



## Session 1: Wednesday, June 5, 1–2:30 p.m.

### American Religion

#### “The Power of Narrative and Hope”

*Location: Lamb & Scroll*

**Scott Billingsley**, *University of North Carolina at Pembroke*, Respondent

- **Michael Ditmore**, Pepperdine University
- **Wesley Constandse**, Independent Scholar
- **Morgan Proffitt-Davis**, Princeton Theological Seminary

This panel examines the intersection of hope and narrative and how the stories we tell shape the challenges, opportunities, and collaborations we face. Michael Ditmore explores the narrative Thomas Jefferson created in the early nineteenth century in what is now called *The Jefferson Bible* and how Americans interpreted that narrative nearly a century later. Wesley Constandse seeks to revise the traditional narrative of westward migration by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the nineteenth century. He argues that many Latter-day Saints who never made it to Joseph Smith’s “Zion” maintained their faith and their hope in the promise of the LDS Church despite their failure to make it to the “promised land.” Finally, Morgan Proffitt-Davis examines the “missiologist martyr” narrative created by American missionary societies about the killings of American missionaries John and Betty Stam in communist China in the 1930s. She seeks to give voice to the characters in this story who were marginalized or ignored in order to canonize the Stams.

**Michael Ditmore**, *Pepperdine University*, “Corruptions, Extractions, and Mutilations: Reconsidering Thomas Jefferson’s ‘diamonds from a dunghill’ Gospel”

*The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth* was not made public until the early twentieth century and was never as widely read as some of Thomas Jefferson’s other writings. This essay seeks to reconsider *The Life and Morals* in a less systematic but no less probing way in terms of the kind of practice Jefferson undertook and the kind of reader and reading implicated. It asks the questions, how is Jesus proclaimed and how does Jesus proclaim, in Jefferson’s extracts? Furthermore, it explores what remains if one follows the order and emphases of Jefferson’s cuttings, what manipulations he navigated to produce a reduced Scripture, and how such a text is to be understood or used.

**Wesley Constandse**, *Independent Scholar*, “A Fleeting Hope While in the Crucible of Crisis”

In the 1850s, European immigrants were making the long and dangerous journey to Utah and the new home for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. These travelers were not seasoned frontiers people but were instead artisans, farmers, and middle-class professionals. The hardships they faced caused many to abandon the journey and settle in towns or unclaimed farmland along the way. Many of those who continued perished before they arrived at their destination. This is a story about the hope these people had in a promise of a new “Zion” and how their faith led them to make radically different decisions about continuing the journey.

**Morgan Proffitt-Davis**, *Princeton Theological Seminary*, “The Myth of Miasosheo”

In December 1934, a young missionary family from capitalist America, far from home in communist China, is taken, marched, and then publicly executed by the Red Army in the dead of winter. Only their three-month-old child, hidden in a blanket in an abandoned home, survives. Two days later, a local Chinese pastor finds her and carries this infant 100 miles to safety where she is pronounced healthy. Using primary and secondary resources from the Stam family’s archival donation to Princeton Seminary concerning the murders, this paper is a critical examination of Protestant media coverage of the event, arguing that the genre of these accounts should be considered less as historical and more as “martyrological.”

## Business and Economics

### “Christian Business Education”

*Location: Yarrnton*

**Andy Borchers**, *Lipscomb University*, Convenor

- **Lamar Reinsch**, *Lubbock Christian University*
- **Shannon Leinen**, *York University*
- **Christopher Horne**, *University of Tennessee Chattanooga*
- **Brad Lemler**, *Howard Payne University*

Christian business faculty face an interesting challenge in integrating faith into a business world that often doesn’t. In this session we will hear four papers that address this challenge in a variety of teaching settings – business ethics, business as mission, public administration and personal finance.

**Lamar Reinsch**, *Lubbock Christian University*

Faith-related business programs should adopt Mary Gentile’s *Giving Voice to Values* (GVV) business ethics curriculum. They can, then, also consider using GVV materials to encourage integration across various business and business-related courses. The introduction and adoption of Gentile’s GVV approach has been one of the exciting developments in ethics education during the past 15 years. Since 2010, the GVV approach has been implemented in educational programs for law, medicine, and a variety of business programs including accounting, economics, entrepreneurship, finance, leadership, and management. By 2017 GVV pedagogy had been used in nearly a thousand programs. The impact of a GVV case results from the emphasis on intention and action rather than intellectual analysis—the typical focus of business ethics pedagogy. In other words, the GVV approach reflects a Christian or Hebrew (rather than a Gnostic or Greek) understanding of the human being. Furthermore, programs that incorporate GVV cases have an opportunity to increase cross-disciplinary education. Faith-related business programs should take note.

**Shannon Leinen**, *York University*, “Business as Mission: A Case-Study of Building an Experiential Learning Course”

This session will explore a case study of how an online course could be built for distance learners that focuses on informing best practices on the subject of Business as Mission (BAM) for the degree requirements of a business or leadership department. The session will cover documenting the course building stages, the travel and strategic planning, and the experiential learning component of the execution of BAM. Foundational research gathered to be integrated into the curriculum, implementation of the course design process, the recruitment of BAM students, and the travel learning processes will inform future educational models and training processes.

**Christopher Horne**, *University of Tennessee Chattanooga*, “Preparing Christian Students for Public Administration Careers”

Christian students preparing for public administration careers want to know what working “as unto the Lord” means for government managers. This requires helping them answer two questions: (1) For the Christian management professional, does being a *public administrator* matter? (2) For the public administrator, does being a *Christian* matter? Building on an earlier empirical study, this paper provides a doctrinal foundation and conceptual

map for helping students explore these two questions. The integration of faith and work for the public administrator is unique in three ways: (1) The many Bible passages about government officials apply to public administration differently than other professions. (2) U.S. Christian public administrators have a different relationship to the First Amendment than other professionals. (3) Christian public administrators have a duty to the public to get faith-work integration right. Aspiring public administrators will find a solid Biblical framework for understanding their careers in the doctrine of common grace. To explore what is good and evil, students need a Biblical understanding of God's moral law, its relationship to legitimate human law, and the importance of exercising godly wisdom as image-bearing agents of common grace.

**Brad Lemler, Howard Payne University, "Teaching the Personal Finance Course in a Post-Virus Policy World"**

The personal finance course is a service to the larger college/university, as the course is typically not required for business majors. In contrast, the course is typically the only opportunity business schools have to add value for non-business majors. One similarity between the personal finance course and the business majors is that both focus on an entity—the individual/household or business/organization—functioning effectively within the macroeconomic environment. The goal in both instances is charting a course that allows for a thriving, flourishing entity. This paper recounts the use of Jeremiah's letter to the exiles in Babylon (Jeremiah 29:1-23) for developing a biblically-based confidence for graduates entering a challenging, difficult economic reality. A biblically based exile worldview helps students process these results and continue to plan for their futures.

## Everett Ferguson Lecture in Early Christian Studies

*Location: Stone Chapel*

**Lynn Cohick, Houston Christian University**

Cohick is the distinguished professor of New Testament and director of the Houston Theological Seminary at Houston Christian University (HCU), where she also leads the Doctor of Ministry program. Cohick has a vast array of publications focusing on the New Testament. Most recently, she is the author of *The Letter to the Ephesians* in the New International Commentary on the New Testament and the associate editor of the second edition of the IVP's *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, a leading reference work for global evangelical scholarship. Cohick has also published *Christian Women in the Patristic World* (co-authored with Amy B. Hughes), *Philippians* in *The Story of God Commentary*, and *Ephesians* in the *New Covenant Commentary*, among other books, essays, book chapters, and reviews in New Testament scholarship. Prior to her appointment at HCU, Cohick was provost and dean of academic affairs of Northern Seminary, which is part of the Northern Baptist Convention (now the American Baptists Churches, USA). At Northern, she helped to develop the DMin program and led the Center for Women in Leadership. In addition, she is a former department chair and dean at Wheaton College, as well as provost and dean at Denver Seminary. Cohick has also taught ministers and leaders at Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology in Kenya.

## Patristics

### “Reassessing Maximus Confessor: A Review of Jordan Daniel Wood’s *The Whole Mystery of Christ, Creation as Incarnation in Maximus Confessor*”

Location: Malamet

**Alden Bass**, *Oklahoma Christian University*, Convener

- **David Mahfood**, *Johnson University*
- **Travis Myers**, *Saint Louis University*
- **John Kern**, *Pepperdine University*
- **Jordan Wood**, *Belmont University*, Respondent

John Milbank hailed the publication of *The Whole Mystery of Christ* as “an epochal event in theology.” Maximus Confessor’s work marks the end of the patristic period; he is one of the few theologians whose Christian orthodoxy is universally recognized in the West and the East. Through a close analysis of Maximus’s works and engagement with German idealism, Wood offers a provocative new reading of Maximus which challenges classical understandings of Nicene theology, including the nature of the Trinity and the Creator/creation distinction. After a review of the book by three historical theologians, Wood will offer a response to the reviewers.

## Practical Theology

### “Hopeful Directions in Ministry to Young People: Addressing Crises of Faith and Mental Health”

Location: Journals Room

**Holly Catterton Allen**, *Lipscomb University*, Convenor

- **Bryan Nash**, *Chaplain, U of L Health – Peace Hospital, Louisville, KY*
- **Carrie Birmingham**, *Pepperdine University*
- **David Rahn** and **Ebonie Davis**, *Arbor Research/TENx10 Collaboration*

**Bryan Nash**, *Chaplain, U of L Health – Peace Hospital, Louisville, KY*, “Toward a Model of Spiritual Care with Adolescents in Behavioral Health Crisis”

This paper explores adolescent behaviors which result in inpatient psychiatric treatment, such as self-harm, suicidal ideation, and homicidal ideation. This paper suggests that these behaviors emerge at the intersection of trauma, adolescent identity development, and adolescent brain development. An assessment tool is proposed to assist with providing pastoral care to adolescents experiencing a behavioral health crisis.

**Carrie Birmingham**, *Pepperdine University*, “Nurturing Faith in Pluralistic Educational Contexts”

What is it like to be a Christian teacher working in a public K-12 school? How do Christian teachers navigate the complexities of remaining faithful to Christ while teaching in a pluralistic context? How do Christian public school teachers understand the Christian purpose of their work? This presentation offers answers to these questions by reporting findings of an interview study with Christian public school teachers from around the country.

**David Rahn** and **Ebonie Davis**, *Arbor Research/TENx10 Collaboration*, “Discipleship and the Crisis of Adolescent Faith”

An alarming number of young people are disaffiliating from the Christian faith. In 2023 more than 100 denominations and national ministry organizations banded together to launch the TENx10 Collaboration and address this concern. In support of that effort, this presentation reports findings of an Arbor Research extensive study of more than 2,000 friendships deemed important to young people, pointing to hopeful possibilities for relational, Christ-focused youth ministry.

## Theology and Philosophy

### "The Theological Anthropology of Salvation"

Location: *Pembroke*

**David Mahfood**, *Johnson University*, Convener

- **Andrew Sutherland**, *Pepperdine University*
- **John Kern**, *Pepperdine University*

Fully articulating what it means for humans to be saved requires, among other things, articulating who and what human beings are. This doctrinal connection between soteriology and theological anthropology raises difficult questions about our continued use of traditional soteriological claims. How can theologians and churches draw on doctrines of salvation from scripture and church history if our understanding of humanity has changed? And how should advances in scientific understandings of humanity impact what we say about salvation?

**Andrew Sutherland**, *Pepperdine University*, "'The Human Heart is Always Drawn by Love': Catherine of Siena's Anthropology and the Possibility of 'Objective' Moral Influence"

This paper argues that given the right anthropology, Christ's example of love on the cross not only inspires a "subjective" human response but contributes to humankind's "objective" reconciliation with God. In Catherine of Siena's thought, this is so because of an Augustinian anthropology that assumes the cooperative and constitutive work of memory, understanding/intellect, and will/love. As Christ's revelation of divine love fills the memory, it restores humanity's fallen faculties, thereby contributing something essential to reconciliation with God that human choice alone cannot. Catherine's soteriology thus reveals Augustinian possibilities for an "objective" moral influence theory of atonement.

**John Kern**, *Pepperdine University*, "Rethinking the Natural Desire to See God: Thomas Aquinas and the Contribution of Neurotheology"

In Christian Theology, spirituality has often been associated with the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence in sanctifying grace and its concomitant habits and operations. Nevertheless, modern neurotheology has identified the brain structures activated in mystical experience, highlighting natural spiritual potencies already built into the human brain. This paper will explore Thomas Aquinas's conception of the natural desire to see God as a theological formulation of this spiritual dimension in human neuroscience and will draw an analogy in Aquinas's own discussion of religion as a natural virtue.