

Canadian Theological Society Annual Conference
York University, Toronto
May 29-31, 2023

Monday, May 29	
8:50– 9:00 am	Welcome (Darren Dias)
9:00 – 9:50 am	Panel 1: “For a Decolonial/Decolonizing Theology” Presenters: Rubén Bonilla-Ramos, Ryan Turnbull, Michel Andraos
10:00 – 10:50 am	Panel 2: “Re-Imagining Mennonite Practices of Peace and Justice: Storytelling, Theology, and Theory” Presenters: Karissa Durant, Melanie Kampen, Christy Anderson
10:50 – 11:10	Break
11:10 – 12:00 pm	“Reckoning with Western Theology and Religious Studies: Decolonial Reflections from PhD Students” Moderator: Fiona Li Session organized by the Dignity, Equity, Justice Committee
12:00 – 1:00 pm	Lunch
1:00 – 1:50 pm	Panel 3: “Ecumenism and Marriage: Theologies of Communion” Presenters: Joshua Zentner-Barrett, Wendy Cranston, Meghan Bowen
2:00 – 2:50 pm	Panel 4: “Interreligious Understandings of Friendship” Presenters: Mitra Barua, Allen Jorgenson, Daniel Maoz
2:50 – 3:10 pm	Break
3:10 – 4:00 pm	Panel 5: “Dis/abling Theology” Presenters: Miriam Spies, Susan McElcheran, Daniel Rempel
	Peer Societies Reception

Tuesday, May 30	
9:00 – 9:50 am	<p>Panel 6:</p> <p>“Pedagogies of (Re)creation”</p> <p>Presenters: Graham McDonough, Konnie Vissers, Rosemary Boissonneau, Michael Stoeber</p>
10:00 – 10:50 am	<p>Panel 7:</p> <p>“Reckoning with Climate Colonialism, Reimagining Climate Justice for Reconciliation/</p> <p>Presenters: Ji-gaabiikwe Diane Campeau, Susan McPherson-Derendy, Hilda Koster</p>
10:50 – 11:10 am	Break
11:10 – 12:00 am	<p>“Reimagining Global Christianities: Decolonial Approaches to Vietnamese Catholic Histories”</p> <p>Presenter: Nhung Tuyet Tran</p> <p>Session organized by the Dignity, Equity, Justice Committee</p>
12:00 – 12:50 pm	Networking Lunch
1:00 – 1:50 pm	<p>Panel 8:</p> <p>“Ecclesiologies of Decolonization: Theory and Practice”</p> <p>Presenters: Ariel Siagan, Bohdan Hladio, Christian Clement-Schlimm, Komi Hiagbe</p>
1:50 – 2:10 pm	Break
2:10 – 4:00 pm	AGM
6:00 pm	CTS Banquet

Wednesday, May 31	
9:00 – 10:30 am	Special Session: Papal Apology Roundtable 2 Panelists: Darren Dias, Niigaan Sinclair, Chantal Fiola, Annie Selak, Christine Jamieson, Timothy Harvie Chairs: Doris Kieser and Jane Barter
10:40 – 11:30 am	Panel 9: “Responding to Abuse, Processing Trauma” Presenters: Christine Way Skinner (student essay winner), Michael Buttrey, Patrick Nolin
11:30 – 12:30 pm	Lunch
12:30 – 1:20 pm	Panel 10: “Theologies of Reconciliation” Presenters: Don Schweitzer, Jean-Pierre Fortin, Kyle Ferguson
1:30 – 2:20 pm	Presidential Address Darren Dias
2:20 – 2:30 pm	Closing Remarks

Abstracts

Panel 1:

Rubén Bonilla-Ramos, Emmanuel College

Imagination as a Decolonial Tool: The Theology of Rubem Alves Meets Decolonial Thinking

Brazilian liberation theologian Rubem Alves argued that the most effective way colonialism exerted control over humans was through the control of the imagination; suggesting that colonized people were incapable of imagining a future beyond colonialism, that they were merely actors on someone else’s history. In this presentation I intend is to link the theology of Rubem Alves with decolonial thinking, to adopt imagination as tool that proposes different potential futures and alternative theological possibilities. In the first part I engage with decolonial scholars to explore some concepts of decolonial thinking and their use. I argue that the colonial matrix of power remains latent in recent theological articulations. This is a significant problem, because imagination, I argue, remains bound to colonial knowledges that fail to engage the systematic oppressions of people who have been undervalued and marginalized throughout history. In the second part I engage Alves’ work to propose that decolonial imagination requires *childsplay* to subvert Eurocentric knowledges and articulate the Divine from a decolonial perspective. I argue that Alves’ *dinosaur logic* and *supermarket analogy* provide a space to reflect and create beyond colonial imaginations of God. My contribution as a colonized Latin American person, is to propose that imagination as a decolonial mechanism provides a Sacred space where theology can un-cover new and refreshing faces and aspects of the Divine that have been hidden and discarded by the dominant colonial notions of God.

Ryan Turnbull, University of Birmingham

Reckoning with English Colonialism: Moving beyond the Doctrine of Discovery

Protestant denominations in Canada have, in response to the TRC calls to action, officially ‘repudiated’ the Doctrine of Discovery and the accompanying concept of *terra nullius*. But the hasty move from 15th C to 19th C in this genealogical reckoning of Christianity’s complicity in colonialism raises the question of whether there is more to be examined. Put stronger, is the eager repudiation of the DoD and *terra nullius* by mainline Protestants another form of what Tuck and Yang call ‘Settler Moves to innocence’? Is it easier to repudiate doctrines inherited from the Roman Catholic Church than to interrogate the discrete Protestant theorizing of colonialism in the 17th C? This presentation focuses on English Protestant theologizing of property throughout the 17th C and how this culminated in Locke’s argument for the displacement of Indigenous peoples from their lands in the Second Treatise. By the end of the 16th century, Francisco de Vitoria and Hugo Grotius had thrown the DoD or ‘papal donation’ into serious legal doubt, and while it continued to be cited as an important precedent in Iberian jurisprudence, English colonialists increasingly staked their claims to territory on theologies of property and habitation. By interrogating the theological logics of property developed in this period, inheritors of English Protestant traditions today can begin to better grapple with the ongoing institutional colonial logics that Aileen Moreton-Robinson has called the “White Possessive” and, through a repudiation of these colonial logics, move towards embracing meaningful material reparations through participation in movements like Land Back.

Michel Andraos, Saint Paul University

Can We Begin to Imagine a Decolonial Theology?

Theology as a discipline and theological education in general continue to be embedded in colonial ecclesial and epistemic structures. In the Canadian context, the theme of decolonizing the churches and theology has become a trendy topic in the aftermath of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the apologies of the Christian churches to the Indigenous Peoples of this land. While many Canadian theologians have begun to tackle these topics from different theological perspectives, this challenging and huge task is still at its early stages. Drawing on the works of some decolonial theologians (See Raimundo Barreto and Roberto Sirvent, eds., *Decolonial Christianities: Latinx and Latin American Perspectives*, eds. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), and in particular on the work of Enrique Dussel on the epistemic decolonization of theology, this paper will explore some insights the author believes are helpful for imagining a decolonial theology in the Canadian context today.

Panel 2:

Re-Imagining Mennonite Practices of Peace and Justice: Storytelling, Theology, and Theory

As Mennonites in Canada continue to reckon with structural violence within our own communities and theologies, we must also look at how practices that have been intended for good, peace, justice, and equity, have also been shaped by white hetero-patriarchal colonialism. Various perspectives on this topic will be presented through three 10-minute interviews between panelists, weaving together storytelling, theology, and theory. This will foster a conversational atmosphere followed by 20 minutes of audience engagement encouraging sharing stories as part of this re-imagining.

First, Karissa Durant, a white settler theologian, will begin by addressing practices of community hermeneutics. She will consider how an idyllic process that theoretically promotes equity of participants has neglected complexities of implicit and explicit power dynamics that exist within the communities, preventing it from enacting its equitable vision. What could it look like to reimagine these practices?

Next, Melanie Kampen, a white settler Mennonite, will discuss Mennonite involvement in Indian Residential Schools as another form of structural violence disguised as peaceful evangelism. Drawing on decolonial and feminist Mennonite theologies, they ask: how might white settler Mennonites might hold each other accountable for colonial violence and work towards right relations with Indigenous Peoples?

Finally, Christy Anderson, an Anishnabe and Mennonite woman with intimate knowledge of Western patriarchal white supremacist theology, will invite participants to wrestle with popular cultural conceptions of faith, God, and relations upon mother earth from a specific cultural lens and social positionality. She will ask: How does an Indigenous feminist theology challenge Western theologies while holding communities of faith accountable to social and racial justice in an unjust colonized world?

Panelists:

Karissa Durant, Canadian Mennonite University

Melanie Kampen, Centre for Translational Mennonite Studies, University of Winnipeg

Christy Anderson, University of Saskatchewan; Keeper of the Circle, Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre

Panel 3:

Joshua Zentner-Barrett, Saint Paul University

Inculturating Coexistence: The Indigenous Anglican Church and the Anglican Church of Canada

For almost twenty years, Indigenous Anglicans have been championing the idea of a self-determining church in partnership with the Anglican Church of Canada. In February 2022, they published a significant constitutional document that outlines their vision. Included among the pages of *Our Way of Life* is a reflection on the relationship between Indigenous Anglicans and non-Indigenous Anglicans, and the way in which they all fit into the larger Anglican Church. Religious dynamics are cohabitating in this relationship without a clear delineation between the different universes, be it the resurgence of Indigenous spirituality, the influence of colonial Christian powers, or the desire for reconciliation on the part of non-Indigenous Anglican Christians. This project examines the ongoing relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples within the Anglican Church of Canada, asking: what does coexistence look like in the church today? It begins by studying the history of Canadian Anglicanism with Indigenous peoples, including examples of conflict and coexistence, as well as the changing attitudes that defined this relationship. The second part of this project explores the relationship in the present day, with particular attention paid to the establishment of the self-determining Indigenous Anglican Church in Canada. This paper argues that coexistence for the Anglican Church of Canada means focusing on listening and healing as it wrestles with its own self-understanding as a colonial church. The Indigenous Anglican Church, on the other hand, faces new struggles around identity, inculturation, and the integration of Indigenous spirituality with Christianity, aiming for its own sovereignty and resurgence.

Wendy Cranston, Emmanuel College

The United Church of Canada: That All May Be One?

The United Church of Canada, a self-proclaimed intercultural church, has within its membership, adherents, and ministries at least three identifiable theological communities: Indigenous, theist, and progressive (including agnostic and humanist). These communities are not defined by membership, as people within the United Church largely practice a hybrid faith, meaning that the theology they experience may be different as they move from their home congregation to regional meetings or

community events. I propose to compare three theological texts written by United Church ministers—T.B. Kilpatrick, Carmen Lansdowne, and Greta Vosper—using Michelle Voss Roberts’ “theologies of difference.” Voss Roberts’ comparative framework uses metaphor as a bridge for comparison, asking the question: how does this common metaphor aid in deconstructing habitual dualisms? I propose to engage the question *how might a church imagine that it could experience the transformation of becoming intercultural, while remaining united, without any significant shift to its theology?* In a United Church context, theological diversity is often relegated to *ethos*—cultural habits and patterns—while *theology* is limited to Western Christian typologies, or “foundations.” I propose to use Voss Roberts’ hypothesis in a way it has not yet been put to test, in an intra-denominational project that troubles the hierarchical relationship between United Church theologies.

Meghan Bowen, Regis College

Augustine and the Equality of the Spouses

Contemporary Catholic marriage theology has become increasingly interested in articulating a necessity for gendered roles in marriage. Christopher Chenault Roberts, for example, argues that sexual differentiation and distinguishable functions for the spouses is necessary for a marriage theology. Further, Roberts claims that these discrete roles for husband and wife originate in the marriage theology of Augustine. While Augustine does discuss a hierarchy of social roles for men and women in works such as *On the Trinity*, I argue that a necessity for sexual differentiation is largely absent from Augustine’s works on marriage. I propose a reading of Augustine’s marriage theology which, in part, demonstrates a resistance to the hierarchy expected in marriages of his own time. In analysing Augustine’s works on marriage and holy virginity, I will demonstrate that Augustine applied the same expectations of chastity to both husband and wife. Further, he tasked the spouses equally to support each other in the development of virtue. While Augustine does undeniably assume a marriage between a man and a woman, the gender of the spouses is otherwise ignored in his discussion of the function of the spouses within that marriage. By resisting a hierarchy of the spouses, Augustine offers a surprisingly countercultural understanding of the relationship of men and women within marriage that remains relevant today.

Panel 4:

Interreligious Understandings of Friendship

This panel will explore how friendship can function in Buddhism, Christianity, and Judaism, and how these understandings can contribute to civility in the public square and beyond. The Buddhist Pali canon variously lays out the crucial function of good friendship in household and monastic lives. The Buddha identifies himself as a good friend. He instructs his followers to become good friends to one another. Broadly, spirituality is defined as a cultivation of friendliness. This study examines the multi-layered concept of friendship in Pali scriptures with a specific reference to recent application of the concept in emerging literature on spiritual care and psychotherapy. Within Christianity, friendship does not hold the same pride of place as familial and enslavement language in describing the God-human relationship. Yet its use in John 15 will be explored as a means by which to counter dangers in these dominant metaphors. Further, the utility of the friendship trope will be expanded to ponder how befriending non-human entities might renew and revise human friendships with one another and with God. In the Hebrew Scriptures, Abraham is said to be a friend to G-d (Isaiah 41.8); David and Jonathan are identified as friends (2 Samuel 1.26); and, in general, Jewish wisdom notes that there is a friend more devoted than a brother (Proverbs 18.24). This study will explore the manifestations of friendship in Jewish literature (Tanakh, Targum, Mishnah, Talmud, Midrash, and Maimonidean philosophy) as a means to understand the meaning and scope of friendship according to rabbinic tradition.

Panelists:

D. Mitra Barua, Martin Luther University College, Wilfrid Laurier University
Allen G. Jorgenson, Martin Luther University College, Wilfrid Laurier University
Daniel Maoz, Martin Luther University College, Wilfrid Laurier University

Panel 5:

Miriam Spies, Emmanuel College

Imagining a Crip Christ in Community

While disability theologians continue to call churches to include people with disabilities as active members of the community and disciples in God's world, my particular work aims to retrieve and crip an incarnational model of ministry to shift perceptions of and orientations toward ministry particularly so that people with disabilities might serve in leadership and with congregations. This presentation examines Dietrich Bonhoeffer's contributions of Christ *pro me* and Christ *in* and *as* community through the work of disability theologians. Through this we will begin to imagine a crip incarnational community. This work will demonstrate how bodies continue to shape our witness of the One who came to be with us, in our flesh.

Susan McElcheran, University of St. Michael's College

Reconsidering the Social Construction of Intellectual Disability: A Paradigm for Difference

This paper addresses the fact that people with intellectual disabilities have not generally been represented in recent gains made by the disability rights movement. Underlying the movement for rights is the claim that physical disability is socially constructed, meaning that people with impairments are only disabled when their needs are not accommodated by society. For example, a wheelchair user is only disabled when there are stairs with no ramps provided. Obtaining equal access and equal opportunity for agency and autonomy has been liberating for many people with physical disabilities. However, this goal has not been extended to people with intellectual disabilities, since they are often seen as lacking the agency and rational autonomy required for full participation in society. Social psychologist Mark Rapley disagrees, claiming that intellectual disability is also socially constructed. He has gathered a body of evidence showing that diagnoses of intellectual disability are constructed by assumptions on the part of the psychology community that exclude the ways of knowing and the competencies of people with intellectual disabilities. This paper proposes that a new approach to the difference of intellectual disability is needed, one that questions the assumptions of a kind of rational autonomy that resembles those in power and that excludes other competencies and ways of knowing. Such an approach to difference could also help other marginalized groups who want truly to assert their unique difference rather than gaining a place in society by merely taking on the characteristics of those in power.

Daniel Rempel, Providence University College

Probing a Theology of Interruption

Over the last few years, Canadians have been confronted by the problem of interruption as a disturbance in our lives. Whether it was life shut down by the COVID-19 pandemic, confrontation by the news of hundreds of unmarked graves across the country, or protests advocating everything from Black Lives Matter to "freedom," Canadian life of recent years has been marked by interruption. The interruptions indicative in such facets of Canadian life can be located in a collective grief and shared loss as we are confronted by injustices of all sorts. Hence, interruption takes something from us. Whether it be a life, a way of being in the world, or our own naïve assumptions, interruptions leave us changed, forced to wrestle with our current affairs in a new way. However, interruption is not always negative. Indeed, one could understand the acts of God in the world as a sort of "interruption" of the mundane, a recognition of God's presence in an

apparently godless situation. In this short presentation, I want to begin to probe the concept of interruption from a theological angle. My argument is that we can develop the notion of interruption as a theological category which confronts us with injustices in the world, pressing us to act on behalf of our neighbour. Interruption provides fertile ground imagine the world anew precisely in the places that we find ourselves unsettled.

Panel 6:

Graham McDonough, University of Victoria

Catholic Education Research in an Age of Reconciliation: A Review of Priorities

Since the publication of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Report (2015), Canadian Catholic schools have made changes to policy, curriculum, and socialization norms. These changes are important for promoting truth, justice, and improving relationships with Indigenous persons and communities, and also because of the large audience these schools reach. Publicly-funded Canadian Catholic schools serve more than 880,000 students (including non-Catholics and non-Christians), and involve numerous teachers, administrators, policy-makers, parents, and community members. They are easily visible Church institutions, and so their attitudes toward Reconciliation have great impact both within and beyond Catholicism's institutional boundaries. Given these efforts in policy and practice, several questions arise about how the scholarship on Catholic education has kept pace to support and critique them. This presentation will share the results of a systematic literature review that answers these questions and comments on their significance. It will describe how much the topics of Reconciliation, Indigenous experiences, and Catholic Church complicity with Residential Schooling appear in Catholic education's peer-reviewed literature since 2015, and in what proportion with other topics. It will consider how much related topics like social justice and recognizing the reality of a changing, more pluralistic Church might represent ideologically sympathetic trends, while trends toward idealized, context-free conceptions of religious knowledge – including de-historicized presentations of the Church, decline-and-fall narratives of Catholic schooling, and some approaches to personal religious formation – might represent the research literature's disregard of Reconciliation efforts to date. It will conclude by recommending possible directions for future research in this field.

Konnie Vissers, Emmanuel College

Re-Creation and Recreation: Engaging a Theology of Wonder in the Children's Garden

Humankind's relationship with the Earth has been at odds for centuries, due to colonizing practices, capitalistic tendencies in food production, and a distancing of our selves from the Earth. What would it look like to confront this reality, starting with the next generation? Combining insights from studies in children's spirituality (broadly speaking), practical theology, and studies in psychological development and resilience, this paper explores gardening as a spiritual practice for resilience in the lives of children as they face an increasingly uncertain future in an ever-changing world. Drawing on first hand experience starting a children's garden in the City of Hamilton, this paper will explore the beauty of creating and re-creating meaningful relationships with one another and the Earth. In a diverse neighbourhood where food insecurity is a risk for many children and families, the "Children's Garden Collective" teaches children the practical disciplines of organic, sustainable gardening while engaging in sensory, embodied spiritual practice—grounded in justice, food equity, and diversity. This presentation will engage the ongoing problems of food insecurity, the climate crisis, and racial inequality as they relate to children's spirituality. I plan to use power point or Canva to create a multi-media presentation on the theological and practical implications of the climate crisis on children and the work of the "Children's Garden Collective."

Rosemary Boissoneau, University of St. Michael's College

Reconsidering the Tree of Knowledge in Genesis 3 in Light of Nishnaabeg Ways of Knowing

The modern epistemologies and hierarchal thinking underpinning mainstream biblical scholarship promote an interpretation of the human being as separate, dominant and superior to creation. By applying decolonial and ecofeminist perspectives to the interpretation of passages in the Hebrew Bible, I seek to uncover depictions of the people and the land in a relationship that is non-hierarchal and marked by reciprocity and mutuality. In her book *As We Have Always Done*, Indigenous scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson teaches that Nishnaabeg knowledge is created and transferred by engaging in lifelong embodied practices of reciprocity, humility and respect on the land, by recognizing the land as teacher and by learning through careful open-minded observation of it. Moreover, she explains that the Nishnaabeg word that denotes knowledge is translated literally as “that which is given lovingly to us by the spirits.” In my presentation, I will apply this Indigenous understanding of knowledge to the story in Genesis 3 of humanity’s first sin in garden of Eden. By centring Nishnaabeg ways of knowing in my interpretation, I will consider sin in terms of the humans disobeying God’s command to keep or observe (*shamar*) the garden (Gen 2:15). Rather than coming to know good and evil through observing the tree as part of a non-hierarchal, reciprocal and respectful relationship with the garden, the humans eat its fruit in an act of selfishness and dominance in an attempt to gain divine knowledge that would place them above the rest of the community of creation.

Michael Stoeber, Regis College

Inter-Religious Movements towards a Condition of “Universal-Sacrifice” in Response to Theodicy Issues

In line with the CTS call, this paper will “re-imagine a new set of social relationships” grounded in the theme of “universal-sacrifice.” The theme of “sacrifice” has been used traditionally in Christian responses to the problem of evil in terms of “divine-atonement”—where God and humanity are reconciled through the suffering and death of the God-Man. The paper will show how such a stress on sacrifice-atonement has been the function of extreme anthropocentrism in scriptural interpretation and propose evolutionary theory as key in a movement to this sense of “universal-sacrifice.” It will emphasise Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s characterization of evolutionary theory as a kind of cosmic primordial catastrophe, where profound suffering appears “necessarily ... through the very structure of the creative system,” at the levels of the physical, vital, and spiritual. The evolutionary structure of creation introduces evil into the world, yet it contains an integral independence and significant role in the redemptive dynamic, as it supports transformative movements toward a harmonious spiritual ideal. In this vision, the healing of creation requires and involves the support and participation of *all facets* of it—land, animals, humanity, spirit beings, as well as God. Drawing on some specific teachings from Jewish, Indigenous traditions, and Sri Aurobindo Ghose’s Indian perspective, I will argue that this Christian theme of sacrifice-atonement can be fruitfully expanded to include an integral and holistic sense of all aspects of creation. This practical theological theme of universal-sacrifice provides a more effective response to the problem of evil than traditional anthropomorphic-centered, atonement, theodicies.

Panel 7:

Reckoning with Climate Colonialism, Reimagining Climate Justice for Reconciliation

Indigenous scholars and activists have suggested that climate change and the climate injustice that disproportionately affects Indigenous communities, is not a new phenomenon, but rather is only the most recent expression of colonialism’s long history of human-caused environmental change that now threatens all of human life. In this way climate colonialism refers to both this on-going expression of colonial domination, and to attempts to mitigate climate change that only superficially involve Indigenous peoples, knowledges, or which ignore these colonial socio-

ecological roots. This panel brings together Indigenous and allied non-Indigenous scholars, faith leaders, and community-based youth workers to explore the ways both Laudato Si and Canadian federal climate policy might be read as contributing to or resisting climate colonialism; and which seeks to explore both the needs and the wisdom of Indigenous community based leaders seeking land justice, exploring how churches can engage this work, and working to create culturally caring spaces for Indigenous young people to reconnect to kinship networks. Gathering under the mantra that “we can and must have the hard conversations if we’ve any hope of a better future,” (Justice, 2018, xii) the first 20 minutes allow panelists to briefly share from their respective fields. A Q&A period will follow, where one of the panelists will draw out themes and moderate a 15 minute conversation between panelists before opening up 15 minutes for questions from the audience.

Panelists:

Ji-gaabiikwe Diane Campeau (Saulteaux, Dakota, Metis), iEmergence Saskatchewan
Susan McPherson-Derendy (Cree), Keeper of the Learning Circle at the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre
Dr. Hilda Koster, University of St. Michael’s College at the University of Toronto

Panel 8:

Ariel Siagan, Trinity College

Christians for National Liberation (CNL): A History of an Underground Faith

My paper draws a historiography of an underground Christian movement in the Philippines called CNL, driven by the question how the theology emerging from the organized social movements evolves through the changing means of domination- from pre-colonial to modern-day apparatuses. In the study of wars of national liberation that emerged after independence from formal colonial rule, rarely that theology is given sufficient scholarly attention. But in decolonizing projects, theology, in many instances, is at the front and center of how subjectivities are formed, and agencies are lived out. The CNL participates both in civil society and civil war: in forming and influencing public reason by referring to higher transcending moral order and in waging peoples war by agitating revolutionary violence in the countryside. This paper challenges the prevailing notion that liberation movements are constituted by people who are “brainwashed” by leftist ideologies. This will also destabilize the popular notion of non-violence as a universalized and the only legitimate response in situations of conflict. I argue that in the civil war happening in the Philippines, as elsewhere, religion and Christian subversive theology and spirituality is an endogenous response from people who receives the brunt of the historical and the on-going colonial violence. Theology is one of the resources used by social movements that mobilize people of faith to reclaim their subjectivities through the means of revolutionary violence.

Bohdan Hladio, Trinity College

Ukrainian Orthodox Church Independence as a Decolonization Movement

Decolonization is usually studied in contexts where non-European cultures have suffered due to colonization by European empires. The territory of Ukraine and its people were subjected to Muscovite rule in 1654, and the Orthodox Church of Ukraine was subjugated to the Moscow Patriarchate in 1686. From that time until the early 20th century Ukraine was treated as a colony by the Russian Empire, and experienced the same type of political, linguistic, cultural, economic, and religious pressures as did other colonized peoples in Africa and Asia at the hands of Western European empires. In my paper I will argue that Ukraine presents the example of a European nation which had been colonized – both politically and ecclesiastically – by a European/Eurasian empire. Between 1918 and 2022 there have been eight separate instances of Ukrainian Orthodox bodies declaring themselves independent from the domination of the Moscow Patriarchate. On the basis

of historical examples and texts from major theologians and ideologues, using historical and theological methodologies as well as post-colonial theory, I will demonstrate that these movements seeking to (re)establish an independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church free from Muscovite domination can best be understood as a decolonization movement in which Eastern Orthodox Ukrainians have sought to cast off the foreign rule, historical narrative, linguistic russification, and ritual changes imposed upon the Ukrainians by the imperial and post-imperial Russian church, and to reclaim their autochthonous historical narrative, ritual practices, linguistic and musical traditions, as well as independent governance and self-determination.

Christian Clement-Schlimm, Wycliffe College

Millennialism, Missions, and West Africa in the thought of Edward Bickersteth

The early nineteenth century was a transformative period in both the history of Christian eschatology and Christian missions. On the one hand, English Protestants were forced to reimagine their culturally entrenched, often nationalistic, understandings and applications of dearly held prophetic texts because of the new realities brought about by the French Revolution and social upheaval in the British Isles. On the other, building on William Carey's Enquiry and the rise of the modern missions movement, Evangelical missions societies were beginning to assert themselves across the sprawling British Empire with great millennial expectation. In this presentation, I will articulate a significant racial dynamic identified from my research into Edward Bickersteth (1786-1850), and the underlying relationship between millennialism and missiology in the early nineteenth century. Namely, how Bickersteth, as a luminary of evangelical missions and eschatological development, conceived of and utilised the narrative of West Africans (and their descendants) in the British Empire in two ways. Firstly, how his initial postmillennial hope inspired his explicit support for indigenous-led churches in West Africa. Secondly, why Bickersteth strategically drew support for his later optimistic premillennialist readings of prophecy from the conversion of West Africans across the Empire. Researching these questions as a Canadian scholar of Afro-Barbadian descent, I will raise critical questions concerning millennialism's unique and lasting legacy in the story of Christian missions among black Africans in the British imperial context. Furthermore, my presentation will suggest that eschatological clarity is indispensable when addressing racial injustice and trauma in both the past and present.

Komi Hiagbe, Global Theological Seminary, Accra

Cultural Reconstruction and Church Growth in Africa

At the beginning of the 20th century, there were only an estimated 10 million Christians on the African continent. That figure rose to 143 million in 1970 and then to an estimated 390 million in the year 2000. In 2018, Africa became the continent with more Christians than any other with well over 631 million Christians. Projections are that that figure would double by 2050. As much as these figures will gladden the heart of any African Christian, the concern is as to how strong the contemporary African church is, to withstand any storm aimed at its decline. From a critical historical perspective, the paper examines Christian witness on the African continent since antiquity with the goal of finding ways by which the contemporary African church can forestall the pitfalls of the past. Consequently, the paper identifies, internal wrangling and lack of depth through the use of a foreign language—Latin, as the bane of the African church of antiquity and strongly advocates that besides the peoples, the cultures of Africa, must become targets of evangelization. Agreeing with Pope Paul II's assertion that faith, if fully received, thoroughly thought through, and faithfully lived out becomes culture, we call for critical examination of the process of evangelization and contextualization on the continent. In conclusion, the paper advocates a continual dialogue between the faith and the cultures of Africa for the future of the church and the socio-economic transformation of the continent.

Special Session:

From Rome to Canada: Reflections on Pope Francis' Apology to Residential School Survivors

This is a second panel which critically engages the historic visit of Pope Francis to Canada and his apologies to Indigenous Residential School survivors. This panel of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, community leaders and academics will help to broaden the conversation that was begun last year shortly after the Pope's visit. This panel, together with the first, will also help contribute to a book of essays to be submitted to an international press, which will assess the impact of Pope Francis' visit. Among the questions panelists will be asked to reflect upon are, as follows:

- To what degree, if any, did Francis' visit further the cause of reconciliation?
- What effect did the apology/ies have on the community you serve?
- What needs yet to be done for the Catholic Church in Canada to make good on its promises and obligations to Indigenous people?
- What did the Apology mean to you personally?

Panelists:

Dr. Darren Dias, University of St. Michael's College

Dr. Niigaan Sinclair, the University of Manitoba

Dr. Chantal Fiola, the University of Winnipeg

Dr. Annie Selak, Georgetown University

Dr. Christine Jamieson, Concordia University

Panel 9:

Christine Way Skinner, University of St. Michael's College (Student essay contest winner)

A Traumatized Church – Implications for Reform

This paper attempts to address the phenomenology of trauma in Roman Catholic clergy. A number of synodal listening sessions which took place in Canada in 2022 revealed significant anecdotal evidence of problematic behaviours in parish clergy that appeared to be rooted in trauma. There is limited literature regarding the psychological health of diocesan clergy but what does exist reveals a higher-than-average level of mental health difficulties. These range from depression to personality disorders. Though arguably at the level of a mental health crisis, much if not most of these conditions are unacknowledged, let alone addressed. Furthermore, authoritarian, oppressive and clerical ecclesial structures supported by problematic ecclesiology and theology of the priesthood further exacerbate this situation. The result is a church that is both traumatized and traumatizing. This paper proposes looking to the social sciences for assistance. In particular, in the field of psychology, Murray Bowen's family systems theory provides a useful tool for understanding and for addressing the mental health of clergy in relation to the ecclesial and familial systems in which they exist. It also provides a framework for considering the way in which trauma and unhealthy behaviours persist in communities from generation to generation when they are unaddressed. Bowen's model has been successfully applied by Edwin Friedman in particular synagogues and churches, and so there is reason for hope that the insights it provides can be useful with larger-scale ecclesial reform. *Problem:* This paper addresses the problem of unaddressed trauma in members of the Roman Catholic clergy. Though it focusses on this group, it is easily transferable to other ecclesial communities.

Michael Buttrey, Regis College

Reckoning with the Protestant Abuse Apocalypse: Re-imagining Church without Moral Externalism, Missional Exceptionalism, and Disembodied Logocentrism

“But this was 1979.” In her 2015 article, Rachel Waltner Goossen gives the year as one reason why seminary president Marlin Miller did not call the police when his star professor John Howard Yoder gave Miller a catalogue of his sexual experiments. Although Goossen then details Miller’s culpability in protecting Yoder, her words suggest readers may hope that religious institutions today are more proactive in addressing sexual misconduct. Any such hopes were dashed by 2022 revelations that leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention spent fifteen years collecting, burying, and denying over seven hundred allegations of abuse perpetuated against church members and their children. Past research has argued for clericalism, patriarchy, and close-knit communities as common factors in the abuse crisis. In this paper, I use examples from public abuse cases to suggest three additional candidates for structural factors that predispose churches to mishandle allegations. First is moral externalism, a theory of moral motivation which among Christians manifests as a confidence that having the right doctrines will – with allowances for occasional mild “sins” – result in good behaviour. Second is missional exceptionalism, a stress on a Christian organization’s particular calling to evangelism, justice, and/or orthodoxy as necessitating a refusal to engage so-called “critics.” Third is disembodied logo-centrism, a dualistic intellectual prioritization of the tools of theology, law, and/or policy over the bodily experience and narratives of survivors. I conclude by exploring some scriptural and historical grounds to re-imagine church practices less susceptible to these factors.

Patrick Nolin, Regis College

Disruption and Rearticulating Past Trauma: Psychic Conversion as a Method for Resolving Dialectical Conflict

Psychic conversion is Robert M. Doran’s complementary contribution to Bernard Lonergan’s initial triadic schema of conversion. Where Lonergan’s intellectual, moral, and religious conversions are situated within the intentional component of human consciousness for the self-transcendence of the individual upon a path toward human authenticity, Doran’s psychic conversion examines how the psyche as representative of humanity’s existential consciousness may also undergo a transformative process of conversion with the assistance of God’s grace. According to Doran, psychic conversion is “the acquisition of the capacity to disengage and interpret correctly the elemental symbols of one’s being and to form or transform one’s existential and cognitive praxis on the basis of such a recovery of the story of one’s search for direction in the movement of life.” The paper will provide an exposition of Doran’s notion of psychic conversion as a methodological tool for the transvaluation of past experiences from archaic tendencies toward the life-giving opportunity of finding the “direction in the movement of life.” Psychic conversion is a differentiated conversion as it combats the ills of what Lonergan identified as dramatic bias – dramatic bias being the progressively collected biases of a community in the formation of a functional censorship operative in an individual’s existential consciousness. This paper seeks to be a brief introduction to the much larger project of situating Doran’s psychic conversion within a discussion of memory and Ricoeurian symbols.

Panel 10:

Don Schweitzer, St. Andrew’s College

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Sermon on the Mount: Reflections on their Relationship in Canada Today from a White Settler Perspective

This paper examines what the Sermon on the Mount has to say about how Indigenous rights and traditions should be braided together with Canadian law so as to honour the intent of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, and what the *Declaration* has to say about how

the Sermon should be interpreted. The ethical demands of the Sermon require a fundamental respect for Indigenous world views, traditions and land claims in this process, so that the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples over their lands and their right to self-determination are fully implemented and nation-to-nation relationships upheld between them and the Crown. Conversely, the *Declaration* decentres the Sermon. It requires that this same respect be demonstrated as the ethical demands of the Sermon are followed. The problem: *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* requires the federal government to develop and implement an action plan by June 21, 2023, in consultation with Indigenous peoples, that will achieve the goals of the *Declaration*. This presents a daunting challenge, as the rights of Indigenous peoples that the *Declaration* sets forth unsettle and undermine colonial arrangements of state sovereignty and jurisdiction that are deeply ingrained in Canadian culture. Canadian governments have repeatedly promised big in this way and under delivered. Cultural and religious work is needed to provide the motivation to implement the *Declaration* in ways that fully uphold Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination. Contribution: This presentation will show how the Sermon on the Mount can motivate settler Christians to seek to implement the *Declaration* so that both hard and soft Indigenous rights are upheld by Canadian law, and how the *Declaration* requires that the Sermon be followed in ways that involve dialogue with Indigenous peoples and respect for their sovereignty, rights and traditions.

Jean-Pierre Fortin, University of St. Michael's College

Seeking *Guswhenta*: Taiaiake Alfred and Arthur Manuel on the Requirements of Authentic Reconciliation

In light of this year's theme, "Reckonings and Re-Imaginations," this presentation will engage the thought of Indigenous scholars and activists Taiaiake Alfred and Arthur Manuel to lay foundations for a transformative encounter between settler Canadians and Christians with Indigenous peoples and cultures. Alfred and Manuel compellingly argue that authentic reconciliation requires the deconstruction of colonizing notions and practices of reconciliation. Through the use of categories such as "Indian," "Native," and "Aboriginal" the latter conceive of Indigenous peoples as communities and cultures in need of Canadian and Christian assistance—be it material, financial, cultural, political and spiritual. Within such an epistemological framework, reconciliation inevitably takes the form of "recolonization" (Alfred) or "neocolonialism" (Manuel), operating as imperialistic enterprise of assimilation under the cover of multicultural tolerance. Alfred and Manuel struggle for the retrieval of traditional Indigenous moral principles and spiritual practices to define a path forward involving the reclamation and achievement of self-governance, land restitution and proper reparation for colonization and its intergenerational effects. Alfred and Manuel invite Canadians to embrace *Guswhenta*, "a vision of a relationship of mutual respect, partnership and sharing of the land on terms of mutual agreement." Beyond legal and constitutional amendments, a profound transformation of Canadian identity and the relationships Canadians entertain with their fellows humans, land (nature) and God is needed. Genuine reconciliation supposes empowering Indigenous peoples to (re)learn and (re-)appropriate their Indigenous identity and agency as well as enabling Canadians to disengage themselves, Canadian culture, society institutions and religion from the enterprise of colonization.

Kyle Ferguson, University of St. Michael's College

Re-Imaginations Reconciliation with Indigenous people through the Learnings of Jewish – Catholic Relations

Jacques Dupuis in his seminal book entitled: "Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism" remarks that: "The case of Judaism and Christianity can serve, as has been suggested, as a catalyst for a reorientation of the relationship between Christianity and the other religions. What applies in the first instance holds good, analogically, in the other. Jewish – Catholic relations, then, as suggested by Dupuis, is a particularly fruitful field for comparative work. While there have

been volumes of theological and historical pieces written on Catholic – Jewish relations, there has been less written, paralleling the example of Dupuis, which seeks to reflect and transpose the learnings of Jewish – Catholic relations onto other dialogical settings. One such lesson is the experience of reconciliation. Moreover, what steps did the Church take with the Jewish people which enabled it to change over a millennium of contemptuous teachings. With this question in mind, the following paper will explore whether the Jewish / Catholic experience of reconciliation can be a valid and fruitful comparand for the Catholic Church's reconciliation efforts with the Indigenous peoples of Canada. The essay will be constructed into three parts. First, I will identify the problem the comparand seeks to address. Second, I will argue why the comparison works focusing on two comparands: the experience of Empire and the experience of ontological violence. In the third section, I will suggest some principals of reconciliation learned from the Jewish experience to be applied in Canada with the Indigenous peoples.