

NEMAAR 2015 Conference Program 21 March 2015

Last Update: February 25, 2015 Conference Schedule now complete

Venue Changed to Boston College: [Boston College School of Theology & Ministry \(STM\), 9 Lake St., Brighton MA 02135](#)

NB: *Due to the heavy snow season Boston University has declared March 21st a “make-up” day for missed classes and therefore the NEMAAR Conference venue has been changed to Boston College’s School of Theology & Ministry (the site of the 2014 conference). The physical address is 9 Lake St., Brighton [Boston] MA 02467.*

Conference Online Registration: Is open to all people, including non-AAR members. However, since we need to get a reasonable head count to the food service department well in advance of the Conference day please register and pay for the Conference by March 10th by going to the registration web-site via Eventbrite: <https://eventbrite.com/event/15254438436/>

Conference Onsite Registration will be held in the foyer of the Boston College School of Theology & Ministry. Walk-in, “day of” registrations will be accepted, though if at all possible please register before-hand online.

Ample **parking** is available both in front of and behind the BC School of Theology & Ministry (entrance is very first driveway to the right off of Lake Street and Commonwealth Avenue). For more information go to <http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/schools/stm/contact.html> or just www.bc.edu/stm . **Handicapped parking and access** to the STM building is available from the rear (east) entrance at the ground level.

Public transportation: take the “B”—“Boston College” Green Line to the final stop and the STM is about 300 yards south of that stop. Go up the hill/driveway to the 2nd building which has a white “lantern” (aka “steeple”) and is clearly visible from the northeast intersection of Commonwealth Ave. and Lake St. For more public travel information see http://mbta.com/schedules_and_maps/subway/

Room Information: Rooms 100, 110, 130, and 135 are on the First Floor, the Large Conference Rooms are on the south-east corner end of the 2nd Floor (243) and 3rd floor (332). **Restrooms and elevators** are on the north end of each floor. **Handicapped access** is on the ground/garden level on the back (east) side of the building.

Conference Schedule

8:15—8:55 AM Registration & Packet pick-up for those pre-registered available in STM Foyer at 9 Lake Street on the Brighton Campus of Boston College

9:00—10:15 AM First Concurrent Session of Papers

THEOPOETICS STM 100 9:00—10:15 AM

Moderator: Francisca Ireland-Verwoerd (Boston University, ffiv@bu.edu)

Panel Discussion: Theopoetics via Liberation Theologies, Queer Theory, and Continental Thought.

Ashley Theuring, J. Blake Huggins, Kathryn Common, Callid Keefe-Perry (all from Boston University, Callid@theopoetics.net)

While its academic origins begin in the late 1960s with work at the intersection of theology, literary criticism, and Heideggerian hermeneutics, conversation around “theopoetics” has recently seen a significant growth in citation. Given this increasing attention, the inspiring question of this interdisciplinary panel is pointed: after a brief survey of what theopoetics is, we will consider how it is useful – if at all – for work in constructive and practical theologies and philosophies of religion.

HINDUISM STM 110 9:00—10:15 AM

Moderator: Jesudas Athyal, NEMAAR President, presiding (Visiting Researcher, Center for Global Christianity & Mission, Boston University School of Theology, jesudas@athyal.org)

“Translating with Care: Hindi and Hindu-Christian Relations”

Rakesh Peter Dass (Harvard, rap363@mail.harvard.edu)

The paper examines the use of *avatār* in Hindi-language Christian literature. It attends to the use of translational choices in the production of the Hindi Bible. To what extent did Hindu-Christian debates shape scriptural translations? Why were neologisms introduced in the Hindi Bible? What do neologisms tell us about the social impact of translation choices? Ethnographic and textual data on translation decisions will help us shed light on Hindu-Christian relations among Hindi Christians.

“Saundarya Lahari: A Woman’s Sacred Body”

Kayla Kellerman (Harvard, ksk074@mail.harvard.edu)

This paper examines the relationship between Hindu Goddesses and the female body through analysis of the devotional hymn *Saundarya Lahari*. This poem provides an example of how Goddess worship has the power to inspire women to reclaim the sacredness of their bodies amidst a society where the female body has often been devalued. *Saundarya Lahari* allows men and women to reevaluate the importance of the body by seeing the religiosity of the Goddess Devi’s own physical body.

GENDER & SEXUALITY STM 130 9:00—10:15 AM

Moderator: Patrick Reyes (Boston University, p.reyes@neu.edu)

“The Death-Dealing Sister Called Community: Reframing the Trans-narrative”

Benae Beamon (Boston University, benae.beamon@gmail.com)

This paper argues that the discourse of mainstream lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender organizations in the movement promotes and relies upon redemptive suffering for its own advancement, sacrificing transwomen of color and constructing narratives of suffering and brokenness as wholly definitive of their lives. In uncovering the ethical and sociopolitical implications of redemptive suffering in the LGBT movement, one can begin to undo the depiction of transwomen of color solely as sites of pain.

“Salvation, Education, and Sexual Assault: The Failure of Catholic Colleges”

Kimberly Humphrey (Boston College, kimberly.humphrey@bc.edu)

College education promises young women a particular brand of salvation through socio-economic success. Catholic colleges layer this promise with the message of Christian salvation, raising the stakes for these young women. Unfortunately, many women lose confidence amidst the violence of the contemporary hookup culture that pervades college campuses. A feminist articulation of suffering and salvation serves as a corrective for institutions that have frequently been involved in the degradation and disempowerment of women.

APPLIED ETHICS STM 135 9:00—10:15 AM

Moderator: Paul Firenze (Wentworth Institute of Technology, firenzep@wit.edu)

The Development of a Patristic Virtue Ethics and Its Application to Health Care Ethics

Stephen Meawad (Duquesne University, meawads@duq.edu)

The admonishment of moral theologians by Vatican II to draw more fully on the teaching of Scripture is at the same time a call for Patristic exegetical methods to inspire contemporary ethics. I will in this paper propose the first stages of a Patristic virtue theory, that is, the application of early Patristic thought to virtue ethics. In so doing, I hope to establish grounds on which to approach contemporary issues in health care.

“Neglected Trauma: Bioethics and Mental Health”

Stephanie Edwards (Boston College, edwardfg@bc.edu)

Mental health, and trauma in particular, remains under-treated in theological bioethics. This paper presents an application of traditional bioethical frameworks to trauma using the case of chemical “forgetting” in instances of extreme trauma. It also suggests evaluative parameters for further discussion of mental health: attention to the dignity of the person, an “ethics of care,” and an exploration of the intricate ties between theological conceptions of suffering, agency, and medical understandings of mental health.

SPIRITUALITY STM 242 2nd Floor Large Conference Room 9:00—10:15 AM

Moderator: Stefan Schindler (stefanschindler@comcast.net)

“Seeing Scripture: Julian of Norwich and the Mediation of Vision”

Kirsten Heacock Sanders (Gordon Conwell, kheacock@gmail.com)

Julian of Norwich was a 14th century anchorite who lived within the walls of the church, both literally and theologically. And yet her vision of Christ’s redemptive work does not fit with the Roman Catholic Church’s view of the scope of salvation. In this paper, I will articulate how Julian’s vision of Jesus created a space for her to challenge and add to the church’s teaching on salvation.

“Evil and the Immaturity of Freedom: An Existential-Ontological Inquiry into the Heart of Darkness”

Richard Oxenberg (Endicott College, Roxenber@endicott.edu ; Roxenberg@live.com)

Whence comes the evil will? This paper examines Kant’s discussion of radical evil and Kierkegaard’s analysis of sin in order to uncover the existential-ontological dynamic of the evil will. Ultimately, I argue, the evil will arises in response to the anxiety inherent to freedom as such. I conclude with an examination of Kierkegaard’s ‘formula of faith’ as a solution to the dilemma of freedom, and consider the role faith may play in freedom’s moral maturation.

RELIGIONS IN ASIA I STM 332 3rd Floor Large Conference Room 9:00—10:15 AM

Panel: “Emasculated Gods: A Study of Bisexual Identities in *Saptamatrika* Iconography”

Aniruddha Kar (Special Centre for Sanskrit Studies, JNU, New Delhi, India, aniiruddha@gmail.com) and Soham Pain (University of Texas, sohampain@yahoo.in)

Authors: Aniruddha Kar (M. Phil Scholar, Special Centre for Sanskrit Studies, JNU, New Delhi, India); Soham Pain (Fulbright Visiting Scholar, Department of Asian Studies, University of Texas, Austin)

The *Saptamatrikas* in Hindu mythology are a group of seven goddesses, six of whom are named after male deities. Iconographically, they are nothing but feminized versions of the latter, thus making them divine counterparts to the "transgender" (commonly called "*hijra*" in India). This paper aims at a critical study of the theme of bisexuality in the *Saptamatrika* motif with special reference to the ‘transgender’.

10:15—10:30 AM Break

10:30—11:45 AM PLENARY ADDRESS in STM 100

Tulasi Srivinas: *Wonder and the Study of Religion*

What is the place of wonder in religion and in the study of religion? How do we think about wonderment and its companionate forms of mystery and awe? How can we use the understanding of wonder to better rethink the contemporary study of religion? Tulasi Srinivas will share some insights from her 15 year ethnography of wonderment and ritual creativity in the city of Bangalore, India, to reflect upon the problems and promise of the study of religion in the contemporary moment. Following a long critical intellectual tradition within religious studies, Srinivas will interrogate the very concept of religion. But in a twinned consideration she will build upon this established interrogation to ask how scholars of religious studies might better consider the pursuit of knowledge through a focus on wonderment.

Dr. Tulasi Srinivas is an anthropologist of religion at Emerson College (tulasi_srinivas@emerson.edu). Her work focuses on religion and globalization. She is the author of *Winged Faith: Rethinking Globalization and Religious Pluralism* Through the Sathya Sai Movement (Columbia University press 2010) and is currently working on a book on ritual creativity, capitalism and wonder. She is a consultant to the World Economic Forum on matters of faith.

11:45 AM—1:00 PM Lunch, NEMAAR Business Meeting, and Grad Paper Awards in STM 100

Jesudas Athyal, NEMAAR President, presiding, (Visiting Researcher, Center for Global Christianity & Mission, Boston University School of Theology, jesudas@athyal.org)

N.B. A box lunch is provided for those who have pre-registered for the NEMAAR Conference. Off campus fast food facilities are located nearby on the north side of Commonwealth Avenue just west of Lake St.

1:00—1:15 PM Break

1:15-2:30 PM Second Concurrent Session of Papers

COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY: Room STM 100 1:15-2:30 PM

Panel: “Theology without Walls: Theology from the Ground Up”

Chair & Moderator: Jerry L. Martin (University of Colorado at Boulder [ret.], jerry.martin@verizon.net), **Panelists:** Bradley Bannon (Harvard); John Berthrong (Boston University); Christopher Denny, (St. John’s University); Jon Paul Sydnor (Emmanuel College); Jon Weidenbaum (Berkeley College)

Theology Without Walls is a project in constructive transreligious theology. World religious traditions provide a vast repository of spiritual resources, available for reflection. Theology from

the Ground Up involves an intellectual and spiritual journey in which certain epiphanies, encounters, and experiences light our way and guide our thinking. This diverse panel will be asked: What were two or three important turning-points in your theological journey that were informed or transformed by an encounter with an idea, text, thinker, or practice from another tradition?

ISLAMIC STUDIES *Session 1: STM 110 1:15-2:30 PM*

Moderator: Tazeen Ali (Boston University, tazeen@bu.edu)

“Non-Muslim' in Socio-Political Discourse of Islamism and Post-Islamism: Some Examples from Pakistan, the US and Indonesia”

Hans Abdiel Harmakaputra (Boston College, Harmakap@bc.edu) [needs AV]

Islamism is defined by Asef Bayat as ideologies and movements that strive to establish some kind of an ‘Islamic order,’ in the form of a religious state, sharia law, or moral codes. However, Bayat and other scholars have found that nowadays Islamism is changing and many countries share the traits of post-Islamism instead of Islamism. The intention of this paper is to describe how the category of “non-Muslim” is taken place in the socio-political discourse of Islamism and post-Islamism. To limit the discussion, there are only three examples from Pakistan, the United States, and Indonesia.

Sufism, Surrender, and Service: The Spiritual Evolution of Said Nursi

Margaret Benefiel (Andover Newton Theological School, mbenefiel@ants.edu) [needs AV with Mac Adaptor]

Said Nursi (1876-1960), arguably the most influential Muslim spiritual leader of the twentieth century, was born into a Kurdish family in the village of Nurs in southeastern Turkey. This paper will argue that, due to a number of historical and cultural factors, Said Nursi forged an important and far-reaching contemporary form of Islam, rooted in Sufism, based on surrender, and expressed in service.

CATHOLIC STUDIES *Session 1 STM 130 1:15-2:30 PM*

Moderator: Dan DiLeo (Boston College)

“John Courtney Murray, Religious Liberty, and American Catholicism”

Craig Ford, Jr., (Boston College, craig.ford@bc.edu)

In this paper, I analyze the current debate over religious liberty in American Catholicism through an examination of the thought of John Courtney Murray, SJ. I then evaluate his worldview against those of the Roman Catholic bishops, concluding that the USCCB’s objections cannot be

sustained because the government is acting in a way to preserve the public morality as indicated by American attitudes concerning crucial issues related to religious liberty and the Affordable Care Act.

“A New Church Discourse: Seventh-Century Perspectives, Modern Realities, and the Controversy over Contraception”

Edward Nugent (Boston College, edward.nugent@bc.edu)

Catholic contraceptive teaching is considered using Isidore’s understanding of law, revealing various shortcomings. After these weaknesses are identified, a number of constructive alternatives are put forth – drawing especially on modern voices within the Catholic tradition – in order to suggest a revised pedagogy of the contraceptive doctrine. The central roles of growth, discernment, and conscience in this new pedagogy might also be applied to other areas of Church teaching, beyond the single issue of contraception.

RELIGION & GENETICS *STM 135* 1:15-2:30 PM

Moderator: Arman Mohseni Kabir, (UMass—Amherst, arman@physics.umass.edu)

Religion, Science & Genetics

Ramin Soltani (UMass—Amherst, rsoltani@umass.edu) and Seyyed Bahram Bergheim, (UMass--Amherst, sborgheai@philos.umass.edu)

Monotheistic Religions include series of instructions on which there are two major perspectives. In the non-rational perspective, the reason that one should follow God’s instructions is God’s interest and nothing more, however, in the rational perspective, it is believed that God’s interest implies on a wisdom that brings advantage to us; e.g. sensible aspect of that is mental-physical health. Based on scientific (genetics) reasoning, we support the latter perspective and provide evidences from existing religions.

“Necessity of Religion from Genetics Point of View”

Fatemah Tabatanae, Mohammad Babaee, Saadat Bagherigaleh, & Atefeh Katrahmani (Criterion Association, dr.fateme.tabatabaei@gmail.com)

Evidence exists which suggests that human feelings and attributes do not originate from the human genome alone. Rather, it is possible that a combination of human and virus genes activated in our ancestors. In this way, we can hypothesize that religions - including Islam which means health- are sent to control the feelings and attributes related to these viral genes in an attempt to let the humanities characteristics grow.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES Session 1 *STM 242 2nd Floor Large Conference Room* 1:15-2:30 PM

Moderator: Kate Jackson (Boston College, jacksokv@bc.edu)

“Félix Ravaisson on Education, Ritual, and the Good Life”

Daniel del Nido (Columbia University, dmd2167@columbia.edu)

This paper explores the educational theory of the philosopher Félix Ravaisson, focusing on his thought concerning the role of ritual in moral education. Moral education for Ravaisson takes place through habituation that actualizes desires and goals into stable patterns of action which at their most skillful can be interpreted as a state of divine grace. Ravaisson claims that this form of education will bring about *eudaimonia*, or the good life, for those who follow it.

Teaching about Religion in Changing Contexts of Religious Diversity: A Review of Empirical Literature

Kate Soules (Boston College, kate.soules@bc.edu) [needs AV]

There have been many calls for improved education about religion, and central to the success of that project is the complex task of teaching about religion. This paper reviews the international empirical research on teaching about religion in primary and secondary schools since 2002. Highlighting the findings and trends in prior research, I also call attention to those areas which would benefit from further research to strengthen the field of teaching about religion.

RELIGIONS IN ASIA Session 2 STM 332 3rd Floor Large Conference Room 1:15-2:30 PM

Moderator: Richard Oxenberg (Endicott College)

“The Education of Desire on the Path to Awakening: Buddha’s Heart-Centered Emphasis on The Caring Life”

Stefan Schindler (Trustee, The Life Experience School and Peace Abbey Foundation; Millis, MA, stefanschindler@comcast.net)

This presentation elucidates five points. First: Buddha does not say life is suffering. He says the unenlightened life is suffering. Second: Buddhism is not an other-worldly escape from life, but a joyful embrace of life as a profound and precious opportunity for learning, evolving and caring. Third: Buddha proposes the education of desire, not its elimination. Fourth: Buddhism as a whole proposes that the meaning of life is learning and service. Fifth: Emptiness is interbeing.

“The Purpose of Fasting According to Early Kutub al-Zuhd and al-Junayd: A Case of Continuity in Early Ascetic and Sufi Literature”

John Zaleski (Harvard, jzaleski@fas.harvard.edu)

This paper examines the treatment of fasting in the writings of Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 797), Wakī‘ ibn al-Jarrāh (d. 812-13), and al-Junayd al-Baghdadī (d. 910), with the aim of showing how Junayd incorporated earlier understandings of the purpose of fasting into his mystical program. I offer this as a case study for our understanding of the development of Baghdadi Sufism and its continuities with early Islamic asceticism.

POSTER SESSION: Foyer 1:15-2:30 PM

Fully Human and Not Yet Fully Adult: An Anthropology that Takes Female Adolescent Development Seriously

Cynthia L. Cameron (Boston College, School of Theology and Ministry, camerocy@bc.edu)

Adolescent girls are made in the image of God yet they are not fully adult meaning-makers. Michelle Saracino's use of hybridity allows theologians to hold the developmental immaturity of girls in tension with their status as images of God. This complements Robert Kegan's developmental theories of identity construction; more importantly, it honors their current abilities and lays the groundwork for their future participation in theological conversation.

2:30—2:45 PM Break

2:45—4:00 PM Third Concurrent Session of Papers

RELIGION & SOCIAL UNREST *STM 100* 2:45—4:00 PM

Moderator: Elizabeth Lee-Hood (Harvard, leehood@fas.harvard.edu)

Ferguson and the Power of Forgiveness: Lessons from *Jesus and the Disinherited* by Howard Thurman

Gabrie'l J. Atchison, (Yale, atchison71@gmail.com)

Howard Thurman's seminal 1949 book, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, offered a strategic method for African Americans living under the constant threat of racial terrorism to live with dignity and have an authentic relationship with God. Forgiveness and humility are central themes in what Thurman calls the *love-ethic*. In our contemporary moment, inhumane and state-sanctioned brutality against young, African Americans has left the younger generations feeling violated, abandoned and helpless. Is Thurman's radical concept still relevant?

“The JustPeace Triad: How Local Clergy Peacebuilders Influence the Peace Process in Northern Ireland”

Trelawney Grenfell-Muir (UMass—Boston, trelawneygm@gmail.com)

Based on interviews with Protestant and Catholic clergy peacebuilders from Northern Ireland, the project explores the psychological strategies, theological resources, and social mechanisms by which clergy influence society, and how the types of work interact to build and stabilize “positive peace.” It uses several disciplines and theories to explore impact on individuals, communities, the peace process, and the broader society and presents a novel taxonomy of clergy peacebuilder activities and a theory of their efficacy.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES Session 2 *STM 110* 2:45—4:00 PM

Moderator: Daryl Ireland (Boston University)

“Religion, Secularization, and Ecology in British Romanticism”

Mark Cladis (Brooke Russell Astor Professor of the Humanities, Brown University, mark_cladis@brown.edu)

After characterizing what I mean by theories of secularization and how these theories have dominated accounts of British Romanticism, I exam poems that problematize secularized accounts of Romanticism. Together, the poems disrupt the view that British Romanticism replaces God with nature and discipline with unencumbered freedom. I conclude by suggesting that when we disclose the language and ways of religion and practice in British Romanticism, we also make more apparent its political and environmental dimensions.

“Art as Agent of Disclosure in Theology”

Francisca Ireland-Verwoerd (Boston University, ffiv@bu.edu) [needs AV with Mac Adaptor]

Visual art provides a different kind of knowledge than what can be known through ratiocination of texts. A guided discovery will be part of the presentation. Questions will help the viewers learn what to look for in the painting; this will inform and enable a ‘conversation’ with the artwork. Then, through theological reflection, new insights can emerge which may lead to meanings, connections and relationships that have not been ‘seen’ before.

BIBLICAL STUDIES STM 130 2:45—4:00 PM

Moderator: Jon Cahill (Boston College)

“The (Mis)use of the Word “Homosexual” in English Translations of the Bible”

Cristina Richie (Flatley Fellow, Boston College; and Adjunct Faculty, Health Care Ethics Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, RichieC@bc.edu)

1 Corinthians 6:9 reads, in the New International Version, “The wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God... neither the sexually immoral... nor *homosexual* offenders (Greek: *malakoi*; *arsenkoitai*).” I argue that this translation is inaccurate based on original Greek language, cultural context, and sexual practices of the ancient world. The misuse of the word “homosexual” has overshadowed the original intention of St. Paul, which was to avoid pederastic relationships and maintain fellowship within the Church.

The Absolute and Beloved Enemy: Romans 9-11 in 20th Century Political Theology

Theresa Cooney (Boston University, tcooney@bu.edu)

In 1979, Catholic political theorist and former National Socialist legal jurist Carl Schmitt and Jewish philosopher and political theologian Jacob Taubes entered into a conversation over what Taubes describes as “what is to me the most significant Jewish as well as Christian political theology, Romans 9-11.” This paper discusses this political theological debate between the self-described “arch-Jew” and the one-time “Crown Jurist of the Third Reich” in the context of their

political theological worlds, but also examines how the conversation poses urgent perennial questions.

HISTORY OF RELIGIONS Session 1 STM 135 2:45—4:00 PM

Moderator: Benae Beamon (Boston University, benae.beamon@gmail.com)

“Word and Sign: Deaf Catholics in the U.S. before and after Vatican II”

Marlana Portolano (Towson University, mportolano@towson.edu)

This presentation is a profile of the Deaf Roman Catholic community with a focus on sign language in worship and leadership from within the cultural group before and after Vatican II. The narrative covers New England and Canadian sites of worship in sign language from the founding of a central membership organization for Deaf Catholics (the International Catholic Deaf Association) in 1949 to the ordination of the first congenitally deaf priest in the U.S.

Divine Longsuffering in the Irenaeian Economy

Jane Sloan (Boston College, bjanesloan@gmail.com)

This paper argues for the crucial role of divine longsuffering in the Irenaeian economy of salvation. *Against Heresies* depicts God's longsuffering (also translated magnanimity or forbearance) toward sinful creatures; God allows humans time and space to repent from sin and grow in gratitude. Irenaeus' allegorical reading of Jonah (AH 3.20, 1-2) depicts Christ as the revelation of a longsuffering God, and the one who accomplishes the work of the economy of salvation (AH 3.18.5).

RELIGIOUS STUDIES Session 3 STM 242 2nd Floor Large Conference Room 2:45—4:00 PM

Moderator: Susan Bratton (Baylor University, Susan_Bratton@Baylor.edu)

“Religious Perception: Exploring a Field of Possibilities”

Brian Jenkin (Boston University, bjenkin@bu.edu)

Research on extraordinary “modes” of perception, including *moral* and *aesthetic perception*, is flourishing. Research on *religious perception* is stagnant. Why? Serious research on religious perception is impeded by narrow conceptions of religion and perception. The paper takes up the realist-constructivist debate in perception research and explores novel possibilities for religious perception apart from typical “cognitivist” understandings. In doing so, it aims to contribute to future research agendas in the quickly growing scientific study of religion.

“You’ve been my guide through all the trouble I faced”: Examples of Mothers as Spiritual Guides in Hip-Hop Culture.

David Osborn (Boston University, daosborn@mail.roanoke.edu)

Christianity has a long tradition of mothers being a model for spiritual guidance. In my paper I look at some of the historic characteristics of African American mothers who were spiritual guides. I then show how Fannie Ann Jones and Dr. Mahalia Hines, the mothers of hip-hop artists Nas and Common, use these characteristics and others to act as spiritual guides to their sons in a modern context.

ISLAMIC STUDIES Session 2: STM 332 3rd Floor Large Conference Room 2:45—4:00 PM

Moderator: Hans Abdiel Harmakaputra (Boston College, Harmakap@bc.edu)

‘God beyond God’ across Muslim and Christian Theology

Khalil Andani (Harvard, Khalil_andani@mail.harvard.edu)

The Islamic metaphysics of Abu Yaqub al-Sijistani and the Christian systematic theology of Paul Tillich employ similar if not identical arguments in establishing the theological position that God transcends the domains of essence-existence and causation. Sijistani and Tillich each resort to special method of discourse to make adequate statements about God. Both thinkers seek to establish a concept of “God beyond God” in relation to the theological views prevalent in their respective intellectual contexts.

‘A Universal Capacity to Hope: The Negative Contrast Experience as a Starting Point for Christian-Muslim Dialogue’

Kate Mroz (Boston College, mrozka@bc.edu)

There has been much focus on Karl Rahner’s anonymous Christian as a Catholic resource for interfaith dialogue. I propose that an often neglected, but less theologically problematic resource, can be found in Edward Schillebeeckx’s notion of the negative contrast experience as a universal phenomenon. Putting Schillebeeckx in dialogue with Muslim thinkers, Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Amina Wadud, I intend to demonstrate how the negative contrast experience can heal tensions between Islam and Christianity by demonstrating the inherent capacity in all human beings to protest injustice and envision a better world through the use of a vibrant religious imagination.

4:00—4:15 PM Break

4:15—5:30 PM Fourth & Final Concurrent Session of Papers

CATHOLIC STUDIES Session 2 STM 100 4:15—5:30 PM

Moderator: Craig Ford (Boston College)

“The Smell of the Sheep’: Local Church Community as an Embodiment of *Sensus Fidelium*”

William Clark, SJ (Holy Cross College, wclark@holycross.edu)

The pastoral emphasis of Pope Francis’s teaching during his first two years in office provides the Church with several new or revitalized images of itself – from “field hospital” to neighborhood storefront – that emphasize concrete presence to local communities. This paper will explore

theological implications of the Pope's ways of speaking about Church, and the ways in which the *sensus fidelium* might be discovered in the ordinary struggles of local church communities to live and sustain their Christian faith.

“Catholic Liberation Ecology *Changes Everything*: Pope Francis, Leonardo Boff and Naomi Klein”

Dan DiLeo (Boston College, dileoda@bc.edu)

In *This Changes Everything*, Naomi Klein contends that climate change mitigation requires a bottom-up, values-based socioeconomic vision that challenges neoliberal economics. This paper argues that the paradigm of Catholic liberation ecology developed by Leonardo Boff and advocated for by Pope Francis is the sort of climate change mitigation program for which Klein calls. Additionally, the paper considers ways that Catholic liberation ecology can help effect climate change-mitigating economic reforms in society.

HISTORY OF RELIGIONS Session 2 STM 110 4:15—5:30 PM

Moderator: Stephanie Edwards (Boston College, edwardfg@bc.edu)

“A Regenerated Ethiopia”: George Henry Jackson, African-American Medical Missionary, and ‘deadly Congo’”

Marcus Bruce, (Bates College, mbruce@bates.edu) [needs AV]

This paper discusses the 1893 Congo Journal of the African American medical missionary George Henry Jackson. It examines Jackson's dream of a “regenerated” Africa and his evolving conceptions of his vocation, Africans, Christianity, masculinity, and other cultures. Like other American and African American missionaries to King Leopold II's Congo, Jackson discovered a reality far different from the one he had imagined, one that led him to reassess his life, his mission and Africa's need.

“The American Prophet: Emerson and Religious Histories”

Nicholas Friesner (Brown University, nicholas_friesner@brown.edu) [needs AV]

This paper argues that many recent historical narratives about American religion have been too quick to portray Emerson as a unique prophet, thereby turning him into a kind of religious idol. Indeed, the nature of Emerson's works lends itself to this treatment. By reading Emerson through the social movements that have claimed him, historians have tended to flatten his religious thought, especially those aspects which make it difficult to contextualize him.

NEW RELIGIOUS CHALLENGES STM 130 4:15—5:30 PM

Moderator: Brian Jenkin (Boston University, bjenkin@bu.edu)

“American Protestant megachurches, urban planning and community connectivity: Visual, environmental and social challenges”

Susan Power Bratton (Baylor University, Susan_Bratton@Baylor.edu) [needs AV]

The rise of megachurches has modified visual, social, and environmental connectivity with surrounding neighborhoods. Historically, Protestant churches favored minimalist lawns and open interface with civic spaces. Megachurches occupy larger properties, with greater setbacks and isolation from adjoining housing. Challenges to connectivity include high fences, dissonance with regional architecture, pedestrian barriers, and watershed disruption. Constructive responses include cooperation with urban planning, retaining woodlands, xeroscaping, maintaining high permeability with communal green spaces, and trail and conservation easements.

Politicizing an Outlaw Religious Movement

Laurie Cozad (Lesley University, lcozad@lesley.edu)

This paper explores a relatively new form of religiosity: cannabis ministries. These ministries have been actively involved in politicizing their respective movements so that they might be regarded as judicially legitimate. . Therefore, the purpose of this presentation is two-fold: first, to examine the law as it relates to the religious freedom and second, to examine the ways in which one cannabis ministry, The Hawai’ian Cannabis Ministry, has used these laws to protect themselves and their congregants while continuing to practice their religion.

GENDER & RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS STM 135 4:15—5:30 PM

Moderator: Kate Mroz (Boston College, mrozka@bc.edu)

“Particularities of Time and Space: An Alternative Way to Look at Muslim Women”

Hesna Aksel (Temple U., hesna.aksel@temple.edu)

Instead of focusing on supposedly universal discourses such as agency, freedom and rights to understand experiences of Muslim women, my paper focuses on how spatial thinking is crucial to challenging the depiction of Muslim women. In order to reveal the discrepancy between everyday lives and the social imagination of norms, I address the particularities of time and space in the enactment of agency, since experiences of Muslim women include a wide spectrum.

“Constructing a Comprehensive Feminist Understanding of Kenosis: Jon Sobrino in Conversation with the Feminist Kenosis Debate”

Annie Selak (Boston College, Annie.Selak@gmail.com)

How can feminist theology today preserve an understanding of *kenosis* or self-emptying? Given the reality that theological self-emptying can be used to oppress women and glorify suffering, is it possible to retrieve *kenosis* in a way that empowers, rather than endangers, women? This study will examine the feminist *kenosis* debates, introduce the theology of Jon Sobrino as a helpful tool for evaluation, and propose a comprehensive feminist understanding of *kenosis*.

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY STM 242 2nd Floor Large Conference Room 4:15—5:30 PM

Moderator: Marlana Portolano (Towson University, mportolano@towson.edu)

“Dark Night of the Soul:” Christian Mystics and the Apophatic Sublime

Ronald R. Bernier (Wentworth Institute of Technology, Bernier1@wit.edu)

It is in the presence of the Sublime that we witness a straining of the mind at the edges of itself, prompting a mode of reverence for that which is unutterable – an ecstatic encounter with the Divine. This paper will investigate the Sublime as that “dark night of the soul,” as it was vividly described in the mystical poetry of 16th-century saints John of the Cross and his mentor Teresa of Avila.

“The Universal Scope of Christ’s Particular Verbal Acts”

Cathal Doherty (Boston College, cathalsj@gmail.com)

In contrast to the general theological tendency to neglect the universal bearing of Christ’s particular historical actions, particularly his verbal acts, this paper argues that Christ’s particular words of forgiveness to individuals are of universal soteriological significance. They represent the real and historical point of insertion of divine absolution into human speech, and so they provide a foundation for understanding sacramental absolution, as continuing Christ’s real agency in human lives beyond his historical particularity.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES AND SOCIETY STM 332 3rd Floor Large Conference Room 4:15—5:30 PM

Moderator: Jonathan Morgan (Boston University, jrmorgan3@gmail.com)

“Political Mysticism and Political Theology of Dorothee Soelle”

Bin Song (Boston University, binsong@bu.edu)

Political theology is for Dorothee Soelle a theological hermeneutics, which emphasizes that the truth of theological statement consists in its answerability to concrete situations of human history and in its transformative effect in praxis. With this idea, political mysticism is on the one hand Soelle's historical research about the political dimension of Christian mysticisms, and meanwhile she also presents an idiosyncratic version of mysticism to address important issues in contemporary human society.

“Theology and Science: Uncovering Darwin’s Relationship with Capitalism”

Kate Jackson (Boston College, jacksov@bc.edu)

I will retell the story of Charles Darwin’s journey to his theory of evolution in a way that highlights his cultural context, specifically his reliance on capitalistic economic theory. This raises issues for how theologians are to take seriously scientific advances without inserting into theology the cultural assumptions of scientists. This cultural critique opens a space for

theological and scientific dialogue, and it offers avenues to reconcile seemingly incompatible scientific and theological views.