

Aotearoa New Zealand Association for Biblical Studies

Annual Meeting, 6-7 December 2021

This is a virtual meeting, and registrants may access all the meeting sessions at the following link:

<https://laidlaw.zoom.us/j/82445105299?pwd=bERhV0JxejdPMEp3UUFPbVdseW1nZz09>

ANZABS 2021 Conference Timetable

Monday 6 December, 8.45-11 am

Mark Keown: *The Spirit as the “Cause” of Suffering in Paul*

Paul Trebilco: *The Human Heart, the Centre of a Person and the Holy Spirit (Gal 4:6; Rom 5:5 and 2 Cor 1:22)*

Chanki Shin: *Reconsidering Features and Functions of Greco-Roman Epistolary Body-Unit-Closings for Interpreting 1 Corinthians 4:14–21*

W.H. Chong: *Breaking · up · Berakah: A Delimitation-Critical Study of Ephesians 1:3-14*

Monday 6 December, 1.45-4pm

Emma Stokes: *Telling the whole story: the importance of Samaritans in the Gospel of Luke*

Kathleen Rushton: *Exploring the Name and Boundaries of the Land of Palestine/Israel in the Christian Biblical Imagination and its Implications*

Derek Tovey: *The Resurrection of Jesus as an item in reconstructing the historical Jesus*

Elliot Luo, *The Antichrist in Johannine Epistles*

Tuesday 7 December, 8.45-11 am

Tekweni Chataira: *African Biblical Scholarship and the Esther Narrative – An Overview*

Allan Bell and Tim Meadowcroft: *Shibboleth*

John de Jong: *Reflections on Teaching Biblical Hebrew Using the Communicative Language Teaching Approach*

[Annual General Meeting]

Tuesday 7 December, 1.45-4 pm

Richard Neville: *Forgiveness as an Expression of Kindness and Compassion in Ephesians 4:31-32*

Jonathan Robinson: *Latifundalization: The Housing Crisis in Biblical Prophecy, the New Testament, and 21st Century New Zealand*

Philip Church: *The Plymouth Brethren Christian Church and Separation from the (Evil) World*

Deane Galbraith: *Nephilim on the earth in these days: When the sons of the New Age went in to the daughters of Evangelical Christians*

Conference Abstracts

Allan Bell and Tim Meadowcroft: *Shibboleth*

Judges 12 tells how a small linguistic difference functioned as diagnostic of tribal identity, resulting in life or death depending on a fugitive's pronunciation. When Gileadites stopped defeated Ephraimite fighters at the fords of the Jordan, they used the word as a test: whether the fighter could produce the Gileadite palatalized fricative [ʃ] implied by the 'shibboleth' spelling, or respond with the Ephraimite alveolar [s] fricative, as if it were 'sibboleth'. This kind of fine phonetic difference is found in dialects around the world as a marker of identity distinction. The fords of the Jordan also function in the story as a linguistic Janus symbol; they are points of intersection which enable encounter and conflict. Our purpose in this paper is to unpack this incident in terms of both contemporary sociolinguistic findings and the broader linguistic environment of the Hebrew Bible.

Tekweni Chataira: *African Biblical Scholarship and the Esther Narrative – An Overview*

African female scholars recognize that, in addition to some biblical texts, "African cultures remain vibrant and authoritative texts in the lives of women..." (Musa Dube, 2001, p1). Hence, they call for approaches and reinterpretations that are liberating for women and their communities. This oral presentation is an overview of my literature review of Esther studies from various African contexts. Crucial to this outline will be the establishment of hermeneutical approaches employed as well as the addressed key themes. It concludes with a proposal of *seMadzimai*, a womanist and Zimbabwean interpretive approach to reading the Bible which I am currently formulating. *SeMadzimai* in the Shona language means 'as/like/with women'. Once formulated, *seMadzimai* will be employed to interpret the Esther narrative while drawing from the Zimbabwean cultural context.

W.H. Chong: *Breaking · up · Berakah: A Delimitation-Critical Study of Ephesians 1:3-14*

This paper presents initial findings of a diachronic study of the opening lines of Ephesians, particularly the 202-word "monstrosity" found in Eph 1:3–14. This *berakah* has been divided into sense-units in the earliest New Testament manuscripts (NT MSS), subsequent copies, printed editions and commentators ancient and modern. It is argued that reading Eph 1:3-14 with an awareness of these textual divisions contributes to our understanding and interpretation of the passage. A delimitation-aware reading also raises implications for understanding the nature and relationship between text, paratext, and Scripture itself.

Philip Church: *The Plymouth Brethren Christian Church and Separation from the (Evil) World*

Separation from the (evil) world based on 2 Tim 2:19–21 is a defining characteristic of Exclusive Brethrenism, both in its most extreme form, the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church (PBCC) and in other Exclusive Brethren groups. I examine this text in its context and note the varieties of ethical injunctions present and the form they take. I then critically assess

John Nelson Darby's reading of this text, working from his translation and comments elsewhere in his writings. I conclude that he misread the text as separation from "evil" people rather than avoidance of wrongdoing. Darby's followers have concentrated on the deontological commands in the text, introduced their own teleological reasoning and overlooked the virtues that the text encourages the Lord's servant to portray.

John de Jong: *Reflections on Teaching Biblical Hebrew Using the Communicative Language Teaching Approach*

At last year's ANZABS conference, Julia van den Brink and I presented a paper on teaching the biblical languages using the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. The CLT approach is markedly different to the Grammar-Translation (GT) approach, which has traditionally been the way biblical languages have been taught at our institutions. This year, I have taught Hebrew 1 and 2 using the material developed by the Biblical Language Center (BLC), which has pioneered the CLT approach for the biblical languages. This is the first time biblical Hebrew has been taught using the BLC material in Aotearoa New Zealand. I will reflect upon the strengths, weaknesses and challenges this way of teaching has presented, with reference to my previous fifteen years' experience of using the GT approach.

Deane Galbraith: *Nephilim on the earth in these days: When the sons of the New Age went in to the daughters of Evangelical Christians*

Michael Barkun coined the term "improvisational millennialism" for those combinations of seemingly incompatible religious and esoteric knowledge "characterized by relentless and seemingly indiscriminate borrowing". Over the last two decades, popular writers such as Tom Horn, L.A. Marzulli, Rob Skiba, and Steve Quayle have developed apocalyptic schemas that centre on the return of the Nephilim mentioned in Gen 6:1-4. Their return is usually understood to be orchestrated by a global elite who have recovered or recreated Nephilim DNA. Although ostensibly based on a dispensationalist Evangelical framework, the Nephilim conspiracy theorists have also drawn eclectically from New Age and other esoteric ideas and practices, utilising the common language and concerns of conspiracy theory culture.

Mark Keown: *The Spirit as the "Cause" of Suffering in Paul*

Commonly, when discussing the role of the Spirit in the life of the believer, the focus is on the positive role of the Spirit in the world, conversion, formation, ministry, church life, mission, and eschatology. Concerning suffering, again the Spirit's role is generally viewed positively. The Spirit intercedes for the believer and strengthens them in suffering enabling them to persevere, experience joy, and to hope. Yet, in Paul's pneumatology, there are other "negative" dimensions to the Spirit's role in the believer. These will be discussed in this paper. First, my approach to discerning "Spirit-texts" in Paul will be explained. Second, I will outline the way in which the Spirit "causes" suffering in the life of believers.

Elliot Luo, *The Antichrist in Johannine Epistles*

The Antichrist in Johannine Epistles is a significant figure for Christian eschatology, and it has long been interpreted in line with the conventional interpretation of Antichrist under the influence of other Scriptures including the Book of Revelation. However, such interpretation does not fit the context of the Epistles. In fact, the author of the Epistles invented this word in order to describe the group of secessionists in Johannine Community out of his theology with dualistic feature. It is only in later period that the implication of this word was extended to include mystical motifs such as monsters and Satan. Therefore, the Antichrist in Johannine Epistles is actually different from the Antichrist appeared in the later Christianity and accepted by general Christians.

Richard Neville: *Forgiveness as an Expression of Kindness and Compassion in Ephesians 4:31-32*

Ephesians 4:31 says to put away “all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice” (NRSV). Instead, the recipients of the letter are to be kind, compassionate and forgiving (4:32). This paper investigates why Paul chose to list these particular virtues. For the most part commentators think that, in contrast to the vices Paul has just listed, these virtues are “conducive to communal living” (Lincoln). However, this study shows that in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple texts forgiveness was understood to be an expression of kindness and compassion.

Jonathan Robinson: *Latifundalization: The Housing Crisis in Biblical Prophecy, the New Testament, and 21st Century New Zealand*

This paper will examine the *status quaestionis* of housing and land poverty caused by economic inequality in both Hebrew and Greek Testaments. It will seek to outline both the socio-economic context and ethical-theological response of the scriptures in regard to housing poverty. Questions of contemporary relevance will also be addressed. What parallels and contrasts are there with today's acknowledged housing crisis in Aotearoa New Zealand? What word might the Biblical authors speak to our present day crisis? And, How can faith communities engage the scriptural word in their own response to housing poverty?

Kathleen Rushton: *Exploring the Name and Boundaries of the Land of Palestine/Israel in the Christian Biblical Imagination and its Implications*

Christians have had a painful journey to come to terms with the extent of anti-Jewish biblical and theological interpretation. Such awareness may be a contributing factor to the silence of Churches ecumenically on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Without disregarding the complexity and intricacy of this conflict, this paper seeks to raise questions about what we as Christians carry in our religious imagination about the boundaries of the Land of Jesus and his Jewish ancestors. Does this match the evidence of historical and archaeological sources? How may the Christian religious imagination have contributed to the unjust occupation of the Land today? As biblical interpreters, how can we participant in the dialogue for promoting a just and sustainable solution to the conflict?

Chanki Shin: *Reconsidering Features and Functions of Greco-Roman Epistolary Body-Unit-Closings for Interpreting 1 Corinthians 4:14–21*

Interpretive possibilities of John L. White's argument that 1 Corinthians 4:14–21 is an epistolary body-unit-closing, for understanding the function and purpose of Paul's fatherhood in 4:14–21 have remained neglected in the 1 Corinthians scholarship for nearly half a century. This paper explores those possibilities by first discussing several features and functions of Greco-Roman epistolary body-unit-closings, and then interpreting parts of 4:14–21 in light of such features and functions. The paper suggests that the explored possibilities contribute to elucidating the significance of Paul's strategic utilization of an epistolary body-unit-closing as the locus of the aforementioned function and purpose.

Emma Stokes: *Telling the whole story: the importance of Samaritans in the Gospel of Luke*

The Samaritan characters in the Gospel of Luke are frequently maligned, often misunderstood and sometimes entirely overlooked. In this paper I will argue that the Samaritans are not only important in the Lukan story world, but that they are an essential component in the Lukan scheme of the restoration of Israel. It is not just that Luke chose to include Samaritan material in his Gospel, but that he couldn't tell his story without them.

Derek Tovey: *The Resurrection of Jesus as an item in reconstructing the historical Jesus*

The resurrection of Jesus must be the starting point for, and integrated into, an account of the historical Jesus. I argue that the resurrection is the catalyst for the history of Jesus, and must be, therefore, taken into account. The warrants for this are:

1. A coherent, believable time-frame for the development of the early church's belief in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God requires this. Furthermore, the disjunction between pre-Easter Jesus and post-Easter Jesus raises the question: Why Jesus?
2. The interpretive function of history allows for the inclusion of the resurrection in a reconstruction of the historical Jesus.

Paul Trebilco: *The Human Heart, the Centre of a Person and the Holy Spirit (Gal 4:6; Rom 5:5 and 2 Cor 1:22)*

Different languages associate parts of the body with different functions. In the New Testament, the heart is the centre of the inner life, including the understanding, emotions, will and spiritual life. This is in contrast to contemporary English, where the heart is most strongly associated with the emotions alone. When Paul writes of the Spirit in connection with the human heart in Galatians 4:6, Romans 5:5 and 2 Corinthians 1:22, we can see in context that he is not simply thinking of the heart as the centre of emotions, but also as the centre of thinking, understanding, volition and decision-making. Accordingly, contemporary readers risk misunderstanding the depths of what Paul is saying in these verses.