

**ANZATS / ANZSTS Conference 2010:****Concurrent Papers - Abstracts**

*(Within each section, papers are listed in the alphabetical order of the surnames of their authors.)*

**Biblical Studies****Tim Meadowcroft    Waiting for Godot: Eschatology and Scripture in Revelation 5**

Vladimir and Estragon, characters in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, wait for Godot. Because Godot never comes, history dissolves into a series of repeated and unremembered events. There is no hope for Vladimir and Estragon because nothing happens and they are thereby denied both an anticipation of the future and a coherent memory of the past; they are enslaved by a perpetual present. In contrast, this paper argues, those who read Scripture wait not for Godot but for God, and they wait in hope with a remembered past and an anticipated future.

The conclusion of this study of the unsealing of the two sided scroll in Revelation 5 is that there is an eschatological function to Scripture. This function is enabled by the sacrificial work of the Lion/Lamb and the pervasive activity of the seven fold spirit of the one represented by the Lion/Lamb. The hermeneutical and epistemological significance of Scripture's eschatological function are also explored.

The ideas in this paper form part of a wider expositional study of Scripture and so build on certain stated prior conclusions as to the nature of God's speaking, the written word of God, God's speaking in Christ and their interaction with one another.

*Tim Meadowcroft is Senior Lecturer in Biblical Studies, Laidlaw College, New Zealand; and Dean, Laidlaw-Carey Graduate School*

**Jon Newton            The Purpose of the Millennium**

The interpretation of Revelation 20:1-10 has been a source of lively discussion and debate among Christians for at least 1900 years and there have been at least three distinct schools of thought about the 'millennium'. This debate is still raging at both a scholarly and popular level today and has been enhanced by several new ways of looking at the question in the past few decades.

The purpose of my proposed paper is to look afresh at this passage in the light of its location in John's text and narrative, its contribution to the major themes of Revelation and its inter-textual relationship with two other locations in Scripture where the idea of a thousand years is found, i.e. Psalm 90 and 2 Peter 3. I will be asking the questions, why is this passage there? What function does it serve in the text as a whole?

My tentative conclusions will be along these lines: Revelation 20 is part of the denouement of John's narrative, following the climax in chapter 19; it contributes to the theme of the triumph of the martyrs and the defeat of the devil; it helps John explain the delay in the *parousia* (the thousand years stands in contrast to the short time frames and immediacy language elsewhere in Revelation); and it supports his missionary emphasis.

*Dr Jon Newton is Head of Biblical Studies, Harvest Bible College, Melbourne, Australia*

**Jeff Silcock            The Last Judgment as the Consummation of the World**

The relation between the world history and the last judgment has been much discussed in philosophy and theology. The senseless pain and suffering and the apparent injustice or powerlessness of God to put things right also raises the question of theodicy and with it the complaints and laments of God's people.

Against this background, I wish to tease out the interconnection between the history of the world, the last judgement, and the resurrection and consummation. In the last judgment, which needs to be seen in the context of creation and redemption—where the creator is not only the judge but also the redeemer who hands

over the task of judgment to the Son—God will vindicate those who have been wronged just as he vindicated his Son in the resurrection (1 Timothy 3:16).

In Jesus we meet the living God, the Lord of the future, the God who is always coming, who brings the future into the present and who shows himself to be God by bringing the dead to life. As long as there is death in the world, God's power, his very Godhood, will remain in question. But to the eyes of faith, Jesus holds the future open for hope in a God who will still prove that he is God by raising all the dead, filling the whole transfigured earth with his glory. Ultimately, it is only because the judge of the world is the Saviour that we can have hope for the future and approach the Last Judgment with confidence. In faith we confess that in the end he will make all things new, and with the church of all ages we sing the great doxology to the one who sits on the throne and to the Lamb (Revelation 4 and 5).

The paper will be theological and biblical and will operate with Luther's law-gospel approach. It will be addressed primarily to the church but will show an awareness of the questions raised by the academy, and will draw particularly on Günther Bornkamm, *Studien zu Antike und Urchristentum* (Kaiser 1970) and Oswald Bayer, *Gott als Autor* (Mohr 1999).

*Dr Jeff Silcock is Postgraduate Research Coordinator and Lecturer in Theology, Australian Lutheran College, Adelaide, South Australia.*

**Sean Winter                    'Ambassadors for Christ' (2 Corinthians 5.20):  
Ministry in the New Creation in 2 Corinthians 5.**

2 Corinthians offers a sustained example of theological reflection in the light of eschatological conviction. At the heart of the letter lies Paul's account of the new creation in 2 Corinthians 5. Far from engaging in apocalyptic speculation for its own sake, however, Paul is keen to identify and secure his audience's ongoing participation in the deliverance of God through Christ.

This paper will explore the dynamics of this profound and important chapter, with a view to clarifying the nature of Paul's core theological convictions and persuasive aims. In particular we shall attend to the importance of locating the ministry of reconciliation within the context of God's act of new creation. The connection between Paul's apocalyptic convictions and the designation of the Christian community as 'ambassadors for Christ' will be thus be a key theme. It is hoped that the paper will offer further support for a reading of Pauline theology that holds apocalyptic / eschatological convictions at the centre, and offer a timely reminder that the shape of effective ministry is to be determined by the dramatic and disruptive event of God's advent in Christ.

*The Revd Dr Sean Winter is Professor of New Testament at the Uniting Church Theological College, Parkville, Australia, and teaches in the United Faculty of Theology (MCD)*

## Philosophical Theology

### **Katherine Abetz      How interactive is Sallie McFague's approach to nature through the 'loving eye?'**

Sallie McFague proposes that an 'arrogant' Western perspective on nature should be replaced by a more 'loving', interactive perspective. In this respect she contrasts a 'subject-object' model with a 'subject-subjects' model. The paper argues that her starting-point of human perspective militates against her aim of interaction with nature. The relationship between the subject who conceives the model and other 'subjects' is still a subject-object one if the other so-called subjects only operate within the model; in this sense a subject-subjects *model* is a contradiction in terms. If McFague's approach is consistently applied, interaction with nature will tend to be perceived rather than real.

McFague takes her proposed interaction with nature a step further by mooted the term 'Nature Which Is' as a way of referring to God. Her emphasis on human perspective would tend towards a conception of a God who belongs within a human model. The appellation 'Nature Which Is' raises further questions of theodicy and what is meant by 'Is' in such a context.

*Katherine Abetz is an MCD Doctor of Theology candidate, resident in Tasmania, Australia.*

### **Judith Brown                      The Spirit and Longing: How to Complete the World**

This paper explores the connection between longing and the 'completion of the world.' The thought of the Marxist Utopian philosopher Ernst Bloch and a variety of theological sources are utilized to explore the possibility of a theology of longing. The paper examines the profoundly different readings of the world and its directionality incorporated in the Marxist and Christian perspectives. Hence, Bloch's notion of hunger or desire as fundamental to our human being, and our human maturity, is used as a framework precisely because of Bloch's appropriation of the Christian tradition to a project deeply antagonistic to Christian eschatology.

A concluding section reflects on the arts as vehicles and repositories of our longings. Here Bloch's notion of *Spuren* or 'traces' is utilized. This is compared with the theological notion of longing as the desire for a lost paradise. The work of the eschatological Spirit as the transforming actor who gives a God-shape to this longing is discussed and this leads to a consideration of 'authentic' longing which both challenges and helps enrich Christian eschatology.

The paper does not discuss the status of longing as an emotion or the contentious issue of how to catalogue the phenomenon but takes as axiomatic that longing is a state that is fundamental to our being. Certain terms are treated as analogous to longing: these include the phenomena of desire, hunger, day-dreaming and hope.

*Dr Judith Brown is Adjunct Lecturer, Laidlaw-Carey Graduate School, New Zealand*

### **Alexander Jensen      Does God have a Future? Questions regarding God's Eternity in Dialogue with Mediaeval and Modern Theology**

This paper discusses the relation between God's eternity and time. It begins with a discussion of the modern awareness that the world evolves, and of the theistic premise that we can draw conclusions about the nature of God from our observation of creation. As Arthur Lovejoy points out in his *The Great Chain of Being*, until the 18<sup>th</sup> century creation was perceived as static and, essentially, immutable. Consequently, God was understood as immutable. However, once the understanding grew that the world is evolving, God began to be understood as changeable. This attitude can be seen in process theology as well as in contemporary authors such as Richard Swinburne and Keith Ward.

Process theology's emphasis on the immanence of God will be welcomed. However, the paper will criticise its sole focus on divine immanence at the expense of divine transcendence. Against this background, the paper discusses different understandings of God's eternity, namely the medieval understanding that God's eternity means that all time is present before God's mind in one timeless instance, and the modern understanding that understands God's eternity as God being present in every moment of time.

The paper argues that the understanding of God's eternity as timeless is to be preferred, but that it needs to be supplemented with a strong understanding of divine immanence. It concludes with some observations about history as the unfolding of the divine purpose and the hope for humankind arising from this.

*Dr Alexander S. Jensen is Senior Lecturer in Systematic Theology, Murdoch University and Principal and Lecturer in Systematic Theology, Perth Theological Hall, Western Australia.*

**Paul Oslington      Adam Smith, Natural Theology, Providence and Hope**

Many of the global challenges we face involve economics, and theologians serving the contemporary church cannot escape an engagement with economics.

This paper engages theologically with the work of Adam Smith, particularly considering the place of providence in the future hope in his system. It begins by outlining the 18th century theological background of Smith's work, including the Calvinism of the Scottish Enlightenment moderates, the Newtonian tradition of natural theology, and Stoicism which Smith was attracted to as a student.

I argue that in Smith's system the operation of markets is an expression of the Christian doctrine of providence, though this raises some difficult issues about the nature of divine activity in the economy and of theodicy which Smith was unable to resolve satisfactorily. Smith's famous references to the 'invisible hand' is considered in relation to the doctrine of providence.

The future hope plays an important role in Smith's system, but unlike his 18th century contemporary William Paley, future rewards and punishments are not invoked in utilitarian manner. Instead for Smith, the future state is an imaginative space where morality can be considered and renegotiated under the gaze of the author of nature. This conception of the future state connects with Smith's various conceptions of spectators which play an important role in his moral theory.

Moving from the 18th to the 21st century, some brief comments are offered at the end of the paper on the eschatology of contemporary economics and its significance for engagement with the global challenges we face.

*Paul Oslington is Professor in the School of Business and in the School of Theology, Australian Catholic University, Sydney Australia.*

## **Systematic Theology**

**Hugh Bowron      The Holy Spirit as God's Enlivening Future: Eschatology and Pneumatology in the Theology of Robert Jenson**

Building on the Cappadocians' view that the Father originates the work of our salvation, the Son develops it, and the Holy Spirit completes and perfects it, Jenson goes on to give a thoroughly eschatological twist to the office and work of the Spirit.

In this paper I want to take a closer look at this intriguing notion, making a closer examination of the notion of Holy Spirit as God's enlivening future coming to meet us, and to see if Pannenberg has been an influence on Jenson here.

*The Revd Hugh Bowron is Vicar of Holy Trinity Avonside, Diocese of Christchurch, New Zealand.*

**Kenneth George      The Padre and the God who Suffers:  
the contributions of G.A. Studdert Kennedy**

In this paper, G.A. Studdert Kennedy's poetry and prose is considered against the development of passibility theology in the latter half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. Lauded by Anglican leaders of his day as both a 'prophet' and 'simply the finest priest I have ever known' in his day, Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy (*Woodbine Willie*) developed a powerful personal statement of God's passibility during his work as a chaplain in the trenches of the Western Front, and in his role as *Messenger* of the *Industrial Christian Fellowship* of the 1920s.

Against the background of ferment in Anglican ecclesiology and theology during the early years of the twentieth century, Studdert Kennedy's contribution to an understanding of human and divine suffering has received relatively little scholarly attention.

With 2009 marking the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Studdert Kennedy's death, this paper seeks to deliver an overview of his literary output and place it in the context of early twentieth century and contemporary studies of passibility and the nature of God.

*Kenneth George is an MCD Doctor of Theology candidate, resident in Melbourne, Australia.*

## **Bruce Kaye: The role of eschatology in recent Anglican ecclesiology**

Anglicans have been engaged in struggle to find appropriate expression globally for their tradition over the past thirty years, in the context of significant conflict between national churches, or as they are referred to in Anglican parlance, ‘provinces’. There have been a number of institutional experiments pursued in this process, and all have struggled to be effective and gain widespread acceptance. At the present time the institutional relationships in the Anglican Communion are being re-shaped by a variety of forces. As is often the case in church history, the reasons for action in church institutions are complex. There are overlays of other influences reasonably visible in the present process.

This paper will be concerned with the theological work done by the three *Inter Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commissions*, and their reports: *For the Sake of the Kingdom* (1987), *The Virginia Report* (1998) and *Communion Conflict and Hope* (2008). The latter two reports were concerned directly with aspects of ecclesiology, and the first with issues of contextualisation in mission. There is no consistent approach to their subjects in these three reports, and there was very little overlap in the membership of the commissions.

The paper will examine the underlying role of eschatology in the argument of the reports. While the first report addresses a theme of contextualisation in the context of mission its implications for relations in the Anglican Communion are very apparent and thus touch on aspects of ecclesiology. The paper will draw out the different role of eschatology and highlight its effect on the values of the ecclesiological arguments.

*Bruce Kaye is the Editor, Journal of Anglican Studies; Professorial Associate, Charles Sturt University; and Visiting Research Fellow in History, University of New South Wales.*

## **Mark Lindsay      Bonhoeffer’s Eschatology in an Australia ‘Come of Age’**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer never outlined a comprehensive doctrine of eschatology. Nonetheless, he was far from uninterested in the question. Eberhard Bethge notes, for example, that eschatological concerns dominated Bonhoeffer’s *Nachfolge* period. Towards the end of his life, eschatology—specifically in the form of the ultimate (*Das Letzte*) and the penultimate (*das Vorletzte*)—underpinned his entire ethical framework.

Of greater interest, however, is Bonhoeffer’s creative linkage between the eschatological presence of Christ and what he terms the ‘world come of age.’ In his view, the world that has come of age is more godless and yet, in paradoxical consequence, *closer* to God, than the world that is not yet of age. That Bonhoeffer elsewhere defines eschatology as the radical repudiation of every continuity that is presumed to exist between humanity and God, suggests that the eschatological presence may indeed be present precisely where that continuity has already been rejected from the human side, that is, in a non-religious world.

In this paper, I will show how Bonhoeffer’s eschatology may be useful in the contemporary secular Australian context, and by retrieving his insights, the Australian church may again learn how to speak of God in a non-religious way, yet without sacrificing its Christological centre.

*Dr Mark Lindsay is Director of Research, Melbourne College of Divinity, Kew, Australia.*

## **John McLean      Pannenberg’s eschatological trinitarianism**

Wolfhart Pannenberg claims that “the eschatological consummation is only the locus of the decision that the trinitarian God is always the true God from eternity to eternity” (*Systematic Theology* Vol 1, 330). This paper outlines how Pannenberg reconfigures classical accounts of divine unity, action and attributes to comply with his eschatological dictum. Pannenberg argues that the unity of the Father and Son is constituted by economic acts and this constitutes the Spirit, and is constituted by the Spirit, so that God is and is revealed as the God who is love.

The paper considers how Pannenberg’s approach overcomes weaknesses in the classical approach and offers an assessment of this approach.

*The Revd John McClean is Lecturer in Systematic Theology, Presbyterian Theological Centre, NSW, Australia, and a doctoral candidate, Melbourne College of Divinity.*

**Kate Tennikoff      Is Wolfhart Pannenberg's theology a useful tool in helping re-frame contemporary Western Pentecostal eschatology?**

Western Pentecostal eschatology has, since the movement's inception, run along premillennial dispensationalist lines, resulting in an urgency to 'save souls,' without providing much theological support for engaging in social justice projects. In recent years, however, Western Pentecostal churches have become much more focused on social justice issues. Even so, their official eschatological beliefs have not been revised. This has resulted in a disjunct between belief and practice among these groups.

In light of this, the paper seeks to explore the theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg in order to discern whether or not his work would be a useful source in re-framing a Western Pentecostal theology of hope - so as to help bridge the current gap between faith and practice.

*Kate Tennikoff is Senior Tutor in Systematic Theology, Alphacrucis College, NSW Australia.*

**Selwyn Yeoman      From Eden to the New Jerusalem – the Ecology of Human Dominion in the Patristic and Monastic Vision**

The idea that humanity has 'dominion' over the creation is widely held to be the source of our current environmental crisis. My doctoral project is 'A Christological Evaluation of the Idea of Human Dominion over Creation' and has involved a historical study of the reception of the relevant Genesis passage, with a particular interest in how the 'Fathers' and Christian monasticism understood the place of the monastic community in the exercise of this dominion. That the community was regarded as a living sign of the eschatological future, already present, locates this study within the wider context of the discussion concerning the 'already and not yet' nature of the Kingdom of God. How the ecology of monasticism might be appropriated more widely in the contemporary context will be a focus of my paper.

*Selwyn C. Yeoman is a Minister in the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, and doctoral candidate at the University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.*

**Theology: Ministry and Mission**

**Neil Darragh      The Reign of God: a strategic future?  
An urban community renovation case study**

A key concept in the Christian articulation of what the future of the world will be or should be is that of the 'reign of God'. One of the challenges for Christians today is to translate this idea across from its origins in a biblical worldview to the conditions of contemporary society. If we believe that the future reign of God is not simply unknowable, but has characteristic that should be guiding our actions today, what are those characteristics in real contemporary terms? Answers to this question can be fantastic, fatalistic, or strategic.

This paper adopts the view that the reign of God need not be fantastic or fatalistic, but can be strategic in the sense that it serves to give direction and guidance to Christian involvement in contemporary society. It uses a case of urban community renovation to illustrate the interchange between theology and public policy. The paper discusses the theological dimensions of eschatology particularly in relation to social-economic-ecological issues, and also indicates where the mission of the church could be focused.

*Dr Neil Darragh teaches in the Catholic Institute of Theology and School of Theology, Auckland, New Zealand.*

**Carmel Davis      Downloading God: Teaching Theology in the Age of Technology**

In 1999, Margaret Wertheim argued, in her book, *The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace*, that in the future, the perfect realm of Heaven would not be found "behind the pearly gates but behind electronic gateways labelled '.com' and '.net'". A decade on, Wertheim's bold prediction does not seem so far-fetched when current worldwide internet usage is considered. In Australia, for example, at the end of 2009, there were over 17 million internet users. For a country with a population of only 22 million, this is a figure that any person or organisation, including the Church, ignores at its peril.

This paper argues that the rise of the internet represents an eschatological shift, marking the end of earlier ways of knowing and understanding theology but, at the same time, offering unprecedented challenges and opportunities for all those seeking God now. In particular, the paper looks at ways of plumbing these opportunities in the

teaching of Theology at tertiary level, by elucidating the parallels between the rise of the medieval university over a millennium ago and the rise of Web 2.0 technologies at the advent of the new millennium.

The paper's conclusions gesture more broadly to the potential of the WorldWideWeb to transform all who seek God in a time dominated by technology. It seeks to contribute to the current debate about the 'fit' and relevance of theology in an age of exponential technological growth. This interest has grown from an academic career, largely spent at Macquarie University, in which medieval religious literature and culture were my main research areas, together with a more recent commitment to delivering quality online theological education at The Broken Bay Institute.

*Dr Carmel Davis teaches in The Broken Bay Institute, University of Newcastle, NSW Australia.*

### **Phillip Marshall      Intentionally Diverse Churches: An eschatological necessity?**

This paper discusses the contribution of eschatology to developing 'intentionally diverse churches' (IDCs) in Australia. Along with dwindling membership, the church in Australia has experienced a muting of the Christian voice in the public square, failing confidence in the uniqueness of Christ, and declining hope in an ever-present God who holds the future. Rising secularism and pluralism have been met by a crisis of identity among God's people. What can eschatology contribute to this pessimistic assessment?

While denominations and local congregations have responded in diverse ways to these challenges, seldom is the culturally homogeneous approach to 'doing church' challenged. In addition, Christian groups arising out of immigrant populations have similarly adopted the 'like attracts like' methodology. This paper critiques this 'default ecclesiology' theologically and eschatologically.

In John's vision of Revelation 7:9-12, people "from all tribes and peoples and languages" engaged in common worship, despite the reality of suffering and martyrdom. Is this only for the future? Drawing on Paul's understanding of destiny, the paper demonstrate how (1) the motivation of heaven should encourage present ministry; (2) spiritual unity with cultural diversity is a mark of the local congregation; and (3) diversity-with-unity extends beyond ethnicity to gender, generation and socio-economic class.

Contemporary approaches to meeting the challenges of IDCs will be elaborated, taking into consideration the tough issues of language and culture. This paper fuels a dialogue on the role of the IDC, justified theologically rather than pragmatically, and argues that ecclesiology should be informed by eschatology.

*The Revd Dr Phillip Marshall teaches at Morling Theological College, Epping NSW Australia*

### **Geoffrey Nutting      Fifty years on: the pursuit of wholeness in training for authorized ministry – a United Kingdom case study**

As visiting research fellow in a British university college, I had recent opportunity to experience and study the current ethos and practice of its seminary arm. Something of what was found there will be contrasted with personal experience of that College fifty years earlier as an undergraduate, and of Church of England provision elsewhere at that time for ordination training. Issues to be touched on will include polarities of:

- gender
- doctrinal inclusiveness / exclusiveness
- uniformity / diversity of worship experience
- immersion in / seclusion from a university's academic agenda
- immersion in / seclusion from the 'busyness' of a surrounding community.

*Special attention* will be invited to the significance of variety of *temperaments* among authority-figures and other mentoring persons, and of opportunities for physical recreation and artistic expression. These issues will be related in a broad way to the author's research specialty: the Enneagram model as an index of psycho-spiritual 'wholeness' and open-ness to others.

The particular aim of the paper is would be to highlight the importance of differences of temperament both in persons under training and in those offering training, and how well institutions may be equipped to honour such difference. Beyond the actual paper offered, I would be interested to create a forum where this issued could be further explored.

*Geoffrey Nutting recently completed a Doctor of Ministry Studies (MCD), and is an Anglican lay chaplain, ministering to the mentally ill in regional Victoria, Australia.*

**Stephen Pickard     A Christian Future for the Church's Ministry**

The paper explores the nature of collaborative ministry. It begins with a reflection on the body metaphor in Romans 12:5 in which Christians are described as 'members one of another'. This text points to relationships in the body of Christ marked by collaboration which involve mutuality and cooperation.

The paper identifies and briefly outlines the critical developments required in a future ministry which is collaborative and thus truly Christian.

*Dr Stephen Pickard is an Anglican bishop, formerly Head of St Mark's National Theological Centre (CSU), Canberra, Australia, about to move to Ripon College, England.*