

**The 379th Meeting of
The Chicago Society of Biblical Research
October 20, 2018, 2:45 p.m.
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago**

Abstracts

Adela Yarbro Collins, Yale University

“Ancient Christians on Marriage and Celibacy”

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The lecture begins with a discussion of 1 Corinthians 7 from the points of view of Paul and his first audience. The focus is on the parts of this chapter that treat the question of whether to marry and on the role of marriage and sexual relations in the social context of the letter. The relation of Paul’s advice to Stoic and Cynic teaching about these issues is explored. The second part of the lecture considers interpretations of 1 Corinthians 7 in the early church, in particular those of Tatian, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian. These readings are shaped by the circumstances in which they were written and discussed from that perspective and not in terms of the question whether their use of 1 Corinthians 7 is “right” or “wrong.”

Stephen Chester, North Park University

“‘Consider yourselves dead’ (Rom 6:11): Biographical Re-Construction, Conversion, and the Death of the Self in Romans”

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It is widely noted within conversion studies that converts characteristically reconstruct their biographies, reinterpreting their past life in light of the present. One of the most common ways of doing this, found across a great variety of religious traditions, is to characterize conversion as involving death and re-birth. An old self, now negatively assessed by the convert, must die in order that the new, converted self might live. In Romans 6-8, Paul makes extensive use of such imagery, but with some unusual twists. In particular, although believers have been crucified with Christ in baptism and walk in newness of life, the death of the self that is involved continues as a present reality. It is not exclusively the prelude to new life. Rather, believers are instructed to “consider yourselves dead to sin” (6:11, see also 8:13). They must in this specific way embrace the death of the self as a continuing, permanent, and positive aspect of their existence in Christ. Such reckoning of the self as dead to sin constitutes for Paul the appropriate human response to the divine reckoning involved in justification from sin (6:7), something which is itself ritually embodied in the act of baptism. This paper explores this distinctive aspect of Paul’s treatment of the death of the self, comparing it with similar themes in other ancient Mediterranean traditions and bringing it into dialog with recent studies of conversion.

John J. Collins, Yale University

“Social Ethics in Apocalyptic Perspective. The Epistle of Enoch and the New Testament.”

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In the Hebrew Bible, material prosperity is promised in the blessings of the covenant. Such prosperity is the ideal for the people of God. There is no virtue in poverty.

In the apocalyptic writings, and also in the New Testament, this is no longer the case. The Gospel of Matthew puts the matter clearly:

Do not store up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matt 6:19-21).

This is a different ideal from that of Deuteronomy. It is not necessarily more patient of injustice in this world, but it is grounded in detachment rather than earthly ambition. Whether the apocalyptic/Christian ideal is an improvement on its Jewish forebear in this respect is open to debate.