

Russia, Rwanda and Racism: The Perils of Beheaded Christianity

Sebastian Dortch

Even though bodies filled the morgue, and airstrikes destroyed hospitals, roads, and stores, Vitaliy Kim, governor of the Mykolaiv region of Ukraine, continued his daily walks, reassuring residents that victory was near.

“What can I say, the 17th day of war, all is well, the mood is excellent,” Kim said of Russian President Vladimir V. Putin’s invasion of Ukraine. “We have freedom and we’re fighting for it. And all they have is slavery. We want all our dreams to come true and we’re moving in that direction. Together to victory.”¹

Kim’s viewpoint was not limited to him. While six million people have fled Ukraine, those who remain have amazed the world with their resolve. Young and old, weak and strong, have banded together to fight insurmountable odds. A grand narrative captures them: they are free and willing to die to stay that way.

Ukraine’s story echoes a grander story found within the Trinity, where one of its members became human, was sacrificed, and raised from the dead to make way for us to join God’s family. It is a gripping tale – filled with plot twists, misery, and woe. Nevertheless, it is beautiful, winsome, liberating, and ennobling – a story of how light will defeat the darkness we see and experience today.

Victory already has been won. God conquered sin and death: not just the occasional missed mark we call sin, but the deep-seated *incurvatus in se* that animates our ways, systems, and history, and not just the last heartbeat we call death, but the Genesis 3 fractured relationship between God and ourselves. Once again, God is victorious. It is just many days it does not look that way.

In 1958, about three-quarters of U.S. citizens said they trusted their government in Washington, D.C., to do what is right. Today, the number hovers at 17 percent.² People are

¹ “‘I’m Not Scared of Anything’: Death and Defiance in a Besieged Ukrainian City,” *The New York Times*, March 15, 2022, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/15/world/europe/ukraine-mykolaiv-russia-war.html>.

² “How Americans View Trust, Facts, and Democracy Today,” accessed May 26, 2022, <https://pew.org/38gSYyx>.

cynical. And cynicism occurs when the promise of a person, place, or thing fails to measure up. Lawyer and activist Mahatma Gandhi soured on Christianity as he grew up; Christians were the reason why. “In those days Christian missionaries used to stand in a corner near the high school and hold forth, pouring abuse on Hindus and their Gods,” he said. “I could not endure this. I must have stood there only once but that was enough to dissuade me from repeating the experiment.”³

Gandhi experienced what theologian Cornelius Plantinga Jr. describes as the oldest and deepest human dilemma – sin. Thankfully, the prophets spoke of a better way:

They dreamed of a new age in which human crookedness would straighten out. The foolish would be made wise, and the wise made humble. They dreamed of a time when the deserts would bloom, the mountains would run with wine, people would stop weeping and be able to sleep without a weapon under their pillow. People would work in peace and work to fruitful effect.⁴

These dreamers spoke of *shalom*. “In English we call it peace, but it means far more than peace of mind or ceasefire between enemies. In the Bible *shalom* means universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight....”⁵ *Shalom* is the way life is meant to be. Whether in business, higher education, world affairs, or even government, it should reign. In Genesis 1, God was happy with the cosmos he made. Everything, he said, was good, and he created male and female – the very reflections of his image – to steward his creation and love him and others in the adventure. But Adam and Eve rebelled and broke *shalom*. Tribalism and self-centeredness were ushered in, replacing dignity and respect.

All these effects of sin are portrayed in the story in ways that had a maximum impact for the ancient Israelites, yet all these things – shame, guilt, futility, hostility, exclusion,

³ “Gandhi, Christ and Christianity | Relevance of Gandhi | Articles on and by Mahatma Gandhi,” accessed May 26, 2022, https://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/gandhi_christ.html.

⁴ Cornelius Plantinga Jr., “Sin: Not The Way It’s Supposed To Be” (Christ On Campus Initiative CCI, 2010), 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

oppression, pain, suffering, and death – are the common experience of humanity in deviating from the divine design, disregarding the divine will.⁶

So, what, or should we say who can overcome the dilemma? Jesus Christ but not the fictionalized character we often imagine. God’s Jesus is our only hope. Heresies cloud our ability to understand this.

Take Gnosticism. It teaches a Jesus-plus philosophy. Follow the steps, whether special diets, readings, celebrations, or practices, and learn to escape your body’s limitations and the fallen dimension known as earth. As for Jesus, he was not fully human, and he did not really die.⁷ And then there is Docetism. Theologian Cherith Fee Nordling says it presents Jesus as Clark Kent of Superman fame. No one questions his great works, but no one thinks he was actually human. He was an illusion, a phantom of sorts.⁸ Both beliefs are crushing. We might as well delete Hebrews 4:15 from our Bible, because under these teachings, we no longer have a high priest who can “empathize with our weaknesses,” one “tempted in every way, just as we are” yet without sin. Lest we swing too far we do hold that Jesus is 100 percent God. But he is 100 percent human as well. Ours is a balanced view. We never want to examine the life of Jesus and mutter, “Well, that was Jesus. Living like him would be impossible today.” Explaining away Jesus’ humanity leads to tragedy. We are left to meet God’s requirements through our resources, whether willpower or rules-based religion. Ancient saints put little confidence in the flesh. They hoped in Jesus.⁹ They believed he entered and remained in their story as fully human, so they could enter his story and become fully human as well.¹⁰

⁶ Michael Pahl, *The Beginning and the End: Rereading Genesis’s Stories and Revelation’s Visions* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2011), 39.

⁷ Nicholas Adams, et al., *Heresies and How to Avoid Them: Why It Matters What Christians Believe*, ed. Ben Quash and Michael Ward. (Baker Academic, 2012), 102–103.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 24–27.

⁹ In book three, chapter 19 of *Against Heresies*, second-century bishop Irenaeus said: “For by no other means could we have attained to incorruptibility and immortality, unless we had been united to incorruptibility and immortality. But how could we be joined to incorruptibility and immortality, unless, first, incorruptibility and immortality had become that which we also are, so that the corruptible might be swallowed up by incorruptibility, and the mortal by immortality, that we might receive the adoption of sons?”

¹⁰ See the Apostle Paul’s viewpoint in Romans 6:1-14.

In his union with us, Jesus did not consider his divine prerogatives as the Son to be used to his advantage.... Instead, he exercised the power of God in the same way that every other image-bearer does and must do – by the Spirit (loudly signaled at his baptism in the Jordan River). Jesus embodied the call of true humanity, and the Scriptures are adamant that we recognize the pattern of his life for what it was – obedience to God his Father in the Spirit’s power....¹¹

Jesus told his disciple Thomas, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”¹² Theologian Eugene H. Peterson said Jesus’ use of the word *way* is instructive, because it should represent,

The way we talk, the way we use our influence, the way we treat another, the way we raise our children, the way we read, the way we worship, the way we vote, the way we garden, the way we ski, the way we feel, the way we eat... And on and on, endlessly, the various and accumulated “ways and means” that characterize our way of life.¹³

Detaching ourselves from Jesus’ life and spiritual resources, as offered through the Holy Spirit, puts us on the hamster wheel of self-salvation. Moreover, we are left to question God’s judgment: he sacrificed his son, when we could have liberated ourselves from sin, the devil, and our flesh. Interestingly, many doubt the value of Christianity, and its adherents in the church. But many of these same people view Jesus more favorably. They applaud the love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control that poured from his life. Consider, once again, Gandhi. Despite how he felt about Christianity, he held its Savior in high regard. “Jesus, a man who was completely innocent, offered himself as a sacrifice for the good of others, including his enemies, and became the ransom of the world. It was a perfect act.”¹⁴

¹¹ Cherith Fee Nordling, et al., "Practice Resurrection, Live Like Jesus," *Tending Soul, Mind, and Body: The Art and Science of Spiritual Formation*, ed. Gerald L. Hiestand and Todd Wilson. (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2019), 129.

¹² John 14:6, New International Version.

¹³ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Jesus Way: A Conversation on the Ways That Jesus Is the Way*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 22.

¹⁴ “Gandhi, Christ and Christianity | Relevance of Gandhi | Articles on and by Mahatma Gandhi.”

In a 1989 lecture at Regent College, J.I. Packer noted that who we are – and, implicitly, our ability to understand and nurture that identity – influences how we behave. So, he asked a question: “What does it mean to be truly and fully human?”¹⁵ As theologian Jeff Greenman says, we grow in the direction of our questions. And Packer asked a great one. According to Packer, the “Bible proclaims that humanness is more than just having a mind and a body; it is essentially a personal and relational ideal, the ideal of living in the image of God, which means being like Jesus Christ in creative love and service to our Father in heaven and our fellowman on earth.”¹⁶ Our job is to plumb this assignment and mirror God’s character, words, and deeds. With and through our triune God, we are to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it with God’s love and good purposes.

Packer warned of wandering about with a “detached intellect,” where God is an object to be managed instead of “the great personal Subject, far above us, apart from whose ongoing life we should exist at all.”¹⁷ Living like this blunts our ability to appreciate our connection to God and humanity.

God delights, of course, in all God’s works. But human beings are singled out from other earthlings in that in them God finds God’s own perfections mirrored back to Godself. A consequence of the fact that each human being mirrors God is that we as human beings exist in profound unity with each other: to see another human being is to see another creature who delights God by mirroring God.... Thereby we also, in a derivative way, resemble each other. One could say we mirror each other. In looking at you and me, God finds Godself mirrored. Accordingly, in my looking at you I too discern, once my eyes have been opened, that you mirror God – and more, I discern that you mirror me. I discern myself in a mirror. I discern a family likeness.¹⁸

¹⁵ J.I. Packer, “An Introduction to Systematic Spirituality,” (Regent College, December 11, 1989), 3.

¹⁶ J.I. Packer, “Systematic Spirituality,” 4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁸ Nicholas Wolterstorff, “The Wounds of God: Calvin’s Theology of Social Injustice,” *Hearing the Call: Liturgy, Justice, Church, and World*, ed. Mark R. Gornik and Greg Thompson (Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011), 123.

Through salvation, God unites us to each other and to himself. We become members of his original family – God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – and members of the global church. With this new identity, we should, of course, bear a family resemblance. People should be able to look at us and see God. Jesus made this very point to Phillip, when he said,

Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.¹⁹

Jesus here directs Phillip to remember his works – how he responded to God in heaven and lepers, prostitutes, children, slaves, tax collectors, women, anyone with broken bodies, broken spirits, and broken minds on earth – as evidence that he was one with God. Jesus’ promise that whosoever, as in “whoever believes in me...,” would behave like him was a reference to his body, the church, of which he is the head and we, his followers, are his hands and feet. Congregations and denominations should be able to speak similarly to the world – “believe on the evidence of (our) works themselves.” This begs the question: What happens when congregations and denominations behave as if they are disconnected from the mind and ways of Jesus Christ?

Consider three separate moments on three separate continents during three separate generations.

During the 1800s, white Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian pastors taught that the Bible supported treating black men, women, boys, and girls as property in the United States. They defended the South’s way from outsiders, including withering critiques of fellow Bible-believing pastors north of the Mason-Dixon line. According to Edward Riley Crowther, emeritus professor of history at Adams State University, southern churches helped maintain slavery.

Anyone who reads the sometimes lengthy and always erudite defenses of black slavery, both on biblical and philosophical grounds, must be persuaded that a great tragedy of

¹⁹ John 14:11-14.

slavery was the waste of intellect in its defense. But these apologies proved compelling and irrefutable to the Southern mind. If the Bible were literally true, then the Old Testament upheld slavery and neither Jesus of Nazareth nor his Apostles expressly forbade it in the New Testament.²⁰

Jesus' professing body of believers acted upon dark impulses that were in no way connected to Jesus' mind and heart. Jesus would not have owned slaves, sold slaves, beaten slaves or raped slaves. Yet this happened with the support of southern congregations, and church leaders unwilling to partake in Jesus' life and storm the gates of injustice.

In theory, conservative theology assigned the church the task of saving... souls. Religion thus avoided confrontation with secular injustice, preferring to emphasize the rewards in heaven that awaited the faithful. The church consciously refrained from mixing religion with politics, but ironically, in the process of saving (people) from hell, it came to justify both the political and social orders of the antebellum South.²¹

In our second example, the heavily Christian nation of Rwanda erupted in violence starting Easter week of 1994. Scholars estimated at least a half million Tutsis were killed by Hutu militias. What is staggering is that some marauders knew their victims; they attended church together. Racism, tribalism, and politics were factors in this genocide.²² And so was Christianity. Regretfully, the church preached an escapist gospel that fixated on future glory and ignored earthly sins.²³

Gross abuses of human rights were taking place within Rwanda long before the crisis April 1994, yet the Churches by and large did not speak up. There had been a failure to

²⁰ Edward Riley Crowther, "Southern Protestants, Slavery and Secession: A Study in Religious Ideology, 1830-1861" (PhD diss., Auburn University, 1986).

²¹ Ibid.

²² Emmanuel M. Katongole and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *Mirror to the Church: Resurrecting Faith after Genocide in Rwanda*, Illustrated edition. (Zondervan, 2009).

²³ Roger W Bowen, *Rwanda: Missionary Reflections on a Catastrophe* (J.C. Jones Lecture, 1995), accessed May 26, 2022, <https://archive.org/details/rwandamissionary0000bowe>.

see that abuse of human beings, created in the image of God, is a very serious issue that the Church cannot ignore if it is to be true to its Lord.²⁴

And finally, today the head of the Russian Orthodox Church has thrown his full support behind Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine. Patriarch Krill’s beheaded theology is rooted in *Russian world* ideology, which teaches that Russia’s sphere of influence should encompass Ukraine and Belarus, and all ethnic and Russian-speaking people in the world. More than 1,200 ministers and professors have condemned the teaching in a statement titled “A Declaration On The ‘Russian World’ (Russkii Mir) Teaching.”²⁵ Proving there is nothing new under the sun, the document’s six points would have been as relevant for Rwanda and Dixie as they are for Russia today. It condemns supplanting the kingdom of God for “any kingdom of this world,” rejects exceptionalism, where one people is viewed as superior to another, and rebukes teaching that “encourages division, mistrust, hatred, and violence among peoples, religious, confessions, nations, or states.”²⁶

Oh, the peril of privatizing Christianity.²⁷ Particularly in the West, we read Scriptures like Romans 5:1-2 – “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.” – and fire up the lexicons. “Beloved, did you know that ‘justified’ is δικαιοῶ (dikaioō) in the Greek, and it means God declared you as righteous? It’s just as if you never sinned. Isn’t that great?” It is great. All I am saying is we should never lose sight of God’s family invitation. Note how the collective is trumpeted in the verses: “We,” the body of Christ, have been declared righteous; “we” the family of God have peace with God; “we” stand as one on level ground, in God’s grace, no big *I*’s and little *U*’s; and “we” collectively boast in the glory of God. What we see in the New Testament

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Public Orthodoxy, “A Declaration on the ‘Russian World’ (Russkii Mir) Teaching,” Public Orthodoxy, March 13, 2022, accessed March 24, 2022, <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2022/03/13/a-declaration-on-the-russianworld-russkii-mir-teaching/>.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Cherith Fee Nordling et al., “Being Saved as a New Creation: *Co-Humanity in the True Imago Dei*,” *What Does It Mean to Be Saved?*, John G. Stackhouse Jr, ed., (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2019), 116.

started in the Old Testament – God’s determination to create a family through the death of his son.

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.²⁸

Maybe we do not grasp what it means to be baptized and clothed in Christ. God has little confidence in our ability to represent his interests. He knows we are turned in on ourselves and turn on others. He sees how we reduce the Bible to a book of incantations: words to cite, memorize, and weaponize as we justify ourselves and condemn others. Our behavior clouds our witness. What a mess. Amazingly, God stays true to his promise to create a people for his name’s sake. But he knows we need help. And that is where Jesus enters stage left.

British theologian Morna D. Hooker believes we have missed the significance of 2 Corinthians 5:21: “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” Yes, our sin is credited to Jesus at Calvary, and His righteousness is credited to us upon conversion. But we cannot ignore the phrase, “...in him we might become the righteousness of God.” Because we have been baptized into Christ, Jesus’ resources – summed up in his ability to fully love God and others – have become ours. “Being in Christ means sharing his righteousness: and that means, not simply his status before God – his vindication as the Righteous One – but his moral righteousness.”²⁹ This “interchange” empowers us to behave like Jesus. His life becomes ours. Hooker expands her point:

Through baptism, believers are united with Christ in death and resurrection. And though resurrection is still a future hope, death and resurrection are already being worked out in their lives. Since Christ died to sin, so must they; they are no longer slaves to sin, but

²⁸ Galatians 3:26-29.

²⁹ Morna D. Hooker, “Interchange in Christ and Ethics,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 8, no. 25 (September 1985), 5.

instruments of righteousness... Thus, while it is true that Christ's death brings us life, it is quite false to suppose that Paul's notion of interchange is a simple exchange. It is not a matter of substitution, whereby Christ dies and we live. Rather, he shares our life and our death; and we, in turn, share his death and his life, by dying to sin and living to God.³¹

Looking at Scripture through an interchange lens exalts Jesus Christ to his rightful place as Savior and us at his feet, humbled and amazed that he invites us to partake in his life. It also creates strong ethical considerations.

Take, for example, the question of how to become a stronger Christian? Our knee-jerk might be to put porn-blockers on our computer if we struggle with sexual sin. Or we can reflect on these words, "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."³²

A few takeaways:

- Notice Paul's nod to the Trinity. He says the Lord Jesus and the Spirit are one. They and the Father are co-equal, co-eternal members of the godhead.
- Through the Spirit, we find freedom. There is nothing wrong with porn blockers. It is just they will never liberate the heart. But the Spirit can and will.
- Change comes as we understand who Jesus is, what he accomplished and who we are because God joined us to himself, his Son, and his Spirit.

Where we find the Spirit, we find freedom. And where we find Jesus, we find freedom again: "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."³⁰

Seeing clearly is a byproduct of our freedom in Christ. One day Jesus was teaching in a synagogue when he noticed a woman crippled by a demonic spirit for nearly 20 years. She was hunched over, unable to stand upright. When Jesus *saw* her, ***he called her forward and said to her***, 'Woman, you are set free.' Then he ***put his hands on her***, and she straightened up and

³⁰ John 8:34-36.

praised God.”³¹ What a beautiful rhythm. Jesus saw, spoke to, and touched an outsider. And she was freed. Instead of being happy, the head of the synagogue got huffy, because Jesus broke the Sabbath with his good deed. It is a classic example of elevating form above substance.

In April 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. was jailed in Birmingham, Ala., for leading an anti-segregation march without court permission or city permit. Like the synagogue leader who chastised Jesus for healing a crippled woman on the Sabbath, eight Christian and Jewish leaders labeled the demonstrations as unhelpful because they were influenced by King and other outsiders.³² Justice, the religious leaders said, was best sought by locals in the courts and at negotiation tables. They asked residents to disregard King’s efforts. King responded by explaining how we are all tied together. He told the leaders,

Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught up in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied to a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with narrow, provincial “outside” agitator idea.³³

Justice has no borders. Yes, we await a future bodily resurrection. But God empowers us, by his spirit, to live dynamic Christians lives – lives that resemble the life of Christ – today.³⁴ Gnosticism is a heretical wind that entices us to fixate on the sweet by-and-by and walk past suffering. Listen to King again:

In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard so many ministers say, ‘Those are social issues which the gospel has nothing to do

³¹ Luke 13:10-14.

³² Martin Luther King Jr, “Martin Luther King Jr.’s ‘Letter From Birmingham Jail,’” *The Atlantic*, last modified April 4, 2018, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/02/letterfrom-a-birmingham-jail/552461/>.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Gordon D. Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996), 56.

with,’ and I have watched so many churches commit themselves to a completely otherworldly religion which made a strange distinction between bodies and souls, the sacred and secular.³⁵

In the book of Isaiah, the prophet said the coming Messiah would be known as the Prince of Peace. Jesus embodied the name. He brought shalom to earth and offers it now. Because we are joined to his life, we can engage in “compassionate and undaunted engagement with reality” but with a balance. We reject the quietism King accused the religious order of possessing but acknowledge that shalom, in the fullest sense, will not occur until Jesus returns to make all things new.³⁶

To live like Jesus, we must not only draw upon his resources but also lean into his methods. Prayer is required because “we cannot simply be persons who have well-informed opinions about the burning issues of our time.” We must nurture an “intimate relationship with the incarnate Word, Jesus.”³⁷ That relationship will take us into uncomfortable spaces, where we will be invited to take meaningful risk and action in Jesus’ name.³⁸ Loving deeply will certainly lead to pain. Jesus suffered, and because we are one with him, we will as well. But he kept pressing ahead. And so must we. “This ‘good news,’ at its core, is a simple message: God coming to his people.”³⁹ And because God’s children have welcomed King Jesus, not only as savior and Lord but as members of his body, we should enter the world with his kingdom purposes.

Scripture depicts a complex reality. God’s kingdom has already begun, but is not fully realized. It is present and can be entered today, yet its completion lies in the future.

Although we often speak loosely of ‘building’ the kingdom, a careful reading of the New

³⁵ Jr, “Martin Luther King Jr.’s ‘Letter From Birmingham Jail.’”

³⁶ Richard Bauckham, “The Future of Jesus Christ,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

³⁷ Henri J.M. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*. (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 45.

³⁸ Andy Crouch, *Strong and Weak: Embracing a Life of Love, Risk and True Flourishing*. (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, 2016).

³⁹ Michael W. Pahl, *From Resurrection to New Creation* (Wipf and Stock, 2010), 48.

Testament reveals that God never assigns that precise task to his people. God builds his own kingdom. The church is called to a twofold witness to the presence and power of God's righteous rule of the world: proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and demonstrating the new life found only in a community that is 'salt and light' amidst a broken world.⁴⁰

Paul starts the book of Ephesians enraptured: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."⁴¹ As the rest of Ephesians shows, every spiritual blessing in Christ is guaranteed by the Spirit and initiated by God's love and grace. God has joined us to his family, in heaven and on earth. Through trinitarian-incarnational theology, we learn *who* we are, *whose* we are and how to join the ways of Jesus Christ.

Bibliography

Adams, Nicholas, Anders Bergquist, Janet Martin Soskice, Rachel Muers, Marcus Plested, Ben Quash, John Sweet et al. *Heresies and How to Avoid Them: Why it matters what Christians believe*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012.

Bauckham, Richard. "The Future of Jesus Christ." In *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, edited by Markus Bockmuehl, 265–280. Cambridge Companions to Religion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Bowen, Roger W. *Rwanda: Missionary Reflections on a Catastrophe*. Place of publication not identified: publisher not identified, 1995. Accessed March 26, 2022. <https://archive.org/details/rwandamissionary0000bowe>.

Cornelius Plantinga Jr. "Sin: Not The Way It's Supposed To Be." Christ On Campus Initiative CCI, 2010.

Crouch, Andy. *Strong and Weak: Embracing a Life of Love, Risk and True Flourishing*. Illustrated edition. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, 2016.

⁴⁰ Jeffrey P. Greenman, *The Lord's Prayer*, (Grove Books, 2012), 16.

⁴¹ Ephesians 1:3.

- Crowther, Edward R., "Southern Protestants, Slavery and Secession: A Study in Religious Ideology, 1830-1861." PhD diss., Auburn University, 1986.
<https://www.proquest.com/openview/180b76fb6f189876481c4ac782d7c6da/1?pqorigsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>.
- Fee, Gordon D. *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996.
- "Gandhi, Christ and Christianity | Relevance of Gandhi | Articles on and by Mahatma Gandhi." Accessed March 17, 2022. https://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/gandhi_christ.html.
- Greenman, Jeffrey P. "The Lord's Prayer." *Grove Books*. Last modified 2012. Accessed March 29, 2022. <https://grovebooks.co.uk/products/s-122-the-lord-s-prayer>.
- Hiestand, Gerald L., and Todd Wilson, eds. *Tending Soul, Mind, and Body: The Art and Science of Spiritual Formation*. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2019.
- Hooker, Morna D. "Interchange in Christ and Ethics." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 8, no. 25 (September 1985): 3–17.
- "How Americans View Trust, Facts, and Democracy Today." Accessed May 15, 2021.
<https://pew.org/38gSYyx>.
- Katongole, Emmanuel M., and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove. *Mirror to the Church: Resurrecting Faith after Genocide in Rwanda*. Zondervan, 2009.
- King, Martin Luther Jr. "Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'Letter From Birmingham Jail.'" *The Atlantic*. Last modified April 4, 2018. Accessed March 18, 2022.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/02/letter-from-a-birminghamjail/552461/>.
- Nordling, Cherith F. "Practice Resurrection, Live Like Jesus." In *Tending Soul, Mind, and Body: The Art and Science of Spiritual Formation*, edited by Gerald L. Hiestand and Todd Wilson, 122-133. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2019.
- Nordling, Cherith F. "Being Saved as a New Creation: Co-Humanity in the True Imago Dei." In *What Does It Mean to Be Saved?*, edited by John Stackhouse, 115-136. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2019.
- Nouwen, J.M. *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*. New York: Crossroad, 1992.
- Orthodoxy, Public. "A Declaration on the 'Russian World' (Russkii Mir) Teaching." *Public Orthodoxy*, March 13, 2022. Accessed March 24, 2022.
<https://publicorthodoxy.org/2022/03/13/a-declaration-on-the-russian-world-russkii-mirteaching/>.
- Packer, J.I. "An Introduction to Systematic Spirituality." Regent College, December 11, 1989.

Pahl, Michael. *The Beginning and the End: Rereading Genesis's Stories and Revelation's Visions*. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2011.

Pahl, Michael W. *From Resurrection to New Creation*. Wipf and Stock, 2010.

Peterson, Eugene H. *The Jesus Way: A Conversation on the Ways That Jesus Is the Way*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011.

Wolterstorff, Nicholas. *Hearing the Call: Liturgy, Justice, Church, and World*. Edited by Mark R. Gornik and Greg Thompson. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011.