

## 2009 Winners

The Awards Committee is pleased to announce the winners of the 2009 Templeton Award for Theological Promise.

- Bauman, Whitney Albert
- Billings, J. Todd
- Höfner, Markus
- Jassen, Alex P.
- Jenkins, Willis Jackson
- Köckert, Charlotte
- Mjaaland, Marius Timmann
- Nimmo, Paul T.
- Pitstick, Alyssa Lyra H.
- Rowe, C. Kavin
- Stievermann, Jan
- Welz, Claudia

1. Bauman, Whitney Albert  
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Award Winning Publication From Creatio ex Nihilo to Terra Nullius: The Colonization of Creation, forthcoming Routledge, 2009.

Theology, Creation, and Environmental Ethics falls at the intersection of Religion and Science, Post-Colonial Studies, and Theological Method. The underlying question is: Has the doctrine of Creation out of Nothing in the Christian tradition provided a theo-metaphorical support system for a "logic of domination" toward human and earth others? In other words, does the idea of being created in the image of an Omni-God that creates "out of nothing," provide support for Christians to act as if they can create "the other" out of nothing (through, e.g., civilizing and educating "other" peoples and cultivating and developing "other" lands). This metaphor gives birth toward a colonizing spirituality: one that escapes from engagement with the other and seeks to assimilate the other into its own reality. As an alternative, I develop a viable, agnostic theological method that seeks to take human and earth others seriously. This metaphor, one of "planetary, continuous co-creation," provides support for a dialogical spirituality that respects and acknowledges human and earth "others."

In 8 chapters, the book explores theological metaphors at work in such figures as Constantine, Christopher Columbus, John Locke, and in the contemporary "logic of globalization." Finally, in dialogue with some contemporary post-foundational theologians and philosophers, the concept of "emergence," and non-equilibrium ecology and thermodynamics, a theo-metaphorical support system for a spirituality of dialogical interaction is developed.

Current Project Dr. Baumann is currently the Assistant Editor for Berkshire's Encyclopedia of Sustainability: The Spirit of Sustainability and is co-editor of an edited volume tentatively entitled, Inherited Land: The Changing Grounds of Religion and Ecology. The latter includes essays from about 20 new scholars interested in the field of "Religion and Ecology." Beginning in the Summer of 2009, he will begin working on his second manuscript which brings together his interests in Religion, Nature, and Politics.

2. Billings, J. Todd  
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Award Winning Publication

Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ, Changing Paradigms in Historical and Systematic Theology, Oxford University Press, 2007.

In Calvin, Participation, and the Gift, I present the first systematic examination of Calvin's theology of "participation in Christ" as a way in which human beings "participate in God," both through humanity's bearing the image of God and through redemption. I argue that Calvin advocates an active role for human agency enlivened by the Spirit, who restores the primal, good nature of human creatures—a restoration

manifested in spiritual practices such as prayer and the sacraments, as well as in the pursuit of love and justice in church and society. I engage critiques of Calvin's thought ranging across a broad spectrum of theological voices, from feminists and theologians of Radical Orthodoxy, to Eastern Orthodox thinkers and theologians analyzing gift-giving and charity. In conversation with these voices, I reframe Calvin's doctrine of the divine power exercised in salvation in light of his underappreciated theology of salvation as participation in Christ.

Current Project I am currently at work on two book-length projects. I am finishing a book on the theological interpretation of scripture which articulates a trinitarian theology of salvation that can shape a theological hermeneutic for receiving the Bible as Scripture. The second project gives a historical and systematic account of the Lord's Supper in the Reformed tradition, particularly in relation to a soteriology of "participation in Christ." This book will extend certain themes from my first book (Calvin, Participation, and the Gift), exploring the ways in which a renewed theology and practice of the Lord's Supper can be tied to a more expansive and multifaceted view of salvation.

3. Höfner, Markus  
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Award Winning Publication Sinn, Symbol, Religion: Theorie des Zeichens und Phänomenologie der Religion bei Ernst Cassirer und Martin Heidegger (Religion in Philosophy and Theology 36), Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2008.  
("Meaning, Symbol, Religion. The Theory of Signs and the Phenomenology of Religion in the Works of Ernst Cassirer and Martin Heidegger")

Following the work of Cassirer, I propose an understanding of spirituality as symbolic form. This description shows that spirituality is an intrinsically social phenomenon profoundly shaped by a dynamic process of symbolic transformation. As a symbolic form, spirituality is located within a pluralism of symbolic forms which (as with other symbolic forms) refers to a reality specifically disclosed by the religious symbol system. However, in my opinion Cassirer neglects the pragmatic dimension of human spirituality. In contrast, Heidegger's approach understands spirituality as a comprehensive form of life in its pragmatic execution, and is thus able to understand experience as a responsive (i.e. active and passive) encounter with reality, articulated by signs not yet bound to a dichotomy of sign and reality. After analyzing Heidegger's early discussion of Pauline and Augustinian spirituality, I argue that philosophy of religion should critically reconstruct how participants of a religious community make use of their religious symbols and thus express their relation to God.

Current Project My current interest is the intersection of christology and ecclesiology in the concept of the Christus praesens. Starting with an analysis of Karl Barth's ecclesiology, my post-doctoral dissertation explores ways of understanding the presence of Christ in the church, and examines the role of the church as a "space" (not just a means) of salvation.

I am also co-editing a volume on aspects of human finitude from the perspective of theology, philosophy and medical ethics (forthcoming, Mohr Siebeck 2009).

4. Jassen, Alex P.  
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Website: <http://www.tc.umn.edu/~jassen> Award Winning Publication Mediating the Divine: Prophecy and Revelation in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Second Temple Judaism, STDJ 68, Leiden, Brill 2007.

Mediating the Divine traces the transformations that took place in the understanding and application of prophecy in the historical shift from the Hebrew Bible and ancient Israelite religion to Judaism in the Second Temple period. The primary focus of this investigation is the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Qumran community. Through analysis of the Dead Sea Scrolls that re-present the classical prophets from Israel's biblical heritage and rewrite the character of their revelatory experience, I determine how the Qumran sectarians and contemporary Judaism conceptualized the meaning of prophecy and revelation in dialogue and in contrast with received biblical models. In this book, I demonstrate how the Qumran community and related elements of Second Temple Judaism developed new models for bridging the gap between the human and divine realms that were acknowledged as distinct from the biblical prophetic heritage but at the same time were recognized as part of an ongoing prophetic tradition.

Current Project In my position as Assistant Professor of Early Judaism, I teach a range of courses related to the history of Judaism, post-biblical Jewish literature, and classical Hebrew. I am currently engaged in two major research projects: (1)

a study of religious violence in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Qumran community; (2) preparing critical editions of three Dead Sea Scrolls manuscripts (one apocryphal text related to the prophet Samuel and two eschatological interpretations of Isaiah).

#### 5. Jenkins, Willis Jackson Current Position

Willis Jenkins is the Margaret A. Farley Assistant Professor of Social Ethics at Yale Divinity School, and holds a secondary appointment at the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies.

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Award Winning Publication *Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology*, NY: Oxford Univ. Press 2008.

*Ecologies of Grace* explores the significance of the natural world for Christian understandings of relationship with God. By attending to ethical responses to environmental problems and to the theological traditions from which they draw, it depicts the characteristic patterns in which ecological relationships matter for Christian life. The first part surveys the several distinct strategies by which theologians make environmental problems intelligible to Christian moral experience, arguing that each strategy forms within some major pattern of salvation. The second part tests that interpretive hypothesis by putting the practical questions and theoretical problems arising from those strategies to major theologians of grace. Critical readings of Karl Barth, Thomas Aquinas, and Sergei Bulgakov elaborate distinct ecologies of grace produced by different accounts of creation's role in humanity's experience of God. The result is an ecumenical sketch of how living on earth matters for living with God.

Current Project My current research interests focus on sustainability and Christian ethics, including: theologies of place, space, and urban form; environmental justice; obligations to future generations; global ethics; problems of climate change, biodiversity loss, agriculture, and energy; theological humanism in conversation with political ecology and economy; and ethics of responsibility. I have begun work on a book that integrates those areas in search of a theological ethic of sustainability.

#### 6. Köckert, Charlotte Current Position

Postdoctoral Position (research and teaching) in Church History of Late Antiquity and Medieval Times at the Faculty of Theology, University of Heidelberg

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Award Winning Publication *Christliche Kosmologie und kaiserzeitliche Philosophie: Die Auslegung des Schöpfungsberichtes bei Origenes, Basilius und Gregor von Nyssa vor dem Hintergrund kaiserzeitlicher Timaeus-Interpretationen* (Dissertation Hamburg 2007), *Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009 (forthcoming).

(&ldquo;Christian Cosmology and Philosophy in the Early Roman Empire. The Interpretation of Gen 1f. in the Works of Origen, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa against the Backdrop of Timaeus-Interpretations in the Early Roman Empire&rdquo;) To consider the character of the world, the position of man within the cosmos, and man's relation towards the gods constitutes the heart of ancient philosophy. Thereby cosmology directly mirrors the underlying conception of god. For the majority of ancient philosophers including the Christians, cosmology is essentially theology, as it finally leads to the cognition of god. The cosmological treatises constitute a certain stage within the philosophical curriculum which aims at the accomplishment of a philosophical and contemplative life.

Based on a detailed analysis of Platonic interpretations of Plato's Timaios and of Christian hexaemeral exegesis, the dissertation illuminates the relation between the concept of god and the depiction of the world in ancient Platonic and Christian cosmologies. It demonstrates how the Christian cosmologists participate in the ancient cosmological debate, and how they refuse prominent philosophoumena concerning the nature of the universe and its relation to god due to the specifics of their Christian beliefs. Current Project In my postdoctoral dissertation I study phenomena of religious and philosophical conversion in Late Antiquity and their literary construction in conversion narratives and hagiographic literature. In a critical dialogue with Arthur Darby Nock's classical monograph as well as recent sociological theories on religious conversion, I hope to shed light on the variety of Christian identities especially in the age after Constantine.

#### 7. Mjaaland, Marius Timmann Current Position Postdoctoral research fellow, University of Oslo. Coordinator of the

network Philosophy of Religion in Northern Europe (PRINE) and president of the Nordic Society for Philosophy of Religion (NSPR).

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Website: [http://absconditus.de/CV\\_MTM.html](http://absconditus.de/CV_MTM.html) Award Winning Publication *Autopsia: Self, Death and God after Kierkegaard and Derrida*, Kierkegaard Studies, Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008. There are certain things that can be explained and certain things that cannot be explained. *Autopsia* is concerned with the latter. It is a book about death: how death interrupts and influences the reflection on the self. It is a book about God: a detailed and critical discussion on how Kierkegaard and Derrida apply the concept of God in their philosophical reflections.

The most ground-breaking analysis concerns the famous passage on the self (A.A) in *The Sickness unto Death*, where Mjaaland combines logical, rhetorical and dialectical means to establish a new perspective on Kierkegaard's thinking in general. The Cartesian doubt then constitutes a common trait for Mjaaland's detailed and rigorous analysis of Derrida and Kierkegaard on death, madness, faith, and rationality &ndash; showing how they both seek to break up the Hegelian *Aufhebung* from within, but still remain dependent on Hegel.

Current Project *Modern Philosophy and the Hidden God [Texts - Terror - Topology]*. The hidden God is a controversial issue in the thought of Martin Luther but also a concept corresponding to several discussions in present philosophy. Genealogically, Luther seems to have played a key role in establishing a new ultimate reference for thought, i.e. the modern self, but his criticism of metaphysics and of ethical autonomy represents a perpetual challenge throughout modernity. In the current discussion, however, I argue that the reference to a hidden God becomes a more topical subject than ever, affecting the discussions on text interpretation, on political and religious terror, and on the topology of language.

8. Nimmo, Paul T. Current Position Lecturer in Theology  
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Award Winning Publication *Being in Action: The Theological Shape of Barth's Ethical Vision*, London: Continuum International / T. & T. Clark, 2007.

At the heart of any theological understanding of the topic 'God and Spirituality' is the question of what it means to be and to act as a human individual before God. The theologian Karl Barth was one scholar who perceived the profound connection between being and action with the utmost acuity, for he recognised that human being and human action were inextricably linked and that, correspondingly, theology always had at the same time also to be ethics. The book *Being in Action* represents the first comprehensive attempt to relate the theological framework with which Barth works &ndash; an 'actualistic' ontology grounded in the divine act of election &ndash; to his ethical vision of the life and work and spirituality of individuals and of the church. The book demonstrates that, for Barth, as each human person is elected in Jesus Christ and lives and moves and has her being in God, so she is called to response to God in actions of faith, obedience, and prayer.

Current Project The first strand of my current research relates to work following directly from my book *Being in Action: The Theological Shape of Barth's Ethical Vision*. I have been commissioned by T&T Clark / Continuum to write a 'Guide for the Perplexed' on Barth, and have a number of further chapters and essays in the process of preparation and publication that represent further work on Barth. These research investigations pursue constructive engagement with Barth's theology on a variety of different theological loci: from baptism and election to Scripture and ecclesiology.

The second strand of my current research pertains to the relationship between Christology and sacramentology in the Reformed tradition. I hope to trace how the ethical interpretation of the sacraments that has always been a persistent, if minority, trend of the Reformed tradition is closely dependent upon certain underlying emphases in Reformed Christological thinking. I intend to show that these impulses allow Reformed sacramental theology to prioritise the ethical dimension of the sacraments without jeopardising their importance and gravity.

9. Pitstick, Alyssa Lyra H. Current Position Dr. Pitstick recently joined the faculty of Hope College's Religion Department as Assistant Professor of Religion. She teaches courses in Catholic theology. Her current classes include Catholic Christianity and *Dracula Meets the Pope: Classic Horror Fiction* and a Catholic Christian View of the Human Person. Hope College  
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Award Winning Publication *Light in Darkness: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Catholic Doctrine of Christ's Descent into Hell*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.

Christ's descent into hell reveals and addresses human fears, beliefs, and hopes about life, death, human spirituality, and our relation to God. Any change in the doctrine thus will affect other doctrines and Christian spirituality. I investigate these issues by examining two radically different doctrines of the descent. First, until the 16th century, Christians universally believed that after Christ's crucifixion, Jesus descended gloriously to the realm of death ("hell") to open heaven to God's faithful dead. In contrast, Hans Urs von Balthasar, a contemporary theologian, has argued that a descent to the suffering of eternal punishment is truer to the gospel. I draw upon an unusually comprehensive range of sources to identify and consider the normative character of the traditional belief. I then systematically set forth and analyze Balthasar's complex doctrine. A close examination shows his proposal radically changes Christian doctrines of the Trinity, Christ, and salvation, as well as all theology based upon them, including Christian spirituality.

Current Project I continue to research and write on the rich theology of Christ's descent into hell and on topics related to my work on Hans Urs von Balthasar; I have, e.g., an article on the descent and the development of doctrine forthcoming in the *International Journal of Systematic Theology*. I will be focusing new research on theology's proper relation to mysticism, which will include an examination of Balthasar's dependence on Adrienne von Speyr. I am also working on a commentary on the book of Job for the Brazos Theological Exegesis of the Bible Series.

10. Rowe, C. Kavin  
Current Position C. Kavin Rowe is Assistant Professor of New Testament at Duke University Divinity School.

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Award Winning Publication *Early Narrative Christology: The Lord in the Gospel of Luke*, BZNW 139, Berlin: de Gruyter 2006. *Early Narrative Christology* relates to the theme "God and Spirituality" in that it demonstrates the impossibility of constructing a theological grammar on the basis of Christianity's normative texts that would separate Jesus from the God of Israel. Through a detailed exegetical analysis of Luke's use of the word *Kyrios*, *Early Narrative Christology* traces the narration of Jesus' identity in the Gospel of Luke as the embodied presence of the Lord of Israel. Contra Marcionism of all forms, to speak of Jesus of Nazareth in Luke's Gospel is to speak simultaneously of the human presence of the God of Israel.

Current Project Dr. Rowe is currently completing a book on the cultural contour of the theological vision of the Acts of the Apostles. The book is entitled *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in a Graeco-Roman Age* and will be published by Oxford University Press.

11. Stievermann, Jan  
Current Position Junior Professor of American Studies at the University of Tübingen.  
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Award Winning Publication *Der Sündenfall der Nachahmung: Zum Problem der Mittelbarkeit im Werk Ralph Waldo Emersons*, Paderborn: Schöningh, 2007. ("The Original Fall of Imitation: The Problem of Mediacy in Ralph Waldo Emerson's Works") This study undertakes a reappraisal of Ralph Waldo Emerson as a religious thinker whose significance lies in opening up a unique path into modernity that brings together an anti-absolutist philosophy with a pluralistic form of spirituality. I argue that throughout his career Emerson struggled with an increasing skepticism regarding our ability to gain unmediated access to an absolute truth, whether through intellect or (spiritual) experience. This skepticism he fought to reconcile with his deep-rooted belief in an all-encompassing divine cause. As he finally came to conceive of it, a modern "philosophical faith" has to accept that the transcendent causalities underlying the perpetual process of being can be disclosed to us only momentarily and obliquely as a confrontation with radical otherness in reason, or in the individual's experiences of freedom in its moral capacity for self-transcendence. Simultaneously, such a faith demands to critically engage in a dialogue with all world religions as different cultural mediations of the truth that both partially express and veil the real nature, obligations and destiny of man's existence in relation to the divine.

Current Project My second book project, tentatively entitled "The Ethnic Fantastic" examines novels by contemporary minority writers from the US in which characters experience disturbing intrusions of the supernatural into their secularized lifeworlds. My main interest is to understand the intended effect on the audience and hence the potential cultural work which these irresolvably ambiguous, literary confrontations with the sacred are supposed to accomplish, especially in their negotiating the meaning of ethnicity as a conflicted state of in-betweenness. Concurrently, I am transcribing and editing vol. 5 of Cotton Mather's hitherto unpublished *Biblia Americana* (4, 500 manuscript pages written between 1693-1728), the first comprehensive Bible commentary to be produced in British North America.

12. Welz, Claudia  
Current Position Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Center for Subjectivity Research, Univ. of Copenhagen, Denmark  
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Award Winning Publication Love's Transcendence and the Problem of Theodicy, RPT 30, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2008. My dissertation Love's Transcendence and the Problem of Theodicy is dealing with the problem of theodicy in disclosing problems with theodicies, i.e. with procedures in which God, the creator of the world who is accused for the imperfection of the world, is defended and justified before the tribunal of human reason. How are we to interpret the epistemic ambiguity of God's transcendence – as the absence, distance or hidden presence of God's love in human life? The responses given by Søren Kierkegaard, Franz Rosenzweig and Emmanuel Levinas have in common that they dismiss a rational defense of God, yet without dismissing faith in God, and that they develop agapeistic ethics instead. In exploring reasons for having no reason to defend God and in indicating a personal and interpersonal modus vivendi with and in spite of the 'wound of negativity' these responses involve human beings as a whole, in their thinking, acting and feeling, and with these characteristics they form a vital part of spirituality in Biblical, Judeo-Christian tradition before and after Auschwitz.

Current Project Currently I am working on two interdisciplinary research projects, (1) 'Trust in Trials' and (2) 'Witnessing Self-Transformation: Seeing Oneself in the Mirror of Conscience.' Abstracts of both projects can be found at <http://cfs.ku.dk/staff/currentresearch-claudiawelz/>.