

**The 383<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of  
The Chicago Society of Biblical Research  
January 25, 2020, 2:45 p.m.  
Catholic Theological Union**

***Abstracts***

**Laurie Brink**, Catholic Theological Union

**“Texts & Artifacts in Conversation: Reconstructing the Cultural Horizon for Lucan Soldiers”**

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If we endeavor to retrieve the earliest stratum of emergent Christianity, we must begin with the texts. However, if we hope to understand the backdrop against which that those texts were written and read, we turn to the material evidence and archaeological finds, which provide a multi-dimensional access to the ancient world. But how might this bevy of material culture contribute to our understanding of New Testament texts? I propose that we have recourse to what Hans-Josef Klauck calls the “horizon of cultural knowledge.” Readers or in the case of an ancient audience—auditors—must have knowledge of the cultural context so as to make sense of the text, particularly in the process of characterization. This presentation intends to build the cultural horizon with which Luke could presume his audience was familiar by comparing contemporaneous literature, analyzing coinage, and exploring inscriptions. It is against this backdrop that the ancient auditor compared the soldiers in Luke-Acts and participated the character-building process. Thus, archaeological evidence isn’t simply illustrative of a particular aspect in the narrative. Material culture can actually help to build the backdrop against which the text can be read and understood.

**Jordan Ryan**, Wheaton College

**“The Magdala Synagogue: Layout, Context, Functions, and Relevance to the Study of Early Judaism and Christian Origins”**

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In 2009, a salvage excavation uncovered a structure that was identified by the excavators as a synagogue building dating to the Early Roman period. Subsequently, a sustained excavation and study of the areas surrounding the synagogue were undertaken by an international team under the direction of Marcela Zapata-Meza of the Universidad Anáhuac México Sur, of which the present author has been a member since 2012. This paper is concerned with analysis and interpretation of the extant remains of the Magdala synagogue, to present theories pertaining to its layout and reconstruction, and to discuss the potential significance of this discovery and other recent synagogue discoveries to the study of early Judaism and Christian origins. This paper supports the excavators’ identification of the building as a synagogue, as well as the date that they have assigned for its later phases. However, there is reason to question the current reconstruction of the layout of the synagogue, and to suggest that an entrance was located on the south side of the synagogue, and that it is unlikely that there was an entrance on the west side.

**Leslie Hoppe**, Catholic Theological Union

**“Teams, Technology and Microarchaeology: Recent Developments in Biblical Archaeology”**

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Biblical archaeology has undergone significant changes because of the developments in technology that have had consequences for both excavation and interpretation. This presentation will illustrate these developments by reviewing the results of the Sea of Galilee project that attempted to address the issue of the Late Bronze Age collapse in Canaan.