



ANZATS Conference
Online
3 – 5 July 2023



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ANZATS Committee 2022-2023

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Colloquium Editor: Megan Powell du Toit

For more information about ANZATS or to get in touch, please visit our website: anzats.edu.au.

The ANZATS committee would like to thank everyone involved in organising this year's conference, with special thanks to Coralie Pietsch and Australian Lutheran College for logistical support and assistance. The committee also wishes to thank Michelle Eastwood, without whose excellent and dedicated work, this conference would not be happening.

Panels

Bible, Context and Tradition

The Bible has been translated many times over the years since the texts were first written down. It is translated into different languages, but it is also translated into different cultural settings that hear and adapt their understanding of the text based on their own cultural norms and traditions. This panel will explore some of the ways that understandings of the Bible have been and continue to be shaped by the context and tradition in which it is read.

Facilitator: Christy Capper

Panellists: Robyn Whitaker, Brian Kolia, TBC

Theology, Context and Tradition

What difference does context make to the questions that are asked, and the ways that theology and tradition are approached? This panel will enable a conversation time about these, and other topics related to the interwoven themes of theology, context and traditions.

Facilitator: David Tombs

Panellists: Michael Mawson, TBC

Education and Theology

Facilitator: Peter Sherlock

Panellists: TBC

Timetable

*All time given are AEST.

NB: Times on the webpage may adjust to your local time.

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
10.00	Panel 1 Bible, Context and Tradition	Panel 2 Theology, Context and Tradition	Panel 3 Education and Theology
11.15	Morning Tea		
11.45	Parallel Papers 1	Parallel Papers 3	Parallel Papers 5
12.45	Lunch		
13.30	Parallel Papers 2	Parallel Papers 4	Parallel Papers 6
15.00	Afternoon Tea		
15.30	New and Emerging Scholar Presentation Conversation Hour	AGM Conversation Hour	Inaugural ANZATS Book Prize Conversation Hour
17.00	End of Day		

Monday 3rd July

10.00	<p>Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome</p> <p>Panel 1: Bible, Context and Tradition</p> <p>Panellists will each speak for 5-8 minutes about their perspective on the broad topic of the Bible, Context and Tradition. A conversation time will follow with space for questions and answers from attendees.</p> <p>Facilitator: Christy Capper</p> <p>Panellists: Robyn Whitaker, Brian Kolia, TBC</p>
11.15	Morning Tea
11.45	<p>Parallel Papers 1</p> <p>Note: Each stream will have a separate link on the webpage. You will be able to move between the rooms during and between sessions.</p>
	<p>Context and Tradition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The “crisis of the modern world” and the war in Ukraine: An analysis of the Traditionalism of René Guénon and its appropriation by political movements in Russia, wider Europe and the Islamic world</i> - Albert Haig • <i>How Context Became Tradition: The Necessity of a Peculiar Myth in the work of Helmut Thielicke</i> – Liam Miller
	<p>Feminist Theologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Black Church is Black Women</i> - Devin Parrish • <i>Are you listening?</i> - Naomi Wolfe
	<p>Issues in Practical Theology, Ministry and Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Patterns in Pentecostal Pastoral Care Expectations</i> – Christopher Cat • <i>Residential Aged Care as a Cruciform Encounter: A Chaplain’s Perspective</i> - Peta Wellstead
	<p>New and Emerging Scholars</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBA • TBA
12.45	Lunch
13.30	<p>Parallel Papers 2</p>
	<p>Faith and Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Perichoresis, symbiosis, and the sybiocene: navigating our way through the Anthropocene</i> - Mick Pope • <i>What does it mean to be human: the question of origins</i> - Neil Ormerod • <i>Beyond Natural / Supernatural</i> - Antonios Kaldas
	<p>Feminist Theology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Handing Off Handing On: Doctrine Outside the Politics of Reproductive Futurism</i> – Liam Miller • <i>Accompanying Survivors of Sexual Harm: Activist biblical scholarship</i> – David Tombs • <i>Emptying the Self: A Framework for Kenosis as Feminist Ethical Practice</i> - Jaimee van Gernerden

	<p>Issues in Practical Theology, Ministry and Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>From the perspective of the disciple-maker, equipping and empowering marginalized groups for polycentric missions</i> - Hanna Hyun • <i>“O a’oga a mea uma!”: A Samoan Educational Approach to weave Sexuality Education to the Christian Pedagogy of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa</i> - Kara Siaosi • <i>Developing a holistic integrated theological education</i> - Sam Hey
	<p>Theological Ethics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A Disabled Lord? Continuity and Legibility in the Resurrection</i> - Andrew Clark-Howard • <i>The spiritual abuse of nuns</i> - Rocio Figueroa • <i>A Matter of Life and Death: Gendered Consent, Elder Abuse and Spiritual Care in 'Amour'</i> - Robyn Wrigley-Carr
	<p>New and Emerging Scholars</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBA •
15.00	Afternoon Tea
15.30	<p>Inaugural ANZATS Book Prize Presentation</p> <p>ANZATS is proud to recognise new scholarly publications that make important contributions to the theological disciplines through the establishment of the ANZATS Book Prize. Awards will be presented in the categories of Emerging Scholar and Established Scholar.</p> <p>Conversation Hour</p> <p>You are invited to stay in the Zoom room to catch up with friends and other attendees. You are welcome to join the conversation in the main room, or join a quieter conversation in one of the breakout rooms. Permissions have been enabled to allow you to enter and leave any of the breakout rooms at your discretion.</p>
17.00	End of Day

Tuesday 4th July

10.00	<p>Panel 2: Theology, Context and Tradition</p> <p>Panellists will each speak for 5-8 minutes about their perspective on personal, social, and cultural context in theology. What difference does context make to the questions that are asked, and the ways that theology and tradition are approached? A conversation time will follow with space for questions and answers from attendees.</p> <p>Facilitator: David Tombs</p> <p>Panellists: Michael Mawson, TBC</p>
11.15	Morning Tea
11.45	<p>Parallel Papers 3</p> <p>Note: Each stream will have a separate link on the webpage. You will be able to move between the rooms during and between sessions.</p>
	<p>Biblical Studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reading Colossians 1:15-20 as a Foundation for Ecological Concern in the Indonesian Context</i> - Herry Susanto • <i>Moral Luck in Pauline Ethics</i> - Matthew Anslow
	<p>Context and Tradition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Existentialism, Theology and the 'Pub Test' – John Macquarie's Pursuit and Advocacy for a Contextually Relevant Theology</i> - Andrew Esnouf • <i>A Pedagogical Experiment in Contextual Theology</i> - Matthew Gray & Michael Bartholomaeus
	<p>Faith and Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Keeping Faith with Monarch Butterflies: Science and Spirituality in an Age of Extinction</i> - Lisa Sideris • <i>"No distinction between contemplating the created realities and contemplating the One God": The Earliest Chinese "Natural Theology" and Its Syriac Roots</i> - Jacob Chengwei Feng
	<p>Issues in Practical Theology, Ministry and Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Pastoral Theology and Pastoral Care in the Age of Artificial Intelligence</i> - Eugen Rosu • <i>Critical realism as a paradigm for considering the reality of God and life</i> - Lynne Taylor
12.45	Lunch
13.30	<p>Parallel Papers 4</p>
	<p>Biblical Studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Dominion and Sabbath: Limits to Power in the Priestly Tradition</i> - Mick Pope • <i>The Pull of Theological Debates in the Study of Anthropomorphism in the Hebrew Bible</i> - Edwina Blair • <i>Auē le Mea Uli! Racism from the Moana?</i> - Brian Kolia
	<p>Context and Tradition</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Disputatio Diaboli: Belief in the Devil in Modern Catholicism</i> - Bernard Doherty • <i>Providential Practices: Two Orthodox Saints on the Role of Practice in the Preservation of Tradition</i> - Mark W Flory • <i>It's About More than Us: A Creatiocentric Anthropology</i> - Terry LeBlanc.
	<p>Faith and Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Primal Testament: parallels between evolutionary and biblical history</i> - Graeme Finlay • <i>Mātauranga Māori as context for Science Engaged Theology</i> - Nicola Hoggard Creegan • <i>The image of medicine within modern Greek Orthodox Christian discourse (late 1990s–present)</i> - Sandy Sakorrafou
	<p>Theological Anthropology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Jesuit Theology: Reading Karl Rahner</i> - Christine Storry • <i>Other Options for People Experiencing Sexual Difference</i> - Christopher Cat • <i>“It better be slim”: Eschatological expectations for the dis/continuity of embodied identity</i> - Maja Whitaker
15.00	Afternoon Tea
15.30	<p>AGM</p> <p>Meeting papers for the AGM will be distributed to ANZATS members via email prior to the conference. Everyone is welcome to attend. Voting is restricted to members only.</p> <p>Appointed representatives of institutional members are encouraged to nominate for a position on the council. For more information or to become a member, contact ANZATS Executive Officer Michelle Eastwood, via the ANZATS website: anzats.edu.au/contact-us/</p> <p>Conversation Hour</p> <p>You are invited to stay in the Zoom room to catch up with friends and other attendees. You are welcome to join the conversation in the main room or join a quieter conversation in one of the breakout rooms. Permissions have been enabled to allow you to enter and leave any of the breakout rooms at your discretion.</p>
17.00	End of Day

Wednesday 5th July

10.00	<p>Panel 3: Education and Theology</p> <p>Facilitator: Peter Sherlock</p> <p>Panellists: TBC</p>
11.15	Morning Tea
11.45	<p>Parallel Papers 5</p> <p>Note: Each stream will have a separate link on the webpage. You will be able to move between the rooms during and between sessions.</p>
	<p>Biblical Studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“For all who are far away”</i>: Acts 2, the Idea of Israel, and Lukan eschatology - Andrew H. Waller • <i>The Case for a Wednesday Crucifixion</i> - Deborah Hurn
	<p>Faith and Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Engaging Science Theologically: Lessons from John Chrysostom’s Apophatic Stances</i> - Doru Costache • <i>Science and the Experience of Creation in Fr Pavel Florensky and Christos Yannaras</i> - Bruce Foltz
	<p>Systematic Theology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Why Context Matters for Matter: 1 Corinthians 15:50 in Different Historical Contexts</i> – Aaron Chidgzy • <i>Understanding the Identity of the Contextualiser: A Theological Approach to A Missiological Concept</i> - Hongfei Zhang
	<p>World Christianity and Missiology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Inculturation and Negative Syncretism: How Indigenous Ways of Knowing Uncovers Christ, the Wild Ox.</i> - Damian Costello • <i>Lived Poetics of Contemporary Chinese Art - Remembering, Reimagining and Responding</i> - Xiaoli Yang
12.45	Lunch
13.30	<p>Parallel Papers 6</p>
	<p>Faith and Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Addiction as a Normal Hedonic and Motivating Function of the Neural System</i> - Hermina Nedescu • <i>Of Gods and Machines: Three Visions of AI and Christianity</i> - Christopher Howell • Exploring the roles of religion in the work of Christian scientists from Copernicus to the present - Sam Hey

	<p>Systematic Theology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Heidegger's existential diagnosis and Bonaventure's positive existential remedy: Using hermeneutics to resolve the problem of one's finitude</i> - Jonathon Lo (TE) • <i>A Defense of the Critical Dialogue Model of Faith and Reason: Philosophy with Theology</i> - Armand Babakhanian • <i>Ascent to Beauty: Toward a Creation-Affirming Image of Ascent</i> - Laura Cerbus
	<p>Theological Ethics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Do this in memory of me." The role of church buildings in constructing settler colonial theologies in Aotearoa New Zealand</i> - Steve Taylor • <i>Hearing old and new ways for transformation</i> - Naomi Wolfe • <i>Archipelagic Ethic: A Christian Sea Ethic from Indonesia</i> - Elia Maggang •
	<p>Worship and Liturgy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How goodly are your dwellings: Song in Athanasius and the Vita Antonii</i> - Ryan Lang • <i>Clapping the Gloria: Liturgical Acts, Liturgical Contexts and the Eucharistic Rite of the Anglican Church of Kenya</i> - Andrew Esnouf • <i>Making the leap: life in rural cathedral liturgical music</i> - Kieran Crichton.
15.00	Afternoon Tea
15.30	<p>ANZATS New and Emerging Scholars Award</p> <p>This award is for the best academic essay in a theological discipline by new and emerging scholars presented at the 2023 ANZATS Conference. The purpose of the award is to support new and emerging scholars to communicate their research among their peers and to encourage such scholars into the field.</p> <p>Conversation Hour</p> <p>You are invited to stay in the Zoom room to catch up with friends and other attendees. You are welcome to join the conversation in the main room, or join a quieter conversation in one of the breakout rooms. Permissions have been enabled to allow you to enter and leave any of the breakout rooms at your discretion.</p>
17.00	End of Day

Abstracts

Biblical Studies

Auē le Mea Uli! Racism from the Moana?

Brian Kolia, Malua Theological College, Samoa

The words of the title are from the first verse of a popular Samoan song titled “Tinga” which translated reads: “Oh, the black thing!” The word uli means ‘black’ while the word mea means ‘thing.’ The word meauli is the common term to refer to black people and is used in everyday language. Yet it is obvious here that the term is dehumanizing, and therefore racist towards black people. In this presentation, I wish to present a talanoa (conversation) around this concept as one of the many colonial and racist legacies of our past, and the role the church played in instigating such discriminatory and racist perceptions and claims of superiority. In particular I wish to explore the role of Samoan missionaries to Melanesian countries such as Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu, and how the racist colonial project had been perpetuated. It is also essential that in this presentation, and I do so with great respect, to offer a biblical ifoga (a Samoan practice of seeking forgiveness and reconciliation) to our Melanesian kin and black folk, through a Samoan reading of Song of Songs 1:5. The hope is that this reading may offer a way of dealing with the issue of racism in the modern context. Further, I seek to draw implications from this reading to propose a new theology to dismantle the racist precepts of our colonial past, and to see how a word such as meauli seeks to dehumanize, degrade, and destroy celebrated cultures of peoples.

Dominion and Sabbath: Limits to Power in the Priestly Tradition

Mick Pope, Whitley College

Francis Bacon defined knowledge as increasing human power and dominion over nature, which would appear to support the creation mandate of Genesis 1:26-28. Combined with Descartes binary of res extensa and res cogitans - the latter reserved for humans alone - such a view has seen the endless manipulation of a depersonalised other. Yet science has now revealed animal consciousness and plant intelligence, while Potawatomi botanist Robin Kimmerer encourages us to “learn the grammar of animacy,” and see a world is full of verbs, not nouns. This paper examines a conversation in the Priestly tradition of the Pentateuch, which provides limits to the power of human dominion. In contrast to the earlier layer of the Priestly creation story in Genesis 1, the later Holiness School introduces the concept of Sabbath as a rest for Israel, but also a rest for the land/earth from human agricultural activities. The land itself is recognised as having agency to keep its own Sabbath, joining with Israel as covenant partner with God. Such a view encourages us to navigate our way through the Anthropocene, the age of humans, as the Symbiocene, the age of living together, where the exercise of power is shared.

“For all who are far away”: Acts 2, the Idea of Israel, and Lukan eschatology

Andrew H. Waller, Ridley College

Jason A. Staples recently advanced a new paradigm for understanding the “idea of Israel” in Second Temple Judaism (Staples 2021). One of Staples’ key claims is that the term “Israel” in Second Temple-era Jewish literature consistently functions both analeptically and proleptically, referring to either the full twelve-tribe complement of Israel past or the restored Israel of an eschatological future. Terms such as “Jews” or “Judeans”, on the other hand, refer specifically to the people and territory of Judah, a post-exilic subset of Israel. In this paper I will offer the Pentecost episode (Acts 2:1–41) as a test case for applying Staples’ paradigm to Acts, demonstrating that Peter’s deployment of “Israel” and “Judah” language aligns with Staples’ account of the “idea of Israel” and orients our reading towards a more specific restorationist eschatology. Peter initially addresses the crowd as “men of Judea” (Ἄνδρες Ἰουδαῖοι) but upon referencing Joel 2 immediately transitions into “Israel” language, referring to his audience as “men of Israel” (Ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλιταί). This terminological shift indicates that Peter is employing the rhetoric of Israel’s eschatological

restoration and characterizes the descent of the Spirit and the subsequent supernatural tongues as a reunification of Israel's hitherto scattered tribes. Peter's eschatological outlook gives context to Jesus's prescribed trajectory of Judea-Samaria-ends of the earth and portrays Pentecost as a reversal of the curse of Deut 28:64. This reading is confirmed by Peter's assertion that the promise of God is for those who are still "far away" (εἰς μακρὰν) among the nations.

Moral Luck in Pauline Ethics

Matthew Anslow

The problem of moral luck—of the relationship between, on the one hand, moral virtue and culpability and, on the other, those things external to one's control—has occupied a position of increasing interest amongst moral philosophers for decades now. One central focus of moral luck is that of contextuality in matters of moral excellence and accountability. This paper will offer an outline of some essential aspects of moral luck, focusing especially on the paradigmatic opposition of Plato and Aristotle. It will then apply the resulting lens of moral luck to Pauline ethics, examining the extent to which Paul might admit factors of moral luck, especially contextuality, into his moral thought and the implications this might have for issues such as moral blame and responsibility. By doing so, I hope to illuminate a previously unexplored dimension of the Apostle's moral philosophy, as well as contributing to Christian thought regarding sin, virtue, judgement, and public engagement on moral questions.

Reading Colossians 1:15-20 as a Foundation for Ecological Concern in the Indonesian Context

Herry Susanto, University of Otago and Tyrannus Bible Seminary

The ecological crisis in Indonesia has caused significant devastation. Therefore, the Christian community needs to address this issue from a biblical perspective. However, interpreting the Bible ecologically can be challenging because of the anthropocentric bias in traditional biblical interpretation. This paper examines Colossians 1:15-20 to find some relevant principles for ecological concern in the Indonesian context. To overcome the anthropocentric bias, this paper uses Richard Hays' fourfold task: descriptive, synthetic, hermeneutical, and pragmatic tasks. The fourfold task is helpful for this study to unpack the analogy of cosmological redemption in the passage and juxtapose it with cosmological harmony in Indonesian tradition. This paper argues that Colossians 1:15-20 can be a theological foundation for the idea of the harmony of the universe that is essential for the concept of ecological responsibility for Christians in Indonesia. There are three aspects will be discussed in this paper. First, overcoming anthropocentrism in biblical reading in the Indonesian context and how Hay's fourfold task fits into this effort. Second, cosmological redemption in Colossians and cosmological harmony in Indonesian tradition. Third, deriving the principles of ecological concern for the Indonesian context.

The Case for a Wednesday Crucifixion

Deborah Hurn, Avondale University

The traditional chronology of Holy Week allows only one and a half days in the tomb -- from sunset on Good Friday to sunrise on Easter Sunday. Yet Jesus' own prophetic expectation was for "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt 12:40), with the "three days" motif appearing frequently in reference to the time between his death and resurrection. In a year when Passover (the first full moon of Spring) fell mid-week, there would be three full days and nights between Jesus' burial at sunset on Wednesday and his rising at sunset on Saturday (early Sunday by the Jewish calendar). This presentation explores allegorical connections between the original Passover week and Holy Week in support of a mid-week crucifixion and offers a new explanation for the apparent conflict between the Synoptic and Johannine Gospels over the date of the Last Supper. By these and other explanations the timeline of Holy Week may be resolved without recourse to proposals of dual calendars or faulty apostolic traditions. The

sequence of events in the weeks after and before the first and last Passovers of the exodus era (respectively) also reveal a double allegory of the Christian life while adding support to the case for a Wednesday crucifixion.

The Pull of Theological Debates in the Study of Anthropomorphism in the Hebrew Bible

Edwina Blair, Australian College of Ministries (Sydney College of Divinity)

When discussing anthropomorphism, especially in a biblical studies context, it is easy to get pulled into the theological debates that have developed over the centuries since the text was written. These debates can be valuable but can also distract from studying the original text and how it was interpreted by ancient writers and readers. However, this paper argues that despite this tension it is still important to explore some of these theological concepts while keeping the focus on the biblical text. Specifically, this paper explores the intentional use of anthropomorphism by the writers of the Hebrew Bible and how it intersects with the concept of Imago Dei and divine accommodation. It also discusses evidence of anti-anthropomorphic tendencies in the Hebrew text, as well as the later tendency to minimize or eradicate anthropomorphism in Rabbinic Judaism and the writings of Christian theologians. This paper is part of the background section of a thesis titled "God's Nose: The Anthropomorphic Representation of God's Sense of Smell in the Hebrew Bible."

Context and Tradition/General

A Pedagogical Experiment in Contextual Theology

Matthew Gray & Michael Bartholomaeus, Tabor

Over the last 3 years, the advanced theology classes at Tabor have been the site of a pedagogical experiment in contextual theology. The experiment consists in distributing a range of readings on a particular theological topic or issue to students who are then tasked with representing this perspective in a tutorial discussion. The readings are drawn from a range of contexts including various confessional (e.g., Reformed, Lutheran, Catholic, Orthodox), theological (e.g., Barthian, Wesleyan, Evangelical), historical (e.g., Early Church, Reformation), and geographical (e.g., Latin American, African, Asian) traditions. The conviction of the lecturers is that such a pedagogical tool is useful for (1) exposing students to new ways of thinking through theological issues and topics and (2) providing vantage points from which students can either affirm or critic diverse theological proposals. The proposed contribution to the conference will describe in more detail the rationale and workings of the tutorials as well as provide an in-depth example of a particular topic, namely, the doctrine of sin from a variety of contextual perspectives. This tutorial, which has now been run twice, provides an excellent demonstration of how drawing a range of readings from different contexts provides a more wholistic understanding of the doctrine of sin, and the Christian faith more broadly.

Disputatio Diaboli: Belief in the Devil in Modern Catholicism

Bernard Doherty, Charles Sturt University

From almost the beginning of his papacy Pope Francis has created discomfit among more 'progressive' Catholics for his frequent references to the Devil. While some have attempted to explain this away with what can best be described as an overabundance of theological subtlety, Pope Francis' belief is indicative of a persistence within Roman Catholicism of traditional beliefs about personal evil —both at an official level and at the level of vernacular religion. Guided by three overarching themes of removal, survival, and revival, this paper will trace the vicissitudes of Catholic belief in the Devil over the course of the last two centuries, highlighting how such a belief has become indicative of wider fractures within contemporary Roman Catholic thought and engagement with popular culture.

Existentialism, Theology and the 'Pub Test' – John Macquarrie's Pursuit and Advocacy for a Contextually Relevant Theology

Andrew Esnouf, Ridley College - Australian College of Theology

This paper will examine how John Macquarrie sought, throughout each phase of his career, to articulate a theology that was responsive both to the Christian tradition and his modern Western context. The first three phases to be examined are his early existential theology phase, beginning with the publication of his dissertation in 1955, his self-described 'existential-ontological theology' phase which began in 1965, and his later turn towards Christology, which Macquarrie describes as a reaction to the 1977 controversy surrounding 'The Myth of God Incarnate'. It is argued that in each of these three phases, Macquarrie seeks to be both contextually relevant to what he sees as the ascendant philosophical movements of his day and to also communicate his thought in a way that passes 'the pub test', an Australian colloquialism for being palatable to the average lay citizen. Finally, I will note Macquarrie's concession that existentialism, despite its promise and influence, was insufficiently contextually sensitive to the variety of subjective human experience, leading Macquarrie to endorse other anthropologically-centred approaches to theology.

How Context Became Tradition: The Necessity of a Peculiar Myth in the work of Helmut Thielicke

Liam Miller, United Theological College

Responding to Rudolph Bultmann in 1943, Helmut Thielicke argued mythology is a timelessly valid way for Christians to access truth about the divine. Yet his argument pushed forward, claiming that the particulars of biblical mythology were "a peculiarly suitable vehicle for the presentation of the Biblical history of the kingdom of God," suggesting that it was as though "God chose the psychological moment." Thielicke thus goes beyond an affirmation of mythology as a necessary medium and awards universal validity (and necessity) to a particular context (its myth, language, and philosophical framework). Thus "the classical world view" which "provided the classical 'realm of terminology'" serves "as a seed-bed for revelation" and so in turn serves as a necessary cultural and philosophical crib for God's revelation. The content of the kerygma fuses with form, and becomes understandable in different times and places only once the requisite preparation has taken place in the culture, thus requiring the accompaniment of a cultural and linguistic colonisation with (or even better, before) the gospel in the intercultural encounter. One context gets deemed tradition, and others must attend and abide by its pre-established particularities. Employing the work of David Congdon, this paper will engage Thielicke's argument (and some descendants), before exploring (in conversation with theologian Marcella Althus-Reid and playwright Inua Ellams), a corrective to Thielicke considering his own criterion of what made classical humanism peculiarly suited: an openness to transcendence.

It's About More than Us: A Creatiocentric Anthropology

Terry LeBlanc, NAIITS: An Indigenous Learning Community

We are a people whose lived identity is a "narrated communal identity that is inclusive of the land." According to Ray Aldred, friend, and gifted Cree theologian, this describes his own and his people's identity. In Mi'kma'ki, the land of the Mi'kmaq, a deepened form of this concept might be described by the phrase, Msit Nokmaq, roughly translated as, "We are all related." It expresses one of the central philosophies and beliefs of many Indigenous peoples that all things are interrelated, interconnected, and interdependent. Nothing stands alone, not even, perhaps especially, human beings. In the history of the Western church, there have only been a few occasions where Christian theology has approached such an understanding, with a theology that I might refer to as Creatiocentric. These instances, while significant and profound, were set aside in favour of an enlightenment view of the creation/environment, facilitated by the rise in influence of social and biological evolutionism and other ways of thinking that place human beings at the

pinnacle of either a creation narrative, the way many people understand the biblical narrative, or of evolutionary trajectories that posit humanity as the highest state of evolutionary progress. The primacy of value that we assign to either the individual or the community in our cultures plays significantly into our theological understandings of ourselves in relation to the rest of creation, and our actions that emerge from those understandings. It does so in ways that carry socially and environmentally transcendent weight.

Providential Practices: Two Orthodox Saints on the Role of Practice in the Preservation of Tradition

Mark W Flory, Metropolitan State University of Denver; Hesycheia Course of Studies

The essay examines how tradition works in two representative Orthodox Christian texts: St. Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain's Proem to The Philokalia, and St. Seraphim of Sarov's conversation with Motovilov. In both texts, the story of God's creation and providential plan provides the context for our present predicament. In this context, we can see how far we have strayed from God's original purpose – and how humans can get back on the path. We also can see how this pattern of grace, falling away from grace, and restoration of grace (often called the "economy of salvation") operates in our own lives. Both saints present the practices of Hesychasm as the traditional medicine that the Church makes available to us. The systematic (St. Nikodemos calls it "scientific") application of Hesychastic physical, mental, and moral disciplines brings us back onto God's providential path. Both saints underscore that the Hesychastic practices are traditional (not novelties), suitable for layman and monk alike, and - with discernment and proper guidance - perfectly safe – as long as one is willing to die to their old self! Thus, these texts give us two classic examples of how a deep immersion in a given context is necessary to preserve the tradition from being reduced to moralism, nostalgia, and stagnation. For these two saints, the major problem facing the Church was not the diversity of religious traditions, or the development of doctrine over time, but the persistence of empty forms that repress the "acquisition of the Holy Spirit."

The "crisis of the modern world" and the war in Ukraine: An analysis of the Traditionalism of René Guénon and its appropriation by political movements in Russia, wider Europe and the Islamic world

Albert Haig, Annandale Christian College

There has been some media attention concerning the role of Russian Orthodoxy and Patriarch Kirill in support of Putin's war in Ukraine. However, there is another theological movement which has arguably played a greater role in spurring this conflict. "Traditionalism", "Integral Traditionalism" or "Perennialism", was pioneered by the French thinker René Guénon, and later by Frithjof Schuon and Ananda Coomaraswamy. While not specifically Christian, Traditionalism claims to encompass orthodox Christian theology within a broader metaphysical framework. Guénon himself was essentially apolitical and focused exclusively on spiritual concerns - his ideas had significant impact on scholars of religion such as Mircea Eliade and Huston Smith. However, his insightful critique of modernity had obvious political implications, which were developed in the "Radical Traditionalism" of Julius Evola, an advisor to Benito Mussolini. This modified, politicized form of Traditionalism then became a mainstay of the European far right, as well as certain Islamic movements seeking an alternative to secular liberalism (Guénon, who was raised a Catholic, adopted Islam and lived the remainder of his life in Egypt, following Sufism). Traditionalism was a major source for the Neo-Eurasianism of Aleksandr Dugin, otherwise known as "Putin's brain", a key architect of the current war. There has been little critical Christian engagement with Guénon's thought, with the notable exception of the Catholic philosopher Jean Borella ("Guénonian Esotericism and Christian Mystery"), even though some of Guénon's followers were inspired to become practicing Christians. A theological analysis of Guénon's thought from a Christian perspective will be presented.

Faith and Science

Addiction as a Normal Hedonic and Motivating Function of the Neural System

Hermina Nedelescu, Scripps Research and Graduate Theological Union

There have been many attempts to provide a general theory capable of explaining both the tendency of some individuals to expose themselves to significant danger and that of psychological addiction. In the context of the formative stages of the early Christian church, many of the apostles and martyrs placed themselves in extreme danger as they maintained their intense religious conviction that a crucified criminal was the long awaited messiah. What drove these individuals to such and intense compulsion to follow Jesus? Presently, intense craving to compulsively seek “something” one becomes dependent on, despite negative consequences, is the hallmark of psychological addictions. How might one reconcile the experience of intense craving for Christ with that of craving for heroin, for example? I propose that human beings are equipped, in part, with an automated functioning of the neural system which serves as a defense mechanism. I will use the opponent-process theory of motivation model to address this issue (Solomon & Corbit, 1978). The opponent-process corrects extreme hedonic states by minimizing them as part of an automated biological defense system mediated by the brain. I will discuss various kinds of opponent processes which are generated by the initial states including heroin-induced pleasure and its opposites: withdrawal and craving; love and its opposites: loneliness and grief; trust and its opposites: distrust and fear; and finally, pride and its opposite: shame. Finally, I will demonstrate how these opposing hedonic states can move a person beyond the limitations of the “self” and closer to the divine.

Beyond Natural / Supernatural

Antonios Kaldas, St Cyrils Coptic Theological College, Sydney College of Divinity

Much contemporary discourse around the relationship between science and faith assumes a sharp division between mind and body, normal and paranormal — natural and supernatural. But this assumption was not so clearly established in the minds of pre-modern people, nor is it at all clear in contemporary Eastern Christian theology and metaphysics. I explore an alternative metaphysics to that prevalent today, that in many ways is more cogent and fruitful, and may even point to the resolution of some thorny challenges to Christian faith.

Engaging Science Theologically: Lessons from John Chrysostom’s Apophatic Stances

Doru Costache, ISCAST / Sydney College of Divinity

The recent return of science-engaged theology (Perry and Leidenhag 2023, 2021) promises to be an interesting alternative to the area variously known as science and religion, faith and science, or science and theology. It is a promising return in that the new science-engaged theology points beyond the contentiousness associated with faith and science. Nevertheless, it is a return, not a new thing, since numerous early Christian and medieval theologians engaged the available “natural philosophy” of the ancients and of later centuries, for apologetic and pastoral reasons (Costache 2023a, 2023b, 2022, 2021a, 2021b, 2020, 2019). It is obvious that what the early Christian and the medieval theologians engaged could not have been the contemporary scientific culture—with its deeper insights into reality and its challenging questions—but their achievements are no less important. It is to the thinking of one such representative of early Christian theology that I turn in this paper. This representative is John Chrysostom (d. 407), who, in his works, *On the Incomprehensible Nature of God* and *Homilies on Genesis*, consistently approaches reality in an “apophatic,” humble manner. Specifically, I consider his treatment of God’s nature, providential activity, and creation—the universe—as mysteries impossible to compute and to articulate. Indeed, to various degrees, these objects of contemplation cannot be rationalised, reduced to the status of easy knowns. After I consider the three objects of Chrysostom’s apophatic treatment—God, providence, and creation—I

undertake to show the significance of his method for a traditionally anchored contemporary science-engaged theology.

Exploring the roles of religion in the work of Christian scientists from Copernicus to the present

Sam Hey, Alphacrucis University College

This paper examines the relationship between the theological beliefs and scientific work of Christian scientists from Copernicus to the present. Through an analysis of the lives and writings of these scientists, the paper explores how their theological beliefs have influenced their scientific work, and how their scientific work has influenced their theological beliefs about God and the nature of the universe. The paper also considers the ways in which changing theological understandings have contributed to changing scientific understandings of the world, as well as the ways in which changing scientific understandings are contributing to changes in theology. This investigation highlights the complex and dynamic relationship between science and religion, and the ways in which they continue to shape and influence one another.

Keeping Faith with Monarch Butterflies: Science and Spirituality in an Age of Extinction

Lisa Sideris, University of California, Santa Barbara

My paper, if accepted, will need to be scheduled during hours that allow me to participate remotely from Pacific Standard Time. Butterflies have long been an object of human obsession and close study. They illustrate the complex imbrication of human-nonhuman existence, and attendant practices of meaning-making across cultures. These practices draw upon and are reinforced by scientific study and spirituality in equal measure. Monarch butterflies, in particular, are widely believed to carry the souls of the dead. A transboundary species, monarchs' arduous migrations symbolize hope, perseverance, and courage in the face of change, adversity, and loss. Their life cycles also elicit reflection on rebirth, renewal or resurrection, owing to their mysterious emergence, in radically altered bodily form, from a tomb-like chrysalis. Thus, monarch metamorphosis and seasonal return offer comforting symbols of change and transformation—not because humans welcome change, but because we often fear and resist it. What happens when a symbol of hope and continuity is threatened with extinction? When creatures whose lives are interwoven, symbolically and ecologically, with human patterns of existence and meaning-making are no longer around? Reflecting on what is known of monarchs' ancient lifeways may help to broaden appreciation for all that is lost when a species succumbs to extinction, and why those losses are often irrevocable, even with cutting-edge genetic techniques aimed at preventing or reversing extinction. Monarchs are central to a worldview that is life-giving even in its encounter with death. Accepting death as a natural part of life processes—keeping faith with death—may teach us to live in ways that make the unacceptable mass death of human-caused extinction less likely to occur.

Mātauranga Māori as context for Science Engaged Theology

Nicola Hoggard Creagan, New Zealand Christians in Science

A lively discussion has arisen in the New Zealand context around Mātauranga Māori and science. For some Mātauranga Māori is a form of science in its own right and for others it is a deeper and wider way of knowing that extends to matters unreached by science. This is relevant to the science and theology dialogue in two ways. First, there has long been a discussion about whether science and faith are similar or quite different ways of knowing. Faith often can be understood as expanding the domain of what is known, and sometimes it gives a quite different interpretation or depth to what is understood partially in science. Second, Mātauranga Māori is a wedge in the New Zealand context which breaks open domains of spirit and being in an otherwise secular rationalistic society. I examine these resonances from an appreciative Pākeha perspective

“No distinction between contemplating the created realities and contemplating the One God”: The Earliest Chinese “Natural Theology” and Its Syriac Roots

Jacob Chengwei Feng, Fuller Theological Seminary

The Church of the East sent their missionaries to China in the seventh century. As the earliest Christian presence in pluralistic and scientific-techno China, they not only remained faithful to their theological tradition but also creatively engaged in “natural theology” to demonstrate to the polytheistic Chinese people the existence of one God. This proposal carries out an interdisciplinary study of the Jingjiao (or the Luminous Teaching/Religion) by employing theology-science-religions triadic dialogue, and argues that their earliest natural theology in Chinese bridged between the Greek concept of kosmos and Chinese cosmology and cosmogony. This proposal will begin by surveying the concept of natural theology and its development and formation in the Chinese context. Next, the proposal will study the texts of the Jingjiao documents, and correlate them with Daoist, Buddhist, and Confucian terminologies, with a particular emphasis on texts that reveal their close affinity with the Greek cosmological concepts and Chinese cosmology. Then, the proposal studies their scientific and technological endeavors. Finally, the proposal seeks to construct a Chinese natural theology for the third millennium that explores the significance of the theology-science-religions trilogue. The significance of this proposal lies in that, first, it is a fresh exploration of the natural theology of Jingjiao and the Church of the East. Second, it demonstrates that doing Christian theology for the third millennium is obligated to engage simultaneously in religion and science.

Of Gods and Machines: Three Visions of AI and Christianity

Christopher Howell, Elon University

This year has been a watershed for public interest in Artificial Intelligence. Though the technology behind OpenAI’s ChatGPT has been around for years, 2023 is the year AI “went viral.” Whether this is a true AI spring—or a false dawn before another long AI winter—remains to be seen, but either way, Christians must reckon with AI as part of their lives: both day-to-day and in the far future. In this paper, I’d like to sketch three future Christian relationships to AI. First, Artificial Intelligence and Religion at odds. Suspicion of AI is seemingly reflexive in religious circles, ranging from the Walter Bradley Center for Natural and Artificial Intelligence to Answers in Genesis, or techno-pessimist thinkers like Jacques Ellul. What drives this conflict? Is it inevitable? How much is informed by science fiction? Or by politics? Second, on the other hand, there is the possibility of alliance between AI and religion. Andrew Torba, the CEO of the far-right social media network Gab, proclaimed his desire to create a Christian AI that would advocate his worldview against the “satanic” ChatGPT. Torba’s extremism aside, conservative American evangelicals have long made use of technology to evangelize. How might they use AI in the future? And lastly, there is AI as a religion itself. In circles like those around Ray Kurzweil, hope in AI can take on quasi-religious proportions: immortality is near, the machine gods are drawing close, and the end is nigh.

Perichoresis, symbiosis, and the symbiocene: navigating our way through the Anthropocene

Mick Pope, Whitley College

We are living in the Anthropocene, the age of the human. Climate change, ecocide, and the polluting of air, water, and soil are evidence that human society has failed to fulfil the mandate of Genesis 1:26-28. A closer examination, however, reveals that while humans have always exhibited the tendency to reshape our environment, capitalism has accelerated this process. This has led some to dub the present ecological crisis the Capitalocene. This begs the question, what is our way out of the Anthropocene? Can such ethic be grounded in God? This paper will present in outline a proposed solution. God as relationship within Godself, the Perichoretic trinity, extends that relationship outward to the creation. This is reflected, albeit imperfectly, in symbiotic relationships. Indeed, the Trinity itself may be described as a symbiotic ecosystem.

God includes within Godself the world in symbiotic relationship. In turn, this informs human ethical reflection in the shift to the symbiocene, where human technology does not simply shield us from the rest of creation, but allows us to relate symbiotically with it.

Science and the Experience of Creation in Fr Pavel Florensky and Christos Yannaras

Bruce Foltz, Eckerd College

Modern natural science grows ever more distant from what Husserl called the *Lebenswelt* or “life-world” of human experience, leaving us stranded in a world of mathematical models and high-altitude abstractions, unable to interpret the experienced realm of creation around us, or to conceptualize how this concrete, perceptual world might be related to a putative Creator—let alone to *experience* this life-world as *itself* theophanic. Two Orthodox philosophers have diagnosed this problem in important, insightful, and often convergent ways. Fr Pavel Florensky (born in Russia, 1882), himself a distinguished scientist, developed an ontology within which creation is understood as symbolic in its very being, bearing and revealing divine energies, while science is understood as employing second-order symbols, describing (not “explaining”) our more primary, symbolic experience of creation. Christos Yannaras (born in Greece, 1935) distinguishes two modes (*tropoi*) of existence through which creation is revealed: a primary (personal) mode, in which the world is disclosed as offering us an “invitation” or “call” (*klesē*) to relation with its Creator, and a secondary (individualistic, atomistic) mode in which the world is revealed “objectively” as serving our own possibilities for autonomy and independence from personal relation, an approach already visible in ancient metaphysics and later ensconced within modern science. Both analyses augment and reinforce one another, with Yannaras’ personal (invitational) mode of relation to creation opening onto Florensky’s symbolic, theophanic disclosure of the higher truth of creation. Together they contextualize science’s more abstract, “autonomous” mode of relation as meaningful, but as secondary and derivative.

The image of medicine within modern Greek Orthodox Christian discourse (late 1990s–present)

Sandy Sakorrafou, National Hellenic Research Foundation

The Scripture and the Orthodox Christian tradition have profoundly shaped Greek Orthodox Christians’ perception of medicine. Considered an ideal example of the so-called “true science”, medicine has been praised as a defender of Orthodox Christian values and ethos. The typical portrayal of doctors being in coexistence rather than competition with Orthodoxy has contributed to this positive depiction. However, biomedical developments and bioethical dilemmas have emerged. Furthermore, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and the consequent medical concerns about the operation of churches and the performance of Holy Communion seem to have unsettled the relationship between medicine and religion. The paper is a preliminary attempt to systematically explore the perception of medicine and its relationship with Orthodoxy, as manifested in Greek Orthodox journals, websites, and books from the late 1990s to the present.

The Primal Testament: parallels between evolutionary and biblical history

Graeme Finlay

Evolutionary biology is regarded with suspicion in some theological circles. However, the era of DNA sequencing, allowing linear side-by-side comparisons of our genome with those of related species, has revealed how our genetic ‘text’ has incrementally developed, and has provided compelling evidence of our evolutionary history. This paper presents examples of mutations in our genetic text that have generated features of our characteristically human biology. It is suggested that our genetic text be thought of as the Primal Testament, analogously to the Old and New Testaments that describe the history of God’s dealings with humankind. There are clearly differences between the Primal Testament and those of the scriptures. The Primal Testament describes an impersonal and nonmoral history. But the three testaments have in

common their origin in God's purposes, their concern with God's creation of new realities (of biological organisms, of Israel and of the church), and of richer conceptions of life (biological, personal/communal, and the Spirit-indwelt zoe aionios). The three testaments all describe contingent histories arising from God's gift of freedom to the creatures. The histories alike describe ambiguities, suffering (even extinctions), goal-directedness, and incompleteness as they together anticipate God's consummation of all things in the New Creation.

What does it mean to be human: the question of origins

Neil Ormerod, Alphacrucis University College

Theologically, what does it mean to be "human"? When we look at the scientific data we tend to identify human origins with the emergence of "*Homo sapiens*" some 300,000 years in Africa. Yet we know of other variants, such as "*Homo neanderthalis*" who emerged at much the same time, who exhibited many features we identify as being truly human e.g. cave art, tools, burial rituals. Neanderthals interbred with Sapiens, but eventually became extinct as a distinct sub-species. Drawing on a soon to be published work by Jesuit Thomas Hughson on the "neanderthal problem" this paper will explore some of the theological questions around the acceptance of neanderthals as truly human beings, loved by God, subject to sin and the possibility of salvation.

Feminist Theologies

Accompanying Survivors of Sexual Harm: Activist biblical scholarship

David Tombs, University of Otago

'Accompanying Survivors of Sexual Harm' is a recently published open access toolkit (Colgan and Blyth 2022, <https://doi.org/10.48785/100/127>) to help churches respond to sexual harm. In addition to practical, pastoral, and theological resources, the toolkit includes a biblical section with four group bible studies that address different aspects of sexual harm: the rape of Tamar (2 Samuel 13:1–22); King David and the ten concubines (2 Samuel 15–20); the stripping of Jesus (Matthew 27:26–31); and the household codes (1 Peter 3:1–7). This presentation locates the ethos and activist methodology of the bible studies within feminist biblical scholarship. This presentation will offer a brief overview of each bible study and examine the underlying principles and values which inform this approach to activist biblical scholarship.

Are you listening?

Naomi Wolfe, NAIITS: An Indigenous Learning Community & Aust Catholic Uni

It has been over 20 years since Aunty Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson wrote *Talkin Up to the White Women* and while the book has been devoured by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander feminists and womanists, it has not gained the same traction within non-Indigenous feminist circles. Professor Moreton-Robinson challenged white and other non-Indigenous feminists on how they see Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and other Indigenous women, and also how they didn't create space for women from those communities to challenge western and white feminisms. How might feminist theologies take up these challenges in 2023? How might feminist theologies become a vehicle for important decolonial and deconstruction within our theological institutions, our churches, and our religious agencies? What transformations might be possible through decolonizing feminist theologies?

Emptying the Self: A Framework for Kenosis as Feminist Ethical Practice

Jaimee van Gernerden, University of Otago

In this paper, I posit that Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist ontological framework opens a place for kenosis as an ethical practice for the sake of subjectivity and freedom within reciprocal relationship. The idea of kenosis has been a contested space for feminist theologians, especially in relation to critiques of the

suffering servant as a Christological ideal for humanity. This paper will draw from Chung Hyun Kyung's discussion of how Christ as suffering-servant is a harmful model for Christian women that "equate[s] the imitation of Christ with obedience, suffering, and self-sacrifice, thereby lending theological support to patriarchal constructions for women." However, rather than throwing-out ethical calls to kenosis entirely, turning to Sarah Coakley's reclamation of the practice, and in light of Beauvoir's existentialist and feminist call to become a "lack" or "nothingness", kenosis can be reoriented as self-emptying that provides a way to ensure authentic selfhood.

Handing Off Handing On: Doctrine Outside the Politics of Reproductive Futurism

Liam Miller, United Theological College

In his influential polemic, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Lee Edelman observes a quality in abortion debates that I will argue is observable in contemporary doctrinal disputes on inclusion: "Even proponents of abortion rights, while promoting the freedom of women to control their own bodies through reproductive choice, recurrently frame their political struggle, mirroring their anti-abortion foes, as a 'fight for our children - for our daughters and our sons,' and thus a fight for the future." This paper utilises Edelman's concepts of reproductive futurism and the politics of *The Child* to analyse liberal and conservative criticism of more indecent, anti-inclusive, and anti-social forms of queer and feminist theologies/theologians. Taking as examples the Uniting Church in Australia's 2018 decision on marriage, and the work of Paleo-Orthodox theologian, Thomas Oden, I aim to demonstrate how concern with the social reproduction of the church through the handing on of doctrine to future Christians, contributes to a particular anxiety toward theologians (and theologies) that are seen as non-reproductive, as concerned, primarily with pleasure and present. Against such commitments to fidelity and reproduction, I will turn to the Bi/Christ of Marcella Althaus-Reid. Spurring inclusion for indecency and incoherence, it is suggested that feminist and queer Christian doctrine hands off handing on, choosing encounter over reproduction. In this I follow Edelman's charge to not fight for *The Child* and take accusation as agenda, considering the shape of doctrine marked positively by confusion, effusiveness, and obscenity.

The Black Church is Black Women

Devin Parrish, NAIITS-Meachum School of Haymanot

Without the Black American church, there would be no Civil Rights Movement. Most people are familiar with the names of ministers and preachers like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Ralph Abernathy but there was a network of unnamed Black church women who prepared the way for those great men. From political gains during Reconstruction to boycotts to the continued fight for voting rights in the U.S., church mothers and aunts have done and continue to do the hidden work of fundraising, teaching, feeding, organizing, and rallying to ensure Black people and all people can truly be free human beings. Like Jesus, these Black women were cultivating relationships in obscurity that would serve as a blueprint for what redemptive love looks like. This embodied ethos of radical love can be seen in three women whose names we do know: journalist and anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells; organizer and Civil Rights-era mentor/strategist Ella Baker; and voting rights activist and community farming advocate Fannie Lou Hamer. All three women have roots in the Black church, where their leadership skills were nurtured and encouraged. Their influence is in the DNA memory of present-day activists and radical lovers who may not even know who these women were.

Issues in Practical Theology, Ministry and Education

Critical realism as a paradigm for considering the reality of God and life

Lynne Taylor, University of Otago

In practical theology, empirical research often draws on research approaches and insights from the social sciences. Doing so provides helpful theoretical and methodological resources. However, it risks losing sight of the theological. This chapter explores the use of critical realism as a research paradigm in practical

theology, arguing that critical realism provides a means for practical theology research to be rigorously and wholeheartedly theological. The chapter outlines the task and meaning of practical theology, before introducing critical realism, some key proponents, and ways that critical realism is used and spoken of in theology. It then provides two examples of critical realism being used as a research paradigm in practical theology: one in relation to contemporary faith formation, and one about church responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. It highlights the importance of theological reflection as part of practical theology critical realism, and notes potential weaknesses of critical realism in practical theology. In doing so, the paper argues that critical realism provides a fruitful philosophical framework for practical theologians: including as it allows space for the activity of God and provides a means of discerning that activity, with a view to participating in the *missio Dei*.

Developing a holistic integrated theological education

Sam Hey, Alphacrucis University College

This paper explores strategies for developing a holistic approach to theology and theological education based on a Wesleyan quadrilateral of four sources of Bible, tradition, reason and experience. Drawing on the writings of John Macquarie, it considers broad understandings of revelation and the importance of awareness of cultural contexts in which we receive and apply theological insights. It considers how theology can benefit from and go beyond scientific methods and insights. This paper argues for the importance of theological understandings of our world that are informed not only by the sciences but also by the humanities. It briefly considers the importance of the methods and insights of further disciplines, including history, philosophy, economics, sociology, politics, the arts, music, drama, dance, poetry, visual arts, and other disciplines. Theology can benefit from considering insights of science, and science has sometimes drawn on theological insights. However, insufficient insights have been considered from Christian understandings of our world that come from a broader range of scholarly disciplines that consider human agency, meaning, motivations, and morals. This paper considers the need to integrate individual thought, agency and accountability with an awareness of communal contexts, influences and responsibilities. The paper considers the limitations of scientific logic and reason and the value of recognising the importance of theological concepts of humility, mystery, beauty, prayer, repentance, conversion, forgiveness, awe, and worship. Drawing on the writings of Soren Kierkegaard, it considers the importance of personal, subjective human freedom, choice and agency as a way of avoiding the reductionism and objectivity of modernity and developing a theology that combines the strengths of science with the insights of the humanities and more traditional theological sources. This paper also considers the importance of theology and education of safe spaces where participants can ask questions, express differences and doubts and consider alternative perspectives.

From the perspective of the disciple-maker, equipping and empowering marginalized groups for polycentric missions.

Hanna Hyun, Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary

As a disciple-maker of BMBs (Believers from Muslim Backgrounds) and minister of an international congregation, I encountered a number of challenges with denominationally-based institutions' provision of formal theological education. The acculturated curriculum for Christians in the Global South and religious minorities is not offered in formal education in the Global North, which is hindered by irrelevant teachings without mission-based theories, the omission of marginality's perspective, and a strict perspective from the traditional-institutional church. In this article, the author emphasizes the significance of disciple-makers perspective in inter-disciplinary theological education in accordance with the "Galilean movement" and the "Global Diaspora Network." By providing several examples of non-formal discipleship programs for migrants, refugees, and religious minorities, she contends that theological education is intended to advocate for marginalized groups and connect local churches to global South perspectives. The theological

education curriculum must be more interreligious and adaptable, suitable for digital nomads and oral-cultural people, as well as for Christians residing in regions of the globe where the number of religious converts is increasing rapidly. Furthermore, theological educators must be aware of the negative effects of government policies on migration, actively oppose discrimination against migrants, and promote ministry and advocacy on behalf of marginalized people, migrants, and refugees.

“O a’oga a mea uma!”: A Samoan Educational Approach to weave Sexuality Education to the Christian Pedagogy of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa

Kara Siao, University of Divinity

The phrase ‘o aoga a mea uma’ is a common Samoan saying to acknowledge that something new has been learnt from a certain experience. It alludes to the understanding that ‘we are never too young/old, sharp/dull, high/low to learn.’ Once in a while, we learn something new. This involves good or bad, correct or wrong, tabooed or accepted things in life. As a starting point for this paper, I choose this common saying as a hermeneutics to weave sexuality education into the CE pedagogy of the CCCS. It questions the general Samoan understanding that it is taboo to talk about sex in the home, schools, villages, communities and in Christian Education (CE). Especially when such taboo is conferred to issues such as sexual abuse by clergy, who are also Christian educators, in the Samoan church. In utilizing a ‘o aoga a mea uma’ (translated as ‘way of learning/teaching/living/life’) hermeneutics I appeal to key Samoan ideals such as va tapu’ia (sacred spaces) or va sā, faaalalo (reciprocal respect) and others. An understanding of va tapu’ia, faaalalo and the Samoan way of living is essential in grasping the meaning of ‘o aoga a mea uma.’ I use Richard Osmer’s four main tasks of practical theology ((a) discovering what is going on, (b) understanding why it is going on, (c) reflecting upon what should be going on, and (d) responding appropriately using information from the three prior tasks) as a guiding framework to expressing a ‘o aoga a mea uma’ hermeneutics.

Pastoral Theology and Pastoral Care in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

Eugen Rosu, South University

Pastoral theology and pastoral care are challenging in today’s age of artificial intelligence. Software can provide instant access to biblical texts, biblical commentaries (from ancient times to the present), devotionals, prayers for various occasions, hymns, and much more. But can a robot visit a parishioner in the hospital and offer pastoral care? Can a robot listen to confession and offer absolution? Can a robot offer communion? Can a robot analyze what is ailing someone’s soul and find the needed compassion and love to offer healing? I will examine these questions and connect the answers with the theology of incarnation as the vivid image of God. The theology of incarnation includes God’s humanity and Jesus Christ’s presence in ministry, as well as the sacramental presence of the human being, meaning the priest/pastor as an ordained person with a direct blessing from God. Therefore, the approaching this topic from the perspective of the theology of incarnation shows how artificial intelligence can help in ministry but cannot replace the human presence of the priest/pastor. I will conclude by considering the human condition and the work required to achieve theosis as a way to salvation. I will compare and contrast the human condition – faith, desire to be with God, contrition of sin – and artificial intelligence, which can mirror beliefs through its dataset but is unable to express faith or wish for salvation.

Patterns in Pentecostal Pastoral Care Expectations

Christopher Cat, Alphacrusis University College

Pentecostals often have high expectations of healing as normal in pastoral ministry. In practice, such healing occurs, however, it is rare. What is normal is that most people seeking healing do not experience miracles most of the time. Pentecostals use various strategies for bridging this gap between their expectation and what occurs in lived experience. This presentation will be a sketch of some of the praxis

patterns, emerging from my research, regarding Pentecostal healing normative expectations. Drawing on Pargament's Means and Ends model, I show how social science can dialogue with theology and pastoral praxis to give a measuring tool to understand what is occurring in Pentecostal praxis. I show differing Pentecostal expectations in regard to disease, disability, mental health, addiction and minority sexuality. I demonstrate how Pentecostals can use scripture to reinforce a model that treats the NT as a healing manual and neglects to consider lived experience. Such a model can marginalise, silence and blame the people who do not experience the expected transformation or healing. It is my hope that providing Pentecostals with tools for self-reflection and understanding will empower them towards broader pastoral strategies that can help improve pastoral ministry to those who experience suffering and limitation.

Residential Aged Care as a Cruciform Encounter: A Chaplain's Perspective

Peta Wellstead, University of Otago

After completing Chaplaincy studies in 2022, I began the role as chaplain in two residential care facilities in New Zealand on Ash Wednesday 2023. It was not a role I relished. My mother had been in residential aged care with Alzheimer's Disease for the last 3 years of her life, and it was not that long ago. The whole idea of residential care would have appalled her. My own life experience as an older single woman without proximal family support has also made me deeply anxious about the complexities of aged care, as have reports from the recent government enquiries into the sector in both Australia and New Zealand. But my vocational pivot to chaplaincy was an intentional 'stepping out in faith' so I knew I had to make my journey 'Resolutely' (Lk 9:51) notwithstanding my anxieties. As I walked through Lent to Easter in my new Ministry, I began to understand that residential aged care as it now operates in the modern West is a cruciform encounter. As I learn my new vocabulary of care, many of the residents I am supporting in their final earthly journey speak of their experiences in ways that conjure notions of 'arrest', 'dispossession', 'pockets shaken', 'dark nights', 'abandonment', 'denial', and 'fear'. Then they die, and it often takes a long time. Using the metaphors of Holy Week, this paper will explore residential aged care as a Cruciform encounter, for both residents and chaplains who minister to them.

Systematic Theology

A Defense of the Critical Dialogue Model of Faith and Reason: Philosophy with Theology

Armand Babakhanian, Georgia State University

In my paper, I examine the "critical dialogue" model of faith and reason presented by Stephen C. Evan and Zachary R. Manis in *Philosophy of Religion: Thinking About Faith*. My thesis is that faith and reason are not two autonomous sources of knowledge, but that they can mutually complement one another and that the critical dialogue model can explain this fact. The significance of my thesis is that theological traditions and systematic theology can be nourished by engagement with philosophy. Specifically, systematic theology can draw upon philosophy to tackle theological topics without having to be "less theological" as a result. My project has three parts. First, I present Evans and Manis' critical dialogue model between the unattractive extremes of "fideism" and "neutralism". Fideism is unattractive because it subordinates reason to faith and neutralism is unattractive because its ideal of rationality is too severe. Second, I argue that the critical dialogue model can show how faith and reason can mutually complement one another. The critical dialogue model maintains that one can rationally hold faith-based presuppositions only if he is also willing to subject them to critical evaluation. The critical dialogue model is attractive because it incorporates the fideist's intuitions about the importance of faith and the neutralist's intuitions about the importance of rational evaluation. Third, I briefly respond to some potential objections. In the end, I summarize my paper's main claims and state its significance for systematic theology.

Ascent to Beauty: Toward a Creation-Affirming Image of Ascent

Laura Cerbus, University of Divinity

Premodern theologians developed the metaphor of ascent as a compelling picture of Christian transformation. However, within recent theological concerns for the creation, this account has been problematized. Given the climate crisis and the underlying denigration of creation, ascent, as a movement away from creation, is dismissed as a fruitful metaphor. This paper seeks to re-imagine ascent to allow us to retain the richness of our tradition's ascent imagery without leaving the created world behind. To do so, I will expand the scope of creaturely transformation to aesthetics and will attribute this transforming ascent to the work of the Holy Spirit. I will argue that creaturely transformation understood primarily as a process of beautification, undertaken by the Holy Spirit, imagines a way for the whole creation, human and non-human, to ascend towards God.

Heidegger's existential diagnosis and Bonaventure's positive existential remedy: Using hermeneutics to resolve the problem of one's finitude

Jonathan Lo, Monash University

In today's postcritical environment, the philosophical disciplines have acquired an increasingly bad reputation for abstraction, relativity and impracticability. In this paper, I challenge this popular assumption by applying Heideggerian hermeneutics to issues of practical religious life. I demonstrate how the threefold way of Christological exegesis of Bonaventure of Bagnoregio can serve as a framework in which to practically redeploy Heidegger's mode of understanding toward a positive existential end. I am afraid of what others think of me - particularly their rating of my intelligence. This state-of-mind shapes my way of being in the world. The specific handling of the horizon of possibility open to me, expresses what I have experienced or understood to be the case about the world in general, namely that it values and rewards intellectual prowess. In my life-context of anxiety over intellectual finitude and its ensuing projections, Bonaventure's sapiential reading of Christ supplies a threefold intervention: (1) certitude of identity or 'being-enough' (content) (2) a change in existential behaviour, to move forward without incessant fear of failure, of intellectual finitude or of not meeting human expectations (mode) (3) an intentional shift to work from love and grateful service to Christ who already calls me 'enough'. (end). This new state-of-mind arising from a new mode of understanding and being-in-the-world, amounts to a transmutation of the Heideggerian hermeneutic mode in light of biblical truth.

Understanding the Identity of the Contextualiser: A Theological Approach to A Missiological Concept

Hongfei Zhang, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

Contextualisation is a missiological task in which a human agent, namely, the contextualiser, understands and interprets the Scripture in such a way that the Gospel meaningfully speaks to the audiences in certain specific contexts. Missiologists have made tremendous contributions to the task with their theories, approaches, and models. However, there seem to be far less many studies on theological understanding of the role of the contextualiser. In my paper, through a literature review from the biblical and theological perspectives, I research on the theological identity of a contextualiser and reflect on the implication to the mission of God. I argue that the task of contextualisation occurs in the trinitarian dimensions and the contextualiser's task is by nature his or her worship of God through their service for the Word. Hence, a contextualiser is by nature a worshipping servant of God and His Gospel, and their worshipperhood manifests their relationship with God in the task scenario. The contextualiser works in a unique context in which they witness the encounter between the Scripture and the audience from their own contextual perspective. As a worshipping servant, the contextualiser's understanding of their worshipperhood and

servanthood is the premise of all their efforts so that, in the end of the day, they could come to the Lord and hear what He says, “Well done, good and faithful servant!” (Matt. 25:21, 23 NIV).

Why Context Matters for Matter: 1 Corinthians 15:50 in Different Historical Contexts

Aaron Chidgzev, Morling College

Of what does the Kingdom of God consist? In the negative, argued the Apostle Paul, it does not consist of flesh and blood. Paul’s enigmatic claim in 1 Corinthians 15:50 seems at odds with the rest of the chapter’s discussion of the resurrection body, and was the locus of some ante-Nicene controversy. Responses to Marcion’s conception of the resurrection emphasized the connection of this verse to other Pauline prohibitions to certain activities that might preclude one from inheriting the kingdom of God (e.g. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and Galatians 5:21), thereby moralizing the claim. The intention here was to combat broader interpretations of the resurrection that stressed the immateriality of the resurrected body, like that of Marcion. This article explores the impact of theological context upon the interpretation of this passage, analyzing the response to Marcion in the second century in the works of Tertullian, Origen, and Irenaeus, and comparing this dynamic with other contexts: Scholastic interpretations of the passage, particularly Aquinas and Scotus, following the rediscovery of Aristotle; and its post-Enlightenment treatment by liberal theologians such as Bultmann and Tillich. Conclusions vary significantly from context to context. This article explores the inevitability of the impact of context upon interpretation and offers some initial reflections for a 21st century context.

Theological Anthropology

Jesuit Theology: Reading Karl Rahner

Christine Storry, University of Divinity Alumni

Together with that other luminous Jesuit, Bernard Lonergan sj, Karl Rahner is considered to belong to the theological movement known as ‘Transcendental Thomism’, theology that attempts to put the Classic Thomism of Thomas Aquinas into dialogue with contemporary philosophy. “Dynamic unity in difference is the pattern for the systematic coherence of Rahner’s thought.” As Sanders has it, Rahner gives priority to uncreated grace which is God’s self-giving gift, over created grace, the result of interior sanctification. Rahner sets out to answer the question “how human nature can be conceivable without grace and yet capable of its truest fulfilment through grace.” This is a question of the spectrum of grace in the human/divine relationship, and we can turn to another classic, Augustine’s ‘Confessions’, and his account of stealing a pear as a young boy, to concretise, this reality. The great saint, Augustine, is indeed the perfect exemplar of Rahner’s thesis. It is said, coming to Christology through anthropology, is one of Rahner’s major contributions to the discipline of theology. It is a Christology of ascent. Rahner, in his essay ‘Ideas for a Theology of Childhood’, began the project of outlining the theological meaning of childhood as a spiritual developmental stage, rather than merely viewing childhood in the light of the adults we [will all] become. From, the Imaginative Contemplative tradition of the Spiritual Exercises, we can approach the childhood of Mary as the graced counterpoint to that of Augustine. Mary, as the one born without sin, and who does not sin, existentially, in the pre-eminent sense, opens up history to the Incarnation of the Divine.

“It better be slim”: Eschatological expectations for the dis/continuity of embodied identity

Maja Whitaker, Laidlaw College

As the postgraduate theology class was discussing the nature of the resurrection body, one student interjected with a confident laugh, “it better be slim!”. The rest all joined in his laughter, comfortable in the shared assumption that the slimmer body is uniformly desirable and somehow eschatologically normative.

Historically, these students are in good company; Augustine asserted that “those who, on earth, are too thin or too fat” could take comfort, for “they would not choose to be that way now if they could avoid it [and] they will certainly not be that way in eternity” (Civ Dei, 22.19). These expectations provide a crack through which we can explore the essential interrelatedness of embodiment and identity, deconstruct the pursuit of culturally-defined aesthetics labelled as the “perfection,” and address the problematic nature of body-shaming and -harming practices within Christian communities. A reassessment of the continuity and discontinuity of pre- and post-resurrection bodies, employing a multi-layered account of identity, points towards a revaluing of the heavier body, and a biblically-grounded embrace of the full diversity of human bodies. There is no end to the variety of body types that are both beautiful and supremely functional. The lack of uniformity of pre-resurrection bodies suggests that the same will be true for the post-resurrection bodies. Our bodies may not fit the dominant aesthetic ideal, but they are still beautiful, potent, and fit for eternity.

Other Options for People Experiencing Sexual Difference

Christopher Cat, Alphacrusis University College

When it comes to appropriate sexual behaviour, conservative readings of Scripture can centre exclusively around opposite-gendered marriage or celibacy. With the help of Pentecostal scholar Gordon Fee, I reflect on 1 Corinthians 6 and 7 to lay some biblical foundations around my own idea that a significant number of people struggle to be viably heterosexually married or celibate. The kinds of people in this number include those who experience physical and mental disability, addiction, physical disfigurement, and diverse or non-heterosexual sexuality. Communities holding a predominantly conservative ethic can marginalise, persecute, ignore and silence people with these experiences who struggle to sit inside the community’s boundaries. This paper is not an appeal for anyone to change their convictions about sexuality. Instead, using practical theology, it is a passionate appeal to carefully consider the pastoral impact of conservative theology and ethics, be open to its limitations, and squarely address its effects on the lived experiences of those who do not measure up to its standards. It is not enough to ask, “What does the bible say?” about this topic and finish there. The request I make to the conservative community, very specifically, is to step aside from the important exegetical discussions which mark their primary way of engaging sexual ethics and pastorally consider if what we think the bible says actually works in practice. When the very real incidences of violence, self-harm and suicide are considered, this marginalisation becomes life and death serious.

Theological Ethics

A Disabled Lord? Continuity and Legibility in the Resurrection

Andrew Clark-Howard, Charles Sturt University

Within the diverse field of disability theology, a particular reading of the resurrected body of Jesus Christ as a disabled body—one which continues to bear the ongoing wounds of the crucifixion even in its glorified state—can be observed. Such a position, often supported by both exegetical and medical interpretations of witnesses to the resurrected Jesus, is undergirded by assumptions about both the continuity and legibility of resurrected, eschatological life. Such readings of a “disabled Lord” are thus employed to promote a fuller understanding of the dignity and personhood of people with disabilities. This paper draws on the queer theology of Linn Tonstad to argue that such assumptions are misplaced. The danger with such approaches to disability and the resurrection is that they repeat logics of continuity and legibility which entrench rather than disrupt continuums of dis/ability and personhood. I therefore argue that disability theology, that is, a theology which seeks to account for the experience of disabled persons, is served better by nonlinear, noncontinuous accounts of Christian resurrection.

A Matter of Life and Death: Gendered Consent, Elder Abuse and Spiritual Care in 'Amour'

Robyn Wrigley-Carr, University of Divinity

A pressing challenge today is the provision of 'spiritual care' for an ageing population. The Australian Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety Report (2021) highlighted 'Elder Abuse' and was aptly entitled, 'Care, Dignity and Respect'. The 2012 French film, 'Amour', portrays the journey of an elderly couple, Georges and Ann Laurent. Ann suffers two strokes and gradually declines but is adamant she wants home-based palliative care. Incontinent and immobile, eventually, 'hurts' becomes one of the few words Ann can utter. The 'arthouse' film genre positions viewers to empathise with Georges' choice to smother his wife to death - romanticising euthanasia as an act of 'love'. However, some commentators highlight more complex layers operating. Firstly, 'gendered consent' to euthanasia without a physician. Ann has not provided clear 'consent' to her death. Given one Australian woman is killed every nine days by a current or former partner, George as male carer (despite burnout and lacking support), means his act of 'love' is interpreted differently, than if Ann, as female carer, had smothered George. Secondly, Margaret Pabst Battin, an American Professor in bioethics and philosophy, argues that two moral constructs should operate in 'end-of-life decision making: autonomy and mercy'. Complexity regarding the extent to which 'autonomy' (consent) and 'mercy' (Elder Abuse) operate in 'Amour' is explored through dialogue with C.S. Lewis' text, 'The Four Loves' (1960). Lewis explores the nature of love through its four Greek words: 'Storge' (affection); 'Philia' (friendship); 'Eros' (romantic) and 'Agape' ('charity'), and highlights 'Need-love' versus 'Gift-love'.

Archipelagic Ethic: A Christian Sea Ethic from Indonesia

Elia Maggang, Lincoln Theological Institute, University of Manchester, UK.

To address the ecological crisis at sea, this paper offers a sea ethic reflecting theologically on Indonesia as an archipelago, to portray the sea as one that unifies communities with all their differences, including their perception of and attitude toward the sea. Sailing further than Whitney Bauman, whose planetary ethics is navigated by the archipelagic character of Indonesia but overlooks the agency of the sea, archipelagic ethics, as I call it, is a human act that acknowledges and supports the sea's agency, regardless of where they live. With an emphasis on the sea's agency expressed in indigenous maritime traditions of Indonesia, where the sea is perceived as a mother that gives life to all, I argue that archipelagic ethic could facilitate the sea to flourish in its agency of feeding the poor and nurturing other living beings. Furthermore, infused by Nancy Victorin-Vangerud's archipelagic imagination, which advocates the unity of land and sea with solidarity with and cooperation for the most vulnerable beings as its expressions, I suggest that archipelagic ethics is a common way of life which is possible to be undertaken in diverse ways. This ethic is not only that of coastal people but also has relevance for those in inland areas far away from the sea. Through engaging and addressing all peoples in this way, this archipelagic ethics could also contribute to the well-being of our blue planet in which both land and sea with their inhabitants flourish.

"Do this in memory of me." The role of church buildings in constructing settler colonial theologies in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Steve Taylor, AngelWings Ltd

Christianity recognises itself as a religion of memory. In Eucharist, amid betrayal and before violence, Jesus calls his disciples to remember rightly. What it means for Christianity in Aotearoa to rightly remember is challenged by "Recessional" (2010), a public artwork on display at Te Papa. Artist Murray Hewitt presents visual imagery of 61 publicly accessible historical battle sites in Aotearoa. These sites require right remembering on both sides of the Tasman, given the earliest dated memorial plaque in Anzac Park, Canberra, marks a military campaign fought in 1860-1 by the Royal Australian Navy Campaign in Aotearoa

New Zealand, in which some 4% of the Māori population died (O'Malley 2016). A feature of Hewitt's "Recessional" is the number of church buildings located close to battle sites. How do these religious communities rightly remember nearby histories of violence? Enns and Myers (2021:10) call for settler "response-ability." Writing as white Americans, they urge settlers to undertake identity work to understand how settler colonialism structures the relationships they inhabit. Savides (2022) argues that decolonisation offers settlers theological resources to remember rightly. Writing as a white South African, he uses themes of the cross and vulnerability in Reformed theology to demonstrate how decoloniality provides frameworks to analyse Christian entanglement in systems of Empire. In Aotearoa, Pākehā have a distinct identity as settler. Reflection on this identity requires recognising privilege, lamenting marginalisation and learning to be better partners. This paper uses as case studies the church buildings present in Hewitt's "Recessional." It draws on archival records and anniversary liturgies to consider how churches do and do not pay attention to the battle sites nearby. In so doing, this paper contextualises Christian practices of anamnesis. It examines how the churches that Pākehā built are theologically forming settler identities. Trajectories for a theological ethic of settler "response-ability" are suggested.

Hearing old and new ways for transformation

Naomi Wolfe, NAIITS: An Indigenous Learning Community & Aust Catholic Uni

The shared history of existence for Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and global Indigenous peoples has been, and is, fraught within Settler societies. Christianity and its agencies in Australia, and around the world, have a colonial history, and a continued colonial impact upon the theological and educational experiences of Indigenous peoples. How can new ways and old ways of engaging in difficult topics (such as colonialism, treaties, historical interpretations) be developed so that decolonization and transformation might occur across all aspects of society? How might locating ourselves in our shared stories assist us to develop ethical and sustainable frameworks that encourage transformation and the flourishing of all Creation?

The spiritual abuse of nuns

Rocio Figueroa, Catholic Theological College

As revelations continue to come out on about abuse in religious settings, the need for appropriate language to talk with sensitivity and precision about the destructive impact of abuses has become more pressing. We argue that the term 'spiritual abuse' offers a useful category for identifying and understanding distinctive elements of abuse in religious settings that might otherwise be unacknowledged or minimized. We suggest that recent work on spiritual abuse by Lisa Oakley in the United Kingdom, and Doris Reisinger in Germany, offers valuable insights for examining systemic abuses in religious institutions in other countries. In this paper, we draw on interviews with a group of nuns in Peru, Chile, and Ecuador to suggest that the category of spiritual abuse sheds light on both the patterns of abuse they experienced and the way these patterns were supported, sanctioned, and sustained.

World Christianity and Missiology

Inculturation and Negative Syncretism: How Indigenous Ways of Knowing Uncovers Christ, the Wild Ox.

Damian Costello, NAIITS: An Indigenous Learning Community, a College of the Sydney College of Divinity

This paper documents the recovery of biblical and theological tradition through the practice of inculturation. The case study is the use of a bison skull next to the tabernacle at St. Peter's Catholic Church in Fort Yates on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation. After examining the cultural and spiritual importance of bison for the Lakota people, the paper probes its meaning within the biblical tradition, particularly through the work of Australian biblical scholars Norman Habel and Mark Brett. The importance of horns

and the wild ox as seen in the Book of Numbers, Psalms, Job, the Jewish liturgical tradition, Daniel, Revelations, and the Gospel of Luke reveal a new Christological image, Christ the Wild Ox, not imposed by but uncovered by Indigenous ways of knowing. In the final section, this paper explores the theological implications of this case in two ways. Firstly, by recommending that the image of Christ the Wild Ox addresses a deficit in Catholic sacramental theology regarding the often cited yet seldom explained “power of the Eucharist.” Secondly, by arguing that the bison skull case requires a more wholistic understanding of inculturation. Local inculturation often benefits the global church by uncovering what could be called the tendency for “negative syncretism,” how unnoticed cultural biases limit our understanding of the faith, domesticating the wildness of its authentic message.

Lived Poetics of Contemporary Chinese Art - Remembering, Reimagining and Responding

Xiaoli Yang, University of Divinity

The rapid growth of Chinese Christianity is changing the face of global Christianity in the third millennium. Aesthetics portrayed by Chinese Christian artists is however rarely researched by scholars of culture, theology and mission. This paper asks how contemporary Chinese Christian artists bear witness to *missio Dei* through the ‘lived poetics’, which is the creative and aesthetic epistemology out of lived human experience. It curates several prominent award-winning contemporary Chinese Christian artists by exploring their cultural, social and spiritual dispositions, and attempts to provide a thick description and exegesis of their artwork. It explores how their ‘lived poetics’ attempts to firstly remember, retrieve, and reclaim history by amplifying voices of the voiceless and the forgotten; secondly reimagine a new aesthetic epistemology to contextualize the gospel in Chinese culture; lastly respond to *missio Dei* in participation with communities of Christian church movements. It argues that these Christian artists provide rich cultural resources that give hope and dignity to the voiceless and the forgotten; comfort and healing to the weary and the suffering; love and justice to a lost and declining social morale. Further, their ‘lived poetics’ provides a path of formation for personal and collective modes of being, becoming and belonging. The ‘lived poetics’ by these artists demonstrates a creative missiological epistemic path, presenting an embedded, embodied, empowered sense of devotion in participation of *missio Dei*.

Worship and Liturgy

Clapping the Gloria: Liturgical Acts, Liturgical Contexts and the Eucharistic Rite of the Anglican Church of Kenya.

Andrew Esnouf, Ridley College - Australian College of Theology

This paper will explore how the meaning of liturgical acts, whether spoken or enacted, is determined by the background of meaning from which they arise, as all speech acts are. Drawing upon Charles Taylor, I argue that the liturgical background of meaning is best understood as a kind of Social Imaginary held by its participants, which not only forms the liturgical contexts but is also shaped by the liturgical and other actions that these participants perform. I then shift to consider the concrete example of the Kenyan Rite, a Eucharistic Rite developed by the Anglican Church of Kenya which was constructed to be contextually relevant to Social Imaginaries extant within Kenya and has also come to be utilised in a variety of other liturgical contexts. This paper will conclude by examining the impacts of this contextual dislocation on the liturgy’s performance of the liturgical acts within the service.

How goodly are your dwellings: Song in Athanasius and the Vita Antonii

Ryan Lang, Laidlaw College

Athanasius' account of Saint Antony's life, in the *Vita Antonii* (Life of Antony), left a defining imprint on Christian spirituality. One aspect of this story that has remained hidden is its vision of Christian song. If Psalm-singing was a hallmark of the monastic movement that emerged in the Egyptian desert, spread from East to West, and looked to Antony as a founding figure, then it is worth exploring the understanding of song that was embedded in this highly influential spiritual text. This paper will explore Athanasius' theology of song as it comes to expression when the Antony of the *Vita* sings the Psalms. For Athanasius, the Church's song is a song of praise, a song of prayer, and a song that participates in the redemption of the world.

Making the leap: life in rural cathedral liturgical music

Kieran Crichton

This paper will reflect on the author's experience of transition from parish music to cathedral music.

Biographies

Matthew Anslow

Moral Luck in Pauline Ethics (Biblical Studies)

Matthew Anslow is the Educator for Lay Ministry with the Uniting Church Synod of NSW and the ACT. His PhD thesis was recently published as *Fulfilling the Law and the Prophets: The Prophetic Vocation of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew* (Pickwick, 2022). Matthew has published numerous articles on subjects such as peacemaking, civil disobedience, agriculture, preaching, biblical studies, and philosophy. He also has a background in activism, including being a co-founder of Love Makes a Way. Matthew lives in Blackheath, NSW with his wife, Ashlee, and three young children.

Armand Babakhanian

A Defence of the Critical Dialogue Model of Faith and Reason: Philosophy with Theology (Systematic Theology)

Armand Babakhanian is a graduate student in Georgia State University's Masters program of philosophy. He received his Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from Biola University in 2022. His current philosophical interests are in free will, philosophy of action, the history of philosophy, and metaphysics. He also has an interest in theology, specifically, the theological thought of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine. He hopes to eventually matriculate into a doctoral program of philosophy and to pursue a career teaching philosophy.

Michael Bartholomaeus and Matthew Gray

A Pedagogical Experiment in Contextual Theology (Context and Tradition)

Matt has worked at Tabor since 2008. He has a Masters of Theology from Regent College in Canada, and a PhD from Adelaide University. My main area of interest is Church history, although I also have a passion for historical theology, and vocational mission. Mike studied his undergraduate and masters at Tabor before completing a PhD at Otago University on the theology of Karl Barth. They team teach a suite of advanced theology subjects at Tabor which makes for some interesting classes!

Edwina Blair

The Pull of Theological Debates in the Study of Anthropomorphism in the Hebrew Bible (Biblical Studies)

Edwina Blair is the Academic Quality Manager and Associate Lecturer in Biblical Studies (Hebrew Bible) at the Australian College of Ministries (ACOM), a member institution of Sydney College of Divinity (SCD). She is a PhD Candidate in the SCD Graduate Research School, and her research is focused on anthropomorphism in the Hebrew Bible and its intersection with the senses. Other research interests include theological education, particularly in the area of unit feedback from student evaluations of teaching, curriculum development and online learning of biblical languages.

Christy Capper

Facilitator: Bible, Context and Tradition; Co-convenor: Theological Anthropology

Christy Capper is currently the Deputy Warden, Academic Dean and Lecturer in Systematic Theology at Wollaston Theological College. She is an Anglican priest in the Diocese of Perth and is currently involved in committees within the Diocese and national Church. Christy is currently engaged in research in the areas of identity, authenticity, work, vocation and the writings of John Macquarrie. Christy is currently the Vice-President (Aus) of ANZATS and is passionate about the theological education sector. Her passion for excellence in education has led to her pursuing a Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching from UWA, and she hopes to spend time researching and reflecting on the practice of theological education, particularly as it impacts identity and self-understanding.

Christopher Cat

Patterns in Pentecostal Pastoral Care Expectations (Issues in Practical Theology, Ministry and Education)
Other Options for People Experiencing Sexual Difference (Theological Anthropology)

Christopher Cat is currently working on his Doctor of Ministry with Alphacrucis University College. His area of research is Pentecostal Pastoral Care and is currently focused on patterns of Pentecostal healing expectations. His ambition is to help Pentecostal pastoral caregivers to further develop their understanding and skills in caring for suffering people. Christopher's area of discipline is practical theology. He hopes that by inviting Pentecostal caregivers to dialogue with Scripture, social sciences, lived experiences and their own history, they may gain a greater understanding of the nature and impact of their pastoral praxis.

Laura Cerbus

Ascent to Beauty: Toward a Creation-Affirming Image of Ascent (Systematic Theology)

Laura Cerbus is a doctoral student at the University of Divinity, where she is researching the relationship between the Holy Spirit's transforming work and the beauty of creation.

Aaron Chidgzey

Why Context Matters for Matter: 1 Corinthians 15:50 in Different Historical Contexts (Systematic Theology)

Aaron Chidgzey is a lecturer in Christian thought at the Perth campus of Morling College. He completed his PhD at Murdoch University in 2019, titled "Reframing Resurrection: Toward a Renewed and Redeemed Creation." His research has focussed on the theology of Jesus' resurrection, particularly in the work of Wolfhart Pannenberg and N.T. Wright, with broader interests including the historical Jesus, church history, and theological, epistemological, and historiographical methodology. He is currently adapting and expanding his PhD into a book, and when he is not doing that, he is either tending to his vegetable garden, working on his podcast, or chasing his toddler around.

Andrew Clark-Howard

A Disabled Lord? Continuity and Legibility in the Resurrection (Theological Ethics)

Andrew Clark-Howard is a PhD candidate at Charles Sturt University, originally from Aotearoa. He currently lives and works on Burrumattagal land at United Theological College, Sydney, with his friends, neighbours, and partner Steph. His interests include theological method, decolonial theory, modern theology, and the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Doru Costache

Engaging Science Theologically: Lessons from John Chrysostom's Apophatic Stances (Faith and Science)

Protopresbyter Doru Costache is the ISCAST Research Director and an Associate Professor at the Sydney College of Theology. He co-edits *Christian Perspectives on Science and Technology*. He is a Fellow of ISCAST and of the International Society for Science and Religion. He was a Selby Old Fellow in Religious History of the Orthodox Christian Faith at the University of Sydney Library and co-chaired the Cosmology group of projects "Science and Orthodoxy around the World" (Athens). Author of *Humankind and the Cosmos: Early Christian Representations* (Brill, 2021) and co-author of *Dreams, Virtue and Divine Knowledge in Early Christian Egypt* (Cambridge, 2019).

Damian Costello

"Inculturation and Negative Syncretism: How Indigenous Ways of Knowing Uncovers Christ, the Wild Ox."
(World Christianity and Missiology)

Damian Costello serves as the Director of Postgraduate Studies at NAIITS: An Indigenous Learning Community, a member college of the Sydney College of Divinity. Costello received his Ph.D. in theological studies from the University of Dayton and specializes in the intersection of Catholic theology, Indigenous spiritual traditions, and colonial history. He is the author of *Black Elk: Colonialism and Lakota Catholicism* and is a frequent contributor to *National Catholic Reporter* and *America Magazine*. Costello is the American Co-Chair of the Indigenous Catholic Research Fellowship and a 2023 Trinity Leadership Fellow.

Nicola Hoggard Creegan

Mātauranga Māori as context for Science Engaged Theology (Faith and Science)

Kieran Crichton

Making the leap: life in rural cathedral liturgical music (Worship and Liturgy)

Bernard Doherty

Disputatio Diaboli: Belief in the Devil in Modern Catholicism (Context and Tradition)

Dr Bernard Doherty is a lecturer in Church History, World Religions, and New Religions at St Mark's National Theological Centre and Course Director in the School of Theology at Charles Sturt University (Canberra, Australia). He is also an honorary research fellow at INFORM (the Information Network on Religious Movements) an independent charity based at the King's College (London) and a scholar in the recently established Centre for Religion, Ethics and Society at Charles Sturt University. He is currently co-editor of the *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion* – the journal of the Australian Association for the Study of Religion.

Andrew Esnouf

Existentialism, Theology and the 'Pub Test' – John Macquarrie's Pursuit and Advocacy for a Contextually Relevant Theology (Context and Tradition)

Clapping the Gloria: Liturgical Acts, Liturgical Contexts and the Eucharistic Rite of the Anglican Church of Kenya. (Worship and Liturgy)

Andrew Esnouf is vicar of the Anglican Parish of All Saints, Ascot Vale, in the Diocese of Melbourne, and has recently completed a Master of Theology research at Ridley College. His thesis examined the liturgical service of Choral Evensong through the lens of speech act theory and social ontology. Previously theological education includes a Master of Theological Studies (Philosophy) from Australian Catholic University and a double degree in theology and ministry from Ridley College. Andrew enjoys systematic and philosophical theology, and is particularly interested in both theological epistemology and Christian worship.

Jacob Chengwei Feng

"No distinction between contemplating the created realities and contemplating the One God": The Earliest Chinese "Natural Theology" and Its Syriac Roots (Faith and Science)

Jacob Chengwei Feng is currently a Ph.D. candidate (ABD) at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA, majoring in Theological Studies. His research interests include systematic theology, Theological Interpretation of Scripture, Chinese theology, religion and science, ecumenical and interfaith dialogue with world religions. His recent publications include "Addressing the Needham Question from a Theological Perspective: Toward a Chinese Theology of Holistic Wisdom" in *Zygon*. Jacob is a recipient of the Logos 2022 Scholarship from Scholarship & Christianity in Oxford (SCIO) and the CATS Fellowship from the Center for Advanced Theological Studies (CATS), Fuller Theological Seminary.

Rocio Figueroa

The spiritual abuse of nuns (Theological Ethics)

Rocío Figueroa Alvear is a Peruvian theologian and professor of Systematic Theology at the Catholic Theological College in Auckland, Aotearoa, New Zealand. Her current research focuses on providing theological and pastoral responses to survivors of sexual and spiritual abuse in the Church. Among her publications are: Figueroa R. - Tombs, D. "Living in Obedience and Suffering in Silence. The Shattered faith of nuns abused by priests" in: Mathias Wirth, Isabelle Noth, Silvia Schroer (eds) *Sexualisierte Gewalt in kirchlichen Kontexten: Neue interdisziplinär Perspektiven*, (Bern: De Gruyter, 2022), 45-74. Rocío Figueroa - David Tombs, "El abuso espiritual de religiosas. Caso de estudio: Siervas del Plan de Dios", *Teología y Vida*, 63/3 (2022) 399-424 and *When Did We See You Naked? Jesus as a Victim of Sexual Abuse* (co-edited with Jayme Reaves and David Tombs SCM 2021).

Graeme Finlay

The Primal Testament: parallels between evolutionary and biblical history (Faith and Science)

Graeme Finlay (MSc, PhD in Cell Biology; BTh in New Testament and Theological Ethics) has taught scientific pathology at the University of Auckland. He has engaged in the science-theology interface out of concern over widespread misinformation. He is author of *Genes, Genealogies and Phylogenies* (CUP, 2013), *The Gospel According to Dawkins* (Austin Macauley, 2017), *Evolution and Eschatology* (Wipf and Stock, 2021) and *God's Gift of Science* (Wipf and Stock, 2022). He is married to Jean (musician and domestic Project Manager) and they have a daughter (an English teacher) and a son (a scientist). He is a lay preacher.

Mark W Flory

Providential Practices: Two Orthodox Saints on the Role of Practice in the Preservation of Tradition (Context and Tradition)

Dr. Mark Flory is a practitioner-scholar of spiritual practices and theology, philosophy, and comparative religion. In addition to working (remotely) at two schools in Denver, he teaches Hesychasm, the Eastern Orthodox Christian spiritual tradition, and spiritual theology via his online program, The Hesycheia Course of Studies. He and his family live in the highlands of western Pennsylvania. A long-time pianist and singer-songwriter, he also occasionally performs at various venues in the region.

Bruce Foltz

Science and the Experience of Creation in Fr Pavel Florensky and Christos Yannaras (Faith and Science)

Bruce Foltz is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at Eckerd College in St Petersburg, Florida. His work draws on Contemporary Continental Philosophy, the History of Philosophy (especially Ancient Greek, Byzantine, and Russian Philosophy), and Environmental Philosophy. The author or editor six books, he is currently working on two more, and his writings have been translated into Russian, Greek, Portuguese, Romanian, and Arabic. Raised in a rural village in Kansas, he received his PhD in Philosophy from The Pennsylvania State University, taught philosophy for 40 years, and now lives with his wife on the shores of Tampa Bay in a forest of ancient oaks.

Matthew Gray and Michael Bartholomaeus

A Pedagogical Experiment in Contextual Theology (Context and Tradition)

Matt has worked at Tabor since 2008. He has a Masters of Theology from Regent College in Canada, and a PhD from Adelaide University. My main area of interest is Church history, although I also have a passion for historical theology, and vocational mission. Mike studied his undergraduate and masters at Tabor before completing a PhD at Otago University on the theology of Karl Barth. They team teach a suite of advanced theology subjects at Tabor which makes for some interesting classes!

Albert Haig

The “crisis of the modern world” and the war in Ukraine: An analysis of the Traditionalism of René Guénon and its appropriation by political movements in Russia, wider Europe and the Islamic world (Context and Tradition)

Albert Haig BSc, BMedSc(Hons), MTeach(Secondary), MDiv, MA(Philosophy), PhD(Syd) is an independent scholar based in Townsville, North Queensland. His interests are in Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, Early Christianity, Mysticism, Indian Philosophy, and Traditionalism. He recently published an account of the theory of language in Plotinus, the Father of Neoplatonism (The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1163/18725473-bja10016>), and currently has a paper under review on Gnostic and Catholic appropriations of Platonism. He reads ancient Greek, Hebrew, and Sanskrit. He currently teaches senior mathematics at Annandale Christian College, and lives nearby with his wife Julia and four children. They attend a Presbyterian Church.

Sam Hey

Exploring the roles of religion in the work of Christian scientists from Copernicus to the present (Issues in Practical Theology, Ministry and Education)
Developing a holistic integrated theological education (Faith and Science)

Dr Sam Hey is a lecturer at Alphacrucis University College and Christian Heritage College, Australia and taught at the University of Queensland, Hillsong, Tabor and other universities and colleges in a range of traditions from Anglican to Catholic, Reformed, Methodist, Baptist, Charismatic, Pentecostal and government and more. He was as a school chaplain, teacher, lecturer, and pastor in a number of churches. He has an MA, University of Queensland and PhD study of Australian Mega-churches and their history, sociology, organization, and psychology at Griffith University. He has delivered many scholarly papers in a range of subjects in Australia and overseas. email dr.sam.hey@gmail.com.

Christopher Howell

Of Gods and Machines: Three Visions of AI and Christianity (Faith and Science)

Christopher Howell teaches at Elon University and is a research assistant at Duke University. He has a PhD in religion from Duke, where he studied religion and science. His first book is an upcoming history of the intelligent design movement, to be published by NYU Press. His writing focuses on religion, science, and technology, and he has been published in Public Orthodoxy, Almagest, and Christian Perspectives on Science and Technology.

Deborah Hurn

The Case for a Wednesday Crucifixion (Biblical Studies)

PhD, BTh(Hons), research fellow of the Australian Institute of Archaeology. Deb's specialty is the historical geography of the wilderness itineraries. She has developed a hydrological model of the biblical regions to locate and delineate the wildernesses and national territories of the Pentateuchal narratives.

Hanna Hyun

From the perspective of the disciple-maker, equipping and empowering marginalized groups for polycentric missions. (Issues in Practical Theology, Ministry and Education)

Hanna Hyun is an assistant professor at PUTS (Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary). Her dissertation focuses on comparative religious studies and migrant Ahmadiyyat Muslims in the U.S. She has served as the director of the Centre for Islamic Studies in Sydney since 2016. She worked with BMB (Believers from Muslim Backgrounds) and Messianic Jews in Sydney, in addition to serving the Arabic church (kanīsatu rajā'i alaūmami). She taught at Kosin University between 2013 and 2015, Sydney College of Divinity between 2016 and 2019, and Juan International University between 2020 and 2021. Her primary research interests are Islamic Studies, Migration Theology, World Christianity Studies, Home theology, Hybridity/ Multicultural church planting, and Platform churches.

Antonios Kaldas

Beyond Natural / Supernatural (Faith and Science)

Antonios Kaldas lectures at St. Cyril's Coptic Theological College within the Sydney College of Divinity in philosophy and natural theology. His research has been in the area of philosophy of mind and cognitive science. He is also a parish priest in Mount Druitt in Sydney and is blessed with a wife, two adult children, a little brown dog and wise snake.

Brian Fiu Kolia

Auē le Mea Uli! Racism from the Moana? (Biblical Studies)

Brian Fiu Kolia is a second-generation Australian-born Samoan. He hails from the Samoan villages of Sili, Satapuala, Faleaseela and Tufutafoe. He is an ordained minister of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa, and a lecturer in Hebrew Bible/Old Testament at Malua Theological College. He holds a PhD from the University of Divinity, in Naarm (Melbourne). His research interests are in Hebrew Bible, diasporic theory, decolonizing readings/interpretation & biblical hermeneutics, and cultural & indigenous/native knowledge. More importantly, he is a husband to Tanaria and a father to Elichai.

Ryan Lang

How goodly are your dwellings: Song in Athanasius and the Vita Antonii (Worship and Liturgy)

Dr Ryan Lang is a Professional Teaching Fellow at Laidlaw College, Auckland, where he teaches in Christian spirituality and mission. His recently completed doctoral thesis at the University of Otago explores song as a form of expression in the life of the Church, particularly in times of struggle. His research interests include Christian worship, spirituality, and mission. Ryan also works as Research Advisor to the Wilberforce Foundation, supporting the work of Christian leaders and organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand. Ryan and his wife Ashleigh attend Hēmi Tapu (St James) Anglican Church.

Terry LeBlanc

It's About More than Us: A Creatiocentric Anthropology (Context and Tradition)

In his 51st year of marriage to Bev, and with three adult children Terry is of Mi'kmaq and Acadian ancestry. He serves by request as an elder with the *Abegweit* Mi'kmaq Healing Centre. As an ordained clergyperson Terry seeks to bring these two sets of spiritual teachings together in a good way.

Terry holds an interdisciplinary PhD, specializing in Theology and Anthropology. He is the founding chair and Director of NAIITS: An Indigenous Learning Community (NAIITS), the first Indigenous designed, developed, delivered, governed, and accredited postgraduate theological educational institution globally.

NAIITS is accredited with ATS in North America, and as NAIITS College within the Sydney College of Divinity in Australia.

Jonathan Lo

Heidegger's existential diagnosis and Bonaventure's positive existential remedy: Using hermeneutics to resolve the problem of one's finitude (Systematic Theology)

Jonathan Lo is a doctoral candidate at Monash University's Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies under the supervision of Professor Constant Mews of Monash University and Dr Matthew Beckmann OFM of the University of Divinity. Jonathan's recently submitted thesis examines the hermeneutics of thirteenth-century Franciscan scholastic St Bonaventure of Bagnoregio in historical and literary contexts. His research demonstrates Bonaventure's unique contribution to the field of medieval exegesis and its relevance for modern reading practice. Jonathan's ongoing interest is in the practical intersection of medieval and modern hermeneutics, particularly the ways in which Bonaventure's hermeneutics has been redeployed in contemporary settings.

Elia Maggang

Archipelagic Ethic: A Christian Sea Ethic from Indonesia (Theological Ethics)

Elia Maggang is from Indonesia and he has just completed his PhD at the University of Manchester, UK, after finished his Master of Theological Studies at Flinders University, Australia. The title of his PhD thesis is "A Trinitarian Pneumatology of the Indonesian Maritime. His research interests revolve around the intersections of Christian theology and indigenous tradition/religion on issues related to the sea, sea creatures and coastal communities. His latest academic publications are "Blue Diakonia: The Mission of Indonesian Churches for and with the Sea" and "Blue Disciple: A Christian Call for the Sea in Peril."

Liam Miller

How Context Became Tradition: The Necessity of a Peculiar Myth in the work of Helmut Thielicke, (Context and Tradition)

Handing Off Handing On: Doctrine Outside the Politics of Reproductive Futurism (Feminist Theologies)

Liam Miller (he/him/his) is a PhD candidate at United Theological College, researching Christian doctrine, Marcella Althaus-Reid, and theatrical practices of adaptation. He is a Minister of the Word in the Uniting Church in Australia, and hosts the Love Rinse Repeat podcast. He lives on the lands of the Garigal and Gayamaygal people, and has been published in Black Theology, Studies in World Christianity, Pacifica and Colloquium.

Hermina Nedelescu

Addiction as a Normal Hedonic and Motivating Function of the Neural System (Faith and Science)

Dr. Hermina Nedelescu is a neuroscientist at Scripps Research in California. Her work focuses on the neurobiological control of maladaptive behaviors. She employs molecular biology approaches with viral vector technology to investigate neural circuit function relevant to human psychopathology. Her major research focuses on rewarding and aversive neural circuits in the control of opioid-motivated approach and avoidance behavior. In her spare time, she is pursuing a master's degree at the Graduate Theological Union with the Center for Theology and Natural Sciences. Dr. Nedelescu seeks to develop a theological anthropology rooted in the Orthodox tradition and connecting this back to neuroscience.

Neil Ormerod

What does it mean to be human: the question of origins (Faith and Science)

Neil Ormerod is an Honorary Research Professor at Alpacrucis University College and Research Adjunct at The Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture. He is widely published with fourteen books and numerous articles in international and national journals. His research interests include Christian anthropology, Trinity, historical ecclesiology, and natural theology. He has doctoral degrees in mathematics and theology.

Devin Parrish

The Black Church is Black Women (Feminist Theologies)

Devin Parrish is a Womanist Theologian from Ohio, which is located in the Midwestern United States. She is also a journalist and playwright who ultimately identifies as a storyteller. She is currently a PhD student at NAIIITS-Meachum School of Haymanot. Her dissertation will focus on the contributions of Black American women to the Black Church and human rights activism.

Mick Pope

Dominion and Sabbath: Limits to Power in the Priestly Tradition (Biblical Studies)

Perichoresis, symbiosis, and the symbiocene: navigating our way through the Anthropocene (Faith and Science)

Mick Pope is a lecturer in meteorology with a PhD from Monash University. He also has a Master of Philosophy in Theology from the University of Divinity, examining a theological basis for ethics the Anthropocene in the Pentateuch. He has written several books on climate change and a Christian response. His latest book, Creation to Canaan will be published by Pickwick late 2023.

Eugen Rosu

Pastoral Theology and Pastoral Care in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

(Issues in Practical Theology, Ministry and Education)

Rev. Eugen V. Rosu, D. Min. is a Final Project Advisor at South University. Eugen has over thirty years of ministry within the Orthodox Church. Eugen completed his Bachelor's degree in Pastoral Theology at Lucian Blaga University in Sibiu, Romania, and in 2022 he earned his Doctor of Ministry with a dissertation on Pastoral Theology based on Saint Gregory of Nazianzus' Oration 2. Eugen presented at IOTA's 2023 conference, "The Validity of Gregory of Nazianzus' Pastoral Theology and the Inclusion of Counseling Psychology Methods in Today's Ministry." He speaks on Transformative Ministry, Artificial Intelligence and Theology, and church growth.

Sandy Sakorafou

The image of medicine within modern Greek Orthodox Christian discourse (late 1990s–present)

(Faith and Science)

A former adjunct lecturer at the Hellenic Open University (2007-2020), I am currently a Postdoctoral Researcher (Project At.H.O.S: Atheism, Hellenic Orthodoxy and Science (1936-1974) at the Institute of Historical Research/National Hellenic Research Foundation. I hold a Ph.D. in History and Philosophy of Science from the University of Leeds (UK) and I am currently pursuing a Master's degree in "Orthodox Christian Theology and Religious Pluralism" at the Hellenic Open University. My research interests include Science and Religion, History of Alchemy and Chemistry, and History of Science. I have various publications on these topics and have participated in several conferences.

Kara Siaosi

“O a’oga a mea uma!”: A Samoan Educational Approach to weave Sexuality Education to the Christian Pedagogy of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (Issues in Practical Theology, Ministry and Education)

Rev. Kara Siaosi is a first year PhD student at the University of Divinity (Whitley College). From the Congregational Christian Church Samoa. Part of the faculty development programme of Malua Theological College, under the Practical Theology Department. Bachelor of Theology at Malua Theological College (2012-2015), Masters of Theology at Pacific Theological College, Fiji (2016-2017). Interests include Christian and Sexuality Education, Indigenous Knowledge to Research, Wellbeing of Clergy. Married with 5 children. Hobbies are farming, walking and socializing.

Lisa Sideris

Keeping Faith with Monarch Butterflies: Science and Spirituality in an Age of Extinction (Faith and Science)

Lisa H. Sideris is Professor of Environmental Studies, with affiliation in Religious Studies, at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Her research focuses on the ethical significance of natural processes and “environmental” values, as they are captured or obscured by narratives and perspectives from religion and science. She is author of *Environmental Ethics, Ecological Theology, and Natural Selection* (Columbia University Press, 2003) and *Consecrating Science: Wonder, Knowledge, and the Natural World* (University of California Press, 2017). She has written extensively on environmental pioneer Rachel Carson, and co-edited an interdisciplinary collection of essays titled *Rachel Carson: Legacy and Challenge* (SUNY 2008).

Austin Steen

Faith as Engaging Context with Tradition: Analysis of Augustine's Sermons on the Creed

Christine Storry

Jesuit Theology: Reading Karl Rahner (Theological Anthropology)

Christine Storry is an architect with a Graduate Certificate in Ignatian Spirituality from the Melbourne College of Divinity (now the University of Divinity). She has a research interest in Ignatian Spirituality with a special interest in the spiritual exercises and the activities of the early Jesuits and how their spiritual practices and activities may help inform contemporary Ignatian and Jesuit practice. She thus has a particular interest in Jesuit theology.

Herry Susanto

Reading Colossians 1:15-20 as a Foundation for Ecological Concern in the Indonesian Context (Biblical Studies)

Herry Susanto is a PhD candidate in the Department of Theology at the University of Otago, New Zealand. His research focuses on Pauline cosmological redemption and its implication for Christian ecological concern. When he was pursuing his M.Th. degree at Asia Graduate School of Theology (AGST), the Philippines, Herry wrote a thesis on Christian social responsibility based on the characteristics of Jesus’ ministry. Herry is a New Testament lecturer at Tyrannus Bible Seminary, a non-denominational evangelical seminary in Indonesia established in 1966. He is passionate about teaching and equipping believers to respond to contemporary issues biblically and contextually.

Lynne Taylor

*Critical realism as a paradigm for considering the reality of God and life
(Issues in Practical Theology, Ministry and Education)*

Lynne Taylor is Jack Somerville Senior Lecturer in Pastoral Theology at the University of Otago. She is attentive to the contemporary mission and ministry context, and researches and teaches in these areas. Lynne's PhD (Flinders University of South Australia) explored why previously unchurched Australians become Christians today, and she continues to be curious about how God is at work in the world. Her recent research investigates how churches responded to the Covid-19 pandemic, exploring their mission, ministry, and pastoral care practices. Before (and in conjunction with) her academic role, Lynne has worked and volunteered in pastoral ministry, and engaged in congregational and denominational research.

Steve Taylor

"Do this in memory of me." The role of church buildings in constructing settler colonial theologies in Aotearoa New Zealand. (Theological Ethics)

Rev Dr Steve Taylor is a public scholar, working for AngelWings Ltd, providing educative resourcing and empirical research to denominations and agencies in times of change. He maintains academic accountability as Senior Lecturer, Flinders University and Honorary Lecturer, Aberdeen University. Steve is author of *First Expressions* (SCM, 2019), *Built for Change* (Mediacom, 2016) and *The Out of Bounds Church?* (Zondervan, 2005) and has more than 50 peer reviewed academic publications in missiology and practical theology. He is a columnist for *Zadok* and a film reviewer for *Touchstone* and enjoys nature, gardening and coffee.

David Tombs

Accompanying Survivors of Sexual Harm: Activist biblical scholarship (Feminist Theologies)

David Tombs is a lay Anglican theologian and the Howard Paterson Chair Professor of Theology and Public Issues at the University of Otago, Aotearoa New Zealand. His work draws on liberation and contextual theologies to address public issues in transformative ways. His publications include *Latin American Liberation Theology* (Brill 2002), *Explorations in Reconciliation* (co-edited with Joseph Liechty, Routledge 2006), *When Did We See You Naked?': Jesus as a Victim of Sexual Abuse* (co-edited with Jayme Reaves and Rocío Figueroa, SCM 2021), and *The Crucifixion of Jesus: Torture, Sexual Abuse, and the Scandal of the Cross* (Routledge, 2023).

Jaimee van Gernerden

Emptying the Self: A Framework for Kenosis as Feminist Ethical Practice (Feminist Theologies)

Jaimee van Gernerden (she/her) is a PhD candidate at the University of Otago based in Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland, in Aotearoa. Her work is in the area of feminist theology with specific focus on existentialism and the objectification of women. She is also currently the co-chair of the New Zealand Baptist Research and Historical Society.

Andrew H. Waller

"For all who are far away": Acts 2, the Idea of Israel, and Lukan eschatology (Biblical Studies)

Andrew H. Waller is a PhD candidate in New Testament Studies at Ridley College. His research focuses on the impact of early Jewish conceptions of David as a prophet on the characterization of the Lukan Jesus. Andrew's other research interests include postclassical narratology, the rhetoric of the Gospels, and the social contexts of early Christianity. Andrew lives in Austin, Texas where he serves as a lay teacher at Redeemer Presbyterian Church.

Peta Wellstead

Residential Aged Care as a Cruciform Encounter: A Chaplain's Perspective
(*Issues in Practical Theology, Ministry and Education*)

After a successful professional and academic career in Australia, New Zealand and the USA, Peta Wellstead pivoted to chaplaincy studies in 2020. She now works as a chaplain in two residential aged care facilities in a role supported by her Anglican community in NZ. After a life in faith, this new role and journey in life (not least a geographic relocation), is challenging and rewarding. It is also confronting some of her preconceptions about the intent and purpose chaplaincy in residential settings in the modern era: not least notions of invitation and consent. Peta will complete her MA (Theology) at University of Otago in 2023.

Maja Whitaker

"It better be slim": Eschatological expectations for the dis/continuity of embodied identity
(*Theological Anthropology*)

Rev. Dr Maja Whitaker is a lecturer in Practical Theology at Laidlaw College, based at the Ōtautahi/Christchurch campus. She is passionate about spiritual formation and helping others understand how to follow the way of Jesus in contemporary cultural contexts. Maja's research interests include the theology of the body, theological anthropology, disability theology, and eschatology. She is a pastor in the Equippers network of churches. She is married to Dave and they have four daughters. She loves to spend her downtime with plants or books, baking, running, or napping

Naomi Wolfe

Are you listening? (Feminist Theologies)
Hearing old and new ways for transformation (Theological Ethics)

Naomi Wolfe is a trawloolway woman, & she is a Lecturer in history at Australian Catholic University. She is also currently Director of Academic Programs at NAIITS College – the first Indigenous postgraduate theological College in Australia. NAIITS: An Indigenous Learning Community is an international learning community of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples from around the world. Naomi has a commitment and interest in decolonising the disciplines of theology and history.

Robyn Wrigley-Carr

A Matter of Life and Death: Gendered Consent, Elder Abuse and Spiritual Care in 'Amour'
(*Theological Ethics*)

Associate Professor Robyn Wrigley-Carr is Spiritual Care Program Director at the University of Divinity and lectures in Pastoral and Spiritual Care at Whitley College. Robyn comes to questions of Theological Ethics having researched in spiritual care for people with dementia and spiritual care for Aged Care chaplains. She loves watching and discussing movies and has written a Unit - 'Theology and Film'. Robyn is a member of the Executive Committee for the International Network for the Study of Spirituality and is an Editorial Board member and Book Reviews Editor for the Journal for the Study of Spirituality.

Xiaoli Yang

Lived Poetics of Contemporary Chinese Art - Remembering, Reimagining and Responding
(*World Christianity and Missiology*)

Xiaoli Yang (PhD, University of Divinity) holds research and HDR supervisory positions at a few Australian universities and currently is a visiting scholar at OMSC at Princeton Theological Seminary, USA. She serves as the president of the executive committee of the Australian Association of Mission Studies and on the board of a few national and international organizations. She has authored over 40 academic works, including her PhD monograph, *A Dialogue between Haizi's Poetry and the Gospel of Luke*—

Chinese Homecoming and the Relationship with Jesus Christ (2018 in English & 2022 in Chinese), the special edition of Mission Studies 2022 on Chinese Christian identity, and many others on intercultural theology, Asian hermeneutics, and Christian spirituality.

Hongfei Zhang

Understanding the Identity of the Contextualiser: A Theological Approach to A Missiological Concept (Systematic Theology)

Having completed her studies for Master of Divinity and Master of Theology at Perth Bible College in Western Australia, Hongfei Zhang is currently a PhD student of the Intercultural Studies program at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Illinois, USA. With passion in missiology in intercultural contexts, Zhang focuses on an in-depth understanding of missional theology as well as the implication to the missional reality from various perspectives. Contextualization is a missiological concept and has achieved substantial attention in terms of the theories and methods for the task. Based on this, Zhang shares her study on the theological identity of the task doer, namely the contextualiser.

ANZATS Conference 2024



Working Theme: Connection and Community

1 – 3 July
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