

Theological & Religious Studies Research Seminar

2pm – 4pm Friday 23rd May 2025
In person: Humanities Building (206), Room 408
Zoom: <https://auckland.zoom.us/j/9570268133>

Indigenous Engagements with Religion

Jenny Te Paa Daniel, An Indigenous Response to Pope Leo XIV

This paper will consider a particular indigenous response to the recent election of Pope Leo XIV. It will set this response in the context of the work begun by Pope Francis with indigenous peoples in Canada and Australia and will interrogate whether or not the official approaches being taken are indeed justice facing or are merely placatory.

Jenny Te Paa Daniel (Te Rarawa) is Professor Emeritus at St Johns College. She is a Distinguished Alumna of the University of Auckland and is widely recognised for her fearless and incisive scholarly critiques of institutional racism, sexism, clericalism and homophobia especially as these are embedded within and protected by the Church.

Naomi Wolfe, Salvation through Assimilation: Abuses of the Bible on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lands

Across Australia, Christian denominations responded to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands and its peoples through a perceived biblical mandate to civilise and to ‘Christianise’, that is, to save Indigenous peoples. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Christian agencies, alongside the state laws and policies, developed programs to segregate and to assimilate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Church missions and agencies sought to bring the ‘Good News’, using biblical texts that promoted ideas of assimilation and abandonment of culture, and reinforced the deficit of Indigeneity. This paper will examine some historical uses of biblical texts within Christian programs in order to examine and consider the impacts of these views and actions had on generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as their ongoing impact on the reception of Indigenous beliefs, motifs and ontologies within Christian churches.

Naomi Wolfe is a trawloolway woman and a lecturer at the Australian Catholic University, Melbourne. Her work focuses on Indigenous cross-cultural training and awareness, as well as indigenous pedagogies and theology.

For more information, contact Mike Mawson, Michael.mawson@auckland.ac.nz