

ANZATS 2021 *Theological Ethics*

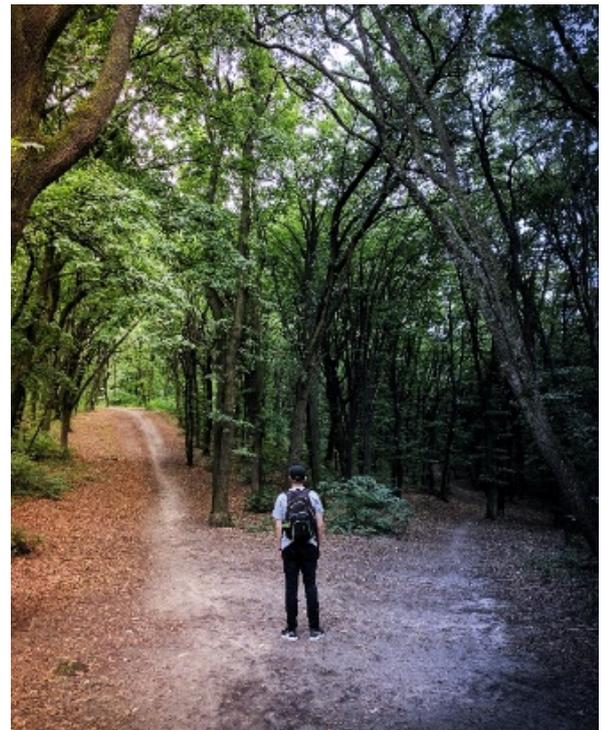
Elective Session Proposals

GENERAL PAPERS

- Presenter** **Isaac Boaheng**
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Public Theology and Public Ethics: Reflections on Ghanaian Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity

Christian presence in Africa is enormous in the 21st century. Ghana is a West African country that has contributed immensely to African Christianity. With 72.1 percent of Ghanaians professing Christianity, one would expect Ghanaian public life to depend immensely on Christian norms. However, secularization and the privatization of Christianity in contemporary Ghana has resulted in the marginalization of the prophetic voice of believers in the public arena. The dichotomization of “Church” and “society” into “spiritual” and “secular” realms respectively, has made Christianity less relevant to the Ghanaian society. Consequently, the contemporary Ghana society is characterized by immense public challenges including poor governance, bribery and corruption, socio-economic injustice, poverty, tribal and ethnic conflicts, human right abuse, among others. This paper considered the contributions of Ghana’s public



theological discourses to addressing the ethical issues facing the nation. The study focused on the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements because of the huge impact on Ghanaian religious landscape. The state of public theology in Ghana was highlighted. Then, selected biblical texts were studied to place the study in the biblical/theological context. This was followed by a brief survey of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity within the Ghanaian context. The study then proceeded to assess data on Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in the light of the contextual frameworks already established. The main finding is that though the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements have contributed a lot to global Christianity, their impact on Ghanaian public ethics has been marginal and hence needs immediate improvement. The study gives some recommendations to achieve this improved public ethics.

- Presenter** Tim Bradford
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Body and Embodiment in the Gospel of Matthew, with special reference to Intersex/ DSD

Intersex/ Disorders of Sexual Development (DSD) raise important pastoral and theological questions. The Christian theological tradition has, generally, taken as axiomatic that to be made in

the image of God is to be embodied as either male or female. After all, “Male and female, He created them” (Genesis 1.27). Yet the ambiguity of Intersexed bodies raises significant questions about this axiom. While the growing theological literature on Intersex/ DSD clarifies aspects of a theology of the body, significant challenges are raised for our understanding of sex and gender. This paper seeks to contribute to the growing theological literature on Intersex/ DSD by bringing these challenges into critical conversation with the Gospel of Matthew.

3. **Presenter** Tom Brennen
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The Creation Theology of Martin Luther and Its Relevance as Christians Engage in God’s Mandate to Love our Neighbours

A popular refrain claims that the reformer Martin Luther had little interest in his theology reforming anything outside the Catholic Church of the 1500s. However, a closer reading of his works clearly brings to the surface necessary practical actions that believers of all stations should undertake. These actions lead to a more equitable and just society both in the 1500s and today. Luther's creation theology provides a unique lens that gives helpful guidance to the believer as they seek to live lives in service to God and neighbour. This paper highlights the unique nature of Luther's creation theology, discusses the impact of this theology in believers' lives, and suggests how the underlying principles contained therein may enhance the broader work of the modern Christian church as it engages in social justice activity.

4. **Presenter** Grant Buchanan
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The Justice of God and the Church: Theological Ethics in Conversation with the Apostle Paul and Michael Gorman

Michael Gorman, in his recent book *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission*, argues that “the cross of Christ reveals a missional, justifying, justice-making God and creates a missional, justified, justice-making people.” Gorman rightly asserts that the church as God’s gathered people is not to be something that merely experiences and receives God’s righteousness/justice. Instead, through faithful witness of the divine mission to the world, the church participates in God’s justice and becomes “a faithful embodiment of it.” In this paper I will, firstly, interact with Gorman’s thesis and explore some of the linguistic and thematic aspects of justice found in selected passages in Galatians, Romans and 2 Corinthians that encourage such a reading. Secondly, I will consider practical ways that Pentecostal churches in Australia might embody and express a faithful justice-making ethos.

5. **Presenter** Samuel Curkpatrick
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Ethical Commitment and Virtual Reality: Giving Impetus to Eagleton’s Materialist Vision

For literary theorist Terry Eagleton, ethical action begins with the recognition of shared material fragility, a view which aligns with his interpretation of Christian faith as a material practice – of ‘feeding the hungry and tending the sick.’ For Eagleton, Christian faith provides a necessary counterpoint to imaginary and symbolic approaches to ethics, which might aptly be illustrated by the curated identities and interactions of social media. In contrast to this virtual world, a Christian ethic requires tangible actions that exceed obligations of law and perceptions of decorum. Such an

ethic entails personal risk and loss. Epitomising this approach to ethics, Eagleton understands the cross as ironic, a self-negating sign that subverts the economy of religious, cultural and political discourse on human flourishing; the gratuitousness of Jesus' sacrifice is the ultimate transgression of this symbolic order that inaugurates the 'unimaginably avant-garde reality of the kingdom of God.' While this view underscores the creativity of love that surpasses ethical mores and expectations, the future that kenotic self-loss opens toward remains wholly elusive, known only in transgression rather than by affirmation. That is, what seems to count for Eagleton is the negation of present experience and human brokenness as an ironic sign of renewal, rather than the radically new possibilities of God manifest in Christ, encountered amid human suffering and loss. For Christian faith, feeding the hungry and tending the sick is radical that reveals the character of Christ presently, rather than a virtual performance of an imagined beyond.

6. **Presenter** Caleb Day
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Touchstones of Evangelical Ethics

In this paper I introduce a schema I am developing to illuminate evangelical theological ethics. Many social scientists and theologians have helpfully analysed evangelical Christianity, often focused on defining evangelicalism across history. My schema is designed for aiding understanding of evangelical theological ethics now. It focuses specifically on ethical topics and on evangelicals in the present day. In the first section, I outline this schema and how it relates to those of other scholars. My schema comprises four 'touchstones' or important theological-ethical focuses for evangelicals: 'Trust and Obey', God's transcendent will as the central source of ethics; 'Follow me', discipleship on the way of the Cross in hope of resurrection; 'Not of this world', ethical distinction from dominant moralities in the social context; and 'The least of these', compassion and social action for the vulnerable. I argue that these touchstones importantly shape how evangelicals practice and articulate theological ethics, alongside topic-specific resources and influences.

In the second section, I begin to use the schema to illuminate one particular intra-evangelical theological-ethical debate. I am developing this schema as part of research surveying, analysing, and evaluating evangelical theological-ethical statements on homosexuality. I therefore read some key arguments from non-affirming and affirming evangelicals through this schema, using it to deepen understanding of important theological-ethical methodological features (explicit or implicit), points of disagreement between evangelicals, and tensions within particular arguments. I will appreciate thoughts and advice from attendees about how to further develop this schema, either generally or as applied to this specific topic.

7. **Presenter** Jill Firth
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Reframing Jeremiah: Myopia, Dystopia, Heterotopia, Utopia

The Book of Jeremiah engages in diverse rhetorical moves to clarify its message of warning and grace. Identifying separate rhetorical moves eases some proposed narratives (e.g., by O'Connor, Scholz) of God's violence. Drawing on Genette and Foucault, I identify caricature and heterotopia in Jeremiah, in addition to the dystopia and utopia utilised by Smend, O'Connor and Carvalho. Confronting Israel's myopia, the book opens with bold caricature of past and present evils (2–3), featuring gender reversal. Chapters 4–13 shift from present to future time, and from marital imagery to daughter imagery (ציון בת). I suggest that this section is not a prophecy of coming events, but an irreal (Orwell) dystopic vision of future war and suffering, seeking to avoid

bloodshed by evoking pity and shame. I propose Foucault's concept of a heterotopia to reframe the exile in Babylon as the eye of the storm, a place of safety where women and men can thrive and be blessed (24.6; 29.5–7). Foretastes of the utopia which will follow the exile are experienced through peaceful living and flourishing in the heterotopia of Babylon (29. 5–7), and in the land under Gedaliah (40.10). In the utopia of Chapters 30–31, dark images are reversed from Chapters 1–20, in the depiction of the future restoration and return to the land. Adding a present heterotopia to a future utopia enhances the vision of God's grace in the book.

8. **Presenter** Matthew James Gray
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***Theosis* as an Impetus for Asset-Based Community Engagement in the Early Church**

This paper draws from the seemingly-unrelated fields of Patristics and community development studies. It explores the Early Church's emphasis on *theosis*, arguing that it became the impetus for Christians acts of community engagement. Too often, *theosis* is seen primarily (if not exclusively) as a theological doctrine rather than a basis of praxis. Yet as Christopher Hall has argued, the early Church had a more wholistic approach, whereby its theology was lived out in its daily rhythms: discipleship was driven by *askesis*, "training, exercise", the application of theological realities. Therefore, *theosis'* emphasis that "God had become human so that humans could become like God", the restoration of the *imago Dei*, and the affiliated emphasis on becoming Christlike, fuelled all that they did, including their community engagement.

Early Christians helped the destitute as a form of pursuing Christlikeness, *theosis*: Christ had "come down" (*kenosis*) so that people could "go up" (*theosis*). Therefore, in pursuing Christlikeness, Christians were compelled to "go down" to help the lost and destitute. Moreover, *theosis* redefined "helping" the destitute, moving it away from a needs-based approach that would only create dependency syndrome. If Christ had come to make people Christlike, then helping others become Christlike, improving the status of the downcast, was essential to *theosis*. Finally, those raised from destitution would, in turn be compelled to help others, and the cycle continued. Such an approach is consistent with what is now called an asset-based approach to community engagement, whereby a community is not defined by what it lacks, but rather what it can grow to become.

9. **Presenter** Myk Habets
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***Theological* Theological Interpretation of Scripture**

Theological Interpretation of Scripture is a discipline that is growing in popularity and usefulness. This popularity has spawned many proposals for what Theological Interpretation of Scripture is and how it should be conducted. Evident within these proposals two general approaches to Theological Interpretation of Scripture can be identified: the biblical and the theological. While complementary, these approaches to Theological Interpretation of Scripture differ. Observing these differences allows for mutual appreciation between the two approaches. It also provides an opportunity to clarify further what theologians are doing when they undertake a *theological* theological interpretation of Scripture. After specifying what a *theological* Theological Interpretation of Scripture is by employing a six-point rubric which incorporates general and special hermeneutics, the differences between approaches to Theological Interpretation of Scripture by biblical scholars and theologians will be illustrated.

10. **Presenter** Mark Jennings
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Adiaphora: On the Israel Folau Case, Heterodoxy, and Heterosexuality in Conservative Australian Christianity

In April 2019, tri-sport athlete Israel Folau was sacked by their employer, Rugby Australia and the Waratahs Rugby Union club, for posting anti-gay and anti-trans messages on social media. Folau sued, and the parties settled out of court for an undisclosed settlement. The “Israel Folau case” was widely debated in Australia and internationally, with some claiming that Folau’s employer was entitled to sack the athlete, while others defended Folau’s freedom to express their views. Although Folau claimed to be expressing genuinely-held Christian beliefs, on previous occasions Folau has publicly articulated heterodox anti-Trinitarian ideas. For most of Christian history, orthodox beliefs concerning the Triune nature of God have been central to Christianity. Same-sex desire, on the other hand, has been variously tolerated and censured, but has for the most part been regarded as *adiaphora* – matters of marginal importance. In this presentation, I argue that the public support Folau received from two conservative Australian Christian bodies—the Australian Christian Lobby and the Anglican Diocese of Sydney—suggests that ‘orthodox’ sexuality is now of central importance, and orthodox belief is now consigned to *adiaphora*. I hope to offer some answers to the questions as to why this reversal has taken place, and what the implications of it have already been for conservative Christianity and LGBTQ+ people and issues in Australia.

11. **Presenter** Philip Kariatlis
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Environmental Ethics: The Contribution of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

Marked by a profound awareness of the environment crisis, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, since taking the helm of the Orthodox Church in 1991, has continued to draw attention to the world’s sacredness and to the urgent need for humanity’s profound change in attitude towards creation. Seeing the world from within a sacramental framework, the Ecumenical Patriarch has issued countless declarations, wherein the inherent value of all creation has been affirmed and the mistreatment of the world has been identified as being nothing less than sin. This has resulted not only in an increased reawakening of a sense of the world’s sacredness, but also brought to light some of the wider ethical ramifications relating to the protection of the natural world. After briefly exploring some of the principal initiatives and activities throughout his thirty-year tenure, the paper will explore some of the more salient aspects of the Ecumenical Patriarch’s environmental ethics together the theological vision underpinning these. It will be argued that the emphasis on becoming communicants and not consumers of the world, together with the repeated call for gentle stewardship so as to bring the entire created realm into God’s final kingdom, merits the ongoing attention for those interested in the world’s ultimate transfiguration.

12. **Presenter** Grenville Kent
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Hugh Hefner's Missionary Position

Playboy founder Hugh Hefner considered himself a "missionary" of a new sexual ethic founded not on dogma or tradition or the guilt he associated with his Methodist childhood but on research and reason. He critiqued Judaeo-Christian views at a popular level in his bestselling magazine and at a

more intellectual level in his 250,000-word magnum opus *The Playboy Philosophy*, as well as numerous media appearances debating clergy. With Hefner's cultural impact now being taken seriously (e.g. Elizabeth Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, Oxford University Press, 2009; Daniel C. Gunn, *Hugh Hefner's God: Religion in Playboy Magazine*, a 2014 Drew doctoral thesis; Steven Watts, *Mr Playboy: Hugh Hefner and the American Dream*, John Wiley & Sons, 2008), this paper summarises Hefner's critiques and begins to ask how Bible believers might best respond in the light of 60 years of social science data around the Sexual Revolution.

13. **Presenter** DJ Konz
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The Kingdom of God as the Divine *Machtergreifung* ('Seizure of Power'): Insights into Karl Barth's Later Political and Eschatological Thought

In the fourth volume of his *Kirchliche Dogmatik / Church Dogmatics*, Karl Barth provocatively employs the term *Machtergreifung* ('seizure of power') in reference to the kingdom of God. The term, usually translated in the English edition as 'coup d'état', is particularly striking because of its common use in Barth's context and since to refer to the National Socialist 'seizure of power' under Hitler in January 1933 and proceeding months. Despite its striking nature, Barth's use of the term, in a number of flourishes across *CD IV/2*, *IV/3*, and *IV/4*, has attracted little attention to date. What did Barth intend to communicate by adopting the term? And how might it inform and be reconciled with his theology of the church and state, both of which he regards as existing under divine governance and providence?

This paper will draw on Barth's use of the term to present a number of key insights into Barth's understanding of the disruptive lordship of God in eschatological confrontation with human hearts, history, and government.

14. **Presenter** Rachel Anne-Lyne Krohn
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Do You See What I See?: A Syntactic Analysis of the Verb *r'h* in the Book of Genesis

God **saw** that it was good.
You are the God who **sees** me.
God himself will **see** to the burnt offering, my son.

The verb *r'h* (to see) is used throughout the book of Genesis at moments of great literary and theological import. While this has been acknowledged by commentators for centuries, the use of the verb *r'h* in the book of Genesis has not been well understood. This may be due to a dearth of studies based on a clear methodology and theory of language: "Without a theory, data are worthless, since they cannot be interpreted; without a clear methodology by which data are interpreted in light of a theory, the conclusions drawn can be nothing but suspect" (Holmstedt 2016: 19). This paper uses generative linguistic theory to analyze the valency of the verb *r'h* in the book of Genesis to demonstrate that specific syntactic patterns create specific semantic nuances, and that these nuances provide fresh insight into the theology and narrative strategy of its authors.

15. **Presenter** Chase Kuhn
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The Goodness of God and Morality

The dismissal of the metaphysical is widely recognized, especially following MacIntyre, as the seat of modern moral confusion. Theology proper fills this metaphysical void, but the nature of the relationship between God and goodness remains a puzzle within theological ethics. Namely, how does a reckoning of God's goodness, proper to His (uncreated) essence, impact our understanding of creaturely realities. This paper proposes a retrieval of the goodness of God's being as the foundation of moral reality. Engaged of historical voices is focused on Augustine and Aquinas, with some interaction with the Reformed Orthodox after them. Attention is given to the correlation between the divine essence, will, and works. The divine works ad intra must be considered before turning to the divine works ad extra. The fundamental difference between uncreated and created being is shown not to discount moral reality, but instead serves as the foundation of it. The conclusion of the paper is that God's essence guarantees the goodness of the creation and serves as the ultimate reference point for morality.

16. **Presenter** Greg Liston
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Spirit, Church, and Mission: A Pneumatological Perspective on Ecclesial Witness

This paper explores the church's missional role in the world through an intentionally pneumatological perspective. Initially arguing that ecclesiology and missiology are mutually informing doctrines, it develops a dialogical approach for viewing missiology from the vantage point of ecclesiology. This contrasts with and complements the more common approach where missiology is seen as determinative of ecclesiology. The final and major section then uses this perspective to sketch out the constituent features of the church's mission, particularly when the Spirit's role is viewed as primary and constitutive. This results in a broad, grounded, and balanced understanding of the church's mission. It is as the church lives out the breadth and depth of this mission that the world sees the church for what it truly is, much more than a mere human institution, but a group of people defined and enlivened by the presence of the Spirit of God.

17. **Presenter** Mick Pope
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In the Beginning: Genesis 1, the Holiness School, and Christian ethics in the Anthropocene

Human civilization faces an existential crisis of its own making, known as the Anthropocene. This new geological era is characterized by rapid economic growth and concomitant impacts on various aspects of the Earth. These impacts include ozone depletion, the so-called sixth mass extinction, and climate change. The logic of the Anthropocene lies in Capitalism, whose origins are properly traced back to the beginnings of settler colonialism. This implicates Christianity, both in the colonial separation of non-Europeans from the imago Dei, as well as in the resonances of right wing religious and market fundamentalisms in the modern period. Furthermore, Western Christianity struggles to accommodate ideas such as the personhood of the nonhuman or understand our relationship with them in other than utilitarian terms. The Holiness school of the Hebrew Bible offers a perspective from which to develop such ideas. The first creation story (Gen 1:1-2:3) is an aetiological account of the Sabbath, the creation of sacred time. It is also an account of the construction of the protological temple, the creation of sacred space. Sabbath observance is

a way of maintaining order in creation, mimetically re-enacting the initial ordering acts of God. However, Sabbath observance is not for Israelites alone. As demonstrated in Leviticus, the land of Israel itself has a relationship to God prior to the covenant relationship between Israel and God. It has its own rights and obligations to enjoy Sabbath rest. The mutual Sabbath obligations of land and people form the basis of a Christian ethic for the Anthropocene. The grounding of these obligations in a creation narrative hint also at the universal nature of these obligations.

18. **Presenter** David C. Ray
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Blame-Fixing in Psalm 78: An Attempt to Maintain Collective Innocence

Whereas there is much commentary on the historic backdrop of the Asaph Psalms, the nature of the central conflict between God and the “fathers” has received less attention, particularly in studies on Psalm 78. This study explores the negative relationship between God and Israel’s inner and outer enemies from the view of the authority-figure psalmist. First, the psalmist forces intergenerational divisions between the fathers and sons of Ephraim in order to fix blame on past generations for the predicament faced the contemporary generation (“internal” enmity). Second, the central opponent is presented in two key figures, which both serve as collateral damage for divine correction of God’s people (“external” enmity). Third, the psalmist maintains the innocence of God’s collective people by presenting the sons of Judah as the righteous remnant. Together these conflicts serve to offer the hearer hope in present leadership, albeit one which has not considered its personal contribution to the plight of God’s people. The segmentation of text into binary oppositions of negative association is reflective of the simplicity of relations built upon hatred.

19. **Presenter** Michael J. Rhodes
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Just Wisdom: Exploring Proverbs’ Account of Justice in Dialogue with Virtue Ethics

Scholars continue to explore the potential relationship between the so-called “wisdom literature” of the Bible and virtue ethics. Brown argues that Proverbs, at least, “seems most fully congenial to virtue ethics,” and Keefer’s recent monograph on virtue ethics in Proverbs makes a strong case in support of this contention.

Given this, it is somewhat surprising that more attention has not been given to the relationship between virtue ethics and the concept of justice in Proverbs. While the importance of justice to the book has been regularly identified, the question of whether Proverbs understands justice as a virtue, and if so, how understanding Proverbial justice as a virtue might impact interpretation, demands further exploration. This line of inquiry is especially important given that virtue ethics historically emphasizes both the importance of justice and the essential relationship between prudence, or practical wisdom, and justice.

In this paper, then, I will explore whether virtue ethics proves a useful interpretive partner for understanding justice and its relationship to wisdom in Proverbs. First, I will briefly identify the way that the Prologue (1:1-7) and second lecture (2:1-22) use language related to justice (cf. *ṣeḏeq*, *mišpāṭ*, and *mêšārīm*) to identify justice as related to, and, indeed, a constituent part of the telos of the acquisition of wisdom. Second, I will demonstrate that Proverbs portrays justice in ways that resonate with the virtue tradition, at least inasmuch as acquiring justice involves gaining a moral disposition, through both teaching and practice, that empowers a person to know, desire, delight in, and successfully pursue that which is just, on the one hand, and identify, loathe, fear,

and avoid that which is unjust on the other (cf. *bāša* language in 1:8-19; 15:27; 28:16; *ṣedeq/mišpāt* language in 21:1-31). Third, I will suggest that Proverbs' wisdom teaching on economic life, not least as that teaching is embodied in the "woman of valor" in 31:10-31, serves, in part, to inculcate the kind of wise economic practice necessary for the work of economic justice.

20. **Presenter** Jacqueline Service
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Just Worship: Triune Being and the Essential Symbiosis of Worship and Justice

This paper explores, through Trinitarian theological and philosophical categories, the essential symbiosis of worship of the Triune God and acts of justice, not only in the divine life, but significantly for the creature. Through consideration of Triune theology and metaphysics, it is proposed that the patterning of creaturely worship has its ontological norm in the dynamics of triune life. On such a basis, the paper argues that patterned on the divine norm, faithful creaturely expressions of worship are necessarily marked by both apprehension of the Triune God and participatory praxis of social justice. The paper, therefore, offers a theological antidote to expressions of truncated worship - where either justice is omitted as inherent to worship, or Triune being is omitted as inherent to justice.

21. **Presenter** Lynne Taylor
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Jumping Online: Learning from One Church's Embrace of Digital Worship, Ministry and Mission

The Covid-19 pandemic forced churches across the world to radically adapt their worship, ministry and mission practices. Although New Zealand eliminated community transmission of the virus and returned to safe, in person worship relatively quickly, some churches (including ABC) continue to invest in online worship and ministry. This paper takes a case study approach, drawing on leadership interviews and focus groups, and content analysis of services to explore the motivation for and fruitfulness of their ongoing response. For ABC's leadership, the necessary pivot to online offered challenge and opportunity as they communicated the message of faith, connected with their congregation and with newcomers, and explored new forms of worship and ministry. In conversation with themes of potentiality and sufficiency from Andrew Root's *Congregation in a Secular Age*, this paper offers an analysis of one church's journey and provides insights for churches similarly committed to ongoing online ministry.

22. **Presenter** Steve Taylor
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Bono's Scripture in Song: Theological Ethics in the Performing of the U2 Catalogue

Theological ethics involve reflection on how Christian beliefs are embodied in life and practice. Such reflection occurs not only within academic contexts but equally in contemporary popular culture. Take the world's biggest band U2. They perform songs that request "Jesus say something," including about apartheid ("Silver and Gold"), Aids ("One") and American interference in Nicaragua and Iraq ("Bullet the Blue Sky"). For Bono, U2's lead singer, the Psalms are a guiding thread (Canongate, 1999). Meanwhile, U2's fourteen studio albums contain seventy-five Scripture

references, including the Gospels (twenty-six), Epistles (seventeen) and Psalms (twelve). This paper analyses Bono's theological ethics using a frame by Richard Burrige (*Imitating Jesus*). Burrige outlines four approaches to applying Scripture to ethics, each tested against how the church in South Africa used Scripture during the apartheid era. Burrige's work offers ways to analyse Bono's Scripture in song. First, U2's live performance of "Silver and Gold" on the Rattle and Hum tour. Second, contrasting "Waves of Sorrow" with "American Soul" as embodied performances of the Beatitudes. Third, examination of how U2's catalogue clusters around following examples (Gospels) and seeking principles (Epistles). Burrige argues that theological ethics that draw on a limited Biblical canon result in embodied practices more likely to legitimate injustice. What then are the implications of U2's focus on Gospels and Epistles? The argument is that Bono's use of the Beatitudes is a sophisticated embodying of theological ethics. However, the performing of a limited Biblical catalogue leaves U2 vulnerable to embodying theological ethics that legitimate injustice.

23. **Presenter** David Tombs
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'It is Not Your Fault. It is Not Your Shame': Why Seeing Jesus as Victim of Sexual Abuse is Important

'It is not your fault. It is not your shame. You are believed.
May you know how much you are worth.'

Rachael Denhollander, a survivor of sexual abuse who played a lead role in bringing serial abuser Larry Nassar to account in 2018, offers these words as support to other survivors. This paper discusses Denhollander's advice in light of recent research on crucifixion as a form of sexual abuse (Reaves, Tombs and Figueroa eds, *When Did We See You Naked? Jesus as a Victim of Sexual Abuse*, SCM Press 2021). It shows how the acknowledgment of the sexual abuse of crucifixion is important for properly understanding the past and can also be an opportunity to make a transformational difference today. Part 1 offers a brief overview of recent work on crucifixion as sexual abuse and/or sexual violence. Part 2 summarises the Nassar case and highlights the sense of shame and self-blame that survivors often reported. Part 3 explores Denhollander's words of advice and reassurance, and suggests how the acknowledgment of the sexual abuse of Jesus can help change perceptions of blame and shame.