

HOM/TH6/703 (3) Preaching and Eschatology
Spring 2021 Jason Byassee
Thursday nights, 6-9 pm

Rationale

In modernity, talk of heaven or hell or the afterlife has hung around theology like an embarrassing elder relative—they have every right to be in the house, but no one wants to talk about them. Yet one could argue that there is not a non-eschatological thought in the entire New Testament. Apocalyptic is, famously, the mother of all Christian theology. Biblical scholars reclaimed it in the 20th century. Theologians have been slower to do so. Just think how many sermons you have heard on heaven or hell. Ever. Or how many you've preached.

This course will attend to eschatology and preaching. What do we do with these cumbersome accretia around our faith? If God has made a home among mortals, "pitched a tent and moved into the neighbourhood," as *The Message* translates John 1:14, then it is no other-worldly topic. It is, arguably, the most this-worldly of topics for preaching and theology. Our resources each make this argument in their various ways. Tom Long attends most explicitly to eschatology and preaching. David Hart argues against eternal torment from his brash Orthodox perspective. Christopher Morse, a student of Moltmann's (whose theology of hope tried to wrestle eschatology back into Christian God-talk) takes on the theme as a systematician. And Michael Battle explores the resources of Ubuntu theology as a student of Desmond Tutu's and as demonstrated in the ministry of Martin Luther King Jr. Apocalyptic may live most vividly among those Christians crushed on the underside of power. Much of the New Testament is written either from jail, or by those just out of jail, or those on their way to jail. Perhaps what makes apocalyptic so cumbersome is our social location amidst such material comfort. But from the place where most Christians have lived through time and space, eschatology may make a good deal more sense indeed than it does to us.

Students will be evaluated on weekly participation, on one presentation bringing a resource distinct from the required readings, and on a final paper or project.

Books

Michael Battle *Heaven on Earth: God's Call to Community in the Book of Revelation* (Westminster/John Knox, 2017). 9780664262549

David B. Hart *That All Shall Be Saved: Heaven, Hell, and Universal Salvation* (Yale, 2019). 0300246226

Thomas G. Long *Preaching from Memory to Hope* (Westminster, 2009). 0664234224

Christopher Morse *The Difference Heaven Makes: Rehearing the Gospel as News* (T&T Clark, 2010). 978-0-567-02733-7

N.T. Wright *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Church*
(HarperOne, 2018). 978-0062089977