

**Abstracts Conference “Agents of Change”, 29 June 2022- 1 July 2022;**

<https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/about/schools/theology/about/annual-calendar/agents-change>

**\* Frank Bosman, *It’s Time for You to Wake Up: Digital Games as Agents of Moral Conversion***

In the game *Spec Ops: The Line* (2012), American captain Martin Walker is sent into a post-catastrophe Dubai in search for military and civil survivors. During the game, the player – through his avatar Walker – is confronted with his own in-game violent behavior. Eventually, this confrontation is aimed at inducing moral conversion in the player. Starting point of this conversion is the confrontation with a dead mother and child, whose aesthetics mirror that of the famous Mother-and-Child iconography from the Christian tradition. In this paper, I will introduce and discuss the game as an example of the capacity for moral conversion in computer games.

**\* Kate E. Bush, *Ancillae Domini: Conversion as Service among Poor Clares, c. 1250-1550***

This paper will attempt to determine the degree to which spiritual conversion among premodern Clarissans was linked to their shared identity as servants to God and to each other. St. Clare (d. 1253) is well-known for abnegating her own high social status and becoming a “handmaid of the lord” after hearing the preaching of Francis. But was the internal moral conversion experienced by Poor Clares accompanied by externalized devotion the form of difficult manual labor? How was their impoverished labor construed given the fact that populations of actual serving sisters lived within their communities? My research will use normative and hagiographical sources to address these questions while also considering the Clarissans’ emergence at the time of the “servant saint” in Italy.

**\* Sabrina Corbellini, *Late Medieval Reading as an Agent of Change***

The paper will discuss the “transformative value” of late medieval reading activities. Combining textual and paratextual information with ego documents and reflections on the value of books and reading, the presentation will discuss to what extent reading activities had the potential to impact and transform readers, both on the physical and cognitive level. This is particularly true for the readers of religious texts, who were involved in a continuous process of conversion and renovation in a constant dialogue with the sacred value of their texts.

**\* David B. Couturier, *From Vicious to Virtuous Institutions: Social Transformation and the Fraternal Economy***

Catholic ethics faces a staggering problem today: the inadequacy of the field’s moral frameworks to address structural evils amidst the rise of “vicious institutions.” It is not enough anymore to locate culpability in individuals (e.g., leaders) who directly and intentionally cause harm. In a globalized world with deep and complicated networks of exchange and impersonal supply chains of production, evil becomes embedded and normalized in systems and structures. This talk will look at the moral transformation that

leads from vicious structures to virtuous ones, using principles and values derived from an analysis of the Franciscan fraternal economy movement.

**\* Juliëtte Deursen-Vreeburg, *Formation and Contemplative Reading of Parables in Religious Education Classrooms***

Because of processes of secularization and individualization in the Netherlands, students in secondary schools are expected to base their life choices on their own personality and to search for their own sources of meaning. Therefore, it is necessary that Christian secondary schools, which are characterised by religious diversity and secularisation, pay more attention to the existential and moral formation of their students as a process of transformation. In this paper, I propose a contemplative pedagogical approach for religious education. Through contemplative pedagogy, the teacher can create in his or her classroom opportunities for a slower and deepening learning process. Which elements of the monastic tradition of *lectio divina* can be used and re-interpreted to design an educational model for contemplative reading?

**\* Maike Maria Domsel & Maurice Andree, *Franciscan Spirituality as Guiding Principle for the Formation of Crisis Competence***

A great amount of resilience is often needed in order to cope with crises and disasters. Often, its source is religious and spiritual. Whereas religious and spiritual matters are intimately connected with the existential dimensions of a person's life, the formation of a personal as well as societal capacity for reflection, dialogue, and expression often contributes to resilience competences. Furthermore, every crisis calls for an individual repositioning, readjustment, and realignment. Against this background, people look for ethical concepts that can offer them orientation. The aim of this paper is to make Franciscan spirituality fruitful as a guiding concept for the formation of individual as well as collective crisis competence.

**\* Matthew Dugandzic, *Moral Conversion and the Passions in Aquinas***

Moral conversion is a complex process, involving both the mind and the emotions. Sometimes the mind changes suddenly, other times more gradually. Sometimes a person's emotional dispositions precede the change of mind, sometimes they follow. Sometimes they change in harmony with the mind, other times they end up in conflict with the mind. Thomistic scholarship currently offers two models for understanding how Aquinas would understand the emotional aspects of moral conversion: the spontaneity view and the command view. This paper will argue that the command view can account for the multifaceted nature of the relationship between mental and emotional conversion outlined above, while the spontaneity view cannot.

**\* Erik Eynikel, *Amos' 1-2 Oracles Against the Nations and the Conversion of Israel***

The sequential ordering of Amos' 1-2 oracles against the nations, culminating in a long oracle against Israel, is a topic much debated in the exegesis of this prophetic book.

If we look at the ordering of the oracles, we see a movement from north east (Aram) to south west (Gaza), from north west (Tyre) to south east (Edom) and from North (Amon) to south (Moab). We are dealing here with a 'chiastic' structure, not in a literary sense but on the map,

with Israel in the centre. Clearly after criticising its neighboring states, Amos now turns his attack to his audience, the Israelites, who are in the centre of the attention. In this paper, I will answer the question on what ground Amos condemns the other nations of these crimes, since the accusations are clearly done in the name of Yahweh: he is speaking to Israel all the time, because they are the ones that need to convert and they know that the law of the Torah is the only universalistic law.

**\* Aaron Gies, *Et divisit lucem a tenebris: Conversion in Early Franciscan Theology***

Moral conversion, as considered phenomenologically by Bernard Lonergan, is one of three basic forms of self-transcendence to which God calls the human person, assuming a middle place between religious and intellectual conversion. However, in the theology of the early Franciscans at Paris, conversion was first considered not as the province of fallen human beings, but of the newly created angels with their unimpaired free choice. In this context, the turn toward God as Love (religious) as Good (moral) or as Truth (intellectual) is clearly one, and this metaphysical approach to conversion in angels inflects analysis of conversion in human beings.

**\* Brian Heffernan, *Why Mary Magdalene Had Nothing on Therese of Lisieux: Dutch Discalced Carmelite Nuns and Moral Conversion in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century***

As the parable of the prodigal son shows, the dynamics of moral conversion involve not just the repentant sinners themselves, but also their dutiful older brothers. As Claude Langlois has shown, Therese of Lisieux reprised this theme in her spiritual rivalry with the figure of Mary Magdalene. It was a motif deeply rooted in the lives of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Discalced Carmelite nuns, who often viewed themselves as a spiritual elite, chosen to assist in the work of redemption through their own intimacy with God and vicarious prayer and sacrifice. This historical paper looks at how Dutch Carmelite nuns conceived of their role in bringing about moral conversion.

**\* Patrick Jones, *The Church of the Wise and of the Poor: Mendicant Charisms and Civic Virtue in the Thought of Pope Leo XIII***

Aside from crafting of *Rerum Novarum*, the inaugural work of contemporary Catholic Social Teaching, Pope Leo XIII is perhaps best known for instituting a Thomistic revival within Catholic education. Yet Leo was also a Third Order Franciscan who produced an encyclical on St. Francis, *Auspicato Concessum*. In this encyclical, Leo highlights the significance of the poverty of St. Francis as a complement to the doctrinal preaching of St. Dominic. Leo regards both St. Francis's poverty and St. Dominic's defense of "the integrity of heavensent doctrine" as guiding lights for the Church amidst the confusions and crises of the late 19th century. In our young century, we have faced the mounting catastrophes of global poverty as well as the near complete erosion of any stable intellectual heritage. In this paper, I will turn to Leo XIII to highlight some ways in which the Franciscan spirit of evangelical poverty and the Dominican spirit of theological study can shape the Catholic laity in the exercise of civic virtue amidst the global crises of poverty and intellectual rootlessness.

**\* Anton ten Klooster, *Conversion of the Will: Moral Transformation in Thomas Aquinas***

Moral conversion entails a change of the will. Sometimes the subject needs to overcome its attraction to false goods, and in any case it needs to be oriented toward a true good.

Understood as such, moral conversion is a reorientation of the will. This paper discusses such a conversion in light of the theological ethics of Thomas Aquinas as laid out in the *Summa Theologiae* and in his other works, and seeks to answer the question how virtues help redirect the will to a true good. Particular attention will be devoted to the question how virtues correct a will hitherto falsely oriented.

**\* Angela Knobel, *Conversion and Coercion***

How should we treat those with whom we disagree, even when we believe they are clearly in the wrong? This paper explores these questions in the framework of Aquinas's treatment of the virtue of justice and his accounts of natural and supernatural virtue. It argues that even the pursuit of the supernatural good is constrained by considerations of natural justice.

**\* Daniel Lightsey, *The Human Thirst to See Heavenly Azure: Vladimir Solovyov and Sergius Bulgakov on Beauty and Conversion***

This paper explores the sophianic experiences of Russian religious philosopher and poet Vladimir Solovyov and dogmatic theologian Sergei Bulgakov. It endeavors to demonstrate how Solovyov and Bulgakov's writings regarding their involvements with and speculations about Sophia – being seized by God's Holy Sophia – introduce a vital link between the experience of beauty and moral conversion. Both figures acknowledge how sophianic beauty cannot be wholly reduced to an entirely intelligible set of material components, and yet their oeuvres speak of how their experiences of Sophia radically shifted their theological-ethical systems and profoundly altered their sense of self through the integral dynamism of an I-Thou framework.

**\* Peter Samuel Lovas, *Moral Conversion: The Agent and the Consequences of Morality According to Thomas Aquinas***

If the accountability of an acting person is reduced or even excluded because of her ignorance, good intentions, erroneous conscience, or particular circumstances of the action, and if the act itself is objectively evil, how will this evil action affect its agent? In this paper, I will discuss the application of some fundamental moral theological principles of Thomas Aquinas' teaching. Evil acts fail to substantiate divine wisdom and goodness. Only good actions lead their authors to happiness. Real goodness proceeds from the communion of life with God, who infinitely happy in himself created mankind to share in his happiness.

**\* Giulia Lovison, *Panis supersubstantialis: Conversions in the Vitae Fratrum Ordinis Praedicatorum***

Significant for the theme of conversion is the *Vitae Fratrum Ordinis Praedicatorum*, written by the Dominican Gerard de Frachet. By analyzing this document and considering the different episodes of conversion narrated in it, this paper aims to make this analysis relevant for a reflection on more broad-ranging questions. For example, the conversion of a Muslim is not only a testimony of the *modus convertendi* adopted by Dominicans, but also allows to gather significant information on the relationship between Christians and Muslims (social and

theological), the etiology of dreams, biblical metaphors and schism. Similarly, the inner conversion of a Cathar informs us about medieval epistemology and physics, the modalities of personal discernment and the perception of heretics.

**\* Conor McDonough, *Sad Kings, Burning Books, and the Devil's Daughters: Dominican Preaching for Moral Conversion in Medieval Limerick***

The books produced and used by medieval friars pay precious witness to the moral formation afforded to those who heard their preaching. While contemporary manuals of moral theology are often quite schematic, the miscellaneous compilations used by preachers, and by lectors responsible for the formation of preachers, fill out these schemata by means of short, vivid narratives for use in sermons and confession. These narratives, known as exempla, are found in abundance in Trinity College Dublin MS 667, a fifteenth-century manuscript recently identified as belonging, in all probability, to the Dominican friars of Limerick. There is one other surviving manuscript from the Limerick Dominican library: British Library Royal MS 13 A XIV which contains, among other texts, the Summa 'qui bene presunt', a popular manual of moral theology. In this paper, the full range of these manuscripts' contents will be considered with the aim of revealing, as far as possible, the theory and practice of moral conversion in Dominican-influenced medieval Limerick.

**\* Ryan Michaël Miller, *From Religious to Moral Conversion***

Often, Lonergan is thought of as supplementing Aquinas's metaphysics with a more phenomenological analysis. Lonergan treats the priority of religious over moral conversion from a purely causal perspective, however: it is operative grace that reveals values, and hence the inadequacy of merely felt satisfaction as a moral criterion (*Method*, p. 242-243). In my paper, I suggest that the phenomenological aspect of this priority can be uncovered by reflecting on Aquinas's ordering of the transcendentals in *De Veritate* Q. 1. Appropriation of being as something (*aliquid*) requires understanding oneself as limited by potency and dependent on the pure act of God (religious conversion). Then the conformity of being to the appetite (*bonum*) is not merely to one's own appetite (moral conversion).

**\* Krijn Pansters, *Conversional Ethics: Introduction***

In this introductory paper, I will explore our theme of conversional ethics – reflecting on turning toward the truly good – by studying the lives of a number of individuals who belonged to the Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi. When their biographers state that these fascinating characters “made peace,” this suggests to me that the women and men whose lives are being told have not only been peace-makers in the world, but have also made peace, in one way or another, with themselves. That, I will suggest here, is the double foundation that we must look for in moral conversion. These tertiaries' expanding moral commitment, whether suddenly awakened or slowly advanced (“conversion”), was the consequence of a new spiritual concentration (“contemplation”) on the one hand, and a new social concern (“care”) on the other.

**\* Bert Roebben, *Ambiguities, Identities and Designs of Meaning: Reconfiguring Theological Education as Conversion***

In the faculty of Catholic theology of the University of Bonn, the collective research is focused on the topic of “Ambiguities, Identities and Designs of Meaning.” In an evolving context of crisis, the challenge is to reposition theological knowledge as a whole (“Gesamttheologie”) as public theology under “the cloud of unknowing” (attributed to a 14th century English mystical author). Identities are no longer clearly defined, but need to be reconfigured dialogically. Ambiguities do not only lead to polarization but can also lead to habits of tolerance (“Ambiguitätstoleranz”). The designs of meaning can change in time but need to be reappropriated as deliberate acts of faith – in short: as conversion. In order to understand these changes my contribution will rely on the spiritual voices of Meister Eckhart and Thomas Merton.

**\* Hanna Roose, *Looking at Side Figures: Moral conversion in the New Testament***

At first glance, Paul seems to be a prominent example of Biblical moral conversion in the New Testament. However, his shift from “Saul” to “Paul” turns out to be neither moral nor a conversion in character. The fundamental changes caused by the calling of Paul regard not so much his moral stance as the foundation of this moral stance. The perspective of *moral* conversion in the New Testament rather leads us to side figures in the Gospels: one of the criminals on the cross (Lc 23.40-43), the young, rich man (Mt 19.16-22 par), Zacchaeus (Lc 19.1-10), or the woman caught in adultery (Jn 7.53-8.11).

**\* Lydia Schumacher, *Moral Conversion and the Virtues in Aquinas***

Aquinas is famous for his theory of the unity of the virtues – the idea that any one of them (prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance) cannot exist without the others. For instance fortitude without justice can lead to violence and justice without fortitude achieves nothing. This paper will explore how habituation in the moral virtues helps gradually to bring about moral and social transformation in the one who commits to this process. The paper will conclude with a discussion of the vexed question concerning the relationship between and interdependence of the moral and theological virtues of faith, hope, and love.

**\* Lauren Simms, *Charity Precipitates Change: Aquinas on The Greatest Commandment***

This paper proposes engage Thomas Aquinas to examine how the soul’s formation in charity is the foundation for the believer’s concern for the common good. I will primarily draw upon the Commentary on Matthew and Aquinas’s treatise On the Perfection of the Spiritual Life. Drawing upon these sources, I aim to demonstrate Aquinas’s stance that since all virtues are ordered to and exercised in the actions of the individual, one cannot claim to love God above all things unless he actions reflect his striving to love his neighbor as himself.

**\* Ronelle Sonnenberg & Shantelle Weber, *Character Formation and Emerging Adulthood: An Exploration of Moral Conversion Inspired by Christian Faith***

In adolescence and emerging adulthood, people develop particular values, lifestyle habits, etc. Amid a diversity of social contexts, spiritual resources, and communities, people respond differently to various situations, thus developing characters that are formed in varying contexts and situations. In this paper, we will focus on character and character formation in emerging adults. How do young people not only live out specific values but also grow and

even change in moral attitude through participating in specific practices and dealing with particular situations? By way of empirical research conducted with theology students in South Africa and Netherlands, this paper investigates how these emerging adults experience character formation in the context of religious beliefs and practices.

**\* Willem Marie Speelman, *Moral Conversion and Mystagogy: A Franciscan Reading Through Pope Francis***

The story of Francis of Assisi failing to fulfill his dream of knighthood may be read as a model for moral conversion. It is about a major choice in life: “Who do you follow?,” about the question: “What do you want me to do?” and its answer: “Go back to the place where you belong, and there you will hear what you should do.” Pope Francis sends the Church back into her own secular situation. Just like *il poverello, il papa* is full of gestures concerning the good life. Like St. Francis, Pope Francis does not tell the Church and the faithful what to do. Moral conversion does not spring from holy people telling people what to do, but from our own situation. Listen! Look! ... and you will hear what you should do.

**\* Mark E. Therrien, *Psalm-Singing and Moral Conversion: Developments from Athanasius to Augustine on the Role of Psalms in Christian Formation***

Early Christians understood the Psalms as one of the most important tools in curing the soul’s affliction by diseased emotions (the passions), which they considered to be one of most serious consequences of the Fall. This paper explores how this transformation takes place by tracking a development from Athanasius to Augustine. It argues that Augustine’s later works on the Psalms successfully integrate different elements of a theology first put forward by Athanasius. More specifically, it argues that Augustine integrates into a synthetic theology of the Psalms the elements that are only juxtaposed in Athanasius, focused especially on the person of Christ.

**\* Luke Togni, *Recursive Conversion in the Legenda Maior***

In the *Legenda Maior*, St. Francis’ course of progressive spiritual development in the history of the Order and in his virtues map dramatically model and mad of human life conformed to Christ. Francis’ course for imitation, as it follows a recursive pattern of development through triads on multiple levels show the persistent need for conversion, including moral conversion at all times. As at the end of his life Francis declared that he was just beginning, the constant beginning in conversion to God is a key component of Bonaventure’s account of the recursive development in the life of the saint. In this paper, I will show how this recursive, cyclical progress in the *Legenda Maior* develops Bonaventure’s thinking on the virtues and situates them in his wider Trinitarian spirituality.

**\* Brian Treanor, *Homo Viator: Pilgrimage and Self-Cultivation***

This paper will discuss the ways in which pilgrimage facilitates personal transformation and ethical conversion. Pilgrimages, in the form that interests me, constitute a particular kind of break with everyday experience. Characterized by some degree of silence, solitude, bodily engagement, environmental immersion, and spiritual aspiration, pilgrimage is an experience that separates us from customary ways of experiencing the world and from our habitual

responses to it. In doing so, pilgrimage invites us to see the world, and ourselves, anew. More specifically, by highlighting our itinerant nature pilgrimage puts us in a position to be able to experience anew our creatureliness. And, when we have a clearer view of the kinds of creatures that we are, we can become the kinds of creatures we are meant to be.

**\* Louke van Wensveen, *Liberating Restoration: Ecclesial Bodies as Flywheels of Moral and Social Conversion***

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**\* Archibald van Wieringen, *The Horse and the Arms Race: Biblical Stories With a Different View of Armaments***

Arms race is timeless. Not just of our time with nuclear weapons (still going on) or biological weapons (a new, almost invisible arms race). Arms race also occurred in biblical times. We have various biblical stories about military ascendancy and liberation. According to the Bible, the enemy always perishes due to their own armaments. In biblical times, the introduction of the horse caused the most significant arms race. The horse has a prominent place in the exodus story about the liberation of God's people from Egypt. The horse has therefore become the biblical symbol of wrong military mechanisms. Whereas the biblical narratives contain an indirect call not to choose the horse, the prophetic teaching uses the horse for an explicit call for conversion, a transformation from trusting in arms to having faith in God.

**\* Mariéle Wulf, *Anima in se curvata: Conversion as the Opening of the Narcissistic Soul***  
“*Anima in se curvata*” is a well-known definition of Augustine for the sinner. This definition applies by proxy to people today who believe that the world should obey their needs. We often call these individuals “narcissists.” There are two main forms of narcissism: narcissism by power and – less known – narcissism by powerlessness. The latter is less visible, but increasingly present. Why is it that more and more people are adopting a narcissistic attitude? And what is needed for them to overcome this attitude and do that which narcissists do not do at outset: take on responsibility? For this, an opening is needed that allows the narcissistic soul to be filled by what was missing. The opening of the soul is the first step in becoming sensitive to others and accepting one's own reality as it is.