

THE 2024 STUDENT RELIGIOUS STUDIES CONFERENCE
Sponsored by
The Chicago Society of Biblical Research &
The Catholic Biblical Association of America

March 15, 2023
Saint Mary's College
Notre Dame, IN

Friday, March 15

9:30 – 10:15 a.m. Registration and Coffee Reception Spes Unica

10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. SESSION ONE

Chair: Matthew Lambert, University of Notre Dame (mlamber8@nd.edu) **Spes Unica 137**

Nathan Abdy, Louisiana State University
The Translation Character of the Peshitta of Habakkuk

Daniel Dicken, Anderson University (IN)
The Sufficiency of ἵψ: Why the Greek Text Uses ἵκανός in Ruth and Job

Jeremias D. Zuniga, Wesley Seminary
Elohim the Uncontested

Chair: Scott Harris, Knox College (saharris@knox.edu) **Spes Unica 135**

Rudy Vazquez, Rockford University
Reading 2 Kings 3: Reconciling the Loss

Erin Graminske, Rockford University
Circumcision as a Means to Murder: A Righteous Ritual in a Deceitful Act

Kay Broun, Loyola University Chicago
What's Up With Snakes? A Borderline Heretical Narrative Criticism of Genesis 3 and the Role of the Serpent in the Fall of Man

12:00-1:30 p.m. LUNCH BREAK

1:45-2:45 p.m.

SESSION TWO

Chair: Maria Sermersheim, University of Notre Dame (msermers@nd.edu) **Spes Unica 137**

Brandon Roberts, Knox College

Less Than One: Righteous Eunuchs and Lacking Husbands in Matthew 19

Morgan Fuksa, Loyola University Chicago

Whores Galore! The Use of Women's Bodies in Identity and Nation-Making in Prophetic Literature

Chair: Mark Lester, Loyola University Chicago (mlester2@luc.edu)

Spes Unica 135

Lucie Pitt, Loyola University Chicago

Poetic Pillow Talk: A Feminist Reading of Song of Songs 7:1-13

Rebekah W. Vick, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry

Female Fertility Imagery in St. Paul's Epistle of Life

Chair: Jon Hatter, Loyola University Chicago (jhatter@luc.edu)

Spes Unica 145

Fionn Meehan, Knox College

Heroes of Today and Tomorrow

Kyle Horn, Knox College

Care for the "Lazaruses" in your Communities: The Ethical Teachings of Jesus

3:00-4:30 p.m.

SESSION THREE

Chair: Fabio Caruso, Loyola University Chicago (fcaruso@luc.ed)

Spes Unica 145

Kamana'okekai Lattig, Knox College

MOTHER HUBBARD TO MU'UMU'U: A glimpse of the influence of Christian Missionaries on Hawaiian culture

Alexa Custer, Knox University

Breaking Cycles: Rituals and Repetition in Firewatch, Buddhism, and the Journey through Grief

Carl T. Knaack, University of Wisconsin - Madison

Remez and Allegorical Techniques Stemming from Romantic Language in A Serious Man (2009)

5:00 p.m.

DINNER

Spes Unica 135

ABSTRACTS

Nathan Abdy, Louisiana State University
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The Translation Character of the Peshitta of Habakkuk

The purpose of this paper is to describe the translation character of the Peshitta of Habakkuk for both those interested in translation itself and those interested in textual criticism.

Translation character is the description of the translation that the Peshitta of Habakkuk is, taking all its translation related features into account. This paper will use methodologies from the field of translation studies in order to describe the translation character of the Peshitta of Habakkuk.

Kay Broun, Loyola University Chicago
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What's Up With Snakes? A Borderline Heretical Narrative Criticism of Genesis 3 and the Role of the Serpent in the Fall of Man

The goal of this paper is to further a narrative understanding of Genesis 3, the story of the Fall of Man in the Hebrew Bible, through the lens of the character of the serpent. By drawing on biblical commentaries, journal articles, and various interpretive works, and examining the roles and characterization of serpents in similar literature, including the Epic of Gilgamesh, I conclude that the serpent is placed in the archetypal role of a trickster by God to operate outside the bounds of the story, and that therefore, the serpent functions as an agent of God in the narrative.

Alexa Custer, Knox University
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Breaking Cycles: Rituals and Repetition in Firewatch, Buddhism, and the Journey through Grief

The concepts of repetition, ritual, and gamification are intertwined in the game Firewatch, Buddhist practice, and the experience of grief. In this paper, I investigate the ritual aspects of Buddhism, specifically focusing on the Samsaric cycle and other, short-term rituals aimed at breaking free from repetitive cycles. I argue that there is a difference between implementing gamification in daily rituals with intention and without intention from the individual. The potential outcome from both has effects on both short-term rewards, like material belongings, and long-term goals, such as reaching Nirvana.

Daniel Dicken, Anderson University (IN)
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The Sufficiency of ἵκανός: Why the Greek Text Uses ἵκανός in Ruth and Job

The Lord is the Almighty. Of the many titles used for the Lord in the Hebrew Bible, יהוה is the name used to describe Him as such. Yet in the Greek Old Testament, of the nearly fifty occurrences of יהוה in the Hebrew text, the authors use ικανός (sufficient) in only five of them, all of which are found in Ruth and Job alone. Among several options for the semantic direction of יהוה, the most likely stems from יהוה, meaning “he who is sufficient,” which then may explain why the Greek authors would translate using ικανός in these passages.

Morgan Fuksa, Loyola University Chicago

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Whores Galore! The Use of Women’s Bodies in Identity and Nation-Making in Prophetic Literature

The use of women’s bodies has been vital in building (or rebuilding) a nation, alongside an accompanying national identity. Hebrew Bible prophetic literature has been instrumental in utilizing women’s malleable bodies to inflict various roles and identities onto women to redirect Israel’s spirituality, thus creating/rebuilding a new nation and identity. Therefore, one must question the implications that the authors of Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel had in depending almost exclusively on women’s bodies, projecting language of violence, rape poetics, and siege warfare as a means to cohesively shape and build a new Israel.

Erin Graminske, Rockford University

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Circumcision as a Means to Murder: A Righteous Ritual in a Deceitful Act

Chapter 34 of Genesis is often known as the rape of Dinah. This paper will investigate the function and implications of the ritual of circumcision as a weapon of war from a narrative-critical perspective. The narrative of the rape of Dinah raises many questions. Within the pericope, does Jacob condemn his sons’ actions? Was it sacrilegious for Simeon and Levi to use circumcision to weaken and kill the Shechemites? Was this a righteous act? Were the murders committed by Simeon and Levi sanctioned by God?

Kyle Horn, Knox College

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Care for the “Lazaruses” in your Communities: The Ethical Teachings of Jesus

In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus is a vocal advocate for those suffering poverty and social outcasts. This paper argues that a class-conscious lens is central to understanding the ethical teachings of Jesus. Through parables, Jesus, teaches his followers to love their neighbors and to be compassionate and help the poor. The message can sometimes be hindered in parables like “the Ten Talents,” with slave exploitation, which is why a class-conscious lens is necessary to understand the full picture of Jesus’s ministry and other parables, enhancing the intended message of doing good deeds to help others.

Carl T. Knaack, University of Wisconsin - Madison
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Remez and Allegorical Techniques Stemming from Romantic Language in A Serious Man (2009)
A Serious Man (Coen, Joel and Ethan Coen, 2009) contains a dialogue between two characters, an aged Rabbi and a young man who had just undergone his Bar Mitzvah. In this dialogue the Rabbi paraphrases “Somebody to Love” by Jefferson Airplane. This enigmatic dialogue can be understood when it is placed within its broader tradition, namely the allegorical interpretation of romantic language within Zoharic and Kabbalist scholarship. Allegorization allows romantic language to become metaphors for both philosophical and theological ‘truths.’ This scene enables brief suggestions to be made regarding the impact of Kabbalist thinking within the modern Jewish-American experience.

Kamana‘okekai Lattig, Knox College
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MOTHER HUBBARD TO MU‘UMU‘U: A glimpse of the influence of Christian Missionaries on Hawaiian culture

Before the arrival of Christian missionaries from America, Hawai‘i flourished as an independent nation. A singular cultural identity didn’t exist because each island had its own traditions. The missions to Hawai‘i resulted in the migration of various ethnic groups that had little in common besides being forced to assimilate to Christian moral standards. This paper looks at the evolution of the mu‘umu‘u, a garment implemented by American missionaries, to understand why it is a staple of Hawaiian culture. I illustrate changes the mu‘umu‘u has undergone and the extent to which Christian dress standards impacted the cultural identity of Hawai‘i as a state.

Fionn Meehan, Knox College
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Heroes of Today and Tomorrow

This paper helps explore the connection between the famous fictional popular culture superhero Superman and the major religious figure Jesus Christ. At first glance, these two figures seem very unrelated and distant; however, both popular culture figures play influential roles in our modern-day society by imparting essential values and life lessons through their stories. Through these many adaptations of these two figures, there have been many changes and different meanings, helping to expand the impact and meaning these iconic figures have on individuals and popular culture.

Lucie Pitt, Loyola University Chicago
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Poetic Pillow Talk: A Feminist Reading of Song of Songs 7:1-13

In "Poetic Pillow Talk: A Feminist Reading of Song of Songs 7:1-13", Pitt examines the sexual practices within the ancient Near East, explores the genre of wasf poetry, and highlights the importance of the female voice within the text through a biblical feminist lens. Pitt interprets the ideas of non-procreative sex for pleasure and a deeper understanding of how feminine pleasure is emphasized within the text.

Brandon Roberts, Knox College
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Less Than One: Righteous Eunuchs and Lacking Husbands in Matthew 19

In Matthew 19:12, we find one of Jesus's most enigmatic teachings: "there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can." Found at the conclusion of a teaching on divorce, Jesus presents the eunuch as an explicit reckoning with the salvific consequences of the body, a body which is necessarily, and indeed piously, lacking. To understand "the kingdom of heaven" according to Jesus we too must reckon with the eunuch and his body, a body whose castration (both literal and symbolic) is the key to righteousness.

Rudy Vazquez, Rockford University
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Reading 2 Kings 3: Reconciling the Loss

2 Kings 3 preserves a story of the Israelite coalition's fight against Moab's rebellion, guided by Elisha's prophecy. Academic discourse examines contrasting views: Raymond Westbrook suggests Jehoram's misinterpretation led to defeat, while Jesse C. Long Jr. links the narrative to earlier contexts in 1 Kings. Rachelle Gilmour's analysis highlights the narrative tension between anticipation and historical outcomes in storytelling. This paper argues for holistic understanding, recognizing the intricate narrative construction and interpretive challenges which come with biblical analysis. In exploring the text's layers within its literary and historical context, the text offers insights into ancient storytelling and narrative.

Rebekah W. Vick, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry
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Female Fertility Imagery in St. Paul's Epistle of Life

When read through an apocalyptic lens, the Letter to the Romans contains many pairs of antitheses: the law versus πίστις Χριστοῦ, Adam versus Christ, death versus life. In this presentation, I will propose an additional pair: Where circumcision is presented as bodily imagery of the law that brings death, the child-bearing womb is presented as imagery of the God of life. I will investigate four pericopes where Paul specifically makes reference to

female fertility, and one place where he conspicuously does not, in order to show that Paul uses imagery of the womb to highlight the life-giving character of God.

Jeremias D. Zuniga, Wesley Seminary
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Elohim the Uncontested

This paper explores the theological message of Genesis 1:1-5. It notes how *bārā 'ēlōhîm* indicates ancient Israel's God exists alone and without competitor, then examines the Decalogue's textual parameters, where Israel becomes YHWH 'ēlōhîm's people, as he claimed divine rights because of his unique status as the uncontested creator-God of all. Further, it demonstrates that the Decalogue's use of Genesis 1:1-5 was foundational for future worship in ancient Israel, as its structure forms an early chiasmus that the Psalter appropriates in Psalm 8. Finally, it will observe distinctions between ancient Israel and their neighbors when approaching cosmology and the divine.

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Lauren O'Connell, Loyola University Chicago, SRSC Coordinator