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Mini-Conference and “Waiting Room”: Practical Theology on the Pilgrimage

Joshua Cho

Mini-Conference: the Origin

Since the end of 2023, the Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary (HKBTS) has organized a number of mini-conferences in the grand conference hall on the third floor of the new academic building. The initial idea was to gather, after the pandemic, a group of spiritual friends and co-workers, who are also alumni, fellow pastors, or church leaders with a common faith, to share thoughts, reflect, and pray together over tea. This setup required minimal preparation and no advance

arrangement for speakers and attendees. It was as casual as meeting up with friends, where things easily fall into place.

I had considered chatting over tea at a tea house but considering the noisy environment and our desire to simplify arrangements, it seemed better to meet on the Sai O campus. We could start with a simple meal at our canteen to welcome friends/alumni/fellow workers from all over, allowing everyone to get to know each other at the dining table, and then move to the grand

conference hall on the third floor of the new academic building to share the struggles and joys of ministry, as well as our views on various topics like societal changes.

Mini-Conference: Flexible and Diverse

The speakers at these mini-conferences include guests from outside the seminary as well as our faculty members. I remember last November, when our alumnus Rev. King-tak Ip, Ph.D.



The Speaker and participants enjoying fellowship at mealtime before a mini-conference



(University of Manchester), returned to Hong Kong. Over tea, I learned he was writing a book about **suicide**, and invited him to share his research findings with the younger brothers and sisters at HKBTS before he left. In a very short time, we enlisted a number of alumni to participate, which created our first mini-conference on December 4 last year.

The second mini-conference featured Rev. Teck-peng Lim, Ph.D. (University of London), Academic Dean of Trinity Theological College in Singapore. Rev. Lim and I are close friends. He left Singapore for Hong Kong on December 11 last year; just for a personal visit to me, but without any reservation, I grabbed the chance to invite him to speak at our mini-conference. On that very day, he came straight from Hong Kong International Airport to HKBTS. As a scholar in **Christian education**, Rev. Lim first shared his experiences in promoting Christian cultural and educational initiatives in Singapore and then discussed the relationship between Christian education and culture, missions, teaching methods, theology, the roles of seminaries and churches, etc.

The third mini-conference featured Mr. Paul Chan, Research Manager of the Hong Kong Campus Crusade for Christ (HKCCC). I met with Mr. Patrick Chan, General Secretary of HKCCC, on September 19 last year and learned about the organization's recent developments, leading to an invitation for his colleague, Mr. Paul Chan, to speak at our morning chapel service. Integrating his research findings with his pastoral experience, Mr. Chan gave the faculty and students of HKBTS a number of new thoughts and insights. During an exchange of ideas with him after the service, I invited him to prepare a mini-conference for our alumni. This eventually took place on January 29 of this year, with Mr. Chan discussing **"Emerging Adulthood."** He talked about the characteristics of "emerging adults"



Learning and exchanging ideas together

and offered concrete suggestions on how churches can pastor this community.

Mr. Sanson Lau has served as the Director of the Edna Wong Christian Worship and Arts Education Centre at our seminary for many years, tirelessly nurturing HKBTS's sacred music until his retirement. On this occasion of transition, I invited him to speak at the fourth mini-conference. On March 4, Mr. Lau discussed **"Traditional vs. Modern: A False Proposition for Church Singing,"** attracting musicians from various Christian generations in Hong Kong. From the perspective of cultural manipulation, Mr. Lau explored how church singing can be led astray by others' discourses and suggested using a post-Dadaist approach to uncover an interdisciplinary approach in hymnology, aiming to revitalize church singing.

The number of participants in each mini-conference doesn't need to be large. An audience of just ten to twenty people allows for closer interaction and freer expression. The composition of participants varies with each session. Initially, the participants were mainly alumni, but based on the topics of each mini-conference, we have expanded the audience to cover brothers and sisters in other specific ministries, hoping that participants will include different church groupings in the future.

Mini-Conferences and Waiting Room

The mini-conferences are a "waiting room" constructed by HKBTS. It could also be described as an extension of HKBTS's practical theology. Theologian Andrew Root discusses the concept of a "waiting room" in contemporary church ministry as ***a cross-generational platform for sharing life stories, where people of different ages, experiences, and backgrounds come together and share their insights and stories.*** Some share

personal stories, and others reflect on stories about the Christian faith. Through the lens of the Bible, everyone examines the stories heard, discerning what is true in their lives, and collectively witnessing God's saving grace, listening for His still voice, and awaiting His guidance.

We aim to build the mini-conferences as such a cross-generational and inter-church "waiting room," enabling alumni of different ages, pastoral and deacon members of different congregations, and Christian friends of different professions to exchange thoughts and experiences, share life stories openly, pray for one another, and together experience and practice gospel truths, facing contemporary challenges together.

Exploring, Practicing, and Doing Theology

In fact, when we engage in these activities in the "waiting room," we are "doing theology." The English word "theology," derived from the Greek *theologia*, combines *theos* ("god") and *logos* ("word"), literally meaning "God talk" or "talking about God." Praying, evangelizing, preaching, or thinking, writing, and discussing God and His matters are all expressions of God talk and are all part of "doing theology."

Moreover, ***the theology we do in this "waiting room" of mini-conferences is a theology that begins and ends with practice—a practical theology.*** Practical theology is not only the practical application of biblical and theological beliefs but it also involves discerning God's actions in the world, attending to the existence and activities of churches, and focusing on the practices of Christians. In other words, practical theology shifts from interpreting sacred texts to guiding "the faithful walk." Practical theology is about "truly doing theology," elucidating the practice of Christian faith to address and solve concrete problems in churches and believers' lives. "Practical theology" refers to "practicing

theology," climaxing in humans' witnessing God's work in the present.

Journeying Together on the Pilgrimage

The "waiting room" of mini-conferences is also where we encourage and empower one another. It not only allows us to meet and gather joyfully but also enables us to face current challenges together. We can draw inspiration from the three friends in chapter 3 of the Book of Daniel, who stood together before King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. They were not alone but supported one another, refusing to fall down and worship the golden image set up by the king, resulting in the three of them being thrown into a blazing furnace together. However, the king saw four people in the furnace, the fourth being God Himself, a friend and source of courage for the three.

When we face difficulties, large or small, God is our friend and our source of courage. We can trust that God will save us from all evils, for He will be with us. Furthermore, God gives us spiritual friends to accompany us on the pilgrimage, helping us hold fast to our direction of life and encouraging us to respond wholeheartedly to God.

Therefore, despite the tumultuous changes of the times, whether abrupt or gradual, we can hold onto a strong hope, resisting being dominated by fate, not to be defeated by it, but steadfastly standing firm in the direction of our life. We are not merely in a "scene" but also making decisions within it. We see whatever we come across not just as a "scene" but as a part of narratives in service of a central aim. We have to reframe our views on the current situation from God's perspective, according to His will, because we believe in God, our Redeemer. Besides Him, there is no other god. Our hearts are free of idols, filled only with God, who is our source of courage.

We know the destination of our pilgrimage, but to reach there, we must indwell the divine story revealed by the Bible, led by God and the Word, with the support of companions, holding fast to the end, marching forward together.



Praying together

Starting from the Theological Symposium ...



What was discussed at the first Theological Symposium of HKBTS?
 Why does HKBTS promote the study of Karl Barth's theology?
 What is the relationship between Barth studies and the practical theology promoted by HKBTS?

Ever since the new academic building became fully operational in 2023, it has become the primary venue where the Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary (HKBTS) holds various academic activities, starting with academic exchanges, followed by mini-conferences. In March last year, we held the first Bible Conference, which was very fruitful, hence the second one on March 25 of this year. Additionally, on February 5 of this year, we held our first Theological Symposium, which was warmly received and achieved desirable results. The following is a report of the highlights of the day, allowing readers to understand why HKBTS promotes the study of Karl Barth's theology and how Barth studies and the practical theology promoted by HKBTS are related.

Barth's Theology in the Speculative Tradition

The first Theological Symposium of our seminary was held on February 5 in the grand conference hall on the third floor of the new academic building, with the theme "Barth's Theology in the Speculative Tradition." We invited two Chinese scholars specializing in Karl Barth's theology, Dr. Alex Shaokai Tseng and Dr. Thomas Xutong Qu, to discuss *the influence of Immanuel Kant's thoughts on Barth's theology* and *Jürgen Moltmann's criticism of Barth's doctrine of the Trinity* respectively. The lectures were excellent and insightful.

The symposium was divided into two sessions, each lasting about an hour and a half, starting with the speakers' presentation of their research results, followed by a response from one of our teachers, and finally, a time for public discussion. The symposium adopted a hybrid meeting format, with speakers, respondent speakers, and

participants (including our faculty, students, alumni, as well as teachers and students from other theological seminaries and pastoral workers) attending either in person or via video conferencing. Approximately 140 participants joined the meeting with enthusiastic responses and a lively atmosphere.

Kant and Barth

The first session of the symposium was delivered by Dr. Alex Tseng (D.Phil., University of Oxford), Research Professor, School of Philosophy, Zhejiang University, on the topic "*Reception of Kant in Modern Protestant*



Dr. Alex Tseng

Theology: As Illustrated in Karl Barth's Speculative Theology," and the respondent speaker was Dr. Curie Qu, Assistant Professor of Christian Thought at our seminary.

Dr. Tseng discussed how Kant's thoughts influenced Barth's speculative theology, allowing us to glimpse the profound reception of Kant in modern Protestant theology. Dr. Tseng refuted Bruce McCormack's post-Kantian interpretation paradigm of Barth, pointing out that Barth adopted a phenomenalist (*Phänomenalismus*) interpretation of Kant, rather than the empirical realism (*empirischer Realismus*) advocated by McCormack, as it does not align with McCormack's description of Barth's "actualism" and McCormack had also ignored Barth's own interpretation of Kant's thoughts and his assessment of Kant in the history of Christian theology.

In the end, Dr. Tseng compared how Kant and Barth refuted René Descartes's ontological argument and his phrase "I think, therefore I am" under the paradigm of Barth's speculative theology, pointing out that there are in fact similarities in their arguments. Dr. Tseng further deduced that the way Kant refuted the phrase "I think, therefore I am" has indirectly yet profoundly influenced Barth through thinkers like Søren Kierkegaard. This reception history shows that Kant had influenced not only Barth but also Kierkegaard and several generations of Protestant thinkers with his philosophy being "in the air."

Dr. Curie Qu fully agreed with Dr. Tseng's interpretation of Kant and Barth, believing that his comprehensive sorting of the interpretative traditions of the two thinkers and his detailed analysis of their main concepts and propositions was both broad and nuanced. Dr. Qu added that Kant started to study the subject-object relation with humans as cognizing subjects, which are active; however, in the case of revelation-reception, it is God who takes the initiative in self-revelation, whereas humans as the cognizing subjects are actually passive. Moreover, both the reformed church and Barth believe that God is essentially unknowable and that humans are finite while God is infinite. If we attempt to understand the existence of God with intrinsic (*a priori*) categories, it would lead to errors like what Descartes describes in his phrase "I think, therefore I am." According to Dr. Tseng's explanation, both Barth and Kant considered this an attempt to make "analytic" truth masquerading as "synthetic" truth, or misuse of *a priori* categories, because



Dr. Curie Qu

"existence" is in the experiential domain, not applicable to the transcendental God.

Moltmann and Barth

The second session of the symposium was delivered by Dr. Thomas Qu (Ph.D., University of Heidelberg), Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, School of Humanities, Tsinghua University, on the topic **"The Tension between Individuality and Community: An Evaluation of Moltmann's Criticism of Barth's Doctrine of the Trinity,"** and the respondent speaker was Dr. Sam Ip, Visiting Assistant Professor



Dr. Thomas Qu

of Christian Thought at our seminary.

Dr. Thomas Qu cited the viewpoint of scholar Christoph Schwöbel, noting that Barth and Karl Rahner started from revelation theology to relay the foundations for the doctrine of the Trinity, providing decisive momentum for the "renaissance or revival of Trinitarian theology" at the end of the 20th century. Primarily based on Moltmann's *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (1980), Dr. Thomas Qu listed a number of criticisms Moltmann made against Barth's doctrine of the Trinity, including some serious accusations, with the key issue being Moltmann's belief that Barth emphasized the precedence of God's sovereignty over the Trinity, using the doctrine of the Trinity to secure and explain God's subjectivity and lordship in His rule.

Dr. Thomas Qu discussed Barth's doctrine of the Trinity based on *Church Dogmatics* I/1 §§8-12, pointing out that for Barth, the doctrine of the Trinity is "decisive and controlling" for the whole of dogmatics. Dr. Thomas Qu pointed out that for Barth, revelation is an event, essentially dynamic rather than static. The essential content of revelation is that "God reveals Himself as the Lord." The doctrine of the Trinity is not explicitly stated in the Bible, but it is based on the Bible and is an appropriate interpretation of revelation and



the self-revealing God in His revelation. When discussing the specific content of Barth's doctrine of the Trinity, Dr. Thomas Qu pointed out the aspects we should pay attention to when studying Barth. He also responded to criticisms from scholars like Moltmann against Barth and clarified some of their misunderstandings of Barth's thoughts.

Dr. Sam Ip commended Dr. Thomas Qu's lecture for its detailed content and clear explanation, which also



Dr. Sam Ip

triggered his own thoughts on these two theological giants. Firstly, Barth and Moltmann used different methodologies, with Barth establishing the conception of revelation from the witness of Scripture, while Moltmann focused on the cross event, leading to distinct styles in their

doctrines of the Trinity with different focal points and orientations. Secondly, when exploring his doctrine of the Trinity, Barth critiqued and integrated traditional theology in order to seek its renewal, development, and continuation; Moltmann, on the other hand, was committed to exploring the possibilities of theology at the forefront of culture and time. Observing the different orientations of the two theologians, one finds that continuing tradition can sometimes be a burden, but while adapting to the needs of the times, one needs to be cautious, and prevent contemporary ideologies from dominating or overriding our exploration of faith. Lastly, he stated that Barth and Moltmann have made significant contributions to the development of the doctrine of the Trinity in the 20th century, but how their detailed arguments have helped churches practice faith over the past decades, such as



A participant raising a question

their impact on preaching and worship, warrants further exploration.

Lively Discussions

The symposium featured lively discussions in a harmonious atmosphere. The speakers analyzed Barth's and other theologians' thoughts from different perspectives, with teachers and students both onsite and online actively raising questions and giving responses, stimulating everyone's thinking. The speakers further supplemented or explained their points, leading to mutual exchange and learning, making it a wonderful and rich academic feast for the Chinese Christian theological community, which was very beneficial to all.

According to the feedback from participants, most were satisfied with the arrangements of the symposium and found the content rich and profound, which was very helpful to them, deepening their understanding of these theologians and clarifying some misunderstandings of their theological thoughts. Some participants mentioned that the lecture allowed them to understand Barth's doctrine of the Trinity more comprehensively and begin to grasp the differences between Barth and Moltmann in their theological approaches. In short, most participants enjoyed the meeting and hoped that the seminary would continue to hold such theological academic lectures in the future.

The Beginning of Barth Studies at HKBTS

President Joshua Cho clearly stated at the meeting that **this symposium marked the official start of HKBTS'**

promotion of Barth studies. He was very pleased that two mainland scholars specializing in Barth's theology were invited to discuss and explore together, with two teachers from our Division of Christian Thought serving as respondent speakers.



President Joshua Cho

President Cho mentioned that in addition to connecting with scholars on the mainland, the seminary is also planning to invite renowned scholars of Barth studies from abroad, such as Bruce McCormack and George Hunsinger from Princeton Theological Seminary, to have exchanges with and learn from each other. This idea is still in development, awaiting its realization in the near future.

Returning to the Substratum for the Learning of Theology

Why does HKBTS promote Barth studies? What is the relationship between this and the practical theology that HKBTS has been promoting?

President Cho stated that HKBTS teachers carry out studies about various theologians, including Paul Tillich, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Jürgen Moltmann, Colin Gunton, Stanley Hauerwas, and Samuel Wells. Among them, many contemporary theologians have been deeply influenced by Barth. Without delving into the origins of their thinking, it would be difficult to understand their development. Barth's theology can be said to be the substratum of their thoughts. To understand the ideas behind them and to do theology, one must return to this origin and foundation.

The Bible, Theology, Practice

Barth studies are also related to the practical theology that HKBTS has been promoting. ***HKBTS is committed to constructing practical theology with theological wisdom (theologia), nurturing preachers with theological wisdom*** to discern the heart of Jesus Christ, to help others to practice their faith with His thoughts and feelings and by following His example, and to respond to the current situation with the right action. Practical theology emphasizes the practical wisdom of theology, which can be concretely applied in pastoral scenarios and situations of social reality. No matter how strong our systematic theology is or how superior our biblical theology is, we ultimately need to return to practical theology.

Practical theology is performative. It begins with praxis and ends with praxis. One approach to practical theology is to start with descriptive-analytical tasks, which reveal the values implicit in praxis. The climax of practical theology is to understand the original praxis and situation and then listen to God's word and deeply reflect theologically so as to re-understand God's action in the present and update our praxis accordingly. In other words, these tasks form a cycle that ultimately generates new praxis.

Therefore, ***when we talk about practical theology, it is not about direct application. It involves much discernment and theological reflection.*** This requires not only a solid biblical foundation but also a sound theological foundation. If we want to apply the theology of famous contemporary theologians to today's situations, we cannot simply force it to fit. We cannot just do as a theologian says at a certain place and time. We need to thoroughly understand the theologian's thoughts, integrate and discern carefully, and determine which elements are applicable to the current era and situation. This is the essence of practical theology.

Therefore, it is necessary to return to the substratum of contemporary theological thought and explore Barth's theology so as to lay a solid foundation for learning contemporary theology. President Cho also hoped that our study of Barth's theology could return to the original German texts, rather than relying on translations or the research results of other scholars. The two speakers at this Theological Symposium are both proficient in German and can contribute to churches by studying Barth's original texts. All these are why HKBTS held the Theological Symposium and began to promote the study of Barth's theology.

We look forward to HKBTS holding more similar academic activities in the near future, continuing to promote biblical studies, theological thinking, and practical theology so as to assist the church in ***faithfully abiding by God's will in this challenging era, developing profound theological thinking on current situations based on the Bible and the guidance and illumination of the Holy Spirit, and putting God's Word into practice.***



Interpretations of Love Poems in the Song of Songs and the *Book of Songs*: A Case Study of Song of Songs 8:5-7 and “Fishhawk”

Curie Qu

Assistant Professor of Christian Thought

Interpretation of the Song of Songs

The Song of Songs, with its explicit expressions of male and female love, is seldom preached from the pulpit; however, it is widely sung at weddings, celebrations, and feasts within Israeli culture, revealing a stark contrast. **Historically, there have been two opposing interpretations of the Song of Songs: allegorical and natural.** The debate over which interpretation is correct remains a matter of perspective, which cannot be fully covered in this article. The focus here is on interpretative questions arising from the Song of Songs 8:5-7a, which is the climactic part of the book.

Reading Song of Songs 8:5-7a

- ⁵ Who is that coming up from the wilderness,
leaning on her beloved?

Under the apple tree, I awakened you.
There your mother was in labor with you;
there she who bore you was in labor.

- ⁶ Set me as a seal upon your heart,
as a seal upon your arm,
for love is strong as death,
jealousy is fierce as the grave.
Its flashes are flashes of fire,
the very flame of the LORD.
⁷ Many waters cannot quench love,
neither can floods drown it. (ESV)

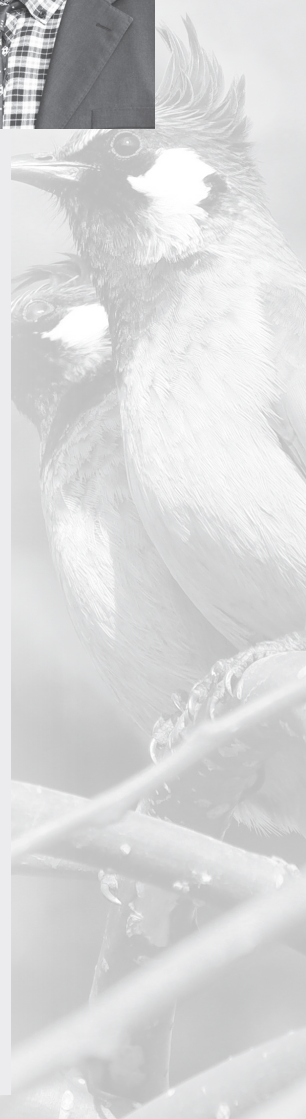
These verses tightly intertwine themes of love, life, and death, which are inseparable. Why is love always entangled with life and death? **That is because love is the most intense human emotion and death represents the end of life; to express**

the most intense emotions, it requires comparing them to these intense and important moments.

Verse 5 shows a woman's expression of love for a man, even in the erotic overtones (scent of the apple tree). Here, the pain of childbirth in particular is mentioned. Then, in verse 6, the woman asks the man to possess her completely as a seal on his heart and his arm. Complete possession is mutual; if a person says, “I am your wife,” it means that they cannot have another wife. The seal has a second meaning. At that time, it was widely popular to mark tombs with seals, which would allow the deceased to enter the netherworld. This is akin to an identity card for the underworld. The seal here also can represent the continuation of one's status in life, especially the status of being spouse, beyond death.

Immediately following is the most famous line in the Song of Songs—“love is strong as death,” which intertwines the images of love and death in a profoundly moving way. According to feminist biblical scholar F. Scott Spencer, “[L]ove proves to be the most worthy match for death, thereby redeeming our fragile existence with meaning, fulfillment, rapture and transcendence.”¹

The next line, “jealousy is fierce as the grave,” is also translated as “its jealousy unyielding as the grave” in the NIV. Does “jealousy” here refer to the jealousy and exclusivity in love? Or does



it carry any other meaning? In his commentary on the Song of Songs, Tremper Longman III says, “There are only two relationships described in the Bible where jealousy is a potentially appropriate reaction: the divine-human relationship and the marriage relationship.”¹² Jealousy in these two types of relationships can be so intense that it can be unparalleled, and it is largely for the purpose of maintaining and protecting the relationship.

Tracing the origin of the terms “death” and “flashes of fire” in verse 6, related etymologies show a link to the god of death Mot, and the god of war and plague Reshep in Ugaritic mythology. “The very flame of the LORD” is also translated as “a mighty flame” in the NIV, both being accurate in rendition as the suffix “yah” of the term can be interpreted both as shorthand for the divine name and simply as a superlative describing the intensity of the fire. If both meanings are to be included, it can even be translated as “an Almighty flame.” The “many waters” and “floods” in verse 7 are also related to the conflict between the god of order and the personified chaos in Ugaritic and Mesopotamian myths, with the ravaging floods directly associated with death. Here, the power of love is shown to surpass death and the gods, gripping the lovers as firmly as the grave or Sheol. Love is so intense that only “death” seems adequate to express it.

...the power of love is shown to surpass death and the gods, gripping the lovers as firmly as the grave or Sheol.

Natural or Allegorical Interpretation?

The question then arises: how should these three verses be interpreted? Should we use a natural approach or an allegorical approach? The Studium Biblicum Version of the Catholic Bible notes in its preface to the Song of Songs that the Second Council of Constantinople rejected the idea that the Song of Songs is a collection of poems celebrating the love between men and women. But this statement is not accurate as the Council denied a proposal made by a local member, the details of which are unclear. Historically, most of the commentators who insisted on an allegorical approach were not negative toward a simpler interpretation. The Jewish *Targum* interprets the content of the Song of Songs as describing the relationship between Yahweh and Israel; Martin Luther sees it as depicting the

relationship between God and the state and government; and the notes in the seventeenth-century Dutch Calvinist Bible version *Statenbijbel* naturally assume it to be describing the relationship between Christ the bridegroom and the Church the bride. The perspectives of Luther and the *Statenbijbel* notes, however, cannot be taken as interpretations, but as applications of the text, or, at most, they can be considered typology.

In his commentary on the Song of Songs, Robert W. Jenson acknowledges that modern scholars consider the text to be about human love based on its genre and language and that it was not until later that it was interpreted allegorically to fit the canon. On the other hand, when discussing verses 6 and 7 in chapter 8, he suggests, “One poem ... almost compels us to suppose that the poet did intend at least this one of the poems to be about both human lovers with each other and God with Israel; for we will see that in this passage the boundary between a secular reading and a theological reading amounts to no more than the difference between alternative resolutions of a play with mythic names that can hardly be accidental.”¹³

Actually, it is not very difficult for modern readers to embrace both natural and allegorical interpretations simultaneously. The author(s) of the Song of Songs, familiar with the myths, religions, and literary forms of Israel and its neighbors (primarily Canaanites), used purely Hebrew language and imagery. On this basis, it is entirely reasonable to imagine **the Song of Songs as a secular celebration of love between men and women, with the authors naturally associating it with God's passionate love for the people of Israel, using it as a blueprint or the source for comparison (“bi”) or affective image (“xing”).**¹⁴ This means that allegory could exist not only at an interpretive level (text → interpretation) but also at the creative level (author → text). This, in a sense, can also serve as a kind of footnote to 1 John 4:19: “We love because he first loved us.”

Interpretation of the Book of Songs

The *Book of Songs* (*Shijing*), also known as the *Classic of Poetry*, is one of the earliest classic books in Chinese literature. The ancient commentaries on the *Book of Songs* are the Mao Poetry (*Mao shi*), the Lu Poetry (*Lu shi*), the Qi Poetry (*Qi shi*), and the Han Poetry (*Han shi*), all compiled in the Han Dynasty. The Mao Poetry was annotated and passed down by Mao Heng of Lu, and the others, collectively known as Three Schools' Poetry, were passed down by Shen Pei of Lu, Yuan Gu of Qi, and Han Ying of Yan respectively.

Both the Mao Poetry and the Three Schools' Poetry were completed during the Han Dynasty. In comparison with contemporary readers, Han scholars enjoyed the advantage of being closer to the language, history, and texts of the original *Book of Songs*. However, it is still important to consider the following issues: first, if the claimed meaning cannot be discerned from the explanation of words and the context of the passage, then there is no "internal evidence"; second, if the events mentioned in the poetry have no historical evidence or, even if they have, cannot be related to the text itself, then there is no "external evidence." Those interpretations lacking both internal and external evidence can be considered speculations of both Mao and the Three Schools' commentators, and such speculations of the Han Confucians hold no more value than modern conjecture. The following analysis, which focuses on the first love poem "Fishhawks" from the *Book of Songs*, also confronts the interpretive dilemma between natural and allegorical readings.

"Fishhawks": Allegorical or Natural Reading?

The fishhawks sing *guan guan*
on sandbars of the stream.
Gentle maiden, pure and fair,
fit pair for a prince.

Watercress grows here and there,
right and left we gather it.
Gentle maiden, pure and fair,
wanted waking and sleep.

Wanting, sought her, had her not,
waking, sleeping, thought of her,
on and on he thought of her,
he tossed from one side to another.

Watercress grows here and there,
right and left we pull it.
Gentle maiden, pure and fair,
with harps we bring her company.

Watercress grows here and there,
right and left we pick it out.
Gentle maiden, pure and fair,
with bells and drums do her delight.⁵

From the words, it is clear that this is a poem about unrequited love. Modern commentators Cheng Junying and Jiang Jianyuan in their *Annotation and Analysis of Shijing*

(*Shijing Zhuxi*) describe its theme as the imagination of a nobleman experiencing unrequited love. But how can it be considered proper to place such a poem of unrequited love at the beginning of the *Book of Songs*? For the Han Confucians Mao and the commentators from the Three Schools, it was intolerable—how could the former emperors "use this to smooth out the ways of husband and wife, cultivate filial piety and respect, enhance human morality, improve indoctrination and change (undesirable) customs" (*Mao Preface*)? If it is unacceptable to say it is "naturally" a love poem, an "allegorical" interpretation must be adopted. But then what could the allegory be? All three schools described "Fishhawks" as a "satirical poem," while Mao described it as a "praise poem." In *A Compilation of Three Schools of Commentaries on Shijing* (*Shi Sanjia Yi Jishu*), written by Wang Xianqian of the Qing Dynasty, Mao's interpretation was even criticized as "hiding the satire and highlighting the praise."

Let's talk about "praise" first. It means praising "the virtuous attainment of the Queen Consort." Thus, the "gentle maiden" in the poem refers to the Queen Consort. But what are we going to say about the feelings of admiration that cannot be erased from the text? According to Mao Poetry, the Queen Consort longs for a virtuous woman. If we read it this way, then "gentle maiden" could also refer to the person the Queen Consort pines for, the person with whom the Queen Consort cannot wait to serve her husband. Such a Queen Consort truly deserves the description "gentle maiden"!

Then comes "satire." Who is being satirized? Who is doing the satirizing? This interpretation mainly comes from the Lu Poetry of the Three Schools, suggesting that King Kang of the Zhou Dynasty was criticized by many for waking up late one day. Some say the criticism came from the consorts; others say the consorts disliked King Kang's late rising, and those staying around seized the opportunity to criticize; still others suggest that King Kang's late rising was due to his indulgence in the Queen Consort, making other consorts, officials, and people all potential critics. If this is truly the subject of the poem's satire, then what kind of language should we expect to see in the text? According to the style of Bai Juyi's "Song of Lasting Pain," it might be said, "The nights of spring seem all too short, our king avoids daybreak court." One may argue that the *Book of Songs* predates Bai Juyi's work and that criticism would not

be so direct, making it as roundabout as the text itself to the point where no one can discern the critique. At that point, it becomes unconvincing because there are far too many examples in the three hundred poems of the *Book of Songs* with even more direct criticisms.

Both allegorical interpretations mentioned above might not be valid. The discussion focusing on “praise” is far removed from the text and cannot conform to internal evidence. As for the discussion focusing on “satire,” it cannot even be called an allegorical interpretation but rather a search for hidden meanings. What is more, the Lu Poetry’s suggestion that the text indirectly refers to King Kang’s late rising simply cannot be linked to the text itself, hence lacking external evidence.

However, even if we abandon allegorical interpretations and adopt a natural approach to interpreting the text as a love poem, there are still a number of problems. A notable difficulty is the mention of musical instruments in the poem. It’s one thing for the consort to think of a virtuous woman while playing the zither or harp in her chamber, but bells and drums (“zhong-gu”) are only used in religious rituals. Wang Xianqian notes that when the Han Poetry reads this as “gu-zhong,” instead of “zhong-gu,” it poses no problem then; “gu” being a verb, “gu-zhong” means “striking a bell.” Nobles could use instruments like bells and stone chimes in their chambers, not necessarily for rituals. How should we view his argument? From a negative perspective, if “gu” is a verb, “gu-zhong” and “qin-se” (“harps”; literally, zithers and harps) are not parallel structures then; in any case, we cannot say “qin” is also a verb, meaning “to play” or “to drum” the zither; can we? From an affirmative perspective, if “gu-zhong” is established as correct, it could not only resolve the interpretive challenge of “the consort thinking of a virtuous woman,” but also address the problem arising from the interpretation supported by Cheng Junying and Jiang Jianyuan of “a nobleman’s unrequited love”: whether it’s the consort or the nobleman, unrequited love is unrequited love, hardly requiring the grandeur of a ritual, while a young nobleman playing music at home to express his longing is perfectly reasonable.

Conclusion

In interpreting the Song of Songs 8:5-7a, we can embrace both literal and allegorical interpretations without any conflict—the two harmoniously coexist. Allegory can be built upon a literal interpretation (text → interpretation), comparing the text’s depiction of the love between men and women to the love between God and humans/the Kingdom/the Church. Allegory can also be included at the creative level (author → text), as we can reasonably speculate that the author(s) of the love poems, who were very familiar with the love between Yahweh and Israel in the covenant, intentionally used this as a comparison while writing about male-female love.

In interpreting Song of Songs 8:5-7a, we can embrace both literal and allegorical interpretations without any conflict – the two harmoniously coexist.

However, in reading the mentioned commentaries on “Fishhawks,” we cannot accept the allegorical interpretations. Whether analyzing the main idea from the perspective of “praise” or from that of “satire,” neither can be supported by the text. This shows that Mao’s and the Three Schools’ interpretations are just being “read into” (imposed on) the text, far from the standards of internal and external evidence. Thus, the theme of “Fishhawks” can only be the unrequited love of a nobleman that we naturally “read out” from the text. The allegorical “praise” and the search for hidden “satire” are products of Han Confucian ideology.

¹ F. Scott Spencer, *Song of Songs* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2017), 213.

² Tremper Longman III, *Song of Songs*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 211.

³ Robert W. Jenson, *Song of Songs*, Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 7.

⁴ “Fu” (exposition), “bi” (comparison), and “xing” (stirring/ affective image) are the three rhetorical skills mainly used in *Shijing* (the Book of Songs). “Bi” is a simile and “xing” is an image that is supposed to stir emotions.

⁵ Stephen Owen, ed. and trans., *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 30-31.

Academic Affairs News

2023-2024 Spring Opening Convocation

This school year the spring term began on January 11 when the Spiritual Formation Day on the theme "Formation of a Preacher" was held. During the morning, Dr. Ken Lui, Assistant Professor of Preaching and Chaplain, talked about the character of a pastor from the perspective of Rev. Lien-hwa Chow, followed by small group discussions.

Mini-Conferences

Following the seminar on "Women in Music and Ministry" held in November last year and the mini-conferences on "Suicide" and "Christian Education" held in December last year, two mini-conferences were held on January 29 (Monday) and March 4 (Monday) of this year in the grand conference hall on the third floor of the new academic building on our Sai O campus. The first one was entitled "Emerging Adulthood," presented by Mr. Paul Chan, Research Manager of the Hong Kong Campus Crusade for Christ. The second one was entitled "Traditional vs. Modern: A False Proposition for Church Singing," presented by Mr. Sanson Lau, Director of our Edna Wong Christian Worship and Arts Education Centre.

Theological Symposium

The Theological Symposium on "Barth's Theology in the Speculative Tradition" was held on February 5 (Monday) in the grand conference hall on the third floor of the new academic building. Two scholars presented their research results: "Reception of Kant in Modern Protestant Theology: As Illustrated in Karl Barth's Speculative Theology" by Dr. Shaokai Tseng, Research Professor, School of Philosophy, Zhejiang University, and "The Tension between Individuality and Community: An Evaluation of Moltmann's Criticism of Barth's Doctrine of the Trinity" by Dr. Xutong Qu, Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, School of Humanities, Tsinghua University. The symposium was attended by about 140 participants including faculty and students from our seminary and other seminaries either onsite or online.

Experiencing Seminary Life Day Camp

The "Experiencing Seminary Life Day Camp" on the theme "Run to Your Calling" was held from February 28 to 29. Activities included an introduction to our seminary's programs, sit-in-class lessons, talks with professors and current seminary students, testimonies of God's calling, a workshop, etc. Throughout the day camp, participants experienced the community lifestyle of seminary students and gained an in-depth understanding of God's call and full-time ministry.

From the Chaplain

The "Five Positions" Developmental Stage Theory

Mr. Benny Chin (1944-2010) was a former executive director of the Fellowship of Evangelical Students (Hong Kong) and Ambassadors For Christ in Canada. We are accustomed to calling him Uncle Benny. During my school years, I attended a summer camp organized by a campus fellowship, where he was one of the speakers. After his sharing session, he stayed behind to talk with us, a group of male campers, until late into the night. That was when I first got to know him.

Rev. Brain Lam
Chaplain

Years later, while I was serving at the City One Baptist Church, I had another opportunity to learn from him how to serve at a Christian organization. In a casual conversation, he mentioned his "five positions" developmental stage theory. The five positions (*wuwei*) refer to "yielding a position" (*rangwei*), "moving to another position" (*zouwei*), "finding a position" (*dingwei*), "ascending to a position" (*shangwei*), and "stepping down from a position" (*tuiwei*). Here is my understanding:

"Yielding a position" means not competing with others for any position. The secular mindset tells us that

prestigious and profitable positions are scarce, so we must compete to get them; but in reality, many realms of the world remain unexplored, so we don't need to rush to compete for the currently available positions. About twenty years ago, some business management scholars proposed the "Blue Ocean Strategy" in response to the "Red Ocean Strategy." The "Red Ocean Strategy" involves cutthroat competition in existing markets, fighting tooth and nail. The "Blue Ocean Strategy," however, recognizes that market space is never constant and advocates for the proactive creation of new market spaces untainted by competition, which may yield a profit.

Choosing to yield a position also depends on one's mindset. Theologian and ethicist Samuel Wells and educationalist Parker Palmer both mentioned that there are two basic mindsets: a scarcity mindset and, in contrast, an abundance mindset. The latter is based on our belief in God's abundant provision and preparation, which allows us to generously yield our place to others without much calculation and haggling.

After "yielding a position" comes "moving to another position," which means actively exploring new spaces and trying different possibilities. An abundance mindset gives us spiritual imagination, not confined by the current situation, hence enabling us to see the opportunities and positions God has prepared for us, allowing us to navigate through them.

During the navigating and exploring processes, we discover who we are, what gifts we have, and also our own limitations, gradually finding our positions ("finding a position").

Having found a suitable position for ourselves, we can unleash our potential or even excel ("ascending to a position"), although it may not be a prestigious and profitable position recognized or valued by the general public or the market. There is a Chinese saying, "Every trade has its master," meaning that even in trades or jobs that are looked down upon by others, there are people who excel. Of course, some oppressive structures exist in society, making it not necessarily easy to "find a position" or "ascend to a position."

Uncle Benny cautioned us to "step down from a position" in a timely way, rather than clinging to one, because on the one hand, we will age and deteriorate, and on the other, we need to make space for the next generation. From my experience, I realized that after "stepping down from a position," there is a high likelihood of another cycle of the "five positions" developmental stages beginning in a new context.

As I approach retirement from HKBTS, the "five positions" developmental stages theory just came to mind. I cherish you in my memory, Uncle Benny.

Lay Theological Education Department

Carter Pang
Director

Spiritual Formation Gatherings beyond the Classroom

As our department primarily offers part-time programs and most students have full-time jobs, opportunities for them to get to know each other and exchange ideas outside the classes may be limited. However, we believe that within this family in our department, in addition to striving in their studies individually, students should also build spiritual companionship and support other students because this is also a valuable lesson in life formation.

Therefore, most of our programs require students to participate in a certain number of spiritual formation gatherings before graduation. In short, these gatherings are fellowship-based activities that include worship, thematic

sharing, interactive prayer, mutual exchange, and insight sharing, through which students of the same program can build companionship and expand their learning perspectives and networks within the community of believers.

On the evening of February 6 (Tuesday), we held the spiritual formation gathering for this spring semester. More than seventy students from five different programs at our department gathered at our Lay Theological Education Centre located at Shantung Street, Mong Kok. We began by listening to a message shared by Rev. Sik-cheung Lam, an alumnus of our seminary and pastor-in-charge at Christ's Evangelical Centre (Church of Love), on the theme "Before the Day We Say Goodbye" Afterward, the students shared and prayed for one another in class-based groups.

In the first half of the gathering, the students listened

attentively. Then, in the second half, they openly shared and laughed heartily, forming a stark contrast; this deeply impressed upon me the value of having companions on the learning journey. Sitting among them, I laughed and prayed with them, praying for their learning and giving thanks for everything they experienced in this home at HKBTS.

Upcoming Programs and Activities

April marks the beginning of a busy period for our staff as we prepare for next year's enrolment. We are excited to announce three new programs for the next academic year. Following this year's launch of the (non-degree) program "Certificate in Life and Death Education from a Christian Perspective," next year we will introduce Postgraduate Certificate Programs in Life and Death Education for believers interested in in-depth study of life and death issues. To provide more information about the above programs and deepen believers' understanding of Christian life and death education, thereby sparking learning motivation, we held the Christian Life and Death Education Symposium entitled "Before the Day We Say Goodbye ..." at the Ngau Tau Kok Baptist Church on May 5 (Sunday).

Additionally, feedback from students enrolled in our programs and inquiries from believers in recent years reveal a growing concern for and interest in topics related to devotions, art, and worship. To meet these needs, next academic year we will launch the master-level Postgraduate Certificate Program in Worship and the Arts and the non-degree "Christian Arts and Spirituality Practices Certificate" program. Information about these two programs was introduced during the Spiritual Revival Concert on April 14 (Sunday). At the Lay Theological Education Experiential Day on August 17 (Saturday), promotional booths will also be set up for inquiries. All are cordially invited to attend the occasion. For inquiries, please contact our staff at 2711 2552.



Spiritual Formation Gatherings

Distance Education Program

Maximizing Resources for Flexible Learning

This year's spring term diploma programs commenced on March 1, with tutorials for all subjects completed within three weeks of the start of the term. Currently, our non-degree programs are supported by twenty-eight tutors. We are grateful for their selfless dedication and willingness to devote their valuable time to teaching students and recording videos for their tutorials. Pre-recorded videos have solved the problem for some students who are unable to attend tutorials due to time zone differences. We also added Chinese subtitles to the videos to support non-Cantonese speakers and help them better understand the course content.

The "Bachelor of Arts/Higher Diploma/Diploma in Christian Studies" degree programs launched this season include the courses "Old Testament Survey" taught by Prof. Fook-kong Wong, "New Testament Survey" taught by Dr.

Kai-hsuan Chang, and "Church History I" taught by Prof. Nathan Ng. Students have expressed that the content of these programs is rich and highly beneficial. All program content is pre-recorded, allowing students to learn anytime, anywhere, and adjust their pace according to their own schedules. This is particularly suitable for overseas Chinese who need to work or take care of their families on weekdays. Each course within the programs is supported by teaching assistants to provide appropriate help to students, ensuring they receive sufficient guidance and achieve effective learning outcomes. In addition, students have access to a wealth of learning resources, including online lectures, online discussion forums, and an online library. These resources help students delve deeper into their studies and interact with teaching assistants and other students. Degree programs can also lead to the seminary's master's programs. We are currently enrolling students

Charis Chan

Associate Director

and welcome inquiries and applications from brothers and sisters.

We thank the Lord for leading Mr. Tin-chi Tse and Ms. Hoi-mei Kong to join our team. Mr. Tse is responsible for teaching the course “Ecclesiastes” in diploma programs and courses in “Certificate in Biblical Studies”; Ms. Kong serves as the teaching assistant for the “Bachelor of Arts in Christian Studies” degree program and the “Higher Diploma/Diploma in Christian Studies” degree programs, primarily responsible for the course “Church History I.” May

the Lord bless their teaching, enriching both their teaching experience and their students' learning experience.

We sincerely invite you to pray for us, especially for the production of course videos for various programs, including course planning, filming, editing, subtitle proofreading, and website creation. All these tasks require significant time, staff, and effort. We pray that the Lord will smooth our path and establish the work of our hands so that more people will be blessed through our efforts.

Student Union

Ka-him Lee
Chairperson

Learning to “Listen” in the New Academic Year

The Executive Committee of the Student Union (SU) for 2024 officially took office in January. This year's SU members come from different groups, including students from undergraduate and master's degree programs. Even our teacher advisors are to a large extent different from last year. Our committee members include Ka-him Lee (Chairperson), Wing-ki Wong (Vice-chairperson), Lam Cheung (Head of the Secretary Department and Treasurer), Ka-wing Lee (Head of the Spiritual Devotion Department), Choi-ling Chan (Head of the Mission Department), and Shing-kam Ng (Head of the Daily Living Department). Our teacher advisors include Dr. Bernard Leung (Student Union), Ms. Michelle Chan (Student Union and Mission), Dr. Chi-yeung Lam (Secretary Department), Rev. Brian Lam (Spiritual Devotion), Rev. Ken Lui (Spiritual Devotion), Ms. Grace Chan (Spiritual Devotion), and Dr. Kit-ying Law (Daily Living).

When the SU members were contemplating the annual theme and direction together, the word “listen” resounded in our hearts. We are often taught to learn to listen under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to both our own and our community's voices, which is especially important for building a disciple community. Yet, to practice this teaching in our busy academic life, we recognize the various difficulties and limitations. As seminary students today who will be pastors in the future, not only do we need to be sensitive in listening to what God is saying to us, but we also need to learn to listen to the voices of

the community, that is, what God is saying to us through different people and events within the HKBTS community.

The question is, how do we “listen”? Dictionary searches reveal that the ancient Chinese character for listening (聽), is composed of the “ear” (耳) and the “mouth” (口), indicating that “sound comes out of the mouth and enters the ear.” “Listening” is more than passive listening; we can actively listen and respond. Perhaps, in this community, we “do” and “speak” a lot, but seldom do we “listen.” We must admit that there is little listening among ourselves, and more often, we are focused only on our own thoughts.

In view of this, the SU wishes to act as a bridge within the community, hoping for more breakthroughs in the new academic year. By actively listening to different voices within the community, we aim to bring everyone together as a disciple community that learns and shares together. We hope to listen to the views of more teachers and students and their responses to different matters, shaping a culture of listening and mutual trust within the HKBTS community.

The direction we have set is also the direction in which we hope the HKBTS community will move this year. May we all listen to God's voice with a servant's heart and, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, listen to one another, and become a united community that can discern God's will. We also hope that the various gatherings and activities organized by the SU will allow teachers and students to experience more of the community's support and the work of the Holy Spirit among us. May God guide and lead us to become vessels fit for His use.

Publication News



The seminary's biannual academic journal, *Hill Road* (issue 53) will be published in June with the theme “**Interdisciplinary Integration of Theological Studies.**” There will be six thematic articles: “Some Uses and Abuses of Interdisciplinary Research in Biblical Studies” (Fook-kong Wong), “Biblical Theology, Neurotheology, and

AI/AGI: A Challenge from Interdisciplinary Integration for Biblical and Theological Studies” (Philip Chia), “Apocalyptic

Paul and Insights from Interdisciplinary Studies: Social-Scientific Approaches and Cognitive Linguistic Approaches” (Kai-hsuan Chang), “The Morphological Freedom of Transhumanism: From the Perspective of Human Vulnerability” (Liang Hong), “Transcendence and Self-Transcendence: From Post-Modern Philosophy to Christian-Confucian Dialogue” (Pan-chiu Lai), and “Overcoming Obstacles: A Practical Theological Reflection on Daily Devotion of Congregation Leaders” (Chi-fung Shea). In addition, there will be discussion articles and book reviews.

Hill Road is available at the seminary, its town centres, and Christian bookstores. For inquiries, please call the Publication Office at 2768 5168.

Visitors

- Alumnus Rev. King-tak Ip shared a message on the topic “A Biblical Perspective on Suicide” at the morning chapel service and met with President Cho on December 5, 2023.
- Four accreditors from the Association of Theological Education in South East Asia visited the seminary from January 31 to February 3, 2024 and assessed the academic standards of our existing and new degree programs.
- Dr. Kenneth Tsang, President of Lutheran Theological Seminary, and Dr. Winnie Chan, Acting President of United Wesleyan Graduate Institute, visited the seminary and met with President Cho on February 7, 2024.
- Rev. Jeremy Sin, Executive Director of the Chinese Baptist Fellowship of United States and Canada, shared a message on “Not to Make Full Use of Our Rights” at the morning chapel service on March 14, 2024.

Alumni News

- Alumnus **Rev. Stephen Chi-kan Liu** (class of 1961) rested in peace on December 24, 2023. May the Lord's consolation, grace, and peace be with his family.
- Alumnus **Rev. Raymond Lai-ming Tse** (class of 1963) rested in peace on March 1, 2024. Please pray for his family. May the Lord's peace be with them.
- Alumna **Suet-ling Cheng** (classes of 2001 & 2009) was ordained as a pastor by Living Streams Baptist Church on January 28, 2024.
- Alumnus **Terry Wai-lun Chan** (classes of 2010 & 2017) was ordained as a pastor by Truth Cornerstone Baptist Church on February 25, 2024.
- Alumnus **Chun-ngai Lau** (class of 2011) was ordained as a pastor by Grace Hong Kong Evangelical Church on March 17, 2024.

Lay Theological Education Department

Student Recruitment 2024-25

Admissions Open for October 2024

Master of Arts/Postgraduate Diploma/ Postgraduate Certificate Programs in Christian Studies

- These master-level degree, part-time evening programs enable students to lay a solid foundation in biblical hermeneutics and theology.
- Offers a flexible course selection and students may select courses according to their interests and needs.
- Some credits acquired in these programs can be transferred when being admitted to the Master of Divinity or the Master of Christian Studies degree programs in the seminary's Main Campus Programs.
- Students of Master of Arts in Christian Studies may choose "Biblical Studies" or "Communication" as their major or they may choose not to pursue any specific major. Students may start with the Postgraduate Diploma/Postgraduate Certificate Programs, and the certificate program may be finished in as little as one year.
- Students may attend real-time classes in our classrooms in Mong Kok in person or online.

Postgraduate Certificate Program in Worship and the Arts

- This master-level degree, part-time evening program enables students to deepen their biblical and theological reflection through study and research in such areas as worship, church music and art, and to explore topics such as worship leadership, pastoral care, art, and spatial arrangement.
- Offers a flexible course selection and the program may be finished in as little as one year.

Postgraduate Certificate Program in Life and Death Education from Christian Perspective

- To equip believers who are motivated to explore and further define the meaning of their lives from a Christian perspective with master-level skills and knowledge in reflecting, integrating, researching, and practicing Christian life and death education.
- Offers a flexible course selection and the program may be finished in as little as one year.

Bachelor of Arts/Higher Diploma/Diploma Programs in Christian Studies

- These bachelor-level degree programs provide students with theological training and spiritual nurturing, enabling them to lay a solid foundation of faith and develop a good spiritual life.
- Our real-time classes enable instructors and students to interact in real time. Students may attend classes in our classrooms in Mong Kok in person or online.
- Students of B.A.C.S. may choose their major according to their interests so that they can better utilize their gifts more effectively in churches and the workplace; students of higher diploma or diploma programs are given flexibility in their selection of courses.
- Some credits acquired in these programs can be transferred when being admitted to the master's degree programs in the Lay Theological Education Department or Bachelor of Theology degree programs in the seminary's Main Campus Programs.

Lay Theological Programs (Non-degree)

April-June 2024 (auditing is welcome)

Subject	Lecturer	Subject	Lecturer
Practical Support for Church Administration	Mr. Po-shing Chan, Mr. Chi-man Yu, Deacon Chun-fei Lung, Mr. Kin-man Ng, Ms. Sau-wa Ng, Ms. Alice Wai-yung Lau, Mr. Chi-hong Siu	Family and Parent-Child Education	Ms. Yvonne Cheuk-ting Chu, Rev. Chi-shing Lo, Ms. Elisa Chi-ying Chan, Mr. Kin-man Ng
Recreation and Sports Ministry for Golden Age	Prof. Siu-yin Cheung, Dr. Peggy Hiu-nam Choi, Ms. Yee-har Yu	Selected Readings from the Gospel of Luke	Dr. Tiger Chi-fu Chan,
Understanding the True Face of Grief	Ms. Carina Lee	Overview of Western Church History	Ms. Michelle Chan

All the classes above are conducted in Cantonese.

Inquiries/Registration Tel: 2711 2552 Email: ltedinfo@hkbts.edu.hk Website: www.hkbts.edu.hk/lted

Pastoral Continuing Education Centre

Courses and talks offered from April to June 2024

Course/Talk	Lecturer	Date	Time
Don't Play Tug-of-War with Your Inner Monster: Acceptance and Commitment	Dr. Tony Wong	15/4, 22/4	10:00 am-12:00 pm
Transition: How to Conduct Ourselves and Lead Others in Times of Rapid Changes?	Rev. Brian Lam	29/4	2:00-6:00 pm
Positive Psychology	Dr. Anthony Tong	29/4	10:00 am-12:00 pm
Holy Communion: A Liturgical Perspective on the Transformation of Worship Service *	Dr. Sam Ip	6/5, 13/5	2:30-4:30 pm
Bereavement, Mourning, and Grief	Ms. Carina Lee	13/5	10:00 am-12:00 pm
The Certainty of Failure and Restoration in Deuteronomy's Covenant Language	Dr. Hing-weng Seng	27/5	10:00 am-12:00 pm
Pastoral Care: Becoming a Discerning Caretaker	Dr. Suet-ling Cheng	17/6, 24/6	10:00 am-12:00 pm
Preaching without Notes: Theory and Practice	Dr. Ken Lui	17/6, 24/6	2:30-4:30 pm

* Video conference only

Fee concessions

- (1) *Early Bird Reduction*: those who pay the full fee for the enrolled course a week before the course begins may enjoy a reduction of HK\$20 (for a 2-hour course) or HK\$30 (for a 4-to-6 hour course).
- (2) A 10% discount for graduates from HKBTS degree programs, pastors of member churches of the Baptist Convention of Hong Kong, and current part-time students of HKBTS.
- (3) A 20% discount for valid cardholders of HKBTS Alumni Association members.
- (4) A 50% discount for full-time seminary students from the 16 member seminaries of the Hong Kong Theological Education Association.

Instruction Mode In Person/Video Conferences

Venue 8/F., Christian Centre, 56 Bute Street, Mong Kok, Kowloon

Registration Application forms can be downloaded from the seminary website, or you may enroll online at www.hkbts.edu.hk/pce/apply1.html

Inquiries Tel: 2768 5179

Email: pce@hkbts.edu.hk

One cannot enjoy both the Early Bird Reduction and fee discounts.

Distance Education Program

Exploring Truth • Reflecting upon Faith • Equipping for Ministry

Degree Program	Description	Admission Requirements	Date of Commencement	Registration Deadline
Bachelor of Arts/ Higher Diploma/ Diploma in Christian Studies (Degree Programs)	To provide students with basic practical theological training, equipping them to serve in churches and to witness Christ in society. Some credits earned in these programs can be transferred to master's degree programs at the seminary.	Secondary school graduates with their pastor's recommendations, who have passed our written test and interview.	February, June, and October	Spring trimester: <i>Hong Kong:</i> November 20 <i>Overseas:</i> October 20 Summer trimester: <i>Hong Kong:</i> March 20 <i>Overseas:</i> February 20 Fall trimester: <i>Hong Kong:</i> July 20 <i>Overseas:</i> June 20

These are all online degree programs

Non-degree Program	Description	Admission Requirements	Date of Commencement	Registration Deadline
Higher Diploma in Christian Studies (Non-degree Program)	Providing basic theological training including bible study, theology, and practical studies. It enables students to lay a solid foundation of faith, reshape their lives, and live out their calling.	Diploma (non-degree program) graduates with their pastor's recommendations.	March and September	Spring semester: <i>Hong Kong:</i> February 10 <i>Overseas:</i> January 10 Fall semester: <i>Hong Kong:</i> August 10 <i>Overseas:</i> July 10
Diploma in Christian Studies (Non-degree Program)		Secondary school graduates with their pastor's recommendations.		
Certificate in Biblical Studies	Introductory programs in biblical studies, guiding students to study the Bible systematically.	All are welcome	January, May, and September	Spring trimester: <i>Hong Kong:</i> January 20 <i>Overseas:</i> December 20 Summer trimester: <i>Hong Kong:</i> May 20 <i>Overseas:</i> April 20 Fall trimester: <i>Hong Kong:</i> September 20 <i>Overseas:</i> August 20

Non-degree programs can be taken online or by mail.

Trial online programs: <http://elearning.hkbts.edu.hk>

Inquiries Tel: 2768 5105

Email: deinfo@hkbts.edu.hk

Website: www.hkbts.edu.hk/dist

Edna Wong Christian Worship and Arts Education Centre

Classes offered from April to June 2024

Class	Lecturer	Date/Time
Primary Class Voice III	Mr. Sanson Lau	16/4-14/5 Tue 7:00-8:30 pm (5 lessons)
Intermediate Class Voice III		17/4-29/5 Wed (5 lessons) Class A: 7:00-8:30 pm Class B: 8:30-10:00 pm
Integrated Voice and Musicianship Training II (9)	Mrs. Wong Fung Chi-la	19/4-7/6 Fri 1:30-4:00 pm (8 lessons)
Evening Class: Integrated Voice and Musicianship Training II (9)		15/4-17/6 Mon 7:00-9:30 pm (8 lessons)
Integrated Voice and Musicianship Training III (11)		17/4-19/6 Wed 10:00 am-12:30 pm (8 lessons)
Integrated Voice and Musicianship Training I Follow Up	Ms. Rachel Kwok	Class A: 18/4-23/5 Thur 9:45 am-12:45 pm (6 lessons) Class B: 15/4-20/5 Mon 2:00-5:00 pm (6 lessons)
Know-How on Music Analytics		15/4-13/5 Mon 7:30-9:00 pm (4 lessons)
Basic Conducting III	Mr. Vicky Shin	12/4-24/5 Fri 7:30-9:30 pm (6 lessons)
Narrative Practice on HK Church History	M. Sonic Lam-fung Lee	2-30/5 Thur 7:15-9:15 pm (4 lessons)
Works of God: Introduction to Aesthetics	Dr. Chi-chun Cheung	3-24/5 Fri 7:15-9:15pm (4 lessons)
A Workshop on Hymns Selection for Worship	Dr. Cherry Wong	17/4-8/5 Wed 7:00-8:30 pm (3 lessons)
Introduction to Community Music at Pastoral Practice I	Ms. Kitty Oi-ki Siu	21/5-18/6 Tue 7:30-9:30 pm (4 lessons)
Basic Homiletics in Practice 1*	Dr. Ken Lui	13/5-3/6 Mon 7:15-9:30 pm (4 lessons)
Basic Homiletics in Practice 2*		17/6-5/7 Mon 7:15-9:30 pm (4 lessons)
Theory and Practice of Curating Worship 1*	Ms. Grace Chan	14/6-5/7 Fri 7:15-9:30 pm (4 lessons)
Theory and Practice of Curating Worship 2*		6-27/9 Fri 7:15-9:30 pm (4 lessons)

* A certificate of attendance will be issued upon completing eight sessions (total 18 hours) of the course "Basic Homiletics in Practice 1/2" or eight sessions (total 18 hours) of the course "Theory and Practice of Curating Worship 1/2" with an attendance rate of at least 80% for a course. Students who enroll as registered students in the Lay Theological Training Diploma/Certificate Programs offered by the Lay Theological Education Department will be exempted from taking one elective course with the certificate of attendance.

Inquiries/Registration Tel: 2789 2200 Email: worship-arts@hkbtn.edu.hk Website: www.hkbtn.edu.hk/waec

DONORS REPORT FOR NOVEMBER 2023



Education Fund (Church / Organization)		李新蘭	400.00	Lay Theological Education Program	
九龍城浸信會	31,316.67	杜裴婉儀	1,000.00	杜桂鵬	3,000.00
九龍國際浸信會	10,803.00	洪錦漢	100.00	陳國權	1,000.00
九龍塘浸信會	5,000.00	洪鷹輪	100.00	無名氏	200.00
上環浸信會	10,000.00	殷振強伉儷	1,000.00	無名氏	200.00
大埔浸信會	12,000.00	曹啟明伉儷	800.00	無名氏	150.00
屯門浸信教會	700.00	梁明財伉儷	1,000.00	HK\$	<u>4,550.00</u>
牛池灣竹園潮語浸信會	10,000.00	梁錦松、郭詠文	3,000.00	Distance Education Program	
以馬內利浸信會	5,400.00	許煥英	700.00	鄭鵬程	300.00
阡陌社區浸信會	5,000.00	許鋒威	2,000.00	無名氏	888.00
香港(西區)潮語浸信會	5,000.00	陳偉倫	400.00	無名氏	500.00
香港仔浸信會	6,852.20	曾慶忠	500.00	無名氏	100.00
香港西區浸信會	1,654.60	馮德華、鄧如玉	400.00	HK\$	<u>1,788.00</u>
香港浸信教會	125,000.00	黃念施	200.00	Campus Maintenance and Repairs	
香港堅尼地城浸信教會	1,000.00	黃華娟	200.00	申融融	300.00
恩潮浸信會	20,000.00	黃雅各、林靜華	100.00	楊美玲	300.00
朗福浸信會	200.00	黃雅忠	10,000.00	無名氏	50,000.00
基立浸信會	3,000.00	楊建成	2,500.00	HK\$	<u>50,600.00</u>
深荃浸信會	500.00	葉玉梅	300.00	Campus Extension Project	
置富浸信教會	3,000.00	葉煥章	600.00	申融融	300.00
觀塘浸信會	1,335.00	劉永生、鍾梓萍	300.00	許煥英	300.00
中華錫安傳道會慈雲山錫安堂	1,300.00	蔡慧英	400.00	鄧小寶	1,700.00
東方基督教會美光堂	893.00	龍振飛	100.00	鄧輝祥	500.00
浸信宣道會明道堂	500.00	羅佩珊	100.00	無名氏	8,000.00
基督教宣道會大埔堂	500.00	羅凱慈	2,000.00	無名氏	1,000.00
啟聞基金	500.00	關廣智、鄧慧然	1,000.00	HK\$	<u>11,800.00</u>
HK\$	<u>261,454.47</u>	無名氏	100,000.00	Faculty Support	
Education Fund (Individual Donor)		無名氏	10,000.00	茶果嶺浸信會	2,200.00
Tam Po Kei	10,000.00	無名氏	4,000.00	Lai Ka Yui	10,000.00
方志強	400.00	無名氏	1,000.00	S. K. Tsang	2,000.00
王紹良	1,400.00	無名氏	977.00	錢志和	4,000.00
申融融	400.00	無名氏	800.00	HK\$	<u>18,200.00</u>
朱活平伉儷	600.00	無名氏	800.00	Ming Yee Theological Bursary Fund	
何仲儀	2,000.00	無名氏	500.00	北角浸信會	HK\$
吳炳榮伉儷	8,000.00	無名氏	400.00		<u>556,200.00</u>
吳國傑伉儷	2,000.00	無名氏	200.00		
李國雄伉儷	1,000.00	無名氏	200.00		
		HK\$	<u>174,877.00</u>		

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DONORS REPORT FOR DECEMBER 2023

Education Fund (Church / Organization)	Education Fund (Individual Donor)	Distance Education Program
九龍城潮語浸信會 55,000.00	鄭鵬程 300.00	
九龍國際浸信會 12,874.00	Ho Ka Keung 3,000.00	無名氏 100.00
大埔主恩浸信會 1,750.00	Lim Teck Peng 600.00	HK\$ 400.00
大埔浸信會 12,000.00	Yiu Wai Sze Wells 3,000.00	
屯門浸信教會 700.00	何惠娟 2,000.00	Campus Maintenance and Repairs
牛潮浸信會 2,000.00	吳炳榮伉儷 8,000.00	許煥英 300.00
以馬內利浸信會 5,600.00	李國雄伉儷 1,000.00	楊美玲 300.00
生命頌浸信會 2,000.00	洪錦漢 100.00	HK\$ 600.00
尖沙嘴國語浸信會 10,000.00	洪鷹輪 100.00	
阡陌社區浸信會 5,000.00	殷振強伉儷 1,000.00	Campus Extension Project
何文田浸信會 5,000.00	張健智 100.00	黃華娟 3,000.00
旺角浸信會 4,757.00	曹啟明伉儷 800.00	鄒小寶 1,700.00
香港（西區）潮語浸信會 5,000.00	莫少霞 10,000.00	鄧輝祥 500.00
香港天樂浸信教會 1,000.00	許煥英 700.00	謝任生伉儷 1,500.00
香港仔浸信會 6,595.10	郭鳳瓊 500.00	羅榮志 500.00
香港西區浸信會 2,967.60	陸澤潛伉儷 3,000.00	無名氏 8,000.00
香港浸信教會 125,000.00	曾慶忠 500.00	無名氏 1,000.00
香港堅尼地城浸信教會 1,000.00	黃念施 200.00	無名氏 1,000.00
恩典浸信會 10,000.00	黃雅忠 10,000.00	無名氏 500.00
朗福浸信會 200.00	楊謝金玉 7,000.00	HK\$ 17,700.00
粉嶺浸信會 180,777.85	劉永生、鍾梓萍 300.00	
將軍澳浸信會 500.00	鄧炳光伉儷 3,000.00	Faculty Support
康山浸信會 19,420.00	鍾卓琪、劉秀珍 2,000.00	茶果嶺浸信會 602.00
深水埗浸信會 15,000.00	鄭雄輝伉儷 1,000.00	Chan So Lan & Lau Yuen Hoi 2,000.00
圓洲角浸信會 5,000.00	羅佩珊 100.00	Ling Mei Ping 5,000.00
新希望浸信會 1,500.00	無名氏 10,000.00	無名氏 8,000.00
置富浸信教會 3,000.00	無名氏 4,000.00	HK\$ 15,602.00
銅鑼灣浸信會 7,000.00	無名氏 2,000.00	
觀塘浸信會 1,799.00	無名氏 1,000.00	Bursary Fund
鑽石山浸信會 2,000.00	無名氏 500.00	香港華人基督教聯會 HK\$ 100,000.00
浸信宣道會啟業堂 53,872.00	無名氏 500.00	
基督教宣道會大埔堂 500.00	無名氏 200.00	Spiritual Revival Concert 2024
基督福音堂（主愛堂） 12,500.00	無名氏 200.00	無名氏 HK\$ 5,000.00
啟聞基金 500.00	無名氏 90.00	
迦勒牙科植牙中心 1,000.00	無名氏 80.00	
HK\$ 572,812.55	HK\$ 76,570.00	

DONORS REPORT FOR JANUARY 2024

Education Fund (Church / Organization)		曹啟明伉儷	800.00	Distance Education Program	
九龍城浸信會	280,000.00	梁明財伉儷	500.00	鄭鵬程	300.00
九龍國際浸信會	27,980.00	梁錦松、郭詠文	1,500.00	無名氏	444.00
上水浸信會	15,000.00	許煥英	500.00	無名氏	100.00
上環浸信會	10,000.00	許鋒威	1,000.00	HK\$	<u>844.00</u>
大埔浸信會	12,000.00	陳偉倫	200.00	DE: Special Need Training Program	
屯門浸信教會	700.00	曾慶忠	500.00	無名氏	HK\$ <u>20,000.00</u>
牛池灣竹園潮語浸信會	10,000.00	湯新南	1,400.00	Lay Theological Education Program	
牛頭角浸信會	20,000.00	馮德華、鄧如玉	200.00	岑麗嫻	5,000.00
以馬內利浸信會	5,400.00	黃永康	5,000.00	陳國權	1,000.00
竹園浸信會	8,000.00	黃念施	200.00	蕭桂娥	1,000.00
阡陌社區浸信會	5,000.00	黃華娟	100.00	無名氏	3,680.00
香港（西區）潮語浸信會	5,000.00	黃雅忠	10,000.00	無名氏	10.00
香港仔浸信會	6,521.10	葉煥章	300.00	HK\$	<u>10,690.00</u>
香港西區浸信會	3,966.00	趙惠月	300.00	Campus Maintenance and Repairs	
香港浸信教會	125,000.00	劉永生、鍾梓萍	300.00	許煥英	200.00
將軍澳浸信會	500.00	蔡慧英	200.00	楊美玲	300.00
彩坪浸信會	50,000.00	鄧志昆	2,000.00	HK\$	<u>500.00</u>
深荃浸信會	500.00	盧倩顏女士	1,500.00	Campus Extension Project	
第一城浸信會	8,000.00	鍾曼儀	10,000.00	Ng Chung Wai	1,000.00
富亨浸信會	2,053.00	羅佩珊	100.00	余小玲	1,000.00
愛群道浸信會	17,500.00	羅凱慈	2,000.00	黃永康	5,000.00
銅鑼灣浸信會	7,000.00	關廣智、鄧慧然	500.00	黃家鏘伉儷	500.00
廣源村禧年浸信會	15,000.00	海外信徒	1,000.00	鄒小寶	1,700.00
錫安浸信會	16,784.39	無名氏	50,000.00	鄧輝祥	500.00
觀塘浸信會	4,837.00	無名氏	10,000.00	無名氏	10,000.00
信望愛福音會北角堂	100.00	無名氏	5,000.00	無名氏	8,000.00
基督教宣道會大埔堂	500.00	無名氏	4,000.00	無名氏	2,700.00
基督教豐盛生命堂	3,900.00	無名氏	1,000.00	無名氏	1,000.00
啟聞基金	500.00	無名氏	1,000.00	無名氏	500.00
SO-IN Education Group Ltd	100,000.00	無名氏	1,000.00	無名氏	500.00
HK\$	<u>761,741.49</u>	無名氏	500.00	無名氏	500.00
Education Fund (Individual Donor)		無名氏	500.00	無名氏	500.00
九龍城浸信會會眾	2,880.00	無名氏	400.00	無名氏	500.00
Ng Chung Wai	1,000.00	無名氏	300.00	HK\$	<u>32,400.00</u>
方志強	200.00	無名氏	200.00	Faculty Support	
王紹良	700.00	無名氏	200.00	茶果嶺浸信會	16,401.00
朱活平伉儷	300.00	無名氏	200.00	歐陽穎鋒伉儷	9,000.00
何仲儀	1,000.00	無名氏	200.00	無名氏	10,000.00
余小玲	1,000.00	無名氏	100.00	HK\$	<u>35,401.00</u>
吳炳榮伉儷	8,000.00	無名氏	100.00	Support “Chinese Preaching Research Project” in Practical Theology	
吳國傑伉儷	1,000.00	無名氏	100.00	銅鑼灣浸信會	2,000.00
李國雄伉儷	1,000.00	HK\$	<u>140,280.00</u>	Hui Na Na Anna	20,000.00
李新蘭	200.00	無名氏	RMB <u>100.00</u>	翁潔萍	20,000.00
周秀珍	300.00	Graduate School Program		主知名	500,000.00
林俊鴻	5,000.00	北角浸信會	HK\$ <u>500,000.00</u>	無名氏	30,000.00
洪錦漢	200.00	Ming Yee Theological Bursary Fund		HK\$	<u>572,000.00</u>
洪鷹輪	200.00	北角浸信會	HK\$ <u>1,000,000.00</u>		
殷振強伉儷	1,000.00				
張啟明伉儷	1,000.00				

Financial Report
General Fund, 1 November 2023 - 31 January 2024

	HK\$
Income	6,680,785.15
Expenditure	(8,825,939.53)
Deficit	<u>(2,145,154.38)</u>

Reply Slip

I will support the Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary by

- ☐ praying for the Seminary's theological education ministry
- ☐ contributing \$ _____ for
- ☐ Educational Fund ☐ Campus Extension ☐ Campus Maintenance and Repairs ☐ Others: _____
- Name: _____ (Rev./Minister/Dr./Mr. & Mrs./Mr/Ms)

Church Affiliation: _____

Address: _____

Contact Phone No.: _____ E-mail: _____

- ☐ I do not wish to receive a hard copy of the Seminary's Newsletter
- ☐ I do not wish to receive any information from the Seminary by email
- ☐ I do not wish my name to appear in the Seminary's Newsletter.
- Your personal data will be used for issuing receipts and the Seminary's communication purposes only.

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- ☐ **Transfer** to our Hang Seng Bank Ltd. (024) Account No.: 787-471721-883
- ☐ **Fast Payment System Identifier** (FPS ID): 166215137
- ☐ **Monthly Autopay** by bank account (Autopay form will be sent to you)
- ☐ **Online Donation** thru our website (via "BOCHK E-Donation Platform")
- ☐ **Credit Card:** ☐ VISA ☐ Mastercard
- ☐ One-off Donation ☐ Monthly Donation

Cardholder's Name: _____

Signature: _____

Card No.: - - Card Expiry Date: _____ / _____ (MM/YY)

Amount: HK\$ _____

- Please send to the seminary the completed reply slip with crossed cheque by post, or bank deposit slip via email, fax or WhatsApp to 852-8491 4750 (designated for donation only).
- A receipt will be issued and tax-deductible in Hong Kong.
- Please tick the appropriate box ☒
- Inquiries Tel: (852) 2715 9511 Fax: (852) 2761 0868 Email: inquiry@hkbtn.edu.hk
Address: 1 Nin Ming Road, Sai O, Sai Kung North, N.T., Hong Kong Website: <http://www.hkbtn.edu.hk>

Thank you for your support!

Precious Moments



January 11, 2024

Spiritual Formation Day

The first day of the spring semester in the 2023-24 school year was Spiritual Formation Day on the theme “The Formation of a Preacher.” A talk was delivered by Rev. Ken Lui, Assistant Professor of Preaching and Chaplain, in the morning. Then, there were small group discussions led by the teachers.



January 29

Mini-Conference: Emerging Adulthood

Mr. Paul Chan, Research Manager of the Hong Kong Campus Crusade for Christ was invited to our new academic building to share a message on the topic “Emerging Adulthood” with our alumni and pastors from various churches. Mr. Chan explored the characteristics and faith experiences of the “emerging adults” (18-29 years age group) and suggested some practical pastoral advice. He also explained what practical theology is and suggested how frontline ministers can make use of it in their contexts. His talk was rich in content, supplemented by concrete examples and practical applications, which broadened the participants’ horizons.



March 4

Mini-Conference: Traditional vs. Modern: A False Proposition for Church Singing

This mini-conference brought together several generations of Hong Kong Christian musicians. Mr. Sanson Lau, Director of our Edna Wong Christian Worship and Arts Education Centre, shared a message on the topic "Traditional vs. Modern: A False Proposition for Church Singing." From the perspective of cultural manipulation, he explored how church singing can be led and disoriented by the discourses of "the others." He proposed to use an interdisciplinary approach to hymnology through post-Dadaism in an attempt to renew the agenda of church singing.



March 25

Bible Conference

The 2024 Bible Conference was held in the grand conference hall of the new academic building on our Sai O campus. Two research papers were presented, namely "Satanology in Paul" by our alumnus Mr. Daniel Lam, Ph.D. candidate of the University of Edinburgh, and "Biblical Basis for the Extreme Unction of the Catholic Church in the Book of James" by Ms. Maggie Chang, Th.M. student of our seminary. They were responded to by Dr. Bernard Leung, Associate Professor of New Testament, and Mr. King-yan Fong, Th.M. student of our seminary, respectively.



Mr. Daniel Lam



Dr. Bernard Leung



Ms. Maggie Chang



Mr. King-yan Fong





香港浸信會神學院
Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary

Student Recruitment for **2024-25**

Bachelor of Theology
Master of Divinity
Master of Divinity (Further Studies)
Master of Christian Studies
Master of Theology
Doctor of Theology

Application Date for Admissions

Hong Kong : January 2-June 7

Overseas : January 2-April 30

Admission Test Date

By individual arrangement
during the seminary's office hours.



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