

Dr Benjamin Myers, Christian Heritage College

“Apt and cheerful conversation”: the dialogue between God and Adam in *Paradise Lost*

Paradise Lost evokes the tragedy of the fall by a series of artful juxtapositions. Adam weaves a garland of flowers for Eve’s hair (9.838-41); when she has eaten the fruit, the garland falls from his slack hand “and all the faded roses shed” (9.892-93). The innocent and generous playfulness of their lovemaking before the fall is juxtaposed with the fierce possessiveness with which they “seize” (9.1037) each other afterwards and wake in shame. Before the fall, Adam and Eve grow through loving disagreement; after eating the fruit they fall into bitter recriminations. The angel Raphael inducts them into the joys of metaphysics and cosmology; Michael inducts them into the horrors of history. There is another juxtaposition of this kind that I want to explore in this paper, and that concerns Adam’s dialogue with God. The poem records only two direct conversations between God and Adam. The first is the debate concerning solitude in book 8, where Adam tries to persuade God that it is not good for man to be alone. The second is the scene in book 10 when Adam is hiding among the trees and God comes looking for him. The juxtaposition of these two scenes shows Milton’s God at his most sympathetic. He is capable of friendliness. He seeks in human beings not blind submission but something like the “apt and cheerful conversation” that (according to Milton’s doctrine of marriage) a man and woman seek in one another.



Postgraduate Research Seminar

6.4.2020

Dr David Reimer, University of St Andrews / Faith Mission Bible College

‘People forgiving people in Psalm 41 — a test case’

As part of an on-going project to explore the nature of interpersonal forgiveness in the Hebrew Bible, this paper addresses the question: “What resources do the Psalms provide for the repair of broken human relationships?” After briefly setting context by way of glossing the key technical terms, this paper offers a reading of Psalm 41 in order to identify the dynamics of the human relationships it portrays. The pithy nature of Hebrew poetry sets up one challenge to this investigation, but through patient probing and a consideration of relevant intertextual relationships, a profile of the psalmist’s relational aspirations both with the “enemy/enemies” and God can be drawn. Human relationships find their meaning in terms of relationship with God, although the extent to which this constitutes a repaired human relationship is open to question. Other psalms need to enter this “conversation” (e.g., Pss. 28; 55; 109; perhaps others as well), but a close reading of Psalm 41 sets suggestive parameters for that wider investigation.

Dr Wally Wang, Brisbane School of Theology

‘A longitudinal study of Karl Barth’s thought on the church-state relation’

The development of Karl Barth’s thought on church-state relation can be traced from the war-time sermons during his tenure as a village pastor in Safenwil, to the dialogues conducted with various groups and individuals toward the end of his life. It will be argued that Barth’s thought on this issue had reached its mature form before he lost his professorship at the University of Bonn on account of his refusal to pledge his allegiance to Hitler. Specifically, it will be argued that this mature form proceeds from Barth’s conceptualisation of revelation.

Mr Kiateck Tan, Brisbane School of Theology

‘The role of Jesus Christ in the Rule of Saint Benedict’

When Saint Benedict wrote the rules for his monastic community, his purpose was to maintain the relationship between the monks and Jesus Christ on the basis of three distinctive titles accorded to Jesus Christ, namely, the Lord, the true King, and the Rock. The role of Christ in light of these titles, their impact on the practices of Benedictine monasteries will be presented, drawing attention to the way that the role of Christ is crucial for an understanding of the Rule. This shall be demonstrated by examining what the Rule understands by returning to Christ the Lord, sustaining one’s journey through the Christ the Rock, and fighting the spiritual battle under Christ the true King.