



CANADIAN SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL STUDIES
SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE DES ÉTUDES BIBLIQUES

(Fourth draft: March 23, 2026)

***A final version of the programme will be sent out later, with all the session locations added.**

Wednesday, May 27

3:00-6:00 p.m. (ROOM) EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, May 28

Thursday 9:00-11:55 a.m. (ROOM)
Creating Ancient Hebrew Literature
Presiding: Mark Leuchter (Temple University)

- 9:00-9:30 Randall M. Shandroski (Wycliffe College, University of Toronto)
A Re-examination of Proverbs' Theory of Knowledge: A Critical Interaction with "The Epistemology of the Book of Proverbs" by Michael V. Fox
Michael V. Fox sets forth that "although knowledge...is at the center of Proverbs' concern, little is said [in the book] about how knowledge is created, where it comes from, and how truth-claims are verified" (669). Despite this, Fox argues that the authors must have been working under an implicit epistemology. After challenging empiricism—the scholarly consensus—he champions a coherence theory of knowledge as the book's implicit epistemology. This paper will critically interact with Fox's analysis and outcomes but also expand his findings in an attempt to present a more comprehensive framework of Proverbs' epistemology from its own perspective.
- 9:30-10:00 Michael B. Johnson (Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)
Just How 'Hodayot-like' is 1QS 9–11? A Generic Reassessment of the 'Maskil Hymn' in 1QS
Eleazar Sukenik already observed in 1947–1948 that the first-person poetic composition attributed to the Maskil in 1QS 9:26–11:22 closely resembles the sectarian hymns later known as the Hodayot. Although this observation has been widely accepted and repeatedly reaffirmed, the Maskil hymn has rarely been examined in its own right and has never been subjected to sustained, methodologically reflective genre analysis. This paper reassesses the claim that the composition is "Hodayot-like" by applying the genre-analytical method developed in my dissertation, "Reassessing the Genres of the Hodayot." By situating the Maskil hymn within the range of genres

attested in the Hodayot and identifying the formal and rhetorical features that distinguish it from that corpus, the paper clarifies both its continuity with the Hodayot tradition and its generic innovation.

10:00-10:30 Break

10:30-11:00 Carol Xu (Wycliffe College, University of Toronto)

Who Has Shared the Burden of Moses as Judge?

Michael LeFebvre argues that dynamic oracle, not static texts, was perceived as the source of jurisprudence for Israel's court system. At this point, I agree with him that dynamic oracles are part of the jurisprudence of Israel that had practical application. However, he further concludes that ancient Israel's written law had no practical function in the judicial system, and these static written laws were idyllic rather than legislative. Are dynamic oracles and static texts completely unrelated? Are the static texts, as written law, which were recorded as divine statutes, laws, and decrees derived from previous oracles, not used in the court system? From wilderness to Canaan, from monarchy to exile, from exile to return, the written law's practical function in the judicial system of ancient Israel has left us with many puzzles. This paper aims to examine the practical application of the Israelites' written law in the court system by tracing the role and responsibilities of judges in ancient Israel and their evolution from Moses to Ezra, through a textual analysis of four descriptions from four different narrative contexts in Exod. 18:13–17, Deut. 17:8–13, 2 Chr. 19:5–11, and Ezra 7:25–26. This paper works with the received canonical text. By examining the final form of the text, this paper seeks evidence of divine oracles incorporated into the written law. My argument is that the ancient Israelites' written law was originally divine oracles in textual form and also served a practical role in the justice system, especially in simple cases from Moses onward.

11:00-11:30 Ehud Ben Zvi (University of Alberta)

What does the Reference to Samuel the Prophet Contribute to the Memory and Significance of Josiah and Josiah's Passover in Chronicles?

What did the reference to 'Samuel the Prophet' in 2 Chr 35:18 do for the early Second Temple literati reading the book, and imagining their past? Did it have any influence on how they construed the significance of Josiah's Passover, one of the highest points of the monarchic period they remembered? Is Samuel mentioned in Chronicles merely to indicate a specific historical period? Or did evoking his memory carry much deeper significance, given how these literati remembered Samuel?

11:30-11:55 General Discussion

Thursday 9:00-11:30 a.m. (ROOM)
Destruction and Desire
Presiding: Laura Hare (University of Toronto)

9:00-9:30 W. Derek Suderman (Conrad Grebel/University of Waterloo)

Patient Expectation or Militaristic Hope: A Rhetorical and Intertextual Reading of Habakkuk's Psalm

While scholars have long recognized that Habakkuk 3 is a psalm laden with mythological elements, less attention has been paid to the rhetorical flow of the passage. By attending to shifts in address between speech to God and address to an apparently social audience as well as noting key inter-

textual links with various psalms, this paper considers whether Habakkuk concludes with a peaceful statement of trust embodied in the image of a frolicking deer “reflect(ing) the skipping joy of the psalmist” (David Baker, TOTC) or with the hope of military domination over the brutal adversary, with God’s help.

9:30-10:00 Katie Maguire (University of Toronto)

Affects of War

How has the concept of war shaped the early Jewish liturgical imagination? In this study, I will explore this question by considering the affective dimensions of war in a selection of Qumranic liturgical traditions. Building on Angela Kim Harkins’ work on embodied cognition and enactive reading, the study considers how individuals are affectively shaped through their engagement with liturgical texts. I am specifically interested in the potential of literary representations of war – ranging broadly from the traumas of military defeat to the exhilarations of triumph – to elicit strong emotional responses from liturgical participants. The paper will explore how early Jewish liturgical traditions strategically deploy different kinds of martial imagery in order to mediate and structure experiences of fear, vulnerability, enmity, confidence, and even Schadenfreude in the reader/hearer.

10:00-10:30 Break

10:30-11:00 Mark J. Boda (McMaster Divinity College)

Hearing Voices: Reengaging a Community in Protest, Penitence and Pain

The book of Lamentations showcases a series of poems connected to a community living in the aftermath of the fall of Jerusalem. The book leads both readers and supplicants on a subtle journey by creatively introducing and intertwining various voices designed to engage those suffering in honest expression. Two voices can be found at the outset (Prophet, City; Lam 1–2) but these voices ultimately are taken over by the voice of the community as a whole (Lam 5). Intratextual connections between these voices highlight this strategy as the community’s voice emerges increasingly in Lam 3–5. Attention will be given to the overall poetic shape of the book of Lamentations with some focus on the dynamics of Lam 3 which has often mystified interpreters.

11:00-11:30 General Discussion

Thursday 9:00-11:45 a.m. (ROOM)
LEAF Panel (co-hosted by the Innovative Approaches and Nonhuman Beings Special Sessions)
Presiding: Rhiannon Graybill (University of Richmond)

9:00-9:30 Laura Kassir (Université de Montréal)

A landmark of hesitation: a feminist critical phenomenological reading of the pillar of salt in Genesis 19:26

This paper investigates the pillar of salt in Genesis 19:26, often referred to as “Lot’s wife”. Building on feminist critical approaches in phenomenology attentive to movements of the body (Al-Saji 2010, 2012, 2017; Casselot 2018; Young 1980), I will argue for a reading of the pillar of salt in its relation to the embodied experience of hesitation within the context of forced migration. I will then reflect on the pillar of salt as a paradoxical geological landmark, with the term “landmark” referring simultaneously to a distinctive feature of the landscape and to a deliberately created monument. From the perspective of the landscape, I will suggest the pillar of salt remembers an instance of doubt, crystallizing an otherwise fleeting and untenable state. Furthermore, I will reflect on how considering the pillar of salt in Genesis 19 as a landmark might

produce an alternative reading of Lot's Wife as a significant material marker of migration and mourning.

9:30-10:00 Heather Macumber (Providence University College)

Anomalous Bodies and Female Monsters

Female hybrid monsters feature prominently in ancient mythologies from Lamashtu to Medusa. Indeed, the plethora of female monsters in Greek mythology in particular showcases Barbara Creed's theory of the "monstrous-feminine" where male anxieties about women (and their bodies) are mapped onto these monstrous creations. In comparison, the most prominent monsters of early Jewish and Christian texts are masculine (e.g. Leviathan, Behemoth, Red Dragon, etc); however, there are a limited number of female/animal monsters hidden in the recesses. In this paper, I examine the representation and function of the stork women of Zech 5, the locusts of Rev 9, and the sirens (the wives of the fallen watchers) in the Greek tradition of 1 Enoch. I argue that that these hybrid monsters do not neatly fit into the category of the "monstrous-feminine" as they are neither overtly abjected nor vilified in the texts. Like all monsters they participate in a confusion of categories as evidenced by their contradictory reception in later scholarship.

10:00-10:30 Break

10:30-11:00 Fiona Black (Mount Allison University)

Coming in from the Garden: Biblical "Landedness" in Conversation with Indigenous Ways of Knowing

Using the mundane hobby of gardening as a starting point, this paper considers *Land* conceptually, symbolically, and affectively. A dominant theme in the HB, like others I have spent years tracing Israel's relationship to "the land" with first-year students. However, reading Indigenous writers such as Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, Joshua Whitehead, and Jordan Abel has increasingly unsettled me, particularly regarding how—and whether—we should approach this concept as settler biblical scholars. I am curious about how the biblical promised land, in its very *landedness*, appears to be largely unexamined in our discipline. Scholarship has tended to privilege historical reconstruction and geopolitical realities. It also incorporates literary analyses of land, even at times exploring more subjective relationships to geography through personal connection. Yet these approaches remain framed by Western conceptions of land as something acquired, possessed, cultivated, and owned. In response, this paper deliberately goes "free-range," allowing other ways of knowing and thinking with land to disrupt our disciplinary defaults. I first survey some of the relevant biblical scholarship described above. I then bring selected "land-forward" biblical texts—such as the Song of Songs and conquest narratives—into conversation with Indigenous explorations, which are often articulated through genre- and gender-bending forms. This encounter asks how a settler reader might learn new relationships with, and develop different understandings of, a concept we think we know well (or perhaps we don't think about at all!). Ultimately, the paper asks what such work demands of us when engaging the central subject of an established and deeply entrenched colonial narrative.

11:00-11:20 Peter Sabo (Huron University College)

Response

11:20-11:45 General Discussion

Thursday 10:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. (ROOM)

Joint CSPS/CSBS Seminar: Then and Now (and in Between): Sociologies of Knowledge in Early Christianity and the “Study of Religion”. A Celebration of the Life and Work of Harold Remus [hybrid mode]

Presiding: Mona Tokarek LaFosse (Emmanuel College & Victoria College, Victoria University, University of Toronto)

- 10:00-10:10 Lincoln H. Blumell (Brigham Young University)
Teaching the Psalms: Didymus the Blind and the Pedagogy of Christian Knowledge
This paper examines Didymus the Blind’s *Lectures on Psalms* (Pss 20–44), delivered in Alexandria around A.D. 370, as a rare witness to the social production and transmission of Christian knowledge in late antiquity. As the earliest extant Christian lecture series, these lectures preserve not only exegetical content but also the pedagogical strategies by which Christian knowledge was conveyed, authorized, and contested within a late fourth-century educational setting. Drawing on insights from the sociology of knowledge, particularly as articulated in Harold Remus’s work on early Christianity, this study analyzes how Didymus negotiates contemporary Greco-Roman discourses of knowledge while simultaneously reshaping them within a Christian framework. Didymus regularly appeals to what is “known,” “self-evident,” or conventionally accepted, even as he redefines the grounds and limits of authoritative knowledge through scriptural exegesis and theological instruction.
- 10:10-10:20 Nikayla Reize (Trinity Bristol College/University of Aberdeen/St. Mary’s University, Calgary)
Barnabas, Jubilee Ethics, Social Location and the Stakes of Religious Identity
This paper considers Harold Remus’ emphasis on the social stakes of religious boundary-drawing, alongside the social dimensions of Barnabas’ Sabbath and Jubilee rhetoric. The epistle of Barnabas makes a particularly sharp case study for Remus’ interest in how early Christian writers constructed their identity in relation to both Judaism and paganism through polemical contrast, since Barnabas’ anti-Jewish polemic is among the most aggressive in early Christian literature. The *Epistle of Barnabas* deploys Isaiah’s Sabbath and Jubilee texts (Isa 1:13–15; 58:1–13; 61:1–2) as the exegetical backbone of its Christological argument, using them to construct a socio-economic vision of true covenant faithfulness. This paper examines Barnabas’s use of these Isaianic texts to position his gentile readers as the true inheritors of the Isaianic covenant, contrasting them with an Israel rendered unworthy through false religiosity. The paper further explores Barnabas’s slave-master imagery and warnings against private property through the lens of social location and the stakes of religious identity. Barnabas’s Jubilee theology was not merely an abstract hermeneutical claim but as a socially embedded discourse that carried real consequences for how his audience — which likely included both enslaved persons and slaveholders — understood their obligations to one another.
- 10:20-11:00 Discussion
- 11:00-11:30 Break
- 11:30-11:40 Tony Burke (York University)
When the Miracle Worker Breaks Bad: Invoking Jesus in Anathema and Maledictions
Back in 1995, I was a student in Harold Remus’s course on Magic and Miracle. From discussions in that course I became interested in the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, which depicts the young Jesus using his powers both to bless and to curse his neighbours in Nazareth. Despite scholars’ frequent smearing of the text as “crude” and “ridiculous,” it was clear to me, thanks to Harold’s guidance,

that whoever wrote the text believed that these stories were appropriate for telling what happened in Jesus' early years. The childhood tales are not the only examples from Christian literature of a Jesus who curses. The broadening of the definition of curse to include oaths and woes demonstrates that even the biblical Jesus performed more curses than many modern readers would expect—and be comfortable with. Jesus also curses, or is expected to curse, in two other sources: “magical” formulae and book curses. There are a number of examples from the magical papyri of both God and Jesus being invoked, either explicitly or implicitly (e.g., in the crosses that frame the invocation), to maim or to kill the curse’s intended target. Scribes similarly call upon God (see e.g., Rev 22:18–19) or Jesus in order to safeguard books against harm or theft. While most Christian book curses threaten anathema (excommunication, though this can lead to harm), some explicitly invoke the “curse of Jesus” against would-be malefactors. Both the magical curses and the book curses demonstrate that Christians felt no hesitation about calling upon the name of Jesus to cause harm upon another person. Modern Christians associate Jesus more with turning the other cheek and being kind to children, but earlier Christians had a more multi-faceted view of Jesus, one more suited for helping them in the dangerous and capricious world in which they lived.

11:40-11:50 Robert Revington (Queen’s University)
Which Books and Scholars Have Been the Most Influential in Contemporary Canadian Biblical Studies?: Analyzing the Results of a 2024 Survey

Harold Remus was one of the most important biblical scholars in Canada in the twentieth century. In keeping with this panel’s emphasis on “positionality and the study of religion in Canada, especially from the perspective of scholarship in the areas of early Christian history,” this paper analyzes the results of a 2024 survey that was distributed to biblical scholars both within and outside the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies. The survey was modeled on a similar survey Mark A. Noll distributed to American evangelical biblical scholars in his 1986 book *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America*. Our survey compiled demographic information, information on whether scholars had a faith background, and information on where scholars had completed their degrees. Other questions asked which books and scholars had most influenced respondents—as well as which specifically Canadian books and scholars had most influenced them and which Canadian scholars had made the biggest contribution to the discipline. (Incidentally, Remus received some votes in the survey.) Finally, respondents were asked which scholars in Canada had made the biggest contributions to addressing antisemitism in biblical interpretation. The survey provides a useful sample of the state of Canadian biblical studies today.

11:50-12:30 General Discussion

Thursday 12:00-12:30 p.m. (ROOM)
 Student/New Member Lunch

Thursday 12:30-1:45 p.m. (ROOM)
 Special Student Session
 Presiding: Laurence Darsigny-Trépanier (Université de Montréal)

What future do the humanities hold?

In the past year, we have been witnessing the closing of multiple humanities departments in many Universities across Canada. In this year's student panel, we focus on career expectations and financial stability in an unstable present in the field of humanities. What does it mean for Phd students who have to face the decrease of opportunities available after finishing their studies? How do they cope with the possibility of not pursuing a career in their field of research? Do they consider in advance a different line of work?

What does it mean for the faculty presently employed to have this sword of Damocles constantly hanging over their heads? Do they have any power regarding the fate of their peer's careers or their own? Do they play a part in convincing the University of the importance of humanities? How do they make the programs more enticing to students in order to get more of them to register to their classes? This panel gathers students and professors to discuss these issues.

Quel futur envisager pour les sciences humaines?

Au cours de la dernière année, nous avons vu la fermeture de plusieurs départements en sciences humaines dans des Universités à travers le Canada. Dans ce panel étudiant, nous nous intéressons aux perspectives de carrière et à la stabilité financière dans un contexte d'instabilité actuelle dans le domaine des sciences humaines. Qu'est-ce que cela signifie pour les doctorant.es confronté.es à la diminution des débouchés après leurs études? Comment envisagent-iels la possibilité de ne pas poursuivre une carrière dans leur domaine de recherche? Envisagent-iels par avance une reconversion professionnelle?

Qu'est-ce que cela signifie pour les enseignant.es-chercheur.es en poste de vivre avec cette épée de Damoclès au-dessus de la tête? Ont-iels une influence sur l'avenir professionnel de leurs collègues ou sur le leur? Contribuent-iels à convaincre l'université de l'importance des sciences humaines? Comment peuvent-iels rendre les programmes plus attrayants pour inciter davantage d'étudiant.es à s'inscrire à leurs cours? Ce panel rassemble des étudiant.es et des professeur.es afin de discuter de ces enjeux.

Thursday 2:00-3:20 p.m. (ROOM)
Student Essay Prizes
Presiding: Alicia Batten (CGUC, University of Waterloo)

- 2:00-2:30 Founders Prize: Isaiah C. Padgett (McMaster Divinity College)
Putting a Name to Diasporic Desire: A Socio-Onomastic Exploration into the Judeans of Āl-Yāhūdu
- 2:30-2:40 Questions
- 2:40-3:10 Jeremias Prize: Kathrin Breimayer (University of Vienna)
Recentering Marginal Spaces of Early Christ Groups and Other Ancient Associations
- 3:10-3:20 Questions

Thursday 3:30-5:00 p.m. (ROOM)
Annual General Meeting
Presiding: Alicia Batten (CGUC, University of Waterloo)

Thursday 5:15-6:15 p.m. (ROOM)
Presidential Address
Presiding: Fiona Black (Mount Allison University)

Alicia Batten (Conrad Grebel University College, University of Waterloo)

Textile Topography: Dress, Bodies, and Ancient Christ Followers

The “garments of skin” (Gen 3:21), in which God clothes Adam and Eve just before expelling them from the garden, have garnered less attention than the couple’s fig leaves (Gen 3:7). Yet some early interpretations of the story have had considerable influence. Ambrose, for example, understood the garments to be literal skins, and perceived such garb as indicative of repentance. He also made a point of contrasting their composition as skins to that of silk (*Paen.* 2.11.99), anticipating later associations between dress and propriety. His protégé Augustine took the skins to be actual animal hides as well, but claimed that they represented the mortal flesh, which was inherently deceitful (*Gen. Man.* 2.21.32.). As Andrea Denny Brown has argued (2017), these interpretations contributed to later western Christian medieval ideas of dress as deceptive and of the truth of the human being as lying deep within, far below the outer layers of clothing and adornment. Cultural anthropologist Daniel Miller (2009) has described such an approach to understanding the human as “depth ontology,” pointing out that many cultures throughout the world do not share such a perspective. This talk attempts to explore a variety of early texts in the Christian tradition without the assumption that the surfaces of the body, especially its coverings and trappings, are superficial or somehow less consequential. Rather, the assumption will be that items worn on the body, or touching the body, are significant in all kinds of ways, even beyond their social import. More specifically, I will investigate instances where textiles and bodies interact. How can attention to these topographic details of the body and its layers assist as we try to understand some of these writings?

Thursday 6:30 p.m. (ROOM)
CSBS Reception

Friday, May 29

Friday 9:00-11:55 a.m. (ROOM)
Persuasion, Usage, and Audience
Presiding: Alexander Chantziantoniou (Crandall University)

9:00-9:30 Bruce Worthington (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)
Populist Features of the Pauline Letters

While there has been significant work on the topic of modern populism in the field of political theory, few have begun to extend these insights into popular movements of the ancient world. This paper uses populist theory of Ernesto Laclau and his book *On Populist Reason* to evaluate populist elements of the Pauline letters, as part of a larger book project on populism in the ancient world. For Paul, the life and ministry of Jesus remain unexplored in his writings, they are of little

consequence, instead the signifier “Christ” is reduced to a name around which a hegemonic political identity is constructed. In short, Paul’s Gospel does not seek inclusion into a larger political whole, rather it seeks to become the whole itself.

9:30-10:00

John L. Lee (McMaster Divinity College)

Paul’s Self-Understanding of his Persuasive Work in 2 Corinthians

One of the intriguing features of 2 Corinthians is that Paul repeatedly clarifies his rhetorical purpose throughout the letter. Reading the letter as a whole, Paul denies that his writing constitutes either an apology or self-recommendation. However, both impressions emerge naturally from the text itself, which explains why Paul must reject these characterizations explicitly. This paper will trace Paul’s own articulation of his persuasive aims through the lens of discursive positioning and will reflect on the nature of Paul’s persuasive work both in his broader ministry and specifically in his composition of 2 Corinthians.

10:00-10:30

Break

10:30-11:00

Laura Hare (University of Toronto)

When Prophets Lie: A Sociolinguistic Investigation of Deceptive Prophetic Speech

In the Deuteronomistic History, prophets sometimes speak to mislead their audience, either by giving an outright false prophecy or by speaking deceptively to lead their audience to a certain conclusion. But while in most cases the prophet’s interlocutor is fooled by the deceptive speech, there are “tells” in the prophet’s speech that indicate to the reader that the prophet is not being honest. For instance, the use of third-person deferential forms in the speech of prophets to non-prophets is restricted to situations of deception. In this paper, I examine deceptive prophetic speech in comparison with honest prophetic speech in the Deuteronomistic History.

11:00-11:30

Dirk Büchner (Trinity Western University)

The conjunctions ὥστε and ὅπως ἄν in the Documentary Sources and Septuagint Pentateuch

This paper explores the conjunctions ὥστε and ὅπως ἄν by way of the 3rd century BCE papyri and Inscriptions, to get a better picture of how to understand their use in the Septuagint Pentateuch on the spectrum from incidental result to intended result to direct causality or purpose. Mayser’s examples of ὥστε will be revisited, augmented by our own exploration of ὥστε in the Inscriptions. ὅπως ἄν is a common feature of the Attic Inscriptions but is rare in the LXX Pentateuch and occurs only once in the NT. The Philippides Inscription displays three distinct uses of ὅπως ἄν, reminiscent of the Septuagint’s employment of conjunctions in multiple roles.

11:30-11:55

General Discussion

Friday 9:00-11:55 a.m. (ROOM)
Special Session: Innovative Approaches in Biblical Studies
Presiding: Laura Kassar (Université de Montréal)

9:00-9:30

Erin Runions (Pomona College)

From Jonathan Edwards to the Book of Enoch: Apocalyptic Visions in Slave Narratives

This paper explores apocalyptic visions present in slave narratives in the eighteenth- and nineteenth- century United States. It reads them as counter to the production of righteousness through textual scriptural teaching about hell. Using Catherine Keller’s notion of counter-apocalypse, Vincent Wimbush’s conceptualization of scripturalization, and Felipe maia’s proposition of “fugitive futures” as guides, the paper looks at the way former slaves refigured apocalyptic images of heaven and hell, celestial journeys, and encounters with angels, spirits, and the divine. Mainstream Calvinist teaching produced righteousness (mostly) through strict and repetitive textuality, including in slave catechisms, where hell and angels were used to discipline

behavior. In contrast, former slaves riff on scripture, drawing in and refiguring images from noncanonical apocalyptic sources, or simply using the genre to produce something new. As is well acknowledged, former slaves' conversion narratives often deploy Jonathan Edwards' famous image of the spider over the pit, but creative uses of other apocalyptic images in these and other narratives are less well examined. For instance, how do we account for images that are reminiscent of the book of Enoch? Part reception history, and part theorization of righteousness as a cultural-religious affect, this paper reads the way that apocalypse operates both as an affective method of righteous social control and a site of affective righteous disruption.

9:30-10:00

John Ottuh (McMaster University)

Reading 1 Samuel 28 in Ancient Jewish and African Medium Contexts

Previous literature has examined the ancient Jewish context of mediums, including 1 Samuel 28, and has related it to the broader ancient Near East. However, contemporary African literary works containing similar medium stories are yet to be studied in comparison with those of the ancient Jews, such as 1 Samuel 1:28. This study examines the female medium of 1 Samuel 28 in light of both ancient Jewish and contemporary African traditions, employing Chinua Achebe's Abgala priestesses' medium narrative in *Things Fall Apart* as a contemporary prototype. I will first read the narrative of 1 Samuel 28 in the context of figure(s) that mediate between the spiritual and human, and then turn to Achebe's medium narrative in *Things Fall Apart*, employing a hybrid approach of historical and comparative readings. My method draws on ancient Jewish and African experiences and is grounded in two complementary approaches. It draws on Martti Nissinen's historical-comparative method, which compares medium praxis in ancient Israel and the broader ancient Near East. Further, it employs Justin Ukpong's evaluative model, which reads biblical texts in light of African thought, culture, and lived experience, using African literary works as a comparative paradigm. As such, this paper focuses on methodological reflection that shows how concepts and practices in ancient Judaism, as reflected in the Hebrew Bible, can be contextually studied in relation to other religions and cultures beyond the ancient Mediterranean.

10:00-10:30

Break

10:30-11:00

Sherry Brown and Zea Jones (Saint Mary's University)

The Metaphorical Hagar: A Slave Mother Between Christianity and Islam

Hagar (Hajar) is a foundational figure used metaphorically by Paul in Galatians 4:21-31 as foil to Sarah's idealized motherhood, and in the Islamic tradition as a representation of the archetypal mother and penitent. Our paper will compare metaphorical interpretations of Hagar/Hajar in the Bible and the Qur'an, with emphasis on reaching an intersectional understanding of her status as an enslaved mother. Special attention will be paid to Paul's allegorical use of a female body to advance identity, and we will evaluate a recent surge of interpretive work among feminist scholars regarding perceptions of Hagar across traditions.

11:00-11:30

Margaret Y. MacDonald and Syed Adnan Hussain, Saint Mary's University

Rereading 1 Cor 7 and its legacies in light of early Islamic sexual ethics within a shared late antique world

This paper rereads 1 Corinthians 7 by situating Paul's account of marriage and sexuality within a broader antique moral world, using as a comparative lens early Islamic legal conceptions of marriage (including child marriage), sexual availability, and deferred consummation. This comparative exercise explores the significance of Paul's ascetic teaching and response to marriage and family life, shedding light on what is historically shared and what is specific to the Pauline legacy. As a shift away from dominant and culturally safe-guarding patterns, 1 Corinthians 7 emerges as a contingent ethical intervention rather than a self-evident foundation of Christian sexual norms.

11:30-11:55

General Discussion

Friday 9:00-11:55 a.m. (ROOM)

Seminar: Hebrew Scriptures and/as Second Temple
Jewish Literature

Presiding: Robert Jones (Penn State University)

9:00-9:25

Judith Newman (Emmanuel College, University of Toronto)

Voicing and Re-voicing in Early Jewish Ancestral Traditions

Recent scholarship has brought much needed attention to the Aramaic literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls as a corpus that reflects some shared concerns, in particular related to the pre-Mosaic ancestors of Israel (Jones, Machiela, Perrin). Much scholarship has been devoted to the cultic character of the literature connected to the priestly figure Levi. Jacob, the father of the eponymous twelve tribes, has been comparatively neglected (Brooke). In this paper, I want to draw attention to the ancestor Jacob and his contested legacy throughout the post-exilic period. The ongoing story of the ancestors can be seen not only in the composition of texts about ancestors by scribes but also in “lived religion” that is, in practices of prayer, blessing, exorcism, and dream-vision cultivation, laws and customs. Such traces of living culture can illuminate something of common practices beyond scribal hands at work reinscribing a fluid tradition. This paper traces an intertwined performative thread connected with the promise to the ancestor Jacob that laces, *inter alia*, through Isaiah (Isa 44:1-8), Jubilees traditions, and the Words of the Luminaries (4Q504-506). Through performative practices, ancestors were re-envisioned, revoiced, and their legacies re-inhabited in order to shape the present and future for the members of Jacob’s priestly house.

9:25-9:50

Andrew R. Krause (St. Stephen's College, University of Alberta)

Biblical Bible Readings in Rewritten Bible: Josiah, Ezra, and the Ritual Performance of the Reading of the Law in Josephus’ *Antiquitates judaicae* 10–11

For Josephus, the weekly communal reading of the Law amongst the people was one of the few normative elements of Jewish practice. In both his defense of Jewish sabbath practices in *C.Ap.* 2.170–175 and his depiction of Nicolas of Damascus’ speech on behalf of the Judeans to Marcus Agrippa in *A.J.* 16.31–57, Josephus presents the weekly, sabbath assembly of the people to hear the reading of their Law as the reason that the people are both the best citizens and completely in tune with their national identity and practice. This emphasis of iterative public reading of the Jewish Law amongst the Jewish people recurs throughout Josephus’ later writings. However, this performative communal reading of the Law is also retrojected back to the paradigmatic readings of the Law by two heroes of the Jewish faith: Josiah (*A.J.* 10.62–65) and Ezra (*A.J.* 11.154–56). Not surprisingly, Josephus’ retelling of these texts regarding the cultic reading of the Law alters the details of the scriptural narratives in order to match his contemporaneous presentation of the institutional reading of these texts. In this paper, I will argue that Josephus’ re-emplacement of both formative, national readings into the midst of the people and the unmediated understanding that results for the people are important elements of Josephus’ presentation of this translocal ritual practice amongst the Jewish peoples’ assemblies for which he advocates in these later writings. This contemporizing of the reading practices of these national forebears gives greater weight to the didactic and formative elements of Josephus’ presentation of the Jewish Law and customs as situated and practiced in these assemblies. In making these arguments, I will rely on the theories of Roy Rappaport, Pierre Bourdieu, Jonathan Z. Smith, and Arjan Appadurai respectively in order to analyze the didactic function, constraining habitus, and sacralizing nature of these translocal performances of this idealized ritual reading.

9:50-10:15

Matteo Carboni (Regis St. Michael’s Faculty of Theology)

The religiosity of wine-drinking in Judith and Sirach

Judith and Sirach feature wine-drinking during the *πότος/συμπόσιον*. In the Hellenistic period, the *συμπόσιον/πότος* was a drinking banquet held after the meal during a communal gathering. Scholarship on Judith and Sirach has focused on the moral and practical questions raised in these texts about proper consumption of wine and pitfalls of drunkenness during the *πότος/συμπόσιον*, but has not engaged with “religious” aspects of *συμπόσιον/πότος* these texts draw upon. Before the *συμπόσιον* began, the host and participants would offer a wine libation to a deity, such Dionysius. When the libation was offered, participants could drink wine to *εὐφροσύνην* (a state of joy). If the libation was not offered, wine would remove *εὐφροσύνην* from participants, encouraging sleepiness and hubris. In this paper, I will explore the ways Judith and Sirach engage with these “religious” aspects central to the *πότος/συμπόσιον*—*εὐφροσύνην* and the agency of wine.

10:15-10:40 Break

10:40-11:05 Carmen Palmer (Stetson University)

Leviticus 25 and Its Presence or Absence in Second Temple Textual Tradition: A Sampler

The Masoretic Text of Leviticus 25 prohibits the perpetual enslavement of Jews and calls for the right to redemption of Jews sold into debt enslavement. Perpetual slaves should only be taken from surrounding nations and aliens residing in the land (esp. Lev 25: 39-55). Despite these rulings of Leviticus 25, a text with a likely composition in either the exilic or early post-exilic era, other examples of manuscript evidence from the Second Temple period detailing enslavement do not agree. The reasons for this disagreement vary, and the present paper compares the ruling of Leviticus 25 and its possible era of composition with two different ancient Jewish communities and their respective bodies of literature. First, we consider a Second Temple community that may not have had any awareness of Leviticus 25 at all, namely the Jews of Elephantine and the Elephantine papyri. Second, we regard a movement that made extensive use of Leviticus 25 but also with different outcomes, namely the sectarian Jews of the Qumran movement affiliated with the Dead Sea Scrolls. Thus, the paper both situates the Hebrew Bible text of Leviticus 25 within its ancient Jewish context and compares the canonical text of Leviticus 25 with non-canonical literature. The paper concludes that a variety of reasons account for differences between what becomes the Hebrew canonical text and Second Temple communities under question, such as contemporary timing, influence from adjacent cultures, and differing sets of ideals.

11:05-11:30 Daniel Falk (Penn State University)

Prayer Performance in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Judaism

Apart from the Dead Sea Scrolls, the vast majority of prayers in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Judaism are literary products that serve rhetorical functions in their respective literary contexts. While it is reasonable to assume—as many scholars have—that these literary prayers must reflect actual prayer practices to some degree, this would pertain mostly to the performative rather than textual aspects. That is, the wording of such prayers—e.g., in LAB or Josephus—may primarily be a vehicle for viewpoints of the author, but it is especially the settings, performers, gestures, and occasions that must be true to life. This paper develops a preliminary inventory of performative aspects of prayer depicted in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Jewish sources. The study concludes by sketching lines of continuity and innovation.

11:30-11:55 General Discussion

Friday 9:00-11:55 a.m. (ROOM)
Book Review Panel: Christopher Hoklotubbe and Daniel Zacharias, <i>Reading the Bible on Turtle Island: An Invitation to North American Indigenous Interpretation</i> (IVP Academic, 2025).
Presiding: Samuel D. Stewart (Regis St. Michael's, Toronto School of Theology)

This is an invited panel discussion of Christopher Hoklotubbe and Daniel Zacharias' *Reading the Bible on Turtle Island: An Invitation to North American Indigenous Interpretation* (IVP Academic, 2025). This review panel will focus upon the relevance of the book for a specifically Canadian context – vis-à-vis Canadian citizens, Indigenous people in Canada, Canadian history, current Canadian political contexts, etc.

- 9:00-9:05 Sam Stewart (St. Michael's College, University of Toronto)
Introduction and Land Acknowledgement
- 9:05-9:20 Fiona Black (Mount Allison University)
- 9:20-9:35 Anne Létourneau (Université de Montréal)
- 9:35-9:50 Leif Vaage (Emmanuel College, University of Toronto)
- 9:50-10:05 Jasmine Wiens (Knox College, University of Toronto)
- 10:05-10:20 Xenia Chan (Augustana University)
- 10:20-10:35 Break
- 10:35-10:50 Chris Hoklotubbe (Cornell College)
- 10:50-11:05 Danny Zacharias (Acadia Divinity College)
- 11:05-11:55 General Discussion

Friday 12:00-1:30 p.m.
Women Scholars' Lunch All women and genderqueer scholars are welcome.

Friday 1:30-4:55 p.m. (ROOM)
Affect and Embodiment
Presiding: Carmen Palmer (Stetson University)

- 1:30-2:00 Colleen Shantz (St. Michael's College, University of Toronto)
Borrowing Feeling: The Affective Efficacy of the Triumphal Imagery of 1 Thess 4:13-18
Beginning with Malherbe (1987), several scholars have noted the affective turbulence of the Thessalonian assembly at the time of Paul's letter. For example, Malherbe emphasizes the nascent state of their association and uncertainty of commitment; Ascough (2004) argues that the assembly is mourning recent deaths of members and now doubting Paul's teaching about the resurrection; and Longnecker (2024) explores the possible recent "rupture" of the original association. Without resolving the precise nature of their turmoil, this paper explores how the imagery of 4:13-18 potentiates an alternative emotional script for the group. By capitalizing on the imagery of a triumphal procession and improbably mapping it onto the situation of the small—both in size and

social currency—association, Paul’s sketch of Jesus’s return also borrows the affect of his source imagery and sets it to work in the circumstances of the Thessalonians.

2:00-2:30

Shannon J. Parrott (Trinity Western University)

“May They be Clothed in Shame”: Dress and Moral Formation

When one thinks of the formation of the self, shame oft not plays a foremost role in its consideration. Moreover, how an Other participates in the formation of oneself can also be overlooked in some circumstances. These two points are related and play an important role in a “genre” of text often overlooked with respect to identity formation: the imprecatory Psalms. In view is Psalm 109, where the psalmist is unjustly attacked by his enemies. The psalmist’s response consists of wishes for his enemies to be clothed in a curse and in shame. This paper will argue that the *moral formation* of the subject is at play in the psalmist’s desire for his enemies to be clothed in shame by creating a new perspective of not only the enemies but of the psalmist, as his wishes for his enemies say as much about him (and to his community) as it does about the enemies.

2:30-3:00

Caleb David Upton (Regis-St. Michael's University)

Samson as an Interpretive Key of the “Manosphere”

This paper offers an interdisciplinary theological reading of the Samson narrative (Judges 13–16) as an interpretive key for understanding the contemporary “manosphere.” Drawing upon academic Biblical exegesis, and Grant Kien’s concept of “memeography,” it explores how Samson’s masculinity—marked by social isolation, entitlement, trolling, violence, and despair—resonates with the affective logic of manosphere discourse, particularly incel subcultures. Rather than adjudicating sociological facts, the paper examines how such memes are experienced as subjectively real. Ultimately, it returns to theology’s primary concern—God—arguing that Samson’s persistent, if fractured, faith offers a critical lens for interpreting masculine despair and imagining theological pathways beyond it.

3:00-3:30

Break

3:30-4:00

Andrew Spencer (Regis-St. Michael's College)

When a Kiss Becomes Costly: Signalling in Early Christ Groups

This paper applies signaling theory to cooperation and credibility in 1st and 2nd century Christ groups. In conditions of uncertainty, communities must generate durable trust. I argue that seemingly small ritual acts, such as the holy kiss and fictive kinship language, functioned as low-cost signals that bound members and coordinated cooperation. Over time, these practices became costlier, not because the acts changed, but because outsiders’ readings shifted. What marked intimacy and commitment internally could be cast as moral deviance or social threat externally. This reframing increased reputational risk, fueled rumors, and raised the cost of participation, sharpening boundaries between insiders and outsiders.

4:00-4:30

Kevin Wing-Chiu Wong (Regis-St. Michael’s Faculty of Theology, Toronto School of Theology)

Table as Battlefield: Chronopolitics and Sharing in the Earliest Christian Meals

Scholars often reduce Greco-Roman commensality to a static taxonomy of “segregative” or “transgressive” meals. I argue instead that the table was a battlefield of “ideological friction,” where competing economic modes collided. Utilizing the anthropology of sharing, I demonstrate that the conflict in 1 Corinthians 11:17–34 represents a struggle between the Roman habitus of reciprocity and the Pauline economy of access (sharing). While the Roman sportula model could have fed the latecomers by reserving portions, Paul rejects this asynchronous solution. His command to “wait” (11:33) attempts to mobilize time to create the “permeable space” necessary for mutual access. I conclude that the table was not a settled utopia, but a fragile intervention against the gravitational pull of Roman patronage.

4:30-4:55

General Discussion

Friday 1:30- 4:30 p.m. (ROOM)

Blood and Sacrifice

Presiding: Anne Létourneau (Université de Montréal)

1:30-2:00

Isaac T. Soon (University of British Columbia)

Hebrews as a Jewish Response to the Destruction of the Temple

This study offers a recontextualization of Hebrews's conception of priesthood and heavenly sacrifice in second temple Judaism. Building on the work of scholars who have argued Hebrews does not envision the abrogation of the entire law, the first part of this article demonstrates that Hebrews argues against the perpetuity of the Levitical priesthood. The New Covenant is a renegotiation of terms, not an abolition of the previous legal framework. The Mosaic Law and sacrifices are still required; the options for potential priestly facilitators, however, widens. The author of Hebrews posits that because none of the commands about the perpetuity of the Aaronic priesthood in the Hebrew Bible contained a sworn promise (like in Ps 110:4 and Melchizedek), the Aaronic/Levitical priesthood will not last forever. This legitimizes Jesus's high priestly work. The second and third parts of the article raise the question of Christ's high priesthood and whether or not the author of Hebrews envisions Levitical and Melchizedekian sacrificial activity as concurrent or sequential. I reassess the evidence used by scholars in ancient Judaism to justify simultaneous sacrificial activity on both earth and heaven at the same time and find that there is very little evidence to support concurrent sacrificial priesthoods. Hebrews, furthermore, does not envision Jesus's priesthood as being concurrent with the Levitical; in fact, Jesus's high priestly sacrifice and activity in the heavenly temple preclude any activity in the earthly temple below. The final section will contextualize this conceptualization of Jesus's priesthood within ancient Jewish atonement substitutions in the absence of sacrifices, supporting the work of recent scholarship that Hebrews is likely a work of consolation in the years after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple.

2:00-2:30

Jasmine Wiens (Knox College, University of Toronto)

“The blood that they had shed upon the land”: Menstruation and the Soil in Ezekiel 36:16-21

Ezekiel blames the land for its own destruction (e.g. Ezek 6), however it is not obvious why the land is responsible for its defilement and destruction. In Ezekiel 36, the image of menstruation is used to describe the soil's defilement. Earlier references to menstruation in Ezekiel (Ezek 18:6; 22:10) focus on male agency and sexual activity. This changes in Ezekiel 36:17, when the imagery focuses on uncleanness. In this shift, Ezekiel's gendered notions of agency become confused. Resisting the idea of land as passive backdrop, this paper will explore how menstruation imagery speaks to the significance of the physical contact between the people and the land in Ezekiel.

2:30-3:00

Anicet Bassilua (Université de Strasbourg/FUTP)

Une libation de sang dans l'Ancien Testament ?

Les textes de l'Ancien Testament n'attestent pas formellement la libation de sang, bien présente dans les civilisations environnant Israël (Mésopotamie, Anatolie, etc.), dans les séquences sacrificielles du culte hébraïque. Leurs différentes couches (P, Chroniste, Prophètes, etc.) restent muettes quant à cette pratique qui semble être en aversion en Israël et en Juda. Ps 16,4 mentionne une libation de sang (נִסַּח דָּם) consacrée à des divinités étrangères, vis-à-vis de laquelle le psalmiste prend d'ailleurs ses distances. Cependant, à y regarder de près, peut-on vraiment parler de l'absence de libation de sang dans les rites sacrificiels du corpus véterotestamentaire ? L'analyse sémantico-lexicographique de l'univers sacrificiel de l'Ancien Testament conduit vers le soupçon d'une forme de libation qui a le sang comme matière. Elle se pratique au cœur même du rituel qui se déroule au temple et accompagne notamment le sacrifice du péché (חַטָּאת) et le rite de purification de la lèpre.

3:00-3:30 Break

3:30-4:00 Peter Sabo (Huron University College)

Blood, Murder, and Sacrifice in Lev 17.10-12

Because Lev 17.10-12 is the only biblical passage that explicitly links the identification of blood with “life” with the cultic manipulation of blood, it has had an enormous influence on attempts to explain the centrality of blood in ancient Israelite rituals; indeed, it is commonly used as a conceptual explanation for the majority of, if not all, the uses of sacrificial blood in the Hebrew Bible. While this influence is problematically inflated, the passage nevertheless remains the most important text in seeking to understand any connection between the prohibition on consuming blood and the various sacrificial uses of blood. Accordingly, this paper uses insights from Animal Studies to examine the sacrificial logic of Lev 17.10-12. On the one hand, there is an absolute respect for “life,” and, on the other hand, there is the taking of animal life for human (cultic) purposes. I argue that a close reading of the different meanings and purposes of *nefeš* in Lev 17.10-12 clearly reveals this tension between human kinship with animals and human ascendancy over them. It provides, in other words, an explanation for the difference between murder (the socially unsanctioned taking of life) and sacrifice (the socially sanctioned taking of life).

4:00-4:30 General Discussion

Friday 1:30-4:00 p.m. (ROOM)
Decolonizing and Indigenizing Biblical/Religious Studies Pedagogies
Presiding: Fiona Black (Mount Allison University)

Panelists TBA

Friday 6:30-8:00 p.m. (ROOM)
Craigie Lecture
Presiding: Alicia Batten (University of Waterloo)

Dr. Rhiannon Graybill (University of Richmond)

This Is Not My Beautiful Body: Weird Female Bodies in the Hebrew Bible and Contemporary Fiction

The Hebrew Bible is filled with peculiar, striking representations of female body. Female bodies transform into land or landscape features; they entice with the delights of a garden; they create new life, in both strange and ordinary ways; they sometimes simply disappear. Contemporary fiction is also filled with peculiar, transformative representations of the female body. Women transform into plants, planets, moons, and voids. Bodies spout flowers and mushrooms; vines and fungus creep and grow and take on women’s shapes. Women become sea creatures, Komodo dragons, real dragons, and dogs. They transform into trees, or rocks, or shadows, or simply disappear. Their bodies remain, unless they don’t. This talk imagines a shared space in which these peculiar, mutable, and often excessive bodies can encounter one another. More specifically, I suggest that contemporary fiction about weird female bodies is uniquely positioned to open up biblical texts about weird female bodies as sites of literary and feminist pleasure and possibility. On the level of method, I argue for reading the Bible with and through literature. On the level of affect, I offer a plea to open yourself to weirdness. Read with a weird story, a weird conceit, a weird point of entry into the text. Read a little weirdly. On the level of feminist attachments, I craft an invitation to let go of the conviction that we already know what these texts about female bodies will show us

(usually, sexualization, exploitation, reproductive commodification, or misogyny). And loosen your grip on the idea that the text and its female bodies are always already toxic, traumatizing, or troubled.

Friday 8:00-9:30 p.m. (ROOM)

Reception

Saturday, May 30

Saturday 9:00-11:55 a.m. (ROOM)

Gospels and Apocrypha

Presiding: Bruce Worthington
(The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

- 9:00-9:30 Nikayla Reize (St. Mary's University, Calgary)
Barnabas Also Hates the Rich: Isaiah's Sabbath Materiality in Luke 4:16-22 and the Epistle of Barnabas
By placing Barnabas' use of Isaiah alongside Luke 4:16–22, this paper positions the Epistle of Barnabas as an important early witness to the reception of Isaiah's Sabbath-Jubilee theology in Christian interpretation. The findings suggest that Barnabas advances a materially grounded, justice-oriented Christology that integrates eschatological hope with concrete socio-economic practice. Focusing on Barnabas' use of Isaiah 1:13–15, 58:3–9, and 61:1–2, this paper demonstrates that Barnabas critiques cultic practices that neglect the material flourishing of the poor while simultaneously reconfiguring Jesus' identity through Isaiah's servant and Jubilee traditions. By allegorizing creation and Sabbath rest, Barnabas envisions a coming Sabbath age inaugurated by Christ, while simultaneously insisting that ethical participation in Sabbath-Jubilee realities must begin in the present.
- 9:30-10:00 Mark Hanson (Crandall University)
The Holy Spirit as Immanuel: The Messianic Transfer in the Gospel of John
In John 14:16 Jesus characterizes the coming of the Holy Spirit with Immanuel language. This use of the motif of Immanuel is part of the way Jesus transfers Messianic expectations on to the Spirit, coinciding with his own departure. This paper argues John expands the motif of Immanuel into being a framework of proto-perichoresis to place both Jesus and the Holy Spirit within the scope of eschatological hope.
- 10:00-10:30 Break
- 10:30-11:00 Matthew L. Walsh (Acadia University)
Context and Combinations: Daniel 7:13–14 in the Synoptic Gospels
An under-explored aspect of the use of Daniel 7:13–14 in the Synoptic Gospels is the potential relevance of the angelological reading of the "one like a son of man" in the context of The Book of Daniel itself. Commentators frequently mention the "messianic" interpretation of these verses, but if Dan 7:13–14 was understood as a reference to Michael, how might this have impacted the presentation of Jesus when these verses are applied to him? In addition to addressing this question, a focus of this paper is the contribution Dan 7:13–14 makes when it is combined with other Hebrew Bible texts. Brief examinations of how Dan 7:13–14 is utilized in other early Jewish and Christian

compositions will provide helpful points of comparison.

- 11:00-11:30 Samuel D. Stewart (Regis St. Michael's, Toronto School of Theology)
Jesus the "Friendly King": Matthew's Jesus as Client King not Rival Emperor
Imperial-critical readings argue that the Matthean Jesus was an alternative to the Roman emperor and that the kingdom Jesus proclaimed was an alternative to the Roman empire (Carter, Riches, Sim). This paper examines the main tenets of this argument and suggests that Matthew's Jesus is more comparable to a local, client king who is "friendly" toward Rome (Braund), engaged in Roman politics rather than attempting to subvert them. Although Jesus the Galilean made royal-messianic claims, the gospel writer had reason to make Jesus "friendlier" toward Rome by minimizing subversive elements of the Jesus story in the political aftermath of the Jewish War. This paper uses postcolonial theory in examining conventional uses of terminology such as *basileia*, *basileus*, and *hegemōn*, Matthew's redactions of his sources, and Matthew's presentation of Jesus as a worthier "King of the Judeans" than Herod (Matthew 2).
- 11:30-11:55 General Discussion

Saturday 9:00-11:55 a.m. (ROOM)
Special Session: Nonhuman Beings in the Ancient World
Presiding: Hanna Tervanotko (McMaster University)

- 9:00-9:30 Guadalupe González Diéguez (Université de Montréal)
Vashti's Two Tails: Animalization, Violence and Gender in Vashti's Portrayal in the Alba Bible (1432)
In the Book of Esther, Vashti, the wife of King Ahasuerus, defies her husband's order to display herself at a banquet and is subsequently repudiated. Vashti's brief account in the Bible was expanded upon by rabbinic traditions, which found their way into the Alba Bible, a 15th-century Castilian translation of the biblical text with commentaries by R. Moses Arragel. These traditions are reflected in the illuminations of this codex, one of which depicts Vashti as a naked, slaughtered, two-tailed creature — a hybrid of woman and animal — in the middle of a banquet hall where guests are eating and drinking. Drawing on recent work by biblical scholars (Brownsmith, 2024; Létourneau, 2025; Stone, 2017), this paper will examine the interplay of animalization, violence, and gender in this medieval reception of Vashti.
- 9:30-10:00 Claire Placial (Université de Lorraine)
Marc Chagall et le bestiaire du Cantique des cantiques
La puissance iconique de l'évocation du corps dans le Cantique des cantiques, associé à la nature (plantes, animaux, minéraux) a fort inspiré le peintre, Marc Chagall, qui consacre au livre biblique un cycle de cinq toiles (1957-1966). Les animaux abondent dans ce cycle de peintures : colombes, cerfs, chevaux, toutes bêtes mentionnées dans le Cantique. Certaines pourtant sont surprenantes : ainsi deux cerfs jaune et bleu, ou un cheval vert, surplombant les amants unis sous l'arbre. Je tenterai de comprendre quelle herméneutique sous-tend la représentation des animaux, chez un peintre tellement obsédé par la Bible qu'il fonda un musée appelé *Message biblique*. Le cas des animaux montre que la lecture de Chagall n'est pas une lecture philologique fondée sur une étude directe du texte hébreu, mais qu'elle est médiée par les traductions qui permettent au peintre comme au public de la lire dans les langues vernaculaires, et par les traditions ashkénazes qui ont accompagné l'enfance et les premiers contacts de Chagall avec l'univers biblique.
- 10:00-10:30 Break

10:30-11:00 Robert E. Jones (Penn State University)
Becoming Nonhuman: Revelation 13 and the Transhuman Apocalypse in Evangelical Christianity

In this paper, I will compare and contrast two approaches to the Mark of Beast in American evangelical Christianity, focusing most of my attention on the latter. Proponents of this latter approach envision the mark of Revelation 13 as a technological intervention designed to rewrite the DNA of its recipients, literally transforming them into nonhuman beings and thus rendering them ineligible for salvation. This view is the outgrowth of evangelical Christian engagement with ufology, New Age spiritualities, transhumanism, and conspiracism, and is ultimately rooted in an idiosyncratic interpretation of Genesis 6 and the myth of the Nephilim as recounted in ancient Jewish sources like 1 Enoch, Jubilees, and the Genesis Apocryphon. Nonhuman beings like angels and demons have always occupied an important place in Christian theologies and cosmologies, but these conspiratorial-minded evangelicals do not just believe *in* nonhuman beings, but in the possibility of *becoming* a nonhuman being.

11:00-11:30 Eduardo Folster-Eli (McMaster University)
The God of This Age: Nonhuman Agency in Comparative Perspective within the Ancient World

There has been extensive debate over the identity of “the god of this age” in 2 Cor 4:4, commonly identified as either Satan or the god of Israel, an identification often shaped by apologetic concerns. This paper instead situates Paul’s language within its ancient Mediterranean context by analysing the “god of this age” as a nonhuman agent who blinds humans. By comparing this passage with Jewish and Greco-Roman traditions in which gods or other beings blind humans (e.g., Tobit, Tiresias, Erymanthus), I explore Paul’s distribution of agency between human and nonhuman actors, reading 2 Cor 4:4 within Paul’s “god-congested world.” (Fredriksen 2017: 42).

11:30-11:55 General Discussion

Saturday 9:00-11:55 a.m. (ROOM)
Biblical Studies in Canada
Presiding: Margaret Y. MacDonald (Saint Mary’s University)

9:00-9:30 Gregory Fewster (Royal Ontario Museum)
“To Illustrate Daily Life in the Time of the New Testament”: Walter Massey, C. T. Currelly, and the Biblical Archaeological Roots of the Royal Ontario Museum

The galleries of the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto are covered in names, mainly patrons who donated collections or contributed financially to their acquisition. One name, Walter Massey, appears in small print under almost 50 objects in the Greek, Roman, and Egyptian galleries, with around 2000 more objects associated with his name held in collections’ storage. The rather simple credit line, however, hides a fascinating history of antiquities collecting in the early twentieth century oriented around Biblical Archaeology and the desire to illuminate the biblical world through ancient, everyday objects. This paper introduces C. T. Currelly, Egyptian archaeologist and first Director of the ROM’s Archaeological Museum, who assembled the Walter Massey Biblical Collection. And drawing on newly discovered letters, newspaper clippings, and other archival ephemera, it charts how Currelly’s collecting habits were shaped through the Christian philanthropy of the Massey family and the advent of Higher Criticism on the Canadian theological scene.

9:30-10:00 Ken M. Penner (St. Francis Xavier University)
Canadian Social Activists Inspired by the Bible

This paper introduces a pedagogical project from a course "Social Activists Inspired by the Bible," in light of the disruption Artificial Intelligence has brought to education. In this course, the bar is raised: students leverage AI research and editing tools to empower them to accomplish something previously beyond reach: collaboratively writing a course textbook. Moving beyond US-centric textbooks, this project recovers Canada's history of biblical-inspired social justice. Each student is responsible for writing and peer-reviewing one chapter that presents the biography and scriptural arguments of a Canadian, e.g., Tommy Douglas, whose vision for universal healthcare was rooted in the Social Gospel; Nellie McClung, who utilized Galatians 3 to argue for suffrage as a divine imperative; and Moses Coady, who framed economic cooperatives (the Antigonish Movement) through Matthew 25. Interested publishers might consider this manuscript as a Canadian alternative to existing resources.

10:00-10:30 Break

10:30-11:00 Joshua M. Matson (Brigham Young University)

A Legacy of Qumran Scholarship: Celebrating the 30th Anniversary of the Dead Sea Scrolls Institute at Trinity Western University

Canadians have played an indispensable role in the study and publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls since the earliest days of Qumran scholarship. This history, masterfully told by Eileen Schuller in 2011, can be further expanded by examining in greater detail the contributions made by the Dead Sea Scrolls Institute at Trinity Western University. While Schuller includes the establishment of the Dead Sea Scrolls Institute in her history, a direct analysis and discussion of the Institute's contribution to the influence of Canadians on the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls deserves further exploration. In commemoration of the 30th Anniversary of the Dead Sea Scrolls Institute, and in preparation for the celebration of the 80th anniversary of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, this paper seeks to build upon this previous history of Canadian contributions to the scholarship of the Dead Sea Scrolls by analyzing in greater detail the role that the Dead Sea Scrolls Institute has played in providing academic training for scholars who have contributed to the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the scholarship they have produced. This paper will articulate that the Dead Sea Scrolls Institute at Trinity Western University has left a rich legacy that expands the history and legacy of Canadian scholarship on both the scrolls and biblical studies.

11:00-11:30 Fiona Black (Mount Allison University)

Biblical/Religious Education, the Archive, and the Un-making of Indigenous Subjects

The 94 Calls to Action of the TRC (2015) unsurprisingly include several that are directed towards religious organizations, as well as others that identify the broader discourses in education and society that have framed Canada's colonial project and the creation of the residential school system. This paper reports on the exploration of another critical element in the religio-colonial picture—the Bible—which is not explicitly mentioned but is undeniably a "silent partner" in the conceptualization and implementation of residential schools and their curricula. I discuss some of our initial findings, including various catechetical and educational texts that range from the rarer, explicit proof-texting to general theological discussions of "citizenship." Drawing on these archival materials—including correspondence, educational resources, photographs, and institutional records—from church and museum collections across Canada, the project reconstructs the biblical frameworks for school curricula, as well as the theological and ideological foundations that informed residential schooling. It also explores the fact that religious education in IRS settings was often informal and derivative, rooted in the training and assumptions of educators formed within mainstream denominational contexts. These influences extended beyond formal instruction to encompass gender norms, labour practices, and environmental worldviews embedded in school life.

11:30-11:55 General Discussion

12:00-1:00 LUNCH

Saturday 1:00-3:45 p.m. (ROOM)

Rethinking Critical Categories

Presiding: Isaac T. Soon (University of British
Columbia)

1:00-1:30

Chaya Halberstam (King's University College at Western University)

Rethinking Critical Categories: A Case Against the "Extra-Legal"

While most scholars who write about law in the ancient world accurately identify that there is no clear boundary between legal and non-legal discourse, critical commentaries and scholarship continue to identify "technical legal" events and terminology, from "covenant lawsuits" to rabbinic "rulings". This talk explores how we might read biblical/rabbinic texts differently if we consistently applied the insight of legal/extra-legal fluidity. Examining several details in Daniel 5-6 and several stories from the Babylonian Talmud, I argue that a more expansive idea of a socio-legal culture allows us to better appreciate the relational and affective aspects of the early Jewish legal imaginary.

1:30-2:00

Emma Wasserman (Rutgers University)

Rethinking Critical Categories: A Case Against "Monotheism"

Scholars often note problems with monotheism as a category of analysis, but most of the scholarship still characterizes the Biblical anthology, as well as Hellenistic texts such as those by Philo and Paul, as "monotheistic" (or at least "monolatrous") without qualification. In this paper, I join a stream of interpreters that find monotheism to be unworkable, and I develop an alternative that I term "monarchic polytheism." On this approach, the category of "monotheism" fits with the new cosmologies developed by Europeans in the early modern period but is highly anachronistic and distorting for worlds of Mediterranean antiquity. Drawing examples from Genesis 1-3, Deuteronomy, Second Isaiah, Philo's *Opificio Mundi*, and 1 Corinthians, I argue that the writers of these texts employ centralizing religious and political rhetoric to understand the world as an organized plurality of beings, entities, and causes. Many of these writers are pre-occupied with polemics about relationships of power in the divine world, but they consistently envision an organized plurality centralized around a single sovereign, whether envisioned as a monarchic ruler, lonely creator, supreme commander, or (in philosophical contexts) as a metaphysical first cause.

2:00-2:15

Break

2:15-2:45

Eva Mroczek (Dalhousie University)

Rethinking Critical Categories: A Case Against Exegesis, Expansion, and "Fan Fiction"

While most scholars now agree that there was no fixed biblical canon in the second temple period, and that new literature and new scripture was still being produced, conceptualizing a world where the Bible was not the standard by which all religious creativity is judged has proved next to impossible. Even as we continue to insist on the rich creativity of this era, the way we describe and imagine its literary world is still dominated by concepts that set non-canonical texts against canonical ones, describing them in terms of exegesis, expansion, or influence. For example, we think of the Genesis Apocryphon, an Aramaic narrative in the first-person voice of Lamech, Noah, and Abraham, as a translated, rewritten, and expanded version of Genesis that solves a number of exegetical problems in the biblical text. While this is true as far as it goes, this approach is very limited: it focuses primarily on the text's origins in, and relationships with, an earlier source. How might we imagine the world that produced the Genesis Apocryphon if we were not quite so preoccupied with how it uses the Bible, and more with how it may have functioned in its own world? This paper uses the Genesis Apocryphon as a case study to consider more broadly how our concepts of exegesis, commentary, midrash, or even the newer category of "fan fiction" keep us stuck on textual origins and hierarchies, and trap us into asking questions that are far less interesting than the sources themselves deserve.

2:45-3:15

Alexander Chantziantoniou (Crandall University)

Rethinking Critical Categories: A Case Against “Idols”

In recent decades, scholars have interrogated a growing list of categories in the study of early Judaism and Christian origins and called for their retirement. In addition to second-order concepts such as monotheism and conversion, standard translations of certain load-bearing words—“faith” (πίστις), “church” (ἐκκλησία), “spirit” (πνεῦμα), “scripture” (γραφή), to name a famous few—have been criticized for smuggling theological import from later centuries into ancient texts innocent of it. In this paper, I propose that “idol” (εἶδωλον) be added to the list. I argue that εἶδωλον was not a technical or pejorative word in postclassical Greek, including Jewish texts, but a generic word for images of various kinds, including images of gods. Continuing to transliterate εἶδωλον as “idol,” rather than translating it as “image,” keeps the illusion of Jewish and Christian uniqueness alive: it invites inherently negative associations that closely align with its later theological legacy but that do not clearly correspond to the use of εἶδωλον in its own time and place.

3:15-3:45

General Discussion

Saturday 1:00-3:45 p.m. (ROOM)
Special Session: Nonhuman Beings in the Ancient World
Presiding: Eduardo Folster-Eli (McMaster University)

1:00-1:30

Phillip Sherman (Maryville College)

The Bible as Bestiary: Imagining the Biblical Lives of Animals

The Hebrew Bible is one of the most foundational and influential works informing how humans think about, live with, and relate to non-human animals. *The Bible as Bestiary: Imagining the Biblical Lives of Animals* is a monograph in progress which explores the Hebrew Bible and its diverse understandings, representations, and constructions of non-human animal life. In dialogue with the interdisciplinary field of Animal Studies, this project examines non-human animals in the Hebrew Bible from three vantage points: (1) Exploring ancient Israelite attitudes towards animals in their historical and cultural contexts; (2) Surveying the reception history of biblical ‘animal texts’ to track how they have shaped historical and contemporary ideas about animals; (3) Fostering interdisciplinary dialogue with modern zoology and other fields of study related to non-human animals to inform biblical interpretation. Why Bestiary? The term ‘Bestiary’ generally refers to a medieval genre of texts and images (most popular in the 12th-13th centuries) which collected and illustrated information about a diversity of animals—real and mythological—in the context of Christian figural interpretation. While the Bible is clearly not a Bestiary in the narrow sense of the term, I follow the insights of two recent scholars who appropriate the ‘bestiary’ as a “cultural tradition and...mode of symbolically relating to the natural world that extends from the Chauvet Cave to the alphabet books given to children today...the bestiary can serve as a theoretical framework to explore the contemporary cultural significance of animals” (McCumber and Dryden 2022, 114). This presentation will explore how attention to the Hebrew Bible as an ‘implicit’ bestiary might generate new questions and insights about the biblical lives of animals.

1:30-2:00

Hanna Tervanotko (McMaster University)

“But ask the animals, and they will teach you, the birds of the air, and they will tell you”

(Job 12:7): Bird Divination in Ancient Jewish Texts

This paper analyzes how ancient Jewish authors conceptualize birds as carriers and transmitters of divine knowledge. In the ancient Near East and eastern Mediterranean, bird divination

(ornithomancy) was among the most accessible techniques for inquiring into divine will, relying on the observation of birds' species, movements, sounds, and behaviors as meaningful signs. Interpreting these signs correctly could provide the inquirer with advantages when preparing for the future. It is likely that ancient Jews also paid attention to birds. For instance, the Greek translator of Lev 19:26 renders the sentence "You shall not practice divination" to "you shall not observe the birds." (Shemesh 2018). This translation suggests that bird divination was a known practice. Whereas the Jewish authors do not explicitly narrate accounts of bird divination, they engage ornithomantic logic indirectly by assigning distinctive epistemic and symbolic traits to specific birds. For example, doves are associated with purity and innocence, eagles with power, ravens with ambiguity and survival, ostriches and owls with desolation and isolation, and sparrows with vulnerability (Blue 2013; Bos 2015). Moreover, some bird species appear to be associated with femininity, while others with masculinity. While scholars have acknowledged these and other characteristics of birds, they have not been considered from a divinatory perspective. This paper reframes bird types through the lens of divination, asking how ancient Jews might have understood interactions with particular birds as conveying hidden knowledge. What kind of hidden meaning could interacting with a specific type of bird indicate? By doing so, this paper contributes to a more nuanced understanding of divination as a knowledge system and the role of birds in it.

2:00-2:15 Break

2:15-2:45 Anne Létourneau (Université de Montréal)

Invasive Species and Sexual Violence in Isaiah 13

The nonhuman animal communities of Isaiah 13:21-22 and 34:11-15 offer interesting potential for ecological hermeneutics. For example, Atkins and Feldt have presented very inspiring readings of these texts with rewilding theories (Atkins 2024; Feldt 2025). These animal vignettes could even be appraised as little zoocentric utopias. In this paper, I would like to offer a different perspective rooted in feminist animal studies and my own struggle with the text of Isa 13:21-22 which introduces nonhuman animals – jackals, owls, goats/satyrs, and son on (v.21-22) – as the new inhabitants of Babylon, a space still *sticky* with the violence perpetrated against children and women (v.16-18). The personified city is not only compared to Sodom and Gomorrah (v.19), but she is also depicted with crawling – and unwanted – new dwellers, filling her spaces (v.21-22). Are the nonhuman animals imagined as participants in sexual violence perpetrated against Babylon and its women? I would like to sit with this discomfort to explore the fact that the human-nonhuman relationality at the heart of *companion species*, involves violence as often as it involves care (Giraud *et al.* 2018). Using Sara Ahmed's thinking on sticky emotions (2014), Akira Lippit's notion of *animetaphor* (1998), as well as focusing on traces and spaces, I will try to clear a path for a non-idealistic reading holding together the gender violence and the animal lives.

2:45-3:15 Merrill G. Greene (Kingswood University)

When Healing Hurts: Exorcistic Abuse in the Ancient World

Ancient descriptions of demoniacs sometimes portray them not only as afflicted by supernatural forces but also as the recipients of varied forms of abuse by their respective communities. Physical abuse included instances of exorcists slapping their patients (*UH* 3:134), communities tying up or restraining demoniacs (*UH* 13-15:200; Luke 5:4), or bringing them potentially deadly herbs (Josephus, *JW* 7.182-184). Additionally, isolating the spirit-possessed (e.g., *Damascus Document* 12.2-6; Luke 8:29), and exploiting them for monetary (Acts 16:16) or magical purposes (PGM IV, 88-93; VII, 348-58) showcases a general demeanor towards demoniacs as less than human. This paper thus examines how the possessed were viewed as hybrid human-spiritual monstrosities and asks how this depiction of the possessed informed their subsequent treatment. By examining the Mesopotamian manual *Udug Hul*, the Dead Sea Scrolls (e.g., 1QS, CD, 4QIncantation, 8QHymn, *Plea for Deliverance*), the New Testament Gospels and Acts, and select rituals from the *Greek Magical Papyri*, this paper draws particular attention to the ways people in the ancient world negotiated the boundary between healing and harm and the power dynamics between ritual specialists, communities, and the demon-afflicted. How, for example, might the perceived

authority of a Jewish ritual specialist and their treatment of a demoniac during the Second Temple Period affect how a community interacts with the possessed both during and after a possession episode? By reading these sources alongside insights from disability studies, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's idea of "monster theory," and the anthropology of illness, it highlights how demoniacs were often made to suffer through socially sanctioned abuse.

3:15-3:45 General Discussion

Friday 1:00-3:00 p.m. (ROOM)

Special Session: Innovative Approaches in Biblical Studies

Presiding: Erin Runions (Pomona College)

1:00-1:30 Andrew P. Wilson (Mount Allison University)
Textiles of Glory: Mark's Transfiguration with the Agency of Materiality in Mind
Mark's account of the Transfiguration differs from the other Gospel narratives in its use of material metaphors, pairing the white robes of glory with the practices of bleaching and fulling cloth (Mark 9:3). While this imagery clarifies what "transfiguration" signifies for Mark, it remains puzzling and has often proven difficult for interpreters to address, if not altogether glossed over in the secondary literature. For my purposes, however, rather than posing a problem, these metaphors offer an alternative vision of glory—one wrested from the abstractions of metaphysics and anchored instead in the earthiness of material objects and practices. New Materialism, with its renewed attention to material agency, provides a compelling theoretical lens through which to reconsider the significance of these robes of glory. What is particularly striking in Mark's Gospel is the pervasive presence of textiles across the narrative, where they figure in some of its most consequential moments, from the Transfiguration to the Empty Tomb. In this paper, I lean into Mark's metaphor of the fuller—its materials, practices, and traditions—to ask what becomes of the vision of glory when it is woven into textile practices and embodied, makerly experience. What are the implications of a material spirituality informed by New Materialism for a vision of Markan glory that is integral, dynamic, both within the narrative arc of the Gospel and capable of extending beyond the text into culture, tradition, and lived experience?

1:30-2:00 Isabelle Lemelin (Université Saint-Paul)
Quand les images modifient les textes
L'histoire de la réception aborde peu « l'autre des textes » (Rosenberg, 2001) que sont les images inspirées par les écrits bibliques. Pourtant, les effets qu'elles ont et la place qu'elles occupent suggèrent qu'elles font désormais partie – implicitement ou explicitement – de notre façon de « voir » ou de lire les textes. Dans le cadre de la présente communication, je présenterai mon projet de recherche en cours, lequel porte sur l'iconographie « récupérant » les figures et les pratiques maccabéennes/hasmonéennes depuis l'émergence du sionisme moderne, afin d'illustrer mon propos ou montrer en quoi cette abondante collection visuelle participe de nouvelles lectures de cette littérature du Second Temple.

2:00-2:30 W. Derek Suderman (Conrad Grebel /University of Waterloo)
Guarding One's Life: "Hearing" Psalm 35 in Light of Residential Schools in Canada

Recent Psalms scholarship has shown that laments routinely include speech to a social audience. This recognition allows for the reader to not simply identify with the speaker and thus monopolize the ‘voice’ of the psalm but rather, by focusing on grammatical shifts to address a social audience, provides an interpretive lever for the reading community to function as the psalm’s social audience, challenged to recognize and respond to the words uttered. This paper seeks to “hear” Psalm 35 in light of the history of Residential Schools in Canada, during which Indigenous children were taken from their families and communities with the express purpose of destroying their culture, language, and identity(ies) and assimilate them into broader society. While the strident language of lament may not resonate with one’s own experience, this example demonstrates the significance of the social audience of such a psalm, then and now.

2:30-3:00 General Discussion