

the THOMAS H. OLBRICHT
CHRISTIAN SCHOLARS
CONFERENCE

HOPE

AMIDST CRISES:
CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES
AND COLLABORATIONS

June 5-7, 2024



Lanier Theological Library



christianscholarsconference.org

Hope Amidst Crises

June 5-7, 2024

*Lanier Theological Library and Learning Center, Houston, Texas
in partnership with Lipscomb University*

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Welcome Letter from Mark Lanier

Becky and I are thrilled to welcome you to the 2024 Christian Scholars' Conference. The Lanier Foundation and its staff hope our facilities will provide a comfortable and inspiring campus for your learning, fellowship, and edification!

If you were with us last year, welcome back! If this is your first time to visit us while attending the conference, we hope to make this a memorable experience for you. Besides over 100,000 volumes in our library and our learning center with our own Oxford Christ Church inspired dining hall, we also have a new residents facility complete with an English pub that offers meeting rooms and expanded parking facilities.

We hope you take time to explore our gardens and green spaces. The grounds are especially inviting at nightfall. Our facilities were designed with conferences like this in mind. We hope you find chances to pray and worship as well as teach and learn.

Our goal is to make your time here valuable in expanding God's kingdom. We are honored to be partnering with Lipscomb University again this year, and we offer you a hearty Texas and Southern hospitality welcome! God bless you as you give your presentations, learn new truths, and expand your community with others who love the Lord.

Mark Lanier

*Founder and CEO, Lanier Law Firm
Founder, Lanier Theological Library
Lipscomb University Trustee*



Welcome Letter from Candice McQueen

On behalf of Lipscomb University, welcome to the 2024 Thomas H. Olbricht Christian Scholars' Conference, hosted for a second year at the Lanier Theological Library and Learning Center. I am grateful to Becky and Mark Lanier and the Lanier Theological Library Foundation for welcoming the conference back to Houston, Texas.

As academic scholars gather together from across the country and around the world, I look forward to the discussions that will take place focused on our theme, *Hope Amidst Crises: Challenges, Opportunities and Collaborations*, and how we will collaborate together to share the hope of God throughout our academic spheres of influence.

I pray that your engagement with the conference is encouraging, illuminating, and blessed. Thank you for joining us.

Dr. Candice McQueen

President, Lipscomb University

Our Recent Host History and Future Plans

Lipscomb University

(2008, 2009, 2010)

Pepperdine University

(2011)

Lipscomb University

(2012, 2013, 2014)

Abilene Christian University

(2015)

Lipscomb University

(2016, 2017, 2018)

Lubbock Christian University

(2019)

Lipscomb University

(2021, 2022)

Lanier Theological Library and Learning Center

(June 7-9, 2023)

Lanier Theological Library and Learning Center

(June 5-7, 2024)

Abilene Christian University

(June 4-6, 2025)

A dramatic seascape featuring a large, turbulent wave with white foam crashing against a dark, stormy sea. The sky is filled with heavy, grey clouds, and a bright sunburst is visible in the upper center, creating a high-contrast scene. The word "SCHEDULE" is centered in the middle of the image in a white, serif font.

SCHEDULE

Wednesday, June 5

All day

- Information Desk (*Alcove at the Staircase in the LLC*)
- Book Signings/Exhibitors (*Main Hall of the Library*)
- Coffee and Beverage service

8 a.m. – 11 a.m.

- Registration Packet Pickup (*The Lamb & Scroll*)

9:30 a.m. – 11 a.m.

- Opening ceremony (*The Grand Hall in the LLC*)
Mark Lanier and Candice McQueen
Mike Cope: Honoring Landon Saunders

11:15 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.

- Networking Lunch – Box lunches (*Pick up lunches in the Cloister in the LLC*)
Participants are invited to picnic around the property or enjoy lunch in the Grand Hall in the Learning Center.

1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

- Session #1 (*Designated rooms in the LLC, Lamb & Scroll, LTL.*)
- Everett Ferguson Endowed Lecture: Lynn Cohick (*Stone Chapel*)

2:45 p.m. – 4 p.m.

- John T. Willis Plenary: Jonathan Brant (*The Grand Hall in the LLC*)

4:15 p.m. – 5:45 p.m.

- Session #2 (*Designated rooms in the LLC, Lamb & Scroll, LTL.*)
- Van Rheen Endowed Lecture: Mark Love (*Stone Chapel*)

6 p.m. – 7:15 p.m.

- Dinner (*Grand Hall in the LLC*)
This session is sponsored by TenX10
- PhD students & Randolph Mentoring Program Reception (*The Red Dog at Trowbridge Village*)

7:15 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

- Fred D. Gray Plenary in Human and Civil Rights: Esau McCaulley (*The Grand Hall in the LLC*)

Thursday, June 6

All day

- Information Desk (*Alcove at the Staircase in the LLC*)
- Book Signings/Exhibitors (*Main Hall of the Library*)
- Coffee and Beverage service

6:30 a.m. – 8 a.m.

- CSC Board Meeting (*Hosted by Becky Lanier, in the Cabana at the Lanier home*)

8:15 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.

- Worship Greg Straughn & DJ Bulls (*Stone Chapel*)

9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

- Session #3 (*Designated rooms in the LLC, Lamb & Scroll, LTL*)
- JJM Roberts Endowed Lecture in OT Studies: John Walton (*Stone Chapel*)

10:45 a.m. – Noon

- Frank and Della Pack Plenary: David French (*The Grand Hall in the LLC*)

12:15 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

- Lunch – Box lunches (*Pick up lunches in the Cloister in the LLC*)
Participants are invited to picnic around the property or enjoy lunch in the Grand Hall in the Learning Center.

1:45 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.

- Session #4 (*Designated rooms in the LLC, Lamb & Scroll, LTL*)
- Christian Apologetics Lecture: Charlie Styles (*The Stone Chapel*)

3:30 p.m. – 5 p.m.

- Robert E. and Bonnie Cone Hooper Plenary: Mark Lanier (*The Grand Hall in the LLC*)

5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

- Dinner (*Grand Hall in the LLC*)

7:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

- Networking, sponsor and publisher visits, and tours of the property.
- Book Signings/Exhibitors (*Main Hall of the Library*)
- Coffee and Beverage service

Friday, June 7

All day

- ☐ Information Desk (*Alcove at the Staircase in the LLC*)
- ☐ Book Signings/Exhibitors (*Main Hall of the Library*)
- ☐ Coffee and Beverage service

8:1 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.

- ☐ Worship Greg Straughn & DJ Bulls (*Stone Chapel*)

9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

- ☐ Session Slot #5 (*Designated rooms in the LLC, Lamb & Scroll, LTL, Stone Chapel*)

10:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

- ☐ Abraham J. Malherbe Plenary: NT Wright (*The Grand Hall at the LLC*)
This plenary is sponsored by Zondervan Academic

TEN x10

According to the Pew Research Center,
less than 50 percent of the U.S. population
will declare themselves Christian by 2070.

TENx10 is a collaborative movement dedicated to
making faith matter more to young people by providing
resources and research to support Christian leaders in
their ministry with the next generation.

Research opportunities are available.
For more information, email research@tenx10.org.



Visit tenx10.org

The image is a full-page background featuring a dramatic seascape. In the foreground, a large, dark blue-green wave is crashing, with white foam and spray visible. The water is turbulent and textured. Above the wave, the sky is filled with heavy, dark grey clouds. A bright sunburst or light source is visible in the upper center, breaking through the clouds and creating a strong contrast. The overall mood is powerful and intense.

FEATURED SPEAKERS

Everett Ferguson Endowed Lecture

Wednesday June 5, 1 p.m., Stone Chapel



Lynn H. Cohick

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.

“I am a Christian”: Ancient Female Martyrs and the Hope of Resurrection”

Ancient Christian female martyrs, such as Thecla, Blandina, Perpetua, and Felicitas, played a significant role in shaping the church's theology and praxis. The testimony of these martyrs challenged Roman imperial power structures. Their witness offers us a theological model for engaging our context through the lens of resurrection hope.

John T. Willis Plenary

Wednesday June 5, 2:45 p.m., Grand Hall



Jonathan Brant

Brant is dean for research and culture at Wycliffe Hall. At Oxford, he leads a new initiative, The Renaissance Project. He served as the founding director of the Oxford Character Project from 2014 to 2023 and is currently involved as an associate fellow. He holds a DPhil in Theology at Trinity College, Oxford, focusing on culture and the arts, particularly cinema. He is the author of many popular and academic books and articles and his research and teaching interests lie in the fields of systematic theology, theology of arts and culture, virtue ethics, and the theory and practice of contemporary mission.

“Christian Scholars and the Hope of a New Renaissance”

Over the past two thousand years, in times of turmoil and crisis, the Christian community has sometimes been able to offer wider society the resources needed for cultural renewal. A select few of these occasions have come to be known as times of Renaissance. This lecture will look back to one such occasion, the Northumbrian Renaissance of the 7th and 8th centuries, highlighting the role of Christian scholarship, leadership and arts in such periods of renewal. It will then offer ideas as to why and how Christian scholars and higher-education institutions might contribute to such an endeavor in our own time. Drawing on illustrations from art and literature, the lecture will conclude with consideration of how we might ensure that any such undertaking remains truly Christian.

Gailyn Van Rheen Lecture on Mission and World Christianity

Wednesday June 5, 4:15 p.m., Stone Chapel



Mark Love

Love is professor of theology and ministry and director of the Master of Religious Education in missional leadership program at Rochester University. He holds a PhD from Luther Seminary and a DMin from Abilene Christian University. Love served congregations in Texas and Oregon in full-time ministry for 17 years before moving into the world of academia. He consults with congregations across the United States who are interested in cultivating a missional identity. His most recent book is *It Seemed*

Good to the Holy Spirit and to *Us: Acts, Discernment, and the Mission of God* (2023 Wipf and Stock).

“The Missional Necessity of Discernment”

Discernment occupies a prominent place in many discussions of what constitutes mission. It is imperative to underscore that discernment must transcend a conventional role as a mere procedural facet in the determination of missional action; rather, it is a necessity for any theology of participation. This presentation endeavors to connect the areas of discernment and missional theology, exploring theological, biblical, and philosophical sources.

Fred D. Gray Plenary in Human and Civil Rights

Wednesday, June 5, 7:15 p.m., Grand Hall



Esau McCaulley

McCaulley is an author and associate professor of New Testament at Wheaton College. McCaulley’s research and writing focus is on New Testament theology. He completed his doctoral studies at the University of St. Andrews where he studied under the direction of scholar N.T. Wright. His doctoral dissertation, entitled “Sharing in the Son’s Inheritance,” looks at the role Jewish messianism played in Paul’s argument in Galatians that Jesus has made believers heirs in the Messiah to the Abrahamic promises. In 2019

he published the award-winning book *Reading While Black*, the timing of which happened to coincide with a widespread national conversation on race. Since then, his work has continued to expand into more public theology, including a children’s book entitled *Josey Johnson’s Hair and the Holy Spirit*. He is a contributing opinion writer for the New York Times. His writings have also appeared in places such as The Atlantic, Washington Post and Christianity Today.

“How the Gospels set us Free: The use of the Jesus Tradition in the Slavery and Abolitionist debates of the 19th Century”

Many people know about the role Paul’s Epistles played in the abolitionist/slavery debates of the 19th century. Less attention has been paid to the function of the Jesus tradition in the slavery debates. This paper will examine how pro and antislavery advocates used the gospels to support their position. It will show that the abolitionist tradition made extensive use of all elements of the life of Christ and that the proslavery party found themselves on the defensive. Despite what the scholarly consensus and popular opinion might suggest, Christian abolitionists displayed a genuine confidence that the gospels read rightly supported their cause. Their use of theologically informed and biblically faithful imagination provides a helpful model for our own practices of Scriptural interpretation today.

J.J.M. Roberts Lecture in Old Testament Studies

Thursday, June 6, 9 a.m., Stone Chapel



John Walton

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.”

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

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.

Frank and Della Pack Plenary

Thursday, June 6, 10:45 a.m., Grand Hall



David French

French is a New York Times columnist and distinguished visiting professor of public policy at Lipscomb University. Prior to beginning his work as an opinion columnist with the New York Times in January, French was a senior editor at The Dispatch, which he helped launch, and a contributing writer at The Atlantic. He also served as a senior writer for National Review and as a senior fellow at the National Review Institute. The majority of his career was devoted to practicing law, working in both commercial and constitutional

litigation. In 2006, he joined the United States Army Reserve as a judge advocate general. He deployed to Iraq in 2007 and served in Diyala Province, where he was awarded a Bronze Star. During his legal career, he litigated in federal courts and served as a lecturer at Cornell Law School. French is also a New York Times bestselling author. One of his most recent books is *Divided We Fall: America’s Secession Threat and How to Restore Our Nation*. French is a graduate of Harvard Law School and Lipscomb University.

“Get Your Heart Right—the Necessary Precondition for Engaging in Polarized Times”

Many Christians are familiar with orthodoxy, the dedication to right belief. They’re also familiar with orthopraxy, demonstrating right conduct. Since the beginning of the church, the contest between prioritizing faith or deeds has divided Christians. The orthodox are intolerant of the heterodox, and those who commit

themselves to the missional work of the church are often contemptuous of theological disputes. We know from scripture that “faith without works is dead”—that both faith and works sustain each other—but what is it that sustains both faith and works? Orthocardia, the concept of a right heart, is upstream of both orthodoxy and orthopraxy. It’s out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks. It’s the heart for God that turns us to orthodoxy and the heart for our neighbors that turns us towards orthopraxy. Yet we pay insufficient attention to forming the right heart—love for God and love for man—as the precondition for our engagement with the world, and without that right heart, we are likely to become the “sounding gong” or “clanging cymbal” that Paul warned us against in the Book of 1 Corinthians.

Christian Apologetics Featured Lecture

Thursday, June 6, 1:45 p.m., Stone Chapel



Charlie Styles

Styles is CEO of the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics (OCCA). With more than 15 years of experience in the field of theology and pastoral studies, Styles is passionate about helping people discover and defend the truth and relevance of Christianity. Through the OCCA, he leads a global team of speakers, trainers, and researchers who engage with various audiences and contexts on the questions and challenges of faith and culture. Before joining OCCA in 2022, he served as the rector of the Wycliffe Fellowship at the Church of England for nine years. He holds an undergraduate degree from Durham University and a postgraduate diploma in theology and pastoral studies from Oak Hill Theological College.

“Engaging the Changing Landscape: The Urgent Need for Intellectual Credibility in Christian Apologetics”

Each generation presents its own challenges for those seeking to share Christian truth. But many evangelists are finding a renewed openness to spirituality, and we have seen some high-profile people turning to faith. Is this a sign of things to come or an historical blip? The online world provides some wonderful opportunities to engage with people from all over the world, and yet many seem distracted—doom-scrolling their way through each day. How can the Christian church present a compelling and rigorous case for Christ in an age overwhelmed with information and misinformation?

This lecture will explore the contemporary opportunities facing Christian apologetics within the dynamic cultural, philosophical, and technological developments of the modern era. Styles will argue for the paramount importance of intellectual credibility in engaging with both skeptics and seekers. As we embrace contemporary challenges with confidence, we can see that academic integrity not only enhances the persuasiveness of apologetics but also enriches one’s own understanding and appreciation of the Christian faith.

Robert E. and Bonnie Cone Hooper Plenary

Thursday, June 6, 3:30 p.m., Grand Hall



Mark Lanier

Lanier is founder of the Lanier Law Firm and one of the top civil trial lawyers in America. Attorney, author, teacher, minister, and expert storyteller, Lanier has earned international recognition for his skill in the courtroom. He founded the Lanier Law firm in 1990 that today has offices in Houston, New York, and Los Angeles. Known for his intense trial preparation and engaging style with juries, Lanier has garnered more than \$20 billion in cumulative verdicts during his highly acclaimed career as well as successfully litigating several landmark cases. He founded the Lanier Theological Library and Learning Center, one of the nation’s

"American Culture in 2024: Demographics, Law and Christian Leadership"

Abraham J. Malherbe Plenary

*This session is
sponsored by*
**Zondervan
Academic**



Wright is senior research fellow at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford University. He is one of the world's leading Bible scholars, with expertise in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity, the New Testament, and Biblical Studies. He is also emeritus professor at the University of St. Andrews and the former Bishop of Durham. He has published more than 85 books including: *The Case for the Psalms*, *How God Became King*, *Simply Jesus*; *After You Believe*, *Surprised by Hope*, *Simply Christian*, *The New Testament and the People of Victory of God*, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, and most recently, *Paul and the*. He is co-founder of N.T. Wright Online which features more than 40 online courses.

“All the fullness of God (Ephesians 3.19)”

Israel's scriptures promise on several occasions that the whole creation will in the end be full of the knowledge, or the glory, of God. The early Christians understood the gift and presence of the Holy Spirit as the advance fulfillment of this promise: the church was itself designed to be the small working model of new creation. This insight provides a fresh view of several passages, notably in Acts and Ephesians, and hence a fresh approach to the church's life and mission.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

New from N.T. Wright & Michael F. Bird

**AN URGENT CALL FOR CHRISTIANS EVERYWHERE TO
EXPLORE THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM AMID THE
POLITICAL UPHEAVAL OF OUR DAY.**

"Readers across religious and political spectrums will find much to grapple with in this sharply written text..."

—KRISTIN KOBES DUMEZ

"No other book... comes even close to locating, so insightfully and in such rich detail, Christian political activity within the context of the coming kingdom."

—NICHOLAS WOLTERSTORFF

"An excellent, short pilgrimage in biblical political theology... We need this book acutely."

—MIROSLAV VOLF

"Help us think clearly and deeply about what Christians are called to be and do in our present day."

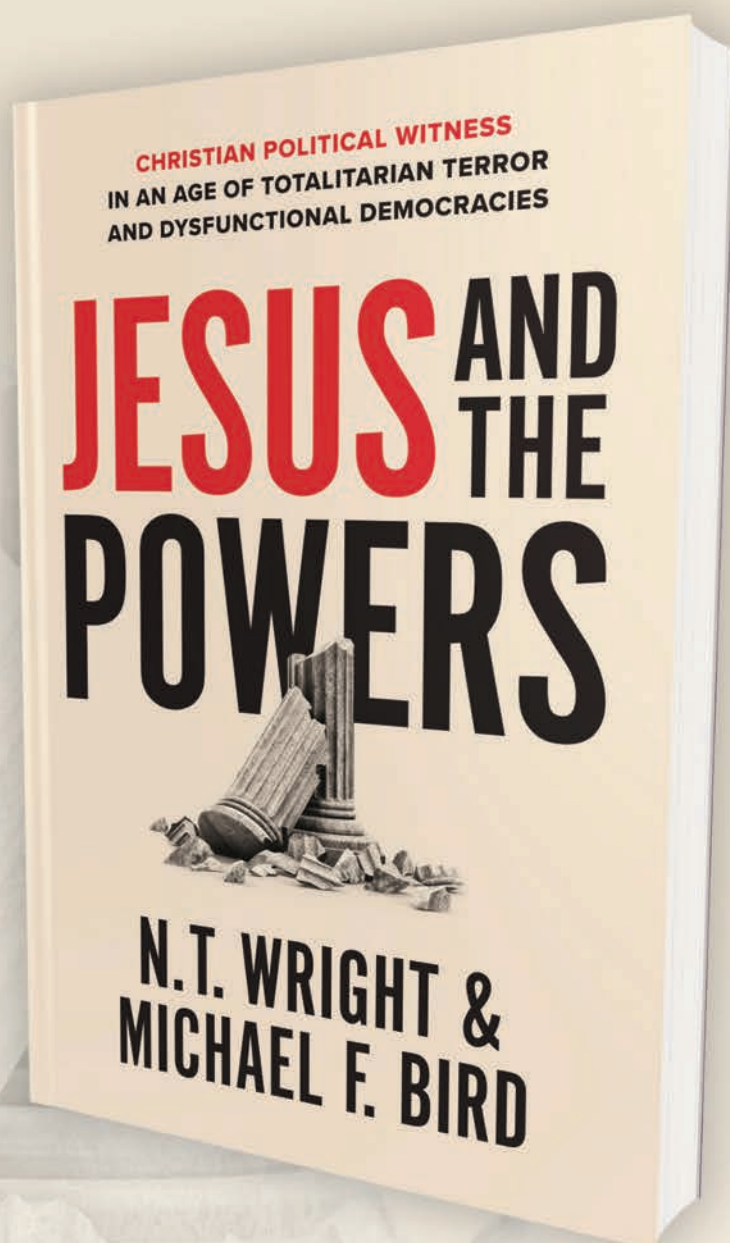
—ANDREW L. WHITEHEAD

"The invitation to explore what faithfulness means between Christian separatism and Christian nationalism is a gift..."

—AMOS YOUNG

"In *Jesus and the Powers*, you will find Mike Bird and Tom Wright... guiding Christians thoughtfully, practically, and jovially through a minefield of contemporary political and social questions."

—CHRISTOPHER WATKIN





SESSIONS

Everett Ferguson Lecture in Early Christian Studies

“I am a Christian’: Ancient Female Martyrs and the Hope of Resurrection” – *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.

Ancient Christian female martyrs, such as Thecla, Blandina, Perpetua, and Felicitas, played a significant role in shaping the church’s theology and praxis. The testimony of these martyrs challenged Roman imperial power structures. Their witness offers us a theological model for engaging our context through the lens of resurrection hope.

American Religion

“The Power of Narrative and Hope” – *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 “missiological 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" – Yarnton

Andy Borchers, *Lipscomb University*, Convenor

Lamar Reinsch, *Georgetown University*, Emeritus

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, *Georgetown University*, Emeritus

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.

Practical Theology

“Hopeful Directions in Ministry to Young People: Addressing Crises of Faith and Mental Health” – *Journals Room*

Holly Catterton Allen, *Lipscomb University*, Convenor

Bryan Nash, *Chaplain, UofL Health – Peace Hospital, Louisville, KY*

Carrie Birmingham, *Pepperdine University*

David Rahn and **Ebonie Davis**, *Arbor Research/TENx10 Collaboration*

Bryan Nash, *Chaplain, UofL 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.

Patristics

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

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.

Theology and Philosophy

“The Asbury Outpouring: Thinking Theologically About Revival” –
Pembroke

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.

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Gailyn Van Rheen Endowed Session on Mission and World Christianity

“The Missional Necessity of Discernment – *Stone Chapel*”

Mark Love, *Rochester University*

Scott Hagley, *Pittsburgh Theological Seminary*, Respondent

Love is professor of theology and ministry and director of the Master of Religious Education in missional leadership program at Rochester University. He holds a PhD from Luther Seminary and a DMin from Abilene Christian University. Love served congregations in Texas and Oregon in full-time ministry for 17 years before moving into the world of academia. He consults with congregations across the United States who are interested in cultivating a missional identity. His most recent book is *It Seemed Good to the Holy Spirit and to Us: Acts, Discernment, and the Mission of God* (2023 Wipf and Stock).

Discernment occupies a prominent place in many discussions of what constitutes mission. It is imperative to underscore that discernment must transcend a conventional role as a mere procedural facet in the determination of missional action; rather, it is a necessity for any theology of participation. This presentation endeavors to connect the areas of discernment and missional theology, exploring theological, biblical, and philosophical sources.

Arts & Spirituality

“Barbie, Dolly Parton, and Taylor Swift: Creativity, Strength, and Truth Telling” – *Pembroke*

Micki Pulleyking, *Missouri State University*, Convener

Nancy Posey, *Lipscomb University*

Karen Fletcher Smith, *Northern Seminary*

Sarah Stone Watt, *Pepperdine University*, Respondent

Culture is strongly shaped by the arts, religion, music, film, and storytelling. Here we explore the intersection of justice, spirituality, imagination, embodiment, and the arts. By looking at the music of Taylor Swift, Dolly Parton, and the storytelling of writer-director Greta Gerwig, this session will focus on truths of the imagination. The arts help humans access aspects of our experience, enhancing our understanding of ourselves, others, and our world as a path to transformation.

Micki Pulleyking, *Missouri State University*, “Barbie’s ‘Contemplation of Incarnation’ will preach!”

“What Was I Made For?” asks the Barbie ballad as she seeks answers to the meaning of becoming human. Director Gerwig weaves symbolic contact between Barbie and her creator, (Ruth Handler), with Michelangelo’s, “The Creation of Adam”. Barbie wants agency, to be more than a conduit through whom stories are told. As Barbie faces her fears, her creator takes her hands and tells her to “feel”. Scenes of people and emotions, joys and sorrows, flash before Barbie’s eyes; she is troubled and “called” to see women and men set free from their packaging.

Nancy Posey, *Lipscomb University*, “Southern Icon Dolly Parton: More than Glitter and Butterflies”

Few people achieve celebrity status without polarizing a large segment of society. Dolly Parton, however, has reached superstardom while crossing religious, political, and socio-economic barriers. Through her love of music and gift of songwriting, Parton has expanded her influence into all areas of culture. Her success has afforded her the freedom to chart her own path and improve countless

lives without losing touch with her roots. The presenter will trace Parton's spiritual roots from the fundamentalist church where her grandfather was "an old time preacher man" to her current expressions of spirituality and generosity.

Karen Fletcher Smith, *Northern Seminary*, "Swift Lament: Pop Liturgy for Ecclesiastical Wounds"

Liturgy gives guidance, voice, and supplication when our words cease. How can we express lament when familiar worship songs, prayers, and sermons trigger fresh wounds? This paper argues for the use of pop liturgy to bring voice and healing to those wounded by the church. The depth of lyrics from Taylor Swift offers the modern Christian applicatory words to their ecclesiastical wounds. Through the writing of Swift, listeners can find a sing along experience that brings a pop theology of lament when familiar ecclesiastical language brings more harm than good.

Business and Economics

"Economics from a Christian Perspective" – *Yarnton*

Russell Dabbs, *Lubbock Christian University*, Convenor

David Johnson, *Harding University*

Janice Hauge, *University of North Texas*

Nate Barton, *University of California Riverside*

Christians who teach in the economics area have unique research interests. In this session we will explore the connection of family and the economy, government involvement in the marketplace and the economics of sanitation in the developing world.

David Johnson, *Harding University*, "Strong Family, Weak Economy?"

A certain degree of family loyalty or identity is critical to accomplish its role of socializing its members so that they may thrive in the broader society. However, a too-strong family identity may compromise the ability of its members to extend trust to those outside the family, trust that is requisite for the development of the broad associations that characterize a modern, progress-prone economy. Manifestations of the lack of these associations are fewer and weaker civic and social institutions, small and short-lived businesses, nepotism, and corruption. The existence of these manifestations will alter the structure of business in those countries and limit economic potential in various ways. The purpose of this paper is to investigate this association between family loyalty and prospects for economic progress, also known as the "paradox of the family."

Janice Hauge, *University of North Texas*, "BEAD's Overlooked Demographic"

The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program was designed to expand high-speed internet access to all U.S. households. The program focuses on infrastructure deployment and compels providers to offer fiber connectivity; however, fiber typically is more costly to install than DSL, cable, satellite, or wireless services. This increased cost is detrimental to unserved households that might be served using a different technology or who choose to connect using a technology better suited to their needs. In particular, the BEAD program omits provisions for the hearing impaired despite their being significantly impacted by the broadband deployment efforts each state undertakes. Among the impending changes are decreased emphasis on teletypewriter services and increased emphasis on captioning and video relay services. While significant research is being conducted on BEAD funds, fiber costs, political opportunism etc., the relatively smaller concern of managing changes to the systems and devices needed by the hearing impaired is largely overlooked; however, to these individuals and their families, the impacts of broadband policy are substantial. As such, this research seeks to quantify the costs of compliance of BEAD subgrantees with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Janice Hauge, *University of North Texas*, “When Government Involvement in Antibiotic R&D is a Flawed Approach”

The economic paradox of investing money to develop a product that will be used as infrequently as possible has caused many pharmaceutical companies to shut down antibiotic research and development branches. What, if anything, is the role of the federal government in supporting antibiotic research development? Ever-increasing transmission and modification of antibiotic resistance mechanisms in pathogens pose serious concerns to pharmaceutical developers and healthcare providers. The overuse of antibiotics in agriculture and over-the-counter remedies for undiagnosed, possibly viral, infections has acted as a selective force on harmless and pathogenic bacteria alike, to favor propagation of hereditary material that confers resistance to antibiotics commonly introduced to humans via water supply, food products, hospital visits, and prescribed medication. Such routine over-exposure to antibiotics has produced a population of bacteria equipped with an ability to develop resistance within days to a drug that took a decade to develop and prove safe. The future of antibiotic production therefore faces an ethical and economic dilemma: to what extent should the government intervene to ensure provision of potentially life-saving antibiotics, and at what point does federal involvement inhibit independent research from developing life-saving antibiotic treatment?

Nate Barton, *University of California Riverside*, “Government Officials and Collective Action Challenges to Low-cost Sanitation Initiatives in Rural Busoga”

In this paper, I examine the role of local government leaders in overcoming collective action challenges facing low-cost sanitation initiatives in rural Uganda. By applying a difference-of-differences (DiD) design to novel observational data from 2,931 survey data points across 10 rural communities in the Busoga region of Southeastern Uganda between 2022 to 2023, this study finds that evidence of community buy-in is associated with the presence of low-cost sanitation facilities such as latrines but that the total number of government officials present is associated with fewer facilities after controlling for confounders.

Early Career Scholars in Theological Disciplines

“Ordinary Language, Stanley Cavell, and Theology” – *Lamb and Scroll*

Daniel Crouch, *Baylor University*, Convener

Katherine Ellis, *Baylor University*

Andrew Whitworth, *Baylor University*

Charles Regli, *Baylor University*

Katherine Ellis, *Baylor University*, “Born Again: Stanley Cavell on Wonder and Childlike Conversion”

This paper considers connections between Stanley Cavell’s account of childhood language learning and the gospels’ description of childlike conversion. Throughout the gospels, childhood is not presented as a life stage that is underdeveloped, limited, or pejoratively infantile. Instead, the gospels point to the way in which followers of Christ are to be re-inducted, reborn as the Gospel of John puts it, into the world brimming with wonder and finitude. Entry into the Kingdom of God is not cast in terms of mastery or mining for solutions. Instead, it is to be received, relished and shared with childlike wonder. Cavell offers an account of language learning dependent on wonder. Language is not a means of mastery but is instead accompanied by strangeness and clumsy delight. Language’s boundlessness, its capacity for playful shifting and transfiguration ironically posits a boundary, a limit on what can and should be grasped. The potency and potentiality of language is not one which

we can claim, wield, or control. Resisting finite projectability, or a sense of ourselves as “finished subjects,” language renders us children. The childlike wonder of words invites hopeful, new, and expansive perceptions and receptions of community, creatureliness, and God.

Andrew Whitworth, *Baylor University*, “Now is Not the Time or Place: The Lesson of Vigdis Hjorth’s *Will and Testament* for Theological Ethics”

Vigdis Hjorth’s 2016 novel *Will and Testament* tells the tragic, complicated story of a Norwegian family through the eyes of Bergljot, one of four siblings. Over the course of the novel, it becomes clear that the varying distances and tensions between Bergljot and the rest of her family are the consequence of a past, unacknowledged traumatic event. Reading *Will and Testament* with Stanley Cavell’s notion of acknowledgement in mind, the relationships between the characters demonstrate what it means to acknowledge another person and what might be the cost of failure in this regard. In this paper I want to first lay out the main conflict of the novel in a way that will both familiarize those who have not read the book, but also to distill the way in which the various characters understand the conflict differently, which will be important for my later analysis. After that, I will explore the notion of acknowledgement laid out by Stanley Cavell as a response to problems posed by skepticism. Finally, I will examine how four different characters respond to the same situation as a way of illuminating both the actions of the characters and particular aspects of what it means to acknowledge another and the implications for Christian theological ethics.

Charles Regli, *Baylor University*, “The Need to Ascend and Descend: Stanley Cavell as a Modern Aristotle”

This paper argues that Stanley Cavell offers both a challenge and opportunity to contemporary theology. In his *Claim of Reason*, Cavell challenges Christian theology by objecting to its ethical demands to pursue eternal values. Cavell depicts this desire to ascend as haunting the modern predicament, leaving it unable to rest in valuing the other. I take this challenge as an opportunity for theology to wrestle with the modern predicament. I argue, by engagement with Cavellian theologian Stephen Mulhall, that Christian theology retains eternal values but that Cavell’s depiction of human language depicts how they relate to the other.

Hermeneutics of Unity in and after Scripture

“CSC 2025 Planning Session” – *Malamat*

Please join us for a discussion where we will work to lay plans for the group into 2025 and thereafter. This discussion is open to all who are interested in the work of the Hermeneutics of Unity in and After Scripture session. If you will not be able to attend but would like to join the group’s mailing list, please give us your email address by visiting the provided QR code.



Practical Theology

“The Doctor of Ministry Degree in a Changing Context” – *Journals Room*

Ron Bruner, *Editor, Discernment: Theology and the Practice of Ministry*, Convener

Jack Holland, *Emmanuel Christian Seminary*, “Redesigning a Thirty-year-old DMin Program”

Tim Sensing, *Abilene Christian University, Graduate School of Theology*, “The Professional Doctorate: A Comparison and Distinction”

Carlus Gupton, *Lipscomb University*, Respondent

Over the last thirty years, Doctor of Ministry (DMin) programs have functioned in a world of flux. Beyond the tectonic shifts in church life, students have changed their expectations, the Academy has adjusted to new realities, the Association of Theological Schools has rewritten the degree standards, and practical theology has matured as a discipline. This session is a conversation about what the DMin degree has been, what it is, and what it should be.

Theology and Philosophy

Explorations in Philosophical Theology – *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.

JJM Roberts Endowed Lecture in Old Testament Studies

“Hope When Empires Are in Crisis: Reading Daniel 5” – *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.*” – *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 and Economics

“Christian Business Leadership” – Yarnton

Andy Borchers, *Lipscomb University*, Convenor

William Sharp, *University of the Cumberlands*

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 Cumberlands*, “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 and Academy

"Beginning in the Present: Genesis 1-2 in the Lab, Classroom, and Sanctuary" – *Malamat*

Garrett Best, *York University*, Moderator

Josh Kingcade, *Preston Road Church of Christ*, Dallas, Texas

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" – *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” – 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.

Christian Apologetics Featured Lecture

“Engaging the Changing Landscape: The Urgent Need for Intellectual Credibility in Christian Apologetics” – *Stone Chapel*

Charlie Styles

Styles is CEO of the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics (OCCA). With more than 15 years of experience in the field of theology and pastoral studies, Styles is passionate about helping people discover and defend the truth and relevance of Christianity. Through the OCCA, he leads a global team of speakers, trainers, and researchers who engage with various audiences and contexts on the questions and challenges of faith and culture. Before joining OCCA in 2022, he served as the rector of the Wycliffe Fellowship at the Church of England for nine years. He holds an undergraduate degree from Durham University and a postgraduate diploma in theology and pastoral studies from Oak Hill Theological College.

Each generation presents its own challenges for those seeking to share Christian truth. But many evangelists are finding a renewed openness to spirituality, and we have seen some high-profile people turning to faith. Is this a sign of things to come or an historical blip? The online world provides some wonderful opportunities to engage with people from all over the world, and yet many seem distracted—doom-scrolling their way through each day. How can the Christian church present a compelling and rigorous case for Christ in an age overwhelmed with information and misinformation?

This lecture will explore the contemporary opportunities facing Christian apologetics within the dynamic cultural, philosophical, and technological developments of the modern era. Styles will argue for the paramount importance of intellectual credibility in engaging with both skeptics and seekers. As we embrace contemporary challenges with confidence, we can see that academic integrity not only enhances the persuasiveness of apologetics but also enriches one’s own understanding and appreciation of the Christian faith.

American Religion

Roundtable Discussion: “Gender and Race in the History of Churches of Christ: How Does the Past Speak to Today?” – *Lamb and Scroll*

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

Richard T. Hughes, *Lipscomb University*

James L. Gorman, *Johnson University*

Kathy J. Pulley, *Missouri State University*

Loretta M. Hunnicut, *Pepperdine University*

Edward A. Robinson, *Texas College*

Douglas A. Foster, *Abilene Christian University*, Moderator

Based on sections of the Hughes and Gorman book, *Reviving the Ancient Faith*, 3rd ed.: *The Story of Churches of Christ in America*, this roundtable discussion will focus primarily on the fragmentation of the Churches of Christ from the 1960s to today, with the emphasis on the cultural issues of gender and race. All panelists will informally discuss whether the church’s history on gender and race affects churches today in regard to unity, identity, and direction for the future? Discussion from the audience is desired.

Business & Economics

“Christian Business Topics” – Yarnton

Russell Dabbs, *Lubbock Christian University*, Convenor

James Woodrow, *Vanguard University*

Dutch Kendall, *Indian Wesleyan University*

Ebenezer O. Danso, *Heritage Christian University College*

This session will introduce a diverse set of Christian business topics including characteristics of Christ-centered companies, customer discrimination law and private Christian higher education in Ghana.

James Woodrow, *Vanguard University*, “Distinguishing Characteristics of Christ-Centered Companies”

Business and industry function best with a strong sense of purpose and how it’s reflected in an equally strong, vibrant culture. When created, communicated, and supported effectively from the top down, the mission, core values, and strategy of a Christ-centered company has the power to transform the work of its employees and its service to customers into positive, Christ-centered outcomes. To investigate the distinguishing characteristics that set these unique companies apart from secular business and industry, a review of the literature and contemporary practices resulted in a variety of distinguishing characteristics, best practices, and findings, which will be shared in the presentation.

Dutch Kendall, *Indian Wesleyan University*, “Navigating Customer Discrimination Law”

This article is the third in a series on legal challenges particular to Christian owned and operated businesses. According to official directories, there are over 60,000 businesses in the United States that lay open claim to the title “Christian owned and operated.” Making this sort of faith statement is protected by law in the United States but can result in legal challenges. There is a dialectic legal tension between freedom of religious expression, guaranteed by the First Amendment and Title VII, and protections against discrimination in the provision of goods and services, guaranteed by Title II. Unfortunately, the intersection of these rights is ill-defined and unclear, and often dependent on latent variables like jurisdiction. When these statutory arenas collide, it has resulted in dramatic court cases that become media events. This article uses specific cases as illustrations to illuminate the boundaries between free religious expression, prohibited customer discrimination, and the large, dangerous middle zone likely to lead to painful lawsuits.

Ebenezer O. Danso, *Heritage Christian University College*, “Challenges and Opportunities: Private Christian Higher Education Institutes Under Ghana’s Higher Education Act 2020”

A major shift in the higher education landscape of Ghana has been caused by the Education Regulatory Bodies Act, 2020 (Act 1023). The Act mandates that affiliated tertiary institutions must charter within four years. Previous to the legislation, new institutions were required to affiliate with an existing chartered institution during accreditation, but this system has not worked for a variety of reasons. Thus, this new Act demands all tertiary institutions must prepare for charter or risk foreclosure. For already affiliated institutions, mostly Christian-based non-governmental higher learning institutes, it is a transition riddled with challenges but also opportunities. The transition necessitates strategic planning, resource mobilization, and institutional capacity building that aligns with the standards set forth by the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC). In this, there is an opportunity to reassess educational mission, pedagogical approaches, and student support services for long-term sustainability and competitiveness. However, the number of regulatory bodies, government agencies, and other stakeholders essential to navigate the transition makes the journey complex and difficult. This paper, therefore, explores the positioning and future sustenance of Heritage Christian University College with a specific focus on the implications of the Act.

Practical Theology

“The Church in Crisis and Hope: Collaborative Engagement with the Work of Andrew Root” – *Journals Room*

Gary Selby, *Emmanuel Christian Seminary at Milligan*, Convener

Carson Reed, *Abilene Christian University*

Jeff Brown, *Woodmont Hills Church, Nashville, TN*

Tiffany Dahlman, *Courtyard Church of Christ, Abilene, TX*

Josh Kingcade, *Preston Road Church of Christ, Dallas TX*

Bradley Steele, *University Church of Christ, Abilene, TX*

Few figures on the contemporary theological landscape have spoken to the church's place within secular culture with greater clarity than Andrew Root. Root's prolific writings integrate biblical and theological reflection with insight from history, literature, popular culture, and the work of philosophers such as Charles Taylor, Michel Foucault, and Hartmut Rosa, in order to help us understand this unique moment of crisis in the church's history. At the same time, he offers a hopeful vision for pastoral identity and ecclesial calling centered in the agency of the "God who is God." This roundtable brings together a diversity of voices from the academy and the church in order to explore the implications of Root's thought for the contemporary church.

Sciences

“Pedagogy and Practice in an Open-source, AI World” – *Pembroke*

John Lewis, *Lipscomb University*, Moderator

Sarah Parker, *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

Juan Rojas, *Lipscomb University*

Finney Premkumar, *University of Birmingham*

In this session on the sciences the power of collaboration using open-source software to facilitate science communication and two perspectives on artificial intelligence will be explored. Please join us for a timely discussion!

Sarah Parker, *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*, “Empowering Collaboration through Open-Source Tools, Education, and Effective Communication”

Scientific research often involves experts compartmentalizing themselves and their discoveries into their own fields of expertise. This makes interdisciplinary collaboration more difficult, and makes scientific findings more likely to be inaccessible and misunderstood by the wider community. Yet, in a current world filled with frequent crises, a broad understanding and trust in science is crucial. My research focuses on closing this gap between complicated scientific findings and general public understanding in two main ways. First, I am developing and using open-source, user-friendly software tools to visualize and interpret complex data, specializing in genomics. Second, I am developing and implementing educational programs to teach coding and data science skills to a wide range of learners, from high school and graduate students to university faculty and working professionals. Through the use of these software tools and educational programs, we are not only promoting collaboration between scientists of varied career and educational backgrounds; we are also making new scientific findings more available to a wider audience by ensuring that these initiatives establish clear, visually engaging ways to communicate scientific data. Through these programs, scientific research will become more efficient, effective, and accessible, but this is about more than just advancing scientific

research. It's about creating a world where science is a collaborative, understood, and trusted part of daily life, enabling hope and resilience especially in times of global challenges.

Juan Rojas, *Lipscomb University*, “Exploiting the World of Symmetry to Accelerate Artificial Intelligence”

This talk will present methods by which Artificial Intelligence and robots decision making is being sped up. Imagine a robot learning new tasks in minutes rather than hours or days. The foundational principles used here come from group theory – the area of mathematics that helps us understand symmetry and transformations. By identifying and using symmetries in the environment, agents learn from their experiences much faster. This involves a technique called equivariant learning, where symmetries give the robot the ability to multiply a single experience. We share how equivariant learning can be systematically used to speed up the agent learning and produce more robust and adaptable policies. The impact of the work promises more efficient and sustainable learning with greater learning outcomes making the agents more versatile and capable partners in a variety of settings.

Finney Premkumar, *University of Birmingham*, “The Imago Dei: Why Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) will never replicate a Human Person”

Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) has become a subject of much interest and discussion recently. I wish to maintain that the development of AGI and the associated existential risks are a non-existent problem. Regardless of the undeniable strides that AI research has achieved, it's not a matter of increased complexity but one of principled impossibility from a Christian standpoint. I will forward two arguments that will converge on the inevitable conclusion to support my position in this paper. First and foremost, the difference between humans and machines is not merely a difference in degree but a difference in kind. Secondly, in order for AI systems to replicate and not merely simulate human agents there must be an identifiable subjective state. A state of what it feels like to be in that state. In order for this to be exemplified there must be more than the accumulation of physical states. Consciousness is to some extent this transcendent state that is not identifiable with any purely physical constitution. This qualitative difference is to be expected in a reality created by a Divine Being since the effect exemplifies characteristics of the cause. Finally, I wish to conclude that from a Christian paradigm what makes us human is the “Imago Dei”. Accordingly, as long as we cannot create or transfer the image of God to machines, any proposed equality of Being between the two will remain a mere proposal and not an actual instantiation. All in all, AGI seems to be a principled impossibility.

Theology and Philosophy

“The Theological Anthropology of Salvation” – *Malamat*

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 5: Friday, June 7, 2024, 9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Arts and Spirituality

"God and Gaming: the Intersection between Faith and the Burgeoning Art of Video Games" – *Pembroke*

Micki Pulleyking, *Missouri State University*, Convener

Grant Testut, *Oklahoma Christian University*

Timothy Williford, *Student, Oklahoma Christian University*

Chris Rosser, *Theological and Instructional Librarian, Oklahoma Christian University*

Video games have been around for over half a century. Though the medium still struggles to be accepted by some circles as a viable art form, it has demonstrated its ability to influence the broader culture through economics, language, music, and a recognizable iconography. Some game developers have used their craft to make profound statements about life, death, love, loss, politics, and even religion. This session is a venue for the discussion of video games as art, and of their potential to hold meaningful conversation with people of faith.

Grant Testut, *Oklahoma Christian University*, "'We played the flute for you, but you did not dance': Rekindling Jesus' Playful Ethic in Theological Education"

The presenter recently built a theology course called God and Gaming, in which the class explored faith in conversation with video games. They learned about video games as play, as art, and as interactive narratives; they learned about the theology of play. The course was even structured as a game in which the participants were not just "students" but "players". This paper explores what the course revealed about a neglected corner of theology, and how such theology can spur students and faculty to collaborate in creating art out of education.

Timothy Williford, *Oklahoma Christian University*, "Am I Jesus Christ?: the Ludological Effects of Portraying Christ in Video Games"

SimulaM is developing a first-person Jesus Christ simulation video game through publisher Space Boat Studios, which is called "I Am Jesus Christ". This paper explores how placing the player in the role of Jesus Christ has problematic ludological results that do more to undermine than to support the gospel narrative. The presenter will explain the player-avatar relationship in video games, outline

the differences between narratology and ludology, and critique SimulaM's game against another upcoming religiously-themed game.

Chris Rosser, *Oklahoma Christian University*, "Learners at Play: Seven Pedagogical Shifts for Teaching across Epistemologies"

The rise of gamer culture has inspired innovative strategies for gameful course design by which classroom identity reconfigures from communities of learning to learners at play. Gameful design helps mitigate problems of epistemic authority, de facto instructor or institutional assertions of authority over diverse epistemologies. Just as video games broaden encounters with different ways of thinking and of inhabiting diverse worlds, so also gameful design encourages exploration and fosters desire-driven encounters with diversity. This presentation outlines seven key pedagogical shifts for teaching across epistemologies, illustrated through three exemplary gamified courses.

Civil Rights

"Navigating Southern culture, commerce, color and church: An ethnographic reflection on student and faculty learnings" – Yarnton

Abby Bell, *Lipscomb University*, Moderator

J. Goosby Smith, *Pepperdine University*

Ben Postlethwaite, *Pepperdine University*

Christopher Collins, *Pepperdine University*

"The South" birthed gospel, blues, and country music. It prospered from cotton, tobacco, and rice. Its immigrant entrepreneurs were invaluable "brokers.". Color, race and racism are endemic, from indigenous names to slavery, Jim Crow, and Civil Rights. The Black church emerged and was integral in fighting racism. Based upon taking undergraduate students to Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee, we present student learning and use autoethnography to frame the impact of this high impact practice upon us individually and as a biracial teaching team.

Congregational Science

"Congregations: Challenging Times, Hopeful Solutions" – Journals Room

Marsha Vaughn, *LMFT, Adler University*, Convener

Chris J. Gonzalez, *LMFT, Lipscomb University*, Convener

Holly Catterton Allen, *Lipscomb University*

Earl Lavender, *Lipscomb University*

As congregations face challenging times with membership declines, generational fragmentation, church hurt, and many members experiencing deconstruction of their faith, some church leaders and members are having a hard time holding on to hope. This session addresses several of the main challenges facing congregations by offering insights and potential solutions to meet these challenges.

Chris Gonzalez, *Lipscomb University*, "Deconstructing Deconstruction: Systemic Perspectives on Faith Deconstruction"

For several years, many people questioning their faith have described the process they are going through as "deconstructing" their faith. Deconstruction as a descriptive term or critical process has

been popularized and transcended its philosophical and academic origins. This paper seeks to explore the systemic and cultural context in which the popularized iteration of “deconstruction” is applied to one’s faith. The presentation concludes by framing deconstruction as a social process of stewardship of relevant and meaningful questions through the lens of ambiguous loss and post-traumatic growth.

Marsha Vaughn, *Adler University*, “Relational Repair After Religious/Spiritual Abuse: Perspectives from Systemic Therapy Theories”

Continuing the discussion on spiritual trauma and religious abuse from previous CSCs, this session will provide a more in-depth exploration of relational repair through the lens of several family systems theories and therapy models, such as attachment theory, Schwartz’s Internal Family Systems therapy, Bowen’s family systems theory, and Hargrave’s Restoration Therapy. The emphasis will be on contrasting each model’s definition of a “self” and of healthy relationships, extending those definitions to a human’s relationship with the Divine. We will also discuss the application of these theories to psychotherapy, pastoral counseling, and spiritual direction.

Holly Catterton Allen, *Lipscomb University*, “How Can Congregations Respond to Generational Fragmentation?”

Congregations have become generationally fragmented over the past fifty years; that is, by building ministries based on age-specific developmental needs and by emphasizing the differences across the generations, we have isolated the generations. Age groups have become separated from each other and from the church family as a whole. This presentation, building on the premise that intergenerational Christian experiences especially and uniquely nurture spiritual growth and development across all ages, will outline key responses to the questions posed by generational fragmentation.

Earl Lavender, *Lipscomb University*, “Renewal and Congregational Growth: Application of the Divine Empowerment Model”

Having planted two churches, one in Italy and another in Illinois, and with my experience in teaching at Lipscomb and consulting with churches internationally, this paper will summarize my research, study and observation concerning the importance of offering creative participation to those who identify as followers of Jesus as the Christ. Using the model of divine empowerment reflected in Ephesians 4:1-16, this paper will demonstrate the potential of renewal and congregational growth based on a concept of ministry focusing on appropriately equipping all members to creatively explore their active participation in the body of Christ.

Early Career Scholars in Theological Disciplines

“Hope in Peril” – *Stone Chapel*

Convened by the Early Career Scholars in the Theological Disciplines Committee

Garrett Smith, *Wheaton College*

Robert M. Bugg Jr., *Liberty University*

Andrew Wong, *Dallas Theological Seminary*

Uncertainty brought on by compounding ecological, ecclesial, and social crises within our world may tempt us to abandon hope. However, there is a longstanding tradition within Christian history of viewing hope as a virtue. More specifically, hope is not traditionally understood to be just any virtue but one of three infused virtues: faith, hope, and love. That is, such virtues are not acquired by mere human effort, but graciously given by God to heal the beleaguered soul. Thus, when we see the tension between the esteemed role that hope has played within Christian spirituality, on the one hand, and a very unhopeful future, on the other hand, an interesting question arises: What role does the virtue of hope play in

addressing a perilous future? This session, therefore, seeks to explore the role of hope in addressing the problem of an uncertain future. Our presentations will explore the role of hope in relation to a theology of dying, Africans within the Biblical narrative, and the theology of Paul's letter to the Romans. These three presentations will provide an enriching opportunity to explore the relation between hope and a perilous future.

Garrett Smith, M.A. *Theology, Wheaton College*, "A Hopeful Death: Dying Well in the Christian Community"

Western churches, imbibing the surrounding culture's medicalization of human flourishing, often forget that Christian dying is an art. Death is not a mere inevitability to be either despaired of or neglected in language and ecclesiastical practices. That is, we do not mourn as those without hope, nor do we ignore in our liturgy the grievous wages of sin. Despairing of death robs hope of its proper telos as a theological virtue of the church, while avoiding the reality of death diminishes the significance of resurrection. Either of these approaches to death threatens to cheapen the church's witness in the communal outworking of hope. Fortunately, the Christian tradition is rich with resources for dying well. Martin Luther's 1519 "A Sermon on Preparing to Die" represents a transition from the soteriological insecurity of late-medieval piety, epitomized in the *ars moriendi* literary tradition, to the assurance of salvation espoused by the reformers. Luther moves readers from the condemnatory images of sin, hell, and death to the christological images of salvation, mercy, and life. The result is a cruci-centric and, he would have hoped, cruci-formed vision of dying. This paper—also drawing from the work of Stanley Hauerwas—suggests that the church, as a cruci-formed community, ought to display an analogous movement from condemnatory to salvific images in its practices of dying. In reclaiming the art of dying, the church may develop the skills necessary to cultivate its witness of hope in a world marked by death.

Robert M. Bugg Jr., Liberty University, "African Influence in the Bible: God's Multiethnic and Collaborative Plan of Redemption"

The Bible presents God's magnificent divine plan, executed by chosen people for a specific purpose. There are illustrations of those from various regions impacting those worldwide throughout the Bible. While much of the Old Testament takes place in ancient Mesopotamia, the magnitude of God's plan is global. This dissertation will examine sub-Saharan people groups in Africa, particularly the Kushites and ancient Ethiopians. The discussion will include the history of Africans in the ancient world, their migration and development parallel to recorded biblical history, and their role in the Bible. Scholars utilize many different terms when referring to Kushites, depending on the particular historical stage. In the Hebrew Bible, the term Cush is consistently identified as the region and inhabitants of the area. At the same time, versions of the Bible sometimes replace "Cush" with "Ethiopia," leading to confusion. Nevertheless, this civilization was a significant force in the ancient Near East for many years, recurring throughout the biblical text. While physical characteristics, such as their dark skin, are evident in ancient art, and cultural elements can be extracted from early literature, the impact of specific Cushites in the Bible is the central focus. Biblical scholars acknowledge the presence of Africans throughout the Bible, as early as the book of Genesis. Therefore, scholars seek to open discussion regarding race in the Bible and God's divine will in using Africans as vessels in His redemptive plan. This study will serve as a reflection of hope for those underrepresented and a reminder of African value in the eyesight of God. Also, through proper examination of specific African characters, we hopefully will be able to glean the necessity of the inclusion of all. God willed His Church to be an accurate representation of God's love. Therefore, Africans are a vital part of His redemptive plan for humanity. The epitome of God's people is a multiethnic people, a mixed assembly of believers from various parts of the globe with the common goal of spreading the gospel.

Andrew Wong, *Dallas Theological Seminary*, “Paul’s Great Hope: An Analysis of Hope in Romans from the Perspective of the Intersection of Greek Philosophy and Social Trauma to Address Contemporary Societal Perils”

This interdisciplinary study endeavors to develop an understanding of the theme of hope in Romans by exploring the intricate connections between hope in Romans with Greek philosophy and the trauma Paul endured through his faith journey. The study seeks to demonstrate that Paul’s view of hope stands in dialogue with ancient Greek philosophers, informed by his trauma, articulating a view of hope that represents a departure from his contemporaries in its communal nature, perceiving hope not as motivation to action, but hope as action in itself, participating in the redemption of all things. To conclude, I reflect on how Paul’s understanding of hope addresses social divisions, specifically between Christian traditions, addressing the Christian virtue of hope’s role in healing social perils for individuals and societies. The paper accomplishes this by synthesizing the views of hope articulated by ancient philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Hesiod, and Heraclitus. Following this synthesis, the study will uncover how the thematic thread of hope in Romans stands in dialogue with Greek philosophical schools of thought. Next, using modern psychological research, I explore how Paul’s faith journey would have inflicted trauma, reflecting on how these social and physical traumatic experiences shaped his conception of hope in Romans. Existing reflections on hope often limit the scope of reflection to socio-historical, exegetical, or psychological. Through this multi-faceted approach, I aim to fill this gap, clarifying and contextualizing Paul’s view of hope and, in doing so, offering a robust response to how Christians may suffer with hope amid social discord.

Hermeneutics of Unity in and after Scripture

“The Hermeneutics of Unity in and after Genesis 11:10–25:11” – *Malamat*

J. David Stark, *Faulkner University*, Moderator

Daniel Oden, *Harding University*

Jared Saltz, *Smoky Hill Church of Christ, Littleton, CO*

Garrett Best, *York University*

Kevin Burr, *Kings Crossing Church of Christ, Corpus Christi, TX*, Respondent

This section explores the hermeneutics of unity involved in the reception of earlier texts by later ones within the biblical corpus, as well as by other authors and communities in Second Temple Judaism, early and medieval Christianity, and more contemporary periods. Across this literature, focused attention is given to the nature of the hermeneutic employed to foster and protect continued unity within each respective interpreting community. This year’s sessions treat the reception of Gen 11:10–25:11 and welcome explorations of the hermeneutics of unity, whether that unity moves toward positive or negative ends.

Daniel Oden, *Harding University*, “Genesis 22 and Interpretations in Judaism and Christianity”

Though the topic of child sacrifice figures prominently in the laws and narratives of the Hebrew Bible, there is little to no explicit connection of Genesis 22 to any text of the Hebrew Bible other than 2 Chronicles 3:1, in which Solomon’s Temple is built on Mount Moriah. Yet within Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity, Genesis 22 invites interpretative expansions, as these communities wrestle with the profound theological questions raised by this provocative chapter. New Testament references to the Aqedah (whether explicit, allusions, or “echoes”) do not seem merely to recapitulate the minimalistic narrative of MT Genesis, but show signs of dependence on later reworkings of Genesis 22, including LXX, Targumim, pseudepigraphical works, and haggadah (Robert Daly, Leroy Huizenga). Later Christian and Jewish interpretations of Genesis 22, despite clear

differences, demonstrate continued dialogue between both communities, while maintaining within each community, a plurality of interpretive traditions. This paper explores this intersection in which unity is realized not in a singular text or interpretative strategy, but in community.

Jared Saltz, *Smoky Hill Church of Christ*, “Isaac Unbound: Abrahamic Faithfulness in Galatians”

Jews of the Second Temple Period, including Paul’s opponents in Galatia, saw Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac as an integral part of a triad of actions demonstrating Abraham’s faithfulness. This Triad of Faithfulness included Abraham’s conversion (Gen 12), his circumcision (Gen 17), and his sacrifice of Isaac to confirm the covenant (Gen 22). This triad is often explicitly cited (and otherwise implicitly accepted) in texts throughout the Second Temple Period, including the apocrypha, Philo, Jubilees, the Mishna, and others, but is absent in Paul. It appears that—for most Jews of the period—Abraham’s three key actions are those that gave hope to the Gentiles and provided salvation in faith to the Jews. Paul, however, does not agree with this triad of actions. Instead, in the book of Galatians Paul accepts the first, transforms the second, and substitutes the third entirely. This paper will seek to identify this triad in Jewish literature, demonstrate its importance to Paul’s opponents in Galatia, and thus demonstrate that the aqedah’s absence in Galatia is conspicuous. Lastly, this paper will consider how Paul’s transformation and substitution of this Abrahamic triad of faithfulness in his search for unity in Galatia may provide starting points for how we read key texts in our own tradition.

Garrett Best, *York University*, “Sodom and Sulfur: Allusions to Genesis 19 in the Book of Revelation”

There is perhaps only one universally accepted claim about the book of Revelation – that it is saturated in the language and imagery of Israel’s Scriptures. John has creatively incorporated hundreds of allusions into the vision, making it difficult to determine the exact number. This paper explores John’s allusions to the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative in Genesis 19. First, this paper will analyze Revelation’s use of fire and sulfur in its depiction of judgment (9:17-18; 14:10; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8). Second, this paper will explore the enigmatic reference to the two witnesses being killed in the city “called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified” (11:8).

Practical Theology

“Hopeful Models of Christian Formation” – *Lamb and Scroll*

Deron Smith, *Lipscomb University*, Convener and Respondent

Ron Clark, *George Fox University*

Drew Davis, *Lanier Foundation, Lipscomb University*

William Sharp, *University of the Cumberlands*

Research into human psychosocial development emphasizes that our formation as persons is as much a product of indirect factors in our social environment as direct efforts to teach or train us, as important as those are. Scholars who draw on that research to explore spiritual development likewise emphasize the profound impact that the health of the church systems of which we are a part have on our faith, an understanding that accords with the urgent attention the NT gives to the quality of the church’s communal life. The papers in this panel reflect this understanding by exploring indirect ways that various structures of Christian community impact spiritual formation.

Ron Clark, *George Fox University*, “Lessons from Lemuel’s Momma: The ‘Eshet Chayil, Healthy Masculinity, and Guiding Young Men to Spiritual Maturity”

Proverbs 31, in which a king’s mother instructs her son about the wife of noble character, reflects themes of leadership and justice. The Hebrew/Aramaic *mah beri*, emphasizes the mother’s strong rebuke of her son, challenging him to remember his role in justice (31:8-9) while seeking sobriety and a strong wife (*‘eshet chayil*). This strong wife complements his focus on justice in the center of

the acrostic extolling her deeds in the community (31:20-21). As a minister working to address toxic masculinity, intimate partner violence, and misogyny, I find “Lemuel’s Momma” to have important advice for males striving to live in harmony with females in cultures which devalue women. This paper explores Proverbs 31 as a text that challenges males to listen to the voices of females who seek partnership and provide wholeness to male development.

Drew Davis, *Lanier Foundation, Lipscomb University*, “Doubters Welcome: Francis and Edith Schaeffer’s L’Abri as a Model of Christian Spiritual Formation”

Christian churches are witnessing a dramatic exodus, especially among young adults who find church to be unfriendly and irrelevant, disengaged from “real world” issues, and unwelcoming of honest questioning and doubt. This paper explores Francis and Edith Schaeffer’s L’Abri ministry as a hopeful alternative for this present moment, focusing on how they welcomed young people into community and table fellowship and, in that setting, engaged questions with intellectual integrity.

William Sharp, *University of the Cumberlands*, “Servant Leadership in the Church: Nurturing Hope, Spiritual Growth and Community Impact”

Servant leadership, which centers on principles of humility, empathy, and stewardship as the foundation for healthy organizational leadership, has been widely studied in a variety of contexts, including business, nonprofit, and educational settings. This study focuses on the application and impact of servant leadership within a congregational context, focusing particularly on elders and senior ministers. It explores how the implementation of servant leadership aligns with church values and mission, fosters spiritual growth and unity among congregants, and extends positive influence to the broader community.

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The Journals Room, Malamat and the Main Hall are in the Lanier Theological Library building.

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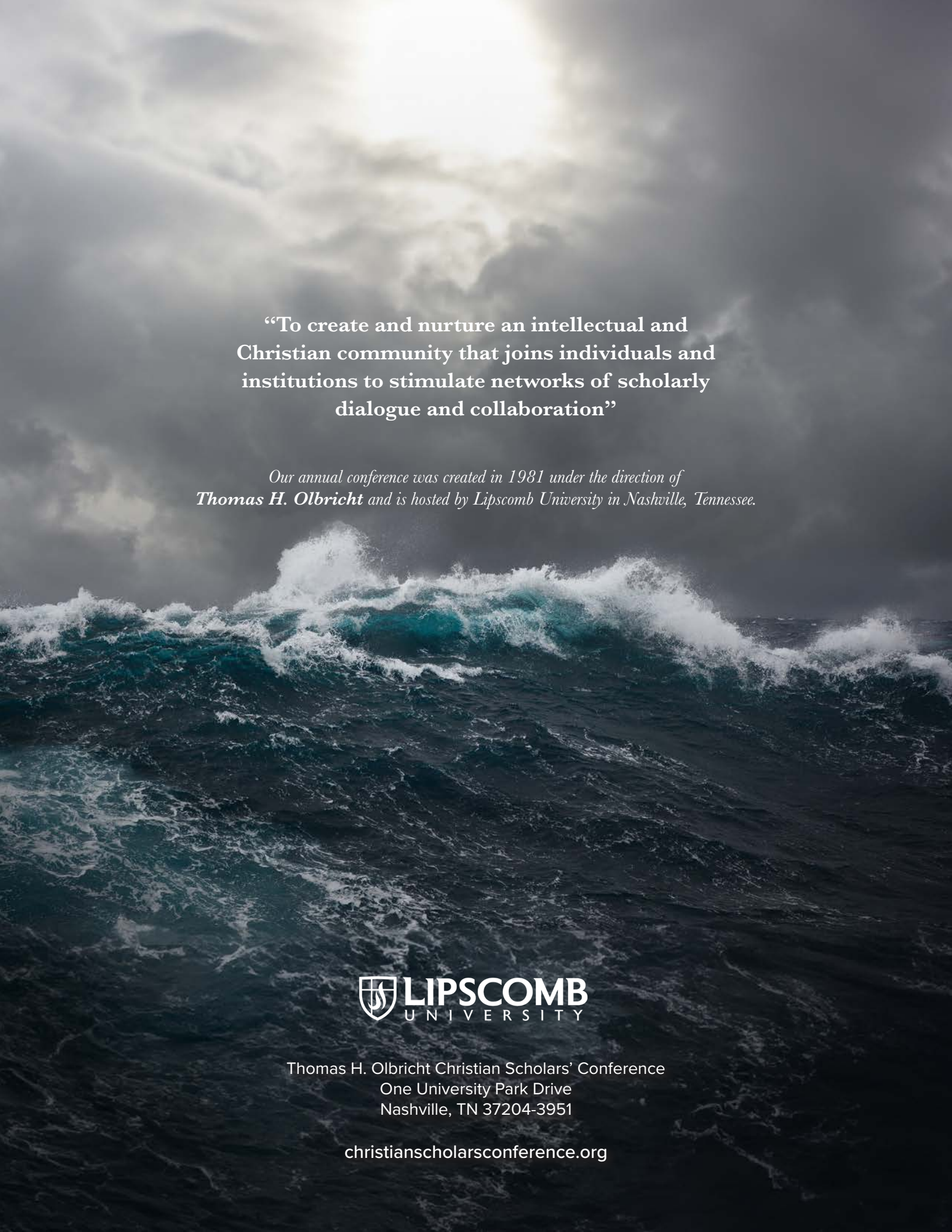
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