

**Aoteaora New Zealand Association for Biblical Studies (ANZABS)**

**2025 Annual Meeting**

DRAFT Schedule and Abstracts



Samuel brought to Eli, by George Tinworth

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Samuel\\_brought\\_to\\_Eli,\\_by\\_George\\_Tinworth.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Samuel_brought_to_Eli,_by_George_Tinworth.jpg)

Hosted by Laidlaw College, Christchurch Campus

1-2 December 2025

Many thanks to Laidlaw College, Christchurch Campus for hosting this year's ANZABS! It's wonderful to see so many diverse papers offered this year. All of abstracts have undergone peer-review for quality assurance purposes.

This year also marks the inaugural **Judith E. McKinaly Memorial Essay Prize**. Judith McKinlay was New Zealand biblical scholar of the Hebrew Scriptures who taught at Knox College and later at the University of Otago. Judith's work operated at the intersection of biblical studies, feminism, and postcolonialism. She authored *Gendering Wisdom the Host: Biblical Invitations to Eat and Drink* (1996), *Reframing Her: Biblical Women in Postcolonial Focus* (2004), and *Troubling Women and Land: Reading Biblical Texts in Aotearoa New Zealand* (2014). The ANZABS Executive Committee is delighted to award this year's prize to **Mofreh Abdelmasih** for his essay, "Exploring Ethnic Identity and Inclusion in the Rule of the Community and the Gospel of John." Congratulations!

More information about the specifics of the conference, such as two links for the Zoom streams, will be provided in due course.

If you have not already done so, please register either via the link or the QR code, <https://laidlaw.typeform.com/28thANZABS>



## Schedule

### Monday, December 1

	STREAM A	STREAM B
8:45	<i>Registration</i>	
9:15	<i>Mihi whakatau</i>	
9:30	<b>Hui-talanoa</b> Chair: Katie Marcar <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deane Galbraith, “The Core of Io / Te Iho o Io: The current impasse in the Māori Supreme God debate and the possibility of a minimal conceptual consensus”</li> <li>• Mercy Ah Siu-Maliko, “A Decolonial Reading of the Rape of Tamar: A Samoan Perspective”</li> </ul>	<b>Session 1: Ancient Material Culture</b> Chair: James Harding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tim Frank, “Social structure, food storage and dating of the books of Samuel”</li> <li>• Julia van den Brink, “Weaving the Tabernacle Curtains”</li> </ul>
10:30	<i>Morning tea</i>	
11:00	<b>Session 2: Sexual Violence in 2 Samuel</b> Chair: Catherine Brownlie <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sarah Hart, “Envisioning Tamar as a voice for Restorative Justice—from Rape-victim to social Empowerer ( 2 Sam 13:1-39)”</li> <li>• David Tombs, “The Ten Women Shut Up by David in 2 Samuel 20:3”</li> </ul>	<b>Session 3: Hebrews</b> Chair: Matt Wright <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Philip Church, “The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Epistle to the Hebrews”</li> <li>• <i>Zoom</i>: Chris Northcott, “Moses Stuart and the Emergence of the ‘Hypothetical Scenario’ Interpretation of Heb 6:4–6”</li> </ul>
12:00	<i>Lunch</i>	
1:30	<i>ANZABS AGM</i>	
2:00	<b>Session 4: Letters of Paul</b> Chair: Jonathan Robinson <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• William Chong, “‘Hostile’ divisions: a delimitation-critical study of τὴν ἕχθραν in Ephesians 2:14 / 15”</li> <li>• Andrew Malone, “Collaborative Authorship of Thessalonians: Evidence/Arguments/Corollaries of Plural Contributors”</li> </ul>	<b>Session 5: Johannine Literature</b> Chair: Paul Trebilco <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mofreh Abdelmasih, “Exploring Ethnic Identity and Inclusion in the Rule of the Community and the Gospel of John”</li> <li>• Kathleen Rushton, “Exploring the Seven Days of Creation in the Gospel according to John and its Implications for an Anticipatory Reading”</li> </ul>
3:00	<i>10 minute break</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chanki Shin, “The Poor and Two Schisms of the Corinthian Assembly (1 Cor 1:11–12; 11:18)”</li> </ul>	<i>10 minute break</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sean Du Toit, “Mimesis in 3 John: The Case of Gaius”</li> </ul>

	STREAM A	STREAM B
3:40	<i>Afternoon tea</i>	
4:00	<p><b>Session 6: Te Paipera Tapu</b> Chair: William Chong</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joshua Black, et. al. “Towards a Diachronic Corpus of Early Paipera Tapu Translations”</li> <li>• Forrest Panther, “On the Sources of the Paipera Tapu”</li> </ul>	<p><b>Session 7: Supernatural Worlds</b> Chair: Sean Du Toit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paul Trebilco, “The Sea, the River and the City: Imagery in the Book of Revelation”</li> <li>• Katie Marcar, “Descents to the Underworld in Anatolian Hierapolis: <i>Katabaseis</i> in the Cult of Magna Mater, Judaism, and early Christianity”</li> </ul>
5:15	<i>Drinks followed by Dinner (optional, local restaurant TBC)</i>	

## Tuesday, December 2

9:00	<p><b>Session 8: Reading Narrative</b> Chair: Mofreh Abdelmasih</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paul Jones, “Reading well, on and off the page: Narratology and leader development”</li> <li>• Andrew Brown, “Evaluating the Impact of Fokkelman's <i>Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel</i> a Generation On”</li> </ul>	<p><b>Session 9: Gospels</b> Chair: Philip Church</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Andrew Duncanson, “How Did Jesus Approach Neutrality? Editorial Harmonisation and the Farrer Hypothesis”</li> <li>• Matt Wright, “God’s Love According to John and the Roman Stoics”</li> </ul>
10:00	<i>Morning tea</i>	
10:30	<p><b>Session 10: Contextual Bible Studies, Grief and Trauma</b> Chair: David Tombs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jess Hall, “Interpretations of Genesis in Purity Guidebooks”</li> <li>• Catherine Brownlie, “Disenfranchised Grief in the Narratives of Hagar: Genesis 16 &amp; 21”</li> </ul> <p><i>10 minute break</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jeremiah Baker, “The Use of Contextual Biblical Studies in Trauma Recovery”</li> </ul>	<p><b>Session 11: Old Testament/Hebrew Scriptures</b> Chair: Kathleen Rushton</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kate Tyler, “People of the Whole Story”</li> <li>• <i>Zoom:</i> Crystal Hong, “A Historical-Canonical Reading of Ezekiel 16 and 23”</li> </ul> <p><i>10 minute break</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• William Chong, et. al., “And Darkness is My Friend:” Contextualising Psalm 88 as Christian Congregational Worship”</li> </ul>

	STREAM A	STREAM B
12:10	<i>Lunch</i>	
1:30	<b>Session 12: Synoptic Gospels</b> Chair: Andrew Duncanson <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peter Collier, “A Proposed Allusion to Exodus 21:32 LXX in Matthew 26:15”</li> <li>• Jonathan Robinson, “The Evacuation of Defilement: The Scholarly Constipation over Mark 7:19, καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα”</li> </ul>	<b>Session 13: Job &amp; Jeremiah</b> Chair: Chanki Shin <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Therese Aitchison, “There is Hope for a Tree: Job 14:7-9 and the Hope for Human Renewal”</li> <li>• James Harding, “Allusive Soundplay in Job 9:17”</li> </ul>
2:30	<i>10 minute break</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kevin Waldie, “When examining the preceding context that Luke has provided for his briefer version of the Lord’s Prayer (Lk 11:1-4) what does Luke’s compositional style and vocabulary reveal?”</li> </ul>	<i>10 minute break</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joshua Axtens, “The Psychogeography of the Covenant Sermon: Urban Dreams and Nightmares in Jeremiah 11:1-13”</li> </ul>
3:10	<i>Afternoon Tea &amp; Departure</i>	

**Mofreh Abdelmasih** (University of Otago/ Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka)

### **Exploring Ethnic Identity and Inclusion in the *Rule of the Community* and the Gospel of John**

Since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, scholars have found in them a valuable resource for understanding the Fourth Gospel. Consequently, increased attention to the Scrolls has given rise to several new directions in Johannine studies. One such direction is the exploration of “the social function of religious practice and identity.” This paper seeks to examine the construction of ethnic identity in the *Rule of the Community* (1QS), focusing on expressions such as “children of Israel” and the concept of “atoning for the land,” among others. It aims to show how this construction of the ethnic identity, as an expression of social identity, illuminates the nature and mission of the *Rule of the Community* concerning outsiders. The paper will then turn to the Gospel of John to investigate the construction of ethnic identity, particularly through the concept of the “children of God,” as well as the themes of land and Jesus as a sacrificial figure in John 11:47–52. Finally, a comparative analysis will be undertaken to examine how both of these texts construct social identity and their respective approaches toward those outside the community.

**Mercy Ah Siu-Maliko**, Centre for Theology & Public Issues, University of Otago

### **A decolonial reading of the Rape of Tamar: A Samoan Perspective**

This paper offers a critical decolonial engagement with the biblical narrative of the Rape of Tamar. It challenges the issues of patriarchal power, gender based-violence and the culture of silence, by reclaiming core Samoan cultural values of *alofa* (love), *fa'aaloalo* (respect), *amiotonu* (justice), *soalaupule* (consensual dialogue), and *tautua* (selfless service) to be embodied in family, community, and church settings. The reality of traditional Samoan culture is the emphasis on family unity and avoiding shame, which may lead to gender-based violence being concealed. A decolonial reading names the existence of the patriarchal power structures that allow the rape of Tamar and breaks the silence surrounding gender-based violence.

**Therese Aitchison**, University of Otago

### **There is Hope for a Tree: Job 14:7-9 and the Hope for Human Renewal**

Is the hope that Job sees for the tree in Job 14:7 also available to human beings? Initially, Job's consideration of the tree does not provide him with any hope or understanding of his own situation (14:10-12). In this paper I argue that as Job, in a death-like state, grapples with trying to understand and make sense of what has happened to him, he comes to a receptive state, so that, like a tree which stretches out its roots to the water, when God finally answers him from the whirlwind he is able to be renewed by the ‘water’ provided both by the storm and by God's words. He ‘repents,’ changing his mind so that he now has a wider, more inclusive view of God, himself and the world. Like the tree, he has moved from death to life.

**Joshua Axtens** (Charles Sturt University)

### **The Psychogeography of the Covenant Sermon: Urban Dreams and Nightmares in Jeremiah 11:1-13**

This interdisciplinary study places cultural trauma theory in conversation with literary spatial theory and psychogeography to explore Jeremiah's Covenant Sermon (11:1-13) as a landscape of cultural trauma. Psychogeography seeks to analyse the affective dimensions of urban life; thus, given the centrality of the urban world of Jerusalem in Jeremiah's landscape, prophecy itself may be understood as a psychogeographical practice that pierces the illusions of city life to lay bare the secret passions, desires, and anxieties that make up urban experience. Applied to Jeremiah's Covenant Sermon, a psychogeographical perspective illuminates the text's mapping of a distinctive Judahite identity between the utopian dream of 'a land oozing milk and honey' and the dystopian nightmare of covenant infidelity. Charting a politics of fear in literary space, the Sermon thus contributes to the consolidation of the borders of a Judahite identity in the aftermath of invasion and exile. This paper is drawn from one chapter of my on-going PhD thesis on landscapes of cultural trauma in selected prose texts from the book of Jeremiah.

**Jeremy Baker**, University of Aberdeen, UK

### **The Use of Contextual Biblical Studies in Trauma Recovery**

This paper explores the role of Contextual Biblical Studies (CBS) in psychological trauma recovery, focusing on the emotional content of biblical narratives as these resonate with the lived experience of trauma survivors. Its primary focus is on interpersonal trauma resulting from childhood sexual abuse and neglect. The plight of this group came to light in the wake of the *Christchurch earthquakes of 2010-2011*. It became the subject of a practical theological doctoral inquiry through the University of Aberdeen (submitted August 2025). CBS originated in 1980s apartheid South Africa. Like practical theology, it engages with contextual, concrete, and local church community issues of interest, and moves them towards theological critique. CBS in trauma recovery is novel and involves numerous additional disciplines in its application, including psychology and sociology. I have labelled this CBS-for-Trauma (CBS-T). I review outcomes for a group of female trauma survivors involved in a 16 session CBS-T programme.

**Joshua Wilson Black, Forrest Panther, Dorian Ghosh**

### **Towards a Diachronic Corpus of Early Paipera Tapu Translations**

Between 1827 and 1868, 38 editions of different portions of the Paipera Tapu (the Māori Bible) were published. How do the texts of these editions differ, how did the understanding of the under biblical text change over time, and what role did mātauranga Māori play in these changes? In this paper, we present work in progress towards a layered digital corpus of these texts to enable exploration of these questions. We first outline the insights which might be expected from such a corpus before turning to our current outputs including digitisation of editions available at the University of Canterbury and an Optical Character Recognition (OCR) algorithm which we have finetuned to work with Paipera Tapu texts. We show that the resulting OCR method outperformed off-the-shelf algorithms.

**Andrew Brown**, Melbourne School of Theology

### **Evaluating the Impact of Fokkelman's *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel* a Generation On**

J. P. Fokkelman's *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel* (1981–1993) arguably represents the high-water mark in close literary readings produced in the narrative art

movement in biblical studies of the later twentieth century, propelled initially by Robert Alter, Meir Sternberg, Michael Fishbane, Fokkelman himself and others. No other entry in this scholarly movement was as extensive as this work on Samuel. This paper covers an inquiry into (1) signs that scholarship on Samuel took the trouble to read and digest the work, (2) whether it made a significant impact on subsequent Samuel scholarship and (3) whether that impact and that literary emphasis in the study of the books of Samuel continue to the present day.

**Catherine Brownlie**, University of Otago

### **Disenfranchised Grief in the Narratives of Hagar: Genesis 16 & 21**

Societally we understand grief. We recognise it, and accept it in a wide variety of situations. The universality of grief as a human experience can also be seen in the various renditions of grief in the Hebrew Bible that we can read, understand, and empathise with. My own experiences of grief have led me to ask the question: how can we respond to grief that is unseen or untold? Grief that is Disenfranchised. I will explore the idea of Disenfranchised Grief in Genesis 16 and 21, focusing not always on what is said, but what is not said and how readers of these texts might engage in a different way so as to reflect on their own stories of grief and trauma. In particular I will explore the complex circumstances and silence around the grief of Hagar which is obscured by the covenantal promise of descendants, and the complexities of Sarah's barrenness and her own grief.

**William Chong**, University of Otago

### **“Hostile” divisions: a delimitation-critical study of τὴν ἐχθρὰν in Ephesians 2:14 / 15**

When Paul declared Christ to be our peace in Eph 2:14, what (or who) was the object of enmity (τὴν ἐχθρὰν)? Has Jesus broken down the hostility of Jew-Gentile division (τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ λύσας...), or has He abolished the hostility of the law (τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν... καταργήσας)? How this sentence has been variously divided in Greek NT MSS, both ancient and modern, impacts our interpretation of the reconciling activity of Christ. This paper explores the earliest spacing and punctuation around τὴν ἐχθρὰν ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ (Eph 2:14–15) as attested in the four earliest Greek witnesses (P46 01 03 02), and surveys the subsequent reception history of this “hostile” phrase as recorded in later MSS and editions. In doing so, we allow the earliest recorded textual divisions to better inform our understanding of the nature of the hostility that Christ's death destroyed, abolished, and put to death.

**William Chong, G. Geoffrey Harper, Kit Barker**

### **“And Darkness is My Friend:” Contextualising Psalm 88 as Christian Congregational Worship**

"Your terrors strike and flood with doubt, and darkness is my friend." When did you last sing words like these in church? Probably never. This essay describes the processes by which the three authors sought to transform and arrange the turbulent lyrics of the notoriously dark Psalm 88 into a contemporary song “You Are the God Who Saves Me” to facilitate lament in sung worship. After problematising the comparatively recent lack of sung lament in Christian congregational worship from church history and speech-act theory perspectives we detail

various exegetical and theological features from the Hebrew text of Psalm 88 that informed the creative process in contextualising it for congregational use. Finally we evaluate the subsequent reception of “Heman’s howls” through a qualitative analysis of Christian responses to an online questionnaire about the song identifying theological and cultural barriers preventing corporate lament from being more acceptable in the contemporary church.

**Philip Church**, Laidlaw College

### **The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Epistle to the Hebrews**

Soon after Dead Sea Scrolls research began in the 1950s, scholars noticed that the writer of Hebrews was dealing with matters that seemed similar to some of what was found in the Scrolls. This includes such things as a preoccupation with angels and angelic worship, the heavenly sanctuary, and the mysterious figure of Melchizedek. At that time, some proposed a close relationship between Hebrews and the community reflected in the Scrolls, and it was even suggested that Hebrews was addressed to former members of that community. As Scrolls’ research has progressed, these initial exaggerated claims have died down, and a more mature approach has prevailed. In this presentation, I consider the treatment of Melchizedek, angels and cosmology, and messianism in the Scrolls and in Hebrews, as well as a few other topics that have occupied the scholarly community in recent years. It is now considered unlikely that there is any relationship between Hebrews and the Scrolls; rather, since both Hebrews and the Scrolls come from a Second Temple Jewish milieu, both reflect features common to that milieu at the time.

**Peter Collier**, Middleton Grange School

### **A Proposed Allusion to Exodus 21:32 LXX in Matthew 26:15**

This presentation will propose an allusion to Exod 21:32 LXX in the Gospel of Matthew (Matt 26:15) where Judas and the chief priests agree upon Jesus’ betrayal price as thirty pieces of silver. It will be argued the allusion is confirmed by satisfying Beetham’s three essential criteria for demonstrating the presence of an allusion. The significance of the allusion will then be suggested. It is widely recognised that Matt 26:15 alludes to Zech 11:12 LXX. The thirty [pieces] of silver referred to in Zechariah 11:12 is often cited as referring to an ANE idiom meaning ‘to treat with contempt.’ However, it will be argued in this presentation that Zechariah 11:12 primarily alludes to Exod 21:32 LXX in referring to the wages of the rejected shepherd as thirty pieces of silver. It will further be argued that Matthew enhances the intertextuality of his source to draw attention to this allusion to Exod 21 in his allusion to Zech 11:12 LXX in Matt 26:15. It will be suggested this allusion provides an example of the irony repeatedly found in Matthew’s passion narrative: Judas and the chief priests valuing Jesus as worth no more than a slave ironically identifies him as the first among them (cf. Matt 20:27). This presentation will therefore highlight the importance of Exod 21 LXX within the narrative of Matthew’s Gospel, and the importance of the Greek Torah in understanding Matthean theology.

**Andrew Duncanson**, University of Otago

### **How Did Jesus Approach Neutrality? Editorial Harmonisation and the Farrer Hypothesis**

Through the Farrer Hypothesis, this paper offers a fresh look at the historical-literary development of the synoptic aphorisms on neutrality. It is argued that the “exclusive” saying

on neutrality (Matt 12:30/Luke 11:23) originated as a direct inversion of Mark's "inclusive" variant (Mark 9:40). Matthew was responsible for modifying and recontextualising the Markan saying, likely in an effort to harmonise it with Mark's otherwise stringent criteria for discipleship. This scenario is shown to be more probable than theories involving Q.

**Sean Du Toit**, Alphacrucis College New Zealand

### **Mimesis in 3 John: The Case of Gaius**

This paper aims to explore the mimetic function of Gaius in 3 John, not as someone who is imitating someone else, but as someone who provides a beneficial example worthy of imitation in contrast to Diotrephes in the letter of 3 Jn. Building on the work of Bennema in his monograph, *Imitation in Early Christianity: Mimesis and Religious-Ethical Formation*, this paper will explore the socio-historical and theological significance of the portrait of Gaius in 3 John. This letter highlights specific characteristics of Gaius that fulfil the vision of what is beneficial, and thus what is from God as noted in 3 Jn 11. We will explore these specific characteristics and how they provide insights into the theological and ethical worldview of 3 Jn.

**Tim Frank**, Vicar of St Paul's Papanui

### **Social structure, food storage and dating of the books of Samuel**

The Books of Samuel have been dated variously from the early days of the monarchy to the Persian Period. Criteria for such a dating have been lexical or literary, assumed historical knowledge or the cultic environment. I suggest that the social reality described in the Books of Samuel points to an earlier date, though later editing also occurred. When investigating household food storage on a the basis of archaeological comparison, I noted distinct differences between food storage practices in the Iron Age I and the Iron Age II, particularly the Iron Age IIB (Frank 2018)\*. The Books of Samuel clearly reflect Iron Age I food storage practices with only incipient moves to more centralised food storage.

\*Frank, Tim. *Household Food Storage in Ancient Israel and Judah*. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2018.

**Deane Galbraith**, University of Otago / Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka

### **The Core of Io / Te Iho o Io: The current impasse in the Māori Supreme God debate and the possibility of a minimal conceptual consensus**

A sometimes-fierce debate has been carried out for more than a century over the Māori supreme god Io. Proponents defend the pre-contact origins of Io, while sceptics attribute Io's conception to Christian influence. We find both proponents and sceptics not only in Māori communities but in the ever-growing scholarship on the issue (by Māori and Pākehā). Furthermore, the Io debate has become central to the wider international debate over the plausibility of Indigenous forms of monotheism. In addition, there are regular proposals made in Aotearoa New Zealand to include the name Io in te reo Māori Bible translation or Christian liturgy, which provoke a similar division of opinion. The present paper attempts to sublimate the current impasse by presenting evidence for a minimal conceptual consensus on Io traditions held by iwi in Aotearoa and the Pacific.

**Jess Hall**, University of Otago

## Interpretations of Genesis in Purity Guidebooks

This paper proposes to examine the interpretive decisions made by purity culture advocates when discussing Genesis 1 and 2. A selection of purity guidebooks written for women will be considered. Purity culture is a system of ideas which promotes the pursuit of sexual purity and is predominantly found within evangelical and conservative circles of Christian thought. This paper will treat purity culture as a hermeneutical lens and consider how authors align with and depart from wider biblical scholarship in their reading of Genesis. A close reading reveals that the Genesis text is leveraged in purity guidebooks to support an agenda of benevolent sexism and gender essentialism, emphasising a view of female personhood that authors argue can be effectively safeguarded by living a pure lifestyle. This reading of the text is worth being attentive to and critical of, as such guidebooks have effectively served as biblical commentaries for a generation of readers.

**James E. Harding**, University of Otago

### Allusive Soundplay in Job 9:17

In his 2016 monograph *Allusive Soundplay in the Hebrew Bible*, Jonathan Kline showed how biblical texts construct theological discourse by using soundplay (paronomasia) to allude to earlier literary traditions. The clearest example in the book of Job is the allusion to Psalm 8 in Job 7:17–21. This paper argues that a similar allusion is present in Job 9:17a. The phrase *'āšer biš'ārâ yāšūphēnî* is translated “For he crushes me for a hair” in the NJPS translation, with a note suggesting “with a storm” as an alternative. The noun *šā'ārâ* recalls the noun *ša'ārâ*, “hair” in Job 4:15, but also anticipates *sā'ārâ*, “whirlwind” in Job 38:1. More to the point, when read aloud the sounds of Job 9:17a recall the expression *bāsūphâ ūbiš'ārâ darkô*, “in storm and whirlwind is His path” in Nahum 1:3. One way to read Job 9:17a, then, is as a text with multiple meanings that alludes both to different parts of the book of Job and to the theophany with which the book of Nahum opens. The fact that this speech of Job elsewhere appears to allude to the doxological passages in Amos strongly suggests that the poet is deliberately evoking the way the Book of the Twelve represents the imminent judgement of Yhwh.

**Sarah Hart**, Te Kupenga (Suva)

### Envisioning Tamar as a voice for Restorative Justice—from Rape-victim to social Empowerer ( 2 Sam 13:1-39)

Tamar, daughter of Maacah and of King David, is raped by her half-brother Amnon. Before being raped, Tamar gives compelling reasons against rape—its illegality and moral reprehensibility. Like all women, she resists rape, but to no avail. Her resistance demonstrates her strength, intelligence, and moral integrity, offering an insight into her character and the extent of her education. The royal household of Judah and its precincts are the wider setting (2 Sam 13:1-39). After the rape, Tamar lives in the house of her full brother Absalom. No more is heard of Tamar directly, however, the biblical text proffers further information about her brother Absalom, her half-brother Amnon, and the wider community. This paper employs an eisegetical approach, reading into gaps in the text, and asks whether the different characters can respond to the terms of restorative justice. Can Amnon take responsibility for his crime of rape? Is he capable of addressing his wrongdoing and repairing the damage? Can Tamar work through the pain and trauma that she suffered? If she can work through such harm her voice has the potential to inspire victims of rape today to work through their pain. Reconciliation and redemption are life giving outcomes in restorative justice but what is

required to attain such an outcome? Chances for restorative justice, or not, from the perspective of the victim, the perpetrator, the family and the wider community are addressed in this paper.

**Crystal Hong**, Melbourne School of Theology

### **A Historical-Canonical Reading of Ezekiel 16 and 23**

The interpretation of Ezekiel 16 and 23 has long challenged biblical scholars. Yahweh, in those chapters, is portrayed as an abusive father and husband who adopted the girls out of sexual desires then accused and abused them for infidelity. The early Rabbis forbid the teaching of the text. Feminist scholars argue that the passage is built on the exploitation of female sexuality. Traditionalist scholars, however, maintain that the metaphor is a literary device to shame its primarily male audience. While all sides insist that the passage is to be read within its historical context, very less research has dug into the historical context. This paper takes the historical-canonical approach to study the chapters. It contends that the text is a pictorial metaphor of the history of the original audience. The metaphor would have been intelligible to the original audience and intended to shame them. This paper will contribute to the current academic debates on Ezekiel.

**Paul Jones**, Carey Baptist College

### **Reading well, on and off the page: Narratology and leader development**

Leader development often relies on didactic (and deductive; general to particulars) methods that reduce rich, nuanced concepts and narratives to principles and propositions. Consider the number of books with titles that begin: '7 habits'; '12 principles'; '5 keys'; '10 steps' and so on. This essay argues that effective leader development requires an inductive approach (life particulars to general principle) that develops interpersonal traits as they have been defined in narrative-critical method, including the subtleties of characterisation ('how we know a person' by their dialogues, actions, responses, etc), gap-filling (e.g. regarding motives), setting (e.g., how context informs and impacts the story), and so on. Real-life leadership challenges require these skills of interpreting people, their contexts, and anticipated outcomes inductively, all of which can be honed by learning to read texts closely.

**Andrew Malone**, Ridley College, Australian University of Theology

### **Collaborative Authorship of Thessalonians: Evidence/Arguments/Corollaries of Plural Contributors**

The Thessalonian letters uniquely name three overt participants in their *superscriptiones*, and the preponderance of plural language throughout these letters is undisputed. Debate thus continues as to how much Silvanus and Timothy are 'coauthors' or merely 'cosenders' alongside Paul. Scholars have explored multiple interpretations of such plural language (e.g. Byrskog, *ZNW* 1996). Commentators typically discourage taking the persistent 'we' language at face value. Even those most committed to the divine authority of Scripture can be reluctant to accept contributions from all three named collaborators. As well as reassessing the evidence and arguments that favour a collaborative composition, this paper considers several corollaries if teamwork proves likely. What probability of more diverse vocabulary and grammar and even of theological emphases? What challenges for benchmarking a uniform 'Pauline' theology? What deficiencies loom if we misclassify such plurals and attribute to 'Paul' words and ideas that belong to more than one solo author?

**Katie Marcar**, University of Otago

### **Descents to the Underworld in Anatolian Hierapolis: *Katabaseis* in the Cult of Magna Mater, Judaism, and early Christianity**

What did ancient residents of Anatolian Hierapolis think of the foul-smelling, vaporous plutonium in their midst? The local Jews, Christians, and worshippers of Magna Mater and other deities would presumably have felt very differently about their local gateway to the underworld. This essay will examine several pieces of evidence from the material culture of Hierapolis in order to gain insight on this question. This presentation will first introduce the plutonium at Hierapolis before examining a local inscription erected in honour of an *archigallos*, a high priest of Cybele. The *galli* of Hierapolis were famous for their ability to descend into the poisonous plutonium and ascend alive and unharmed. In contrast, I will then briefly examine a subterranean Jewish inscription of the Song of Manassas, which may be a Jewish response to the plutonium. I will then conclude with some thoughts on early Christian beliefs about the underworld with attention both to Christ and the Apostle Peter.

**Chris Northcott**, [?]

### **Moses Stuart and the Emergence of the ‘Hypothetical Scenario’ Interpretation of Heb 6:4–6**

This paper presents the emergence of what is known as the “hypothetical scenario” interpretation of Heb 6:4–6. This position has been popular for some Christians of a Reformed persuasion, since it upholds the doctrine of “Perseverance” and the similar doctrine known as “eternal security” or “once saved always saved” while also conceding the point that Heb 6:4–6 definitively describes genuine Christians. The hypothetical scenario resolves the tension between doctrine and critical scholarship by proposing that the “falling away” is a merely speculative possibility, and that the passage functions as God’s means of facilitating perseverance. It is found that the interpretation originated in the commentary by the American biblical scholar Moses Stuart published in 1827–28, and appears to have been popularised by the Presbyterian pastor and writer Albert Barnes, and through him the Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon. This paper proposes that the inherited Reformed interpretation likely overstated its case, leading to what could be deemed an overcorrection on the part of Stuart and others, in the form of the hypothetical scenario position.

**Forrest Panther**, University of Canterbury

### **On the Sources of the Paipera Tapu**

In this paper, I use quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyse the sources of the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Māori, using the 1868 text of the *Paipera Tapu* (Māori bible). The text shows influence from the King James Version (KJV), e.g. the word מִסְגָּב *misgab* ‘high place’ is translated five different ways in the KJV, and the Māori text corresponds directly to these in cases: ‘high tower’ > *pourewa* (Ps. 144:2), ‘refuge’ > *piringa* (Ps. 46:11), ‘defense’ > *pā* (Ps. 62:2). In other cases, translation more closely follows the Hebrew text: מָחָה *khuppah* ‘covering’ in Is. 4:4 is translated in KJV as ‘defense’, but the Māori text uses *taupoki* ‘cover’. I show that quantitative evidence points to a closer alignment with the Hebrew text, but some qualitative evidence, like above, shows a clear influence from the KJV, painting a complex picture of the composition of the *Paipera Tapu*.

**Jonathan R. Robinson**, Carey Baptist College

### **The Evacuation of Defilement: The Scholarly Constipation over Mark 7:19, καθαρίζω πάντα τὰ βρώματα**

In 2020 Sighurd Grindheim sought to constrict an “emerging consensus” that Jesus was a Torah abiding Jew who did not refute food laws (*JSHJ* 18: 61). On the other hand, in 2024 Logan Williams deposited that the traditional interpretation of Jesus repudiating food laws had a “forceful momentum” that “may seem impossible to countermand” (*NTS* 70: 374). The central text in this debate is Mark 7:18-19, especially the closing parenthetical, editorial insertion, καθαρίζω πάντα τὰ βρώματα. This Markan colon raises questions of syntax, Jesus’ relation to Early Judaism, and the Sitz im Leben of Mark’s Gospel. In this paper I will examine a sample of scholarship on this contested verse and outline the key blockages to agreement, before offering some suppository remarks on a way forward.

**Kathleen Rushton**, RSM

### **Exploring the Seven Days of Creation in the Gospel according to John and its Implications for an Anticipatory Reading**

This paper is another step towards my developing an anticipatory approach (metaphysics of the future) to the Gospel according to John that can accommodate in one wide vision both biblical hope and the contemporary science of an unfinished, evolving universe to support and sustain the flourishing of all creation. I explore how the cosmology of the Prologue continues in gospel which follows “to transform historical reporting about the life of Jesus into a cosmological scheme” (Carmichael) by modelling its early chapters on the seven-day scheme of creation in Genesis and how Philo and other Hellenistic Jewish sources “in the air” may have influence the evangelist. The implications of this possibility will be considered to enable the People of God today to participate with Jesus in completing the works of God by hearing “both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” (LS §49) in God’s unfinished evolving universe.

**Chanki Shin**, Alphacrucis College New Zealand

### **The Poor and Two Schisms of the Corinthian Assembly (1 Cor 1:11–12; 11:18)**

In 1 Corinthians 1:12, 26; 4:6, Paul includes the poor of the Corinthian assembly among those actively and arrogantly participating in the schism in 1:11–12. This paper attempts to explain that inclusion by exploring how the poor likely influenced the relationship between the two schisms in 1:11–12; 11:18. The paper begins by examining which of these schisms occurred first. Then, it investigates how the poor may have interpreted and reacted to the abuse of the Lord’s Supper in 11:17–22. Lastly, the paper suggests that the poor made a rumor about this abuse and communicated it to Paul through Chloe’s people (1 Cor 1:11). These behaviors aimed to politically pressure certain influential members of the assembly—the likely culprits of the abuse—by causing Paul’s surveillance of them and damaging his perception of them. While Paul does not particularly favor the poor, he likely recognizes the behaviors harming the unity of the assembly.

**David Tombs**, University of Otago

### **The Ten Women Shut Up by David in 2 Samuel 20:3**

*Content warning:* sexual violence and secondary victimisation.

2 Samuel 20:3 is a distressing denouement to an episode of conflict-related sexual violence. It briefly states the fate of the ten women from the royal household that David left to ‘look after the house’ in Jerusalem when he fled from the attack by his son Absalom (2 Sam. 15.16). When Absalom captured the city, he publicly raped the ten women ‘in the sight of all Israel’ (2 Sam. 16.21-22). After the death of Absalom, and David’s return to Jerusalem, David’s response was to order that the women be ‘shut up until the day of their death, living as if in widowhood’ (2 Samuel 20:3). The paper presents David’s decision as an egregious failure of compassion that made a devastating situation for the women even worse. I present the women’s confinement as a form of secondary victimisation and suggest how readers might seek to engage with the women’s experiences through imaginative critical empathy.

**Paul Trebilco**, University of Otago

### **The Sea, the River and the City: Imagery in the Book of Revelation**

In Revelation 21:1-2 John the Seer says that he saw “a new heaven and a new earth”, and “a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God”. However, John also says “and the sea was no more” (Rev 21:1). Further, in Revelation 22:1-2 we read of the “river of the water of life” which flows through the new Jerusalem. In this paper, the significance of the sea in the Biblical world view will be discussed, followed by the significance of rivers. And why is it that the hope portrayed in Revelation culminates in a new *Jerusalem* – a new *city*. Why is a city the key image used? This will lead to a discussion of how we might appropriate the images of the sea, of a river and of a city today. This will include discussion from the perspective of those of us for whom the moana is absolutely vital, and for whom “cities”, particularly large cities, are challenging and difficult places.

**Kate Tyler**,

### **People of the Whole Story**

Drawing on more than a decade of teaching biblical narrative, this paper addresses a persistent gap in biblical literacy among first year learners: the narrative period between Israel’s entry into the land, and the incarnation of Jesus. While many students demonstrate some familiarity with Creation, Fall, Exodus and Torah, they consistently lack a cohesive understanding of the recurring pattern of covenantal disobedience that drives the Old Testament narrative through monarchy, exile, and return, and frames the prophetic office. Attending to the way that God’s own identity shapes Israel’s vocation as a covenant community, this paper draws on the concept of the ‘preacher as witness’ and the ‘preacher as storyteller’. It suggests that churches can more faithfully form ‘people of the whole story’ by reclaiming the Old Testament as essential narrative scaffolding for Christian identity and mission.

**Julia van den Brink**, Laidlaw College

### **Weaving the Tabernacle Curtains**

The book of Exodus includes God’s instructions for constructing the tabernacle curtains as well as a description of their creation (Exod 26:1-14, 31-37; 35:22-29; 36:8-19, 35-38). There are hints in these accounts about how the curtains were made: the process of preparing and dying the fibre, spinning and plying the yarn, and weaving the final pieces of fabric that would make up the curtains. But many of the details are missing. Archaeological finds and non-industrial textile production can fill in some of the gaps, allowing for a tentative

reconstruction of the process. In this paper, I want to explore how the Israelites may have gone about making the tabernacle curtains based on the text of Exodus, ancient textile archaeology, and the process of turning fibre into fabric.

**Kevin Waldie**, Te Kupenga-Catholic Theological College

**When examining the preceding context that Luke has provided for his briefer version of the Lord's Prayer (Lk 11:1-4) what does Luke's compositional style and vocabulary reveal?**

On a close reading of the two pericopae (Lk 10:25-37 & 10:38-42) that immediately precede Luke's edition of the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of chapter 11 it is interesting to observe a certain sequencing of words and associated ideas. In general, until recently, it has not been the normal practice of Lukan scholars to attentively examine how the Good Samaritan and Martha/Mary episodes might rightly relate to each other and subsequently lead into this particular version of the Lord's Prayer. So this paper is an initial attempt to shed some light on the specific textual content that suggests Luke purposely placed these three delimited passages in this precise narrative order.

**Matt Wright**, University of Otago

**God's Love According to John and the Roman Stoics**

John and the Stoics each discuss divine love for people, and at a cursory level, their claims are similar. Both suggest that God loves humanity (cf. John 3:16; Seneca, *Ben.* 6.23.3, 5). Both describe the supreme heavenly being as a loving father (e.g., 1 John 3:1; Seneca, *Prov.* 2.6; cf. Epictetus, *Disc.* 1.3.1). Yet, when one studies their views in more detail, the Johannine and Stoic visions of divine love markedly diverge. In this paper, I will compare John's presentation of God's love with that of the first-century Stoic philosophers Seneca and Epictetus. Contrasting their views allows the distinctive elements of John's perspective to emerge with greater clarity.