



## EDITORIAL

### CHRISTIAN INCARNATION AND ESCHATOLOGY

**Olli-Pekka Vainio, Francis Jonbäck and Carl-Johan Palmqvist**

One year has passed since we launched *Agatheos: European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* and began this collaborative project. The initiative has primarily been carried out on a voluntary basis, driven by a commitment to the field of philosophy of religion and a conviction that high-quality scholarship should be freely accessible through open access.

The successful start of this journal would not have been possible without substantial contribution from the philosophical community. We would therefore like to express our heartfelt thanks for the support we have received - not only from those directly involved, but also from all our readers, authors, and reviewers. Your engagement and support have been truly invaluable.

As a celebration of our shared efforts, and in recognition of the great scholarship published in the journal during its first year, we are pleased to announce the launch of the first Agatheos Prize. The prize is sponsored by the University of Gävle and the Olaus Petri Foundation through Uppsala University. Participation is open to PhD students and early-career scholars, and the prize is awarded for the best article in philosophy of religion (as broadly conceived and in line with the journal's scope). Special attention will be paid to the criteria of novelty and innovation. The winner, selected by a panel of regional editors and editorial committee members, will receive a monetary award of €1,000 and the winning paper and possibly also other papers that are positively reviewed will be published in *Agatheos*. Stay tuned for the official call on our website.

\* \* \*

The present issue, centres on two important themes in Christian philosophical theology, namely Incarnation and Eschatology. We are especially grateful to Olli-Pekka Vainio, who also is co-editing it. Vainio is one of the organizers of the 2024 HEAT (Helsinki Analytic Theology) workshop, held annually by the Faculty of Theology at the University of Helsinki. The theme of the 2024 workshop was *This is (Not) the End*, focusing on eschatological questions from both philosophical and theological perspectives. Several of the articles in this issue originate from that event,

where participants explored topics such as the afterlife, heaven and hell, the beatific vision, varieties of Christian eschatology, and the meaning of life. The workshop's distinctive format, where papers are circulated beforehand and sessions are entirely discussion-based, encouraged especially rich and constructive engagement.

However, we begin with three connected papers on the theme of Incarnation, focused on a shared concern with how Christ's sinlessness can be reconciled with his genuine humanity, particularly in relation to temptations and free will.

In the first of these articles, Jonathan Hill offers a typology of models interpreting Christ's temptations, distinguishing between internalist models, where Christ experiences desires toward sub-optimal acts, and externalist ones, where he does not. While most contemporary analytic theologians adopt internalism, Hill argues that its various forms face significant challenges. By contrast, he contends, externalism avoids these pitfalls and ultimately provides a more robust model.

In his contribution, Richard Swinburne addresses the apparent incompatibility between Christ's sinlessness and his full humanity. He considers and rejects three common attempts to resolve the tension - treating Christ's sinlessness as contingent, appealing to compatibilist free will, or limiting his freedom to supererogatory choices. Instead, Swinburne defends the view that Christ was necessarily sinless yet still experienced temptation as humans do. He responds to several objections to this model, ultimately granting some weight to the concern that it may require Christ to have falsely believed that he could sin - something at odds with, but not essential to, traditional views of his self-knowledge.

In the following paper, Joshua Sijuwade critically responds to Swinburne's paper. While Swinburne argues that Christ could be necessarily sinless and still genuinely tempted, Sijuwade challenges this view using Robert Kane's libertarian theory of free will. He contends that true human freedom requires Self-Forming Actions, which in turn require real alternative possibilities, including the option to sin. Since Swinburne's Christ lacks this, Sijuwade argues, he cannot possess fully human freedom. As an alternative, he proposes the Dispositional Incarnation Model, which maintains Christ's libertarian freedom at the level of human experience while grounding his sinlessness in a dispositional aspect of his divine nature - thus better supporting the traditional Chalcedonian claim of Christ's full humanity.

After these three interconnected papers, we turn to the HEAT-papers on Christian Eschatology. In the first of these, Max Byker-Hytch explores whether near-death experiences (NDEs) can provide evidential support for belief in an afterlife. While NDEs have long fascinated the public and scholars, their philosophical significance remains contested. Byker-Hytch analyses three distinct inferential routes from NDE reports to the conclusion that an afterlife exists, ultimately arguing that at least two routes offer moderately strong support for such a claim.

The following paper by Robbie Hoque addresses the question of whether freedom exists in Heaven. Certain theodicies and views of human nature regard freedom as essential to genuine moral personhood, raising challenges for the idea of a Heaven

without freedom. Hoque argues that a realm of enhanced agency, derived from a good-maximizing view of an omniperfect God's creative purpose and Robert Kane's neuro-physical theory of free will, can provide an account of the goods that could exist in Heaven and explain how choices between such goods could be valuable.

Brendan Harris advocates for a position he terms "Skeptical Infernalism," which attempts to balance the competing goods of God's justice and creaturely freedom. Harris contends that Augustinian theology of grace renders many traditional responses problematic and explores whether Augustine's appeal to divine mystery could explain why God grants efficacious grace to some but not others.

Lee Wakeman analyzes contemporary debates on the meaning of life, arguing that supernaturalists and naturalists often talk past one another when addressing questions of sufficient or quantitative meaning. The key difference, according to Wakeman, lies in the theistic framework, where God's ultimacy necessitates that meaning must be understood fundamentally as a value-relation grounded in God. God does not quantitatively increase meaning but qualitatively defines what meaning is. Consequently, it becomes difficult simply to assert that a sufficiently meaningful life is possible without God as the crux of the matter seems to lie elsewhere.

Ryan Shields investigates whether it is logically possible for an individual to desire an afterlife apart from God. After weighing arguments for and against this claim, Shields discusses Charles Williams's concept of progressive affective impotence in support for the argument that such a desire is in fact possible.

Finally, Aaron Davis tackles a specific issue related to post-mortem purgation: if the Parousia (the Second Coming) makes real the state of bliss in the afterlife, what happens to the ongoing processes of purgation? Instead of advocating for "abrupt purgation" or other views that might contradict key doctrinal positions, Davis proposes the possibility of post-mortem time dilation, where objective time differs from subjective, experienced time.

We hope these papers spark your interest and contribute to ongoing conversations on these important topics. As this shared journey continues, we look forward to working together with you, our readers, authors, and colleagues, to advance meaningful research in the philosophy of religion.

### **Copyright Information**

This is an open-access article published under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License ([CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)), which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.