

**Laura Tack**  
***John 14:6 in Light of***  
***Jewish-Christian Dialogue:***  
***Sharing Truth on the Way to Life***

(Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), paperback, xx + 491 pp.

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This book is an English translation of Laura Tack's revised doctoral dissertation written under the supervision of Reimund Bieringer and Didier Pollefeyt at KU Leuven. Tack's original study was part of a research project at KU Leuven entitled "New Hermeneutics or Renewed Dialogues: A Catholic Perspective on Crucial Theological Issues in Jewish-Christian and Ecumenical Dialogues in the Perspective of a Future-Oriented Interpretation on Key Johannine Texts." Tack offers an interpretation of John 14:6 that is Christocentric and relationally trinitarian but also, she contends, one that makes Jewish-Christian dialogue possible.

After briefly introducing the volume, Tack examines in chapter 1 the literary context of John 13:31-14:31 and provides an extensive exegetical study of three sections (13:31-38; 14:1-26; 14:27-31). Her detailed examination addresses the major concerns of the discourse. She concludes that John 14:6 serves as a pivotal point in the discourse. Jesus's talk of the disciples' dwelling with him is now in doubt since he is departing. Tack argues that Jesus's saying in John 14:6 moves from a realized eschatology to a "future-oriented eschatology" not just for the disciples but for a larger community (91-92).

The second chapter comprises a substantial portion of the book (164 pages). Here, Tack analyzes the three terms "way," "truth," and "life" in the context of their use in the Gospel of John. Since "way" is not a significant Johannine term, Tack considers eight possible backgrounds for it. She argues that "way" is connected to Jesus's movement of ascent and descent (128-54) and that the Father is where the way leads. Tack maintains that "truth" in John is not an existential reality but reflects the relationship between the Father and the Son. "Life," Tack contends, is central to the Gospel of John. While it has a soteriological aspect, life, like truth, is relational, as is evident in the "life-giving relationship between the Father and the Son" and in the way the life that Jesus gives comes from the Father (258).

In chapter 3, Tack combines her examinations of the literary context of John 14:6 and the concepts of way, truth, and life to determine the meaning of Jesus' statement. She contends that the "I am" sayings are metaphorical. She argues against the common appeals of an Isaianic background for the sayings, claiming that the absolute "I am" category is misleading. After describing various relationships between way, truth, and life in John 14:6, she states her view as follows: "Jesus is the way in the sense that he is the truth, i.e., a part of the Father's and Son's loving unity of being, and he is the way in the sense that he is the life, i.e., that which constitutes the Father's and Son's loving unity of being" (284; also 286, 309). Tack discusses metaphor in John and understands the "I am" predicate statements ("I am the...") as creating new meaning and not as a means of identifying Jesus.

Tack shifts from exegesis in chapters 1-3 to hermeneutics in chapter 4. She addresses the reception history of John 14:6 in Jewish-Christian dialogue, beginning with a case study comparing the use of John 14:6 in two modern documents of the Roman Catholic Church that address the Church's relationship to other religions. The first, *Nostra Aetate* (1965), is a Second Vatican Council document, and the second, *Dominus Iesus* (2000), was completed under Cardinal Ratzinger and ratified by Pope John Paul II. Tack argues that *Nostra Aetate* was more inclusive of Judaism and that *Dominus Iesus* presents a "triumphalist Christology" supported by John 14:6 (335). Following the case study, Tack considers various ways that interpretations of John 14:6 prove problematic for Jewish-Christian dialogue. She indicates that interpretations that present Jesus as divine, the new Exodus, "the Truth," or the only mediator with God create barriers to Jewish-Christian dialogue.

In chapter 5, Tack presents her hermeneutical approach to John 14:6. Drawing on work by Reimund Bieringer and Sandra Schneiders, she offers a "normativity of the future approach" (381). This approach is future oriented in that it is not tied solely to the historical context of the text but considers the revelatory aspect of the text. The normativity of the future approach is a "world in front of the text" approach in that it focuses on the historical context of the author and original audience. This approach also considers the community to which the text was written and is concerned with future dimensions, such as time, ethics, hope for a better future, and *Zukunft* (a future that "comes to" one) (395-96). Tack's inclusive interpretation of John 14:6 using this hermeneutical approach presents perspectives on the "implied community" of the Gospel, reads the text as testimony, and is a vision of many coming to the Father's house with its many dwellings (436). The book's conclusion summarizes the primary arguments of each chapter.

Tack's work is ambitious in scope. Her first three chapters on the literary context of John 14:6, the three concepts of way, truth, and life, and the "I am" saying as a metaphor would have served as a substantial contribution to Johannine studies on their own. That she additionally tackles interpretational obstacles to Jewish-Christian dialogue and uses a new hermeneutical approach to John 14:6 is to be commended. At the same time, clarity on what an obstacle-free Jewish-Christian dialogue would look like would be beneficial in order to compare Tack's approach and conclusions to this ideal. While Tack presents numerous examples of high

Christological interpretations of John 14:6, her engagement with Jewish thinkers does not indicate how the proposed Christocentric and trinitarian interpretation of John 14:6 would be more conducive to Jewish-Christian dialogue. However, Tack's metaphorical approach to the "I am" sayings and her focus on "the way" as the central concept are compelling.