29th September – 1st October 2025

# Fellowship for Biblical Studies 2025 Conference: Timetable

**Monday 29th September**
9.30–11am: Arrivals and Registration
11.30–1.00 p.m.: Welcome and Opening Session
1.00–2.00 p.m.: Lunch
2.00–5.30 pm.: Seminar Session 1 and 2
6.00–7.00 pm.: Dinner
7.00–8.30 pm: Plenary Paper 1

**Tuesday 30th September**
9.30–11.00 am: Plenary Paper 2
11.30–1.00 am: Seminar Session 3
1.00–2.00 pm: Lunch
2.00–5.30 pm: Seminar Session 4 and 5
6.30–8.30 pm.: Conference Dinner

**Wednesday 1st October**
9.30– 11.00 am: Seminar Session 6
11.00 am–2.30 pm: Conference Excursion
2.30 pm onwards: Departure

| 9.30 a.m.–11.00 a.m. | Arrivals and Registration |
| 11.00–11.30 a.m. | Morning Tea |
| 11.30–1.00 p.m. | Welcome, Introduction, Opening Plenary 1 |

### Naomi Wolfe (Australian Catholic University)

*Scripture, Coloniality, and Country: Reframing Biblical Studies in Settler-Colonial Australia*

This paper critically examines some of the challenges facing Biblical Studies and theology within Australia and other settler-colonial contexts. It begins by analysing the role of key biblical texts and theological interpretations that informed and legitimised settler engagement with both Aboriginal Country and Aboriginal peoples. These texts, often read through Eurocentric hermeneutical frameworks, contributed to theological justifications for dispossession, displacement, and the marginalisation of Indigenous knowledges including spiritualities. By exploring these historical dynamics, the paper seeks to highlight how the entanglement of biblical interpretation with colonial expansion has left an enduring legacy on the Australian theological landscape. The discussion then turns to the ongoing implications of this legacy for contemporary Biblical Studies within Australian theological education. Despite growing recognition of Indigenous perspectives, the discipline continues to grapple with structural and epistemological challenges that limit its capacity to engage meaningfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contexts. This includes the persistence of curricula grounded only in Western canonical traditions, as well as insufficient attention to the cultural, historical, and theological realities of First Nations peoples. In response, the paper proposes decolonizing approaches that seek to reframe Biblical Studies in ways that are dialogical, inclusive, and contextually grounded. Such approaches may include the integration of Indigenous hermeneutics, collaborative partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander theologians, and pedagogical practices that prioritise relationality and place-based learning. By adopting these strategies, it is hoped that the study of the Bible in Australia may be revitalised, fostering a discipline more equipped to engage ethically and constructively with the complexities of its postcolonial context.

| 1.00–2.00 p.m. | Lunch |

2.00–3.30 p.m.  Seminar Session 1

**Seminar 1:1**
*Stephen Cook, "Humour and Sarcasm in the Biblical Creation Stories"*
Puns, wordplays, and sarcasm occur frequently in the Hebrew Bible, often with a humorous effect. Although not generally regarded as comedic texts, the second account of creation in Genesis contains several humorous elements. This paper examines some of these comedic features and analyses the function of humour in the theological and historic contexts of the Genesis narratives.

*Barbara Deutschmann, "'Rachel is Weeping for Her Children': Character Development Across the Hebrew Bible"*
Rachel is shown in Genesis 29–30 to have internalised the patriarchal script for ancestral women by staunchly desiring to bear sons for Jacob: "Give me children or I shall die!" (30:1). Women long have been observed as serving an ideological purpose in the Hebrew Bible, supporting the patriarchal script determined by the men in their lives. This explains, Esther Fuchs suggests, the "literary flatness" of these figures (in "The Literary Characterization of Mothers and Sexual Politics in the Hebrew Bible" in Women in the Hebrew Bible: A Reader, ed. Alice Bach, 138) and the absence in biblical literature of accounts of the realia of motherhood such as pregnancy, child-birth, lactation, and child-raising. The character of Rachel, however, develops extra dimensions through the employment of her figure in a number of other places outside of the narratives of Genesis, such as in the book of Ruth (4:11) as an ancestral hero and in Jeremiah (31:15) as an emblem of exile. This paper tracks the development of the literary persona of Rachel through various biblical genres paying particular attention to the motherhood functions enacted by Rachel. It concludes that this nuanced character is not simply another flattened feature of the patriarchal project in the HB but in fact shows evidence of a sophisticated recursive staging of an important persona.

**Seminar 1:2 (Chair: Fergus King)**

*Rosemary Canavan, ""In those days…" (Luke 2:1): Mary the Mother of Jesus, Livia/Julia Augusta and the Gospel of Luke"*

The opening chapters of Luke's Gospel have often been engaged with the context of Augustus as saviour, son of a god, and bringer of peace in contrast to Jesus, saviour, son of God and bringer of peace. There is less engagement with the mother of Jesus in light of the same context: in relation to titles of Atia, the mother, and Livia, wife/daughter, of Augustus. This paper surveys the iconography of Mary in the biblical texts, particularly Luke-Acts, and the formation of titles of Mary as the Christ movement develops, in light of the coins of Livia/Julia Augusta and relevant 'mother' culture and naming in the Greco-Roman World. Of particular interest is Livia's commemoration in Syria on silver coins as Hera and Mother, and in Spain as Mother of the World.

*Michael Hughes, "Erotic Ambiguity and Servile Status: The meaning of παῖς in Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10"*

The term παῖς is often translated as "boy" or "slave" in Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10; however, its precise meaning is ambiguous in the context. This paper explores the erotic naunce of the term and argues homoerotic readings of the relationship between the gentile centurion and his Pais warrant serious consideration as predicated on contemporaneous perceptions of enslaved children. Readings of the centurion and Pais's relationship have traditionally been heteronormative in their interpretation of παῖς as an asexual enslaved person or child; however, in the last seventy years, numerous scholars have challenged this line of thinking in their interpretation of the term as "beloved". In doing so, the majority of interpreters who argue for a homoerotic reading of the pericope rely anachronistically on Classical Greek conceptualisations of pederasty and παῖς. Such approaches are deficient due to their reliance on Classical and Hellenistic literature. My study corrects this imbalance by outlining the semantic range of παῖς within the Gospels' immediate literary culture. It surveys a large cross-section of first-century literature, revealing homoerotic uses of παῖς in the following authors: Apollonius of Tyana, Appian, Arrian, Chariton, Dio Chrysostom, Epictetus, Josephus, Longinus, Meleager of Gadara, Philo, Plutarch, Strabo, Straton of Sardis, Xenophon of Ephesus, and Select papyri, Greek Lyric and popular mime. In this paper, I give some examples of this wider analysis and its conclusions. in which I identify four broad erotic categories with different contexts in which παῖς is used: (1) explicitly erotic or romantic, (2) incidentally erotic, (3) plausibly erotic and (4) affectionate. I consider the features of each of these four categories and then compare Matthew and Luke's use of παῖς against these observations and in light of Greek terms with similar semantic domains. I conclude that παῖς, as used in the Matthean and Lukan pericopes, can not in itself specify homoerotic interpretations of the narratives. However, when taken together with other historical considerations, especially that of the institution of slavery, it is plausible that first-century audiences heard homoerotic undertones in the pericopes.

3.30 p.m.            Afternoon Tea

4.00–5.30 p.m.  Seminar Session 2

**Seminar 2:1 (Chair: Liz Boase)**

*Ian Young, "Belshazzar's Successors"*

The account of the end of the reign of King Belshazzar and the commencement of the reign of Darius the Mede at the conclusion of chapter 5 and the beginning of chapter 6 in the Book of Daniel raises a number of questions. The transition between chapters 5 and 6 is unusually smooth in the Masoretic Text (MT), even leading to questions of where the chapter division should go. In contrast, the transition between these chapters in the Old Greek (OG) text of Daniel is anything but smooth. In the two main OG manuscripts, Belshazzar's immediate successor is either Artaxerxes (manuscript 88) or Xerxes (papyrus 967). Both texts then abruptly state: "And when Darius was full of days and esteemed in old age…" These puzzles are related to the dating given in the introduction to Daniel's vision in chapter 9, where in all texts Darius' father is said to be Ahashverosh/ Xerxes. Darius the Mede turns up a third time in MT Daniel, in Dan 11:1, where OG instead names King Cyrus. This paper will review current scholarly solutions to these issues and their problems. Faced with difficulties with the explanations offered so far, I will venture a new proposal of the relationship between the texts in which the OG evidences an earlier stage in the textual development of the Book of Daniel, before the separate stories in Daniel chapters 5 and 6 were fully integrated

*Dave Forward, "Dan 8:27 is Dan 7:28b"*

The final words of Dan 8 are commonly understood as an expression of Daniel's ignorance and thus intimately connected to the following chapters where Daniel seeks further revelatory information - a quest that seems to support the "ignorance" interpretation. However, earlier commentators (e.g. Rashi) understood the phrase differently as an expression of Daniel's surreptitiousness. While presenting linguistic and local contextual arguments in favour of the "surreptitious" reading, this paper will observe patterns of similarity between Dan 7:28b and Dan 8:27 and argue that the latter is a Hebrew translation of what was originally an Aramaic Wiederaufnahme of 7:28b created to attach the addition of chapter 8 to the Aramaic anthology. The verse thus emerged from the preceding chapter. However, this association does not negate its connections with the later chapters, with their underlying "ignorance" interpretations, but the shift in comprehension is evidence of the stratification of the Danieline apocalypses and the process of inner-biblical exegesis by which they were created, challenging the commonly held assumption of their sole origin.

**Seminar 2:2**

*Robyn Whitaker, "Machines in Our Image:  Automata, AI, and John's Apocalypse"*
Creating images of ourselves is as ancient as humanity itself. Creating images that move or communicate elevates them into godlike domains, blurring the lines between divine power and human techne. This paper moves from the ancient context of John's Apocalypse to ours, comparing and contrasting technology and responses to it in Revelation 13 and 21st century AI. I argue that John draws upon practices and experiences of αὐτόματα in his context when depicting the image of the beast in Revelation 13:13-18. In doing so, he emphasises the way both awe and fear are operative in response to something that is created by humans yet takes on the properties of divinity. Using an intercontextual approach, I will examine how understanding the dynamics of αὐτόματα in Revelation might offer a way, by analogy, of thinking about contemporary, generative AI. I will trace the way AI evokes a range of response from powerless inevitability to awe and fear. The paper will touch briefly on the ethics of such human techne and what happens when the machines we make in our image start to become godlike.

*Katie Haldane, "Rider-gods and the imagery of the single horseman in Revelation 6 and 19*
The imagery of the single horseman in Revelation 6 and 19 is an image well known in the Greco-Roman world and the seven churches of Asia. John uses the image of the rider-god, rider-hero portrayed on coins in the Greco-Roman world to describe the rider-gods of heaven in Revelation 6:1–8 and 19:11–16 to challenge the existent worldview of the rider-god cults. The rider-god of the Greco-Roman world was a single horseman; the image was adapted with existing deities across numerous regions to convey a protective divinity that crossed the worlds of mortals and immortals. The rider-god was worshipped in Anatolia (Asia), Thrace, Danubia and Pisidia, through the rider-god cults. I will examine coins from Thrace, Pisidia, Danubia and Asia, to affirm that the image of the rider-god and rider-hero, was prevalent from the time of Augustus to Domitian. In Revelation, John uses key words and rhetorical devices to convey the rider-god image in Revelation 6 and 19 to challenge the rider-god cults. In 6:1–8 the one's seated upon the horses have beyond human authority: they are commissioned from the throne of God, enacting their jurisdictional power over earth and the afterlife. In Revelation 19:11–16, Christ appears as a rider-god that is beyond human, this intermediatory between heaven and earth has eyes like blazing fire and a sharp sword from his mouth. The all-purpose god is now fulfilled, not in the gods of Kakasbos, Aphrodite, Apollo, and Hades, but the true rider-gods are the heavenly order of Revelation 6, and finally, the Commander rider-god of Revelation 19, Christ. Visual imagery found on numismatic evidence from the first century CE, gives us vital information about the socio-political concerns that impacted the community in Asia and is an invaluable aid in the interpretation of Revelation 6 and 19.

6.00 p.m. Dinner: at the Centre for Theology and Ministry

7.00–8.30 p.m. Plenary 1: Emily Colgan, Trinity Theological College, Aotearoa New Zealand (Chair: Simon Holloway)

*And the Earth was Filled with Violence: Noak's Ark and Multispecies Justice*

This paper offers a critical re-reading of the Noah's Ark narrative through the lens of multi-species justice, interrogating the anthropocentric assumptions embedded within traditional histories of interpretation. Although the Noah's Ark narrative appears to present a planetary vision by including animals, birds, and reptiles in the divine rescue plan, it ultimately reinforces a human-centred imperial cosmology. While the Ark excludes "unrighteous" human beings, it admits "impure" animals. However, this inclusion does not signify the recognition of their agency or rights; rather, it reflects a paternalistic benevolence in which animals are preserved for their utility to humans. The Ark's boarding policy invites critical ecological inquiry: which species were included, and by what criteria?

9.30–11.00 a.m.  Plenary 2: Robert Myles, Wollaston Theological College, Perth

*Jesus and Ideologies of Imperial Settlement*

This paper examines subtle and not-so-subtle ideologies of imperial settlement
in the academic discourse of mainstream historical Jesus research from the past 50+ years.
It reveals how these discourses assume the legitimacy of imperial settlement
and collectively perpetuate ideas that sustain and uphold modern settler
colonial regimes, whether consciously or not.

11.00 a.m.  Morning Tea

11.30-1.00 p.m.  Seminar Session 3

## Seminar 3:1 (Chair: Simon Holloway)

*Zhong Li, ""You shall not kill" or "You shall not murder"? (Exodus 20:13)"*
This paper aims to analyse and clarify the meaning of the sixth commandment in the Decalogue as presented in the Hebrew Bible. Owing to its simple form, the commandment has been translated in different ways – commonly as "Thou shalt not kill" or "Thou shalt not murder" – despite the significant contextual differences between these terms. This paper will examine the structure of the commandment and its surrounding legal material, particularly in the Decalogue and the Book of the Covenant in Exodus. It argues that the more accurate semantic rendering is "you shall not kill," and that the underlying term refers to unlawful killing, a category that includes unintentional, intentional, and premeditated killing within the legal framework of the Pentateuch.

*Idan Dershowitz, "How Hard Is It to Count to Ten? The Problem of the Decalogue"*
The division of the Ten Commandments—more accurately, the Ten Proclamations—has been a major crux for more than two millennia. Many delineations of the text have been proposed, each problematic in its own way. This paper examines two largely overlooked opinions: those implicit in the manuscript layouts of the Masoretic Text and the Samaritan Pentateuch. Strikingly, these agree with one another on a key detail even as they contradict the dominant Jewish and Samaritan traditions. What might this evidence reveal about the history of the Decalogue?

## Seminar 3:2 (Chair: Deborah Storie)

*Sarah Callista, "Elected by the Emperor: A Reading of Mark 13:14-27 with the Unification of China during the Qin Dynasty"*
At the high point of the Olivet Discourse, Mark 13:14–27 portrays prophecies of struggle,new forms of oppression, cosmic upheaval, and the eschatological promise of the Son of Man gathering the chosen people. This paper offers a contrapuntal reading of Mark 13:14–27 with Emperor Qin Shi Huang through an Indonesian Peranakan lens, drawing upon cultural and historical heritage to re-read the significant meaning of this passage. As the Peranakan community has Chinese ancestry, figures such as the first emperor who united China and proclaimed himself as the "Son of Heaven" hold cultural and historical significance within their fragmented worldview. By engaging with these intersecting themes of oppression, order, and the gathering of chosen people, this paper aims to provide new reading into Mark's eschatology, expanding its interpretive possibilities to provide a deimperialise reading of the text that may shed nuanced eschatological hope for Peranakan community

*Deborah Storie, "On vineyards, their γεωργοὶ and owners, lands and fruit: An experiment with inculturation hermeneutics (Luke 20:9-19)"*
According to the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus told a parable in the Jerusalem Temple shortly before Passover after his opponents questioned his authority (Luke 20:9-19 //s Mark 12:1-12; Matthew 21:33-46). Some scholars identify this as the most complex of Jesus' parables. It might also be the simplest. As each of the Synoptics relate the story, those against whom Jesus first told this parable understood it immediately. In this paper, I attempt to recover the parable's communicative clarity through an experiment in intercultural hermeneutics (Ukpong). I seek to engage the parable with a critical awareness of the historical contexts from which it emerged, the narrative and canonical contexts in which we receive it, and the contemporary context in which I read. An inculturation approach requires us to take seriously i) the economic and political realities of early first century Palestine; ii) the economic and material realia portrayed in the parable; iii) the public conflict to which Jesus' performance of this parable contributed; and (iv) the somewhat analogous economic and political realities of the contemporary world in which we interpret and respond to the text.

1.00 p.m.  Lunch

2.00–3.30 p.m.   Seminar Session 4

### Seminar 4:1 (Chair: Ian Young)

*Volodomyr Lavrushko, "Principles and Approaches to Teaching Elementary Biblical Hebrew Vocabulary."*
The learning of vocabulary paves the foundation for acquiring any language. As David Wilkins rightly notes: "Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed."  However, Biblical Hebrew vocabulary acquisition poses unique challenges, especially for those who comes from a non-semitic language background. First, it takes time and effort to get used to the Hebrew script and reading direction from right to left. Second, in comparison to other biblical languages, Biblical Hebrew often lacks a sufficient connection to the prior knowledge of the learner. For example, Boyce provides a dictionary of about 2500 English words which has connection to the Ancient Greek.  The students of Biblical Aramaic usually learn the language after studying Hebrew which also provides an advantage. The complete Aramaic vocabulary consists of 705 words  and after learning just 268 most frequent words the student is able to understand 91% of the Aramaic portions of the Bible.  This article attempts to outline the main principles and strategies that support more effective vocabulary acquisition for the students of Biblical Hebrew.

*Andrew Brown, "Visual representation of intertextual linkages for the theological classroom: 2 Samuel 21–24 as a test case"*
The maturation of information visualization in wider society represents a tool ready for further exploitation in the theological classroom, in particular, for the representation of textual structures and interlinking. 2 Samuel 21–24 represents a useful test case as a text that suffered relative neglect and underappreciation within an older paradigm of biblical studies but which has attracted greater respect and research focus as its literary role has become better appreciated. While falling outside the narrative flow established in the preceding chapters, 2 Samuel 10–20, it displays numerous intertextual links with these chapters and beyond across 1–2 Samuel and on into 1–2 Kings. Data and information visualization methods already well established beyond the field of biblical studies hold great potential for the effective representation and explanation of such biblical literary structures and linkages such as these in the theological classroom.

### Seminar 4:2 (Chair: Barbara Deutschmann)

*Timothy Rafferty, "Bless God and die! The contest for blessing in the book of Job or why listening to his wife could have saved Job a lot of trouble and strife."*
This paper will argue that the book of Job can be understood as a contest for blessing between Job and the Divine. It will do so by re-examining the traditional "converse translation" of *brn* in Job 1:11, 2:5, and in the words of Job's wife in 2:9, and the role that blessing plays throughout the dialogues and in the epilogue to the book

*Anne Gardner, "The Future in Isa 66:22 for the Tremblers at the Word of God (Isa 66:5) in Comparison with the Future for Those Rebelling against God in Isa 66:24"*
The respective fates in Isaiah 66:22 and 66:24 of those trembling at God's word (Isa 66:5) and those rebelling against Him/Her do not appear to be in balance. Scholarly explanations are examined and found to be inadequate. An examination of the vocabulary of the two verses within Isaianic thought illustrates their message and demonstrates that there is a much closer relationship between the two fates than hitherto suspected and that they are, indeed, at opposite ends of the spectrum.

### Seminar 4:3 (see next page)

**Seminar 4:3 (Chair: TBC)**

*Emily Fero-Kovassy, "The Historicity of Jesus' Baptism by John:*
*Challenging the Criteria of Embarrassment and Dissimilarity"*
John's baptism of Jesus is narrated in all three Synoptics (Mk 1:9–11//Mt 3:13–17//Lk 3:21–22) and is possibly alluded to in the Gospel of John (Jn 1:31–33). The historicity of this event is almost universally accepted by scholars. The reason for this near universal consensus is that it satisfies what is known as the criterion of multiple attestation, the criterion of embarrassment, and the criterion of dissimilarity (or discontinuity). Some have already noted problems with the criterion of multiple attestation. John baptising Jesus is only multiply attested, for example, if one believes Q existed, and that the Fourth Evangelist did not know the Synoptics. In this paper, however, I challenge the historicity of Jesus' baptism by John by demonstrating that this event, as described in the Gospels, does not actually satisfy the criterion of embarrassment or the criterion of dissimilarity. I first outline the traditional arguments for these criteria. I then discuss several Jewish texts and practices that problematise the satisfaction of these criteria. In particular, I challenge the notion of "superiority" and "inferiority", terms scholars assign to Jesus and John when applying the criterion of embarrassment, by problematising the issue of status in rituals of washing and anointing. I then discuss the wider phenomenon of ritual washing that existed both in the Second Temple period and in the literary traditions of Ancient Israel, in which ritual washing is used as a rite of passage to mark some kind of transition from the profane to the holy, using this as evidence to challenge the criterion of dissimilarity. In so doing, I demonstrate that in the context of first-century Judaism, and hence the early church, Jesus' baptism by John is neither embarrassing nor dissimilar. I therefore suggest that these widely accepted and long-standing arguments be retired.

*Brendan Byrne, "The Pivot of Luke-Acts: Gentile Inclusion and the Sword for Israel"*
This paper takes a totalizing view of the Lukan project, understanding the Gospel and Acts as proceeding from a unified view of the inclusion of Gentiles in the messianic people of God and of the cost to Israel of that inclusion. It argues that the evangelist ("Luke") sets out to establish "securely" (asphalōs) the identity of Gentile believers within the people of God in line with the scriptural promises that spoke of God's action in the messianic age, while acknowledging the cost involved for Israel. This acknowledgment begins already in the Infancy stories of the Gospel, notably the canticle of Simeon and his prophetic oracle to Mary, who represents Israel (Luke 2:33–35). The paper goes on to argue that outreach to the Gentiles is the pivot on which the narrative of Acts swings, with central chapters showing how the Spirit led the early community through a long process designed to gain maximal acceptance of Gentile inclusion. Paul becomes the key instrument of that inclusion, achieving significant success, while at the same time by dogged by Jewish hostility at every point. The "wound" of Israel remains open to the end. In fact, the portrayal of Jewish hostility is the "shadow" side of Luke-Acts (as it is perhaps of all four gospels). How we deal with that in current interpretation may be a matter for discussion at the end.

3.30 p.m.   Afternoon Tea

4.00–5.30 p.m.  Seminar Session 5

**Seminar 5:1 (Chair: Andrew Brown)**
*Joshua Axtens, "Urban Annihilation and the Earthenware Jug: Landscapes of Cultural Trauma in Jeremiah 19:1-15"*
This interdisciplinary study places cultural trauma theory in conversation with literary spatial theory and urban theory to explore Jeremiah 19:1-15, the breaking of the earthenware jug, as a landscape of cultural trauma. The concept of urbicide, drawn from urban theory and describing the premeditated destruction of urban space, forms the backdrop to a reading of the literary space produced by the text's representations of urban annihilation. The literary space of Jeremiah 19 emerges in this reading as an urban traumascape, a devastated landscape bound by traumatic repetitions owing to urbicidal impulses seemingly endemic to urban space itself: Jerusalem is constructed as a city that repeatedly – and horrifyingly – consumes itself. Cultural trauma theory offers a framework for understanding not only the role of these representations of urbicide in promoting narratives about the causes, effects, perpetrators, and victims of violence in and against urban space, but also the function of literary traumascapes in the narration, formation, and reinforcement of collective identities. Here, the representation of urban destruction becomes a potent site for both memorialisation and symbolic reinvention in the aftermath of urban annihilation, producing an affectively complex world in which hope is not a voice in the text, but an outcome of the reader's inhabitation of the text in the act of reading. This study thus combines synchronic and diachronic concerns, engaging a close reading of the text and its production of literary space in order to consider its function as trauma literature in the wake of Babylon's urbicidal conquest of Jerusalem in 586 BCE.

**Seminar 5:1 (Cont.)**

*Liz Boase, "Was it ever amusing? Exploring Jeremiah's symbolic action reports at the intersection of humour and trauma studies."*

This paper explores the possibility of reading the symbolic action reports in the Book of Jeremiah as examples of what Granofsky refers to as literary symbolism which allows for a safe confrontation with a traumatic experience, and whether an element of humour (i.e., political stunt, black humour, satire) is embedded within their performing/telling. The paper will consider the complexities of humour and trauma theories in their application not only to ancient texts, but to ancient texts in which redactional layers inevitably obscure our ability to locate and define such contextually bound concepts.

**Seminar 5:2 (Chair: TBC)**

*Rachelle Gilmour, "David's wives: The creation and narration of kinship in the book of Samuel"*

In this paper, I examine the lists and narratives of David's wives in the book of Samuel with a focus on their role in the construction and shaping of national identity in late monarchic Judah. Firstly, I argue that David's many wives establish a wide network of kinship connections that encompass all Israel under his patrimonial authority. Secondly, I show how the narration of David's wives and their sons establishes hierarchies among the kin of Israel, demoting the Benjaminites to servants not brothers, and northern and transjordan kin as legitimately excluded from royal power.

*Jonathan Thambyrajah, ""They Covered Haman's Face" (Esth 7:8): shame, executions, transitivity, and indefinite subjects"*

In Esther 7:8, there is an exegetical difficulty. While most translate it as "and they covered the face of Haman," there is little agreement about what exactly this means. It is generally supposed that while the grammar of the sentence is straightforward, there is some sort of social practice that would explain what is going on. Normally, scholars suggest that the covering of Haman's face is some sort of ritual practised prior to an execution. In this paper I intend to approach the problem from the other direction, in order to propose an alternative: I will suggest that in fact there is no need to hypothesise such a ritual. The social phenomenon that is being described can be understood as one that is well-known from the Hebrew Bible, namely shame or humiliation (and is conveyed in very similar language to some other instances of shame and humiliation). Rather, I will suggest that the grammar of this sentence is not so straightforward as is normally assumed and that it is this which is the source of the exegetical difficulties and the place where the solution needs to be found.

**Seminar 5:3 (Chair: Sean Winter)**

*Fergus King, "A Cynic Jesus in the Fourth Gospel?"*

From the late 1980s, there has been a strong trajectory to identify Jesus with Cynic philosophy and practice. This has focused on Q and the Synoptic tradition, and remains highly disputed. Analyses of the potential compatibility of Jesus as portrayed in the Fourth Gospel and the Cynics have been fewer. Noting the contours of the Synoptic research, this article looks at the potential to identify Jesus with Cynicism in the Fourth Gospel, and suggests that there is less evidence for such a comparison both in relation to literary forms and content.

*Kara Siaosi, "Turmeric and Loaves: A Cross-Cultural Hermeneutic of Generosity in Samoan Myth and John 6:3–13"*

This paper explores parallels between the Samoan saying 'e itiiti a lega mea,' (Less yet more) from a legendary myth of generosity—where villagers and their chief relinquished their share of lega (turmeric) to strangers—and the boy's gift of five barley loaves and two fish in the Johannine feeding of five thousand (John 6:3–13). By juxtaposing a Pasifika oral tradition with a canonical Johannine passage, I argue that both accounts reveal a counter-cultural ethic of sharing that transforms scarcity into abundance, inviting communal participation in the sacred. The study contributes to intercultural theology by modelling how indigenous and Biblical Narratives blend to reshape contemporary understandings of sacred generosity. In this paper, I give some examples of this wider analysis and its conclusions

6.00 p.m. Conference Dinner: Naughton's Hotel, 43, Royal Parade, Parkville

# Wednesday 1ˢᵗ October

9.30–11.00 a.m.   Seminar Session 6

**Seminar 6:1 (n.b. 10.00 a.m Start)**

*Angela Sawyer, Laughing until it hurts: Hebrew Bible prophets, survival literature and post traumatic growth*
This paper examines the Hebrew Bible prophets in relation to Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG), applying a broad definition of humour that includes notions of transcendence and wellbeing. Focusing particularly on Isaiah, with comparative reference to other prophetic voices, the paper explores how expressions of joy and celebration (e.g., Isa 51:11; 52:8; 54:1; 55:12) stand in tension with the despair of war, exile, and loss. Tedeschi and Calhoun, leading proponents of PTG research, observe that transformation through trauma is ancient and widely recognised. Do the prophets reflect elements of PTG, or simply express resilient optimism, and how might we distinguish the two? While prophetic use of satire, mockery, and irony are often noted for their use of dark humour, this study expands the conversation by drawing on insights from positive psychology to assess whether prophetic discourse can function as a kind of survival literature beyond its original context towards hope for contemporary readers.

**Seminar 6:2**

*Sally Douglas, "Leaving Everything"? Untangling Markan understandings of discipleship from Lukan constructions*
The disciples leave everything and follow Jesus. From commentaries to pulpits this claim is repeated and presented as self-evident. While this assertion finds support in Luke's Gospel (see Luke 5:11; see also Luke 5:28), in Mark's Gospel this is not the case. In the earliest gospel, after being called by Jesus the first disciples leave "their nets" (Mark 1:18) and they go home for dinner. What is more, they invite Jesus to come with them (Mk 1:16-20; 29-31). This paper will trace the reality that the author of Luke reworks and reorders the Markan material. In Luke, first Jesus heals Simon's mother-in-law (Luke 4:38–39). After this, Jesus calls Simon and Andrew to leave "everything" (Luke 5:1-11). By changing the sequence of these events, and the details of what is left behind, the author of Luke is able to emphasise a particular construction of faithfulness. It will be demonstrated that the Markan ordering of events is not accidental, in need of Lukan correction, nor is this ordering of events incidental. This is because for the author of Mark leaving everything is not the focus of discipleship. Instead, Mark's Gospel offers a different, and commonly overlooked, understanding of discipleship in which the home and the family are integral sites for faithful practice. The evidence within Mark's Gospel destabilises patriarchal constructions of Christian discipleship in which home and family are relegated to encumbrance. The complexity of the Markan evidence also scrambles the patriarchal tendency to insist upon loyalty to the biological family. When Mark's understanding of faithfulness is untangled from Luke's Gospel, a potentially liberative vision of discipleship and the family emerges.

*Ruth Mathieson, The Blends of Wisdom, Prophetic and Apocalyptic Rhetorolects in the Matthean Discourses: Sermon on the Mount and the Mission, Parables, Community and Eschatological Speech*
*I*n sociorhetorical interpretation (SRI), the term "rhetorolect" (a contraction of rhetoric and dialect) is used to identify six varieties of early Christian discourse: wisdom, miracle, apocalyptic, prophetic, priestly and precreation. Each has a distinctive belief system centred on a particular metaphor for God. It will be argued that the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7) is primarily wisdom discourse with God as Father (pater familias) threaded with prophetic discourse with God as King (pater patriae). Jesus is seated and speaking as a teacher in the wisdom tradition as the Sermon on the Mount is delivered, while introducing the prophetic call to righteousness for those listening.  The Mission Discourse (Matt 10) and Community Discourse (Matt 18) are considered as primarily prophetic rhetorolect, as is the polemic in Matthew 23.  Both the Parables Discourse (Matt 13) and Eschatological Discourse (Matt 24–25) are best understood as blended wisdom and apocalyptic rhetorolect, with the two ways of the wisdom tradition set in eschatological contexts.  This socio-rhetorical analysis of the interplay of intersecting early Christian belief systems provides a fresh way of engaging with the vivid rhetography (the use of imagery in rhetoric) of Matthew's Gospel.

11.00–2.30 p.m.   Conference Excursion: Melbourne Holocaust Museum