

CATA 2024 PAPER ABSTRACTS

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Ashoor Yousif, “Shared Past, Shared Future: Interreligious Engagements, Socio-Political Involvements and Intellectual Partnerships of Middle Eastern Christians in Late Antiquity and Early Medieval Periods.”

In an ecclesiastical letter, Timothy I, the East-Syrian Patriarch of the Church of the East, recounts his cordial and candid theological debate with the Abbasid caliph al-Mahdi in Baghdad around 781 CE. In other letters, Timothy also recounts his intellectual partnership with al-Mahdi by translating Aristotle’s *Topics*, and his involvement in the caliphate’s political affairs by accompanying Caliph al-Rashid on a military campaign. Timothy’s relationships with Muslim rulers were not, however, unique cases. Christian sources preserve other examples of such relations between Christian and Muslim elites at the highest echelon during the early Islamic Medieval Period. This presentation examines a few cases of such relationships, shedding light on the contexts, reasons, and learning outcomes of this history, demonstrating an example of a shared past that may inform the Canadian future context.

Michael Anderson, “Retrieving the Idea of ‘Great Church’ for Evangelical Ecclesiology.”

In a 2005 essay, John Webster confronted a tendency within contemporary evangelical Christianity whereby some, wanting to outgrow the ‘ecclesiological minimalism’ of their tradition, are tempted to ‘move upmarket’ and embrace a more catholic ecclesiology. But he warned that an uncritical embrace of *totus Christus* ecclesiology would turn evangelicals into ‘catholicized Protestants.’ A better way to overcome their low church frustrations, he contends, is to develop a robustly evangelical doctrine of the church, rooted in the gospel of grace. Such a distinctively evangelical ecclesiology could be a gift to the wider church, from whom evangelicals also have much to learn. To this end, he urges evangelicals to look to their own tradition for theological resources and historic examples to help guide them.* This paper looks at one such example and commends it as a resource for those who would follow Webster’s counsel.

In the early 1890’s a series of conferences were held in Grindelwald, Switzerland, which brought together leaders from the Church of England and the English Free Churches to engage in serious reunion dialogues for the first time. While these conferences did not result in reunion, they did lead a number of Free Church leaders to take up a challenge from the Anglican side to deepen their own ecclesiology, in order that future reunion dialogues might have a closer starting point. Charles Berry, a Congregationalist participant, responded to this challenge and declared his ambition to help the Free Churches grow in the direction of the ‘Great Church.’ This language of ‘Great Church’ would continue to appear in the writings of Congregationalist theologians, including P. T. Forsyth and Daniel Jenkins. As understood by Forsyth and Jenkins, the ‘Great Church’ was a future-oriented vision of a unified church established on the dogmatic basis of the kerygma, but which is also receptive to valued elements of the catholic heritage. Hence these Congregationalist theologians model an approach that is instructive for those who wish to develop a robustly evangelical ecclesiology while at the same time remaining open to giving and receiving from the catholic church traditions.

* John Webster, “On Evangelical Ecclesiology,” in *Confessing God: Essays in Christian Dogmatics II* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 153–93.

Joshua Arp: Human Sin and the Environment: Exegesis and Apologetics

Since it is written from an agricultural (as opposed to an industrial) perspective, many passages in the Bible have potential to yield axioms that are relevant from an environmental perspective. Careful exegesis of these passages, therefore, will both produce and contextualize environmental axioms that are distinctive to the Biblical message. Such distinctive axioms then, hold value either to support the legitimacy or to promote the supremacy of the Biblical message against other messages.

One topic in which the axioms of the Bible stand tall is human sin and the environment. Two passages in which these axioms are richly presented are Psalm 104 and Romans 8. The environmental axioms that emerge from these passages are the creaturely uniqueness of human sin and the effect of human sin on other creatures. Armed with brief exegetical study of these passages, apologists of the Bible are able first to address broader corollaries within the Bible and second to address the validity of the Bible vis-à-vis other world views. Corollaries in the Bible include animal sacrifice and environmental degradation. Finally, apologists of the Bible are able to apply these environmental axioms to ethical norms for those who would accept the validity of the axioms.

These three approaches to the topic of human sin in the Bible show the relevance and empirical reality of the Biblical approach to the interaction of humans and the environment. By following this template of axioms and corollaries, my paper provides a Biblical apologetics dimension to the discussion of Christian environmentalism.

Chris Barrigar, “Cognitive Science of Religion and God's Two Principles of Natural Theology According to C. Stephen Evans.”

Christian philosopher C. Stephen Evans has proposed that God employed two principles in designing the human brain for natural knowledge of God—the Wide Accessibility principle, and the Easy Resistibility principle. Evans also proposes that these two features of the brain fit with evolutionary accounts of humanity, yet he provides no account of this fit. Barrigar surveys the current state of evolutionary cognitive science of religion, and finds that current findings of ECSR do indeed fulfill the WE and ER principles.

Lee Beach, “Theological Reflection and Congregational Discernment: A Pneumatological Approach to Practical Theology.”

In today’s context of new and ever-increasing challenges facing the church, the ability of congregations to discern how to respond to these challenging issues and how to shape their ministry accordingly in these rapidly changing times is more important than ever. This paper will respond to the need for congregational discernment by offering an approach to Practical Theology that is rooted in a model that sees the work of Practical Theology as the gaining of wisdom through discerning the voice of the Spirit speaking into the life of a Christian community. The paper will consider the work of theological reflection as a central practice in ministry leadership and congregational life, as well as provide an approach to theological reflection that can be adopted for use in congregational discernment. The goal of the model offered is to aid in the contextualization of ministry in a way that is faithful to God’s leading in the particular time and place that Christian churches and communities find themselves. Ultimately the paper will cast a vision for both a theological method for doing Practical Theology as well as how to put that method into practice through a model of theological reflection that can be implemented in the life of a local church or Christian community.

Michael Brain, “Reforming the Trinity: The Aseity of the Son and Calvin’s Theological Procedure.”

Trinitarian theology and Christology play an important role in Reformation theology, though controversies surrounding justification and ecclesiology have often obscured the impact of these doctrines on the reformers. One major innovation in the Reformation period, pertinent to the reception of trinitarian doctrine in evangelical theology and noteworthy for contemporary Protestantism, occurs in the trinitarian theology of John Calvin. Through various trinitarian controversies, the reformer claims that God the Son is *autotheos*, having possession of the divine essence alone, and not through the communication of the divine essence from the Father, as theologians have commonly maintained.

Calvin’s trinitarian theology is noteworthy for his attempt to avoid speculation into the divine nature by grounding the knowledge of the Trinity within the economy of salvation. However, my argument is that Calvin’s doctrine of the *autotheos*, in denying essential communication, undermines his attempt to ground the doctrine of the Trinity in the economy by splitting the inner connection between God’s essence and the persons as subsistent relations. After describing Calvin’s doctrine of the *autotheos* and his denial of essential communication, this paper demonstrates from Calvin’s own theological procedure in the *Institutes* that he should have allowed for a reserved account of essential communication among the triune persons, with the goal of securing the unity of the scriptural testimony to the oneness of God and the threeness of persons.

Anugrah Brij, “Water Pollution in India: An Eco-Ethical Evaluation.”

No ecological crisis that challenges India today is graver and pressing than the Water Pollution. The G-20 Conference held in New Delhi on the 09th and 10th of September 2023, reminds us of the Global position of the Foreign and Indian Governments on ecological issues. “It is with the philosophy of living in harmony with the surrounding ecosystem that we commit to concrete actions to address global challenges.”* In the Christian scheme of things, “there are approximately hundred verses in the bible that talk about protection of the environment. Christians therefore have an environmental responsibility and should encourage behavioral change for the good of the future.”* However, through our superficial understanding of the relationship between humanity and nature, humans have recklessly exploited nature. We are called to be stewards of God’s creation rather than exploiters of it. Sin has afflicted all of God’s creation, including the natural world and therefore it is our duty and responsibility to not only care for our fellow human beings, but also for the creation of God.

Through this research I’ll shed light on the interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic issues, and would delve into the ethical dimensions of environmental degradation. I will attempt to explore how religious beliefs and practices, particularly Christian eco-theological perspectives, can either contribute to or mitigate the water pollution crisis. In India, there is an uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources. Water Pollution is caused by the unchecked discharge of waste from households and industries.* It is an environmental issue affecting many urban areas around the world. In addition, I will aim to examine the potential for interfaith collaboration to foster eco-justice principles and sustainable solutions for India’s environmental challenges. As highlighted, Water Pollution is a severe problem and thus a Christian eco-theological response is imperative.

* New Delhi Leaders’ Declaration Final Adoption - G20.org, accessed September 11, 2023, https://www.g20.org/content/dam/gtwenty/gtwenty_new/document/G20-New-Delhi-Leaders-Declaration.pdf; UN Environment, “*Religions and Environmental Protection*,” UNEP, accessed September 7, 2023, <https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment-programme/faith-earth-initiative/religions-and-environmental-protection>; James K. Boyce, Sunita Narain, and Elizabeth A. Stanton, *Reclaiming Nature: Environmental Justice and Ecological Restoration* (London: Anthem Press, 2007), 7.

Dustin Burlet, “Navigating Eden’s Exegetical Labyrinth(s): Adam and Exegetical Fallacies (Gen 2:15).”

Effective interpretation of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament often requires an acute awareness of some of the subtle intricacies of its language(s). This includes, but is not limited to, clear engagement with the accentuation (pointing) system of the Masoretic Text (MT). Coupled with this is the linguistic necessity to judiciously differentiate between different verbal stems (Qal, Piel, Pual, Hiphil, Hophal, Hithpael, etc.). Regrettably, some authors fail to fully appreciate the nuance of some of these matters thereby leading to certain misinterpretation(s). To be clear, some individuals fail to note how the Masoretes point the verb *nuakh* with a *dagesh* in the *nûn* at Gen 2:15, i.e., “Adam” in “Eden,” thus indicating a HIPHIL II (or ‘B’) form that carries the sense or meaning of “to set, place” (see *DCH* 5:638–39; Gesenius 18 793; *HALOT* 1:679; *TLOT* 2:723) rather than “cause to rest,” i.e., HIPHIL I (or ‘A’). Given such, these authors tend to (wrongly) import a meaning of “sabbath/rest” to Gen 2:15 where none exists. While it may be possible that sometime ago HIPHIL “B” developed from HIPHIL “A” it is not the way that the MT understands it. Likewise, while the Masoretes are not infallible, they do evince a faithfulness and rigor in the interpretation that they have provided to subsequent generations. As such, their work continues to demand careful analysis throughout the exegetical process. This presentation will consider such matters at length alongside their relevance to exegetical fallacies in general.

Theo Camara, “The Problematic Carbon Oligarchy: Exploring A Missiological Response to Carbon Inequity in the Global South.”

The escalating risk of carbon emissions since the 19th century poses a severe threat to Earth’s biosphere. Despite heightened awareness and advocacy for climate change, emissions remain alarmingly high, resulting in an imminent crisis disproportionately affecting the Global South. This disparity is evident as the Global North and select entities persist in emitting carbon at alarming rates.

When asked of the “greatest commandment,” most Christians will point to Matthew 22, in which Jesus answers “love the Lord your God” and secondly, “love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matt. 22:37, 39, NRSVUE) While the question of “Whom is my neighbor?” is answered in Luke 10, the intricacy of this question remains relevant. Whom is a neighbor in an age of globalization? Further, what implications do these coinciding principles hold in an age of climate crisis?

Given the realities of carbon inequity between those affected by climate change and those contributing the most to CO₂ emissions, as well as the theological implications of Matt. 22:37- 40, this paper seeks to argue the missiological response required of Christians against the *carbon oligarchy* and toward helping affected populations in the Global South. After analyzing recent carbon emission data and examining the *Climate Risk Index*, an argument for inequity will be established. This paper will then utilize theological principles of the commandment of neighborly love to explore its implications given globalization, specifically within the climate crisis. This comprehensive approach aims to bridge the gap between climate change data, theological principles, and practical responses for Christian leaders.

Taina Chan, “Christian Response To The Ecological Crises: Jonathan Edwards’s Ecotheological View.”

The increasing public consciousness of environmental problems has prompted theologians to reflect upon the topic of humanity’s proper relationship with the natural world. On one hand, the ecotheological conversation has been apologetic in responding to the critical voices claiming that Christianity is anthropocentric: the biblical command to “subdue the earth” (e.g., Gen 1:28) has long been interpreted in the Western world as permission to dominate or even exploit nature. Therefore, many biblical studies have been conducted to reassess the Old Testament creation narratives through an ecological lens. On the other hand, theologians have examined the values and attitudes that direct environmental actions and recognized the urgency for eco-reformation within Christian thinking. In this process, theologians have turned to studying the ecological perspectives within the Christian tradition.

This presentation attempts to respond to the environmental crises by investigating the writings of Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) and his Puritan heritage from an ecological perspective. Although Edwards’s ecological backdrop—the eighteenth-century New England milieu—differs from the industrialized landscapes of today, modern-day ecotheologians can retrieve valuable ecological guidelines from Edwards’s life and thought. Edwards’s main contribution to the ecological conversation is his philosophical and theological principles which point to an idea of companionship: the created world forms a network of mutual relationships. The creation glorifies the Creator and fulfills its purpose as it reflects God’s beauty and supports the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of human beings. At the same time, Edwards recognized the human depravity and suffering within the creation; humans have forced creation to serve their own interests and rejected God’s design for an ecological balance. Throughout his ministerial work, Edwards called for a revival: without a renewed heart, humans are not capable of perceiving God’s beauty and having compassion for the created world to the fullest extent. Edwards’s love for God and nature can serve as an example and inspiration towards the much-needed eco-transformation.

Jonathan N. Cleeland, “Toward a Redeemed View of God’s Creation: Insights from Peter Martyr Vermigli’s Soteriology.”

As proponents of Reformed theology have looked to offer theological reflections in light of current ecological concerns, it may be tempting to conclude that work on creation care is a more recent phenomenon in the Reformed tradition. Yet such an assumption would be misguided. Although the concerns and how they are addressed may be different today, there is a line in Reformed theological tradition that has reflected on the Christian’s redeemed view of creation. In particular, the Italian Reformer from the sixteenth century, Peter Martyr Vermigli, spoke of how the redemption of humanity would lead to the proper care of creation.

This paper will look to survey select sections from Vermigli’s corpus that display his vision of the Christian’s redeemed view of creation. One’s perspective of creation must be rooted in soteriology. For Vermigli, the fall of Adam and the redemption provided in Christ, the second Adam, has direct implications for how Christians are to understand God’s creation. It is only as redeemed people, Vermigli argues, that one can have a correct view of creation and can therefore begin to care for creation in a way that relates with it properly. This paper will thus display how concerns regarding creation care have been present since the beginning of the Reformed tradition and will also display how the thought of Vermigli can help facilitate a view of creation care that is rooted in the soteriological work of Christ.

Christian Clement-Schlimm, “A Biblical *Livity*?: Food Systems, Evangelicalism, and Rastafarian *Ital* Diets.”

The food choices humans make; from farm to table and beyond, have a deep impact on our bodies, minds, economy, and climate. Encapsulated in the term “food systems,” what humans choose to eat as food and how they produce, process, acquire, and prepare it, have extensive and decisive influence on humanity’s individual and collective well-being. This claim of the crucial impact of food systems on life, both physical and spiritual, should be a most welcome concept among Evangelicals. As presented in David Bebbington’s quadrilateral, a widely recognized baseline for Evangelical identity, Evangelicals are known for their biblicism, i.e. their particular regard for the Bible. Therefore, Evangelicals ought to take seriously the place of prominence discussion of food systems are consistently given in Scripture, from Creation to New Covenant. Yet, despite the Bible’s consistent concern for food systems, Evangelicalism is one of the few religious movements in the world without a commonly held and definable food ethic.

After identifying several significant biblical texts which speak to food systems, and reflecting on their themes from an Evangelical perspective; this paper will argue that Christian liberty is constrained by ethical duty when it comes to forming and participating in food systems. To explore the potential

implications of this position, the paper will then provide an Evangelical analysis of Rastafarian Ital dietary rules. Recognizing Rastafari as an Afro-Caribbean Creole religion with a deeply intertwined history with Afro-Caribbean Evangelicalism, this paper will conclude that Ital “*livity*,” the Rastafarian concept of righteous living as a part of a spiritually unified creation, may be baptized and coopted by Evangelicals as a starting point for a biblically-sound and theologically orthodox food ethic.

Camille-Constance Curet, “Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Nature: the ‘Zest of Life’ amidst the Anthropocene.”

This paper will seek to bring Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in conversation with current debates around the Anthropocene, and the role of religion in the latter. Crutzen’s definition of a new geological epoch in which human influence outcompetes natural processes, one where humans ‘decide what nature is and what it will be,’ has indeed been subjected to critiques from Clingerman and Szerszynski (2002; 2016; 2017). As Pope Francis writes, the ‘misuse of creation begins when we no longer recognize any higher instance than ourselves’ (2015: 129).

In a first part, this paper will thus trace the rise of the Anthropocene as its theological implications. In a second part, it will analyse Teilhard de Chardin’s sophisticated yet long-overlooked doctrine of nature as a product of the French Christian humanist traditions and of the spiritual crisis of his time – which I will argue represents one of the ways in which concerns similar to the Anthropocene’s have been considered in the past. In a third and final part, it will assess the potential of Teilhard de Chardin’s work – and Christianity more generally – to participate in debates on and alternatives to the Anthropocene, drawing on his assertion that ‘[t]he whole future of the Earth, as of religion, seems to me to depend on the awakening of our faith in the future.’ It will do so not as a mere nostalgic ‘going back,’ but as a retrieval which has the capacity of adding texture and depth to current approaches to the Anthropocene.

Robert J. Dean, “Recontextualizing Contextual Preaching.”

Karl Barth’s instruction to preachers, that they must preach with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other, remains one of the most quoted aphorisms in preaching circles—even though relatively few people read the newspaper anymore. Despite the frequency with which it is quoted, few situate the saying within an understanding of the whole of Barth’s theology, with the result that the aphorism is often used to underwrite an understanding of preaching that calls upon the preacher to act as a bridge-builder between the ancient world of Scripture and the contemporary world in which we find ourselves. As a result, the contextual side of the chasm often remains theologically uninterrogated and is left to drive the homiletical bus. This bridge-building metaphor of preaching founders on the reality that, theologically speaking, there is no chasm between the world of Scripture and the one we currently inhabit. The story of Scripture is the ongoing story of the world, and the church is the historically extended form of God’s people in the world, and the world is not simply nature or bare history but is storied by the promises and purposes of the triune God. This paper will seek to develop an understanding of the theological context of the preaching event by locating it within the overlapping realms of canon, congregation, and creation. Truly contextual preaching seeks to discern and name the connections between canon, congregation, and creation through which Christ constitutes our lives.

David Fuller, “Patristic Reception of Genesis 47:13–26: Was Joseph a Wise Administrator?”

In Gen 47:13–26, Joseph handles the situation of the famine by selling grain to the starving Egyptians. After he has taken all their money, he gives them food in exchange for their livestock. Finally, he repossesses their land for the crown and enlists the Egyptians into slavery, as these commodities are all the Egyptians have left.

A significant interpretive question about this passage relates to the ethicality of Joseph's policies, particularly his enslavement of the Egyptians. Was this a wise, beneficial administrative policy to provide for the needy, or was it a cruel means of exploiting the vulnerable?

These questions cannot be easily answered from the Hebrew Bible alone. The Mosaic law does make allowance for debt slavery (Exod 21:1–11; Lev 25:35–55; Deut 15:12–18), although it forbids selling food to those who are in poverty (Lev 25:37). Some have suggested that this ambiguity is the very point—that a Persian-period audience could identify with a role model who experienced tension between Hebrew and foreign values.^{*}

Interacting with early reception history provides chorus of instructive voices for comparison. Second Temple sources (Artapanus, Jubilees, Philo, and Josephus) consistently praise Joseph's actions as exemplifying wise leadership, but usually by augmenting the story so that Joseph gives back the cattle and land to the people after the famine.

In light of these challenges, it is prudent to move forward chronologically and consult the exegesis of the church fathers. Within the first five centuries, substantial commentary on this passage is provided by Origen, Gregory of Nazianzus, Ambrose, John Chrysostom, and Theodoret of Cyrus. Ethically conscious interpreters today are well served by reflecting on the diversity of ways that patristic sources applied Gen 47:13–26. The five sources listed above vary widely in their approaches and conclusions, including both positive and negative appraisals of Joseph's actions, the use and rejection of allegory, and speculation on gaps in the narrative. Nonetheless, it is fruitful to allow the readerly questions and impulses of current times to be queried by the creativity, doctrinal richness, and sensitivity to moral formation of the past, particularly in light of the urgent call to interpret the Hebrew Bible in an ethically responsible way today.

^{*} See Hyun Chul Paul Kim, "Reading the Joseph Story (Genesis 37-50) as a Diaspora Narrative," *CBQ* 75 (2013), 219–38.

Dion Gingerich, "The Theological Importance of Simplicity for Community Formation in Early Anabaptism."

Early Anabaptist communities were utterly committed to the virtue of simplicity in their communities. Living a life of simplicity spoke to their commitment to Christ and to their love for one another. Simplicity was universally held in these early Anabaptist communities. However, Anabaptist communities since the Radical Reformation have not been consistent in implementing simplicity and thus it is unclear what importance it still has for their understanding of faithful Christian living. This paper will explore how the early Anabaptist leaders, such as Menno Simons, Peter Riedmann, and Pilgram Marpeck, regarded simplicity as essential to their faith and to the life of their communities. This paper will demonstrate how the early Anabaptist application of simplicity edified and built up their communities while also establishing within these groups their dependency upon God for provision. The early Anabaptist commitment to simplicity had a profound effect on the formation of their communities, creating a recognition of mutual need and dependency among their members and developing a profound sense of communal reliance upon God. Finally, this work will argue in the face of contemporary neglect of simplicity among Anabaptists for the necessity of a recovery of a robust commitment to the virtue of simplicity for both Anabaptist communities in particular and the broader church more generally, for the sake of both the integrity of their communal life and the church's collective witness in the world.

Meg Giordano, “Truth belongs to God, but what about facts? – A study in charity and public discourse.”

Many people, myself included, would like to think that we are more than willing to engage in healthy discussion, even with people who disagree with us. In spite of this shared value, however, the cards seem stacked against us and we devolve easily into us-vs-them divisions. Of particular concern to me is the frequency with which Christians justify such an antagonistic stance toward other viewpoints by claiming that those others have not shown respect to their own views, an impulse often framed in terms of alignment with divine truth. This dramatic breach of gospel charity – see especially Matthew 5:38–48 – identifies a real problem: how we are to understand and embody Christlike charity in the difficult context of public discourse. As nearly legend as the problem genuinely is, surely we who have the help of the Holy Spirit should be the most able and ready to engage in discourse as peacemakers. That is, this paper takes the gospel mandate of Matthew 5 and applies it to the logic and structures of public discourse.

The paper proceeds by challenging the typical framing of discourse around the two categories of fact vs opinion, a framing that itself contributes to the problem of division. In it, I propose an alternate framing, prompted not only by logic but by a spirit of gospel charity: fact vs. *analysis*. In this framing, both kinds of statements would be understood as responding to some aspect of reality, and both are understood as capable, or even deserving, of being taken seriously. The paper will present concrete structures of logic and discourse that can help us to better cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the fulfillment of Christ’s difficult mandate to turn the other cheek, to hand over one’s cloak, and to go a second mile. It equips readers, both logically and theologically, to resist the temptation to equate fact with truth.

Matthew Lortie, “Power Brokers in Post-Christendom: The Pastor and Operative Power.”

The role of pastoral authority and power is an area within practical theology that requires significant critical reflection. What complicates this discussion is the church is operating in a post-Christian and post- authoritative age. One mark of this age is the erosion of trust in authority figures like pastors. The first part of this study will wrestle with the current cultural landscape. It will begin by framing this discussion around the metaphor of exile within the biblical narrative and how this metaphor is relevant in the post- Christian West. This will set the stage for the second section, which will interact with power theory and the related theory of authority, guided by the works of Michel Foucault and Amy Allen. This section will conclude by integrating the metaphor of exile with the implications I draw from Foucault and Allen. The third section will focus on the pastor’s role, task, and power. This will begin by offering a general survey of the pastor’s role in the church throughout history. A discussion of the changes and unique developments for pastors in a secular age will follow. Finally, the focus will move to the role of authority and power within the pastoral vocation. To conclude this study, I will draw these three sections together by noting the implications that arise. This will allow me to offer a nuanced theory of pastoral power and authority that can operate in a post-authoritative age.”

Sarah Newman, “Psalm 50 as Cultic Prophecy and How This Reveals the Heart of Yahweh.”

Psalms is a testament to the worship of Yahweh and scholarship notes themes of cultic prophecy within the Psalms and ANE texts. After exploring the role of prophecy and how kingship and godship functions in the ANE and OT, I argue that Psalm 50 is a such a psalm of cultic prophecy and is connected to Psalm 51. Ultimately, this paper asks this paper asks and aims to answer the question: what can these psalms tell us about the difference in worship of the ANE pantheon versus Yahweh?

Ian Ritchie. “Dune and Lynn White Jr.: The role of religion in averting ecocatastrophe.”

When I first picked up Frank Herbert’s *Dune* in 1965, I was captivated by its dedication: “To the dry land ecologists...”. Of the many levels upon which one could read it, I found its development of how a culture’s divinely sanctioned ecological living could bring a whole planet from desert to paradise, over a period of hundreds of years most fascinating.

Dune’s premise, that the goal of creating an earthly paradise would require more than laws and courts, but also the moral/spiritual force of Divine sanction, may remind us of Lynn White Jr.’s (1967) solution to our ecological crisis. White proposed St. Francis of Assisi as the patron saint of ecology. *Dune*’s religion has elements of St. Francis, but more central to its plot is the role of a warrior Messiah as leader of a jihad. *Dune*’s “Kwisatz Haderach” or “Shortening of the Way” offers a shortcut path to the green earthly paradise its indigenes long for; a path that would otherwise take 500 years. We note that *Dune*’s messiah resonates most often with Islamic conceptions of *Al Masih*. *Dune*’s ecological themes, its rejection of Artificial Intelligence, coupled with its jihadist notes, led The New Yorker recently to conclude: “*Dune* is possibly more relevant today than it was when it was first published.”

We explore the question: “Does ecological action need a Messiah or does messianism generally tend to cut the nerve of ecologically responsible action, claiming it will be done when the Messiah comes”?

Amanda Ross, “For the Love of the Earth: Questions of Transcendence and Difference in God/World Relations.”

In *When God Was a Bird* Mark Wallace draws on evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould’s assertion that “we will not fight to save what we do not love.” Similarly, many theological writers have variously attempted to argue for the proper valuing of the natural world to convince their readers that this world is worth saving. This paper will explore two alternative approaches to this endeavour. The first, represented through three authors—Ivona Gebara, Catherine Keller, and Mark Wallace—offers a re-envisioning of divine being that would divorce concepts of God from assumptions of superiority and difference. To love the world sufficiently so as to fight to save it, they seem to say, can be inspired only by way of similarity in God/world relatedness. In this way, sameness between Creator and creation is presented as the inspiration for Christians to love and, therefore, work to save this natural world. In the alternative avenue of possibility, Kathryn Tanner and Mayra Rivera both work to affirm difference as a potential site for transformative love. Rather than viewing divine/natural difference as unavoidably inviting hierarchy and exploitation, their views on divine/human agency (Tanner) and transcendence (Rivera) open a space for the embrace of otherness and, in so doing, the kind of human living which honours the essential relation of all being. It is along this pathway of welcoming difference that humanity may develop the kind of love which will fight to save all those human and more-than-human “others” whom we have learned to cherish, differences and all.

Jared Sittig, “Heavenly Agents and Care for the Earth: Exploring What the Celestial can Teach us About Caring for the Terrestrial.”

With the earth in peril, shall we look to Mars? As escapists evading the mess we have created, probably not. However, there may actually be some answers up there. In fact, a historical critical analysis of the Genesis 1 creation account within the context of Ancient Near Eastern cosmology reveals that *looking* to the heavens may actually reveal much about how humans are to function in their divinely ordained roles as rulers over the earth. So as evading escapists, no, but as responsible divine image bearers, perhaps we ought to *look* to Mars and other celestial bodies as models, not as alternative habitats.

By way of historical, form, and redaction criticism of Genesis 1:14-19, this paper will present a case for the celestial bodies being model divine agents that shed light on the functional definition of the *Imago*

Dei and inform the practical application of the divine mandate to rule over the fish, birds, livestock, animals and all living things (Gen. 1:27). This study will conclude with reflections on implications for both church liturgy and practical theology in the case that celestial bodies do indeed serve as models for ruling in God's image. These reflections will highlight the importance of liturgies attuned to natural orders and seasons, the theological significance of sea-level rise, and creative participation in biodiversity conservation, among other potential applications. The goal will be readers with enriched understandings of human and non-human agency and their places in God's cosmic design, necessitating action in our decisive social moment.

Stephen Swan, "Jesus, Did You Know? Christ's Divine Omniscience and Human Ignorance Considered in Light of the Partitive Exegesis Of Gregory Nazianzus."

Classical Christology holds that the two natures of Christ are united together in one person. Christ then possesses both divine and human attributes. This creates a dilemma: how does the God-man Jesus Christ experience ignorance as he seems to do in differing ways in Scripture? In various Gospel texts (Luke 2:40-52, Mark 13:32, Mark 5:30 in particular*), Jesus is portrayed as growing in knowledge, admitting an unknown fact, and asking a question that he may not know the answer to. The texts cry out for a method of reading which allows for divine omniscience and human ignorance to be simultaneously affirmed. Gregory of Nazianzus' method of *partitive exegesis* gives us an historical example of such a method. I consider this exegetical method as a way not to complete resolution or comprehension of the inner psychology of Christ, but to hold in tension both divine omniscience and human ignorance.

* Luke 2:40-52: This growth involves moving from more to less ignorance, something that omniscience would have no ability to do; Mark 13:32: Jesus claims not to know the day or the hour of the climax of eschatological events; Mark 5:30: Amid a crowd, he is touched by a woman and then asks: "who touched my garments?"

Joel Tejado, "Megachurches and Public Life: How Megachurch Congregants See Life as a Whole and How Do they Live Out their Faith in Public Life?"

Megachurches at large are undergoing a massive transition and transformation influenced by the recent global health crisis, wars, and geo-political conflicts in various continents. While its still in its infancy period, the study of megachurches in the Global South will continue to be evolved and forged by the global challenges as the 21st century unfolds. How megachurch congregants approach lived religion and how do they play their role in public life are questions that are worth noting in our times. Drawing our attention from perspectives and perceptions of megachurch congregants, fresh from the results of the empirical research conducted by the research team of Templeton Megachurch Project of John Templeton Foundation, this study unpacks the collective voices of church congregants as to how they live out and translate that faith in public life. Using the survey templates of Qualtrics, we surveyed and interrogated megachurch people from all walks of life about faith and life, politics, socio-economic issues, cultural values, social media, and Covid-19 pandemic and find out important and meaningful discoveries that perhaps shape the global study of religion and the forging of public policy toward religion.

Rick Wadholm, "Bonhoeffer Meets Macchia: The Pentecost of an Embodied Christological Ethic."

This study will propose to bring two theologians' Christologies into conversation toward a pneumatic embodied ethic centered in Christ as *the* embodied and enspirited Son of Man. While Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christological foci and most specifically his *Ethics* have been mined for their own contributions, a number of his insights (regarding Word, Church, history, world, the ultimate, and the real) are brought into conversation with the recent constructive Christological contributions of Pentecostal theologian, Frank Macchia (notably his *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer: Christology in Light of*

Pentecost and Tongues of Fire: A Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith). Bonhoeffer's rejection of principlizing ethics and focus upon the real, the ultimate, that is the Christ, offers a welcome conversation partner for those seeking to discern an ethic within the Christocentric full gospel message enjoined within Pentecost/als. This conversation offers overtures drawn from the Christocentric ethic that Bonhoeffer began to envision, but which Macchia might fill out further with insights drawn from the Spirit Baptizer at Pentecost. Thus, the ethics of Bonhoeffer are drawn into a constructive ethical movement with insights from Macchia's Spirit Baptizer Christology as a means of explicitly Christocentric-enspiriting of the Christocentric embodied ethic of Bonhoeffer. This movement provides a re-envisioning of ethics centered in the Christ of the full gospel emphasizing the manner in which Jesus as Spirit baptizer speaks to faithful/faithfilled response-able living for God and world.