



IRCI Book launch

Join us in celebrating the publication of David Litwa's work: *How the Gospels Became History: Jesus and Mediterranean Myths* (Yale University Press, 2019).

PRESENTERS

Dr Mike Bird with response from Dr David Litwa

LOCATION

Room 460.8.57
The Sir Bernard Callinan Board Room, Level 8,
250 Victoria Parade
Fitzroy, ACU Melbourne

DATE AND TIME

Tuesday, August 13th 2019
4.30pm for 5.00pm, until
6.00pm, (with refreshments).

RSVP REQUESTED

EO.IRCI@acu.edu.au

How the Gospels Became History: Jesus and Mediterranean Myths

Did the early Christians believe their myths? Like most ancient—and modern—people, early Christians made efforts to present their myths in the most believable ways.

In this work, David Litwa explores how and why what later became the four canonical gospels take on a historical cast that remains vitally important for many Christians today. Offering an in-depth comparison with other Greco-Roman stories that have been made to seem like history, Litwa shows how the evangelists responded to the pressures of Greco-Roman literary culture

by using well-known historiographical tropes like the mention of famous rulers and kings, geographical notices, the introduction of eyewitnesses, vivid presentation, alternative reports, and a historical preface highlighting careful research. The evangelists deliberately shaped myths about Jesus into historical discourse to maximize their plausibility for ancient audiences.

Dr Mike Bird is academic dean and lecturer in Theology at Ridley College; his many academic works have made him an internationally known researcher in New Testament and theology.

Dr. David Litwa is a scholar of ancient Mediterranean religions with a focus on early Christianity. Before coming to IRCI David taught courses at the University of Virginia (Religion and Classics), the College of William & Mary (Classics), and at Virginia Tech (Religion and Culture). He is a member of the Steering Committee of the Bible, Myth, and Myth Theory Group at the Society of Biblical Literature. Other publications include *Hermetica II* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), *Desiring Divinity* (Oxford University Press, 2016), and *Refutation of All Heresies: Text, Translation, and Notes* (SBL Press, 2016).



IRCI Book launch

Join us in celebrating the publication of Associate Professor Matthew Crawford's recent works

PRESENTERS

Dr Benjamin Edsall with response from Associate Professor Matthew Crawford

LOCATION

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Matthew R. Crawford, *The Eusebian Canon Tables: Ordering Textual Knowledge in Late Antiquity*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: OUP, 2019)

The Eusebian Canon Tables is an exploration of one of the most successful publishing ventures in antiquity, the edition of the fourfold gospel compiled by Eusebius of Caesarea in the early fourth century, which was accompanied by his innovative paratextual reading aid known as the 'Canon Tables.' This system of marginal notation represents the world's earliest form of numerical cross-referencing for a body of literature and opened up new avenues of interpretation for the fourfold gospel, from the philological to the theological to the visual.

Co-edited with Nicholas J. Zola, *The Gospel of Tatian: Exploring the Nature and Text of the Diatessaron, The Reception of Jesus in the First Three Centuries 3* (London: Routledge, 2019)

In the mid-second century Tatian the Assyrian, who ran a Christian school of philosophy in Rome, combined the four 'canonical' gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John into a single composition, making from these sources a new unified gospel that came to be known as the 'Diatessaron'. Tatian's gospel proved to be extremely popular, especially among Syriac-speaking Christians, and spawned an array of later versions in a variety of languages, including Latin, Arabic, and a host of medieval European vernaculars. *The Gospel of Tatian* is a collection of essays that explores the intent behind Tatian's literary creation and its reception in later centuries, and marks the greatest advance in Diatessaronic studies in the past two and a half decades.

Associate Professor Matthew Crawford is Director of the Program in Biblical and Early Christian Studies in the IRCI. From 2012 to 2015 he held an AHRC-funded postdoc at Durham University on canonical and non-canonical gospel literature, and he currently holds a DECRA from the Australian Research Council in which he is investigating the interaction between paganism and Christianity in late antique Alexandria. He is also the author of *Cyril of Alexandria's Trinitarian Theology of Scripture* (OUP, 2014).

Dr Benjamin Edsall is a Research Fellow at IRCI and previously held an Alexander von Humboldt fellowship at HU Berlin and was a Departmental Lecturer in New Testament at Oxford. He received his BA in Music and Philosophy from the University of Oregon, an MCS in New Testament from Regent College (Vancouver, BC) and an MSt and DPhil from the University of Oxford. He is the author of *The Reception of Paul and Early Christian Initiation: History and Hermeneutics* (CUP, 2019) and *Paul's Witness to Formative Early Christian Instruction* (Mohr Siebeck, 2014).