

Research Seminar Series on Religion 2020/21

(Part 2: January to June 2021)

Tuesdays on TEAMS (at different times)

Link to Teams:

<https://teams.microsoft.com/l/team/19%3ad4875f5b516b42da94013e25519d98d5%40thread.tacv2/conversations?groupId=3c9ff430-9453-44ba-a802-8a21fe4d358c&tenantId=4e0f11f9-046e-4505-9cb8-db2152311e21>

19th January 2021, 4 p.m.

The Very Revd Dr Sarah Rowland Jones, Dean of St David's

Pursuing Moral Rationality in the Public Space – Perspectives in a Time of Coronavirus

Alasdair MacIntyre, in *After Virtue* and subsequent works, argues that moral rationality is found through extended argument pursued through time by communities of tradition, and is best exemplified within the Thomistic-Aristotelianism of historic Western Christianity. But he is dubious about the capacity of such communities to engage with any effectiveness in a public square shaped by liberal democracy – a stance which Stanley Hauerwas has picked up and argued strongly, not least within the public square! Sarah Rowland Jones background as a diplomat for 15 years before ordination within the Church in Wales informed her PhD, 'Doing God in Public: An Anglican Interpretation of Alasdair MacIntyre's Tradition-based Reasoning as a Christian Praxis for a Pluralist World.' In this she argued that distinguishing between 'utopian' theory and MacIntyre's actual practical requirement merely to be 'good enough' in pursuing substantive dialogue provides resources for the churches not only to communicate effectively in our multicultural world, but to shape the context and conduct of discourse such that moral rationality can be better pursued – not least, through the capacity to unmask what should be considered immoral and irrational. In her seminar, Dr Rowland Jones, now Dean of St Davids, will present this approach and consider its practical implications for the contemporary political debate, in the context of the current pandemic.

9th February 2021, 10 a.m.

Dr Tom de Bruin, SL New Testament Exegesis and Early Christian Literature, Newbold College

Fascination, Frustration and Fixing Mark

Ancient Christians wrote hundreds of texts based on earlier texts: from extensions of existing gospels and epistles, to entirely new gospels and letters of Paul; from Christian retellings of Jewish narratives, to entire novels about the adventures of specific apostles. I am currently working on a monograph that explores the analogies

between contemporary fan fiction and the ancient Christian literary context. Using theory developed in Fan Studies, this book explores fundamental questions about these ancient derivative texts: Why were they written? In what ways do they interact with more established texts? How does the consumption of derivative texts influence the original ones? And how does the community react to these (new) texts?

In this paper I will focus on a small example of how Fan Studies can inform the study of ancient Christian literature, by examining the various endings to Mark. I will introduce the combined forces of fascination and frustration that drive fannish creativity. I will examine the endings to Mark in the context of 'Fix-it Fic,' a genre of fan fiction that sets out to solve 'errors' or 'problems' in the original text. Here, unsatisfied fans 'fix' issues that they feel cannot be right. Through the examination of the endings of Mark, I will demonstrate how frustrated and fascinated fans improved the original gospel. These examples elucidate a major reason why derivative texts are produced: an affective fascination and frustration with the existing narratives.

23 February 2021, 4 p.m.

Dr Elizabeth Harris, Honorary Senior Research Fellow, Birmingham University

Lynn Alton de Silva (1919-1982) and the postcolonial encounter between Buddhism and Christianity.

The European Network of Buddhist-Christian Studies (ENBCS) marked the centenary of De Silva's birth in 2019 with a conference entitled 'Buddhist-Christian Encounter: A Visionary Approach: a conference inspired by Lynn A. de Silva on the centenary of his birth'. De Silva was a Sri Lankan Methodist minister who opted to study Pali and Buddhism as Sri Lanka moved from a colonial to a post-colonial context that was conditioned both by mistrust between Buddhists and Christians, and by the beginnings of ethnic conflict. He became both a phenomenologist, who was keen to describe accurately the lived Buddhism in his country, and a pioneer of constructive Buddhist-Christian conversation that centred on the differences and similarities between the two religions. Drawing on the ENBCS conference, which I helped to organize, and my own research into religion in colonial and postcolonial Sri Lanka, this session will offer a critical and contextual examination of de Silva's contribution to the encounter between Buddhism and Christianity in Sri Lanka and the West. I argue that his contribution, which came at a critical point both within the development of Buddhist Modernism and within global Christianity, was both significant and prescient.

16th March 2021, 10 a.m.

Dr Megan Clay, Honorary research fellow at UWTSD

The Fluid Body: Feminist Theology and Art

One of my research projects is based in exploring the relationship between feminist liberation theologies and visual art to expand the language of experience. This is not just a cerebral praxis but one that encompasses the whole embodied experience to

the wider possibilities of a collective consciousness for women and other marginalised subjects in order that they may speak and be heard. The use of the fluid body in this context is a somatic practice and when combined with visual art and feminist theologies it creates a visual expression of movement. Thus, creating a signifier for women that speaks outside of patriarchal language that has so often spoken for them.

13th April 2021m 4 p.m.

Revd Canon Dr Mark Clavier, Residentiary Canon at Brecon Cathedral

Augustine and Rhetorics of Delight

Drawing on his training in Ciceronian rhetoric and as an orator, Augustine developed a theology that underscored the role of the heart within the dynamics of not only salvation but also human freedom and identity. This seminar will explore Augustine's rhetorical theology in light of Cicero's rhetorical treatises to present a Christian ethic that accounts for the challenge of consumer culture and the ecological imperative in response to the climate crisis. According to Augustine, we must recognize the sources of our delight and become attuned to that delight that he associates with the Holy Spirit. This is done through a process of instruction, delight, and persuasion as laid out in Book 4 of *On Christian Teaching*. It is by being open to God's eloquent wisdom that we can be drawn away from the destructive worldly city into the City of God and even become Christian orators ourselves.

11th May 2021, 10 a.m.

Dr Alana Vincent, University of Chester, Associate Professor of Jewish Philosophy, Religion and Imagination

Constructing Reconstruction: Popular Imaginations of post-Genocide Reconciliation

This talk will analyse the way that genocide and post-genocide reconciliation are portrayed in popular media, uncovering the religious assumptions that inform such depictions, and assessing the impact that popular imaginaries have on real life reconciliation efforts.

25th May 2021, 4 p.m.

Prof Lisa Isherwood, UWTSD

Wanderings in Ecofeminist Theologies

We are at a moment where there are no guarantees as to the Earth's future. It is a question of our own critical choices. And I think what we are deeply in need of is a

transforming vision....a vision that opens the future to hope'[Miriam McGillis, Genesis Farm] This paper asks if ecofeminism can offer anything to that vision.

15th June 2021, 10 a.m.

Tbc
