



## Theology and Philosophy

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

#### **“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.

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

### “Explorations in Theology”

Location: Journals Room

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

- **Andrew Gass**, *Portland Seminary*
- **Fidel Arneccillo, 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 Arneccillo, 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.

## Session 4: Thursday, June 6, 1:45–3:15 p.m.

### “The Asbury Outpouring: Thinking Theologically About Revival”

Location: Malamat

**Mark Powell**, *Harding School of Theology*, Convener

- **Jason Vickers**, *Baylor University*
- **Tom McCall**, *Asbury Theological Seminary*

Jason Vickers and Tom McCall, two well-regarded systematic theologians, were teaching at Asbury Theological Seminary in spring 2023 during the Asbury Outpouring. In their recent book *Outpouring: A Theological Witness* (Cascade Books, 2023), they give a personal account of the event and reflect on charismatic phenomena like revivals from the standpoint of theology. In this session they will share personal and theological reflections on the Asbury Outpouring, with questions and discussion to follow.

## Session 5: Friday, June 7, 9-10:30 a.m.

### Explorations in Philosophical Theology

Location: Grand Hall

- **Andrew Wong**, *Dallas Theological Seminary*
- **Fidel A. Arnecillo, Jr.**, *California State University, San Bernardino*

This peer reviewed session offers two papers addressing theologically significant issues in connection with the discipline of philosophy; the first considering the ecclesiological problem of division and the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12 in connection with Socrates as presented in Plato’s Republic, and the second applies analytic philosophical methods to questions about uniqueness and identity to question as they apply to God.

**Andrew Wong**, *Dallas Theological Seminary*, “Developing an Ecclesiology with Paul and Socrates: Reading 1 Corinthians 12 with Socrates to Find Hope in an Age of Division”

This paper endeavors to develop an understanding of Paul’s ecclesiology in 1 Corinthians 12, using Paul’s allusions to Socrates in Plato’s Republic as an interpretive key. By placing Paul’s development of the Church-as-a-body metaphor in conversation with Socrates, I argue that Paul’s ecclesiology is best understood when read in conjunction with Greek philosophical visions of the ideal State. In doing so, the study offers a hope-filled vision of unity to the Church amid an age of division by contending that Paul’s ecclesiological foundations are centered around egalitarian ideals of unity, maintained through well-defined relationships, present in all domains of society.

**Fidel A. Arnecillo, Jr.**, *California State University, San Bernardino*, “Uniqueness and Identity”

Here’s an intuitively true claim, which I call UI (i.e., “U” for uniqueness and “I” for identity):

UI: If each object in a pair of objects, x and y, is unique, then they are not identical.

Some theological claims affirm the uniqueness of each in a pair of entities and identicalness of the two. For example,

1. The God of the Bible and the God of the Quran are individually unique but identical.
2. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are individually unique but identical.

I argue that, despite UI, (1) and (2) can be coherently formulated.