

APECSS Conference Abstracts

Contents

Abstracts	3
Hubertus R. Drobner.....	3
Geoffrey Dunn	3
Matteo Monfrinotti.....	3
Ruth Sutcliffe	4
Mario Baghos.....	4
Chun Li	5
Dr Vassilis Adrahtas	5
Amy J. Erickson.....	6
Alexis Balmont	6
Peter Steiger	6
Erin Hutton.....	7
Yip Mei Loh.....	7
James Pietsch	7
Wendy Mayer.....	8
Vicki Petrakis	9
Naoki Kamimura.....	9
Takayuki Ozawa.....	10
Chi-Kin Lei	10
Kyosuke Sunada.....	11
Daniel An	11
Hind Salah El-Din Somida Awad.....	11
Satoshi Ohtani	12
Robert Edwards.....	12
Malcolm Choat.....	12
Matthew R. Crawford	13
Beatrice Ang.....	13
Shinichi Muto.....	14
Georges El Hage	14
Jimmy Chan	14

Marcin Wysocki	15
Robert Tilley	15
Kazuhiko Demura	15
Junghun Bae.....	16
Alexandru Prelipcean.....	16
Katherine Chambers.....	16
Ian J. Elmer	17
Mark Baddeley.....	17
Jonathan T. Hoffman.....	18
Andrew Bain	18
Andrew Roushdy	18
Peter John McGregor	19
Colten Cheuk-Yin Yam	19
Edwina Murphy	19
Thomas D. McGlothlin	19
Kevin Wagner	20
Contact Details.....	21

Abstracts

Hubertus R. Drobner

Psalm 23/24.7-10, A Tale of Two Cities; Heaven and Hell

The original Christian understanding of Psalm 23/24:7-10 “Gates, raise your heads and let enter the King of glory” referred it unanimously to Christ’s ascension and entry into the city of heaven.

Since the fourth century it was re-interpreted to be talking of Christ’s harrowing of hell during his three-day burial in the tomb, culminating in the Gospel of Nicodemus (*a.* 424/425) and the famous sermon by Pseudo-Epiphanius (*ca.* 695).

Augustine’s sermon 377 seems to be represent the unique link of both interpretations as he explains the double call of “gates, raise your heads” to refer to two different, subsequent entries of Christ, namely first into hell as conqueror of Hades and death, and then as God and man into heaven.

The paper intends to follow the basic lines of the interpretation of Psalm 23/24.7-10, showing how and why it changed from heaven to hell and, in Augustine’s case, joined both ideas.

Geoffrey Dunn

Flesh and the Kingdom of God: Tertullian’s Reading of the Scriptures in De resurrectione carnis

How should Christians interpret the Scriptures? Many scholars who have asked how Tertullian, the North African who was the first major Christian writer in Latin, read the Scriptures, such as Hanson, O’Malley, Waszink, Trigg, and Froehlich, have come to the conclusion that he generally engaged in a literal reading. *De resurrectione carnis* (preferred to the older title often used, *De resurrectione mortuorum*) is cited as an example. Indeed, in chapter 19 he asserted that he was “preserving at all costs the integrity of the terms”. This paper argues, through an examination of the interpretations Tertullian offered of the scriptural passages employed in this pamphlet considered within their rhetorical context and in relation to his vast literary output as a whole, that his opposition to a figurative or allegorical reading of the Scriptures was only true to the extent that he was rebutting the approach taken by his opponents, which he believed to be contrary to the *regula fidei*, which was the fixed point in his theological system.

Matteo Monfrinotti

The Gospel of Mark in Alexandria in the Pre-Constantine Age. Use and Interpretation

The study of the New Testament tradition in the pre-Constantinian age is particularly complex.

The present contribution aims to examine how the Gospel of Mark was used by Alexandrian authors of the pre-Constantinian age in an attempt to establish whether there is convergence between the different authors. In particular, the focus will be on the quotation of Mark in Clement of Alexandria. Should we ask the contributor to provide more details?

Ruth Sutcliffe

For so they persecuted the prophets: a theological and hermeneutical approach to Christian martyrological influences

Scholars continue to debate the literary and ideological origins of Christian martyrdom, particularly as portrayed in the martyr acts. Biblical and Jewish apocalyptic accounts (Abel, Isaiah, Zechariah, Daniel's three friends, the "Maccabean martyrs"), Jewish Holy War tradition, Graeco-Roman spectacle and the "noble death" tradition each have their advocates. One neglected approach is to inquire of the early Christian writers themselves as to how and why they used Old Testament and Jewish apocryphal literature for examples of martyrdom. In this theological and hermeneutical approach, I propose that the patristic hermeneutic of the unity of scriptural witness to Christ is a key determinant of the link between Jewish and early Christian martyrdom. This paper will examine the issue of a consistent theology of persecution and martyrdom through the lens of patristic biblical interpretation, particularly Origen's use of Jeremiah, which informed the conclusion that "so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Mario Baghos

Returning to the 'Jesus of History' and the 'Christ of Faith': A Scriptural and Patristic Analysis

Much biblical criticism since the nineteenth century has unfolded along the parameters of historical positivism that is anchored on the empirical demonstration of 'truth' *apart from any theological reflection*. While having merit in terms of its assessment of factors peripheral to theology – e.g. analyses of geographical settings – positivism nevertheless approaches the person of Jesus using the same a-theological criteria. As such, it distinguishes between the 'Jesus of history' and the 'Christ of faith,' where Jesus as a man is explored apart from any faith-based representations of him. In this way the positivist approach has yielded representations of Christ that are inconsistent with the received traditional/ecclesial representations that can be found for instance within the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

This paper will bring to the foreground ecclesial representations of Jesus based on the scriptures and patristic tradition, and in relation to the latter will especially foreground the doctrinal definition of the fourth ecumenical council held in Chalcedon in AD 451, that there is one Christ in two natures, divine and human. It will then contrast this representation to positivist approaches towards Christ and will argue that the latter's emphasis on an accurate 'historical' (i.e. not faith-based) reconstruction of the life of Jesus based on a selective reading of the New Testament scriptures actually results in a construct that can be found nowhere in either the scriptures themselves or in their earliest interpreters, i.e. the Church Fathers.

Chun Li

Unveiling Balaam: A Characterization Theory Approach to Reading Balaam in New Testament, Philo, Josephus, and Pseudo-Philo

This paper explores the complex figure of Balaam through the lens of characterization theory, examining his multifaceted portrayal in the New Testament, Philo, Josephus, and Pseudo-Philo. By analyzing how these authors construct Balaam's character, both directly and indirectly, within their respective contexts, the study aims to illuminate his significance in early Christian biblical interpretation. The research investigates Balaam's presentation within the immediate context of scriptural quotation, as well as his broader theological importance for each author. A comparative analysis of these diverse characterizations will reveal how Balaam's figure served to address possible theological, moral, or exegetical concerns within various early Christian settings. Ultimately, this study seeks to unveil the rich tapestry of interpretations surrounding Balaam and his relevance in shaping early Christian thought.

Dr Vassilis Adrahtas

Biblical Allegorical Hermeneutics as Historical (Self-)Consciousness

It is widely held that allegorical interpretations go beyond the historicity of the Scriptures in fanciful, arbitrary, or even paradoxical ways. This paper aspires to show that Patristic allegorical hermeneutics is a peculiar type of rational reading that not only does not lose contact with historical reality but even more constitutes a heightened historical consciousness.

If Biblical allegorical hermeneutics were devoid of historical (self-)consciousness, how is one to explain the fact that Origen, the allegorist *par excellence*, was the most accomplished proponent of Old Testament textual criticism in the early Church? Why didn't allegorist hermeneutists dispose of the Scriptures altogether, since what they allegedly were interested in was the core meaning achieved through their *anagoge*? If the allegorical *anagoge* regarding meaning did not take place in the light of a given historical condition, why do we witness a differentiation of this meaning from time to time?

But because they had a pronounced historical consciousness, they knew well that the historical referent changes with times, and this is why they pursued the paradoxical, at times, *anagoge* of meaning. What is needed, thus, is to be able to discern the experienced historical referent that accompanies this *anagoge*; to trace the history that it presupposes and entails each time but studiously conceals.

Amy J. Erickson

Law as Gospel in Gregory of Nyssa's Life of Moses

This paper proposes to trace how Gregory of Nyssa's conception of the relation between Law and Gospel informs his reading of Exodus and Numbers in *Life of Moses*. The paper will begin by elucidating Gregory's understanding of the Law, paying especial attention to his interpretation of Exodus 32. This passage interprets the Incarnation as a creational, "law-inscribing" event and Moses' tablet-breaking as an analogue of the fall. Next, the paper will locate his account of the Law in relation to Protestant Law-Gospel accounts. It will then revisit *Life of Moses* to consider how Gregory's framing of Law-Gospel informs his reading of Exodus and Numbers. In particular, it will stress the Law's role as a dynamic guide on the believer's journey to become a friend of God.

Alexis Balmont

Lost in translation?

A primary challenge encountered by academics engaged in research on Christianity in China pertains to the translation of Christian concepts and proper nouns into Chinese. While these terms are well-established in European languages, reflecting a substantial academic and religious history, they exhibit significant fluidity in Chinese, contingent on the Christian denominations and transcription systems that have been adopted at various historical periods. The article undertakes a comprehensive documentation of this issue by examining the predominant ancient and contemporary proposals concerning the names of God, Messiah, Holy Spirit, the concepts of salvation, Christianity and canonical books. The article then presents a project for a lexicon of religious terms in Chinese Christianity. This lexicon is to be built on a new book series of patristic bilingual texts Chinese / old languages hosted by CUHK Press, and aims to survey and document translations and transcriptions from Latin, Greek, Syriac and Hebrew.

Peter Steiger

Jewish and Christian exegetes debating the Book of Job

In recent years, Jewish scholars of late antiquity have been researching the scholarly debates that continued to take place between Christian and Jewish exegetes after the legalization of Christianity. In particular, Michal Bar-Asher Siegal has shown evidence of ongoing Jewish-Christian interaction present in the Babylonian Talmud. Likewise, Dr. Jason Kalman of Hebrew Union College argues that the interpretation of Job within Rabbinic Judaism, which took shape during the fourth and fifth centuries of the common era, was in response to Christian exegesis of this text. The purpose of this paper will be to examine the introductory chapters of two Christian commentaries on the LXX of the book of Job from Alexandria – those by Didymus the Blind (late fourth century c.e.) and Olympiodorus the Deacon (early sixth century c.e.) – to see if there is any evidence that these Christian scholars were aware of developments in Rabbinic treatment of the book of Job.

Erin Hutton

Athanasius and Song of Songs Against the World? Bringing the (alleged) Athanasiana on Song of Songs into conversation with the School of Alexandria.

Athanasius the Great (Athanasius *Contra Mundum*) is arguably the author of a lesser-known work/s on Song of Songs, the so-called *Athanasiana* on Song of Songs. While scholars have made arguments on whether *exegetica* attributed to Athanasius are of genuine Athanasian authorship, little has been written comparing “Athanasius’s” catenae on the Song with commentary on Song of Songs from other Alexandrian Fathers.

I take the recent work of Reinhart Ceulemans, which focuses on two catenae (CPG 2141.6 and CPG C 84), as my starting point. After exploring their transmission and translating the relevant fragments, Ceulemans articulates their relation to the (genuine) writings of Athanasius which cite the Song. I pick up where Ceulemans leaves off and compare the *Athanasiana* with Cyril of Alexandria’s exegesis of the Song and Origen’s *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, to explore the similarities between these fragments and the characteristically allegorical interpretations of the Alexandrian School.

Yip Mei Loh

Origen: The Christian or the Pagan?

Alexandria, where Origen was born and grew up, was the birthplace of early philosophical theology and Neoplatonism. It was an ancient city, where all outstanding peoples came together to engage in scientific research and trade activities. Because of its complexity, multiculturalism and a place where scholarship and multiethnicity come together, it gives rise to a new *paideia*—the philosophical theology, of which Origen is the founder. However, after Origen died, he was condemned as a heretic by the Church; and the issue of two Origenes arose in the 17th Century, so that there are questions about his very identity. The matter of Porphyry’s Origen and Eusebius’ Origen needs further investigation, as the work of Erasmus and Martin Luther preceded the two-Origenes theory. Hence this article is divided into three sections: 1. the life of Origen, 2. Porphyry’s Origen and Eusebius’ Origen, 3. Origen and Platonism.

James Pietsch

Worldly wisdom and the wisdom of the Word: Augustine’s hermeneutic in De Doctrina Christiana

In *De Doctrina Christiana* Augustine provides advice to Christians on how to interpret the Scriptures and how then to teach in a manner that brings about practical repentance. Augustine commends the study of languages for making sense of “unknown signs” and the study of things for making sense of “unfamiliar signs”, including the study of biology, mathematics and music. Augustine also draws on Platonic principles as he develops his approach to reading the Scriptures. What lessons might Augustine wish to share with 21st century Christian educators regarding the interplay of philosophy and theology, or the wisdom of the world and the wisdom contained in Scripture? This paper will examine how Augustine and other early Christian writers understood this interplay and how such an approach could inform modern-day approaches to teaching a secular curriculum in schools with sacred foundations.

Wendy Mayer

Approaching John Chrysostom as an Interpreter of Scripture in the Twenty-First Century

A vast proportion of the surviving sermons of John Chrysostom are exegetical. As I argue in a forthcoming chapter in the Cambridge Companion to Early Christian Theology, while John Chrysostom's contribution to exegesis has long been acknowledged, how we view his approach to exegesis and where that contribution sits within the larger context of early Christianity has in the past two decades shifted. In this paper I map out some of the key factors behind that shift, describe how his role as a scriptural interpreter is largely viewed today, and speculate on where some of the current trends are taking us. Some of the key factors discussed and deconstructed will be the influence on scholars in the twentieth century of systematic theology and of the concept of discrete Alexandrian and Antiochene schools of exegesis.

Vicki Petrakis

The Hermeneutics of Spiritual Growth in Gregory Nazianzen: The Scriptural Word and its Enfleshment

One of the more nuanced ways that Gregory Nazianzen, or as he is otherwise known, Gregory the Theologian, directs and develops how the human person makes progress in the spiritual life, grows in the image and likeness of God, and on their way to becoming a *new creation*, is through Christ's power vested in the scriptures. More particularly, it is through the enfleshed Christ as Word and Reason that he understood this power in the scriptural word. This paper will examine how Gregory nuanced the power of the scriptures, for making moral choices and progress in the spiritual life. It will briefly assess the hermeneutic model that associated the scriptures with the enfleshed Christ and Christ's eternal power; examine how he discussed the power of the Word through the term 'logos', nuancing both the living Christ and the scriptural word; before setting out the metaphysics for how one makes spiritual progress through Christ as Reason and as the scriptural Word of salvation, when one is "rightly fed" by the scriptures and living in Christ.

Naoki Kamimura

Matthew 11:12 and the exegetes of the Latin patristic tradition

Matthew 11:12 (From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force) is a problematic passage interpreted in various ways. For example, given that this passage refers to John's imprisonment and murder, Christ's death, and the subsequent persecution, it is interpreted to mean that the kingdom of heaven is under attack by the authority of evil and the corresponding earthly authority. The passage can signify that the kingdom of heaven symbolises spiritual might and that only those who possess such spiritual strength are worthy of the kingdom; alternatively, it can be interpreted to imply that those who undertake a sacred endeavour, such as repentant prostitutes and tax collectors, are fit to receive the kingdom of heaven. My proposal will focus on an exegesis of the Latin Christian writers (e.g. Ambrose, Hilary of Poitiers, Jerome and Augustine) in this particular passage. By clarifying the development of interpretations of this text up to the first half of the fifth century, I will argue for the potential of the message of this scriptural passage.

Takayuki Ozawa

The Relation between Human Knowledge of God and the Renovation of the Image of God in Augustine's De Trinitate

This presentation explores the status, distortion, and renovation of the image of God (*imago Dei*) in Augustine's *De Trinitate*. While many studies link its restoration to ascent (anagogy), the nature of ascent remains debated. Instead of engaging in this debate, the presentation focuses on fundamental concepts that recent scholarship has often overlooked, perhaps because they appear self-evident: what the image of God is, how it is distorted, and how it is recovered. Augustine views the image of God as the human mind's capacity to remember, understand, and love God. Distortion arises from improper love due to original sin, leading to an inability to recognize God. However, recognizing God itself is conducive to restore the image. Since direct recognition of God is impossible in this life, striving toward recognition is key to renovation. I argue that this restoration is not a vertical ascent toward God but a parallel progression in the world, offering a new perspective on *imago Dei* renewal.

Chi-Kin Lei

Paul's ἀλληγορούμενα (Gal 4:24) in Early Christian Reception

Paul's interpretation of the Hagar and Sarah narratives as an "allegory" (ἀλληγορούμενα) in Galatians 4:24 has been a puzzling problem for modern exegetes, who have offered a wide range of critical judgments about what Paul is really doing here. Is Paul referring to a deeper meaning beyond the literal sense of the Old Testament, something like what Philo of Alexandria did? Or is Paul using a technique sometimes called "typology" to connect historical events of both past and present? What significance, if any, does Paul's "allegory" have upon modern biblical exegesis? What is perhaps lacking in this discussion, however, is to study how Galatians 4:24 was interpreted and received by early Christian readers. Thus, this paper discusses two prominent early readers of Paul, namely, Origen and Tertullian, and analyzes how they understood Paul's ἀλληγορούμενα in Galatians 4:24 (seven works of Origen and two works of Tertullian). Results show that Paul's "allegory" served as the key hermeneutical principle among early Christians, demonstrating the "vitality of Scripture" in the context of early Christianity.

Kyosuke Sunada

Theodore's Exegesis in Meletian Context

It is well known that Theodore of Mopsuestia criticized allegorical interpretations of the Bible and advocated for a literal approach. However, A closer examination of Theodore's biblical exegesis reveals a nuanced approach: he acknowledges the Holy Spirit's role in the *Psalms* while insisting on strict typological correspondence but denies it in Solomonic books (*Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes* and *Song of Songs*) and suspects pagan interpolations in *Job*.

There is evidence that contemporaneous Subordinationists have sought to define the divinity of the Son through a "literal" interpretation of passages from *Proverbs* and *Job* etc. By analyzing the Theodore's fragments and other sources, this study reassesses Theodore's milieu, i.e. so-called Arian debate, arguing that his exegesis had a positive doctrinal agenda. Additionally, by contextualizing his work within the broader historical landscape, it becomes clear that the Meletians in Antioch were striving to make their own contribution among the emerging consensus in Neo-Nicene reunion.

Daniel An

The Grace of God or the Pity of God? Reading the psalms in late antiquity

Scholars of late antique Christianity have long acknowledged the outsize influence of the psalms on Christian worship and spirituality. No biblical text is more frequently cited by patristic authors, who often used the psalms as a blueprint for prayer. The present paper charts a distinction between the Septuagint and Peshitta psalters with respect to their translations of the Hebrew term *hesed* ("steadfast love") as God's primary attribute vis-à-vis humanity: whereas the Greek overwhelmingly translates the term with *eleos* ("pity"), the Syriac uses two terms, *rahmē* ("mercies") and *taybutā* ("grace"). Through an exploration of two late antique commentators on the psalms in Greek and Syriac—Basil of Caesarea and Daniel of Ṣalaḥ—the paper aims to assess how this linguistic distinction shaped Greek and Syriac readers' understandings of God's relationship with humanity.

Hind Salah El-Din Somida Awad

The iconography of the Virgin Mary in the chapel of Peace: A deciphering study of the theme

The Chapel of Peace at Bagawat Necropolis is one of the earliest examples of Christian art in Egypt. This article aims to seek an interpretation of the iconography of the Virgin Mary, who was depicted and a dove beside her head, in a scene understood as the traditional narrative of the Annunciation, in which the dove was the messenger of God, though this deviates from the traditional account as described in the Gospel of Luke where the Archangel Gabriel was responsible for delivering the message.

Therefore, this article will try to reinterpret and seek the scene in its context within the other representations encircling the ceiling of the chapel in a single register, especially since the representations of Adam and Eve, Sarah, Isaac and Abraham proved to deviate from their traditional accounts in the Old Testament, to define the scene and shed more light on the people who produced this art.

Satoshi Ohtani

Why ‘the historian’ Dionysius?: A Philological Analysis of the Transmission of Tradition in Eusebius and Jordanes

In the mid-6th century, Jordanes wrote a history of the Goths, which contains a short reference to the so-called ‘Plague of Cyprian’ that struck the Roman world in the mid-3rd century (*Getica*, 104). Regarding this plague, Jordanes writes, ‘Dionysius the historian writes tearfully about this misfortune’. This Dionysius is generally thought to be not the historian but the bishop of Alexandria in the mid-3rd century, whose letters are quoted by Eusebius’s *Church History*, 7.21-22.

Scholars have not pointed out why Jordanes mentioned the bishop Dionysius as ‘historian’. In this paper, I would like to show that the words of Thucydides (2. 64.1) quoted by Dionysius in his letter, and the accompanying word ‘historian συγγραφεύς’ (both of which were quoted in Eusebius’s *Church History*), were transmitted in a confused manner by the time of Jordanes. Through these considerations, I will show an example of the textual transmission of patristic works from the 4th to the 6th century.

Robert Edwards

Eucharistic Typology in Fourth-Century Mystagogical Lectures

Among the earliest extant mystagogical lectures are those of Ambrose of Milan (both *De mysteriis* and *De sacramentis*) and those attributed either to Cyril or to John of Jerusalem. In these writings, the language of ‘type’ or ‘figure’ is prominent, both with respect to the presence of the body and blood of Christ in/as the eucharistic elements and in relation to OT—NT typology. This paper explores the relationship between biblical types and eucharistic types in these writings, particularly inquiring into implicit metaphysics that underlie both kinds of typologies—that is how a ‘type’ or ‘figure’ can participate in or otherwise relate to its ‘antitype’ or ‘truth’. Tentatively, this paper will argue that all three (including the two works ascribed to Ambrose) view this relationship slightly differently—and that differences in typological interpretation correspond to different understandings of the presence of Christ’s body and blood in the Eucharist.

Malcolm Choat

Constructing a Provenience for Fake Scripture: Constantine Simonides and his Biblical Papyri

Alongside the now infamous ‘post 2002-Dead Sea Scroll-like fragments’, the papyri forged by Constantine Simonides in the early 1860’s provide the best example of a collection of fake ancient scripture. Like the post 2002 ‘Dead Sea Scrolls’, the forgeries by Simonides of New Testament, Septuagint, and para-Biblical material on papyrus were initially convincing to many contemporary observers (despite their seemingly obviously fake nature to modern observers), until they were decisively disproved. Simonides went to considerable lengths to set out collection history (provenance) of the papyri, going as far as to construct a provenience (find spot) for them, inserting ‘proof’ of this into one of the papyri themselves. This paper will examine the way Simonides constructed the provenance and provenience of his fakes, and argue both that he was ahead of his time in doing so, and that the study of his case contains important lessons for the study of Scriptural manuscripts in the present day.

Matthew R. Crawford

Reconstructing Macedonian Scriptural Exegesis in Didymus (?), De Trinitate

One of the many theological parties that emerged as a result of the fourth-century Trinitarian controversy was the so-called “Macedonians,” named after Macedonius, bishop of Constantinople in the 340s and 350s. From the 360s onwards, the defining feature of the Macedonians was their refusal to recognise the deity of the Holy Spirit. Despite falling out of favor after the Council of Constantinople in 381, the group persisted for another half century at least. The history of the party during this period can be reconstructed on the basis of a number of surviving but largely neglected texts, such as Theodore of Mopsuestia’s *Dialogue with the Macedonians*, the ps-Athanasian *Dialogues with the Macedonians*, and the three-book treatise *De Trinitate* once ascribed to Didymus the Blind. The latter text is more concerned with arguing against Macedonians than any other heretical group, and it even includes quotations from texts written by the Macedonians themselves, fragments that have scarcely been studied in scholarship over the past century. In the present paper, I will examine these Macedonian fragments to highlight the role of scriptural exegesis in their arguments against the Spirit’s deity.

Beatrice Ang

Reading the Passion of Perpetua and Felicity through the Lens of Family

Family is a persistent thematic element in the *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, its Greek rendition, and its subsequent *Acta* variants. The retention of this theme, amidst other revisions, highlights the enduring relevance of the narrative’s message about family.

Although scholars have touched upon family dynamics within the *Passio*, such as motherhood, gender, and blood ties, the full potential of family as a central theme remains underexplored. This gap exists because of the *Passio*’s wealth of historical and theological content, with the focus usually trained on the overarching themes of martyrdom and Christian identity.

This paper argues for the critical importance of family as a lens through which to interpret the *Passio*. It will engage with existing scholarly work, both building upon and challenging certain interpretations. By doing so, it will demonstrate how family dynamics are integral to understanding other significant themes within the text, including age, emotion, spiritual intercession, and the ongoing activity of the Holy Spirit.

Shinichi Muto

The Use of Biblical Exegeses on Comparison between Ephrem the Syrian and John Chrysostom

It is suggested that in John Chrysostom ['s corpus?'] the Greek was influenced by some Syriac speaking precursors. Ephrem the Syrian was the representative of Syriac exegetes in the 4th Century. It is true that they are different from each other on their hermeneutics in the broad sense of the word as I had treated in my previous studies, but they still have some common features on their practical use of biblical exegeses. On the one hand, John as one of the representatives of Antiochene exegetes puts emphasis on the literal sense of the biblical words; Ephrem's commentaries on Scripture are well known for the literal approach. On the other hand, it is noticeable that the former often deviates from down-to-earth exegeses in his expository sermons to any moral topics of his own concern; the latter so freely mingles a variety of materials out of all the Scriptures in his verse homilies and hymns.

Georges El Hage

Origen and the violence in the Bible

Marcion and his followers wanted to separate the two Testaments of Revelation by opposing two different gods. They claimed that was the only way to resolve the problem of Old Testament violence. In his *Homilies on Joshua*, Origen was among the first Christian thinkers to resolve the problem of divine violence as described in the Bible. He proposed a method of interpreting the scriptures that went beyond the literal meaning to uncover a deeper, spiritual significance. Origen's allegorical exegesis aimed to reconcile the apparent contradictions in the biblical texts, particularly those involving divine violence. He believed that violent narratives should be understood metaphorically. He argued that these stories symbolized the spiritual battles that individuals face against sin and evil, rather than literal historical events. By focusing on the spiritual meaning, Origen sought to promote a message of peace and spiritual growth.

Jimmy Chan

All For 'David': Augustine's Typological Reading of David in the Psalms and 2 Samuel 7 in The City of God XVIII

In *The City of God XVIII*, Augustine asserts, "The view that seems most credible to me, however, is the view held by those who ascribe all one hundred and fifty Psalms to David's work" (*ciu.* 18.14). This conviction shapes his typological reading of David as both historical king and a type of Christ. This paper examines Augustine's interpretation of David's kingship and covenant in relation to 2 Samuel 7, where God's promise of an eternal throne is fulfilled in Christ. For Augustine, David's psalmic voice is Christ's own, his sufferings and triumphs mirroring the Messiah. Moreover, David's lineage signifies the Church's endurance amid history's trials. By analyzing Augustine's exegesis in *The City of God XVIII*, this study highlights his unified vision of Scripture, where David's city is a type of the *civitas Dei*, and his hermeneutical method integrates history, prophecy, and ecclesiology into a theological reading of salvation history.

Marcin Wysocki

What Does it Mean to Be a Father-Patriarch? A Case of the Patristic Interpretations of the Biblical Patriarchal Blessings from the Book of Genesis 48

Certainly the idea of a father-pater/patriarch is one of the most crucial in the biblical tradition, and its most important representation is the description of the patriarchal blessings contained in chapter 48 of the Book of Genesis. It is one of the fundamental biblical texts for understanding fatherhood and the role of the father in the Bible and subsequently in early Christianity. There are four surviving patristic commentaries on this text: by Ambrose of Milan, Rufinus of Aquileia, Pseudo-Paulinus of Milan and Hippolytus of Rome. The aim of my proposed paper is to show how a text and its main idea can be interpreted by different early Christian writers and what they took from the biblical text to understand the role of a father and its perception in the early Church. It will show the importance of Scripture in creating not only the dogmatic doctrine of the early Church, but also moral views and everyday issues.

Robert Tilley

Recapitulative Emergence in Ephesians and St Irenaeus: A Theological critique of AI

In Ephesians St Paul presents a theological cosmology that implicitly opposes that which forms the background of texts like those found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, and this by means of the dynamic of a Christological recapitulative understanding of time and space which finds its locus proper in the Church. Following suit, St Irenaeus opposes the emanatory cosmologies which underlie Gnosticism that, like other cosmologies of the time, effectively understands the universe to be a closed system and does so while seeking to undermine the Church by way of introducing teachings that compromise Real Presence. The argument of this paper is that AI (in particular the hopes held for AGI) represents the apogee of the logic of all closed systems and that it is only by means of Catholic theology, specifically ecclesiology with a stress on Petrine authority, that AI can effectively be countered and critiqued.

Kazuhiko Demura

Augustine's Anthropological Interpretation on St. Paul's Bodily Expressions

In Pauline letters, we can find plenty of bodily expressions based on his acceptance of Hebrew Scriptures and LXX translation. In this biblical tradition, bodily human parts designate some intellectual and spiritual functions literally and/or figuratively. Such usage of the words is quite different from Greco-Roman philosophical reflection on the human self. Augustine made several exegeses on Paul's texts and tried to read them consistently between biblical and philosophical traditions. This paper will examine his early exegeses in order to clarify Augustine's interpretation on Paul concerning his understanding of body, flesh, mind and heart. Through this examination, we will notice that Augustine set these human functional concepts of body and mind into one locational order (out and in, up and down, close and distant etc.). As a conclusion, it will claim that paying attention to this locational order of body and mind of the self is the very important characteristics of Augustine's anthropology.

Junghun Bae

Greater than Virginity: John Chrysostom's Interpretation of Matthew 25:1-13

The parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13 played a key role in shaping John Chrysostom's thought on almsgiving. He interprets the oil in the parable as charitable acts, arguing that the foolish virgins were excluded from the bridegroom's wedding feast because they had failed to prepare by practicing generosity. This paper examines John Chrysostom's interpretation of Matthew 25:1-13, a topic that has received little scholarly attention. By situating his reading within the broader context of late antique asceticism and discourses on celibacy, this study explores its theological and ethical significance. It first considers John's views on virginity, then analyzes his interpretation of the parable, and finally discusses the broader implications of his reading.

Alexandru Prelipcean

Typology and its functionality in the Stromateis of Clement of Alexandria

The problem of using allegory and typology in patristic commentaries on the books of the Old Testament had become a real fact within the theological School of Alexandria. Without a doubt, the use of typology made the mysterious meaning of the content of Holy Scripture much more accessible. One of these authors who used typology in many contexts is Clement of Alexandria, a refined theologian and leader of the Theological School of Alexandria for a short period of time. What concerns us in this study is to indicate the typological images in the Stromateis and to see how they became fundamental for other authors through their critical reception.

Katherine Chambers

Converting to Christianity in Late Antiquity: What we can learn from Augustine of Hippo.

Writing in 1933, the scholar of ancient religions and classical culture, Arthur Darby Nock (1902-1963), addressed himself to the question of what was distinctive about Christianity in the Greek and Roman world. He called his study of religion in antiquity, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford, 1933). This work is still considered a seminal study of the topic: its interpretation of the dynamics of conversion in the sources that it selects has not really been challenged. Yet Nock drew closely on the work of two near contemporaries: the sociologist Max Weber, and the religious studies scholar, William James. He applied their insights to his reading of conversion. This raises the question of whether this is the correct lens through which to view conversion in late antiquity: in particular, did late antique thinkers have their own models of conversion? This paper argues that Augustine of Hippo had his own model of conversion, one which rivals that employed by Nock. There are shortcomings in Nock's model, making Augustine's view of conversion a worthy one for us to consider.

Ian J. Elmer

Scripture in the Making: Did Paul See His Letters as “Scripture”?

The consensus view amongst Pauline scholars is that Paul’s letters were occasional in nature, written primarily to address specific problems or immediate concerns within early Christian communities, but came later to be regarded as scripture (2 Peter 3:16). While commentators have recognized that Paul’s letters reflect a collective process of authorship—where Paul’s personal authority is constructed through the communal context of early Christian communities—the question of how Paul himself viewed his letters in relation to "scripture" has never been adequately addressed. This paper seeks to explore this issue in greater depth.

While Paul does not explicitly identify his writings as “scripture” in the sense of a fixed and closed canon, his frequent invocation of Jewish sacred texts using phrases like “it is written” demonstrates his deep engagement with the scriptural tradition. Paul saw the Jewish Scriptures as authoritative and inspired, and his own writings reflect a similar function within his communities. Moreover, the concept of scripture in the first century was fluid, rather than static, allowing for a more dynamic understanding of what constituted sacred text.

This paper will argue that Paul’s self-presentation aligns with prophetic traditions in the Jewish Scriptures. He speaks of his conversion and mission using language reminiscent of prophetic calls, portraying himself as a divinely commissioned recipient of revelation. His expectation that his letters be read aloud in communal gatherings, as well as his encouragement of their collection and circulation among various churches, suggests that he saw his writings as more than just occasional correspondence. Rather, Paul’s letters were being positioned within a broader tradition of scriptural innovation and interpretation. In this sense, they were *scriptures in the making*, functioning as authoritative texts within the life of early Christian communities even before their formal canonization.

By reassessing Paul’s letters in light of their reception and circulation, this paper contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the early Christian textual tradition. It invites further reflection on how scripture emerges and evolves within the earliest communities of Christianity.

Mark Baddeley

Uniting the names: Athanasius’ approach to reading Scriptural texts synthetically

Previously Athanasius was often portrayed in quite heroic hues, but more recent depictions have likened him to a mafioso and questioned his integrity and truthfulness in his polemical writings. Athanasius’ reputation as a biblical exponent has experienced a roughly parallel trajectory, with a general contemporary sense that his interpretation of Scriptural texts often owes more to philosophical frameworks and pastoral and polemical tactics, than anything that can be justified objectively by appeal to characteristics of the text. This paper examines a couple of Athanasius’ more striking examples of interpretive approach and argues that at least some of what can be observed is best explained by a distinctive method of combining Scriptural texts synthetically and that interpretation is controlled, not by the rules of grammatico-historical hermeneutics, but by having the object determine the meaning of the words referring to it.

Jonathan T. Hoffman

Last Woman Standing: Positing a relationship between allusions to Sarah and Rahab in Hebrews 11

This paper examines an unexpected feature of Hebrews 11:8-16, wherein the author offers a historical allusion to Abraham's migratory sojourn as part of the *encomium* on πιστις. The feature in question concerns Hebrews 11:11. Here a complex construction temporarily spotlights Sarah in a way that appears to set syntax and lexeme in opposition, leading some scholars to postulate that Abraham remains the figure exercising faith throughout 11:8-16.¹ Given that Sarah is the only other woman named in Hebrews 11, besides "the prostitute Rahab,"² this inquiry has implications for understanding the rhetorical function of Hebrews 11 and how anticipates the *paraenesis* in chapter 13.

My work explores these implications by drawing on the work of Carl Mosser, who argues the author's historical allusion to Rahab serves as climax to the *encomium*.³ Whether the author is alluding to the πιστις of Abraham or Sarah in 11:11 is a query that informs not only the rhetoric of the epistle, but also the broader value of OT texts for NT audiences in the early Christian period.

Andrew Bain

Jewish & Christian Readings of Job in Late Antiquity: Hermeneutical Methods in Selected Authors

A notable degree of methodological similarity exists between Jewish and Christian exegetical treatment of some scriptural texts in late antiquity, alongside more obvious points of difference. This paper will consider this confluence in the case of the book of Job. Although no major standalone Jewish work on Job survives from the period, substantial exegetical comment on Job exists within two major midrashic texts that received their final form in the fifth century CE, the *Genesis Rabbah* and *Leviticus Rabbah*. This material is considered alongside commentary on the same texts from selected Christian authors who lived in relative proximity to the major centres of Jewish scholarly activity in the period (Ephrem, Chrysostom, Didymus). To allow for focused comparisons to be made, all exegetical selections are drawn from comments on the prologue and introductory material in Job and the climactic concluding chapters (Job 1-3 & 38-42).

Andrew Roushdy

Synergy and Salvation in Apostolic Literature: Examining Human Effort in Early Christian Soteriology

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live..." (Deuteronomy 30:19). The earliest Christian literature, far from rejecting the role of human effort in the Divine Economy of Salvation, insisted upon a synergistic framework of soteriology. God saves, but human will necessarily works in synergy with the Divine Will to participate in the Divine Economy of Salvation. By examining the literature attributed to the Holy Apostles: *The Teaching of the Lord to the 12 Holy Apostles*, *The Epistles of Saint Barnabas the Apostle*, etc., we find a corpus pleading with the Christian communities of the time to synergize their wills

with the Divine Will. It will be argued that this corpus of postbiblical literature scripturally expositis a soteriology centered upon sacramentalism and Divine-human synergy.

Peter John McGregor

Investigating the Historicity of the Gospels through Minor Characters and Unnecessary Details

The question of the historical reliability of the Gospels seems to be a perennial one. Richard Burridge has argued that the Gospels are not a unique form of literature, but belong to the genre of biography, one which was common in the Graeco-Roman world in which they were composed. Richard Bauckham has proposed that the Gospels embody the testimony of eyewitnesses and those close to these eyewitnesses. One particular point of Bauckham that has struck me forcefully is the importance of paying attention to those who could be called the “minor characters” of the narratives. Yet another thing that has recently drawn my attention when I read the Gospels is the phenomenon of what I would call “unnecessary details,” little things that could have been left out without any significant loss to the narratives. This paper will present some personal musings on these characters and details, and what they can teach us about the historicity of the Gospels.

Colten Cheuk-Yin Yam

Augustine and Julian on Animal concupiscence

The concept of concupiscence of the flesh played a pivotal role in the debate between Augustine and Julian of Eclanum during the final phase of the Pelagian controversies. While Julian maintains that concupiscence, including sexual desire, is natural to human nature, Augustine argues that it is a consequence of sin. Within this debate, a significant but understudied section (*Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum* 4.38-43) records Julian's use of animal concupiscence to defend the inherent goodness of sexual desire and Augustine's subsequent response. Their arguments centre on whether the physiological similarities between animals and humans can justify human concupiscence as a natural instinct. In this paper, I examine the arguments on both sides and analyze their philosophical traditions in interpreting the animals. The discussion offers valuable insights into how early Christians understood animal nature and conceptualized human uniqueness within the Christian context.

Edwina Murphy

Thomas D. McGlothlin

Physicalism, the Holy Spirit, and the General Resurrection in Athanasius

For Athanasius, how do the effects of the incarnation spread to other humans? This paper uses the general resurrection to explore this question in conversation with Ellen Scully's recent account in *Human Salvation in Early Christianity*. According to Scully, Christ's *representative* humanity guarantees universal resurrection (but not salvation) by scaring off death; yet Christ made universal salvation possible (but not guaranteed) by transforming human nature so that all can and do receive the deifying Holy Spirit internally—but, if unfaithful, only temporarily. This paper, however, asks: first, whether the “representative humanity” model is sufficient to

explain how Athanasius connected the incarnation to the general *resurrection*, given that the model explains death's avoidance better than its reversal; and, second, whether and why the Holy Spirit plays no role in Athanasius' theology of resurrection, given Rom. 8:11 and important parallels between Athanasius and Irenaeus, for whom the Spirit was central to resurrection.

Kevin Wagner

Philo of Alexandria's Reception of the Tabernacle Narrative (Exod. 25–30)

The Jewish exegete, Philo of Alexandria, lived and died during the time Jesus walked through the hills and villages of Palestine. Jean Danielou, in his classic work on Philo, highlights that Philo was placed “at the crossroad of Judaism, Hellenism, and Roman civilization.” In particular, we note that he stands within a tradition of Jewish exegetes who read Moses in the light of Greek philosophy. In this paper we will investigate how the intellectually cosmopolitan Philo read the Tabernacle narrative of Exodus 25–30, with the view to seeing how his interpretation might prove fruitful for believing Christians today.

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