The parable of the wheat and the tares is not about good people and evil people coexisting in the church and the need for church discipline; it is not about good and evil residing in each of us and the need for repentance; it is about the reality of evil in the world.

The world is created good: *And God saw all that He had done, and, look, it was very good* (Gen 1:31). The farmer plants good seed. God is good and does only good. The path to true freedom, and so to God, is loving the good.

The good, however, has an enemy who sows a seed similar in size and weight to the good seed sown by the farmer, a few grains of which will adversely affect crop quality. This seed is poisonous to people and livestock.

The parable acknowledges that human failure is part of a wider problem, namely, the cosmic struggle between God and Satan. Don't ask me where Satan came from, or where evil came from, if God created everything good. The parable is not evil's origin story.

The parable does say that free will is not a sufficient explanation of the reality of evil in the world. While this is no excuse for irresponsible behavior—"the devil made me do it"—it is a recognition of a greater mystery, a transcendent or non-human evil.

The assurance of this parable is that evil endures only for a season, a, as it turns out, very long season. The tares will eventually be plucked up, the wheat gathered. It is, then, history's end which will give the answers to the difficult theological questions history, including the history of Jesus, raises.

Christianity grew and endured and even flourished over the course of many generations in total and blissful ignorance of any officially defined dogma, of any single universally recognized canon of scripture, of anything remotely like the systematic and dogmatic theologies of the coming ages, of anything approaching a single church hierarchy.

The point to make here is that, despite many confessional and theological differences, Christian faith and hope was sustained by apocalyptic expectation and not dogmatic purity. An eager certainty of the imminence of the full and final revelation of God's truth in a restored and glorified cosmos was the very essence of faithfulness to the gospel (David Bentley Hart).

It should never be forgotten that Christianity entered human history not as a new creed or wisdom path or system of religious observances, but as apocalypse: the sudden unveiling in history of a mystery hidden in God before the foundations of the world. A slave legally crucified at the behest of all the religious and political authorities of his time, was raised by God as the one sole Lord over all the cosmos.

The church was given birth in something like a state of crisis, of mingled joy and terror, as one age was passing and another coming into existence. The Kingdom was drawing near; the Kingdom had already partly arrived; indeed, the Kingdom was already within, waiting to be revealed to the world.

A purely apocalyptic consciousness could persist for only so long. Soon enough, the church would assume the religious configurations provided by its age. The living tradition, however, is essentially apocalyptic: apart from a final disruption of history, what the parable calls *the end of the age*, the mystery of good and evil will remain a mystery.

The real, unmistakable, ultimately irrefutable revelation of reality to all of us is one that lies yet ahead, at that unimaginable moment when we will no longer see all things in a glass darkly, but will instead be granted a vision of reality “face to face.”

This is the faith that animated the early church: the will to let the past be reborn in the present as more than what until now had been known, and the will to let the present be shaped by a future yet to be revealed.

This faith knows how to live with unanswered questions; this faith does not accept, as Job did not, pious platitudes that blame the victim; this faith hopes for a final disclosure of the perfect love in which we know as we are known.