



Session 3: Thursday, June 6, 9-10:30 a.m.

JJM Roberts Endowed Lecture in Old Testament Studies

“Hope When Empires Are in Crisis: Reading Daniel 5”

Location: Stone Chapel

John Walton, *Wheaton College*

Walton is professor of Old Testament emeritus at Wheaton College and Graduate School. Previously he was professor of Old Testament at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago for 20 years. Walton has authored numerous books including *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*, *The Lost World of Scripture*, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, *Wisdom for Faithful Reading*, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, *The Essential Bible Companion*, *The NIV Application Commentary: Genesis* and *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (with Victor Matthews and Mark Chavalas). His ministry experience includes church classes for all age groups, high school Bible studies, and adult Sunday school classes, as well as serving as a teacher for “The Bible in 90 Days.”

By any measure, Daniel lived in tumultuous times. As a Judean exile in Babylon, it would have been easy to abandon hope. Nevertheless, he faced his personal crises armed with a stalwart faith. The book of Daniel, however, looks beyond the personal crises of Daniel and his friends to focus on the ebb and flow of empires, a subject introduced with the king’s dream of an image and its interpretation by Daniel in chapter 2. In Daniel 5, the political situation in the Babylonian Empire has reached critical mass and the empire is on the brink of collapse. At Belshazzar’s Feast, important insights are given about the shifting of power and the transition of empires, all under the control of the Most High. We will offer a detailed analysis of the text with fresh insights into some of the controversial and mystifying elements found there, and then draw out the lessons that it has for us today about God’s control of time, history, political power, and empire. Such understanding can give us hope when we face times of political crisis.

American Religion

“Major Book Review: Richard T. Hughes and James L. Gorman, *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America, 3rd ed.*”

Location: Lamb and Scroll

Corey J. Markum, *Freed-Hardeman University*, Convener

- **Douglas A. Foster**, *Abilene Christian University*, Reviewer
- **Loretta M. Hunnicutt**, *Pepperdine University*, Reviewer
- **Edward A. Robinson**, *Texas College*, Reviewer
- **James. L. Gorman**, *Johnson University*, Respondent

For nearly 30 years, Richard Hughes’s *Reviving the Ancient Faith* has been considered by many the standard and most influential single-volume history of the Churches of Christ in the United States. Earlier this year, Eerdmans published a third edition of the book, significantly expanded and updated by James Gorman, who carries the narrative of American Churches of Christ forward from the 1960s into modern day. In this session, several leading scholars of Restorationist history will critically review the new edition of *Reviving the Ancient Faith*, assessing both the durability of Hughes’s original narrative and the contributions of Gorman’s update. Gorman will then offer their own responses and reflections on the book and its reviews.

Business & Economics

“Christian Business Leadership”

Location: Yarnton

Andy Borchers, *Lipscomb University*, Convenor

- **William Sharp**, *University of the Cumberland*s
- **Carol Lusk**, *Lipscomb University*
- **Makeba Lindsay D’Abreu**, *Virginia Commonwealth University*

Christian business academic programs often focus on the role of leadership in a variety of settings. In this session we will explore effective leadership styles in challenging economic and global times, the gender gap in leadership roles and leadership development among African American women.

William Sharp, *University of the Cumberland*s, “Hope Leadership: Navigating Crises through Servant Leadership in Business”

This paper explores the connection of hope, servant leadership, and crisis management within the business and economics realm. In times of crises, whether it be economic recession, economic downturns, global pandemics, or other challenges, leaders face the task of fostering hope among employees while navigating the complexities of uncertainty. Drawing on principles of hope, servant leadership, stewardship, having a foundational ideology of servant leadership in action, and a focus on the well-being of employees, this research aims to investigate how leaders can effectively instill positive outcomes, lessen stress and anxiety, build resilience, and foster a sense of purpose within their teams during times of crises. An essential tool for leaders in business and economics is utilizing servant leadership questionnaires to foster hope better and mitigate stress during a crisis. Through establishing a foundation of servant leadership, utilizing a servant leadership questionnaire for business leaders within organizations, and an analysis of the actions of past leaders in a time of crisis, the study will provide insights into the practical applications of servant leadership for promoting hope and organizational recovery in challenging times.

Carol Lusk, Lipscomb University, “The Sacred and Secular: Closing the Gender Leadership Gap with Women of Faith”

Despite the strides in education and workforce participation, women remain underrepresented in leadership positions, a curious disparity that invites a deeper understanding of underlying factors, including the unexamined influence of religiosity. These effects were investigated among a nationally representative sample of fully employed men and women (n=1150). Religiosity contributed to the leadership journey for men, but the relationships were more complex for women. This research encourages the optimistic view that religiosity is not a barrier but rather can be a beacon of hope for the challenges of women aspiring to leadership. The path forward is not only about addressing the gender leadership gap; it is about harnessing the unique strengths of women of faith to lead.

Makeba Lindsay D’Abreu, Virginia Commonwealth University, “Meeting the Complexity of the Leadership Development Needs for African American Women in Vocational Ministry: A Literature Review”

Effective leadership is critical to organizational success. Demand for targeted leadership development increases as women increasingly answer the call to vocational ministry leadership. The literature identifies specific development needs for African American women in vocational ministry across four management levels. Women broke through the stained-glass ceiling to assume leadership ministry roles. The movement into leadership caused seminaries to focus on the leadership development needs of African American women in ministry. They address the “call” and initial call “placement.” However, limited leadership development addresses needs associated with the four management levels complicated by the call placement/assignment. As it is with secular institutions, Christian institutions must ask, do African American women in vocational ministry leadership have unique leadership developmental needs, and what are the best methods to address them? This literature review discusses the leadership development needs of African American women in vocational ministry at the four major management levels. Since most literature does not address African American women, the literature will be analyzed through the critical lens of Womanist Theology. This literature review further advances women’s leadership development research by identifying a potential leadership development model for African American women in vocational ministry.

Makeba Lindsay D’Abreu, Virginia Commonwealth University, “Perceptions of Leadership Development Strategies from Three African American Women Senior Executives Called to Vocational Ministry and Serving in VUCA Environments”

Leadership development cannot be monolithic to be effective, especially in VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) environments. This phenomenological investigation of three senior executive-level African-American women in vocational ministry (AAWVM) examined their perceptions of the intersectionality of race, gender, faith, the call to ministry, and leadership development (LD) and career growth (CG) needs and identified components of high-impact leadership development and growth programs. I examined the perceived differences in call acceptances between women and men, LD needs to sustain role success (CD), strategies to advance in one’s career (CG), and effective onboarding and succession. I conducted a thematic analysis to study how participants described factors that impacted the progress of their leadership journey in the context of race, gender, faith, the call, and LD and CG needs.

Church & Academy

“Beginning in the Present: Genesis 1-2 in the Lab, Classroom, and Sanctuary”

Location: Malamat

Garrett Best, *York University*, Moderator

- **Josh Kingcade**, *Preston Road Church of Christ*
- **Kevin Youngblood**, *Harding University*
- **John Lewis**, *Lipscomb University*
- **Janet Kellogg Ray**, *North Texas University*

This session will explore the relationship between faith and science in the classroom and in the local church. Pew Research Center found that 56% of Americans say there is generally a conflict between science and religion, and a 2022 Barna study found that 32% of pastors doubt Christian beliefs because of science. Professors and preachers must navigate these issues as they teach Genesis 1-2 to students in the classroom as well as to believers in the sanctuary. Many approach this topic with preconceived ideas about what and how the creation account(s) in Genesis are communicating. This session brings together leading scholars and experienced ministry leaders to address the challenges and opportunities that arise when teaching the creation narrative(s) of Genesis, aiming to foster dialogue between the church and academy as we seek to navigate issues related to faith and science.

Josh Kingcade, *Preston Road Church of Christ*, “Rebuilding the Foundations: Reteaching Sunday School and Treading Lightly”

Some Christians’ greatest struggle to understand Genesis 1-2 comes from what they were taught as children. This presentation will examine how we might gently rebuild those foundations without toppling people’s faith.

Kevin Youngblood, *Harding University*, “Creation in Stereo: The Significance of Genesis’ Two Distinct Creation Accounts”

Contrary to popular opinion, Genesis presents two distinct creation accounts that differ with respect to the duration, starting point, sequence, and method of creation. In fact, it was not unusual for ancient Near Eastern cultures to hold multiple creation accounts in tension. They appeared to grasp, perhaps better than we do, that the cosmos and its origins are profound mysteries that cannot be reduced to a single narrative. While Genesis certainly does challenge many aspects and claims of neighboring creation myths, it at least concurs with their notion that the profundity and significance of creation cannot be limited to a singular account. By placing these two differing accounts side-by-side, Genesis is signaling to readers that the two accounts are not intended to be read as literal reportage of the precise historical steps God took in forming the cosmos, but rather symbolic theological statements regarding the nature of Creator, creation, and their relationship to each other. As such, Genesis 1-2 need not be read as excluding what the natural sciences have discovered in God’s “Book of Nature” as the apparent mechanisms and means of cosmic, animal, and human development.

John Lewis, *Lipscomb University*, “Genesis 1 and 2 in Light of Human Anthropology”

With fossil remains from over 6,000 individuals, the evidence from paleoanthropology for human evolution is nearly impossible to ignore. Likewise, the evidence from genetic analysis converges on the same conclusion—human evolution has proceeded like most other species. The question then, is what does that mean for Christians that want to take both Scripture and science seriously? After providing a summary of the paleoanthropological and genetic evidence, several models for reconciling hominin evolution with the Biblical account of our origins will be considered.

Janet Kellogg Ray, *North Texas University*, “Monkey Science: Evangelicals and Science Denial”

At the beginning of the pandemic, many hoped for a more positive relationship between science and faith, perhaps a joint effort to fight a common enemy. Unfortunately, it drove us further apart. Why are evolution, COVID, and climate change at the top of the evangelical hit list? How did we get here?

President's Session

"Higher Education Under Attack: Issues on the Front Lines"

Location: Pembroke

- **Candice McQueen**, *President, Lipscomb University*
- **David French**, *Visiting Distinguished Professor of Public Policy, Lipscomb University*

Recent headlines pertaining to higher education present a dizzying array of issues for educators. Topics range from political polarization, regulatory agendas, college access, funding authorization, financial aid authorization and delays, academic freedom, free speech, campus safety, and how leaders respond to world crises. The expected enrollment cliff of the next decade coupled with the fickle public perception of the value of higher education adds to the mounting pressures that leaders face. Even the purpose and mission of universities are under scrutiny with new regulations aimed at assessing the value of academic programming. In this session, Lipscomb President Candice McQueen joins David French, visiting distinguished professor of public policy at Lipscomb and a political commentator and former attorney, to discuss the impact of current issues on faith-based institutions and the challenge of leading a Christian university community that reflects the society it resides within.

Theology and Philosophy

"Explorations in Theology"

Location: Journals Room

David Mahfood, *Johnson University*, Convener

- **Andrew Gass**, *Portland Seminary*
- **Fidel Arnecillo, Jr.**, *California State University, San Bernardino*
- **Finney Premkumar**, *University of Birmingham*

This peer reviewed session is comprised of papers addressing contemporary theological issues, including the role of tradition in the Restoration Movement, the possibility of hope as an epistemic stance towards the existence of God, and the implications of theism or its rejection for how the laws of physics can be interpreted.

Andrew Gass, *Portland Seminary*, "A Restorationist Plea to Stop Looking Backwards: *Tradition and Apocalypse* in the Churches of Christ"

This paper aims, in conversation with David Bentley Hart's *Tradition and Apocalypse*, to propose a "modest" reassessment of the purpose of the Restoration Movement. The goal of Restoration movements should not be to restore a mythical set of past practices but to recapture the apocalyptic mindset of the first century, which held that the telos was breaking into the present age. This means that to look towards tradition as the sole evaluator of doctrine, practice, and thought is insufficient; we look towards tradition to inform us how we best unveil the future working in the present. Nonetheless, we must recognize that we are to be stretching forward into the eschatological unveiling of the church as she is meant to be.

Fidel Arnecillo, Jr., *California State University, San Bernardino*, "A Hopeful Theist"

There are arguably evidences for theism. But they are not enough to epistemically legitimize belief in its truth. So, belief is not the appropriate propositional attitude in relation to theism. Given the epistemic values of intellectual humility and intellectual honesty, it is not intellectually virtuous to believe that theism is true. I argue that hoping that it is true is the appropriate propositional attitude. It is a kind of hope that lacks belief, that is distinguishable from faith, and that values religious realism. In the end, I consider possible or anticipatory objections from Alexander Pruss and Michael Rea.

Finney Premkumar, *University of Birmingham*, "Do the Laws of Physics Lie? The Representational (Metaphysical) Limitations of Science and its Implications for Thinking about God"

This brief paper will, first and foremost, discuss the nature of science (especially physics) and its methodology in order to show that it is not necessarily truth-conferring i.e., get us to what Richard Rorty called a 'final vocabulary' or truth. I will argue that the non-representational and therefore non-truth conferring status of science undermines its usage by Atheists as the foundational paradigm for denying God's reality God. I will conclude by re-describing the boundary lines for limited Atheistic deliberations about the existence of God and by redirecting the kinds of bold extensions Theists can make in their case for God.