FRIDAY AFTERNOON, MAY 21, 2021
(All times Pacific Time)

12:00 Welcome Page and Zoom Hospitality Room will be open.

FIRST SESSION (2:00 PM–5:00 PM)

ARTS AND RELIGION
Ritual and Memory

Presider: Octavio Carrasco, Bellevue College, Bellevue, WA (doctavioc@gmail.com)

2:00-2:30 Theresa Henson, Director of Spirituality & the Arts, Monastery of St. Gertrude, Cottonwood, Idaho (theresa.henson@gmail.com)
“The Dance of Love: The Trinity and Creativity”

2:30-3:00 Renee Cyr, Religious Studies at University of Kansas (renee.cyr23@gmail.com)
“Dancing with Death”

3:00-3:30 Marion G. Dumont, PhD, Independent Scholar (mariondumont@gmail.com)
“Nurturing the Soul at the Intersection of Nature, Art, and Spirituality”

3:30-4:00 BREAK: BYO Coffee, Tea, and Treats

HEBREW BIBLE

Presider: Antonios Finitsis, Pacific Lutheran University (finitak@plu.edu)

4:00-4:30 Simeiqi He, Drew University (she1@drew.edu)
“The Historical Reception of the Song of Songs and Its Marital Imagery”

4:30-5:00 Jessica Atamanenko, University of Alberta (atamanen@ualberta.ca)
“Identifying the Named and Unnamed Woman in the Book of Judges"
NEW TESTAMENT AND THE WORLD OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY

Theme: Pedagogy and Transmission

Presider: Anne Moore, University of Calgary (amoore@ucalgary.ca)

2:00-2:30 Christopher S. Mackay, University of Alberta (csmackay@ualberta.ca)
“Old Speech into New Skin: Learning Coptic as a ‘Living’ Language”

2:30-3:00 Stanley N. Helton, Alberta Bible College (snhelton@abccampus.ca)
“A History of Transmission of the Text of Acts in the Greek Fathers to the Time of Origen”

3:00-4:00 BREAK: BYO Coffee, Tea, and Treats

Theme: Book Review: God and Human Wholeness: Perfection in Biblical and Theological Tradition, by Kent L. Yinger, Portland Seminary (kyinger@georgefox.edu)

Presider: Anne Moore, University of Calgary (amoore@ucalgary.ca)

4:00-4:20 Reviewer: Ron Clark, Portland Seminary (rclark@georgefox.edu)

4:20-4:40 Reviewer: Stan Helton, Alberta Bible College (snhelton@abccampus.ca)

4:40-5:00 Author Response: Kent Yinger (kyinger@georgefox.edu)

RELIGION AND SOCIETY

Religion and Emotional Experience

Presider: Marcia Webb, Seattle Pacific University (marcia@spu.edu)

2:00-2:30 Lars F. Nowen, Holy Apostles’ College and Seminary (lnowen@holyapostles.edu)
“Human Responses to Anger: A Comparison and Application of Aristotle’s, Nicomachean Ethics, IV, 5 & Dante’s, Inferno, Canto VII”

2:30-3:00 Marcia Webb, Seattle Pacific University (marcia@spu.edu)
“On Disability and the Dread of Vulnerability”

3:00-3:30 Break: BYO Coffee, Tea, and Treats
THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Presider: Norman Metzler, Concordia University Portland (npjmetzler@gmail.com)

2:00-2:30 Kirk Lougheed, University of Pretoria/LCC International University (philosophy@kirklougheed.com)
“Anti-Theism and African Communitarianism"

2:30-3:00 Glen Graham, Burman University (glengraham@burmanu.ca)
“Dialectic and Nihilism in Brothers Karamazov"

3:00-4:00 BREAK: BYO Coffee, Tea, and Treats

4:00-4:30 Christine H. Chou, Fu Jen Catholic University, Taiwan (ccdsaa@gmail.com)
“Aesthetic Existence and Apocalyptic Possibility: A Dialogic Study of the ‘Post-Christian’ Narratives of Kierkegaard and Atwood"

FRIDAY EVENING, MAY 21, 2021
(All times Pacific Time)

6:00 Presidential Address: Craig Ginn, University of Calgary (cwcginn@ucalgary.ca)
“Personalizing Truth and Reconciliation: The Impact of Narrative”

8:00 Executive Committee Meeting (TBA)

SATURDAY MORNING, MAY 22, 2021
(All times Pacific Time)

SECOND SESSION (9:00 AM–12:00 PM)

ARTS AND RELIGION
Language and Interpretation

Presider: Octavio Carrasco, Bellevue College, Bellevue, WA (doctavioc@gmail.com)

9:00-9:30 Rev. Dave Fekete, Saint Stephen’s College (revdrfekete@gmail.com)
9:30-10:00  Stephen Reasor, Burman University (stephenreasor@burmanu.ca) and Eduardo Sola, Burman University  
“Interdisciplinary Biblical Interpretation: Expressing Meaning through Visual and Aural Art Forms”

10:00-10:30  John McDowell, Burman University (jmcdowel@burmanu.ca)  
“Reading the Bible: Views of a Relationship”

10:30-11:00  BREAK: BYO Coffee, Tea, and Treats

11:00-11:30  Michael Gillingham, University of Alberta (mgilling@ualberta.ca)  
“Cork Would Be the Poorer without You”: Irish Roman Catholic and Irish Jewish Relations in Cork, Ireland as Depicted in David Marcus’ A Land Not Theirs”

GENDER, RELIGION, SEXUALITY, AND POWER

Presider:  Jennifer Higgins-Newman, Vanderbilt Divinity School (Alumna),  
(jennifer.elizabeth.newman@gmail.com)

9:00-9:30  Autumn Reinhardt-Simpson, University of Alberta (amreinha@ualberta.ca)  
“With a Table Napkin on Her Head: Gender and Gesture in English Churching Reform (1524-1700)”

9:30-10:00  Hannah Irish, Pacifica Graduate Institute (hannah.irish@my.pacifica.edu)  
“The Virginity Myth: Tracing the Mythological Roots of American Purity Culture”

10:00-10:30  Program Unit Business Meeting

HEBREW BIBLE

Presider:  Antonios Finitsis, Pacific Lutheran University (finitak@plu.edu)

9:30-10:00  Erica Mongé-Greer, University of Oregon (erica@ericamg.com)  
“Frankenstein’s Creature, Sapient Cylons, and the Adam: The Search for Evidence of a Soul through Procreation”

10:00-10:30  Jerry E. Shepherd, Taylor Seminary (jerry.shepherd@taylor-edu.ca)  
“Ten Plagues, Ten Commandments, Ten Plagues”

10:30-11:00  BREAK: BYO Coffee, Tea, and Treats
11:00-11:30  Ian Wilson, University of Alberta (iwilson@ualberta.ca)
“The History of Prophecy: The Book of Isaiah as Archive”

11:30-12:00  Ehud Ben Zvi, University of Alberta (ehud.benzvi@ualberta.ca)
“The Chronicler as a Sophisticated, Carefully Crafted, Prose Writer”

**HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY**

Presider:  Christopher Roberts, Independent Scholar (robertschristopher4@gmail.com)

9:00-9:30  David Gides, University of Providence, Great Falls, MT (davidmgides@gmail.com)
“Bonhoeffer’s Multifaceted and Shifting Commitment to German Nationhood”

9:30-10:00  Gregory Doudna, Independent Scholar (gdoudna@msn.com)
“Does ‘Aretas’ of 2 Cor 11:32-33 allude to an Aretas V of 69-70 CE?”

10:00-10:30  Anthony Swieringa, University of Southern California (swiering@usc.edu)
"Tongue and Print: Glossolalia in The Apostolic Faith Newspaper”

10:30-11:00  BREAK: BYO Coffee, Tea, and Treats

11:00-11:30  Program Unit Business Meeting

**NEW TESTAMENT AND THE WORLD OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY**

*Power and Authority Study Group*

Presider:  Anne Moore, University of Calgary (amoore@ucalgary.ca)

9:00-9:30  The following papers will give a 7 minute presentation followed by group discussion.

Pat Hart, University of Alberta (pathart@ualberta.ca)
“Power, Authority, and Paul”

Ron Clark, Portland Seminary (rclark@georgefox.edu)
“Associating with the Humiliated: Paul’s Hermeneutic of Transformation among the Oppressed in Romans 12:1-16”

David King, Independent Scholar (daviddmking@gmail.com)
“The Unforgivable Sin and the Spiritual Authority of Good Works”

Ralph Korner, Taylor Seminary (ralph.korner@taylor-edu.ca)
“Paul’s Corinthian Ἐκκλησία: A Non-Misogynistic, Sacred ‘Location’ for Jewish Manumission Ethics?”

Kenneth A. Fox (kealfo@gmail.com)
“From Two Gospels to One: Pauline Chronology and How James and Paul Changed Their Minds”

9:30-10:30 Roundtable Discussion of Presentations

10:30-11:00 BREAK: BYO Coffee, Tea, and Treats

RELIGION AND SOCIETY
Religion and Spiritual Care Responses

Presider: Marcia Webb, Seattle Pacific University (marcia@spu.edu)

9:30-10:00 Philip Bewley, University of Wollongong (philipjbewley@gmail.com.au)
“Henri Nouwen, Self-Availability and Same-Sex Attraction: A Pastoral Response”

10:00-10:30 Zinia Pritchard, St. Stephen’s College (zinia@ualberta.ca)
“Differentiating the Dark Night from Depression within Palliative Care”

10:30-11:00 BREAK: BYO Coffee, Tea, and Treats

STUDY OF ISLAM

Presider: Josie Hendrickson, University of Alberta (jnhendri@ualberta.ca)

9:00-9:30 Abubakar Abdulkadir, University of Alberta (aabdulka@ualberta.ca)
“The Beginnings of Sufism in Mauritania: Muḥammad al-Yadālī (d. 1753) and the Khātimat al-taṣāwuwf”

9:30-10:30 Roundtable: Islamic Studies, Current and Future Directions

Presider: Paul Powers, Lewis & Clark College (ppowers@lclark.edu)

Participants: Paul Powers, Lewis & Clark College (ppowers@lclark.edu)
Josie Hendrickson, University of Alberta (jnhendri@ualberta.ca)
Matthew Melvin-Koushki, University of South Carolina (mmelvink@sc.edu)
Mushegh Asatryan, University of Calgary (mushegh.asatryan@ucalgary.ca)

Yousef Soufi, University of Toronto (yousef.soufi@utoronto.ca)

Jairan Gahan, University of Alberta (gahan@ualberta.ca)

Basit Kareem Iqbal, McMaster University (iqbalb3@mcmaster.ca)

10:30-11:00  BREAK: BYO Coffee, Tea, and Treats

11:00-12:00  Roundtable: Islamic Studies, Current and Future Directions (Continued)

**JOINT PANEL: THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY & RELIGION AND SOCIETY**

*Exploring Evil*

**Presider:** Sarah Gallant, University of Toronto (sarah.gallant@utoronto.ca)

9:30-10:00  Aaron Eldridge, University of California, Berkeley (eldridge@berkeley.edu)

“The World and Its Evil: Orthodox Christian Monasticism in Lebanon”

10:00-10:30  Joseph Kim Paxton, Claremont School of Theology (joseph.paxton@cst.edu)

“Living Compassionately in a Violent World: A Pastoral Theological Response to Evil”

10:30-11:00  BREAK: BYO Coffee, Tea, and Treats

11:00-11:30  Robert Armstrong, University of Calgary (armstrrrj@ucalgary.ca)

“Responsible Spending and Voting with Your Wallet”

11:30-12:00  Zoe Anthony, University of Toronto (zoe.anthony@utoronto.ca)

“Kant, Nietzsche, and Arendt on the Innateness of Evil”

**WOMEN AND RELIGION**

**Presider:** Kristen Daley Mosier, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary (kristen.daley-mosier@garrett.edu)

10:30-11:00  BREAK: BYO Coffee, Tea, and Treats

11:00-11:30  Doris Kieser, University of Alberta (dkieser@ualberta.ca)

"Mary's Body, Mary's Blood"
11:30-12:00 Taylor Tate, University of Connecticut (taylor.tate@uconn.edu) "Spiritual Rituals That Empower the Spirit"

SATURDAY NOON, MAY 22, 2021

12:30-1:30 All Conference Business Meeting (Joe Paxton will provide link)

SATURDAY AFTERNOON, MAY 22, 2021
(All times Pacific Time)

THIRD SESSION (2:00–5:30 PM)

ARTS AND RELIGION
Performance and Image, Songs for Survival

Presider: Marion G. Dumont, PhD, Independent Scholar (mariondumont@gmail.com)

2:30-3:00 Robin Willey, Concordia University of Edmonton (robin.wiley@concordia.ab.ca) and Carolyn Jervis, MacEwan University (jervisc@macewan.ca) “‘Artists are Weird!’: Investigating the Inclusion and Exclusion of Artists in Christian Communities”

3:00-3:30 Break: BYO Coffee, Tea, and Treats

3:30-4:00 Dana Tanner-Kennedy, Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Alberta (dana.tanner.kennedy@gmail.com) “‘I Carry Your Coffin on My Back’: M. Lamar’s Funeral Doom Spiritual and Black Theology on the Postsecular Stage”

4:00-4:30 Octavio Carrasco, Bellevue College (l.encarnacio@gmail.com) “Singing Songs for Survival: Freedom Songs in the Civil Rights Movement”

4:30-5:00 Program Unit Business Meeting

JOINT SESSION: GENDER, RELIGION, SEXUALITY, AND POWER & WOMEN AND RELIGION

Presider: Jennifer Higgins-Newman, Vanderbilt Divinity School (Alumna), (jennifer.elizabeth.newman@gmail.com)

2:30-3:00 Jessica Atamanenko, University of Alberta (atamanen@ualberta.ca)
“Look, Don’t Touch: Bathsheba and the Male Gaze in 2 Samuel 11”

3:00-3:30 Alaine Thomson Buchanan, Independent Scholar (alainebuchanan@gmail.com)
“The Levite and the Concubine: An Unspeakable Tale of Horror and the Necessity of Advocacy”

3:30-4:00 BREAK: BYO Coffee, Tea, and Treats

4:00-4:30 Hannah Irish, Pacifica Graduate Institute (hannah.irish@my.pacifica.edu)
“Jesus, Child of the Goddess”

4:30-5:00 Kate Kingsbury, University of Alberta (kingsbur@ualberta.ca)
“Daughters of Death: The Female Followers of Santa Muerte, the Bone Mother”

5:00-5:30 Program Unit Business Meeting

HEBREW BIBLE
(All times Pacific Time)

Presider: Ian Wilson, University of Alberta (iwilson@ualberta.ca)

4:00-4:30 Joshua Joel Spoelstra, Piedmont University (jspoelstra@piedmont.edu)
“An Inverted Type-Scene? Setting Parameters on a Jacob Cycle Sister-Wife Story”

4:30-5:00 Kevin Burrell, Burman University (kevinburrell@burmanu.ca)
“A Pyrrhic Victory: Reconciling Divergent Biblical Views of Hezekiah and the Assyrians in 701 B.C.E.”

5:00-5:30 Program Unit Business Meeting

MORMON STUDIES

Presider: Thomas W Murphy, Edmonds College (tmurphy@email.edcc.edu)

2:30-3:00 Jenny Webb, Bangor University (jennywebb37@gmail.com)
“A Break of Tongues: Charismatic Divergence within Mormonism”

3:00-3:30 Amanda Buessecker, Carleton University (amandambuessecker@gmail.com)
“Sacred Precedence: The Theological, Political, and Architectural Significance of the Alberta Temple”

3:30-4:00 BREAK: BYO Coffee, Tea, and Treats
4:00-4:30  Thomas W Murphy, Edmonds College (tmurphy@email.edcc.edu)
“An Indian Princess and a Mormon Sacagawea: Decolonizing Memories of our Grandmothers”

4:30-5:00  Aidan Oswald, University of Alberta (aoswald@ualberta.ca)
“Imagining Sally: Racialized Women in Early Mormonism”

5:00-5:30  Program Unit Business Meeting

NEW TESTAMENT AND THE WORLD OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY

Presider:  Ron Clark, Portland Seminary (rclark@georgefox.edu)

2:00-2:30  Ralph Korner, Taylor Seminary (ralph.korner@taylor-edu.ca)
“Revelation’s Reiterative Structure: How It Reinforces Eschatological Imminence”

2:30-3:00  Lorne Zelyck, St. Joseph’s College, University of Alberta (zelyck@ualberta.ca)
“The Sisters and Brothers of Jesus (Mark 6:3)”

3:00-3:30  Samuel Grottenberg, Independent Scholar (samgrottenberg@me.com)
“Investigating a Possible Instance of Deparabolization in James 4:1–10”

3:30-4:00  BREAK: BYO Coffee, Tea, and Treats

4:00-4:30  Fred Tappenden, St. Stephen’s College, at the University of Alberta
(frederick.tappenden@ualberta.ca)
“Sowing Interpretive Uncertainty: The Cognitive and Narrative Poetics of the Markan Parable of the Plantings”

4:30-5:30  Program Unit Business Meeting

NORTH AMERICAN RELIGIONS

Presider:  Jane Samson, University of Alberta (jane.samson@ualberta.ca)

2:00-2:30  Indre Cuplinskas, University of Western Ontario (indre@ualberta.ca)
“Debating Dancing and Drinking: Catholic Youth Movements and Bodily Practices in the 1920s and 1930s”

2:30-3:00  Matt Hoven, St. Joseph’s College, University of Alberta (hoven@ualberta.ca)
“‘A Powerful Sporting Tradition among Canadian Basilians’: Catholic Priest-Coaches’ Body-Soul Ideal in Early 20th Century North America”

**RELIGION AND SOCIETY**
*Religion, Identity, and Contemporary Society*

**Presider:** Joseph Kim Paxton, Claremont School of Theology (joseph.paxton@cst.edu)

**2:00-2:30** Jenna Ferrey, Independent Scholar (jennaferrey@gmail.com)
“*The Sacred and the Secular in the Golden Age of Television*”

**2:30-3:00** Paulo Câmera Marques Pereira Junior, Vancouver School of Theology (pcmpereirajr@gmail.com)
“A Christology of Presence—and Its Relevance for the Contemporary Church Growth Movements among Presbyterian Churches in Brazil”

**3:00-3:30** Barry K Morris, Independent Scholar (bkmorris59@hotmail.com)
“Place and Contribution of One’s Ministry to Praxis in Practical Theology and the ‘Academy’: The (Unintended) Trilogy of The Word on the Street, Hopeful Realism in Urban Ministry, and A Faithful Prophetic Witness? Charities Pursuit of ‘Success’ amid Challenges to Do Justice”

**3:30-4:00** Break: BYO Coffee, Tea, and Treats

**4:00-4:30** Clara Marlijn Meijer, Abo Akademi University (mmeijer@abo.fi)
“*Sexuality, Stigma, and Religion: The Negotiation of Sexuality and Religion among Sexual Minorities in Ghana*”

**4:30-5:00** Program Unit Business Meeting

**THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION**

**Presider:** Sarah Gallant, University of Toronto (sarah.gallant@utoronto.ca)

**2:00-2:30** Norman Metzl, Concordia University Portland (npjmetzler@gmail.com)
“How Shall We Be Judged?"

**2:30-3:00** Samuel Wager, St. Stephen’s College (swagar@ualberta.ca)
“*Ecstasy, Grace, and Polytheism in Wicca*”
3:00-4:00 BREAK: BYO Coffee, Tea, and Treats

4:00-4:30 Jae Yang, Fuller Theological Seminary (jaeyang@fuller.edu)
“Calvin’s Concept of Sacrament Applied to Creation and the Eucharist"

4:30-5:00 Jonathan Strand, Concordia University of Edmonton
(Jonathan.strand@concordia.ab.ca)
“Faith and Hope Among the Virtues."

5:00-5:30 Program Unit Business Meeting

SATURDAY EVENING, MAY 22, 2021
(All times Pacific Time)

6:00 Plenary Address: Antonio Finitsis, Pacific Lutheran University
(finitsak@plu.edu)
“A Rhetorical Analysis of Daniel’s Apocalyptic Visions (Dan 7-12) and Its
Implications for Social Media”

8:00 New Officers and New Section Co-Chairs Late Happy Hour TBA

SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 23, 2021
(All times Pacific Time)

FOURTH SESSION (9:00 AM–11:30 AM)

NEW TESTAMENT AND THE WORLD OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY
Writings in the World of Early Christianity

Presider: Anne Moore, University of Calgary (amoore@ucalgary.ca)

9:00-9:30 Alex Trew, Regent College (alextrew91@gmail.com)
“Irenaeus Inquisitor? Locating Irenaeus of Lyon and the ‘Gnostics’ within
the Context of Christian Diversity in Second-Century Rome”

9:30-10:00 Glen Fairen, University of Texas at El Paso (glenfairen@gmail.com)
“‘And He Shared His Fire with Them...’: The Apocryphon of John and the Roman
Usurpation of Divine Power”
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<tr>
<td>10:00-10:30</td>
<td>Lara-Sophie Boleslawsky</td>
<td>University of British Columbia</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lara-sophie.boleslawsky@ubc.ca">lara-sophie.boleslawsky@ubc.ca</a></td>
<td>“Talk ‘Daimōn’ to Me: Dynamic Dualism and Deconstructing Debates on Judas as a Daimōn in the Gospel of Judas”</td>
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<td>10:30-11:00</td>
<td>Daniel Christensen</td>
<td>University of Chicago</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dkchristensen@fuller.edu">dkchristensen@fuller.edu</a></td>
<td>“The Application of Word-Based Statistical Models in Synoptic Studies, Going Beyond the Synoptic Problem”</td>
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**THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION**

**Presider:** Sarah Gallant, University of Toronto (sarah.gallant@utoronto.ca)

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<td>9:00-9:30</td>
<td>Bruce Hiebert</td>
<td>University Canada West</td>
<td><a href="mailto:brucehiebert@shaw.ca">brucehiebert@shaw.ca</a></td>
<td>“Problematizing Theology: The Application of Michel Meyer’s Philosophy to Theological Understanding”</td>
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<td>9:30-10:00</td>
<td>Peter Andes</td>
<td>University of Alberta</td>
<td><a href="mailto:andes@ualberta.ca">andes@ualberta.ca</a></td>
<td>“Modified Divine Command Theory and Ideal Observer Theory”</td>
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<td>10:00-10:30</td>
<td>Laura Lee Nimilowich</td>
<td>St. Stephen’s College</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Inimilow@ualberta.ca">Inimilow@ualberta.ca</a></td>
<td>“Whitehead and Levinas: A Conversation about Decolonization”</td>
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ABSTRACTS

FRIDAY AFTERNOON, MAY 21, 2021

FIRST SESSION (2:00 PM–5:00 PM)

ARTS AND RELIGION

Ritual and Memory

2:00-2:30

Theresa Henson, Director of Spirituality & the Arts, Monastery of St. Gertrude, Cottonwood, Idaho (theresa.henson@gmail.com)

“The Dance of Love: The Trinity and Creativity”

Through art and an interfaith exploration of theology and philosophy, we will explore the Trinity as a model for creativity and a model toward non-dual consciousness. The Christian Trinity has focused on three male persons but the essential symbolism points toward a highly energized dynamic of being and creative response to life. In addition to Christian theology, this presentation takes into consideration the teachings of Lao-tzu and Paramahansa Yogananda, philosophers Luce Irigaray and Crispin Sartwell, poet Walt Whitman, and several visual artists.

2:30-3:00

Renee Cyr, Religious Studies at University of Kansas (renee.cyr23@gmail.com)

“Dancing with Death”

When faced with the death of a loved one, bodies serve as both the site of mourning and the vehicle through which we can embody grief. Using a Performance Studies lens it becomes clear that the execution of death rituals involves complex choreography, props and other visual aids, readings/speeches, food, music, considerations of space, and a large cast of supporting actors. In this paper I will examine the performance of bodies during a contemporary American funeral. This includes the deceased body, bodies of funeral participants, and the bodies of those who work in funeral homes. I seek to address the question-how do bodies perform the various ritual elements of a funeral service and what is the result?

Currently, the funeral industry is undergoing major changes. As the traditional funeral is waning in popularity, combined with less reliance on traditional religious scripts, individuals are left to create a death ritual that is meaningful to them. Not having a definitive religious framework to fall back on can make it difficult to make choices when in an emotional state. However, this also encourages families to be creative in personalizing a service that reflects the deceased and helps them to process their grief. A modern funeral must balance consumerism with customization to create a unique memorial experience. Death rituals are either for the deceased to help them transition into the afterlife. For the living to help them process grief. Or for a combination of both. In contemporary American death rituals, the focus is almost entirely on the living. In general, it is not believed the spirit
of the deceased needs help in transitioning. Rather funerals serve as a way for the bereaved family to express their grief and reaffirm social connections.

There are infinite ways to hold a death ritual. Each can be tailored to suit religious and cultural practices, budget, desired mood, personal preferences, and be personalized to reflect the personality of the deceased. However, there are four main categories death rituals fall into: traditional burial, full-service cremation, direct burial, or direct cremation. A traditional funeral includes embalming of the body, a visitation or viewing, a funeral service, transportation out to the cemetery, and burial at the gravesite. It is also common to hold a reception for friends and family after the burial. This paper covers all of the public rituals associated with a traditional funeral.

3:00-3:30 Marion G. Dumont, PhD, Independent Scholar (mariondumont@gmail.com) “Nurturing the Soul at the Intersection of Nature, Art, and Spirituality”

This presentation is one artist’s rendition of the experiential relationship between the creative process and spiritual well-being. Photographic images and discourse will highlight examples of the artist’s work for the purposes of demonstrating the richness found at the intersection of nature, art and spirituality. The motive is to encourage participants to consider the role of nature, art and spirituality in their own creative process and spiritual practice. (Examples include pendants, talismans, and block prints.)

HEBREW BIBLE

4:00-4:30 Simeiqi He, Drew University (she1@drew.edu) “The Historical Reception of the Song of Songs and Its Marital Imagery”

The historical reception of the Song of Songs and its marital imagery is significant in both Jewish and Christian traditions. Reading it as a divine love song, the early rabbinic sages employed the Song and its marital imagery to shape rabbinic piety in terms of obedience animated by love and affection. Christian expositions of the Song, beginning with Origen of Alexandria, have also attributed its marital imagery with theological and moral connotations. Understood as referring to the relationship between the Church and Christ and between the soul and God, the Song, in late antiquity, was read as the eschatological song of nuptial love by Origen and used to define the nature of the church and the conduct of its members in the Latin West. Medieval commentaries and homilies on the Song were produced in liturgical and monastic settings to promote monastic ideals. The Song discourse continued to shape religious identity well into the early modern period, especially in Hispanic Catholicism. Early Protestant expositions adhered to an ecclesial-historical reading of the Song, while bridal spirituality frequently resurfaced in various Christian movements.

Reading the Song as depicting the love between two human lovers is only a recent phenomenon. With increased attention to the plain erotic and sexual sense of the text, the issue of the opposition of sexuality and spirituality became prevalent in the modern readings of the Song. Diverse interpretations on both human and divine levels continue to flourish,
and present scholarship has also taken the Song to various directions in addressing the present concerns of gender and sexuality. Regardless, the interpretations of the Song’s marital imagery and their functions have both reflected and are shaped by the varying historical contexts, social concerns, and theological presuppositions of their commentators. This paper surveys the reception history of the Song of Songs and its marital imagery from late antiquity to the present day. It aims to demonstrate the historical trajectory of the Song’s interpretation.

4:30-5:00  Jessica Atamanenko, University of Alberta (atamanen@ualberta.ca)
“Identifying the Named and Unnamed Woman in the Book of Judges"

This paper explores the implications of naming and namelessness of women in the Hebrew Bible through a postmodern feminist lens. The practice of naming is a powerful tool in biblical narrative for characterization. I argue that naming or lack thereof of female biblical characters sets expectations of what part this woman will play in her narrative, but that this prescribed identity may fall into tension with identity based on her actions. I argue this by evaluating Achsah’s character in Judges 1 and the Woman of Thebez in Judges 9. Achsah is named, which implies narrative significance, but her name means bangle or anklet, and thus her importance and primary traits are reduced to that of “prized possession,” despite her active role in the text.

The Woman of Thebez, although she literally kills a king, becomes a symbol of Abimelech’s feminization rather than a person in her own right, and this relegation to the symbolic serves to contain this woman by instead focusing on the concerns of hegemonic masculinity. In both cases, the naming/namelessness of these women shrouds the subversive elements of their characters by fostering assumptions that minimize their roles, although deeper readings reveal the opposite. Through a postmodern mimetic reading, we may identify with these women and thus construct fuller identities that were not previously able to exist; by placing ourselves in the shoes of Achsah and the Woman of Thebez, we may liberate them and even ourselves.

NEW TESTAMENT AND THE WORLD OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY

2:00-2:30  Christopher S. Mackay, University of Alberta (csmackay@ualberta.ca)
“Old Speech into New Skin: Learning Coptic as a ‘Living’ Language”

In recent years, there has been a trend in the pedagogy of the Classical languages (ancient Greek and Latin) to teach them as “living” languages. That is, students are taught to speak Latin and Greek and to understand the spoken languages, just as one would learn a modern language. This stands in contrast to the “traditional” method of learning the languages via the memorization of grammatical rules, so that students can “understand” texts from antiquity via grammatical exegesis for the purpose of rendering the text in one’s own language (the “grammar and translation” method). The newer method (though in reality learning Latin as a spoken idiom was the rule until early modern times) takes a number of
forms, but all could be characterized as the “living language” method.

Why the change? There are fundamentally two purposes. First, to present the ancient language in as engaging a manner as possible to retain student interest. Second, the ability to speak the language involves an “embedding” of the mechanics of the language in the mind that is far more immediate than the abstract ability to recognize patterns on the written page and then use such information to convert the text to another language. Even if one grants that the understanding and interpretation of the ancient texts is the primary purpose of studying the dead languages, the spoken method is the best way of achieving this end.

So, is it feasible to revive Coptic in the way that Greek and Latin have? First, we have a large corpus on a number of topics. Much is translation of Greek. This may be a certain impediment, but it does give us an automatic crib on the meaning. There is also a large amount of text composed originally in Coptic. This provides a sufficient reservoir for idiom. Second, there is a large amount of grammatical work describing the language. The modern work is rather theoretical. All such work is geared towards the “decipherment” of the language for purposes of translation and so is often surprisingly uninformative on rudimentary linguistic concepts necessary. There are also no proper English-Coptic dictionaries. The vast majority of instructional grammars are geared towards block acquisition of grammatical rules rather than an active understanding of the language. Nonetheless, it is possible to reconfigure the material and to form a community of speakers. So, it would be beneficial and feasible to institute the teaching of Coptic as a living language.

2:30-3:00  Stanley N. Helton, Alberta Bible College (snhelton@abccampus.ca)
“A History of Transmission of the Text of Acts in the Greek Fathers to the Time of Origen”

This paper traces the history of the transmission of the Acts of the Apostles among the early Greek Fathers and other Greek Witnesses. The end goal is to marshal and weigh evidence for the reception of the book of Acts from its publication through various post-apostolic Greek Church Fathers to the time of Origen, when the use of Acts of the Apostles by the church is easy to confirm. Along the way, a few other Greek witnesses—other than the Greek Fathers—will be cited and discussed so as to keep the history of transmission via the Greek sources as complete as possible.

After briefly rehearsing modern research looking for Acts in the earliest sources, this paper begins with the literature nearest Acts, namely, the works that later became the NT. Then follows the evidence for Acts as found in the Apostolic Fathers (AF)—with a minor detour to apocryphal acts and other potentially “secondary” witnesses to the text of Acts—to time of Origen (ca. 185–254). The overall purpose of this paper is to theorize a history of transmission of Acts through the available sources. An important caveat that I will not be looking at the Latin Fathers, the MSS of Acts, the versional evidence, and other non-Greek witnesses pertinent to a writing of a complete history of the transmission of Acts.
Aristotle assumes the reality of ‘external evils’ within human society, and thus it is inevitable that we grapple with human ethics in response to these external evils. Anger is the response to external evils, and the ethics of anger divide into the means and extremes of this response. Dante is heavily influenced by Aristotle’s ethical teaching within his own life and poetical works, albeit augmented by his own Christian faith and formation (heavily indebted to Thomas Aquinas, of course). By noting Aristotle’s struggle to formulate the language of virtue in relation to anger in *Ethics IV, 5*, and by comparing this to Dante’s own careful use of language within Canto VII of his *Inferno* we will see how Dante, by way of Aquinas, takes Aristotelian ethics and develops the vices in relation to anger in a profound way. Of contemporary importance and application, we observe that there are many who claim a right to be spared the external evil of *offense*, in our own institutions and in society in general. Offense is addressed in both Aristotle and Dante as a key component of our inevitable exposure to external evil. We also observe how various *virtual* media, in varying degrees detached from physical human society, tends towards an excess of anger. Aristotle and Dante may inform a proper human response to anger, and also warn us regarding a lack of awareness in relation to our own response (and role) in the external evil of offense in our human relationships.

The paper will begin by noting the context in which Aristotle places anger in relation to our pursuit of happiness and the voluntary nature of this pursuit. External evils are subsidiary and follow on from the subsidiary goods of riches and honours, all of which need a virtuous response if one is to achieve happiness. Aquinas’ commentary on Aristotle will be woven within a close examination of the specific passage under consideration in the *Ethics*. We will then look at Dante’s *Inferno* Canto VII noting key language development and imagery which augments and deepens Aristotle’s thinking. We will conclude by considering how Aristotle and Dante’s ethical teaching may help us understand a proper response to external evils in our own lives, and within our immediate common life, society and education establishments.

Perceptions of disability, whether physical or psychological in nature, may be shaped in part by our responses to human vulnerability and weakness. Both psychological science and theology speak to the experience of human vulnerability, including our general resistance to its reality, and our tendencies to reject its presence in others. For Christian theology, a central, paradoxical reality is the power within weakness as exemplified by Christ himself, and evident in the mysteries of his incarnation and crucifixion. In psychological science, research
reveals the human propensity to blame and to ostracize those whom we believe are vulnerable among us. This chapter considers this propensity, and the potential dread experienced when confronting vulnerability. Discussion will include the human experiences of fear, anxiety, terror, and finally dread, drawing upon insights from both the theology of disability and research from psychological science involving terror management theory.

THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

2:00-2:30  Kirk Lougheed, University of Pretoria/LCC International University (philosophy@kirklougheed.com)  
"Anti-Theism and African Communitarianism"

In the philosophy of religion, a common question is the existential question of whether God exists. Much of the literature on this topic explores the (de)merits of arguments for and against theism. Recently, however, philosophers have asked a different question about God. This is the axiological question of what value impact, if any, God’s existence would (or does) have on our world. Anti-theism is the view that God’s existence would (or does) detract from the value of the world. Personal versions of anti-theism which say that God’s existence would be (or is) worse for specific individuals have been defended based on the claim that theism entails a loss of meaning in life, a loss of privacy, a loss of dignity, a loss of understanding, and an inability to make genuine sacrifices.

A lesser-known philosophical tradition conducted in English is African philosophy. This tradition emerged (professionally) on the African continent in the 1960s with the decline of colonization and rise of literacy rates. In ethics, indigenous African thinkers tend to emphasize the health of community over, say, the preservation of individual rights. It thus is a truism to describe African ethics as communitarian and Western ethics as individualistic. On African communitarianism (or ubuntu) the focus of morality is often on developing one’s personhood by exercising other-regarding virtues or on simply promoting harmonious relationships with others.

This paper explores the arguments for anti-theism on the assumption that African communitarianism is true. So far in the literature, the metaethical framework by which anti-theism is evaluated is often obscure. In making it explicit I examine whether anti-theism can be defended to the indigenous African philosopher. I argue that anti-theism turns out to be much more difficult to defend if African communitarianism is true. This is because anti-theistic goods tend to be intrinsic, while communitarianism values relational goods (which are extrinsic). This is consistent with both sets of goods being personal and valuable as final ends. While there might be other routes to defend anti-theism on African communitarianism, the current arguments in the literature fail to do so.
In this paper I will examine the role of dialectical philosophy in Brother’s Karamazov. When the devil appears to Ivan Karamazov in Book 11, he discloses his diabolical and essential role in cosmic order. The devil’s role, he claims of himself, is to establish oppositional limits for human beings to make life interesting and motivate their worship of God. Without the devil, without suffering and pain, he argues, there would be no love of God. The devil’s oppositional role, in other words, is essential to world order.

This idea of essential or dialectical opposition connects with a major theme in the novel, namely that human purpose results from “strain” or will to power. Throughout the novel, we have several characters who, in their struggle to overcome pre-established limits, set up high-minded ideals for themselves, defined in terms of wilful overcoming. The primary motivation here is negative; the motive is strain itself -- strain for the sake of strain. The ethic of power that dominates the lives of many of the characters flirts with nihilism, but, as I will argue, there is one thing that “saves” this Nietzschean ethic of power from a celebration of purposelessness, and that is oppositional limitation. Without oppositional resistance there would be nothing to structure or condition the purposeless celebration of power itself. Absent positive purpose, only the negative purpose of struggle can concentrate unfocused, potential energy and turn it into a will to power. Power here, as Nietzsche himself recognized, means power over something, command and control, not as is often maintained, a purely positive expression of vital energy. The novel forces us to confront the toxic effects of an ethic that requires suffering as its basic motivation.

From the perspective that Kierkegaard the nineteenth-century Christian thinker and Margaret Atwood the contemporary (post-)secular novelist are both engaged in depicting and reflecting on human reality in the post-Christian milieu, in which to exist is predicated by “art” rather than Christian faith, this paper attempts to bring these two modern writers into dialogue— to compare their ethics of existence via cross-reading their “post-Christian” narratives. Through the critical lens doubly comprised by Kierkegaard’s concept of “aesthetic existence-sphere” and Atwood’s moral idea of “apocalypse” as human possibility, this dialogic study aims to cross-examine how these two writers, existential thinkers, and cultural critics represent aesthetic existence and apocalyptic possibility in their narratives— Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous book Stages on Life’s Way (especially the first section) and Atwood’s speculative novel Oryx and Crake.

The key inquiries in this cross-study include: How does Kierkegaard’s persona’s recollection of the banquet guests’ views on “love” manifest not just the truth about living the aesthetic lifeway but also the potentiality of such a mode of life leading to personal or social “apocalypse”? Turning to the recollective narrator in Atwood’s novel— “the Last Man on Earth” looking back at his pre-apocalyptic life that used to be obsessively preoccupied with
“erotic love,” we wonder in what sense this post-apocalyptic survivor-narrator may be seen as a true representative of aesthetic existence. Also, how does this representative, along with other aesthetic beings in the novel, such as the mad Frankenstein scientist and those business, political, or sexist human monsters, play the part of making possibilities of apocalypse come true? Furthermore, what exactly are the “apocalyptic possibilities” associable with aesthetic existence as morally or religiously imagined and conveyed in the two writers’ narratives?

Relevant to the above inquiries is another important task of cross-investigation: to contemplate and compare the ethical significance of the two narratives conveying the association between the aesthetic lifeway and human apocalypse. Seeing that Kierkegaard is a substantial proponent of Christian ethics, which is obviously not shared by Atwood, it is, therefore, intriguing to probe into the distinct ethics of existence suggested by their narratives. Ultimately, besides considering the ethical concerns as the embedded and significant dimension of their depictions of aesthetic existence and apocalyptic possibilities, the cross-reading of their narratives looks to compare and contrast the critical responses distinctively made by Kierkegaard and Atwood to the post-Christian situation of modern existence.

FRIDAY EVENING, MAY 21, 2021

6:00  Presidential Address: Craig Ginn, University of Calgary (cwcginn@ucalgary.ca)
“Personalizing Truth and Reconciliation: The Impact of Narrative”

SATURDAY MORNING, MAY 22, 2021

SECOND SESSION (9:00 AM–12:00 PM)

ARTS AND RELIGION
Language and Interpretation

9:00-9:30  Rev. Dave Fekete, Saint Stephen’s College (revdrfekete@gmail.com)

The climate crisis in which we now are has its origins in the death of God ideology pervading western culture. T. S. Eliot, who attempted to capture “the mind of Europe,” prophesied this state of affairs in his epic poem, The Waste Land, and in The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.

The overriding concept in The Waste Land is the death of God. T. S. Eliot draws heavily on concepts and imagery from Sir James Frazer and Jessie Weston. He juxtaposes poetic imagery against concepts from Weston or Frazer to generate a new meaning. That meaning,
achieved by the ironic use of religious concepts and imagery, is the debasement of the sacred and a parody of religion.

Eliot’s efforts to express the “mind of Europe” succeeded, evidenced by the tremendous success of the published poem. One consequence of the death of God ideology is the loss of the sacred in general. Thus, Nature, too, loses its sanctity. Since Nature is no longer seen as God’s sacred creation, humans carelessly defile and pollute it. Ironically, the very humans who have lost a feeling of Nature’s sanctity are called “nymphs” by Eliot. Nymphs were divine spirits of Nature.

The nymphs are departed.

Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.
The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed.

(The Waste Land ll. 173-179)

We will see Eliot depict the death of God and the desecration of Nature by reading excerpts from The Waste Land and The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock in conjunction with relevant passages from Sir James Frazer’s The Golden Bough and Jessie Weston’s From Ritual to Romance.

The format of this presentation will be interactive. Instead of lecturing, I will distribute handouts with passages from Eliot, Frazer, and Weston. We will read the passages together and discuss them as a group.

9:30-10:00  Stephen Reasor, Burman University (stephenreasor@burmanu.ca) and Eduardo Sola, Burman University

“Interdisciplinary Biblical Interpretation: Expressing Meaning through Visual and Aural Art Forms”

A major obstacle for translating and interpreting biblical texts into a target language is the often unavoidable loss of nuance, emphasis, and mood when the text is expressed in the second language. The depth of meaning discovered through exegetical work cannot be clearly expressed in a concise translation. Expressing the discovered layers of meaning through a lengthy, technical description of the text allows for greater expression of meaning, but results in limiting access to those with technical understanding and a willingness to engage in scholarly discussion. This paper proposes an approach to, and explores results and implications of, biblical translation and interpretation that is both accessible to the layperson and rich with nuance, emphasis, and mood. This approach relies on a collaboration between biblical studies and graphic and musical arts.

At Burman University, the Religion and Music Departments have initiated a collaboration that results in a syntactically informed and aesthetically beautiful collection of biblical texts, expressed through some type of graphic media, set to music, arranged, and performed publicly. Students and faculty work collaboratively to move from text, to interpretation, to artistic expression, to arranging, and finally to performing the texts.

This process begins in the Koine Greek courses (we hope to include Hebrew courses in this collaboration next year). The faculty and students select appropriate texts, properly
exegete and identify thought units, syntactical emphasis, idioms, moods, and depth of meaning. They then create a complete word-picture of the movements this text makes and how certain words, feelings, or ideas are given emphasis by the author.

The next step in the process partners music students and faculty with the Greek students and faculty. Each team explores the structure, meaning, and message of the text. The word picture is portrayed in an accessible graphic representation that contains both the original wording of the text and the important expressions in the target language. The team decides on an appropriate modality. The music students and faculty then create an aesthetically pleasing and meaningful melody, and orchestrate and arrange a score, that expresses the nuanced meanings in the text. The full meaning of the text, in its various expressions, is displayed and performed as a unified and meaningful event. This paper will describe this process, consider some sample results, relate the experiences of the artists and the audience, and discuss implications for artistic representations of Christian Scripture.

10:00-10:30  John McDowell, Burman University (jmcdowel@burmanu.ca)
“Reading the Bible: Views of a Relationship”

This is a creative presentation. As a practicing visual artist, I create works of sculpture using Bibles to represent visually the ways the Bible is used and read. The Bible as an art object has a long history: the illuminated manuscripts of the middle ages and Bibles from the 13 century that where richly decorated and illustrated are examples. A jeweled incrusted Bible revealed not so much something new about the Bible per say, but an attitude about the value, importance, and authority of text (and the power of the church).

In using the bible as a sculptural object, I realized that I am not thinking so much of the text itself, but of contemporary attitudes toward the Bible. People’s feelings about the Bible vary widely—and this is what I try to represent. Some are obvious: the Bible has been a target for attack and ridicule to being an evangelistic tool to sound the alarm. Some, less obvious.

Two of the most common approaches to the Bible are 1) devotional and 2) doctrinal/theological. The Bible is read for comfort, for solace, for encouragement, for advice. The Bible is also read doctrinally out of a desire to gain knowledge: hold, believe, and propagate The Truth (often, also to be assured that one is right.) Both general approaches read the Bible from a clear point of reference, an a priori starting point that helps determine what in fact, one gains from the reading. We read to prove something, to gain something: that “something” is known or felt before we begin reading. Reading often becomes an act of confirmation—the Bible confirms what we desire. Of course, things are not quite so straightforward; however, it is difficult to read the bible without some sort of precondition of what we expect.

In the “Reading the Bible” series I now have about 20 pieces. The presentation will be a showing of several of these works along with commentary. A visual representation of an idea can change how one understands that idea.
11:00-11:30 Michael Gillingham, University of Alberta (mgilling@ualberta.ca)
“Cork Would Be the Poorer without You”: Irish Roman Catholic and Irish Jewish Relations in Cork, Ireland as Depicted in David Marcus’ A Land Not Theirs”

David Marcus, a self-identified Irish Jewish author, was an important literary figure in Irish literature in the mid to later parts of the twentieth century. His novel A Land Not Theirs, published in 1986, tells the story of a small Jewish community in the Irish city of Cork in the early years of the twentieth century. Questions about religious practice, educational opportunities, business opportunities, the land of Israel, and certain romantic limits are encountered by the younger Jewish characters in his work.

In A Land Not Theirs, Marcus also depicts the relationship between Jews and Roman Catholics in Cork as he presents the friendship of the Jewish Rabbi Moishe and Roman Catholic priest Father McGiff. It is McGiff who first welcomes the immigrant Jews to Cork on their arrival and McGiff’s willingness to welcome the “stranger” inspires his Roman Catholic congregation to do the same. A deep friendship grows between the rabbi and the priest over many years. Father McGiff attends a meeting for Cork Jews who are considering emigrating to Israel, and he says, “I may not be of your persuasion but tonight I have been persuaded that the world is reaching a turning-point in its history and that the ancient biblical promise is about to be redeemed. I believe it is. I hope it is...I hope you won’t all leave Cork. I have been a friend of your wonderful Rabbi and many of you for a very long time. I cherish his and your friendship, and I can say in all sincerity that Cork would be the poorer without you” (90).

As new political realities emerge in Ireland with the violent rampages of the British sponsored Black and Tans, both rabbi and priest and their collective communities must respond. Marcus’ depiction of this friendship suggests both a responsibility and an opportunity for Irish Catholics in Ireland to respond in positive ways to the arrival of immigrants. I will contrast Marcus’ positive depiction of Catholic-Jewish relations in Cork with the historical stories of the notorious Irish Roman Catholic priest Father Creagh and his role in inspiring the terrible Limerick Pogrom of 1904. I will also compare Marcus’ positive depiction of Catholic-Jewish relations with historical accounts of the Jewish community in Cork. Finally, I will briefly discuss the work of Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas as it relates to justice and welcome for the alien, the outsider, and the immigrant.

GENDER, RELIGION, SEXUALITY, AND POWER

9:00-9:30 Autumn Reinhardt-Simpson, University of Alberta (amreinha@ualberta.ca)
“With a Table Napkin on Her Head: Gender and Gesture in English Churche Reform (1524-1700)”

Ritual has been understood to be a way to build and sustain community, to communicate with deities, and/or to integrate one’s body with one’s inner experience. Contrary to many people’s understanding, the medieval period in Europe was a time when many women were considered the ritualists of their household. While priests officiated at the mass in church, many women of all classes performed Christian household and life-cycle rituals. Though at
times these rituals and their performance were contested locally, no real move was made to stop or reform them until the advent of the reformation when codification and uniformity of ritual became a project of the government.

The reformations in Europe (approximately 1524–1666) are perhaps the best known of historical periods in which ritual became a focal point for dissent. A commonly accepted view is that they were a time of intense division fueled by concern about what constituted proper Christian doctrine. However, Edward Muir argues in *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* that the debates surrounding the reformations in Europe were not about right doctrine but rather about right ritual practice. Tension centered around ritual specifics such as how and when baptism should be administered rather than on doctrinal purity. Muir’s assessment of the primacy of ritual debates is mainly correct but I intend to take his thesis further. I propose to look at Muir’s argument in an English context and through the lens of gender and gesture, specifically, how the ceremony of the churching of women became a contested ritual and how women, both reform-minded and traditional, used gesture and clothing to make both traditional and reformed theological claims through ritual.

The goal of my proposed presentation is to answer the following questions: how did women respond to the reform of churching? How did the Church of England accommodate churching in its continuing attempts at uniformity? And in what ways did women make their wishes about ritual known?

9:30-10:00  Hannah Irish, Pacifica Graduate Institute (hannah.irish@my.pacifica.edu)
“The Virginity Myth: Tracing the Mythological Roots of American Purity Culture”

Sexism underlies many of the expectations in American “Purity Culture.” A product of Evangelical Christianity, there are many similarities between its teachings and the ancient mythologies of Greece and India, all problematic. These texts, products of patriarchal societies, make explicit a distinction between the sexes that has remained the norm, over two millennia later—men will prove their sexual prowess in encounters with multiple women, willing or otherwise, and women will first prove their chastity before their wedding day, and then continually prove their fidelity thereafter. This emphasis for chastity and fidelity on the woman’s part is a double standard based on biological sex. The English word “virgin” did not come into use until the 14th century, CE, and it originally meant a woman who was not bound in betrothal or marriage to a man, or a woman who had not yet born children. However, since its introduction in the Middle Ages by the Church, especially concerning the Virgin Mary, the word has come to mean a person who has not had sexual intercourse. That this sexist terminology is not only still in use but is foundational in a nationwide movement targeted at adolescents (“abstinence-only sex education”) shows the enduring power of its founding myths, and the social anxieties out of which those myths were born.

Six texts are considered in this history of virginity: the Greek story of Alcmena and Zeus; the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope in *The Odyssey*; the Hindu story of Indra, Ahalya, and Guatama; the story of Sita and Rama from *The Ramayana*; the Hebrew Messianic prophecy from the book of Isaiah; and the Gospel of Matthew’s narrative of the Immaculate Conception. Between this millennia old emphasis on women’s chastity and the brutal laws regarding virginity in the Bible, it is no wonder that the virginity myth is alive and well in
twenty-first-century America, nor that an entire movement has been built up around it in Christian Evangelicalism. However, as evidenced in personal accounts of those raised in Purity Culture, as well as in psychological studies, it is clear that the ideologies surrounding and within Purity Culture are problematic at best, and harmful at worst. Decades after psychologist Carl G. Jung expressed the need, regarding religion, for a new mythology, it is obvious that a new mythology is desperately needed regarding sexuality.

HEBREW BIBLE

9:30-10:00    Erica Mongé-Greer, University of Oregon (erica@ericamg.com)
                “Frankenstein’s Creature, Sapient Cylons, and the Adam: The Search for Evidence of a Soul through Procreation”

“Go forth and multiply” might just be the most commonly recognized quote from the Hebrew Bible. It is a command that accompanies God’s creation of the world, and everything in it, including humans. Even today, there is a rich discussion to be had around technological developments like birth control or en utero genetic manipulation in light of a biblical mandate to produce offspring. Modern and future scientific advancements seem to threaten the mandate, so ethics of procreation may be considered in light of science futurism. Anxiety about procreation is a common theme in science fiction film and literature that envisions humanity’s future. For some, the pursuit of having children is tied to a spiritual affirmation and acceptance by God.

This is a prevalent theme in Battlestar Galactica (BSG), a perspective held by the religious monotheistic Cylon, an evolved Artificial Intelligence (AI) created by humans. It is also implied in the philosophical struggle of Dr. Frankenstein when he considers building a mate for his AI creature. This connection between God’s approval and the ability to have children can be traced back to cosmogony narratives in Genesis, and the creation of the adam. This leads to an ethical question about the felt sense of obligation for created beings to self-replicate. This paper explores how human anxiety about procreation in science fiction interprets the ethics of the Hebrew Bible mandate to procreate.

10:00-10:30    Jerry E. Shepherd, Taylor Seminary (jerry.shepherd@taylor-edu.ca)
                “Ten Plagues, Ten Commandments, Ten Plagues”

After the giving of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, the subsequent narratives in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers recount a number of instances in which the Israelites incur the wrath of God, and God accordingly executes judgment against the people. Interestingly, when one looks at these various instances, there are exactly ten such occasions where the judgment is of a “supernatural” character; that is, ten instances where the punishment is not carried out by human agency. The larger narratives containing these instances are: (1) Exod 32:1-35 (Golden calf); (2) Lev 10:1-20 (Nadab and Abihu); (3) Num 11:1-3 (Fire); (4) Num 11:4-35 (Quail); (5) Num 12:1-16 (Miriam and Aaron); (6) Num 13:1—14:45 (Spies); (7) Num 16:1-40 [Heb. 16:1—17:5] (Korah); (8) Num 16:41—17:13 [Heb. 17:6-28] (Korah aftermath); (9) Num 21:4-9 (Snakes); (10) Num 25:1-18 (Baal-Peor).
It will be argued in this paper that the ten-plagues-on-Israel scheme is an intentional redactional strategy of the Pentateuchal narrative. This will be demonstrated first, by looking at the various features of the ten instances that provide a coherence among them. These features consist of (1) linguistic correspondences, (2) conceptual correspondences, and (3) a literary structure that binds the instances together. This structure, at the very least, consists of an inclusio provided by the first and last narratives. But it will also be argued that beyond the inclusio, there is a chiastic structure which may be discerned among the narratives as well, though also malleable in some measure. The redactor, in addition to these literary devices, has also possibly employed a measure of dischronologization in order to arrive at ten instances, and to structure the narratives chiastically.

It will then be demonstrated that the larger ten-plagues-on-Israel narrative was intended to evoke the ten plagues on Egypt. This evocation takes place via various linguistic and conceptual correspondences, though not to the extent that there is any precise attempt to provide a one-to-one correspondence between individual plagues.

The purpose of this literary arrangement was to reinforce a particular theological teaching. Even though Israel is God’s elect, when Israel sins and rebels like Egypt, Israel can expect to be punished like Egypt. The nation that was delivered by ten plagues, and was given ten commandments, but which then tests Yahweh “ten times” (Num 14:22) can expect to be plagued ten times. Judgment begins at the house of God.

11:00-11:30  Ian Wilson, University of Alberta (iwilson@ualberta.ca)
“The History of Prophecy: The Book of Isaiah as Archive”

Isaiah contains a great deal of metadata for historical study. The book reflects, to some degree, how ancient Judeans thought about and with their past, as it was represented in their larger literary repertoire. The prophetic and the historiographical were closely related in ancient Judah. Although prophetic literature is not history-writing proper (i.e., in the way we understand such writing today), it is nonetheless marked by an “unresolving tension” between conflicting attitudes and claims about the “real” past and that past’s import for the present and future—a feature that intellectual historian Allan Megill sees as essential to historical thought. Prophetic books reveal a deep concern with history, especially with how to reconcile the perceived glories and failures of Judah’s monarchic past with its postmonarchic present under imperial rule.

With these issues in mind, I will argue in this paper that the concept of “archive” is a useful heuristic for thinking about how Isaiah, and prophetic literature in general, functioned historiographically for its readers in antiquity. The book’s archival function is apparent in several of its literary features: (1) in how it structures its various narratives; (2) in how it marks and organizes its various oracles and visions; and (3) in how it presents the prophet himself, as a container and thus source for divine authority. Examining these literary features, I will make the case for thinking about Isaiah in particular as a kind of archive that would inform social remembering, and I will work toward developing a better understanding of prophetic literature’s generic and cultural functions in antiquity.
11:30-12:00  Ehud Ben Zvi, University of Alberta (ehud.benzvi@ualberta.ca)
“The Chronicler as a Sophisticated, Carefully Crafted, Prose Writer”

People tend to think of books such as Isaiah, or Song of Songs, or Job or Psalms when the issue of the ‘art’ of writing in ancient Israel. If they think about prose writings, the usual candidates that come to mind are, e.g., Genesis or Samuel. Few people would think of Chronicles. Using some examples from 1 Chr 10 I will show that the literati who read it construed the Chronicler, their implied author of the book, as a highly sophisticated writer with excellent mastery of his craft. I will then advance some of the potential implications of such a construction.

NEW TESTAMENT AND THE WORLD OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY
Power and Authority Study Group

9:00-9:30  Pat Hart, University of Alberta (pathart@ualberta.ca)
“Power, Authority, and Paul”

There is no doubt that Paul’s correspondence possesses a kind of eminence—not only within the Christian Bible, but in literature generally. Indeed, as contemporary philosophers such as Slavoj Žižek, Giorgio Agamben, and Alain Badiou have demonstrated, Paul’s writings even hold utility to those who, themselves, have no fidelity to Paul’s theology. Yet even still, such writers find with Paul’s writings a certain allure. In part, this allure derives from a level of power and authority associated with his letters. But where does this power and authority come from? Or perhaps more precisely, what is it that renders these texts authoritative, and why? In an effort to address such questions, this paper will explore both the concept of authority on a theoretical level, and also various iterations of authority that can be identified in Paul and his letters, including (among other things): canonical authority, literary authority, historical authority, apostolic authority, and revelatory authority. Moreover, this paper will carefully examine the way in which we, as readers of Paul, are in fact active participants in the formulation, or maintenance, of Pauline authority. In doing so, this study is aimed at offering a cogent and reasonably comprehensive account of how we might go about theorizing Pauline authority.

Ron Clark, Portland Seminary (rclark@georgefox.edu)
“Associating with the Humiliated: Paul’s Hermeneutic of Transformation among the Oppressed in Romans 12:1-16”

Paul guided the Roman Christians to develop connection through the use of “mental/emotional” (phrone) words, spiritual giftedness and mercy, and relationships with the vulnerable members of the congregation. This act provided transformation for both vulnerable members and those who represented the higher class or more elite members of the congregation and community. By translating alla tois tapeinois synapagomenoi as “associate with the humiliated” I suggest that the text, along with other texts (Phil. 2; 1 Cor.
1, 8-10), offers the reader the opportunity to identify with Jesus through marginalized populations in the congregations. While the poor and lower classes may model the vulnerability of the crucified Jesus, it would have been the responsibility of the leaders and upper-class members of the community to model the humiliation and sacrifice of Jesus.

These actions continued to provide a method of “resistance” to the culture of upward mobility through gaining honor, power, and oppressing others. In this paper I will discuss Romans 12:1-21 as a call to transformation and renewal of mind through acts of mercy and service toward the vulnerable/marginalized. The author’s use of *phrenē* (4 times) leads the reader toward an “attitude” that embraces the humiliated of their community. Through this transformation the Roman Christian community offered a method of resistance (or refusal to conform) within their city, congregation, and the larger Christian movement as a whole.

David King, Independent Scholar (daviddmking@gmail.com)
“The Unforgivable Sin and the Spiritual Authority of Good Works”

Four ancient Christian sources—the gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke, and Thomas—narrate Jesus declaring that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit can never be forgiven. Other sins can be forgiven. Blasphemy against Father can be forgiven, blasphemy against the Son can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit is unforgivable. Many Christian interpreters, both ancient and modern, have sought to interpret this by trying to imagine theologically what could possibly be so bad that it would be unforgivable, most concluding that it is a sin of incorrect doctrine. It might be, for example, a rejection of the divinity of the Holy Spirit, and thus a rejection of the doctrine of the trinity. It might be a denial of Jesus’s role as Son of God, which was clearly revealed by the Holy Spirit. It might be a persistent rejection of the grace of God, or a rejection of orthodoxy, or a rejection of the church. However, if one is unburdened of the theological need to explain why the sin against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable, a different interpretation can emerge.

All four ancient sources place the saying in a slightly different context. However, all four contexts suggest that the sin in question is calling the good work of the Holy Spirit evil. In Mark and Matthew, Jesus has been performing works, by the Spirit, that, regardless of anyone’s theological or doctrinal positions, should be clearly and obviously good. Nevertheless, his opponents say they must be the work of an evil spirit. It should take no theology, doctrine, or revelation to understand that one who is performing clearly good works is inspired by a holy spirit, not an evil spirit. In the Gospel of Thomas, the saying is placed in the context of fruitful living. If a person’s life produces good fruit, it must come from a holy spirit, not an evil spirit. Luke connects this saying with the Spirit’s power to allow disciples to defend themselves and demonstrate their authority. In all cases, the logion is placed to suggest that good works are a sign of the Holy Spirit and that the presence of the Holy Spirit is a source of authority for the one performing those works. If one demonstrates fruit that is clearly a sign of the Holy Spirit, to call that work evil, that is, to undermine their authority, is to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit.
Ralph Korner, Taylor Seminary (ralph.korner@taylor-edu.ca)

“Paul’s Corinthian Ekklēsia: A Non-Misogynistic, Sacred ‘Location’ for Jewish Manumission Ethics?”

In 1 Cor 7:17-24, Paul explicates ekklēsia ethics with manumission terminology. The final sentence (7:24b; μενέτω παρὰ θεῷ) appears to allude to a paramonē clause found in some Greek manumission inscriptions (e.g., παραμενέτω, FD III 6:27; Delphi, 1–20 CE). One could thus loosely paraphrase μενέτω παρὰ θεῷ as follows: “You are to remain obligated to God in your ethnic (7:18) and social (7:21) station of life for as long as God, your master, lives (7:24b).”

By means of an ‘ekklēsia command’ (7:17), however, Paul extends that ‘paramonē demand’ (7:24b) beyond simply enslavement to God. Paul’s “rule in all the ekklēsiai” (7:17) also mandates an obligation of life-long service to a group, that is, to all of God’s metaphorical douloi within the ekklēsia (7:21-23). This ongoing obligation to a sacred collective (3:16, 17, “temple of God”) mirrors Bosporan Jewish adaptations of the Greek paramonē clause for manumissions within, and service to, their sacred proseuchai (1st–4th centuries CE).

But are Paul’s paramonē-style ekklēsia ethics egalitarian? One obstacle to this conclusion is usually found in 1 Cor 14:33b-35. However, this passage loses its complementarian force with respect to Pauline ekklēsiai if one assumes that Paul is quoting a dictum mandated of Jerusalem-loyal hoi hagioi who restrict gynai from verbal participation in their ekklēsiai. This possibility increases with two translational moves. First, “ekklēsiai” could be translated as “meetings” rather than only as a collective designation (“churches”). Second, as Jewett (2007) and Trebilco (2011) suggest, hoi hagioi could function as a group designation (“the holy ones”), not only as a theological construct (“the saints”). Paraphrasing 1 Cor 14:33b-34a accordingly, Paul’s quotation could read: “As in all the meetings of the subgroup of Jerusalem-loyal Christ-followers known as hoi hagioi, the gynai are to remain silent.” Paul’s ekklēsia ethic, however, contrasts sharply (14:36); he is not misogynistic. Women are equal public participants (11:5) within the regularly convened ekklēsiai of Paul’s multi-ethnic ekklēsiai.

Kenneth A. Fox (kealfo@gmail.com)

“From Two Gospels to One: Pauline Chronology and How James and Paul Changed Their Minds”

In Slavery and Social Death (1982) and Freedom (1991), Orlando Patterson pounds the point that slavery does not exist in a social vacuum. Slavery requires the support of a community. The power of a slave owner to hold individuals against their will, Patterson says, “cannot be divorced from the distribution of power throughout the wider society in which both master and slave find themselves.”

Plato provided evidence. Slave owners, he said, do not live in fear of their slaves because the entire city will come to the assistance of the slave owner were there a problem with the slaves. Plato then imagines a situation where the slave owner, together with wife and children, is deposited in some desert place with his slaves, and no free man can come to
his assistance. In this situation, Plato said, the slave owner will be terrified for his life and the lives of his wife and children, and he will have to resort to pathetic practices like setting his slaves free and being nice to them (Resp. 578d-579a). Patterson’s inference: “As Plato saw all too clearly, the master’s power was nothing in isolation from fellow members of his community.”

The societies that made up the Roman empire were, to borrow from Keith Bradley, steeply hierarchical and deeply patriarchal. In these societies, slaves occupied the bottom, and slave owners had unrestricted authority over their property. While I feel on safe ground to say that Paul’s societies were hierarchical, I have no confidence – based on the meagre evidence available – that Paul’s societies mirrored the patriarchy of the Roman world prior to the late 40s CE. I think this incongruity was rooted in Paul’s gospel.

With this incongruity in one hand, I hold in the other the likelihood – to my mind anyway – that at Corinth a group of people, or maybe just one person, were studying Paul’s gospel and inferring that churches should be slave free. To be sure, no one in the early Church – with the single exception of Gregory of Nyssa – challenged the Roman imperial social order and its unqualified support of slavery. But some Christians, it seems, were challenging the compatibility of slavery and church. At 1 Corinthians 7.20-23, Paul shuts them down.

Building on my research across ancient Greek, Roman, and Jewish primary source material pertaining to slavery – with a special nod in this paper to Seneca – and at every turn dialoguing with the comparative work of Keith Bradley, David Brion Davis, Orlando Patterson, and Hugh Thomas, I explore how and to what degree Paul and his churches, as slave societies, extended power and support to slave owners to hold their slaves against their wills. I draw upon the entire corpus of authentic Pauline letters, with attention to 1 Corinthians, Philemon, and the disputed Colossian letter.

RELIGION AND SOCIETY

Religion and Spiritual Care Responses

9:30-10:00 Philip Bewley, University of Wollongong (philipjbewley@gmail.com.au)

“Henri Nouwen, Self-Availability and Same-Sex Attraction: A Pastoral Response”

Henri Nouwen (1932-1996), one of the most prolific Christian spiritual writers of the twentieth century, studied phenomenological psychology at Nijmegen University in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Nouwen’s exposure to this form of psychology made him suspicious of those who buried their sexuality deep within themselves, keeping it hidden and suppressed. This theme was explored by Nouwen in his 1971 essay, ‘The Self-availability of the Homosexual,’ where the concept of ‘self-availability’ is offered as a way for someone to relate meaningfully to one’s sexual orientation.

My argument is that this particular essay deployed concepts from French philosopher Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973) who designated disponibilité (generally translated as ‘availability’) with a special quality, a peculiar human virtue. For Marcel, our bodies are seen as the object of our initial disponibilité to both ourselves and others. He once wrote: “If I am my body, this is in so far as I am a being that feels.” In other words, I must be able to
experience my own body, its sensations and feelings, prior to being able to experience anything else. ‘My body,’ therefore, becomes my landmark upon the world, a living centre from which I take the measure of the things of this world, and familiarize myself with what is strange and other.

By the 1990s, Nouwen had developed an important pastoral ministry with those dying of HIV/AIDS-related illnesses, and as a consequence, was invited to be the keynote speaker at two US National Catholic HIV/AIDS Ministry Conferences. At the 1994 conference, speaking in somewhat Marcellian language, Nouwen admitted that in the face of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, he had to learn that the body was no mere metaphor but rather had to be lived ‘as a reality, as a real place of being.’ For Nouwen, this was ‘to discover what it really means to be a body, to be in a body, to be incarnate.’ Then, building upon these themes in his 1995 address, I believe Nouwen again explored the concept of disponibilité, this time by directly addressing the pastoral reality that for those suffering from the effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, death would be imminent. Therefore, this paper seeks to revisit Nouwen’s theories, and by so doing, to identify their renewed importance for LGBTIQ+ Christians today, and their importance for those religious communities which struggle to minister to them.

10:00-10:30  Zinia Pritchard, St. Stephen’s College (zinia@ualberta.ca)  “Differentiating the Dark Night from Depression within Palliative Care”

The palliative mandate to provide impeccable assessment of spiritual issues is challenged by the presentation of the Dark Night, a spiritual phenomenon that can easily be conflated with depression. A term coined by the Christian Spanish mystic John of the Cross, the Dark Night is a mystical or contemplative form of spirituality acknowledged within the psychiatric literature, notably in the research background for the development of the DSM-V. It has been examined within health care with varying levels of comprehension.

Differentiation of the Dark Night from depression is nothing new to the practice of spiritual direction nor psychiatric leaders within the field of spirituality. However, what has been missing from the literature is a differential offered from within the practice of palliative care. This presentation offers a palliative perspective on the differential between these two forms of suffering and is given from the vantage point of a Dark Night scholar who has practiced as a palliative practitioner in spiritual care. It will focus on the comparison between the Night and the symptoms of Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) as delineated in DSM-V.

The Night will be introduced through the use of images, with emphasis on St. John’s signs of the Dark Night of Senses, and will draw upon a palliative phenomenological study conducted by the presenter within a tertiary palliative care setting in Canada. DSM-V symptoms of depression will be reviewed with clinical perspectives offered from palliative and cancer studies, augmented by considerations offered through a psychiatrist consult. Discussion will center on the diagnostic challenges, etiology and prognosis of both Dark Night and depression and the similarities and differences in presenting symptomology.

Differential diagnosis between Dark Night and depression raises a number of questions, inclusive of the following: What is normal and what is pathology? What are the deciding factors? How therapeutically useful are behavioral descriptors of depression without
personal contexts? Is Depression spiritual? Is Dark Night a salutary form of depression? Participant discussion is welcomed around these and other implications.

To support engagement, the following hand-outs will be made available to participants: Dark Night and Depression: Similarities and Differences Table and Dark Night Self-Assessment Tool.

**STUDY OF ISLAM**

9:00-9:30 Abubakar Abdulkadir, University of Alberta (aabdulka@ualberta.ca)

“The Beginnings of Sufism in Mauritania: Muḥammad al-Yadālī (d. 1753) and the *Khātimat al-taṣawwuf*”

Nothing belies the hypothesis of the supposed ‘decline’ in Islamic intellectual production in the 17th-18th centuries as much as a look at Islamic West Africa—too often ignored due to lingering colonial and racial stereotypes. It was this period in particular period that witnessed the emergence of an efflorescence of scholarship and literary production in the region. Before this period, the literature on Sufism (*taṣawwuf*) studied and taught in Mauritania (and West Africa) was mostly of North African and Middle Eastern origins. However, in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, Mauritanian scholars began to author works on Sufism that would become classics in the region. One such work was the *Khātimat al-taṣawwuf* by Muḥammad al-Yadālī (d. 1753), one of the most prolific and influential scholars of his time and of Mauritania’s Islamic intellectual history.

The *Khātim* is a unique text in style and content. It attracted the attention of numerous scholars, resulting in several commentarial works in verse and prose. Due to its prominence, the text became, arguably, the most commented upon manual on Sufism in Mauritania and West Africa. It had a profound influence upon and was frequently cited in the Sufi works of three most influential scholars of the three most popular mystical traditions of West Africa: Sīdī Mukhtār al-Kuntī (d. 1811), Āḥmadū Bambā (d. 1923) and Ibrāhīm Niasse (d. 1975) of the Qādiriyya, Murīdiyya and Tijāniyya orders respectively. Yet, this work remains largely unstudied in European languages.

This article examines the intellectual and socio-religious currents that stimulated the authorship of the *Khātim*, the wide-ranging literary and intellectual networks in which its author was embedded, as well as its legacy and reception in West Africa and beyond. The *Khātim* and its author help illuminate the intellectual history of an oft-neglected region (West Africa) in an oft-neglected time (17th-18th C), demonstrating why this should no longer be the case.
The themes which monastic discipline assigned to friars for meditation were designed to turn them away from the world and its affairs. The thoughts which we are developing here originate from similar considerations.

This paper is ethnographically situated in the return of Arab Orthodox Christian monastic life in Lebanon in and following the 15-year civil war (1975-1990). It asks how the monastic form of life articulates a relationship to a fraught present, one in which the aftermath of past and current war (Syria) and current ecological/economic collapse make illegible any kind of future. Rather than past/present violence as a dominant suppressive force, one that is lived as repetitious memory or trauma, the grammar of Orthodox Christianity cites dull mawkishness (ḥiss)—a weary deadening of the heart (qalb)—as the mode of incapacity which the tradition inhabits. Any theodictic question, therefore, emerges not in response to an excessive evil but from a mundane tastelessness that puts at risk the capacity to live. This kind of incapacity cannot be understood through the grammar of radical evil—as that which is excessive and puncturing—precisely because weakness (ḍu’f) here is an inability to be punctured.

Orthodox monasticism does not problematize evil in terms of existence (as in Leibniz’ theodicy) and hence does not exceptionalize it as that which is in excess to being in the world. This point is then brought into conversation with the question of world, where the Orthodox concept of world (al-ʿālam) is exegeted through three modalities: creation, evil, and love. An argument against radical immanence—where reviving reparative despair is seen as only possible in the world (of the anthropocene, late capitalism etc.)—manifests. For the monastics, the capacity to inhabit despair for the world is only possible in an abandonment of the world. To posit that Orthodoxy is nothing but the “inheritance of the holy” (mirāth al-muqaddas) that is borne through “endless tears” (al-damu’a al-ʿabadiah), points to the imbrication of painful struggle and inheritance, of incapacity and theophany.
parallel perspectives of Griffin and Hauerwas and Vanier will be engaged to complexify a theological anthropology to muddy attributions of evil, and instead seek to understand and interpret why people commit acts that are considered evil, pushing against a theological anthropology that would label perpetrators as “evil.” Instead, a responsive pastoral theology of evil will be constructed with the help of Greider (1997), Hauerwas & Vanier (2008), and Swinton (2007).

11:00-11:30  Robert Armstrong, University of Calgary (armstrrj@ucalgary.ca)  
“Responsible Spending and Voting with Your Wallet”

I previously defended that in certain contexts, inaction certainly constitute a kind of everyday evil. As Hannah Arendt famously highlighted, evil is banal. Here I will defend the claim that the world today has a very high bar for us in terms of our responsibility to be informed agents, and the result is that we are engaged in a kind of evil when we choose cheap, fast, easy purchases over more responsible options. The way that we spend is not something to be taken lightly. We have responsibilities to be informed customers just as we must be informed voters. Private patronage of businesses with questionable practices is as problematic as public support of politically dangerous candidates. Ignorance cannot be an excuse for either, especially since expedience is almost always what we appeal to in order to rationalize our cheap and lazy buying habits. The moral weight on our spending decisions is heavier than ever today since we are all aware, to some degree, of the consequences of how we shop. The same way it is critically important for everyone to be an informed participant in political processes, we must all vote as carefully with our wallets as we do at the polls on election day.

11:30-12:00  Zoe Anthony, University of Toronto (zoe.anthony@utoronto.ca)  
“Kant, Nietzsche, and Arendt on the Innateness of Evil”

Immanuel Kant, in Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason, argued that the disposition to evil is “rooted” in human nature, and is, further, an innate disposition we must cultivate awareness of and resistance against in order to combat its influence in the world. By contrast, Friedrich Nietzsche, in On the Genealogy of Morality, argued against the innatism present in Kant’s thinking on the problem of evil, instead arguing that evil, as a concept, has a genealogy that points toward its predominant use as a weapon to demonize the powerful and elevate the powerless. I argue that while Nietzsche is right to redirect our attention away from the metaphysics of evil, to the social conditions that produce the concept, his theory of evil is not fine-grained enough to account for acts of evil that jeopardize human life. While Nietzsche’s revolutionary work opens the possibility of challenging social conditioning that tends to identify as “evil” that which is marginal, work needs to be done to ground a theory of evil that takes seriously the possibility of evildoing in the world. To this end, Hannah Arendt’s distinction between radical and banal evil will be used to clarify the stakes of the debate between Kant and Nietzsche’s theories of evil.
WOMEN AND RELIGION

11:00-11:30  Doris Kieser, University of Alberta (dkieser@ualberta.ca)  
"Mary's Body, Mary's Blood"

Mary of Nazareth is likely the most widely known female figure in Christian history. In the Catholic tradition, she has taken on many roles over the years: mother, virgin, theotokos, Church, Mother of the Church, and general model of womanhood. Yet historical discussions of these roles do not necessarily aim to explore her embodied nature. In this paper, I will explore Mary’s body in relation to blood in the Jewish and Christian traditions, and the ambivalent reception of Jewish menstrual laws in the early Christian Church. My intention is to situate Mary’s flow of blood in menstruation and parturition as sacramental, in consideration of the sacramental and sanctifying nature of the blood of Jesus. Given Mary’s place in Catholic consciousness, identifying and exploring these aspects of her person can potentially connect her more concretely to actual females.

My concern here is to reframe menstrual blood and lochia as not defiling, dirty, unclean, or disgusting but as a graced sign of the goodness of menstrual bodies. I aim to envision embodied female menstrual and reproductive realities within the sacramental lives of the Christian community. I also hope to accentuate the power of Mary’s (and therefore women’s) menstrual blood and after-birth to connect with the blood of redemption in positive and fruitful ways. Such reframing could shift attention away from an objectified and imposed perception of menstrual sexuality and towards the subjective and embodied realities of menstruants (including pre- and post-menstruants). By attending to embodied experiences of menstrual blood, a Christian theology of sexuality opens itself to a complex and diverse perception both of females and of Mary.

11:30-12:00  Taylor Tate, University of Connecticut (taylor.tate@uconn.edu)  
"Spiritual Rituals That Empower the Spirit"

In each of us is what Gloria Anzaldúa calls “the inner self” or the “divine within” (Anzaldúa, 72). Inside each of us is a self that is capable of expanding our facultad, a capacity that allows us to see deeper realities, to sense reality without conscious reasoning. Following Christian mystics like Simone Weil, I will call the inner self or the divine within us, the spirit. Our spirit is often crushed by social structures that make it is acceptable, even natural to feel blocked, immobilized, like we can’t move forward or backwards, like we can’t fully exercise our faculties or engage with the world in the way we would want. Estranged from the spirit, we operate without a love ethic, hope, a desire to seek liberation, and we become susceptible to social norms, laws, and lukewarm gods that batter and bruise us. But the forces that work to crush the spirit are not so great that they can stop all people from growing their spirit. We can engage in spiritual rituals that empower the spirit.
SATURDAY AFTERNOON, MAY 22, 2021

THIRD SESSION (2:00–5:30 PM)

ARTS AND RELIGION
Performance and Image, Songs for Survival

2:30-3:00  Robin Willey, Concordia University of Edmonton (robin.wiley@concordia.ab.ca) and Carolyn Jervis, MacEwan University (jervisc@macewan.ca)
“‘Artists are Weird!’: Investigating the Inclusion and Exclusion of Artists in Christian Communities”

In his analysis of the Christian socialist movement in England, political economist Ernest Belfort Bax (1854-1926) suggested that over the long term “either their Christianity ousts their Socialism, or their Socialism ousts their Christianity,” suggesting that the two ideologies where incompatible with each other. Our research suggests that art (for visual artists in particular) and Christianity work in a similar fashion—that over time either one’s Christianity ousts their art or one’s art ousts their Christianity. Thus, this paper looks into the complex and often challenging coexistence between artists and their churches. We will explore some of the pressures artist face to “fit in” to church environments, the struggles of church leadership to control the “message” embedded in artworks, and the threat that artists pose to power structures in churches that have been traditionally derived through the interpretation of text.

This work is part of a multi-sited ethnography that investigates the burgeoning relationship between visual art and religious innovation in Canadian Christian communities, and makes use of almost two years of ethnographic observation and interviews in Alberta, Southern Ontario, and Grand Rapids, MI. This “mode of ethnographic research” moves beyond traditional single site ethnographies in order to capture the complexities of the “postmodern” world. As such, a multi-sited framework enables us to move across the religious field in order to follow particular theo-political articulations. In this case, it allows us to extend the project into art galleries and events that intersect with the Christian world and into churches that are strong supporters of the arts.

3:30-4:00  Dana Tanner-Kennedy, Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Alberta (dana.tanner.kennedy@gmail.com)
“‘I Carry Your Coffin on My Back’: M. Lamar’s Funeral Doom Spiritual and Black Theology on the Postsecular Stage”

In *Funeral Doom Spiritual*, a spectacular concert performance of his eponymously titled song cycle, M. Lamar meditates on the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and how he, as black man, carries the weight of that intergenerational trauma. Bringing Black Theology, specifically James H. Cone’s *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, together with his personal aesthetic, which he calls “Negrogothic,” Lamar traces an apocalyptic trajectory, from the fiery destruction of an unjust
world to the resurrection of the dead on some future Judgment Day. Lamar presented *Funeral Doom Spiritual* at Brooklyn’s National Sawdust in January of 2017 as an intermedial concert performance.

Wedding several genres of music, most notably the “funeral doom” and “spirituals” of the title, percussive strings and lugubrious minor chords dissolved into the tintinnabulation of electronic bells and watery pulses, all anchoring Lamar’s stratospheric voice, part diva, part banshee. Backed by a black-hooded and cloaked quintet, Lamar’s tremulous countertenor and piano appeared to be accompanied by a string section of executioners. The performance, with the eerie light of its projections, felt submerged under the watery murk of the Middle Passage where full fathom five his fathers lie. His singing scaled wild ranges—from keening woman to chthonic growls—as he mourned the beloved dead of his ancestors.

This paper will read Lamar’s piece along with notions of the domestic apocalypse on the contemporary American stage, which I have written about elsewhere. I will argue for *Funeral Doom Spiritual* as a postsecular work—one in which religious structures are evoked but are ultimately destabilized. While Lamar explicitly connects himself to Cone’s seminal text, he disrupts Cone’s call to witness to the resurrection. When the dead rise in *Funeral Doom Spiritual*, they are not resurrected or redeemed bodies but the “living dead.” Lamar undoes Revelation’s teleology of redemption and instead offers a world mired in the cyclical pain of oppression.

When spirituals arrive in the songs cycle, they appear as cultural fragments rather than religious anchors. In “We Want To Cross Over,” Lamar gives the voices of the dead the refrain “Hush. Hush. Somebody’s callin’ my name.” In the original hymn, the speaker identifies the voice as Jesus calling him towards a heavenly home upon his death. “I’m so glad, got me religion on time,” the speaker cries and celebrates his deep knowing that “trouble don’t last always.” In Lamar’s version the promise of redemption is reduced to a song fragment, which he then describes as “what they say when they rise/what the dead gotta say.” Instead of the hymn itself asserting the speaker’s belief in the promise of eternal life, Lamar sings a spiritual without direct access to God. Here God is something someone else calls upon in distress. Using these and other strategies, M. Lamar creates a postsecular piece that performs religious work on a secular stage.

**4:00-4:30**  
Octavio Carrasco, Bellevue College (l.encarnacio@gmail.com)  
“Singing Songs for Survival: Freedom Songs in the Civil Rights Movement”

This paper will address the question of what role songs play in the process of helping human beings survive and thrive in dangerous and oppressive settings. By focusing on the Music of the Civil Rights Movement and specifically the role of song during the Freedom Rides, I will explore the sustaining of power of music for people confronting a violently repressive racial system. A key example is when the Freedom Riders were jailed in Mississippi, they sang songs to keep their spirits up. The guards told them to stop, and threatened to take their mattresses away if they continued singing. They decided to give up their mattresses in order to “keep their souls,” and the people there “sang as they had never sung before.” I contend that while music does not tear down walls or stop brutality, it can help sustain people as they struggle for justice. Moreover, the participatory, shared activity of singing as a group “changes the
condition” of the participants, not by saving their souls or protecting them, but enabling them to continue in the struggle.

**JOINT SESSION: GENDER, RELIGION, SEXUALITY, AND POWER & WOMEN AND RELIGION**

2:30-3:00  Jessica Atamanenko, University of Alberta (atamanen@ualberta.ca)  
“Look, Don’t Touch: Bathsheba and the Male Gaze in 2 Samuel 11”

In this paper, I will explore Bathsheba through Laura Mulvey’s concept of the Male Gaze and also meditate on 2 Sam 11 through the presuppositions maintained by modern rape culture. I aim to disassemble the patriarchal gazes cast upon Bathsheba on the part of David, the narrator, and the biblical scholar. The principle behind the Gaze is that a woman’s only value is her perceived sexual availability. As objectification in its purest form, the Gaze is a form of violence perpetrated against Bathsheba on two levels: first, within the text through her rape by David, and secondly, through violation with the text, as the very narration is weaponized against her.

The text presents a male power fantasy, and the narrator immerses the reader in this fantasy through identification with David’s scopophilic gaze. The narrator denies Bathsheba a voice of her own, and makes her only identifying feature her beauty in David’s eyes, and thus in our own. Her beauty and implied nudity suggests sexual availability, implicitly convincing the reader that a sexual relationship is valid. Once David is punished for his actions—not his gaze—we are invited to ironically disapprove of David’s gaze despite having participated in and benefited from it. Further, we are also able to vicariously enjoy Bathsheba’s violation and blame her for it simultaneously. Her violation is then perpetrated by biblical scholars who make her responsible for her own rape, and this reading is what I aim to problematize above all.

3:00-3:30  Alaine Thomson Buchanan, Independent Scholar (alainebuchanan@gmail.com)  
“The Levite and the Concubine: An Unspeakable Tale of Horror and the Necessity of Advocacy”

Judges 19-20 tells a horrific tale in which a Levite, his servant, his concubine, and an Ephraimite homeowner and his daughter find themselves in a precarious situation. The concubine’s father also plays a pivotal role at the beginning of this story. The significance of honor and shame in Ancient Near Eastern hospitality takes center stage as an Ephraimite homeowner in Gibeah tries to protect his guest, a Levite finds himself in a situation of “shame or be shamed,” and a woman, a concubine, is forced into an evening of rape and abuse, only to be found motionless and unable to speak the next day. The Levite puts her on his donkey, arrives home, cuts her body into twelve pieces, sending them to the various tribes of Israel, which incites a civil war Benjamin does not participate in this war because Gibeah, the place where the assault and rape occurred, is part of its territory.

Although parallels to the Sodom and Gomorrah story in Genesis 19 can be seen, there is no deliverance by messengers from God, and there are no names ... only designated
descriptions in the Judges account, which suggests that this narrative may be a symbol of what it looked like in the time of the Judges when “everyone did what was right in his/their own eyes” (Judges 17:6 and 21:25).

Because of this ambiguity, the purpose of this paper is to explore the roles of the Levite, his servant, his concubine, her father, and the Ephraimite homeowner in Gibeah in hopes that we can address the times when we too have served in the role of the Levite, his servant, his concubine, her father, or the Ephraimite homeowner in Gibeah and create awareness so that we can use wisdom to become healers, reconcilers and advocates.

4:00-4:30 Hannah Irish, Pacifica Graduate Institute (hannah.irish@my.pacifica.edu)
“Jesus, Child of the Goddess”

In Jung’s “Answer to Job,” the “answer” lies in the incarnation: “Mankind is not, as before, to be destroyed, but to be saved. [. . .] no new human beings are to be created, but only one, the God-man” (35). However, unlike the first Adam, this Second Adam will be born of a human woman. So, Jung states, “this time priority falls to the Second Eve” (35). Unlike Jung, however, I will not consider the Marian traditions within Roman Catholicism. Jung states that “God desires to regenerate himself in the mystery of the heavenly nuptials [. . .] and to become man” (35). I disagree. If, as the Bible states, the Holy Spirit impregnates Mary, then Jesus is conceived by the feminine person of the Trinity in a human woman, without any masculine participation whatsoever, human or divine.

In examining this claim, I analyze Biblical texts as literature, comparing ideas from both Judaism and Christianity. The primary point is that the Holy Spirit is the feminine member of the Trinity, thus an element of the Divine Feminine within the Christian tradition. This is evident in the relationship of the Holy Spirit to elements in the Hebrew Scriptures, namely that the Holy Spirit is likely the “ruah” that hovered over the waters at the beginning of creation, and the relationship between the Jewish traditions of Sophia, Divine Wisdom, and Shekinah, Divine Glory, and the Holy Spirit as being the giver of both the “Gifts of the Spirit” and the “Fruits of the Spirit” in the New Testament.

Due to Christianity’s patriarchal background, the Holy Spirit’s impregnation of Mary is often assumed to be at the direction and by the power of the all-powerful “God the Father” person of the trinity (this is clearly Jung’s position). However, the gospel account in Matthew nowhere implies a male Spirit. The language of the Old Testament Hebrew, which establishes the person of the Divine Spirit, as well as the Majestic Plural name of the Divine, imply that the Divine Spirit is a feminine entity. The personification of that Spirit as both Shekinah and Sophia shows clearly that this Divine person is, contains, or at least represents an element of the Divine Feminine. The evidence speaks strongly that this Divine Feminine Spirit of the Old Testament is the same as the Spirit in the New Testament who bestows Her “Gifts” and “Fruits” on humanity, and who impregnates Mary with the Divine Son.
Santa Muerte is a female folk saint who personifies death. Saint Death veneration is the fastest growing new religious movement in the Americas, boasting 10-12 million followers most of whom reside in Mexico, North America. She is depicted as a grim reaper. Her origins are hybrid. In her skeletal hand she wields a scythe attesting to her Catholic heritage. An owl sits at her bony toes connoting wisdom, as in Western folklore, but also in line with her Indigenous origins, death. She is petitioned for health, wealth, love and to hex one’s enemies. She is known by devotees as fierce, vengeful, yet also a caring mother. The religion is portrayed as barbaric, satanic and devotees as violent Mexican men: drug-dealers and murderers. The media refers to Santa Muerte as a ‘narco-saint’.

The ‘imagined religion’ of Santa Muerte has little to do with actual practice. Most devotees are female, outnumbering male devotees 2 to 1. They pray to the saint for their well-being and protection, and that of their children, from illness, violence and death. The view that violent males follow this religion, men that epitomize the ‘Savage Other’, is androcentric and racist. It silences Santa Muerte supplication by women and the ways in which women create spiritual spaces to empower themselves in the face of insecurity. As I will demonstrate through reference to my fieldwork on female followers, for women, Santa Muerte is a means of asserting agency and self-authoring feminine epistemologies. Santa Muerte’s multifaceted persona reflects the many sides, needs and experiences of Mexican women of all ages.

An examination of how the folk saint is conceived of, and reached out to in imaginary dialogues, reveals the social, economic, political difficulties women face, and how in response they reconstruct feminine spirituality in line with shifting notions of self, gender and of the world. In spaces of violence, by casting death as a female saint, women re-imagine the relationship between gendered identity, power, life and death.

HEBREW BIBLE

The sister-wife episodes in Genesis (Gen 12:10-20; 20; 26:1-13) are well-documented in biblical scholarship; there, the patriarch deceives the foreign ruler by lying about his wife being his sister. This paper investigates the tenability of the sister-wife type-scene present in the Jacob cycle (Gen 25–35). While it has been occasionally postulated that an inverted example of the sister-wife motif is present with Jacob and Laban, this is only one motif of the overall sister-wife type-scene. Additional elements in the type-scene present in the Jacob cycle, almost totally neglected in scholarship, include (1) a divine confrontation, (2) an explanation demanded from the ruler, (3) the patriarch’s depart from the local chieftain with great material resources, along with the return of his wife/wives.
Moreover, there are distinct features which bracket the hypothesized Jacob’s sister-wife story, serving as distinct parameters enclosing the type-scene; the anterior is the wife-at-the-well type-scene and the posterior is the covenant making between the patriarch and the regional potentate. Building upon the seminal work of Culley and Alter on the biblical type-scene, Jacob’s sister-wife story, though not uniform to the other instances, is a tenable occurrence where the storyline formula has been “recast and redeployed” with “inventive freshness” (Alter, *Biblical Narrative*, 62).

4:30-5:00 Kevin Burrell, Burman University (kevinburrell@burmanu.ca)
“A Pyrrhic Victory: Reconciling Divergent Biblical Views of Hezekiah and the Assyrians in 701 B.C.E."

The historiography of 2 Kings 18-19 and 2 Chronicles 32 present Hezekiah as a paradigmatic righteous king who obeys the law of his God without compromise. In particular, Hezekiah is depicted as demonstrating exemplary faith: “he trusted in the Lord God of Israel,” so that “there was none like him among all the kings of Judah which came after him, nor any among those who were before him” (2 King 18:5). Of significance, Hezekiah’s rebellion against Assyria is celebrated as a “righteous” act, which yet again demonstrates his faithful trust in his God. Like the narrative of Kings, the Chronicler is careful to emphasize that Hezekiah is trusting in the Lord his God, which distinguishes him from the Assyrians who are trusting in the “arm of flesh” (2 Chron 32:8).

Yet, a radically different portrait is presented by the Book of Isaiah regarding the rebellion against Assyria in 701 B.C. Isaiah’s disposition towards the rebellion problematizes the way Hezekiah is portrayed in Kings-Chronicles. Isaiah strongly condemns Judah’s ill-conceived rebellion against Assyria, and especially Judah’s reliance on Cushite-Egypt for military backing in the rebellion. Isaiah 18 depicts Judean messengers en route to Cush, the “land of whirring wings,” to forge a military alliance with the powerful Cushite state. He envisions the total failure of the enterprise: nothing but disaster awaits this ill-conceived decision. For Isaiah, Assyria is Yahweh’s instrument of punishment against Israel, Judah, and the surrounding nations, which renders fugacious any hope of a rebellion succeeding. Without mentioning Hezekiah directly, Isaiah condemns Judah for relying on the imperialistic regime of Cush in its bid to be free from Assyrian domination. Hezekiah, it appears, is depending on an “arm of flesh,” after all.

Despite Hezekiah’s failure of faith, however, Yahweh intervenes to save the day. According to both Isaiah and Kings-Chronicles, the Assyrian army suffers a devastating loss of 185,000 of its soldiers in a single night at the hand of “the angel of the Lord.” But though this victory is celebrated in these narratives, both the Hebrew Bible and the Annals of Sennacherib indicate that Judah suffers devastating destruction at the hands of the Assyrian army in the course of the military campaign—and Jerusalem itself barely manages to avert destruction. In the final analysis, Hezekiah’s pyrrhic victory taints his laudatory depiction in King-Chronicles and foregrounds differing ideological perspectives in biblical historiography.
Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries to date, the mainstream LDS Church has followed a trajectory of relative cultural normalization in which Church practices and peoples have shifted from a position of extreme cultural exteriority into a cultural space that is, if not necessarily mainstream, still relatively recognizable and accessible to most contemporary Americans. One area in which it is possible to trace this trajectory of cultural normalization more precisely is that of charismatic practice, and specifically, the practice of glossolalia. It is clear that glossolalia was enthusiastically adopted by the early Mormon converts, and that following its adoption, the practice of speaking in tongues and interpreting tongues gradually underwent a slow decline in terms of its charismatic dimension.

Institutionally, the practice was redefined in terms of xenoglossia (in which the Church's evangelizing efforts became the arena for sanctioned outpourings of the Spirit, manifest through the preacher's ability to suddenly understand a foreign language previously inaccessible to them), though the practice was still identified as the scriptural gift of tongues, and it is in this arena that the present-day understanding of the gift of tongues occurs within the mainstream LDS religion. There were, however, several groups whose break from the LDS Church early on occurred prior to this shift, and as such, whose development has followed a distinctive path in which the practice and development of charismatic experiences generally, and the practice of glossolalia in particular, increased rather than diminished. One such group is that of the Church of Jesus Christ, commonly known as the Bickertonites after their founder, William Bickerton.

This paper will trace the development, break, and fragmentation of glossolalia within both Mormon and Bickertonite contexts in order to produce a clearer comparative understanding of the charismatic trajectory within these Mormon churches. The larger goal in doing so is to examine the ways in which this relationship between the Spirit and humankind is theologically configured in Mormon practices, even as the pragmatic deployment of charismatic practices varies widely between the differing branches. In doing so, this paper seeks to provide an historical and theological entry point for those interested in engaging with Mormon Studies from a comparative context, and suggest the potential for future research and engagement with the charismatic in a variety of interfaith contexts.

When Mormon pioneers arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in 1847, the religious group desired to separate themselves from the United States physically, politically, and architecturally. By the turn of the century, four pioneer temples had been completed in Utah using architectural designs to connote sacred space, and their Gothic Revival design was a stark contrast to the classically inspired temples built previously at Kirtland and Nauvoo. When a temple was built
in Cardston, Alberta (1913-1923), it was a radical departure from its Gothic predecessors in Utah. The new temple symbolized Utah’s recent interest in integrating into American society shortly after years of political turmoil and finally receiving admission to the Union as a state in 1896, and it also provided the largely expatriate community in Southern Alberta the permission to fully establish a permanent residence in Canada following an era of new converts moving to Utah. No longer would the Canadian Saints need to travel to Utah for religious rites and rituals.

While the Cardston temple, like the pioneer temples, still relied heavily upon the same interior division of space to symbolise the post-mortem return to live with God—a pattern that would be continued through the building of the Los Angeles temple—the exterior presented a new ideology for temple construction. Rather than simply following established precedent, where the church leader was ultimately responsible for creating the design, the Cardston temple design had been opened to an architectural competition. The selected proposal, drafted by architects Harold Burton and Hyrum Pope, was a modern Prairie-school style building. This paper provides a detailed analysis of the Cardston temple, including elements of comparison to Frank Lloyd Wright’s Unity Temple, and discusses how the interior space of the early temples, from St. George to Los Angeles, created a sense of sacredness.

4:00-4:30 Thomas W Murphy, Edmonds College (tmurphy@email.edcc.edu)
“An Indian Princess and a Mormon Sacagawea: Decolonizing Memories of our Grandmothers”

Remembering ancestors is a political act. The way in which Mormons remember Indigenous women who married white men is especially wrought with questions of power. Mormon expectations of an Indigenous progression toward whiteness found a counterpart in a corresponding colonial desire to become autochthonous. Intermarriage brought together the families of the colonized and the colonizers as each sought to navigate a world of race, gender, and power in Mormon borderlands. Caught up in this social drama, the authors’ Native grandmothers, Susannah Ferguson and Peninah Schropshire Cotton, struggled as they moved between matrilineal and patriarchal worlds. Remembered by descendants as an “Indian princess” and a “Mormon Sacagawea,” these Mohawk and Cherokee women were colonized not just in life but in memory. Circumscribed memories of our grandmothers have privileged the authority of white men and undermined our understanding of the world in which they actually lived. Our hope is that by sharing and deconstructing some of the stories coming from the past seven generations of our families, we might begin the process of decolonizing the memories of our grandmothers. Co-authored with Kerrie Sumner Murphy and Jessyca Brigette Murphy.

4:30-5:00 Aidan Oswald, University of Alberta (aoswald@ualberta.ca)
“Imagining Sally: Racialized Women in Early Mormonism”

Within the Mormon archive there is an Indigenous woman, Sally, whose subject spreads light on the narratival workings of early Mormon race and gender configurations. In my initial search for Sally’s origins—her real name, her Indigenous upbringing, her induction into
servitude in the house of Brigham Young—I amassed several bibliographic texts written a decade or so after her death in Corn Creek, Utah that speak of her kidnapping and enslavement, salvation, feminization, and bloody end (all of course historically dubious). These bibliographies (better classified as religio-pulp) do not simply function as histrionic entertainment. More so, they seem to answer a common anxiety: What do we make of an Indigenous woman living among us—and to a small degree as us? Sally’s alterity disrupts normative identity, system, and order and comes to repeatedly haunt the consciousness of the Mormon recorders. As a result, she triggers an impetus for a fictionalization meant to explain and offset the instability created by her marginal positionality.

Thus, while these reception (hi)stories most likely have nothing to do with the true events of Sally’s life, they unwittingly reveal the configurations of power meant to ‘whiten’ Sally and vilify her indigeneity. Specifically, the Mormon idealization of Sally’s femininity—that she act how a woman ought to in a severe patriarchal theocracy—along with the Mormon perception of her race—that she comes from Jewish or “Lamanite” roots and is thus part of a chosen, not savage or religionless people—is a position that is academically unrealized and expands the historical understanding of the indigeneities and femininities of the American West. Furthermore, Sally’s story illuminates geographic regions (urban Utah) and religious traditions (Mormonism) not often discussed in Indigenous Women’s history. In sum, an analysis of those bibliographic narratives about Sally exposes the dominant configuration of power that forged them.

NEW TESTAMENT AND THE WORLD OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY
New Testament Writings and Their Reception

2:00-2:30 Ralph Korner, Taylor Seminary (ralph.korner@taylor-edu.ca)
“Revelation’s Reiterative Structure: How It Reinforces Eschatological Imminence”

In this presentation, I build upon my previous work by demonstrating how Revelation’s structural organization implicitly reinforces Jesus’s claim of imminence relative to the parousia (1:3). My overall argument is that the first five Seals (6:1-11; a.k.a., “the last days”; cf. Acts 2:16-18) reflect recurring events throughout human history, with only the 6th Seal (6:12-17) reflecting the eschatological “timeframe” of the “Last Day” (6:17, “great day of their wrath”; cf. Acts 2:19-21). The rest of Revelation’s visionary content (7:1—22:20), then, simply re-visits/reiterates the same eschatological “timeframe” of the 6th Seal. Through this structural strategy John implicitly communicates to his 1st century addressees that: (1) the events of the first five Seals have already unfolded, and, thus, (2) there are now no longer any prerequisite historical events yet to be fulfilled prior to the start of the eschaton (the 6th Seal)—the parousia is imminent.

My claim that 7:1—22:20 reiterates the eschatological 6th Seal builds out from the insight of some (e.g., Loenertz, Thomas) that the 7 Trumpets and 7 Bowls (8:6—16:21) telescope linearly, yet progressively, out of the “empty” 7th Seal (8:1). I differ on one key point, however. I do not accord with their claim that the “empty” 7th Seal occurs after the 6th Seal. Rather, I suggest that the 7th Seal is a synonymous “umbrella term” for the 6th Seal. As
an “umbrella term,” the 7th Seal encompasses the seven telescopic Trumpets and Bowls, of which the seventh element in each includes events that reiterate 6th Seal descriptors (e.g., earthquake [11:19; 16:18]; mountains and islands removed [16:20]). I call this interpretive approach “telescopic reiteration.” In other words, “telescopic reiteration” re-describes expansively, and reiterates from different perspectives, the same eschatological “timeframe” as that of the 6th Seal (6:12-17).

John creates his telescopically reiterative structure by using three visionary literary devices that occur throughout Hebrew and Jewish visionary texts (prophetic and apocalyptic). These three literary devices are: (1) the space/time referent (1:9-11) and (2) the two clauses “kai eidon/and I saw” and “meta tauta eidon/after these things I saw” (and their variations). Altogether, these literary devices demarcate six major vision blocks (“after these things I saw” occurrences) and 40 minor visionary segments (“and I saw” occurrences). John adds a distinctive literary twist, however. Unlike other visionary texts, the resultant structure of his vision episode (1:9—22:20) allows one to re-organize the six major vision blocks into a reiterative format.

John also is distinctive in his creation of a chiastic micro-structure for a number of his vision blocks through his placement of “and I saw” clauses. The centrally located “and I saw” clause(s) form a chiastic centrepoint/“peak” within four vision blocks (4:1—22:20). If one “skim reads” each chiastic “peak” in order, then this essential message unfolds: the Lamb, who is the only one worthy of opening the seven-sealed scroll (6:1a, vision block 2), is thus worthy of unleashing cataclysmic judgment upon (1) the Sea and Land Beasts (13:1-10; 13:11-18; vision block 4), (2) Babylon (16:12-21; 17:1-5; vision block 5), and (3) Satan (20:1-3; 20:4-10; vision block 6) at his parousia as the Lion of Judah.

2:30-3:00 Lorne Zelyck, St. Joseph’s College, University of Alberta (zelyck@ualberta.ca)
“The Sisters and Brothers of Jesus (Mark 6:3)”

A tangential, yet perpetual, theological problem associated with the birth of Jesus from the Virgin Mary, is that Mark and Matthew indicate that Jesus had sisters and brothers (Mark 6:3; Matt 13:55-56). Three positions, associated with historical figures, have attempted to delineate the relationship between Jesus and his sisters and brothers: (1) Helvidius naturally assumes that they were Jesus’ half-siblings—Mary and Joseph procreated after the virgin birth; (2) Epiphanius contends that they were Jesus’ step-siblings—Joseph had children from a previous marriage; (3) and Jerome infamously argues that they were Jesus’ cousins, in order to uphold the perpetual virginity of Mary, as well as Joseph. Each of these positions are also maintained within current branches of Christianity: Protestant, (Eastern) Orthodox, and (Western) Catholic.

This paper will evaluate the Scriptural evidence about the sisters and brothers of Jesus, but focus primarily on the reception history of Mark 6:3 and its interpretation in early Christian literature. Along with a few allusions by early church fathers, two infancy gospels from the second or third centuries CE – The Infancy Gospel of Thomas and The Protoevangelium of James – clearly articulate the Epiphanian position. These infancy gospels are early expressions of the beliefs of some Christians (perhaps many based on the manuscript evidence), and their memory of Jesus’ relationship to his siblings must be
accounted for in historical reconstructions, despite the paradox between their non-canonical status and inclusion in liturgical practices.

The Helvidian position is virtually unknown until Jerome attacks it in the late fourth century CE. Particular attention will be focused on Jerome’s argumentation for his novel proposal, including: the denigration of certain points made by early Christian authors that were later deemed heretical and early Christian texts that became apocryphal, although he incorporates some of their conclusions; the harmonization of multiply named individuals in the canonical gospels (Mary, James, Joses/Joseph, etc.); and the biblical examples used to argue that the semantic range of ἀδελφός includes those related by nature, race, kin, and love, with the glaring omission of any serious attempt to incorporate the semantic range of ἀδελφή into his argumentation.

In conclusion, this paper will elucidate the reception history of Mark 6:3, weigh the historical plausibility of the three positions on the relationship between Jesus and his sisters and brothers, and offer a critique of Jerome’s presuppositions, argumentation, and conclusions.

3:00-3:30  Samuel Grottenberg, Independent Scholar (samgrottenberg@me.com)
“Investigating a Possible Instance of Deparabolization in James 4:1–10”

It has been widely recognized that the Epistle of James contains references to the teachings of Jesus, although debate persists about the nature and frequency of these references. Using the methodology that I tested in my master’s thesis for analyzing instances of appropriation through “deparabolization” and creative re-expression in James 1–2, this paper will expand upon my findings by evaluating the potential instance(s) of appropriation of the Jesus tradition present in James 4:1–10.

My methodology may be summarized as follows: (1) exegetical analysis of the relevant verses in James’s flow of argumentation; (2) examination of the form, structure, (received) literary context, and probable didactic intent of the parable(s) in question; (3) analysis of any theological, thematic, and/or verbal connections between James’s discourse and the parable(s), including the use/non-use of the Two Ways motif; and (4) the proposing of a preliminary conclusion regarding whether or not James appropriated the parable through deparabolization and creative re-expression (along with an identification of the form of the latter, if present).

The primary resonance that warrants this study is the aphorism contained in Jas 4:10. This verse has obvious verbal linkages to various Synoptic passages, which are noted in the NA28 and UBSS cross-references. These passages include the Parable of the Wedding Feast (Luke 14:4–11) and the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 18:9–14). I contend that Jas 4:1–10 contains a possible instance of appropriation through deparabolization. I intend to argue that the author of James refers not only to the aphorism contained in Luke 14:11/18:14b, but deparabolizes and then re-expresses the core idea(s) of these parables more broadly within the context of his epistle in didactic form. This study supports the broader argument that the author of James made use of material from the Jesus tradition in ways that go beyond mere literary dependence, verbal allusion, or genre-similar
appropriation (i.e., didactic materials only). It also strengthens the case for the author’s specific knowledge of and use of the parabolic teachings of Jesus.

4:00-4:30  Fred Tappenden, St. Stephen’s College, at the University of Alberta
(frederick.tappenden@ualberta.ca)
“Sowing Interpretive Uncertainty: The Cognitive and Narrative Poetics of the Markan Parable of the Plantings”

This paper employs both cognitive linguistic and narrative analyses to examine the poetics of how the Markan Parable of the Plantings (Mark 4.1–20) constructs for its hearers a web of layered and interconnected meanings, the chief outcome of which is to sabotage interpretive certainty and to foster ongoing puzzling. The analysis focuses not only on the parable itself (Mark 4.1–9) and its inscribed interpretation in the Gospel (Mark 4.13–20), but also on the plurality of meanings that emerge when the parable is read within both the Markan narrative world and the socio-religious world of the implied Markan reader. My departure point is Mark 4, where Jesus not only speaks the parable but also explains it within the restricted, private confines of being “alone [with] those who were around him, along with the twelve” (4.10).

This narrative reference in 4.10 serves to draw the hearers/readers into the inner circle of Jesus’s teachings, leaving the hearer with the impression that they too are privy to the meaning of Jesus’s short stories. Yet, at this moment in which the Markan narrative promises to promote “understanding” among the gospel’s characters and hearers, the parable actually functions to undermine interpretive confidence. That is to say, Markan injunctions such as “Listen!” and “Hear!” end up sowing seeds of interpretive doubt, which in turn construct cognitive processes of questioning and puzzling in the minds of the hearers/readers of the narrative. To these ends, the Parable of the Plantings participates in a recurring set of themes/motifs that echo throughout the Markan narrative.

RELIGION AND SOCIETY

Religion, Identity, and Contemporary Society

2:00-2:30  Jenna Ferrey, Independent Scholar (jennaferrey@gmail.com)
“The Sacred and the Secular in the Golden Age of Television”

What it means to be secular is still contentious, particularly outside of the academy where the secularization thesis continues to hold a strong place in the social imaginary. Within the academy the secularization theory is largely rejected, with Peter Berger rejecting his own assumptions about secularism in The Desecularization of the World (1999). The presumption that human progress into rational and scientific thinking would demystify the world, supplanting religion with pure a-religious, a-mystical, and un-enchanted way of thinking, is challenged by scholars such as Charles Taylor and Bradley B. Onishi. Taylor argues that secularism is better understood as a state in which no particular position of belief or unbelief is privileged. Onishi argues that a less binary understanding must be adapted through the
philosophy of religion. In 2020, with an increasing sense of polarization in many Western liberal democracies, the role of religion is a major flashpoint for conflict and mistrust. Art and entertainment offer unique and accessible means to explore the questions that continue to mystify and to make room for the religious other in the context of contemporary secularism. This paper will explore the television shows Ramy and Fleabag for their engagement with the religious, the secular, and the questions that continue to mystify.

THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

2:00-2:30 Norman Metzler, Concordia University Portland (npjmetzler@gmail.com)
“How Shall We Be Judged?”

While the basic Christian message is that we are saved solely on the basis of God’s grace as revealed in Christ, the portrayal of the sovereign God as Judge often communicates a sense of God’s execution of divine justice that will include some people in his heavenly Kingdom, but will exclude others, banishing them to eternal damnation. However, if the actual Judge will be Christ, the one with nail holes in his hands and feet giving evidence of his having died for every individual he judges, then one would expect the Final Judgment scenario to communicate an overriding sense of God’s gracious, self-sacrificing love toward every person he judges. This presentation will make the case for a radical inclusivity at the Final Judgment, reflecting the radical graciousness of a God whose grace supersedes any perception we may have of his sovereign justice.

This presentation will include dealing with some biblical references pertinent to the Final Judgment that appear to reflect an element of human accountability to God for our sin and how we have lived our lives, and may even allow for an individual’s final rejection of the gift—but these elements will be considered within the context of the overarching biblical portrayal of a divine Judge whose amazing grace far outshines his perceived justice.

2:30-3:00 Samuel Wager, St. Stephen’s College (swagar@ualberta.ca)
“Ecstasy, Grace, and Polytheism in Wicca”

Grace is typically thought of as a purely Christian concept, the expression of God’s unsolicited love. Grace is expressed in the world in free and unforced action prompted by connection with the divine. The new religious movement of Wicca is polytheist, experiential, and emphasizes the deliberate cultivation of ecstatic practices. In Wicca cultivation of ecstatic mystical communion with the goddesses and gods aiming to open the channels for grace is part of clergy training. To dedicate oneself to a god and be open to the prompting of grace does not automatically result in connection. God/desses are interested in helping out people that are like them, who value the same things that they do. They are ultimately about excellence, but excellence in a narrow range of abilities and pursuits. So, different god/desses will help people with different things. It is not something for nothing—because the gods are enacted through relationships and embodied in the human and material world features that
particularly interest them, they will help you if you demonstrate that you are worth the trouble. If you ask for help and do the work, you will get the help.

Wiccans find ways to incorporate the interventions of the gods into life in a consistent way that builds meaning and connection. Moments of grace and sense of vocation or Call are ecstatic personal experiences which deepen religion and provide significant insight into the realities behind appearances. Theology is not a purely contemplative or abstract process, but must lead one from an experience and feelings about it to insight and thence to action in the world. Intentions are not actions, and being a good person requires good work. Understanding of grace centers in the movement toward action to make the divine purpose real in the world of human experience. In a polytheism individual gods will establish what relationships that they desire with individuals who wish to have relationships with them, often involving mutual respect, sometimes lust and love, often a mentor / protégé relationship. Relationships with numerous deities in a polytheistic frame differ from monotheistic conceptions. When a religious person speaks of her or his relationship with a deity we must begin with the relationship—it involves two persons, of different natures and unequal power, both possessing freedom to act or not act.

4:00-4:30  Jae Yang, Fuller Theological Seminary (jaeyang@fuller.edu)
“Calvin’s Concept of Sacrament Applied to Creation and the Eucharist"

In this presentation, I will interpret John Calvin’s theology of creation using the framework of his theology of sacrament. By sacrament, I mean a created visible medium which spiritually mediates the presence of God. Calvin, in his exposition of creation does not directly identify it as sacrament as such. However, through analysis of his view of the sacraments and more specifically, the Lord’s Supper, I argue that creation is a sacrament of general revelation relative to the special sacrament of the Lord’s Supper localized as a church rite. I use sacrament as a starting point because since as much as 14 percent of Institutes is explication of sacrament it’s heuristic potential for other doctrines cannot be dismissed. Therefore, I attempt to reconcile what appears to be Calvin’s inconsistency relative to the Holy Spirit.

On the one hand, Calvin talks about Spirit in terms of a justification and sanctification that is exclusive to Christian believers. This would be most apparent as members of the church community participate in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. On the other hand, Calvin, described by many as a theologian of the Holy Spirit, expands the domain of the Spirit to cover the entire of creation. Therefore, I argue that the difference between the Lord’s Supper and creation is not a qualitative or categorical differentiation but a quantitative one based on the relative range of the sacrament based on the usage of the duplex gratia; the Lord’s Supper is a sacrament of special revelation attributed to believers in the Christian community and the latter is a sacrament of general revelation more readily available and universal in its incorporation of all creation.

I will make the argument through four aspects. Prior to specifically analyzing Calvin’s theology proper, I develop Calvin as a public theologian ruling in Geneva. By understanding Calvin as a public theologian, I hope to show his concern not just with ecclesial matters but also matters of general creation and its governance. After this, I will then underscore the following similarities in Calvin’s doctrine of the Lord’s Supper and creation in order to
establish both as sacraments mediating a higher reality: the presence of the Spirit, transignification, and evolution. I hope I will have developed Calvin in three aspects: as a theologian of the sacraments, as a theologian of the Holy Spirit, and a theologian, whose special and general manifestations of pneumatology can be explained through the concept of sacrament.

4:30-5:00   Jonathan Strand, Concordia University of Edmonton
(Jonathan.strand@concordia.ab.ca)  
"Faith and Hope Among the Virtues"

In recent decades the “Virtue Ethics” of Aristotle has experienced a significant revival. Much recent work in ethics uses and elaborates this framework of analyzing persons’ characters in terms of positive and negative characteristics—virtues and vices. More recently, this framework has been explored, elaborated, and adopted by many working on epistemological questions; people can be virtuous or vicious in various ways in the manner in which they manage their beliefs. This application in epistemology is in keeping with Aristotle’s own articulation of “virtues of thought” as well as “virtues of character.”

Faith and Hope have traditionally been thought virtues—especially by those in religious traditions, those in the Christian tradition in particular; Paul highlighted faith and hope as second only to love (I Cor. 13:13). But these virtues seem capable of conflicting with virtues of thought like “conforming one’s beliefs to the evidence.” At least strong “Evidentialist” understandings of such epistemic virtues seem to conflict with typical understandings of faith and hope. The correct understandings of these later virtues have also been much debated recently, however. Many analysts have sought and advocated for analyses on which these virtues do not conflict with evidentialist understandings of epistemic virtue.

This paper succinctly addresses (1) the analyses of faith and hope, (2) on these bases, whether faith or hope may conflict with other epistemic virtues, and (3) how these conflicts, if any, are to be adjudicated. These issues will be discussed within the framework of Virtue Ethics and Virtue Epistemology. They will also be guided by traditional Christian understandings of these virtues. It will be argued, by thought experiment, that (1) the virtues of faith and hope can conflict with (other) epistemic virtues, and (2) the former virtues can “trump”/“outweigh” the latter. More specifically, there can be situations in which it is more virtuous to have faith and hope than to “conform one’s beliefs to the evidence.”

SATURDAY EVENING, MAY 22, 2021

6:00   Plenary Address: Antonio Finitisak, Pacific Lutheran University
(finitisak@plu.edu)  
“A Rhetorical Analysis of Daniel’s Apocalyptic Visions (Dan 7-12) and Its Implications for Social Media”
The second half of the book of Daniel contains three visions that mirror in symbolic and allusive language historical events that happened a lot later in the Hellenistic period. I will offer a brief description of Daniel’s apocalyptic visions, and I will place them in their historical context. Then, I will provide a definition of rhetorical analysis and I will use it to examine the discursive choices that shaped the visions. I will focus my attention on the function of the heavenly realm as a rhetorical forum with reality altering powers. I will argue that the transposition of events in the heavenly plane allowed certain advantages that led to an effective disputation of foreign sovereignty over Israel. I will highlight some fundamental discursive choices that shaped the heavenly realm since they seem unsettlingly similar to the ones employed in contemporary social media with unsettling results for societal well-being.

SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 23, 2021
FOURTH SESSION (9:00 AM–11:30 AM)
NEW TESTAMENT AND THE WORLD OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY
Writings in the World of Early Christianity

9:00-9:30 Alex Trew, Regent College (alextrew91@gmail.com)

This paper is concerned with the diversity of Christian communities in second-century Rome as they existed prior to formal episcopal or creedal centralization in the last decade of that century. I am specifically interested in the developing theological and ecclesial notions of “orthodoxy” and “heresy,” a dialectical relationship first formulated in this period by Irenaeus of Lyon. My paper argues that the so-called “Gnostics” and other Christians who were termed “heretical” by Irenaeus in his enormously influential work Against the Heresies were less the victims of an intensifying and pernicious push for homogeneity (as the story sometimes is told) than groups of variously associated believers who had voluntarily separated themselves from other Roman Christians on the basis of exegetical and theological considerations. These “heretics” believed the majority congregations that would come to form “orthodox” Christianity were, in one way or another, misdirected or theologically incomplete.

In terms of structure, the paper begins by expounding the disparate diversity (termed “fractionation” by Peter Lampe) of the early Roman Christians and their eventual move toward centralization under bishop Victor in the 190s, during Irenaeus’s lifetime. Next, utilizing the important scholarship of Michael Williams and David Brakke, it argues for the discernible existence of a Christian group self-identifying as “Gnostic” in the second century, without arguing for anything like a “Gnosticism” per se. Finally, I demonstrate the plausibility of the thesis that these Gnostics and their successors chose to leave the wider Christian communion, and I thereby also shed light on the purposes of Irenaeus’s “heresiology.” My most notable source in regard to interpreting Irenaeus is John Behr, who in his 2013 study, Irenaeus of Lyon: Identifying Christianity (OUP), makes a powerful historical and theological
defence of Irenaeus against modern (mis)readings that tend to portray the bishop as an intolerant persecutor of “heterodox” Christians. To the extent that my paper is an apologia of Irenaeus’s constructive theological project within the complexities of his historical context it displays the marks of Behr’s influence.

My inquiry attempts to offer a provisional assessment of the second-century Roman ekklesia that is fairer to all parties: while defending Irenaeus’s legacy from distortion, my paper suggests that we more accurately attend to the course of action pursued by the Gnostic Christians in commitment to their interpretation of the faith, thus pursuing its particular historical investigation on terms dictated by its subject matter.

9:30-10:00 Glen Fairen, University of Texas at El Paso (glenfairen@gmail.com)

“‘And He Shared His Fire with Them...’: The Apocryphon of John and the Roman Usurpation of Divine Power”

In both the longer and shorter versions of the Apocryphon of John, there is an odd and incongruous scene in which the Demiruge, Yaltaboloth, first steals “power” from his mother, Divine Wisdom, but then proceeds to share a portion of his own “fire” with the subordinates that he himself created; a fire that, for the authors of the text, “still exists today.”

Since Yaltaboloth is not known for his generosity, this paper will argue that this particular scene only makes sense when read as part of J.Z. Smith’s model of “apocalyptic/gnostic” scribal critique of the cessation of native kingship under foreign rule. While other analogous texts (such as Revelation, The War Scroll, A Charter of a Sectarian Jewish Association, or the Potter’s Oracle) claim that the wrong king will be replaced by the right god in some sort of future “apocalyptic” resolution, the Apocryphon of John assumes a “gnostic” situation in which a wrong or foreign king on earth must be an indication that a wrong or illegitimate god is in heaven. Indeed, this illegitimacy is not only indicated by the corrupt birth of the Demiurge, but given the function of Divine Wisdom in Ancient Near and Middle Eastern cosmologies as the mediator of the divine to the terrestrial kingdoms, Yaltaboloth’s theft appears to be a critique not just of a foreign ruler from “below” who has not only failed to receive the “blessing” of “above” from Divine Wisdom, but of one who has stolen it, and then proceeds to share their own “power” with the semblance of divine approval.

Given the Romans justified their right to rule by asserting the gods favoured and blessed them due to their piety, with even the emperor himself being worshiped throughout their empire, this (re)casting of the ruler of the heavens as nothing more than an illegitimate thief and pretender is a clear rejection of such claims. This is particularly clear considering that Yaltaboloth’s sharing his power with a variety of subordinate Archons, Watchers, and Aeons, is clearly the corrupted version of an “above” that reflects the equally corrupt Roman imperial power structure in which a distant and illegitimate emperor (from the point of view of the authors) holds the throne with the appearance of divine right and law, and who “shared his fire” or authority by delegating power to various satraps, governors and vassal kings who ruled at the behest of Rome.
The National Geographic Society’s publication of the fragmented Coptic Gospel of Judas in 2006 saw scholars divided on the issue of how to interpret the eponymous character Judas; some, such as Bart Ehrman, Karen King, and Elaine Pagels read Judas as a good figure, singled out by Jesus from the other disciples, as a receiver of special secret knowledge. Others, including April D. DeConick and Louis Painchaud have pushed back at such a reading, arguing that the Judas in this lost gospel is more evil than ever.

Taking a fresh look at the Gospel of Judas, this paper addresses one of the most debated lines in the Coptic text: Judas as the meh-ment-shomte daimōn, or ‘thirteenth daimōn on line 21, page 44 of the Codex Tchacos manuscript. The aforementioned scholars’s decisive English translations of the term daimōn as either “spirit” or “demon” colour their prospective interpretations of the figure of Judas, with the former gesturing to a thoroughly good Judas, and the latter to a wholly evil one.

Moving away from a binary ‘either/or’ interpretation of Judas as good/evil, this paper argues for a reading of Judas as ‘both/and’, under the framework of what is here called dynamic dualism. This framework allows for a more complex reading of the figure of Judas, whose actions and agency warrant a movement away from such a superimposed binary of ‘either/or’. The breaking of such a binary requires a critical re-evaluation of the concept of dualism in what are considered Sethian Gnostic cosmologies; as such, this paper situates the Gospel of Judas alongside the cosmology found in the Apocryphon of John, in which the structure of the cosmos unfolds along a dualistic axis of spiritual and material realms.

Prompted by the works of Karen King and Bentley Layton, this paper approaches these Gnostic texts using dynamic dualism. Dynamic dualism sees the figures in these cosmologies conceived as dramatic actors, whose agency plays out through their negotiation of identity against the dualistic backdrop they inhabit. Reading Judas as a daimōn within this framework sees his identity moving dynamically between what are considered good/evil characterizations, signalling the benefit of a ‘both/and’ approach to the figure of Judas. By moving away from the unilateral binaries imposed on readings of the Gospel of Judas thus far, this framework proves potentially useful in further studies of dualism in other Sethian cosmologies.

The use of word-based statistical models in synoptic studies has largely revolved around positing a solution to the Synoptic Problem. As a result, many synoptic scholars have dismissed the use of these models because they have been overly committed to a positivistic reading regarding the texts’ literary relationship and origins. However, these two extremes are misplaced. In this paper, I argue that although word-based statistical models of the
Synoptic Gospels should not be used to postulate wholistic explanations of particular source theories, they should not be completely dismissed from synoptic studies. Instead, word-based statistical models can be used by New Testament scholars in two capacities regarding synoptic research. First, word-based statistical models of the Synoptics Gospels can be used to design and enhance digital visualizations of the gospel texts, also called digital synopses. Second, word-based statistical models can aid in the interpretation of synoptic pericopae and should be considered part of the repository of exegetical tools alongside more traditional avenues of interpretation, such as textual, source, and redaction criticism. Incorporating digital resources into Biblical exegesis is identified as a process called “operationalization” of the digital humanities. This process requires a great deal of scholarly care but is nonetheless becoming increasingly important as digital representations of the gospels become more common and easily accessible.

To highlight the ways word-based statistical models can aid exegetes of the Synoptics Gospels beyond the Synoptic Problem I perform a brief exegetical exercise on a gospel pericope using a statistical model called a contingency table and a digital synopsis derived from the table. Specifically, I demonstrate that the contingency table can be used to postulate a positive association between Matthew and Luke within the pericope of the Healing of the Paralytic based on their redaction of Mark (Mt 9:1–8; Mk 2:1–12; Lk 5:17–26). Based on this contingency table and a digital visualization of the texts I argue that Matthew’s and Luke’s common redaction of Mark in this particular pericope is in keeping with their larger programmatic goals set up in their introductory material to their gospel accounts (Mt 1:21–23; Lk 4:18–21), which designate Jesus as God’s Messiah who forgives sins, releases captives, and dwells with human beings as Emmanuel.

Digital Synopsis Link: https://dchristensen7452.github.io/GospelData/synopses/43Paralytic.html

THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

9:00-9:30 Bruce Hiebert, University Canada West (brucehiebert@shaw.ca) “Problematizing Theology: The Application of Michel Meyer’s Philosophy to Theological Understanding”

The failure of ontological or propositional theologies to provide a coherent basis for doing theological work has led to the problematization of theology, indeed, to the question of whether theology is a coherent practice. Belgian philosopher Michel Meyer’s neo-foundational approach, problematology, offers a new possibility for theological practice through the questions it directs at the questions themselves. Meyer argues that propositions of any sort are efforts to deny questions and thus an effort to avoid the emergent, questionable nature of answers. Conceiving of theological answers as emergent outcome of a foundational dialectical system of questions and answers provides a new context for theological validity as a non-ontological reality engagement. Following Meyer, all questions, including theological questions, require social acceptable answers.
These answers leave behind a body of unquestioned knowledge even as they open up new avenues for questioning. Considered in this way, theology is a vital aspect of human knowledge acquisition given its focus on the limit conditions of human experience (Kaufman). It is the basis for extending human knowledge regarding the things that matter most, even accepting that they are the type of answers most likely to create new questions. Indeed, theology could become the foundational practice for all human questioning of things that matter.

9:30-10:00  Peter Andes, University of Alberta (andes@ualberta.ca)
“Modified Divine Command Theory and Ideal Observer Theory”

There has been a recent explosion of development in the area of Divine Command Theory (DCT). Once thought to have been dealt with once and for all in Plato’s Euthyphro, “modified” Divine Command Theories (MDCT) are now much discussed in the literature as MDCT supporters respond to classic challenges to the view. Particularly of note is the latest formulation of an MDCT position by Robert Adams.

On Adams’s latest view, God’s commands stem from his nature, which Jeremy Koons has described as like the “meter bar” of the good, the standard for goodness and badness. Although critics are quick to claim that calling God’s nature from which God’s commands flow “good” is itself arbitrary, this may not be a fair complaint. After all, moral non-naturalists, those who believe in independently existing ethical facts, stop with these facts as providing the standard of goodness, so why not stop with God’s nature? It is here that I explore the view that Ideal Observer Theory might offer a useful way to understand this disagreement, and, perhaps, a way out of the more than two-thousand-year-old Euthyphro dilemma.

Ideal Observer Theory (IOT) was first proposed in its contemporary form by Roderick Firth in his 1952 article “Ethical Absolutism and the Ideal Observer”. Firth characterized IOT as holding that to say that “X is right (or good)” means that “Any ideal observer would react to X in such and such a way under such and such conditions.” The theory is cognitivist, moral statements being right or wrong insofar as they match reactions of the ideal observer.

As Firth states in his original article, and as William Frankena suggested, God can be understood as the “Ideal Observer”. As Harry Gensler has characterized Frankena’s view, IOT would hold that ethical judgments are made by a fully-informed, rational, and impartial being who possesses the highest wisdom and love around. For atheists, Gensler notes, this would be to speak of a human being, while for theists this is to speak of God.

Building on Gensler’s view, I argue that, whether independently existing ethical facts exist or not, one can defer to the highest wisdom and love around, which for theists will mean thinking of the good as ultimately stemming from God’s wise and loving judgments. If ethical facts do exist, this is the way to get close to them, by trying to be as rational, wise, and loving as possible, while if they do not, then this is still the way to make moral judgments, voluntarism in its human or divine forms being unacceptably arbitrary. However, this by no means entails the impossibility of secular ethics. For both the atheist and the theist can on IOT think of ethical judgments as those judgments stemming from the Ideal Observer. I entertain and respond to the objection that circularity remains on the view that Gensler defends. I conclude by pointing to recent identifications of metaethical constructivism with
ideal dispositionalism to suggest that IOT already enjoys wider support than might initially be acknowledged.

10:00-10:30  Laura Lee Nimilowich, St. Stephen’s College (lnimilow@ualberta.ca)
“Whitehead and Levinas: A Conversation about Decolonization”

Metaphysics is a system of thought that seeks to understand the nature of Ultimate Reality. Hartshorne argues that the study of metaphysics focuses on the study of universality, i.e., universal themes that describe reality and/or existence. In the Western Philosophical Tradition, metaphysical schemes have generally been proposed and created from a western European view. In Canada this means that a significant portion of Indigenous views have been excluded from a broader philosophical conversation. After the national recognition of the gross human rights violations committed against Indigenous populations through the process of colonization including the 60’s scoop and residential school system by the Federal Government of Canada, both the implementation of the TRC and the vast academic movement to decolonize ushered in a significant change process. It is ethically imperative that this change process continues.

In the field of Western Philosophy two prominent thinkers can assist further with decolonization efforts: Alfred North Whitehead and Emmanuel Levinas. For both Whitehead and Levinas, relationality is the foundational concept in the development of their metaphysics. Alfred North Whitehead argues for a relational perspective in understanding existence. Whitehead’s relational metaphysics focuses on the nature of reality as being in a continual state of process. i.e., he develops a relational ontology. While for him there is no unifying being, unification does arise in the sense that all beings are in a process of relationality. Differing from Whitehead by locating himself within the human sphere, Levinas argues for a metaphysics of Desire that disrupts what he terms the same, i.e., the same referring to systems constructed by human beings such as governments, systems of thought, philosophy through its relationship with the Other. Levinas grounds his relational metaphysics in the human dyad relationship where he argues that ethical relationality requires that metaphysics proceeds ontology. Thus, from my view both Whitehead and Levinas argue that to live ethically requires that we work diligently to question dominant systems, and the violence that results.

My presentation will argue that the decolonization of philosophy must ultimately begin with the decolonization of the philosopher. My presentation will explore this question: how can both Whitehead and Levinas together illuminate a path to decolonize the self?