

2019 AC COLLOQUIA

5 March 2019: Speakers - David Jones and Dr Jacqueline Service

Triangulating Forgetfulness: the Autoethnographic, the Academic, and the Homiletic in tension.

David Jones

This autoethnographic research explores my experience of being caught in a cognitive “perfect storm”. The raging elements include on the one hand, a disability, such that my recall seldom takes the form of personal narrative – recall requires prompting, and is often first propositional, not storied; together with a compensatory way of working with a heuristic frame - although it has allowed me to succeed in enterprise, it appears to others as an esoteric and bare cognitivism. On the other hand, my story is marked by a long and passionate pursuit of a Christian onto-epistemology, where knowing and being are inseparable; and my discoveries are theological, so any deficiency in academic markers makes them seem homiletic in nature. The former, cognitive parts of the storm seem antithetical to the “evocative” autoethnographer; the affective parts seem seditious to the academic. This paper explores the seemingly abstract academic phrase “Christian Speech Enactivism” to pose my dilemma: how can I be true to who I am, and use what I see as the epistemologically congruent methodology of Autoethnography to conduct my research?

Divine Self-Enrichment and Human Well-Being: A Systematic Theological Inquiry, with Special Reference to Development and Humanitarian Aid.

Dr. Jacqueline Service

Christian involvement in international development and humanitarian aid is prolific. It is premised on improving human well-being. With well-known notions of ‘love thy neighbour’ and a history and tradition of caring for the poor it seems obvious why churches and Christians are involved in ‘development’ and ‘humanitarian’ work. But is it that obvious? What is the rationale for Christian involvement in the contemporary dominant development paradigm, and not merely engagement in charity, preference for the poor, or liberation movements? As a secular agenda increasingly determines the development space, the question of what difference ‘faith’ makes to Christian faith-based development organisations (FBDOs) becomes both significant and urgent. Arguably, many Christian FBDOs have acquiesced to secular pragmatic rationales to undergird the formulation of their work. Much less referenced is the role of theology as an explanatory and pragmatic influence. In many ways therefore FBDOs are devoid of the influence of ‘faith’, or more particularly, the influence of a robust theological foundation. This thesis addresses this deficit by locating a Christian rationale for human well-being in relation to the doctrine of the triune God. Specifically, this theological inquiry examines the triune God’s work in, and for, creation with a view to identifying the characteristics and dynamics of divine well-being through the intra-trinitarian movement of gift and receipt. This gifting and receiving within the Godhead is identified as ‘Divine self-enrichment’ — defined as God enriching God in the perfection and fullness of God. The mode through which Divine self-enrichment occurs is essentially kenotic. The thesis provides an extended inquiry into the theological logic of kenotic-enrichment, and its implications for human well-being. In particular, the thesis argues that the pattern of kenotic-enrichment is to be discerned in the dynamic economy of God in creation and human life. When humanity exhibits characteristics of kenotic-enrichment identified in the economic Trinity, there we see intimations of the work of God. In this sense, the archetype of divine enrichment is antecedently operative in the creation; where kenotic-enrichment conditions created well-being. The thesis, therefore, argues that a theology of triune self-enrichment provides an alternate, and complementary, theological paradigm for Christian rationale and praxis of international development and humanitarian aid.



2 April 2019: Speakers - Dr Jon Newton and Dr U-Wen Low

Framing Revelation, Pentecostally

Dr Jon Newton

Research on the reception history of biblical texts shows that how a text is framed shapes the interpretation of that text. Framing a text refers to the assumptions, presuppositions and questions, even ideologies, the reader brings to that text, which bring different meanings out of it. The reception history of Revelation illustrates this point. In this paper, I will look at selected examples of how this framing has affected the interpretation of Revelation. For instance, reading frames drawn from events in the middle ages and Reformation helped create the Historicist interpretations; Dispensationalism influenced Pentecostal interpretations in the twentieth century; other early Pentecostal interpretations were framed by the experience of Pentecostals as a distinctive sect-like group. I then discuss how a different Pentecostal frame might influence the interpretation; that is, what would a reading influenced by the event of Pentecost, and its outflow in Acts, and the expansion of modern Pentecostalism, look like? I sketch parallels between Revelation and Acts and draw on C. Kavin Rowe's *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco-Roman Age*. Thus, I will suggest that such a reframing of Revelation would produce a more missional reading in line with the mission of the church given by Jesus in Acts 1:8. I will finish by comparing readings of Revelation 17-18 (the downfall of the harlot Babylon) and especially the call to "come out of her, my people" (Rv.18:4), from these perspectives.



Unity through Performance: A Performance - Critical Approach to the Book of Revelation

Dr U-Wen Low

Performance criticism understands various Biblical texts as performed works, which were later encoded as texts. Similar to liturgy, the performance of texts creates a new reality for listeners. By recreating reality through spoken language, John is effectively "reculturing" his audience, drawing them together through their shared experience of the text. However, the *ekphrasis* language of the text lends itself to multiple interpretations, meaning that every performance of Revelation has the potential to be a unique interpretation of the text. This paper aims to demonstrate that

despite this array of possible interpretations, the shared experience of a performance of Revelation nevertheless results in John's original goal: to unify an audience in the face of seeming persecution and oppression. The performance of the text therefore acts to transform the community that hears it, providing a sense of hope against oppression and giving fresh weight to John's three central priorities for the Christian community: to wait, witness, and worship.

7 May 2019: Speakers - Annie Tang and Dr DJ Konz

Ministry Approaches in Chinese Collectivism

Annie Tang

From field experience, mission workers have come to realise that it is crucial to understand how the cultural theme of collectivism shapes gospel ministry while aiming to fulfil the great commission. This paper explores: the features of Chinese collectivism, its implications for missionaries from non-collectivist cultures, the four sets of values of collectivism that conflict with Christianity, Jesus' evangelistic and discipleship efforts in context of collectivism, and approaches for ministries to Chinese background people. The purpose of this research is thus to facilitate the evangelistic and discipleship effort by suggesting the language, approaches, and methods suitable for ministry to diaspora Chinese.

The paper describes how collectivists view the society as a collection of groups, each with its values and expected behaviours. A hierarchical system of status keeps order and peace within the groups and in society at large. However, some values within collectivism have the potential to conflict values with Christianity. Nevertheless, Jesus' ministry work is an example of his adaptation to collectivist culture and the resulting benefits to his work for the gospel. The paper concludes that in following Jesus' model, Chinese ministries can overcome the obstacles collectivism imposes and use its features to advance the fulfilment of the great commission.

Suggestions for Chinese ministry workers include the formation of inclusive Christian groups that focus on oneness, placing emphasis on prayer and scripture reading, focussing ministry approach on the family as the basic unit of ministry, awareness of the primacy of status in Chinese culture and its acknowledgement in ministry work, and emphasising the importance of teaching Chinese background believers to find their identity in God and seeking God in decision-making.

The even Greater Commission: Relating the Great Commission to the *missio Dei*, and human agency to divine activity, in mission

Dr DJ Konz

This paper proposes a means to reconcile and properly order two of the dominant missiological concepts of the past century: the so-called “Great Commission” of Matthew 28:18–20, and the concept of *missio Dei*. The paper thus seeks to offer a more robustly trinitarian basis for mission based upon the Great Commission, and a means to better understand the relationship between divine and human agency in mission. To do so, the article offers an historical and theological primer on the two concepts, then contends that the Great Commission should be understood as a second-order frame of reference for mission, located *within* the wider trinitarian framework of the “even greater” co-missions of the Son and Spirit. Then, the paper then draws on the theology of Karl Barth to affirm that the church, insofar as its actions correspond to God’s own activity in the Spirit, can be regarded as the locus of human co-activity in the pneumatological *missio* of God, and, finally, proposes that properly ordering the Great Commission and the *missio Dei* allows for a co-operative, if asymmetrical, co-missional account of the relation between God’s actions and human agency in mission.



4 June 2019: Speakers - Joseph Kohring and Tania Harris

Listen to the Voice: A literary study of 1 Samuel 15 including an investigation of the significance of *herem*

Joseph Kohring

Frequently labelled a “*herem* text,” 1 Samuel 15 often presents a difficult moral dilemma. Modern scholarship has sought to resolve this issue by asking questions such as: “Did God really command genocide...” or “How could God command genocide...” This paper argues that these questions of historicity, unto themselves, devalue the text by ignoring the purpose of its composition and the artful, linguistic beauty found therein. In an effort to highlight the creativity in the narrative, this paper offers an alternate question: “What is the function of the text and how does it contribute to the purpose of 1 and 2 Samuel?” A close reading of the text reveals that *herem* is best understood as a literary vessel through which the narrative is told. This paper concludes that 1 Samuel 15 has been inaccurately labelled a “*herem* text” as *herem* is not the primary concern of the narrative. Instead, this narrative reveals that a king is not judged by his ability or inability to govern, but by his paradigm of power. This narrative reveals the command for Yahweh’s king: “Listen to the voice...”

The Impact of Pentecostal Revelatory Experiences on the Theology of Scripture

Tania Harris

Pentecostalism has been defined as a worldview that sees itself in historic continuity with its biblical counterparts. As such, Pentecostals expect to access experiences that correlate with the experiences of the first century church. These include revelatory experiences that involve direct and spontaneous interaction with the Holy Spirit via dreams, visions, auditions and prophetic encounters and the reception of extra-biblical, particularistic, future-oriented and previously unknown information. The capacity to “hear from God” in this way has been shown to be a core and distinctive component of Pentecostal spirituality. Pentecostals draw particularly on the narrative accounts to interpret and understand their own experience. Thus the stories and experiences depicted in the Scriptures become the model for how God’s voice is heard, discerned and responded to.

While one cannot make the claim that contemporary inspired experience is identical to biblical experience, it is clear that the correlation has a significant impact on the way Scripture is read and understood. Cargal (1993) reminds us that the relationship between the Scriptures and Pentecostal experience is a dialectic one.

Pentecostals understand their experience in light of the Scriptures (particularly the New Testament narratives) and their experience then acts back on the way the scriptures are received.

However, the relationship between inspired experience and the Scriptures has been a contentious one throughout history. The Pentecostal claim to contemporary inspired experience that is in alignment with the biblical characters has been seen to pose a threat to the uniqueness and authority of scripture and more generally, to theological orthodoxy itself. The inability to reconcile inspired experience and the Scriptures has often led to a rejection and/or dilution of revelatory experience, particularly by evangelicals in the reformed tradition.

The question is *in what way* does contemporary revelatory experience impact our understanding about the nature of Scripture? My paper will explore these issues drawing on the findings of my PhD studies in three urban Australian Pentecostal churches and in dialogue with relevant theorists, showing the implications of contemporary revelatory experience for understandings about the nature of inspiration in the Scriptures, hermeneutical approach to the Scriptures and authority of the Scriptures.

6 August 2019: Speakers - Dr. Stephen Fyson and Dr. Lyn Kidson

Where Grace and Truth Almost Meet: Suggestions from an Initial Study on Orthodoxy and Moral Therapeutic Deism

Dr. Stephen Fyson

The concept of “Mission Drift” has been well articulated over the last decades (e.g. Greer and Horst, 2014; Mellis, 1976; Clapp, 1996). Because of their awareness of such an historical dynamic that points to a diminishment or loss of faith emphasis, many of the evangelical Christian school leaders in Australia are asking themselves the question “What is most important for Christian schools currently?” This includes the newer crop of Christian faith-based schools, founded in the last thirty-five to forty-five years across the nation.



One question that has been asked within these discussions has been how well Christians (and others) know the basics of the faith (Barna 2009; 2017; Sheridan 2018). Part of this consideration is the scholarship that is warning that within the Christian church, there is a syncretic form of Christianity that is becoming increasingly dominant amongst young people. Smith and Denton (2005) have called this phenomenon Moral Therapeutic Deism (MTD).

This paper is based on an initial study of six focus groups with senior students, who completed a short survey that contained questions aligned to Christian evangelical orthodoxy (as in George Barna's research), and other questions that were aligned with Moral Therapeutic Deism (as per Christian Smith's research). The groups then discussed “What is it like to be at a Christian school?”

The purpose of the study was to help inform Christian school leaders about what some of their graduating students believed of their school experience, given the issues within the scholarship about competing priorities within Christian education.

There were five themes that appeared from the surveys and discussions with these final year students. These indicative themes are suggestive of areas for future research and policy development, which are not too dissimilar to the themes found in Blamires' (1963) work when exploring the question, “What is the Christian mind?”

The Prophetess Ammia of Philadelphia and the Rise and Growth of the Early Church in Asia Minor

Dr. Lyn Kidson

In this paper, I will be investigating the ministry of prophetess Ammia of Philadelphia. Ammia is listed as a prophet by the church historian Eusebius (4th C CE). She is among a group of prophets who were active in the church from the first or perhaps early second century: “Agabus, or Judas, or Silas, or the daughters of Philip, or Ammia in Philadelphia, or Quadratus” (*Church History*, 5.17. 2–4). In this paper, we will consider what prophets did in the early church and how they may have aided the rise and growth of the church in its first two centuries. In this context we will consider how Ammia's prophetic ministry may have aided the growth of the church in Asia Minor. It will also be proposed that the prophet's ministry disappeared in the contest for authority in the consolidating early church. Thus, it will be suggested that with the loss of this office that women's voices became silent in the church.

3 September 2019: Speakers - Rikk Watts and Kenelm Chan

Reframing the Trinity — How Israel's Scriptures can help us out of an ancient Trinitarian Muddle.

Rikk Watts

One tension faced in early Trinitarian theology was maintaining the unity and identity of the one God while at the same time affirming the Cappadocian order, Father, Son, and Spirit, as expressed in Matt 28.19's baptismal formula. This paper proposes that anchoring the NT language in Israel's Scriptures goes a long way to resolving this tension. In keeping with Scripture, the NT uses Lord to identify Jesus with the creator Yahweh, and son (Christ, only begotten, firstborn) to speak of his incarnation as created, faithful Israel. These two "grammars"—the creator's self-revelation as distinct from his relationship to his creation—are incommensurate in Israel's Scriptures but both present in the one Jesus. Problems arise when they are confused, such that, e.g., "betting" which belongs to the latter is imported into the former. Finally, we will suggest that Matt's baptismal formula was intended to address not the nature of the Trinity but the new identity of the believer. If so, it is probably not best employed to describe the Trinity *per se*.



Creating Music that Resounds: A Discussion with the Hillsong Huayu Team and Mandarin Translations of English Congregational Christian Music

Kenelm Chan

This paper discusses the implications of translated Contemporary worship music within Chinese congregations transnationally, looking at the role and meaning making that happens within the translations process through ethnomusicology and theology. First, a brief context of Mandarin congregational Christian music will be provided, alongside a discussion of the contribution of the "contemporary" worship genre to Chinese worship, and the cultural implications of translated worship songs in the Chinese church context. Second, I will discuss my preliminary findings from ethnographic interviews with the Hillsong *Huayu* (Mandarin) translations team. These interviews discuss the role and meaning of translations within the Hillsong Hills Chinese congregation context. This paper will highlight the need for further research into the cultural and ecclesiological implications of Mandarin translations of contemporary worship songs and models for its best practice.

22 October 2019: Speakers - Elise Leger and Dr Jim Twelves



Managing a growing international organisation: organisational culture and structure at Hillsong

Elise Leger

Due to a lack of research on the interaction between organisation theory, international business and religion, this research focuses on one international religious organisation, Hillsong.

Hillsong started as a church in 1983 and is today an international religious organisation that has diversified its activities (with charity works, a television channel, music production and publishing, education through a college, community networking and childcare facilities). Its

sustained global growth makes it an ideal model for study.

The preliminary results of my research have illustrated that organisational culture is the central component of Hillsong's activities. The goal of this research is to determine how much organisational culture can influence the structure and design of an international organisation and to propose a revision to the heterarchical model established by Gunnar Hedlund.

Reciprocity

Dr Jim Twelves

Alphacrucis College, Australia, has developed a Clinical Teaching Model (CTM) as an option within the initial teacher training awards, where student teachers are immersed, one or two days a week in a community of practice throughout their study. The Alphacrucis College model intentionally combines the pre-service teachers' spiritual formation with their professional development. The key findings confirm an increased sense of self-discipline and confidence, and an overwhelming appreciation for a practical application of their learning without the stress of assessment. What are the implications for Alphacrucis College's teaching and learning now and into the future: students as learners; lecturers as guides; cost effective subject delivery; building communities of practice with a mission mentality; collaboration with expert practitioners; cross faculty collaboration; innovative measures of learning; peer tutoring; innovative curriculum design; effective student support; increased student retention and much, much more.



5 November 2019: Speakers - Josh Mathis and Dr Caroline Batchelder

The Spirit, evolution, and human destiny: Wolfhart Pannenberg's pneumatology in relation to evolution and humanity's teleological destiny as the imago Dei

Josh Mathis

In recent decades, scholarship in the fields of theology and evolutionary science have increasingly reached a point of mutual coexistence: scientific disciplines yield advances in evolutionary theory and theology seeks to build a framework for belief that can exist in relation to those new scientific findings, without abandoning a biblical grounding. This paper contributes to such efforts to synthesise theology and evolutionary theory, contending that the Holy Spirit plays a fundamental role in the unfolding of creation through evolutionary means. Drawing on Wolfhart Pannenberg's pneumatology, this paper will offer proposals concerning the Holy Spirit's active involvement in continual creation through including that the Holy Spirit leads such a process of evolution as a means by which humanity moves towards its teleological destiny of the fullness of the imago Dei.

“What is the splendor of your name in all the earth?” A theological anthropology of Psalm 8 in the Tehillim

Dr. Caroline Batchelder

Psalm 8, the first praise psalm of the Psalter (*tehillim*, 'praises'), is well known for its reflection on the place of humanity and its acknowledged echoes of Genesis 1. There has been much meditation upon and scholarly analysis of this much-loved Psalm.

By means of a close examination of the biblical text, with attention to genre, poetics and rhetoric, this paper will argue that Psalm 8 represents a post-Genesis 3 re-envisioning of humanity, in particular covenanted humanity, as to their place within Yahweh's world. Approached through a series of lament psalms (3-7), Psalm 8's single verb of which a human is subject ('I see') provides a key to its anthropology. Building on established links with Genesis 1, I will argue that Psalm 8 provides an intra-creational, covenantal viewpoint on God's Genesis 1 order. It acts through praise to re-envision its users as to the privilege and responsibility of their appointed place in relation to Yahweh and 'all the earth'; to 'see' the cosmos as Yahweh has ordered it, along with its antithetical notions of power that relativise human rule. I will propose that the psalm's interrogative frame encourages the psalm user to take up this place in relation to Yahweh as the central act of human praise, with direct consequences for the splendour of Yahweh's name in the cosmos.

Psalm 8 provides a place to stand for those who have turned aside from 'the way of the wicked' in Psalm 1. It gives a voice to those who live with the dissonances of the fallen world, but whose eyes are re-opened to Yahweh's intentions for splendour.

