

2015–2016 Luce Fellows announced

The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS) and The Henry Luce Foundation, Inc., have named six scholars from ATS member schools as Henry Luce III Fellows in Theology for 2015–2016.

Selected on the basis of the strength of their proposals to conduct creative and innovative theological research, the Fellows will engage in yearlong research in various areas of theological inquiry. The 2015–2016 Fellows constitute the twenty-second class of scholars to be appointed since the inception of the program in 1993, bringing the total number of Luce Fellows to 148. The program is supported by a grant from The Henry Luce Foundation, honoring the late Henry Luce III.

At the conclusion of their research year, the Fellows will gather at the annual Luce Fellows Conference to present and critique their work and to discuss with both current and past Luce Fellows how their work may impact the life of the church and the broader society. They will also present their findings for publication in popular religious journals.

J. KAMERON CARTER, Duke University Divinity School

On Christianity's Postracial Blues

Carter's project meditates on Christianity's "postracial blues" and explores a hope that may emerge through careful attention to theologies born of current pain and protest. He argues that fraught dynamics of race are not new in American Christianity, yet the country is experiencing a distinctly potent moment in relation to racial violence and injustice, a moment that calls the American church to new and trenchant explorations of race, "postraciality," and reconciliation. Indeed, across the church spectrum from evangelical to mainline, Christians are saying there is a continuing issue with race in our country, and as Christians we need to be accountable to new ways of imagining church and society in relation to race. Until now, Carter says his work has focused on outlining a genealogy of race as intertwined with and even driven along the tracks of Christian theology. In this project, he turns to the current moment (we might call it "the postracial Obama era"), and excavates the new terms of entanglement of race and theology. Carter's project seeks to analyze what the postracial is and to diagnose its relationship to church and theology. His theological concern is with postracialism as a disease festering at two tightly related doctrinal locations: theological anthropology and Christology. His project pursues these questions in conversation with the theologies of James Cone, Karl Barth, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, also utilizing womanist thought and Mariology as critical leverage to disrupt Christianity's postracial capture.



MICHAEL J. GORMAN, St. Mary's Seminary and University

Missional Theosis in the New Testament

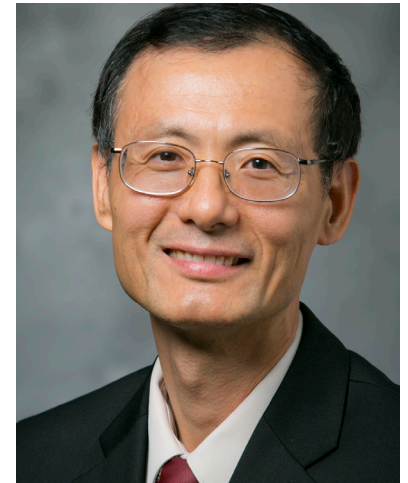
The question driving Gorman's project is, What is the relationship between a biblically grounded spirituality of theosis (deification), or participation in the life of the Triune God, and the mission of the church? This question is significant for the church in North America (and elsewhere), according to Gorman, if the church is going to appropriately hold together two aspects of its life that are often separated: spirituality and mission. Thus his project aims to bring together the fields of biblical studies, spirituality, and missiology in order to assist in the construction of an answer to the driving question; this integration is part of the goal of the emerging discipline of "missional hermeneutics." According to Gorman, the recent renewed interest in theosis has become highly significant for systematic and ecumenical theology, and it has begun to impact New Testament studies as well. But because theosis is traditionally associated with contemplation and personal spirituality, few people have attempted to connect it directly to the church's mission. Gorman's project would be a continuation of the direction in which his work on Paul, both in its most technical and somewhat less technical forms, has been moving in recent years. In this project, Gorman intends to look at several parts of the New Testament (outside of Paul), including Luke-Acts, John and 1 John, 1-2 Peter, and Revelation.



XI LIAN, Duke University Divinity School

The Theological Politics of Lone Dissent: Lin Zhao's Christian Journey in Mao's China

Lian's project is a critical biography of Lin Zhao (1932-1968), a Bonhoeffer-like figure in Chinese Christianity whose faith steeled her to publicly oppose what she decried as the slavery of Chinese communism during the most radical phase of Mao's rule. In the 1940s, Lin Zhao was educated at Laura Haygood Normal School for Girls in Suzhou run by the Methodist Episcopal Church South mission in China. There she was baptized into the church. Soon afterwards, like many patriotic students disillusioned with the autocratic and corrupt Nationalist government, she became an ardent supporter and underground member of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). After the CCP came to power, Lin Zhao was admitted to Peking University where she became a fledgling journalist, essayist, and poet. In 1957 she joined the students' campaign for freedom and democracy, and was subsequently punished as a "rightist" and imprisoned in 1960 as a counterrevolutionary. Lian has discovered that in returning to her Christian faith, Lin Zhao produced a stream of prison writings (essays, poems, letters, and even a play) against communist rule, which were often done in her own blood and while in chains. She professed to stick to the "political line of Christ" as a "servant of God" in defense of human freedom. For that she was repeatedly tortured and finally executed in 1968 at the height of the Cultural Revolution. Nobel peace laureate Liu Xiaobo calls her "the only voice of freedom left for contemporary China."



JOHN S. MCCLURE, Vanderbilt University Divinity School

Speaking Together and with God: Liturgy, Preaching, and Communicative Ethics

According to John McClure, communicative ethicists (sometimes called “discourse ethicists”) are committed to conceptualizing an ideal form of communication, articulating norms for human communication that are both ethical and emancipatory. While such ethicists (Apel, Habermas, Dussel, Maldonado-Torres, Alcott, and others) have debated rational norms for such communication, grounded in philosophical categories, theories of argument, and the human sciences, theologians such as Johann Metz and Helmut Peukert, have advised looking at resources provided by religious communities. McClure’s project takes this advice seriously and investigates Christian liturgical and homiletical practices for resources relevant to establishing, clarifying, or enriching ethical norms for human communication.

In particular his project interprets the following practices as relevant to communicative ethics: (1) the performative rhythm between confession, lament, and praise as relevant to the formation of reliable communicative presence, (2) intercessory prayer as relevant to the shaping of a genuinely empathic communicative competence, (3) the reading and interpretation of Scripture as relevant to the opening of language and discourse to “the other,” (4) the sermon as relevant to attempts at timely ethical referring (meaning, truth), and (5) Eucharist as relevant to the discursive embodiment of memory and hope.



WILLEMEN OTTEN, University of Chicago Divinity School

Natura Educans: The Psychology of Pantheism from Eriugena to Emerson

Otten’s aim is to recalibrate the Christian tradition on nature through a deconstruction of pantheism. The result will be a dynamic sense of nature that is animated by the divine without canceling out the human self. Her reconfiguration of the Christian natural tradition will take shape in a book project with the title, *Natura Educans: The Psychology of Pantheism from Eriugena to Emerson*. In her project, Otten seeks to develop a revised history of nature, allowing for a deeper sense of nature in which the divine is inherent and lends nature a voice of its own. She will dialogue with two central authors, premodern John Scottus Eriugena and modern Ralph Waldo Emerson. The project will also draw on the thought of Maximus Confessor, Augustine, Schleiermacher, and William James. A second goal of the project is to deconstruct the modern notion of pantheism and reinstate nature as conduit of the divine in the West. She will do so with the aid of the medieval notion of the parallelism of nature and Scripture by which, through a kind of *communicatio idiomatum*, nature can speak if and when in a secular and global world Scripture stands to lose some of its force. By taking nature out of a state of environmental victimhood, Otten intends to rehabilitate it as a source for theological reflection not unlike how it is used for philosophical reflection, varying from deep ecology to moral perfectionism.



STEPHANIE PAULSELL, Harvard University Divinity School

Lost in the Mystery of God

“Lost in the Mystery of God” is the title of a sermon Paulsell heard her father preach in pulpits around eastern North Carolina when she was a child. She recalls that it was a sermon she loved, but it is a sermon that is now lost to her in almost every way: it is part of her childhood, now long past; she cannot remember the words of it; and her father did not save a copy. The sermon exists now as a memory of the world opening up around her and a feeling of connection to devoted people everywhere.

Paulsell’s project will explore the idea of being “lost in the mystery of God” in relation to the human experience of losing things that were once familiar to us. She imagines a book that explores Christian interpretations of being “lost in God” in relation to the lost sermons, lost communities, lost beliefs, and lost memories that slip away over a lifetime. She is inspired by Augustine of Hippo’s conviction that, since only God can remember what we have forgotten, we cannot fully know ourselves without cultivating a life with God. It is her hope that by bringing our ordinary losses into conversation with traditions of being lost in God, she will be able to articulate a Christian spirituality in which our losses and bewilderments open unexpected paths toward God and one another.

