangelical communities, and places them in conversation with one another to highlight how we can effectively bring about change for the oppressed. This book is divided into five parts. In part one, Cannon first lays the biblical foundation for social justice: "Comprehensive biblical justice is the scriptural mandate to manifest the kingdom of God on earth by making God's blessings available to all humankind" (9-10). With this scriptural foundation, Cannon grounds our perspective not in politics, but in faith, and calls us to unity through living out Christ's message. She then focuses on the intersection of politics and faith, asking how evangelical politics can shift to address injustice. For example, Cannon argues that evangelical politics must abandon "fear and pursuit of power," and examine the role of politics in relation to various forms of oppression, including "theological imperialism, genocide of indigenous communities, [and] the commodification of black bodies in the hundreds of years of slavery" (40). Part two examines how poverty is manifested both domestically and globally. Part three focuses on race in the United States and abroad. Cannon dedicates the first two chapters to racism in the US, while the latter two address issues of immigration and ethnic violence around the world in countries such as Myanmar, Syria, and Yemen. Part four addresses gender oppression and women's fight for freedom. Finally, part five examines issues that have long divided the church, including marriage and sexuality and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The last chapter of the book examines religious freedom in the US and around the world. In each of these chapters, Cannon stays true to the "holistic prophetic advocacy" goal she introduces at the start by encouraging churches and Christians to become agents of positive change by educating themselves on these matters, volunteering, and donating.

Cannon does not stop there. She directs the reader to various organizations that work for social justice, such as World Vision, Compassion International, GRACE, CCIR, and others. She leaves no room for the Christian reader to be passive or disengaged. Cannon's call for activism beyond social media hashtags is thought-provoking and compelling. At a time when Christians are divided and many are content with passive engagement with social justice issues, Cannon skillfully presents Christians with an alternative approach, one that is grounded in the gospel's commandment to participate in God's kingdom on earth by fighting to end oppression. Cannon does not simply preach this message but prac-

tices her recommended approach in her work at Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP).

While the book mentions systemic transformation, further analysis on what such transformation looks like in each context would have given the reader a greater visual of how one's individual actions can lead to important changes. Still, *Beyond Hashtag Activism* remains a noteworthy contribution to the study of activism and social justice in the US and around the world. Each chapter concludes with a set of questions meant to provoke further discussion. As such, this book should be read by churches, pastors, and individuals who are interested in learning more about social justice issues and how to be a source of peace and justice in the world. While "the world [is not] the way God intended for it to be" (9), Cannon encourages us that by working for justice we become a source of positive change in the world. Let us, then, heed Cannon's call and work to be churches and Christians who love their neighbors, maintain hope, and "trust in the good news that God is just, and one day he will come again" (258).

TALA RAHEB

Rebekah Eklund, *The Beatitudes through the Ages* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2021), 368 pages, $35

In *The Beatitudes through the Ages*, Covenant scholar Rebekah Eklund offers a reception history of the Beatitudes from Matthew and Luke's gospels (Mt 5:3–12; Lk 6:20–26). Why read a reception history? There are a few reasons, but perhaps most poignantly, a reception history explores what a text does; its impact on individuals, communities, and societies; and how they, in turn, impact one another. In other words, a reception history aligns with the way Covenanters read Scripture: we read it to be transformed, and thereby to become better equipped in reading it again (and again) so as to hear the call of the living God upon our lives anew.

In chapters one and two, Eklund considers some orienting questions on the Beatitudes: Who are they for? What is the role of grace? Are the Beatitudes impossible ideals, or are they actions achievable through the power of the Holy Spirit? Her reception history of the Beatitudes is laid out in chapters three to ten. Eklund begins each chapter with a compelling story about the way faithful women and men have embodied

specific Beatitudes across history and geographical places. Regarding the Beatitudes' interpreters, Eklund introduces us to a delightfully wide array of readers. Pietists such as P.P. Waldenström appear alongside the likes of Cappadocian theologian Gregory of Nyssa, medieval figure Dhouda of Septimania, and contemporary Jesuit biblical scholar Yiu Sing Lúcás Chan.

Giving the book additional theological depth, Eklund stakes out a distinct angle to each Beatitude. A few teasers: In chapter five, she recovers a largely lost understanding of meekness (Matt. 5:5). Contrary to its association with passivity and unassertiveness, for ancient readers meekness meant a disciplined sense of discernment, knowing how (and when) to resist evil and yield to the good. In chapter six, which discusses the blessing on hungering for justice (Matt. 5:6) and those who are simply hungry (Luke 6:21), Eklund leads us to ask: What is the church's responsibility when many Christians possess abundant wealth while the gap between rich and poor continues to grow? In chapter eight, Eklund demonstrates how different renderings of purity of heart (Matt. 5:8)—cleansing of sin, single-minded devotion, and integrity—coalesce to engender a way of pursuing holiness less prone to hypocrisy and self-justifying spirituality. Eklund also offers important cautionary observations on how this Beatitude has been historically interpreted, especially in relation to matters of chastity and sexual purity, in a way that places a disproportionate amount of responsibility on women—and, lamentably, still does.

One of the most instructive features of this book lies in the way Eklund utilizes a breadth of voices to help us see the depth of Scripture's meaning and applicability more clearly. To be sure, as Eklund notes, important factors guide us and sometimes serve as a check in our pursuit of the meaning and application of Scripture, such as historical context, authorial intent, and Augustine's famous question: Does this interpretation further the love of God and neighbor? At the same time, there's also promise in the multiplicity of meanings in Scripture itself. For as many premodern readers of Scripture knew full well, multiplicity of meanings, and even the potential tensions that arise between them, are "generative rather than troublesome, a signal of the inexhaustible riches of Scripture and its ability to speak anew into new situations" (10).

For pastors, teachers, and really, all interested readers of Scripture, *The Beatitudes through the Ages* is quite simply a gift. In it we find a treasury of perspectives and dialogue partners on the meaning and application of the Beatitudes that can help us to better understand and respond to

the challenging, but ultimately life-giving, invitation of the Beatitudes today. Put differently, I commend this book because it reminds us of a simple but profound point: this reception history is not over. In engaging with past readers of the Beatitudes, we, too, hear Christ's words anew and must ask: How shall we, in our time and place, receive the living words of Jesus and faithfully put them into practice?

SCOTT P. RICE

Jonathan Teram, *Illuminating Counsel: How the Least Holy Books of the Hebrew Bible Explore Life's Most Important Issues* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2021), 329 pages, $39

But you're actually approaching the book as though it offers reliable theological conclusions!" Those were the words once spoken to me in response to a project on the book of Psalms. Whether because of its poetic, petitionary, or variably imprecatory nature, the Hebrew Bible's beloved repository of prayer is sometimes looked at with side-eye glares, betraying a suspicion of the doctrinal applicability of the material therein. Couple that with the fact that the *Ketuvim*[1] contains the three most canonically contested books of the Hebrew Bible (Esther, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes) and you have before you a collection dubbed the "least holy books."

Jonathan Teram presents a compelling case against such an accusation. The two main purposes of his book are to display (1) that the books of the *Ketuvim* deal with life's most critical concerns and (2) that these books must be read together in order to dig fully into their life-changing lessons. After a brief introduction on the nature of the collection and Hebrew poetry, Teram sets out to explore each individual book and to gradually weave a web evidencing the literary brilliance of their organization.

He finds several key themes throughout his analysis, suffering being the most prominent. As he progresses in his survey, he highlights the painful adversity embedded within the biblical pages, and the response

[1] The *Ketuvim* is one section of the Tanakh, the Jewish ordering of the books of the Hebrew Bible. The *Ketuvim* contains the books of Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah and the combined book of 1st and 2nd Chronicles.

to such pain on the part of the biblical figures. He picks up on other, secondary themes as well, noting the feminine nature of many of the books. Hence, the *Ketuvim* contains a personification of Jerusalem as a woman (Lamentations) and the only book in the Hebrew Bible that centers around two main female characters (Ruth).

Teram commends the logical order and chronological nature of the collation of the Hebrew Bible, and contends that necessary ideas are birthed when observing the essence of the thematic organization of the *Tanakh*. He picks up on two recurring ways in which the books of the *Ketuvim* are inextricably linked. First, subversion occurs between the key themes of the books, such that the retribution principle, for instance, infused within Proverbs is softened by the inquisition of Job. Second, the recurring motif of the "court Jew" allows for the juxtaposition of key figures and the varying ways they respond to their circumstances. Hence, the books of the *Ketuvim* offer instruction in wisdom; life lived out in discernment and nuance.

Teram's work endeavors to fill a gap in the current literature. Not only are monographs on the *Ketuvim* in short supply, but his approach is particularly accessible, leaving space for all to learn from the "illuminating counsel" of this collection. He states at the outset that he wants the pages he has set forth to be available to the Jew, Christian, and the invested non-religious reader alike. He prudently defines and describes what a less careful writer might take for granted. Furthermore, Teram avoids getting distracted by long debates regarding the date and authorship of the various books, and only incorporates the more academic discussions of Hebrew translation and historical background when it is most pertinent to the exploration of the literature.

While finding suffering as a key theme in every book may seem overdrawn from a literary standpoint, Teram's emphasis on this theme reveals a keen pastoral awareness. The mere mention of abuse in Song of Songs is not enough to highlight suffering as a central concern of the book, but Teram understands the impact that even those few words can hold for anyone who has been through such trauma. Thus, wisdom is offered through the text. By expanding the definition of suffering, such as to include an existential crisis, he reveals that various forms of anguish are important throughout many of the books.

Teram's book is important for the pastor, not only for the unique insight to be gained on the text, but also for the particularly pastoral bent to the work. Very few seminaries require a whole class on the *Ketuvim*.

Much is offered here for the eager pastor-theologian who seeks to understand the specifically Jewish underpinnings of the Hebrew Bible. This, I believe, is both a necessary and worthwhile endeavor. However, even more so, Teram presents this information in an already "pastorally packaged" manner, providing insight that is relatable to real-life application and the discipleship process. As a final note, the importance he places on the inter-interpretive nature of the books offers a ready warning against proof-texting, one which I hope will stay with me in my own pursuit of allowing the biblical text to shape my thinking first and foremost, rather than vice versa.

ANNA BETH VOLLEMA

A PUBLICATION OF
NORTH PARK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY