

**The 385th Meeting of
The Chicago Society of Biblical Research
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Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago**

Abstracts

Theodore Hiebert, McCormick Theological Seminary

“The Book of Genesis as Migration Literature”

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The book of Genesis is a collection of migration stories through which Israel’s historians construct a migrant identity for themselves and their people within their origin traditions. In the history of its interpretation, for a variety of reasons, Genesis’s readers and commentators have largely missed this fact. In this presentation, I want to lay out a path toward recovering Israel’s migrant identity in its origin traditions in Genesis.

Eunyoung Lim, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

“Entering God’s Kingdom (Not) Like A Little Child”

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What does it mean to be “like a child” in antiquity? How did early Christ-followers use a childlike condition to articulate concrete qualifications for God’s kingdom? In today’s Christian ministry and theological discourses, it is not difficult to find people quoting Jesus’s welcoming of little children, particularly as a way of providing biblical grounds for advocating for children’s well-being. Despite their noble intentions, however, preachers and scholars have not given proper attention to the diversity, differences, and general messiness that characterize ancient historical and religious data about children. Rather, many people often romanticize Jesus’s sayings about children and God’s kingdom against the backdrop of the ancient world or project modern Christian assumptions about the innocence of the child onto early Christian literature. Problematizing this interpretive tendency, *Entering God’s Kingdom (Not) Like A Little Child* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2021) examines imagery of the child used in the Gospel of Matthew, 1 Corinthians, and the Gospel of Thomas vis-à-vis a set of philosophical, historical, and archaeological materials concerning ancient children, thereby presenting a socio-cultural context in which to understand the childlikeness each text distinctively promotes. Calling the modern reader’s attention to young children’s socio-political utility, intellectual incapability, and non-gendered state in ancient intellectual thought and everyday practices, this book illuminates how the three texts present no one uniform understanding of childlikeness but deploy various aspects of children to envision ideal human qualities or bodily forms. In turn, it sheds new light on the rich and diverse theological visions that early Christ-followers pursued by means of images of children.

Christine Shea, Ball State University

“Parables Repurposed: A Few Examples of Cultural Cooptation in Early Christian Texts”

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When we put ourselves to recapturing what the works of the Jesus movement may owe to the works of other Mediterranean cultural groups, we often focus on the impact of a whole work on the thought of the Christian commentators. But it often seems to be that some appealing narrative nugget—a pagan parable, we might call it—circulates independently of, and sometimes even in contradiction to, the larger work it graces. This paper will discuss how the cooptation and translation of a few of these pagan parables informed the rhetorical techniques and philosophical speculations of some early Christian writings.