

**CONFERENCE**

# CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND PEACE BUILDING

**In the Age of AI and Autonomous Weapons Systems**

**Date & Time**

3rd March 2026

09:00 - 17:00

Senate Room

Queen's University Belfast

Organisers

Dr Femi Omotoyinbo | Professor Fiona Magowan



**QUEEN'S  
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BELFAST**

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**Christian Ethics and Peacebuilding in the Age of AI & Autonomous Weapons Systems**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> March 2026**

**Senate Room, Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom**

**CONFERENCE PROGRAMME**

<b>09:00–09:15</b>	<b>Registration</b>		
<b>09:15–09:30</b>	Welcome and Opening Remarks	Professor Louise Mallinder	
<b>09:30–10:45</b>	<b>Panel 1 - AI, Autonomous Weapons, and Warfare</b>		
<b>Chair:</b>	Alannah Travers		
<b>09:30–09:50</b>	Autonomous Weapons Murder and Uncertainty	Christopher Kuennen	
<b>09:50–10:10</b>	A Critical Analysis of AI in Warfare and Human Dignity	Helen Titilola Olojede, Gabriel Udoh & Harsh Kumar	
<b>10:10–10:30</b>	Fighting With Machines: On the Ethics of Weaponized A.I.	Michael Robillard	
<b>10:30–10:45</b>	<b>Panel 1 Q&amp;A</b>		
<b>10:45–11:00</b>	<b>Tea</b>		
<b>11:00–12:00</b>	<b>Keynote Lecture</b>	Artificial Intelligence, Autonomous Weapon Systems and the Future of Air Warfare	Professor Peter Lee
<b>12:00–12:30</b>	<b>Lunch</b>		
<b>12:30–13:45</b>	<b>Panel 2 - Peacebuilding, Human Dignity, and Church Responses</b>		
<b>Chair:</b>	Gabriel Udoh		
<b>12:30–12:50</b>	The Colombian Church is Walking a Path of Human Dignity Amidst The New Modality of War	Alejandro Perez	
<b>12:50–13:10</b>	Prospects for Demilitarization in the Context of the New Modernization of Warfare	Oleksandr Rohovskyi	
<b>13:10–13:30</b>	Paul Ramsey, Autonomous Weapon System (AWS) and the Double-edged Approach to Peacebuilding	Femi Omotoyinbo	
<b>13:30–13:45</b>	<b>Panel 2 Q&amp;A</b>		

<b>13:45–15:00</b>	<b>Panel 3 - Algorithmic Power, Surveillance, and Gendered/Digital Harms</b>		
<b>Chair</b>	Michael Robillard		
<b>13:45–14:05</b>	Weaponizing the Public Space: A Christian Ethical Critique of the Garda Recording Devices Bill and the Criminalization of Recovery	Ciarán Mulryan	
<b>14:05–14:25</b>	The Algorithmic Principality: A Theological Analysis of Social Media Power and the Shape of Christian Witness	Hasset Shimeles Hailu	
<b>14:25–14:45</b>	Digital Violence Against Women and Girls in the Age of AI: Toward a Theological and Ethical Framework for Justice	Ruth Haile Gelane	
<b>14:45–15:00</b>	<b>Panel 3 Q&amp;A</b>		
<b>15:00–15:15</b>	<b>Tea</b>		
<b>15:15–16:45</b>	<b>Panel 4 - Techno-colonialism, Civilian Agency, and Theological Responses</b>		
<b>Chair:</b>	Femi Omotoyinbo		
<b>15:15–15:35</b>	How the Church can shape AI ethics through a Christian anthropology	Graham Nicholls and Jeremy Peckham	
<b>15:35–15:55</b>	‘Witnessing without flinching’ – Techno Colonialism and the reclamation of civilian agency in an age of Algorithmic Warfare	Alannah Travers	
<b>15:55–16:15</b>	The Current Opportunity to Overcome the Perversion of Christianity	Rob Fairmichael	
<b>16:15–16:35</b>	New interpretation of the basic texts suggesting Christian ethics	Antonino Drago	
<b>16:35–16:45</b>	<b>Panel 4 Q&amp;A</b>		
<b>16:45–17:00</b>	<b>Plenary:</b> Synthesizing recommendations & next steps	Facilitator: Dr Femi Omotoyinbo	Draft [6] concrete recommendations for churches, policymakers, and researchers
<b>17:00</b>	<b>Closing &amp; farewells</b>		

## Keynote Speaker



### Professor Peter Lee

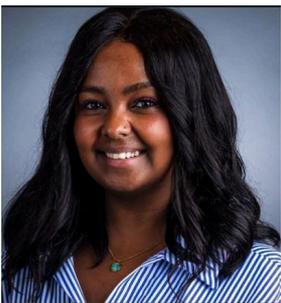
Peter Lee is a Professor of Applied Ethics in the University of Portsmouth Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. His research has spanned the ethical, operational and other human aspects of UK Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (Reaper) operations, the ethics of AI and autonomous systems, and moral injury and mental harms in military and police personnel. Peter commenced a collaborative EPSRC-funded project to create a Trustworthy Autonomous Robotic Drone System to Support Battlefield Casualty Triage, while in 2024 he was part of an ASIS-funded collaborative project entitled, 'Autonomous Vehicles: Opportunities, Threats and Challenges. He taught at RAF College Cranwell from 2008-2017, and am a member of the UK Ministry of Defence Artificial Intelligence and Autonomy Ethics Advisory Panel. He served as a Royal Air Force chaplain from 2001-2008.

# Presenters' Bios

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**Michael Robillard** is a philosopher and ethicist at the Stockdale Center for Ethical Leadership at the United States Naval Academy. He is an Iraq War veteran and former U.S. Army officer whose professional background spans military service, academic research, and public scholarship. His work sits at the intersection of ethical theory and real-world practice, with particular attention to how emerging technologies shape moral responsibility, institutional trust, and the character of professional communities. Michael's academic research has focused on civil–military relations, counterterrorism ethics, veterans' issues, contemporary just war theory, the warrior ethos, and the ethical challenges posed by emerging technologies. His recent work has engaged directly with the ethics of artificial intelligence, including the ethical implications of autonomous weapons systems, informational warfare, and broader questions of technology, power, and trust. He has held prior research positions at the Stockdale Center for Ethical Leadership, the Uehiro Center for Practical Ethics at the University of Oxford, and the Notre Dame Institute for Advanced Studies. In addition to his academic writing, Michael's non-academic work addresses freedom of speech, the moral importance of language, and the responsibilities of institutions in shaping ethical discourse within academia and beyond. He is originally from South Shore Massachusetts.



**Hasset Shimeles Hailu** is a recent graduate in Theology and Peace Studies at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. Her research critically engages liberation theology, feminist and womanist perspectives, and public theology, with a particular focus on peacebuilding and social justice in African and diasporic contexts. As a social media influencer and practitioner, she brings a unique, grounded perspective, informed by firsthand experience navigating the algorithmic systems she analyzes theologically. Originally from Ethiopia, her current writings explore how Christian ethics must address the spiritual and structural dimensions of emerging technologies, arguing that faithful witness requires a prophetic critique of systemic powers—a focus she extends from contexts of physical conflict to the digital sphere. Her work consistently seeks to amplify marginalized voices, especially women survivors, and to articulate how theology can contribute to healing, justice, and the prevention of violence in all its forms.



**Ciarán Mulryan** is a second-year undergraduate student in International Relations at Dublin City University (DCU). As a mature student, Ciarán brings a dedicated focus to widening participation in academia; he works actively with DCU to expand access to higher education for individuals from underprivileged and underrepresented backgrounds. He is also the founder of the student-led podcast, *Dublin City Questions (DCQ)*. His primary research interests are interdisciplinary, covering gender studies, security dynamics in the Sahel region, and the intersection of culture and art. His current work examines the ethics of surveillance and social justice in Ireland.



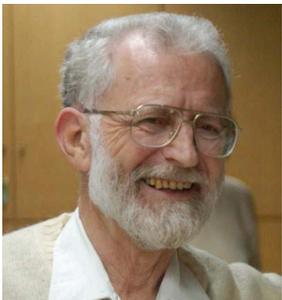
**Alannah Travers** is a PhD researcher at the School of Law, Queen's University Belfast, specialising in algorithmic warfare and civilian harm. Her work explores the intersections of international humanitarian law, TWAIL, and the ethics of emerging technologies. She also has a background in journalism covering post-conflict reconstruction in Iraq and is a recipient of the UNCA Elizabeth Neuffer Memorial Prize.



**Chris Kuennen** is a Ph.D. student in Philosophy at the University of Colorado. His studies focus on virtue ethics, just war theory, and environmental philosophy, and his doctoral dissertation explores contemporary military ethics issues around autonomous weapon systems, human enhancement, and environmental harm from a virtue ethical standpoint. His writing has appeared in *Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence*, *the Journal of Character & Leadership Development*, and *Joint Force Quarterly*. Chris is also an active-duty U.S. Air Force officer.



**Jeremy Peckham** is a technology entrepreneur and author of the book “Masters or Slaves? AI and the Future of Humanity” published by IVP in 2021. He spent much of his career in the field of Artificial Intelligence working at the UK Royal Aircraft Establishment and later Logica (now CMG). He was Project Director of a 5 year pan European research project on Speech Understanding and Dialogue (SUNDIAL) that broke new ground in neuro symbolic AI. Jeremy founded his first company in 1993 through a management buy-out of the AI technology developed at Logica, and launched a successful public offering on the London Stock Exchange in 1996. Over the last 25 years he has invested in and served on the board of a number of high-tech companies. Jeremy is passionate about applying the Bible to the ethics of technology and AI and is currently a Commissioner for the AI, Faith and Civil Society Commission that is engaging with policy makers and other stakeholders around the globe to ensure that core human values are preserved in the development and deployment of AI. Jeremy is a 1st Class Honours graduate in Applied Science and was elected a Fellow of the RSA in 1995.



**Antonino Drago**, MD (Physics, Università di Pisa, 1961), is an emeritus scholar with a long career in theoretical physics, history of science, epistemology and nonviolence studies. From 1964 he taught Automata Theory and Epistemology & Methodology, and from 1973 he served at the Department of Theoretical Physics, University of Naples, where he became Associate Professor of History of Physics in 1987 and retired in 2004.

He also held contract professorships in Nonviolent Defense at Scienze per la Pace, Università di Pisa (2001–2013) and in History & Techniques of Nonviolence at Operazioni di Pace, Università di Firenze (2004–2010). Drago’s interdisciplinary research spans cybernetics, automata theory, logic, biology, epistemology, foundations and history of science, bioethics, social and political sciences, philosophy, theology, and linguistics. He is the author of approximately 500 scientific publications and a dozen books. His most recent monograph, *Dalla Storia della Fisica alla Scoperta dei Fondamenti della Fisica Scienza*, Roma: Aracne, 2017 (Engl. transl.: *From the History of Physics to the Discovery of the Foundations of Science*) available at <https://antoninodrago.com/>.

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**Oleksandr Rohovskyi**, doctor philosophical sciences, professor of department of sociology and politology Kharkiv national pedagogical university (Ukraine). He defended his Ph.D. thesis on the problems of social organization at Moscow State University (1992). He worked as an associate professor at the Department of cultural studies, then as a professor (2014). The interest in the problems of time was reflected in the monograph “Forms of Time in The History of Culture. Philosophical and Anthropological Analysis” (Kharkiv, 2009). His study of problems of relationships between the center and the periphery was reflected in the collective monograph “Modern society: socio-political and socio-cultural dimensions” (2017). O.M. Rohovskyi is also the author of several articles and an individual monograph “Ethics of Freedom. Socioanalysis of freedom and other ethical categories” (Kiev, 2018), which highlights socio-cultural aspects of freedom. Latest articles are devoted to research political forms of ethical evil and inclusive society, the analysis of form democracy for Ukraine. The area of scientific interests: perfecting forms of democracy and problems of demilitarization and peacebuilding. Finally, he is the author of the poetry collection “MetaPoetics. Collection of Poems and Meditations” (2015) and literature creation “Unbetter people: Experience of body transmigration in search to of better life” (2026).



A long time peace activist, **Rob Fairmichael** comes from a Southern Protestant background and has lived in Belfast since 1975. Involved with Dawn nonviolence magazine in the 1970s -1980s, he has been coordinator of INNATE, a nonviolence network in Ireland <https://innatenonviolence.org/> and <https://www.flickr.com/photos/innateireland> since 1987 and editor of its ‘Nonviolent News’ since 1990. In terms of paid employment he worked for the Christian inter-church structures in Ireland for the best part of two decades and for an inter-faith body focused on social issues in Northern Ireland. He is married to Carmel Fairmichael (surname a combination of their original surnames) with adult children and a number of grandchildren. He was involved with developing monitoring as a response to contentious situations in Northern Ireland in the late 1980s – early 1990s. He is still involved with peace activism, journalism and training in conflict and nonviolence. His hobbies include cycling and bog wood carving and - name dropping – he has presented a bog oak carving (on the Aztec symbol for ‘word’, two interlocking spirals, my word and your word) to the Dalai Lama when in Belfast.



**Ruth Haile Gelane** is an Ethiopian scholar-practitioner with a strong foundation in theology and peace studies and working at the grassroots level. She holds a Master of Arts degree in Theology and Peace Studies (MATPS) from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Theology with a concentration in Peace and Conflict Transformation from Meserete Kristos Seminary in Bishoftu, Ethiopia. Her study has been conducted within a broader social and contextual framework, developed a strong foundation in social justice, peacebuilding, communication skills, and living in a diverse community. Ruth has experience working as a social worker at Meserete Kristos Relief and Development in collaboration with Compassion Ethiopia, where she engaged with community needs and peacebuilding initiatives. The project uses a Christ-centered approach that endorses holistic ministry and addresses emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual needs. Currently, she serves at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary as an assistant in the History, Theology, and Ethics Department, a writing coach, a library assistant, and an intern archivist at Mennonite Church USA. Ruth has published two articles: “Living Cloud of Witnesses to Ethiopia”: Anabaptist Witness, Mission and Peace in Ethiopia, in Volume 11, Issue 1 (2024), and “Christlike in Word and Deed”: Anabaptist World (January 7, 2025). Her current research interests include African womanist, Postcolonial studies, the Theology of Reconciliation, and trauma healing for peacebuilding.



**H. Titilola Olojede** is a Lecturer and the Head of the Department of Philosophy at the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). Titilola works at the intersection of Ethics, Gender and African philosophy. She is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Global Value Inquiry in Germany, where her research focuses on recovering African women’s contributions to philosophy. She has served on various committees on AI ethics, both nationally and internationally, and is the recipient of several research and travel grants, as well as awards for excellence.

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**Gabriel Udoh** (PhD) is a Research Fellow at the Robotics and AI Law Society (RAILS), Berlin, and an interdisciplinary legal scholar working at the intersection of artificial intelligence, international law, and socio-technical accountability, with a particular focus on AI-enabled warfare, responsibility gaps, and human dignity.

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**Graham Nicholls** is Director of Affinity, an organisation seeking to promote Christian unity and partnership of about 1,300 churches and Christian organisations throughout the British Isles. He is also one of the Pastors at Christ Church Haywards Heath in West Sussex, UK. Graham is married to Caroline and has three grown up children. Prior to being in full time pastoral ministry, Graham trained as an engineer and worked in the process control and computer industries with various computer technology companies in the UK, Europe and the USA in senior management roles before going into full time Christian work. He has Masters Degree in Theology.



**Femi Omotoyinbo** is a Philosopher with research interest in philosophy of war, applied ethics, political theory, feminism, public international law, and African Philosophy. Femi has made seminal contributions to topical discussions on just war theory, moral responsibility, feminist war perspectives, punishment, reparation, human rights and artificial intelligence in warfare including the presentation “3Ps of Programming Killer Robots” at the 2023 LINAS conference (AI, Ethics and the Human), Queen’s University Belfast. Femi was a Visiting Scholar at Wesley House Cambridge on funded research on *Paul Ramsey and Autonomous Weapon System*. He also has collaborative and interdisciplinary publications including the thought-provoking academic article *Smart soldiers: towards a more ethical warfare*. Femi is the Managing Editor of *Intellectus: The African Journal of Philosophy* and he is a member of the Society of Christian Philosophers, the International Society for Military Ethics in Africa, the British Academy Early Careers Researcher Network, and the British Philosophical Association.

## Conference Abstracts

### \* Panel 1 - AI, Autonomous Weapons, and Warfare \*

#### Autonomous Weapons, Murder, and Uncertainty

Christopher Kuennen

It is never permissible to intentionally kill an innocent person. In war, this amounts to the principle of distinction: militaries should never target civilians. Modern militaries need weapons capable of autonomous target identification, selection, and engagement—i.e., lethal autonomous weapon systems (LAWS). Any feasible LAWS might mistakenly target a civilian. So, it cannot be the case that militaries need LAWS which could never target a civilian. Given these assumptions, militaries committed to the principle of distinction encounter a problem of risk. If a LAWS relies on algorithmic calculation for targeting, what is an acceptable probability that a potential target is not a civilian?

In this paper, I argue that correct military decisions—including targeting decisions under conditions of subjective uncertainty—are determined by the prudent judgment of a virtuous soldier. If a LAWS is making autonomous targeting decisions, then its acceptable level of risk for mistakenly targeting a civilian is whatever level of risk a virtuous soldier would be willing to countenance in actually targeting someone. This standard must be applied in two stages. In the development stage, the goal should be to design a trustworthy LAWS. Pursuing this goal may involve designing for a probabilistic threshold regarding target identity, modeled on the subjective level of certainty a virtuous soldier might have in the same situation. However, executing a model of prudent decision is not the same as actually making a virtuous judgment. Since distinction is ultimately a principle of virtuous judgment, maintaining a commitment to the principle depends on a prudent human decision. In the deployment stage, then, a virtuous and technically competent commander must deliberate and decide to employ a trustworthy LAWS. Only their decision ultimately determines whether the system is adequately designed with respect to the principle of distinction and appropriate to deploy in any particular situation.

#### Fighting With Machines: On the Ethics of Weaponized A.I.

Michael Robillard

The rapid emergence of artificial intelligence within the 21st century has been met with a wide variety of opinions and attitudes ranging from techno-optimists such as Ray Kurzweil and Nick Bostrom to staunch technological pessimists such as Paul Kingsnorth and Wendell Berry, and seemingly with every stripe and shade of perspective in between. Regardless of where one falls on this spectrum of attitudes regarding artificial intelligence, it is fairly safe to say that such concerns are only exacerbated when it comes to the domain war. This paper seeks to explore a particular paradox at the juncture of the ethics of artificial intelligence and the ethics of war; what I will here call ‘The Samurai’s Paradox.’ The Samurai’s Paradox can be stated as follows: **by keeping his sword and refusing to pick up the rifle, the samurai risks his culture being conquered by some foreign adversary. By putting down his sword and picking up the rifle to defend his culture, his very use of this new weapons technology seems to erase the very culture he is trying to defend. Hence, whether he fights or does not fight, he loses his culture nonetheless.** This paradox, endemic to warfare since time immemorial, now seems to be particularly and increasingly pronounced and problematized when we consider new and additional moral considerations such as the dangers of proliferation, runaway A.I., and existential risk. This paper therefore aims to explore and to make more explicit what is really at stake when it comes to this paradox as it specifically applies to the use of artificial intelligence in war. Additionally, this paper seeks to

sketch out several possible Aristo-Thomist/teleologically-informed prescriptions and principles in responding to this paradox in hopes of ensuring that the weapons we fight with don't soon become the weapons we fight against.

### **A Critical Analysis of AI in Warfare and Human Dignity**

Helen Titilola Olojede, PhD; Gabriel Udoh, PhD, Harsh Kumar, PhD

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become incorporated into several spheres of life, including, but not limited to, the economy and labour, healthcare, education, and, of course, warfare. AI's impact on human lives in these sectors is indirect; that is, it does not directly eliminate human life. AI in warfare potentially does this. It raises significant concerns, especially in armed conflicts, where AI can make independent decisions about the value of human life and who lives and who dies. Concerns on the use of Autonomous Weapons Systems (including AI-based weaponry) have been at the forefront of conversations at the United Nations' Committee on Conventional Weapons (Group of Governmental Experts) for a little over a decade, albeit with limited headway, issues such as the need to respect the dignity of the human person and the conundrum of determining responsibility for decisions regarding life and death, given the inherent dignity of human life. Based on this, the questions this paper addresses are: who is responsible when an AI system harms/kills? Is there a limit to 'human in the loop' for lethal decisions? Drawing on qualitative content analysis and the Roman Catholic Church's recent *Antiqua et Nova*, this study argues that extreme care must be taken when AI is used in the conduct of warfare, because life is sacred, whether that of combatants, civilians, or other parties involved. Furthermore, the paper concludes that humans have significant moral and legal responsibilities in the deployment of AI in warfare, particularly with respect to lethal autonomous weapon systems. Therefore, AI in warfare should be human-centric, not only at the point of deployment but throughout its life cycle.

#### **\* Panel 2 - Peacebuilding, Human Dignity, and Church Responses \***

### **The Colombian Church is walking a path of human dignity amidst the new modality of war**

Alejandro Perez Suarez

The Colombian armed conflicts have severely affected Colombia for more than 60 years and have left millions of victims in the country. Although several peace negotiation processes have been carried out with different armed groups operating in the country to sign final peace agreements, such as the most recent and significant 2016 Peace Agreement with the FARC-EP, extensive violence persists, especially in various largely rural areas of the country. The Catholic Church and other civil society organizations have played a leading role in seeking solutions to the conflict, supporting victims, and making ethical appeals for respect for international humanitarian law, human rights, and the civilian population amidst the confrontation. In April 2024, the first attack using a drone by an illegal armed group occurred in the south of the country, and by December 2025, more than 400 attacks using this technology had been reported, resulting in more than 200 injuries and 58 deaths. Those drone attacks are a new element of tactical warfare that is becoming increasingly prevalent in the country, mainly due to the low-cost access to this technology by armed groups, which are using it indiscriminately against the population as part of their efforts to obtain or maintain territorial control. This article proposes lines of future action for the Catholic Church in peacebuilding, particularly in light of the dynamics of drone warfare and its impact on the country's ethical and humanitarian spheres. It utilizes Paffenholz' scheme on the seven functions of civil society in peacebuilding as a basis for developing lines of action for the Church, as a

primary civil society actor in the country, seeking to consolidate peace, support victims of violence, and uphold human dignity.

### **Prospects for Demilitarization in the Context of the New Modernization of Warfare**

Oleksandr Rohovskyi

1. Since dictatorships are more prone to violence and war, they may have an advantage over democracies. Technological superiority in conventional weapons can "grant" victory to any actor, including authoritarian leaders of states and extremist, terrorist movements pursuing their goals.
2. The use of artificial intelligence and robotic systems reduces human involvement, displacing them from the process, similar to displacement in manufacturing, which leads to the possibility of reducing casualties. However, this "humanization" carries the risk of blurring the distinctions between war and peace, as well as between soldiers and ordinary citizens;
3. The use of technologically advanced weapons of selective impact and autonomous systems does not cause catastrophic (demographic or environmental) consequences, making them relatively easy to use, unlike WMD, and will require new universal agreements to maintain peace based on a balance of Power.
4. New technological weapons are significantly more accessible, and require only professional knowledge (especially UAVs and military robots), unlike WMD, which has always been an "elite" weapon of power.
5. War as a technological competition, observed by participants on a computer screen, is increasingly turning into a dangerous Game with possible errors and accidental casualties. This will require adjusting the rules of warfare to increase responsibility. Computer modeling, which predicts the outcome of a real war with a high probability.

It should also be added that establishing a security equilibrium in a modern multipolar world with many "players" is significantly more difficult than in the bipolar world of the Cold War era. The fundamental confrontation between authoritarianism and democracy is complicated by some crisis and backsliding in the latter.

### **Paul Ramsey, Autonomous Weapon System (AWS) and the Double-edged Approach to Peacebuilding**

Femi Omotoyinbo

Paul Ramsey (1913-1988) was indeed notable for his contributions to bioethics, but he was no less a controversial figure among Christian ethicists for his just war theory approach in defending nuclear weapons rather than an envisaged Christian inclination towards pacifism. However, contemporary developments in war have gone beyond nuclear weapons to include the advanced artificial intelligence warfare, especially autonomous weapon systems (AWS) or lethal autonomous weapon systems (LAWS). Unfortunately, the writings of Ramsey on war predate the established development and introduction of AWS into modern warfare. This seems to create a lacuna in the trend of contributions and engagement of modern warfare from the influential perspectives of Paul Ramsey.

Therefore, hinging on a critical evaluation of the works of Ramsey on war, this paper presents the position that Ramsey's perspectives on war would create a double-edged approach in relation to

peacebuilding in the context of AWS. On one side of the approach is just war theory that details the conditions that should characterise the justified use of AWS. On the other side of the approach is contingent pacifism, which accepts the possibility of a justified usage of AWS, but it denies the reality of such possibility due to the inherent nature of AWS that makes it unable to meet the required conditions for a justified usage. The paper further argues that in contrast to existing church/Christian reactions to AWS, the double-edged approach is a more realistic model for church engagement with policy makers and decision makers on AWS.

**\* Panel 3 - Algorithmic Power, Surveillance, and Gendered/Digital Harms \***

**Weaponizing the Public Space: A Christian Ethical Critique of the Garda Recording Devices Bill and the Criminalization of Recovery**

Ciarán Mulryan

In December 2025, Ireland's Minister for Justice championed the Garda Síochána (Recording Devices) (Amendment) Bill as a triumph of bureaucratic efficiency, promising to "free up Garda time" through biometric analysis. However, drawing on Gustavo Gutiérrez's "Preferential Option for the Poor," this paper argues that a policy prioritizing speed over human dignity constitutes "structural sin." We contend that while the state views Facial Recognition Technology (FRT) as a neutral administrative tool, it fails to account for the impact on individuals suffering from Substance Use Disorder, for whom anonymity is often a prerequisite for engaging with support services.

We argue that the deployment of biometric sensors fundamentally fractures the sanctuary of the clinic, transforming a designated safe haven into a site of digital exposure. While harm reduction services operate as vital safe havens (MacNeil & Pauly, 2011), existing literature demonstrates that visible policing explicitly deters engagement with support services (Davis et al., 2005; Michaud et al., 2023). We posit that the deployment of FRT creates a digital barrier even more pervasive than physical patrols, a threat actively compounded by the impending transposition of the EU "Prum II" directive which mandates a national facial database.

To substantiate this, this paper presents findings from a mixed-methods study conducted with service users in the North Dublin region. Through surveys and interviews, we document the lived experience of policing anxiety and the specific deterrence mechanisms introduced by digital surveillance. The data suggests that the threat of algorithmic identification actively drives vulnerable cohorts away from support and into the shadows. We conclude that efficiency must not trump equity; a Christian ethical framework demands surveillance-free zones around health services, affirming that the state's desire to see must not override its duty to care.

**The Algorithmic Principality: A Theological Analysis of Social Media Power and the Shape of Christian Witness**

Hasset Shimeles Hailu

This paper argues that the core algorithms governing major social media platforms function as a sophisticated contemporary "principality and power" (Eph. 6:12)—a created yet fallen systemic force that orders human life, demands allegiance, and exerts a formative, oppressive grip. By shifting beyond pragmatic strategy, it employs a missiological framework informed by Walter Wink's theology of the

powers to offer a critical theological diagnosis of digital culture. Through a three-dimensional analysis, the paper demonstrates how this “Algorithmic Principality” operates: *structurally*, as an engine of surveillance capitalism that commodifies human relationality and institutes organized injustice (Marx, Melba Maggay); *spiritually*, as a generator of algorithmically amplified collective emotions—especially anger and tribalism—that fragment social consciousness (Durkheim, Pankaj Mishra); and *technologically*, as the pinnacle of Weberian disenchantment, enforcing an autonomous, value-neutral rationality (Zeynep Tufekci).

Synthesizing these dimensions, the paper contends that this power creates a fundamental disconnect between the church’s “believed” identity as a reconciled body and its “experienced” reality of division, challenging the integrity of Christian witness. In response, it articulates a tripartite model for faithful engagement that corresponds to the power’s complexity. Witness must begin with prophetic naming and catechesis, unmasking the system’s claims to neutrality and discipling believers in digital discernment. It is sustained through the formation of counter-communities that cultivate embodied, resistant practices—such as digital Sabbaths and communal “examination of the feed”—to deconstruct the algorithm’s formative logic. Finally, it advances through strategic redirection, advocating for structural policy changes and modeling the ethical, tactical use of technology to serve human flourishing and *shalom*. The paper concludes that faithful mission in the digital age requires this multidimensional spiritual engagement, positioning the church as a tangible alternative to the alienation and fragmentation engineered by the algorithmic principality.

### **Digital Violence Against women and girls in the Age of AI: Toward a Theological and Ethical Framework for Justice**

Ruth Haile Gelane

The era of Artificial Intelligence has sparked debates among scholars about its pros and cons for humanity, as well as the opportunities it presents and the dangers it poses. This is also a time when Artificial Intelligence fuels digital violence against women and girls. The digital violence forms include doxing, trolling, deep fakes, grooming, cyberbullying, and their escalation to physical violence and stalking, significantly undermining women's participation in peacebuilding, social development, and community engagement, which affects societal progress and gender equality. Furthermore, digital violence systematically suppresses women's voices, dehumanizes them, and hinders their social and political participation and their contribution to peacebuilding and social cohesion. In addition to this, digital violence affects women's lives, personal identities, and their capacity to contribute to the common good of humanity in various ways. There is a necessity for a prophetic voice that needs theological, ethical, and biblical frameworks to address digital violence against women, embodying human dignity, promoting justice, and fostering resilience among women. Theology, as a tool of liberation and justice, as explored by scholars such as Musa Dube and Gustavo Gutiérrez, offers a theological and ethical framework and perspectives that recognize the divine image in every person (Imago Dei), which deserves dignity and respect. Jesus' teachings on loving God and loving our neighbors are central to Christian Ethics, and this can serve as a foundation to uphold the dignity, equality, and rights of all people, forming a spiritual basis for human rights principles. Jesus' teachings

also provide a moral basis for equality and justice, as well as for advocating for the rights of the oppressed, marginalized, and vulnerable.

This work aims to address the problem of AI fueling digital abuse against women through a different approach. First, by developing theological and ethical frameworks that advocate human dignity and justice. Second, by analyzing how AI algorithms may reinforce gender stereotypes, oppression, bias, and violence against women. Third, by advocating for critical engagement and the improvement of digital systems and AI algorithms to promote liberation and equity. Additionally, challenging social media owners and developers is crucial, as they are often driven by greed and self-interest rather than prioritizing the common good. Involving change agents and actors, such as faith-based organizations, community leaders, policy makers, and civil society, is essential for advocating policies that challenge systemic biases, social injustice, and systemic violence in AI algorithms and digital platforms, as well as community-led resistance, legal reforms, and the ethical use of digital platforms, to promote fairness and protect women's rights.

#### **\* Panel 4 - Techno-colonialism, Civilian Agency, and Theological Responses \***

##### **How the Church can shape AI ethics through a Christian anthropology.**

Graham Nicholls and Jeremy Peckham

The age of AI has ushered in the so-called fourth industrial revolution that, rather like the industrial revolution of the 18th century, humanity is ill prepared for. Yet over time, the church had enormous influence on the shaping of industrial and social policy through the influence of individual businessmen, the church's teaching and the impact of charitable ventures. Many of the challenges of the industrial revolution were moral and ethical concerning the rights of workers and their social conditions. Today, AI is having a profound impact, not only on labour, but also on the ethics of autonomous weapons systems and autonomous decision support systems, including those used for military purposes. Perhaps more than at any time in our history, AI has called into question what it means to be human.

We will show how a Christian anthropology, contrasted with an ontology of AI, provides a powerful lens through which to view the various ethical dilemmas surrounding AI design and deployment. Through this lens, we argue that humans alone have agency and moral autonomy and that artefacts can only have proxy agency because they cannot act volitionally. We argue that this raises significant moral accountability issues in applications such as self-drive vehicles, autonomous weapons and automated decision support systems used in areas such as the military, judiciary and health. We also show how cognitive offloading to AI artefacts affects competence, which will ultimately lead to dehumanisation and to our becoming slaves to the organisations controlling the technology. The paper argues that the Church and Christian organisations can shape AI ethics at an individual and policy level with this biblically grounded perspective, just as it shaped ethics and social norms in the 19th century.

##### **'Witnessing without flinching' – Techno Colonialism and the reclamation of civilian agency in an age of Algorithmic Warfare**

Alannah Travers

While the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into armed conflict is often framed as a technical evolution towards precision and compliance, such implications overlook the denial of agency in

excluding civilians from the architecture of their own protection. As AI-Decision Support Systems (AI-DSS) enter the modern theatre of war, traditional frameworks of Just War theory are being stressed to breaking point. This paper argues that the push for algorithmic warfare constitutes a new phase of Techno Colonialism, where the management of populations is outsourced to opaque, data-driven architectures that reduce complex human beings to statistical variables in a deeply problematic form of de-humanisation, which has been ever thus, but this time by data.

Drawing on recent shifts in Catholic social teaching, specifically Pope Francis's move towards a witnessing stance that affirms the agency of the overlooked, this paper will critique the current legal regulatory obsession with meaningful human control. From a TWAIL (Third World Approaches to International Law) perspective, this technocratic focus acts as an epistemic buffer, insulating perpetrators from the moral reality of violence while silencing the lived experiences and perspectives of the Global South.

The integration of AI-DSS is part of this moral buffer, which is removing the human values of empathy and forgiveness from the decision-making loop entirely. By tracing the impact of these systems, from lethal targeting to the potential involuntary conscription of civilians into global data lakes, such as NATO's Alliance Data Sharing Ecosystem, this paper proposes a faith-focused ethical response rooted in epistemic humility. It concludes that a truly peacebuilding approach must reject the technological excuses for impunity and demand a standard of institutional transparency that restores the survivor as a participant, rather than an object, in the international legal order.

### **The current opportunity to overcome the perversion of Christianity**

Rob Fairmichael

Mohandas Gandhi said that the only people who don't see Jesus and his teachings as nonviolent are Christians. Christianity began in the Middle East but became a bastion of conservative European and Western power structures. While we are at a time of Christian belief becoming very much a minority pursuit in most western countries, there are right-wing demands for the retention of 'Christian' culture when what is meant is 'white conservative' values and a continued perversion of Christianity.

The Irish-American Jesuit Richard McSorley provocatively said that there was more credibility in speaking about a 'Just Adultery' theory than a 'Just War' theory. Walter Wink had a radical interpretation of some of Jesus' teaching. The availability of modern small arms (e.g. Sudan) and weapons of mass destruction, along with autonomous and remote weaponry mean more and more civilians are at risk and in more ways. It is not a question of waiting to see the whites of their eyes before killing but never needing to see the whites of the eyes of those to be wiped out. Killing is now a video game. With the 'Constantinian settlement' deal of churches and power reinforcing each other having collapsed in many societies – the USA and Russia being largely exceptions – there is an opportunity for Christians to reconsider their position not just on violence but on the kind of power they seek to exert, and learn how change can happen nonviolently (cf Chenoweth and Stephan). The German revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg pointed to the early church being communist in consumption if not in production; that early radicalism and nonviolence should be reconsidered.

## **New interpretation of the basic texts suggesting Christian ethics**

Antonino Drago

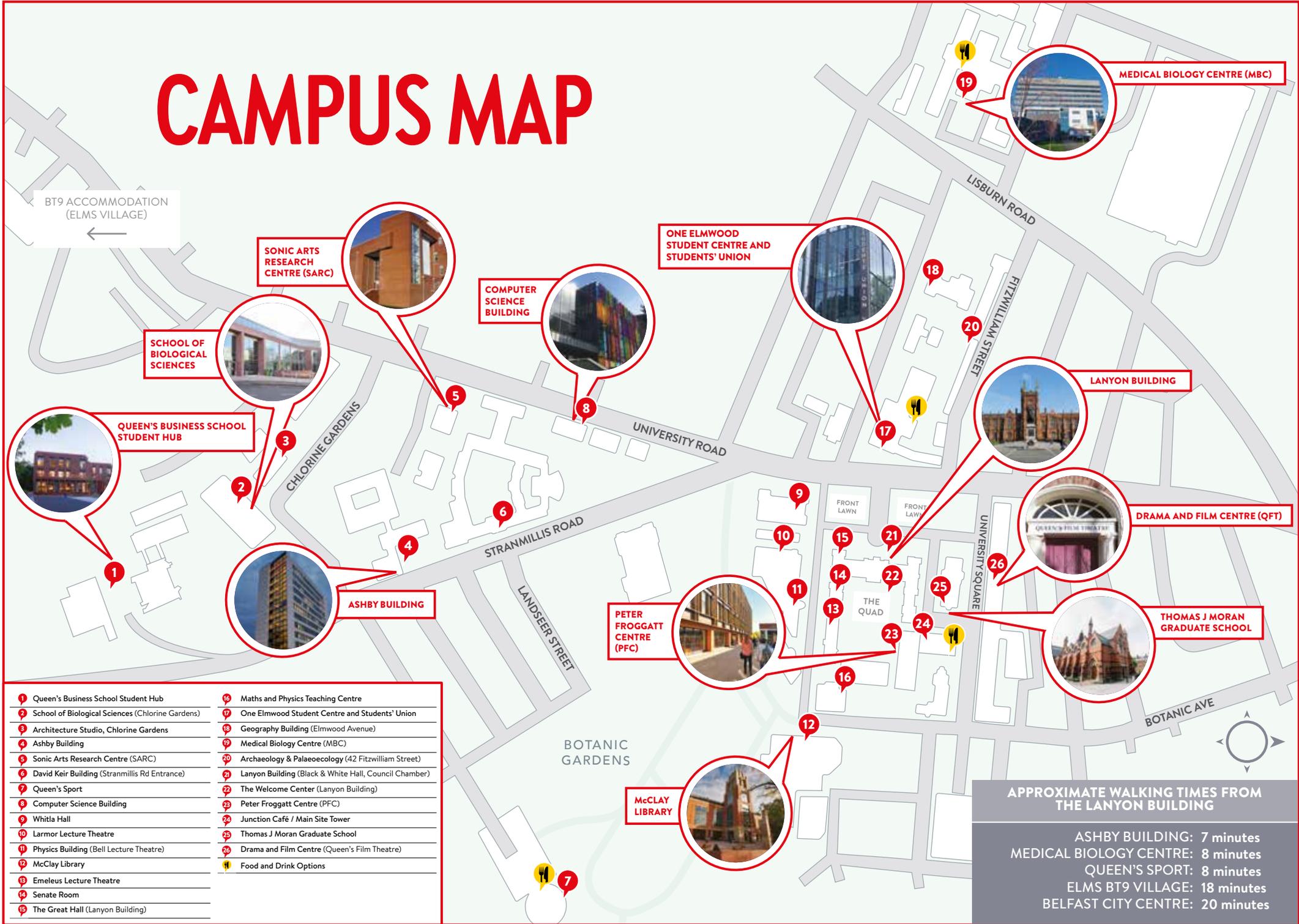
Through intuitionist logic Christ's new commandment is interpreted as a doubly negated proposition. Nonviolence summarizes the second tablet received by Moses, that is, the six social commandments, all with a double negative (e.g., "Thou shalt not kill"). These are not commandments, except for the hardness of the hearts of the Jews of the time; the Bible, however, rightly calls them words of the "Decalogue" (ten words); that is, advice from Him who understands the lives of men and the spiritual dangers they face, the Eternal Father. Precisely because He intended them not as prohibitions but as warnings, for us they are methodological principles on which to base our lives. It took a little Indian, Gandhi, to understand this synthesis, giving it the right word, also a double negative: non-violence. And he taught us to use "non-violence towards enemies." But since in all types of logic three negatives are equivalent to a single negative, let us rediscover what Jesus called the "new commandment" to summarize all the old social commandments: "Love your enemies." And with this, the East reunited with the West, thus instilling a universal ethics. It was the very beginning of a new civilization, no longer Eastern or Western, valid for all men, of all skin colors, of all cultures, of all ethics, and of all religions.

Analogous interpretations are suggested of the Beatitudes. They are intended as the responses to the main social evils (Lanza del Vasto 1959), the four scourges that can plague social life: misery, sedition or/and revolution, war and servitude; the first four Beatitudes are the interior responses and the second four Beatitudes are the external responses (provided that one remedy to the insufficient words of the 6<sup>th</sup> one).

From these interpretations four models of ethics are derived; the Christian one is based on the accumulation of interpersonal relationships of love (instead of an accumulation towards mythical goals) and the organization of communities (instead of building authoritarian societies).

Beyond the scourge of the misery of the unemployment and the scourge of the servitude to computers, AI mainly implies the scourge of sedition of the traditional society; whereas the autonomous weapons represent an extreme empowerment of the scourge of war.

# CAMPUS MAP



BT9 ACCOMMODATION (ELMS VILLAGE)

MEDICAL BIOLOGY CENTRE (MBC)

SONIC ARTS RESEARCH CENTRE (SARC)

ONE ELMWOOD STUDENT CENTRE AND STUDENTS' UNION

COMPUTER SCIENCE BUILDING

SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

LANYON BUILDING

QUEEN'S BUSINESS SCHOOL STUDENT HUB

UNIVERSITY ROAD

DRAMA AND FILM CENTRE (QFT)

ASHBY BUILDING

PETER FROGGATT CENTRE (PFC)

THOMAS J MORAN GRADUATE SCHOOL

1 Queen's Business School Student Hub	16 Maths and Physics Teaching Centre
2 School of Biological Sciences (Chlorine Gardens)	17 One Elmwood Student Centre and Students' Union
3 Architecture Studio, Chlorine Gardens	18 Geography Building (Elmwood Avenue)
4 Ashby Building	19 Medical Biology Centre (MBC)
5 Sonic Arts Research Centre (SARC)	20 Archaeology & Palaeoecology (42 Fitzwilliam Street)
6 David Keir Building (Stranmillis Rd Entrance)	21 Lanyon Building (Black & White Hall, Council Chamber)
7 Queen's Sport	22 The Welcome Center (Lanyon Building)
8 Computer Science Building	23 Peter Froggatt Centre (PFC)
9 Whitla Hall	24 Junction Café / Main Site Tower
10 Larmor Lecture Theatre	25 Thomas J Moran Graduate School
11 Physics Building (Bell Lecture Theatre)	26 Drama and Film Centre (Queen's Film Theatre)
12 McClay Library	🍴 Food and Drink Options
13 Emeleus Lecture Theatre	
14 Senate Room	
15 The Great Hall (Lanyon Building)	

## APPROXIMATE WALKING TIMES FROM THE LANYON BUILDING

- ASHBY BUILDING: 7 minutes
- MEDICAL BIOLOGY CENTRE: 8 minutes
- QUEEN'S SPORT: 8 minutes
- ELMS BT9 VILLAGE: 18 minutes
- BELFAST CITY CENTRE: 20 minutes