British New Testament Society

MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

We are delighted to welcome you to the 2025 British New Testament Society Conference at the University of Manchester

CONTENTS

CONTENTS 1
ATTENDANCE AND REGISTRATION 3
OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION 4
CONFERENCE INFORMATION 6
PROGRAMME OVERVIEW 15
PLENARY, SEMINAR, & SIMULTANEOUS SHORT PAPER LOCATIONS & LINKS 17
PLENARY PAPER DETAILS AND ABSTRACTS 20
SEMINAR PAPER DETAILS AND ABSTRACTS 21

ATTENDANCE AND REGISTRATION

Residential Delegates

Accommodation is at Dalton-Ellis Hall, Conyngham Road, M14 5RL (see Arrivals)

Standard Rooms: Dalton-Ellis Graham; Ensuite Rooms: Dalton-Ellis Sutherland.

Accommodation check-in on Monday:

Check in 12.00 at Dalton-Ellis Hall main reception, Conyngham Road entrance.

A member of staff will be on reception to hand over the keys. **Please aim to arrive before 18.00.** After 18.00, you need to **contact the ResLife advisor** on site to collect keys: **07770280271**

Accommodation check-out on Wednesday:

Check out (with rooms cleared) by **10.00**.

If someone is on reception, hand the keys to them. Otherwise use the key post box next to the main door.

Luggage storage:

University Place 3.205 from 9am on Wednesday. The organising team and volunteers will remain in the room as much as possible, but the room will **not be locked,** and items are left at your own risk.

Dalton-Ellis Contact

Dalton-Ellis Hall main reception, M14 5RL
For all issues related to **Dalton-Ellis Hall**, including late check-in, call the **ResLife advisor on 0777028027**

Registration for All In-Person Delegates (including non-residential)

Please **register and collect your name badge at The Drum,** University Place, M13 9PL (Map on p.11).

Registration will be open **from 15.00 on Monday**.

Campus Support and Security:

Campus Support and Security (The University of Manchester)

Emergency Tel 24/7: 24-hour Control Room on **0161 306 9966**

Safezone App Details: SafeZone | The University of Manchester

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

Meals

Breakfast

For **residential delegates only** at Dalton-Ellis Hall from 07.30 to 09.00 on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Drinks Reception and Coffee Breaks

The Drum, University Place (Map on p.11)

Lunches and Dinners

The Market, University Place (Map on p.11)

N.B. If you have informed us of any dietary restrictions, please also ensure that the catering staff are aware of your special meal requirements.

Places to Eat/Drink/Shop near University Place

- There are a number of cafés, coffee shops and supermarkets on campus, including:
  - The Place, University Place (08.00-16.00)
  - Museum Café (1 min walk; Tuesday & Wednesday 08.30-15.00)
  - Bold Street Coffee (4 min walk; University Green, 08.00-18.00)
  - Navarro Lounge (5 min walk; University Green, 09.00-22.00)
  - Kro Bar (4 min walk; 325 Oxford Rd (09.30-22.30)
- Gift shop on Campus (University Place)

WIFI

If you are already registered for **Eduroam,** this network should be available to you. Visitors to key locations on campus can register for free Wi-Fi access with the University's guest Wi-Fi network - UoM_Guest. It's easy to use just connect to the **UoM_Guest** network on your laptop or mobile device, open your web browser, and follow the onscreen instructions.

Morning Prayer

Christian Morning Prayer will take place at 08.15 on Tuesday and Wednesday morning at University Place 3.205 (Map on p.12).

Global Majority Heritage Networking Drinks

A chance for Global Majority Heritage colleagues to meet over free drinks will take place on Tuesday 2 September from 14.00-15.00 in University Place 3.214 (Map on p.12)

Visit to the Rylands Library

On **Monday** (1st September), it is possible to visit the Rylands Library for a special display. There are two available time slots, each accommodating up to 30 people:

- From 13.00 – 14.00
- From 14.00 – 15.00

Attendance will be on a first-come, first-served basis.

If you are interested, please email Sarah Parkhouse (sarah.parkhouse@manchester.ac.uk) with your preferred time slot **by 26 August**.

Nearby Places to Visit

Manchester Museum

Manchester Museum has been named the European Museum of the Year for 2025. It is the first university museum to receive it, earning recognition for the way it balances globally significant academic research with community engagement and social responsibility. And it's opposite University Place.

Opening Hours: Tuesday 10.00-17.00 and Wednesday 10.00-21.00

museum.manchester.ac.uk

Whitworth Art Gallery

The Whitworth is part of the University of Manchester and serves as a bridge between the University and the people of the city; a place to meet, play and learn in public. Its mission is to use art for social change; founded in 1889 as The Whitworth Institute and Park in memory of the industrialist Sir Joseph Whitworth for "the perpetual gratification of the people of Manchester". The gallery was awarded Art Fund Museum of Year 2015, nominated for the prestigious Stirling Prize and named Best Emerging Cultural Destination in Europe.

Opening Hours: Tuesday and Wednesday 10.00-17.00

whitworth.manchester.ac.uk

CONFERENCE INFORMATION

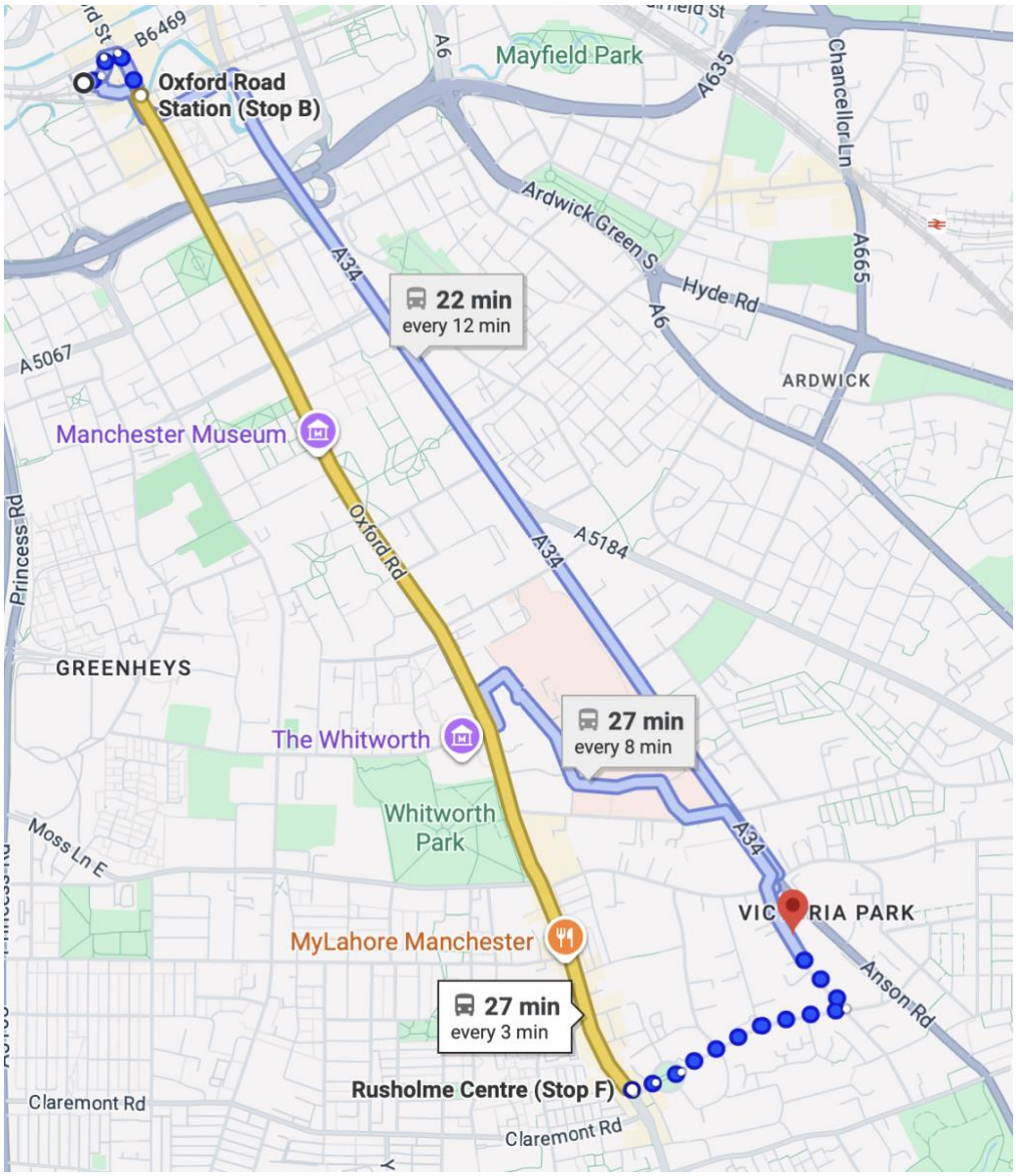
Arrivals

Route to Residential Accommodation

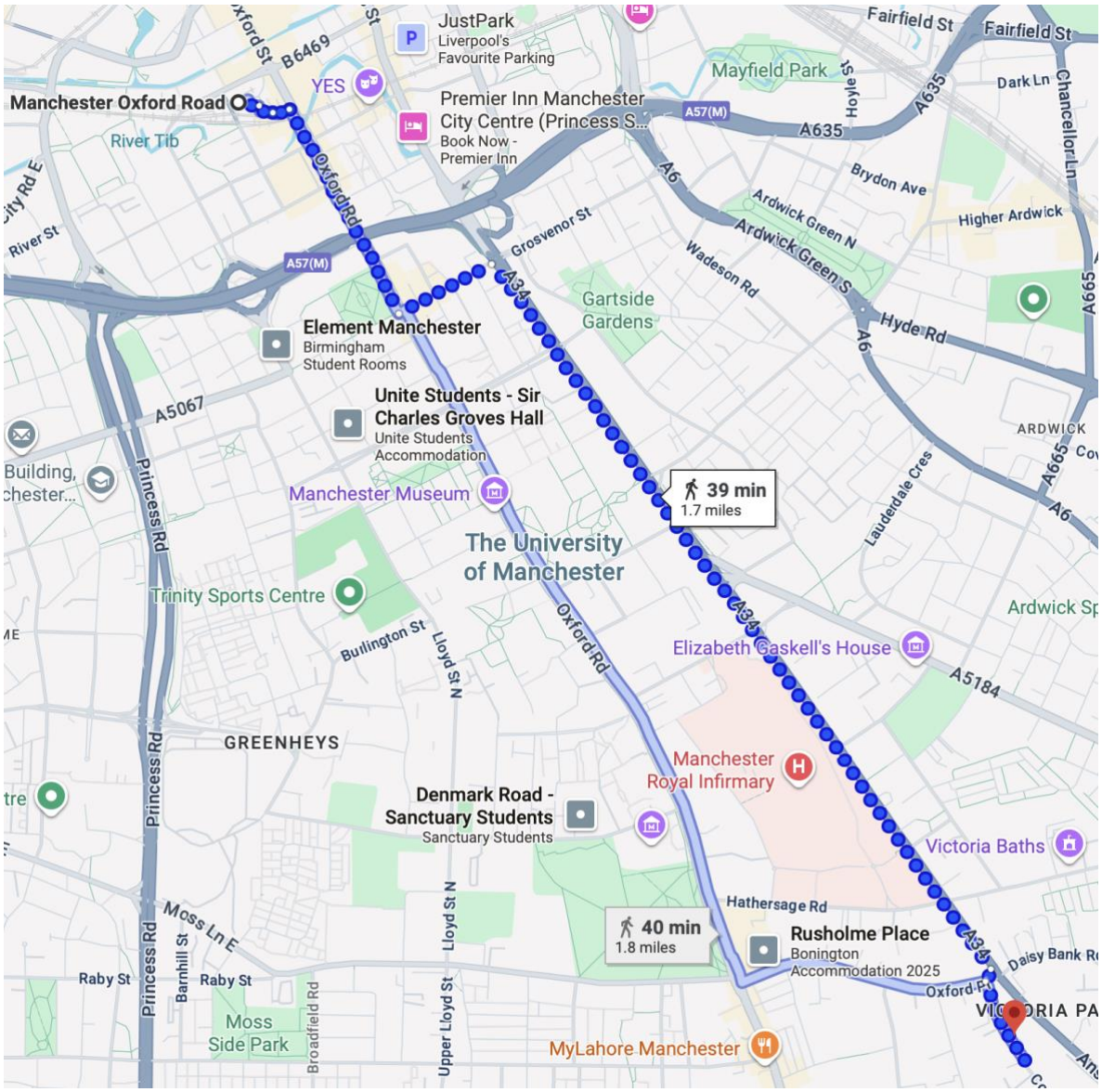
If you are travelling by train, you can alight at Manchester Oxford Road, Piccadilly, or Victoria. From there, take the bus or taxi to your accommodation:

From Manchester **Oxford Road** to Dalton-Ellis, exit the Station and walk to the main road (Oxford Rd). Cross to the other side of the road (bus leaves from same side of the road as the Palace Theatre). Take the 42, 43, 142 or 143 and get off at St. Mary's (Stop T). Walk forward and take the first left into Rusholme Place, which bends right into Oxford Place. Continue down Oxford Place. Near the end of Oxford Place, turn right into Conyngham Road. Dalton-Ellis Hall is on the left.

By Bus:



By Foot



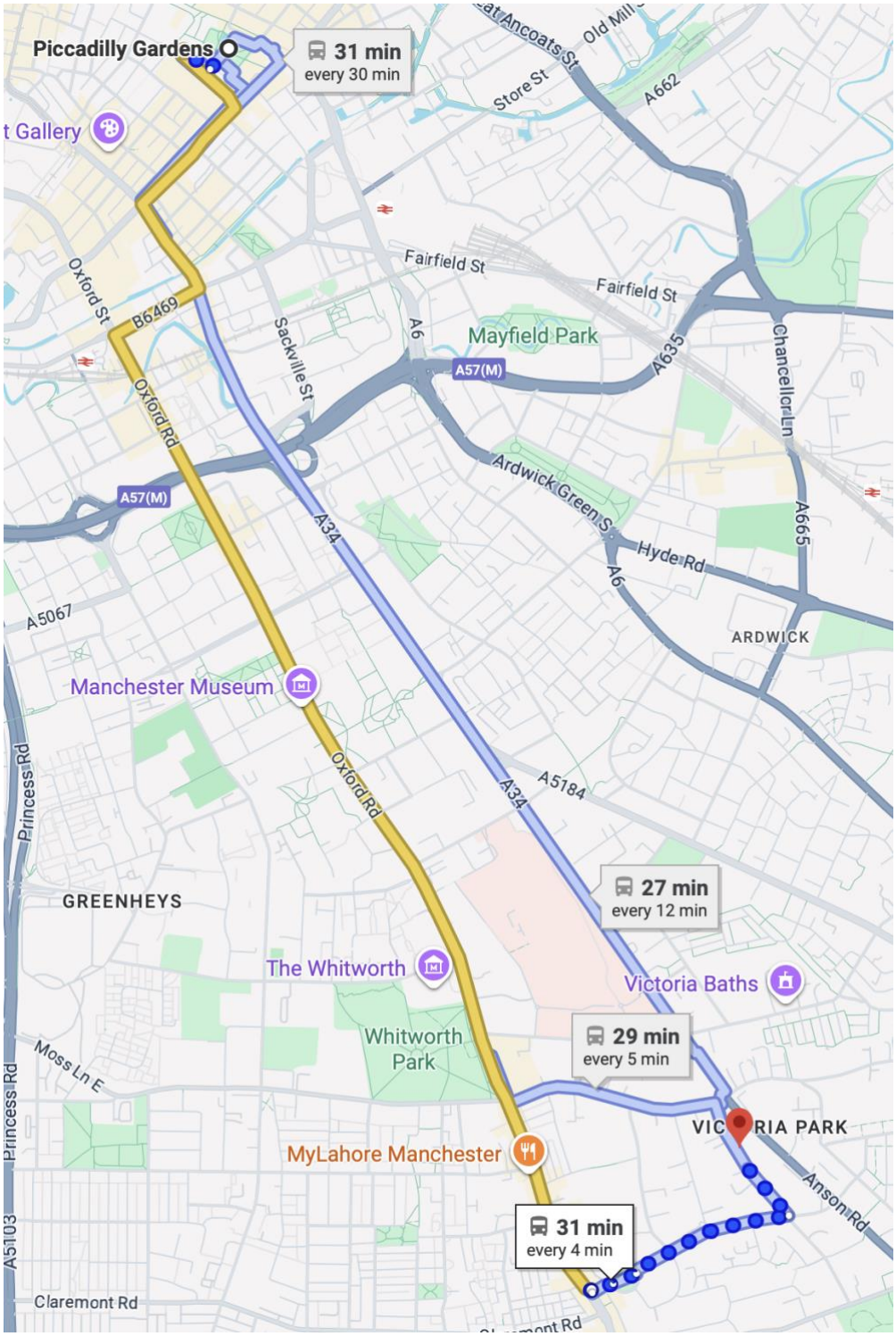
Taxis will be available outside the train stations, or you can use **Manchester Street Cars** on 0161 228 7878 or download the app.

<u>From Manchester **Victoria** to Dalton-Ellis</u>, the best option is to take a taxi.

Taxis will be available outside the train stations, or you can use **Manchester Street Cars** on 0161 228 7878 or download the app.

From Manchester **Piccadilly** to Dalton-Ellis, leave the station via the exit next to Boots, Oliver Bonas and Burger King, turn right and walk downhill on Station Approach towards Piccadilly Gardens. The bus terminal is next door to Piccadilly Gardens. Take the 42, 43, 142 or 143 and get off at St. Mary's (Stop T). Walk forward and take the first left into Rusholme Place, which bends right into Oxford Place. Continue down Oxford Place. Near the end of Oxford Place, turn right into Conyngham Road. Dalton-Ellis Hall is on the left.

By Bus



By Foot

Taxis will be available outside the train stations, or you can use **Manchester Street Cars** on 0161 228 7878 or download the app.

Routes to University Place

If you are travelling by train, you can alight at Manchester Oxford Road, Piccadilly, or Victoria. From there, take the bus or taxi to your accommodation:

- From Manchester **Oxford Road** to University Place, take bus **V1, 18, 111, 142** or **143** from Oxford Road Station to University Shopping Centre, or walk (0.7 miles, 15 minutes).
- From Manchester **Piccadilly** to University Place, take bus **41, 42, 43, 142** or **143** from Charlotte Street (Stop CU) to University Shopping Centre, or walk (1.1 miles, 26 minutes).
- From Manchester **Victoria** to University Place, take bus **18** (Hanover Street Stop NN) to University Shopping Centre, or walk (1.6 miles, 36 minutes).

Taxis will be available outside the train stations, or you can use **Manchester Street Cars** on 0161 228 7878 or download the app

Parking on Campus:

If you wish to park at Dalton-Ellis Hall, there are a very limited number of parking spaces on a first-come, first-served basis. For further information, contact Andy Boakye (andrew.boakye@manchester.ac.uk)

This link shows Car Parks near University Place (#37 on map) and prices can be found on the University Car Parking Page

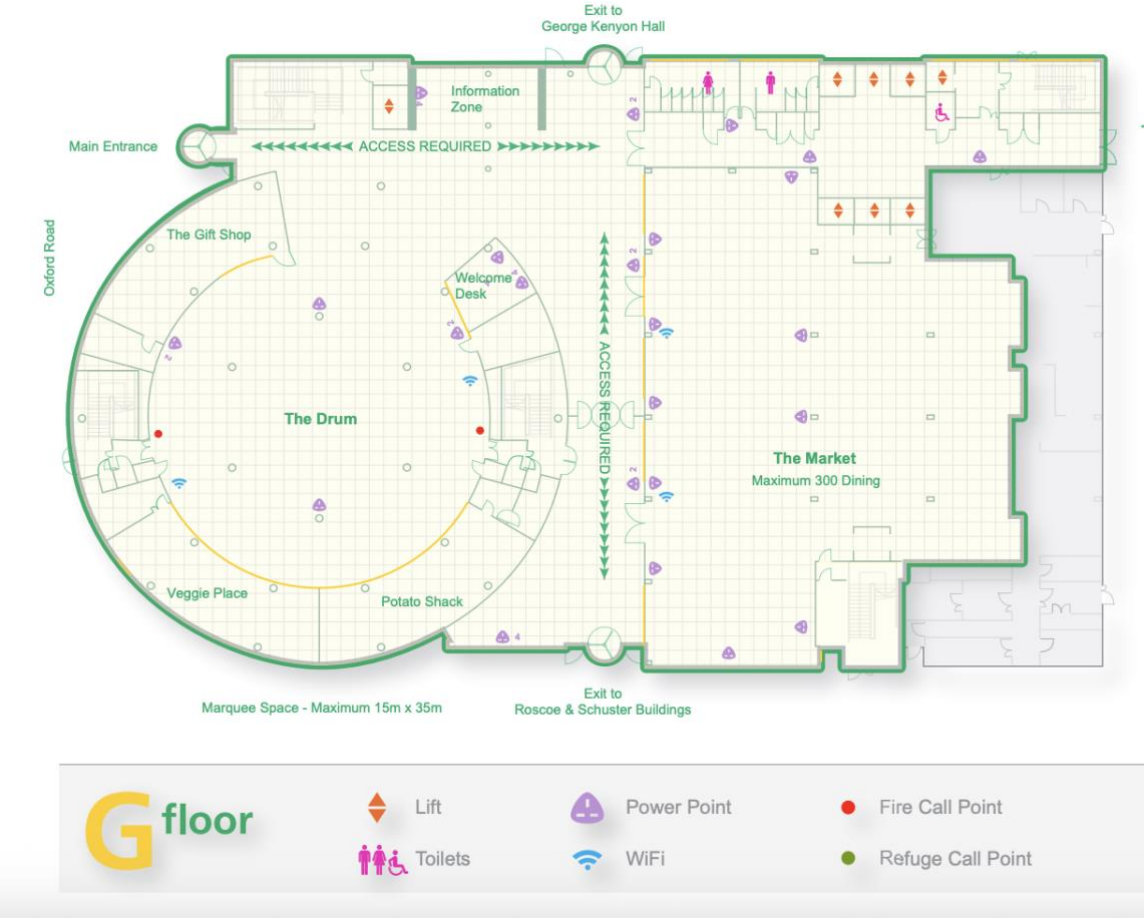
N.B. Oxford Road is not open to regular traffic, and there are applied penalties for anyone driving where they shouldn't, so take care when getting to the car parks!

Maps

For more directions and campus maps, follow this link to the University of Manchester Interactive Map

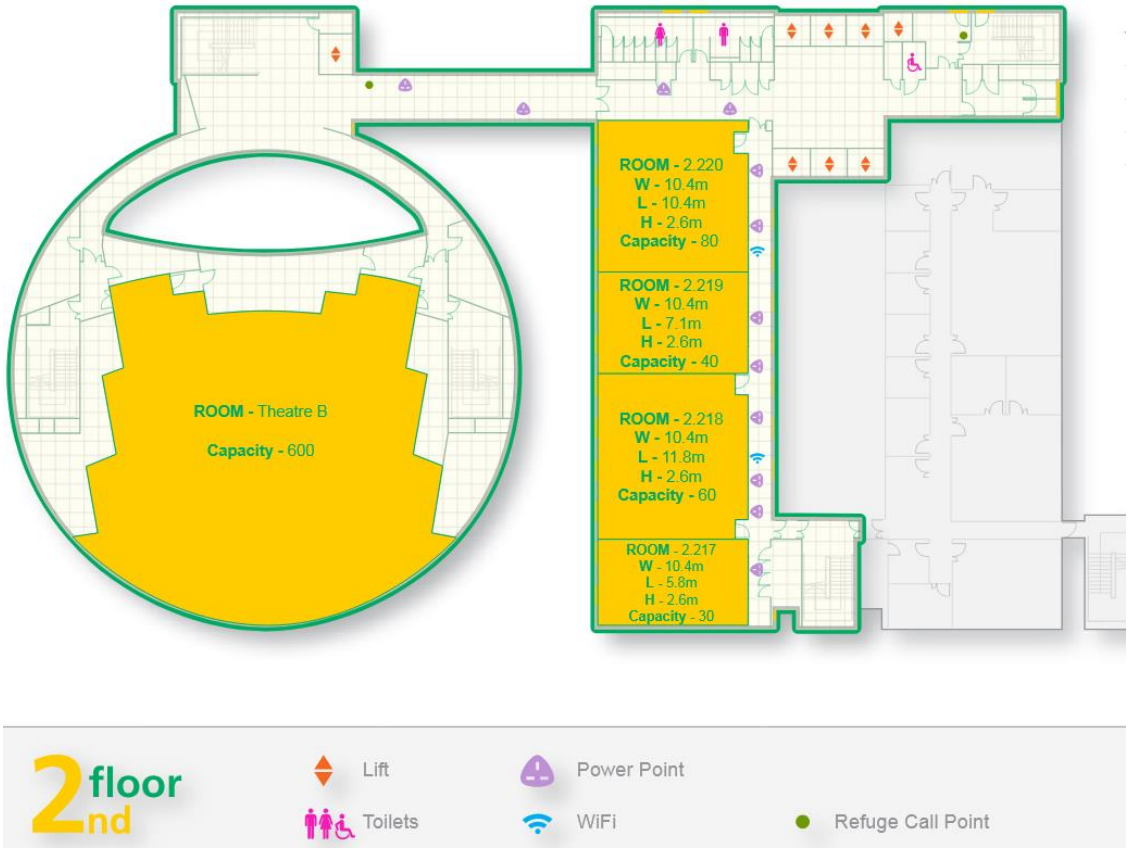
University Place Ground Floor

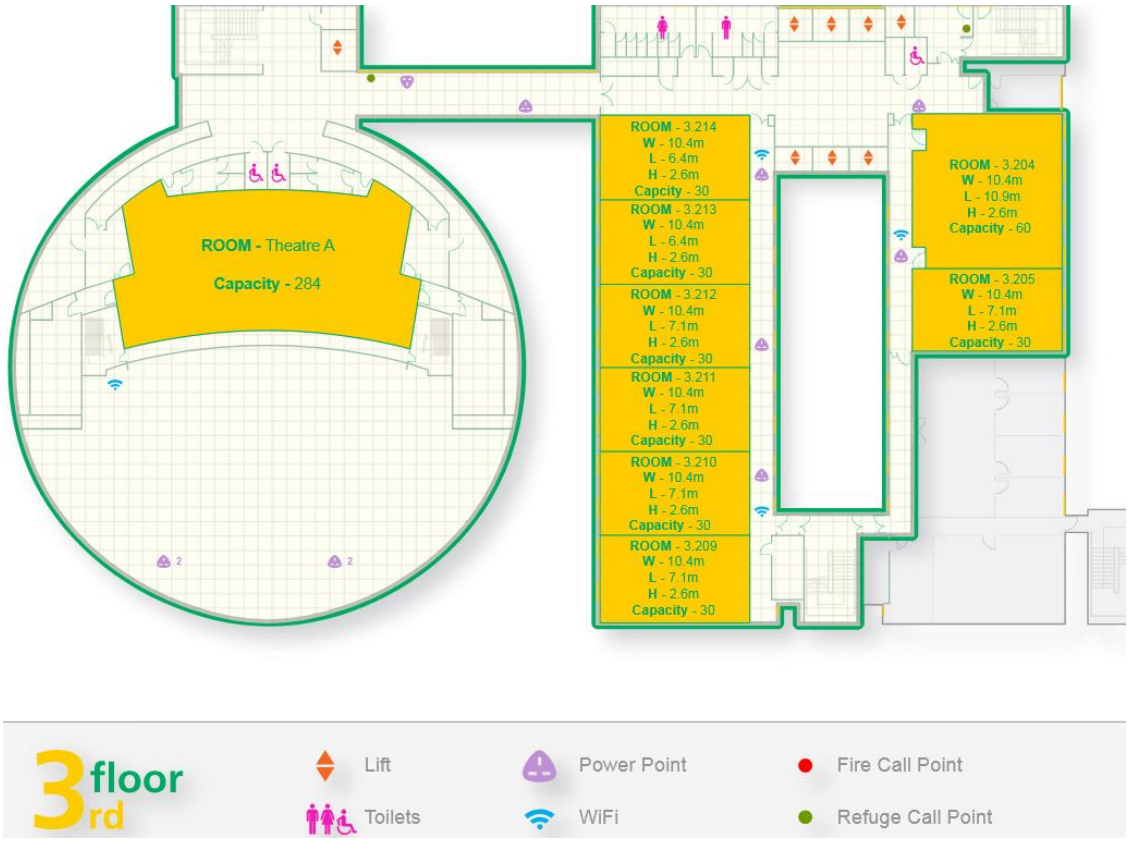
Registration, Coffee, Lunch, Dinner, Book Hall and Receptions



Second and Third Floor plans

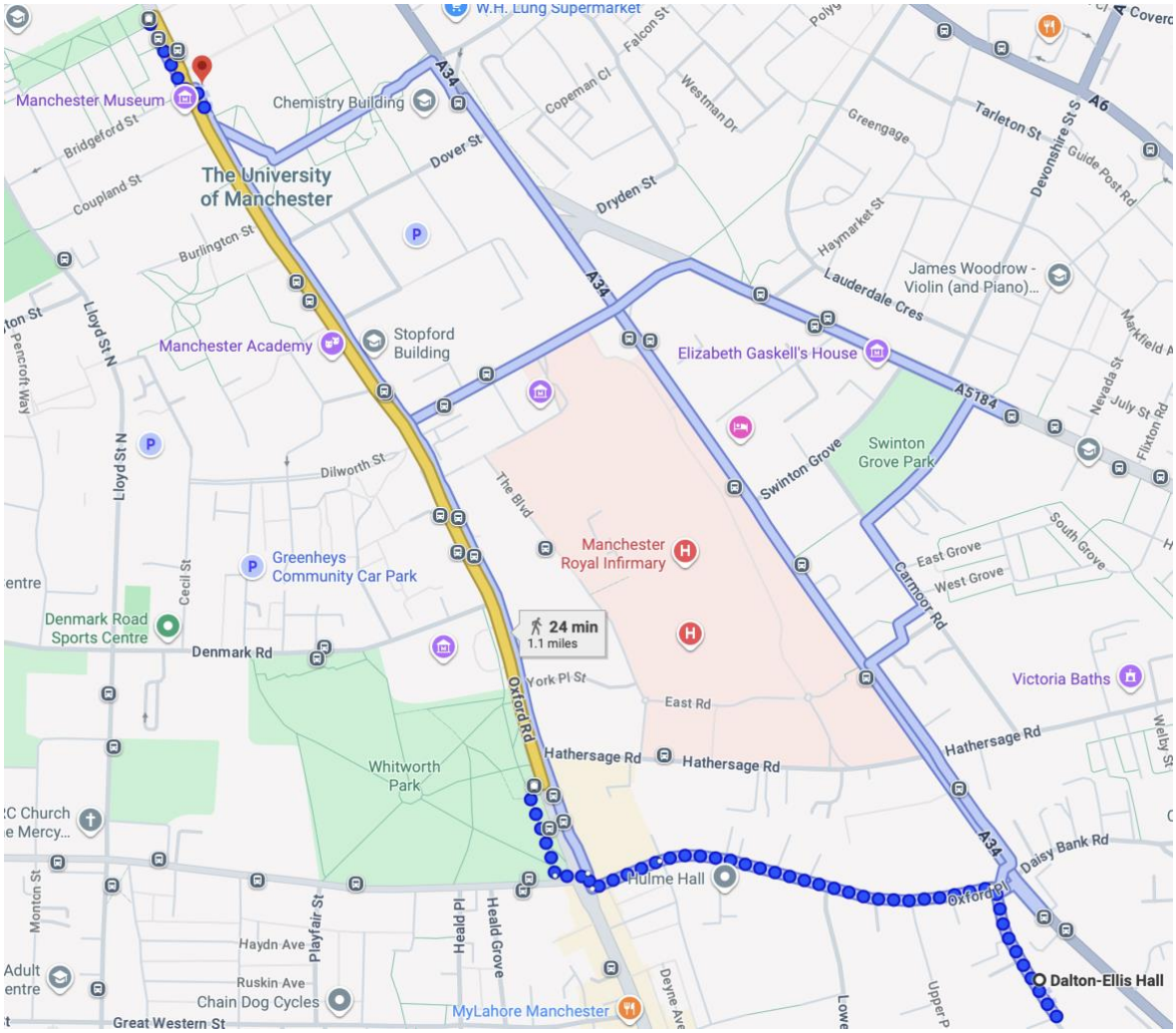
Lecture Theatre A and seminar rooms





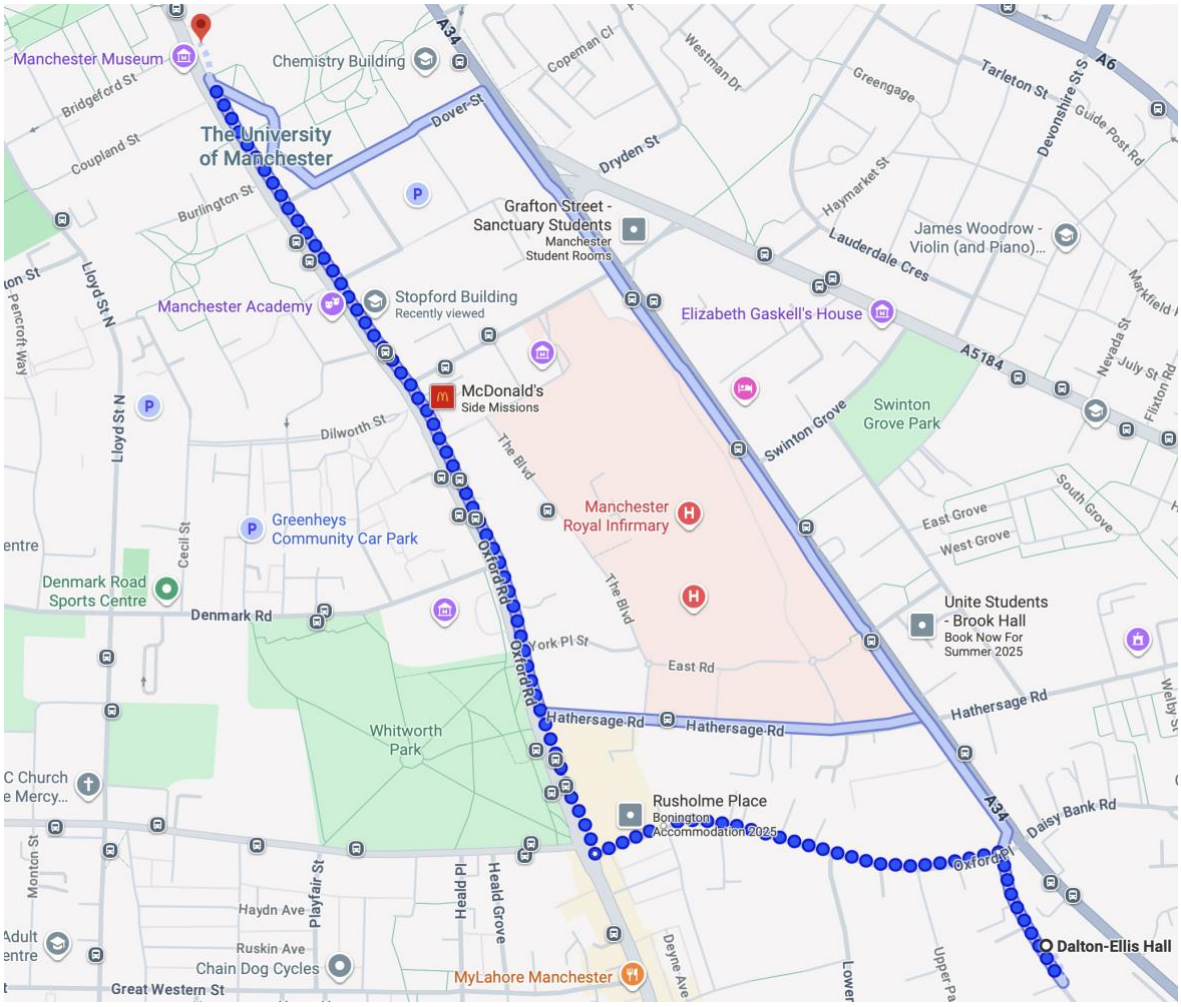
Bus Route from Dalton-Ellis Hall to University Place (14-20 minutes)

You can take the 50 from Daisy Bank Road, alighting at Brunswick Street, followed by a 5-minute walk (14 mins total) or take the 41, 42A, 43, 142 or 143 from Dagenham Road (Stop K), alighting at the University Shopping Centre, followed by a 2-minute walk (20 mins total).



Walking Route from Dalton-Ellis Hall to University Place (24 minutes)

Turn left onto Oxford Place and continue onto Rusholme place. Turn right onto Wilmslow Road which becomes Oxford Road and University place is on the right opposite the Manchester Museum.



PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Monday 1 September

15.00–17.00	Arrivals and registration with tea & coffee	University Place, Information Zone & The Drum
16.15–16.45	Seminar chair AV meeting	University Place, Theatre A
16.45–17.30	Wine Reception	University Place, The Drum
17.30–19.15	Welcome by Peter Oakes Welcome by Catrin Williams **Plenary (1)** Graham Stanton Memorial Lecture Chair: Catrin Williams Helen Bond, University of Edinburgh *'Luke's Rewriting of Matthew's Birth Narrative'* (See pp. 17-19 for Teams links)	University Place, Theatre A
19.15–21.00	Dinner	University Place, The Market
21.00–23.00	Social hours in BrewDog	BrewDog Outpost, 144 Oxford Rd, M13 9GP Space reserved downstairs

Tuesday 2 September

07:30–09.00	Breakfast (**residential delegates only**)	Dalton-Ellis Dining Room
09.00–10.30	**Seminar session (1)** (See pp. 17-19 for rooms and Teams links)	University Place, Seminar Rooms
10.30–11.00	Coffee/Tea Break	University Place, The Drum
11.00–12.30	**Seminar session (2)** (See pp. 17-19 for rooms and Teams links)	University Place, Seminar Rooms
12.45–14.00	Lunch	University Place, The Market
14.00–15.30	Free Time	
14.00–15.00	Global Majority Heritage Networking Drinks	University Place, 3.214
15.30–16.30	**Simultaneous Short Papers** (See pp. 17-19 for rooms and Teams links)	University Place, Seminar Rooms
16.45–17.30	**General Meeting**	University Place, Theatre A

17.30–18.00	Coffee/Tea Break	University Place, The Drum
18.00–19.30	**Plenary (2)** Panel Discussion Chair: Tom de Bruin *Decolonising New Testament Studies* David Horrell, University of Exeter; Sofanit T. Abebe, Trinity College; Bristol Olabisi Obamakin, Durham University; Gifford Rhamie, Newbold College; U-Wen Low, University of Birmingham	University Place, Theatre A
19.30–21.00	Dinner	University Place, The Market
21.00–23.00	Social hours in BrewDog	BrewDog Outpost, 144 Oxford Rd, M13 9GP Space reserved downstairs

Wednesday 3 September

07.30-09.00	Breakfast (**residential delegates only**) & Check-out for residential delegates by 10.00)	Dalton-Ellis Hall (Store Luggage in University Place 3.205 from 09.00
09.15–10.45	**Seminar session (3)** (See pp. 17-19 for rooms and Teams links)	University Place, Seminar Rooms
10.45–11.15	Coffee/Tea Break	University Place, The Drum
11.15–12.45	**Plenary (3)** Chair: Andy Boakye Benjamin Wold, Trinity College Dublin, *'Debt, Hunger, and the Inversion of Forgiveness in the Matthean Lord's Prayer in light of 4QInstruction'*	University Place, Theatre A
13.00–14.00	Lunch (then depart)	University Place, The Market

PLENARY, SEMINAR, & SIMULTANEOUS SHORT PAPER LOCATIONS & LINKS

Plenary Sessions

All In-Person Sessions: University Place, Theatre A

All Online Sessions: Plenaries | Microsoft Teams

Seminars

Ancient Judaism & Christianity

All In-Person Sessions: University Place 2.217

Online Sessions 1 & 3: Ancient Judaism and Christianity | Teams

Online Session 2: Joint Session - Ancient Judaism and Christianity AND Later Epistles | Microsoft Teams

Book of Acts

All In-Person Sessions: University Place 3.214

All Online Sessions: Book of Acts | Microsoft Teams

Book of Revelation

In-Person Sessions 1 & 3: University Place 3.213

In-Person Session 2: University Place 2.219

Online Sessions 1 & 3: Book of Revelation | Microsoft Teams

Online Session 2: Joint Session - Book of Revelation AND Johannine Literature | Microsoft Teams

Early Christianity

In-Person Sessions 1 & 2: University Place 2.218

In-Person Session 3: University Place 3.211

Online Sessions 1 & 3: Early Christianity | Microsoft Teams

Online Session 2: Joint Session - Early Christianity AND New Testament and Christian Theology | Microsoft Teams

Johannine Literature

All In-Person Sessions: University Place 2.219

Online Session 1: Johannine Literature | Microsoft Teams

Online Session 2: Joint Session - Book of Revelation AND Johannine Literature | Microsoft Teams

Online Session 3: Joint Session - Johannine Literature AND Synoptic Gospels | Microsoft Teams

Later Epistles

In-Person Sessions 1 & 3: University Place 3.210

In-Person Session 2: University Place 2.217

Online Sessions 1 & 3: Later Epistles | Microsoft Teams

Online Session 2: Joint Session - Ancient Judaism and Christianity AND Later Epistles | Microsoft Teams

New Testament & Christian Theology

In-Person Sessions 1 & 3: University Place 3.209

In-Person Session 2: University Place 2.218

Online Sessions 1 & 3: New Testament and Christian Theology | Microsoft Teams

Online Session 2: Joint Session - Early Christianity AND New Testament and Christian Theology | Microsoft Teams

Paul

All In-Person Sessions: University Place, Lecture Theatre A

All Online Sessions: Paul | Microsoft Teams

Reception, Critical Theory, & Interdisciplinary Studies

In-Person Sessions 1 & 2: University Place 3.212

Online Sessions 1 & 2 Only: Reception, Critical Theory, and Interdisciplinary Studies Microsoft Teams

Synoptic Gospels

In-Person Sessions 1 & 2: University Place 3.211

In-Person Session 3: University Place 2.219

Online Sessions 1 & 2: Synoptic Gospels | Microsoft Teams

Online Session 3: Joint Session - Johannine Literature AND Synoptic Gospels | Microsoft Teams

Joint Session Links

Joint Session - Ancient Judaism and Christianity AND Later Epistles | Microsoft Teams

Joint Session - Book of Revelation AND Johannine Literature | Microsoft Teams

Joint Session - Early Christianity AND New Testament and Christian Theology | Microsoft Teams

Joint Session - Johannine Literature AND Synoptic Gospels | Microsoft Teams

Simultaneous Short Papers

Simultaneous Short Papers 1

In-Person Session: University Place 2.219

Online Session: Simultaneous Short Papers 1 | Microsoft Teams

Simultaneous Short Papers 2

In-Person Session: University Place, Lecture Theatre A

Online Session: Simultaneous Short Papers 2 | Microsoft Teams

PLENARY PAPER DETAILS AND ABSTRACTS

Plenary Session (1): The Graham Stanton Memorial Lecture

Monday Evening - Chair: Catrin Williams

Helen Bond, University of Edinburgh

'Luke's Rewriting of Matthew's Birth Narrative'

This lecture argues that Luke's birth narrative (Luke 1-2) was inspired by the ambiguity in Matthew's account of Jesus' conception, which left open the possibility that Jesus was illegitimate and was perhaps already inspiring the kind of slanders recounted by Celsus in his *True Word*. The author of Luke's Gospel stressed Mary's virginity through an angelic annunciation, replaced Matthew's dubious or parochial stories with a set that better prepared for the Lukan Jesus, and developed a *synkrisis* with John the Baptist already in embryo form in Mark's opening verses (Mark 1.7-8). The new opening, it will be argued, was added to a second edition of the gospel.

Plenary Session (2): Discussion Panel

Tuesday Evening - Chair: Tom de Bruin

Decolonising New Testament Studies

David Horrell, University of Exeter; Sofanit T. Abebe, Trinity College, Bristol; Olabisi Obamakin, Durham University; Gifford Rhamie, Newbold College; U-Wen Low, University of Birmingham

Plenary Session (3)

Wednesday Morning - Chair: Andrew Boakye

Benjamin Wold, Trinity College Dublin,

'Debt, Hunger, and the Inversion of Forgiveness in the Matthean Lord's Prayer in light of 4QInstruction'

This paper explores the Matthean Lord's Prayer as an ethical response to the material realities of debt and hunger in the ancient world. Rather than treating "daily bread" and "forgiveness of debts" through abstract, non-literal, or eschatological frameworks, it argues that these petitions reflect lived experiences of precarity and exposure. Special attention is given to the prayer's inversion— "forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors"—which places human mercy at the center of divine response. Drawing on 4QInstruction, an early Jewish wisdom text, the paper situates the Lord's Prayer within a sapiential tradition in which forgiveness and provision are formative acts of justice. Prayer here is not passive but performative: a communal ritual that disrupts cycles of obligation and models a divine economy of mercy. By reading these texts together, the paper shows how prayer becomes not merely petition but a communal practice of compassion, equity, and ethical formation.

SEMINAR PAPER DETAILS AND ABSTRACTS

1. ANCIENT JUDAISM & CHRISTIANITY

Chairs: Yael Fisch & Nathanael Vette

Session 1

Kelsie Rodenbiker, University of Copenhagen, *'Canonical Concern: The Rhetoric of Anxiety Over Ancient Pseudepigraphy'*

A forceful rhetoric of concern permeates ancient historiographical discourse around the formation of the canon. Well-known passages contain potent assertions: Eusebius was "compelled" to catalogue forgeries because their character is "exceedingly discordant" with orthodoxy (Hist.eccl.3.25.6–7); For Athanasius, pseudepigrapha have a historical patina to deceive "simple folk"—empty, polluted literature intended to make famous their vainglorious authors (Epist.fest.39.21–22); The Muratorian Fragment decried the combination of authentic and forged works as "gall… mixed with honey" (ll.67); Jerome cautioned Paulina that "it requires great skill to look for gold in mud" (Epist.107.12). I argue that this vivid rhetoric of anxiety and purported protectiveness reflects ancient practices of *enargeia* and *ekphrasis*. Discourse surrounding canonization is emotionally-inflected and intentionally constructed. Affective rhetoric is a mode of expression serving to persuade readers of the integrity of scripture and the dangers of pseudepigraphy—and therefore to control the shape of the canon and its use.

Tom Finegan, Mary Immaculate College, *'A New Reading of Matthew 5:32'*

For a host of reasons Matthew 5:32 is a perplexing verse. But if one brackets the divorce clause one begins to see that it is a corrective exegesis of Deut 24:1–4 asserted against the dominant Pharisaic interpretation of Deut 24:1 (as cited by Mt 5:31). This reading makes sense out of the most unusual features of Mt 5:32. Its implications for the divorce clause are particularly noteworthy. Briefly: (a) the clause was an editorial addition to Mt 5:32*a*; (b) made to clarify that Jesus' teaching did not impugn Joseph (Mt 1:19); (c) an addition which uses key terms from the relevant Torah passage, Deut 22:13–21 (**λόγου πορνείας** = accusation of pre-*nissuin* unchastity); (d) which in turn implies the betrothal view of the clause's meaning.

Session 2: Joint with Later Epistles: Book Review Panel

Panel review of Nicholas Moore's (Durham, Cranmer Hall) *The Open Sanctuary: Access to God and the Heavenly Temple in the New Testament* (Baker Academic, 2024).

Madison N. Pierce, University of St Andrews; Philip Alexander, University of Manchester; Yael Fisch, Hebrew University

Session 3

Junette Galagala-Nacion, University of Edinburgh, *'Paul's Myth of Gentile Inclusion in Romans and the Olive Tree Metaphor'*

As earliest evidence of Christian writing, Paul's letters showcase the appropriation of what Campbell calls the "Jewish symbolic universe" from which his communities derived their

identity. Paul's converts were gentiles, not Jewish proselytes, and in doing so, their participation in the covenant rested on their retention of their non-Jewishness (Campbell). Such identity is explicated at length in Romans, which deals with intergroup tensions in the mixed assembly. As Jewish believers returned to a primarily gentile congregation after their expulsion by Claudius in 49–50 CE, the Roman *ekklesia* had to contend with the differing practices and emphases of the Christian faith, with the Jews refiguring the meaning of their traditions and what that meant for the gentiles. I propose that in Romans, Paul crafts a myth of origins for gentiles and assigns them an identity within the new framework of faith in Jesus from a Jewish perspective. One way he constructs this ethnogenesis is through the olive tree metaphor. Paul reworks ancient horticultural conventions to depict the grafted wild olive branch as opposed to Israel as the olive tree's natural branch. Moreover, Paul appeals to the cultivator's sovereignty to emphasize God's sovereignty, parallel to the earlier potter-clay metaphor.

Joshua Crosby, University of Manchester, *'Josephus' Temple Descriptions: Moving Beyond Discrepancies'*

Within the studies of the Second Temple, particularly the post-Herodian period, Josephus has been used as a resource for the many endeavours to reconstruct the building itself. To this end, he has been of great use, representing the best eyewitness account available to us. Nevertheless, views on his reliability have varied greatly from scholar to scholar, and his accounts have been viewed as competing evidence alongside *Tractate Middot* in the Mishnah. Instead of attempting to reconcile the source material, this paper will consider both of Josephus' major descriptions, found in *The Jewish War* and *Antiquities of the Jews*, as worthy of individual scrutiny. The differences will be explored, neither to discredit his reliability, nor to synthesise them into a coherent picture. Instead, they will be used to shed light on Josephus' intentions for each literary project and the character of the Temple itself. It will consider the impact each description might have had on Josephus' readership and what might have occurred in the intervening years between the compositions for such a change in tack.

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2. THE BOOK OF ACTS

Chairs: Monique Cuany & James Morgan

Session 1

Chris Norden, Bristol Baptist College, '*The Faithfulness of God, and Paul: Reading Acts 13:16-41 and 20:18-35 together'*

The speeches of Paul at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:16-41) and Miletus (20:18-35) provide a sort of frame for Luke's presentation of Paul's free missionary activity. The contexts and contents of the two speeches are very different: the earlier speech is delivered in a synagogue and primarily concerns the faithfulness of God to Israel, while the later one is to church leaders and focuses on the faithfulness of Paul to his calling. Because of such contrasts, each speech has normally been compared with other material in Luke-Acts and beyond, but seldom with

the other speech. Using a narrative-critical approach, I briefly summarise the narrative significance of each speech, before going on to discuss how reading them in relation to one another may provide insights into Luke's characterisation of Paul, contributing to an impression that Luke is not an uncritical observer of Paul.

Todd Thomason, University of Edinburgh, *'James's Invocation of the* σκηνὴν Δαυιδ *in Acts 15: Eschatological Fulfilment or Theological Nostalgia?'*

James's speech to the "Apostolic Council" has long been esteemed as a watershed moment in Acts: The inclusion of Gentiles is affirmed and a schism between Antioch and Jerusalem is avoided. I will contend that an analysis of intratextual echoes within Acts 15 and an *inclusio* formed by the term **σκηνή**, which unites Acts 7-15 as a narrative unit, complicates this traditional assessment of the speech by setting James's interpretation of God's activity in tension with the earlier proclamations of Stephen, Peter, and Paul. Following an overview of James's speech in which I highlight these intratextual echoes, I will explore material within the *inclusio* that undercuts James's exegetical logic. This examination will reveal that, while James is prepared to welcome Gentiles into the fold of the Jesus movement, his appeal to Amos's vision of a restored **σκηνὴ Δαυὶδ** demonstrates he understands Gentile inclusion in a way that does not align with "what Simeon has reported." Ultimately, James maintains a pre-Cornelius understanding of God's redeeming work.

Session 2: Book Review Panel

Panel review of Steve Walton, *Acts 1-9:42*, Volume 37A, Word Biblical Commentary, 2024

Loveday Alexander, University of Sheffield, emerita; David Horrell, University of Exeter; Luke Macnamara OSB, St Patrick's Pontifical University, Maynooth

Session 3

Will Loescher, Independent scholar, '*The Ambiguous Bust-Up between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36–41)*'

This paper explores the possible interpretations of this unexpected and shocking incident against the background of ambiguity in ancient literature, narrative theory, and divine revelation. It also considers the various aspects of textual inferences and pastoral applications before proposing a solution based on the underlying issues for a wider literary reading of the gospel mission from the Acts 15 Jerusalem Conference onwards.

Michael Blythe, Africa Nazarene University, *'Unsettling Imperial Ethos: A Socio-Political Exorcism at Philippi in Acts 16'*

Building upon Richard Horsley's hypothesis, this study employs Acts 16:11–40 as a case study to explore how Luke's narrative symbolically depicts Roman militarism and imperial oppression through the exorcism event in Philippi. By interpreting the possessed slave girl's "spirit of Python" as a representation of imperial authority, the encounter is reframed as a direct confrontation with Roman socio-political dominance. Utilizing a cultural anthropological approach similar to Horsley's interpretation of Mark 5:1–20, this analysis highlights the

exorcism as both spiritual liberation and political subversion, symbolically driving out oppressive powers and restoring communal wholeness. The Philippian episode serves as a key literary bridge to Acts' narrative culmination in Rome, emphasizing a progressive confrontation between the Gospel and imperial authority. Ultimately, Paul and Silas's imprisonment and dramatic release illustrate Luke's broader theological vision of the Holy Spirit's superior authority dismantling Roman imperial ideology. Thus, Acts' Philippian account exemplifies a narrative strategy unsettling imperial ethos, portraying the Gospel as a force subverting oppressive political and spiritual systems.

Richard Cleaves, University of Gloucestershire, *'Imagining Luke-Acts in Roman Britain … through the eyes of those responsible for the Uley curse tablets'*

The recent publication of three archives of written material from early Roman Britain has the potential to throw light on the way Luke and Acts were received by their first audiences. The traders, merchants and financiers of the Bloomberg tablets (published 2016), the women as well as men of the military community of the Vindolanda tablets (1983-2019 and ongoing), and the members of the rural community of the Uley curse tablets (2024) were not only the kind of people we meet in Luke-Acts, but also the contemporaries of its first readers. Drawing on the insights of archival ethnography, it is possible to develop an understanding of these people through their very own hand-written documents. We can then imagine how they might have read texts from Luke-Acts, had they become followers of The Way. This paper will imagine how passages to do with temple ritual, cursing and praying would be received by those responsible for the Uley curse tablets and demonstrate the value of collaboration between Roman Britain research and New Testament research.

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3. BOOK OF REVELATION

Chairs: Martina Vercesi & Sean Ryan

Session 1: Open Session

Sigve K. Tonstad, Loma Linda University, *'"Restraining", "Binding", and "Releasing": Delineating Agency in Revelation'*

On two or three occasions, Revelation uses a combination of verbs that offer much-needed help toward delineating agency. The relevant verbs are *restrain* **κρατέω** (7:1;20:2); *bind* [**δέω**] (9:14; 20:2); and *release* [**λύω**] (9:14, 15; 20:3, 7). In the last occurrence, God-sent angels bind Satan and lock him up for a thousand years. Surprisingly, we are told that "he must be *released*" (20:3), and he is (20:3). The question of agency is here straightforward. God restrains and releases, and Satan is restrained and released. The same verbs occur in the trumpet sequence (9:14, 15; see also 7:1-3). This paper proposes to see action and agency the same way: God's side restrains the demonic side, but at some point lets go of restraint. The question of agency is critical to the theology of Revelation lest we make the mistake of assigning the actions of the demonic side to God, as interpreters often do.

Ian Paul, University of Nottingham, *'Automata and robotics in the Imperial Cult as background to reading Rev 13.14–15'*

Revelation 13.14–15, with its language of pyrotechnic displays and animated statues, has long been problematic for readers and interpreters of this text. Some have taken it as rhetorical exaggeration; others (reading 'futuristically') imagine it predicting a future age of technological wonders, diabolically harnessed in opposition to the people of God in the 'end times'.

In fact, historical evidence shows that impressive automata and robotics were a key part of the imperial cult and related cultic activity. The apparent mystery of animated mechanisms functioned both emotionally and psychologically, to support the impression of magical power. Rev 13 offers a critique of the way that technology is harnessed to totalitarian imperial power, and thus potentially offers us a theological resource for thinking about the relationship between technology, power, and domination in the contemporary world.

Session 2: Joint Session with the Johannine Literature Seminar

David Ray Johnson, Regents Theological College, *'Flesh, Resurrection, and the New Creation: A Johannine Embodied Eschatology'*

This study examines the goodness of creation from an eschatological perspective as a motif shared in the Johannine literature (FG, 1–3 John, and Revelation). While Platonic assumptions have been considered as influences of the Johannine worldview, including the privileging of the spiritual over the material, this study argues that the Johannine texts affirm creation and materiality presented in their shared eschatological vision. This study provides a literary-thematic analysis of creation, materiality, and eschatology in the Johannine texts to demonstrate the affirmation of creation, particularly through the incarnation and bodily resurrection of Jesus, which underscores the hope for the resurrection of all the dead and the union of creation with the divine realm in the new creation (Rev. 21–22). This framework ultimately provides the ethical directive for the community to care for the bodily and material needs of others in love, grounded in the 'flesh' of Jesus (1 John 3.16–4.3). The study concludes that embodiment, creation, materiality, and eschatology are underlying motifs shared in the Johannine corpus.

Francis Watson, Durham University, *'John the Prophet and John the Apostle: the Johannine Writings and the Montanist Controversy'*

The early identification of the anonymous "beloved disciple" with the apostle John created a link with the prophet of the same name who authored the Book of Revelation, and who is associated with Ephesus and western Asia Minor. As a result, Montanist beliefs about the promised coming of the Paraclete and the imminent descent of the heavenly Jerusalem could both be traced back to "Johannine" texts, which thus became implicated in the fierce controversies generated by the "New Prophecy". This paper investigates the anti-Montanist rejection of both texts that can plausibly be linked to Caius of Rome, drawing on the evidence of Irenaeus, Eusebius, Epiphanius, and Dionysius bar Salibi to reconstruct key themes in Caius's lost Dialogue with Proclus, a Phrygian (i.e. Montanist). The paper aims to locate the Book of Revelation within a Christian prophetic tradition in Asia Minor that extends to

Montanus, Maximilla, Priscilla, and beyond. Later ambivalence about the place of Revelation within the New Testament collection can be traced back to this early controversy.

Session 3: Open Session

Lynn R. Huber, Elon University, '*Light Space, Good Space? Revelation's Throne Room as White Mythic Space*'

Depicted by John as kaleidoscopic and colorful, the heavenly throne room in Revelation 4 is often represented by modern interpreters, including illustrators and authors of biblical commentaries, in ways that evoke what historian Stefan Aguirre Quiroga describes as "white mythic space." This describes a space, historical or pseudo-historical, made racially homogenous via the erasure or minimization of the non-White. In this paper, part of a book project on Revelation and Whiteness, I use Quiroga's framework to discuss how interpretations of Revelation downplay the book's complex use of color to depict the One Who Sits on the Throne, compared to jasper and carnelian. Engaging ancient theories about color and lapidaries, I argue that the text should be read as depicting a polychrome Divine and that failures to recognize this participate in Revelation's legacy of racialized thinking. Among the interpretations I discuss are English-language illustrated Bibles, ubiquitous tools for communicating religious and racial ideologies.

Daisy Andoh, University of Edinburgh, *'Her Whorings and Her Sorcery: Jezebel and Food Offerings in Revelation 2'*

In the book of Revelation, the figure of Jezebel is a contentious one. The vast majority of scholarship has assumed that the target of John's critique is sexual sin alongside the sin of eating food offered to images. This has led to rich research in feminist scholarship that rightly highlights the impact of this sexualised interpretation of Jezebel on the characterisation of women in Revelation and the wider NT.

However, I seek to offer an alternative reading of Jezebel's story that argues that the coupling of *eidólothutos* and *porneia* in Revelation is a rhetorical tool used to condemn the worship of other gods through the eating of food offerings, as opposed to sexual sin. This paper will explore the edicts against food offerings in the Hebrew Bible alongside the Greco-Roman cultural context to demonstrate how *eidólothutos* is often framed as religious adultery. Furthermore, this paper will argue that Jezebel in Revelation is named as such to link her to Jezebel in 1 & 2 Kings in order to emphasise the sin of religious adultery though the consumption of food offerings. By examining the critiques levied at Jezebel in Revelation within their socio-historic context, this paper aims to challenge the common consensus about the nature of Jezebel's sin.

4. EARLY CHRISTIANITY

Chairs: Kimberley Fowler & Jane McLarty

Session 1: General Session

Susan E. Benton, Baylor University, *'Modeling Women Leaders in Ekklesia'*

Scholarship on Greco-Roman associations and Roman history has uncovered numerous significant women who contributed in collegia, defying previous conceptions about women's roles in ancient society. Although there were "limits of participation," as Riet van Bremen memorably wrote, inscriptional evidence reveals women who carved out places for themselves. In previous research, I have argued that women patrons and mothers in associations provide fitting counterparts for comparison to New Testament women in the early ekklēsiai, enabling development of a model for the types of activities the women in early Christianity likely undertook. This presentation uses the earlier models for Phoebe and Prisca to provide patterns of analysis, envisioning Apphia and Nympha and their engagement in Lycus Valley Christ groups. In conversation with Huttner, Harrison and Welborn's Vol. 5 in The First Urban Churches series, and further recent scholarship on the Lycus Valley, I explore how the brief Biblical mentions of these women likely allude to their significant ecclesial influence.

Naomi Reiss, University of Edinburgh, '*Imprisonment in Roman Penal Ideology and Christian Martyr Literature'*

Recent studies demonstrate that imprisonment was a vital part of the Roman penal system. This wider reality is reflected in the prominence of the prison in much early Christian literature. However, by the time of Constantine the prison system was coming under increasing pressure, and the appropriateness of imprisonment as a punishment was questioned in some quarters. This paper will consider a range of third- and fourth-century material, including the letters of Cyprian, Constantine's legal reforms, and Libanius' *Orations*, in order to unpack the ways in which Roman attitudes towards imprisonment are mirrored in early Christian texts, and especially in martyr literature. Working from the hypothesis that martyrdom was not solely about death but more broadly about the experience of carceral punishment, which could take many forms, this paper explores the often fraught conversation within Christian communities about what exactly *did* constitute martyrdom, and the contested place of imprisonment in early Christian identity formation.

Sarah Parkhouse, University of Manchester, *'Gospel Writing in Late Antiquity: Poetic Retellings of the Passion'*

The impulse to retell the story of Jesus began with Matthew's reworking of Mark and continues to transpire in churches, schools, and public places throughout the world today. Each new retelling changes the story in various ways to align with new contexts and audiences. It is commonly acknowledged among scholars of early Christianity that gospel writing proliferated in the first and second centuries and extended beyond those that became the canonical four. Yet, we rarely consider what happened to the phenomenon of gospel production after the long second century. This paper examines a selection of late antique

Christian epics as "gospels", on the basis that they lie within the tradition of relaying the story of Jesus that began in the first century. To make the case, this paper will focus on how the works of Proba, Eudocia, Juvencus, and Nonnus retell the Passion story in various ways, focusing on questions of gospel production, genre, contexts, and canonicity.

Session 2: Joint Session with NT & Christian Theology "The Four Last Things: death, judgement, heaven and hell"

Irene Barbotti, Trinity College Dublin, *'"This being so, this is the judgment of God" (Ps.-Cl. Hom. 12,29). Exploring the Judicial Background of Couplings of Beatitudes and Woes in Early Christian Writings'*

This paper examines the judicial framework underpinning the pairing of beatitudes and woes in early Christian literature. By analysing these paired sayings, it traces the development of the eschatological judgment motif, structured around the contrast between the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked. Building on prior observations of the link between beatitudes and woes in Second Temple Jewish and New Testament texts (cf. Pogor 2022), the study advances the discussion in two key directions. First, it expands the textual corpus to include lesser-studied early Christian writings—such as the Gospel of Thomas, the Didache, the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies, the Book of Thomas the Contender, and the Apostolic Constitutions and Canons—where this literary form also plays a significant role. Second, it argues that the beatitude–woe pairing constituted a distinct literary form already in Second Temple literature and retained, in early Christian usage, its original focus on the expectation of imminent eschatological judgment, thus offering fresh insights into the Jewish roots and theological evolution of this motif in early Christianity.

Piotr Ashwin-Siejkowski, King's College London, *'Valentinus' Harvest: Chasing the Shadow of a Theologian'*

In the early third century work the Refutation of all Heresies we find a poem, whose author is identified as Valentinus. The hymn depicts a positive, not frightening, climax of the visible reality as a collection of the fruits. In my discussion, I place this cosmological hymn close to some parallel motifs of harvest in the New Testament, but also, I reaffirm its setting within the second century philosophical mind of the author, especially influenced by the eclectic Middle Platonic cosmology. Looking through this poem, we can see that Valentinus, while wishing to ground his poem in the New Testament metaphors, eliminated their apocalyptic connotations and creatively and succinctly combined them with his philosophical position. The hymn does not allow any speculations about other aspects of the philosophical position of the author (such as e.g. ethics or anthropology), but his understanding of salvation linked with the image of a baby/Saviour. It offers a very positive comprehension of the final moment of the current world.

Tyler Hoagland, Independent Scholar, *'Judgment and Consequences: The Shepherd of Hermas and the Gospel of Matthew in Conversation'*

The ninth parable of the Shepherd of Hermas provides a convoluted collection of spiritual possibilities. The vision and its interpretation describe at least thirteen possibilities for the state of an individual's relationship to church and Christ, with both positive and negative

outcomes for some failings in the preliminary judgment of the Son of God. And while some errors, like apostasy and false teaching, have dire consequences, others, even the dreaded double-minded, are redeemable. This paper places this parable in conversation with the Gospel of Matthew, particularly the passages concerning judgment from the Sermon on the Mount (7:1–5) and the parable of the sheep and the goats (25:31–46). By including Matthew in the conversation, several things become clearer in the Shepherd. First, the established concern in the Shepherd regarding the activity of the wealthy reinforced. Second, judgment considers the impact of errors on the community and the potential for community restoration and reparations. Finally the identity of the judge as the Son of God points the reader towards the final judgment.

Session 3: Book Review Panel

Review Panel on Cor Bennema, *Imitation in Early Christianity: Mimesis and Religious-Ethical Formation* (Eerdmans, 2025)

Peter Oakes; Amy White; Roi Ziv; Steve Walton; with an introduction by the author.

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5. JOHANNINE LITERATURE

Chairs: Elizabeth Corsar & Paulus de Jong

Session 1: John

Tyler Brown, Oxford University, *'Re-entering the Womb (κοιλία): The Rewriting of Matthew's Sign of Jonah in the Johannine Temple Incident and Conversation with Nicodemus'*

Reviving older arguments, James Barker recently suggested Matt 18:3 rather than oral tradition inspires the Johannine "born again" saying in John 3:3, 5 (2025, 115). The paper shows that Nicodemus's question in 3:4 also reflects Matthean influence. The Matthean Sign of Jonah (12:40) uniquely describes someone re-entering a "womb" (**κοιλία**) to be figuratively reborn. Matthew's Sign of Jonah likely already influences the preceding Johannine Temple incident, where the request for a sign is answered by a statement about resurrection in three days (John 2:18–22; cf. Boismard et al. 1977, 109). In the ps.-Philonic De Jona, Jonah is in fact born **ἄνωθεν** (46.4). With Johannine irony, Nicodemus is half-right. While John's "signs" program does not allow the importation of the synoptic Sign of Jonah as a denial of the sign-request, the meaning of the Matthean Jonah-sign as a Christologically focused symbol of resurrection and rebirth is carried over into the Temple incident and Nicodemus conversation. The paper thus illuminates one way the Fourth Gospel handles the refusal of the synoptic Jesus to give a sign.

James Bell, University of Exeter, *'The shepherd metaphor in John 21:15–19: connections to Ezek 34 and Zech 13'*

Scholarship has often discussed the 'Good Shepherd discourse' in John 10, but the

commissioning of Peter as a shepherd by Jesus in John 21:15–19 is less explored. A particular aspect of the LEADERSHIP IS SHEPHERDSHIP metaphor in this passage which should be considered is its relationship to earlier usages of the metaphor in the Hebrew Bible. In this paper, I will use Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) to elucidate the different aspects or mappings of the LEADERSHIP IS SHEPHERDSHIP metaphor utilised in John 21:15–19 for Peter. I will then consider the connections between these mappings and Ezek 34 and Zech 13:7, arguing that these passages relate closely to John 21:15–19. I will further suggest that this implies that Peter is being considered as partly fulfilling the promise of eschatological Davidic shepherdship in Ezek 34 and the dying shepherd in Zech 13. This also suggests that the Christian community is perceived here as the eschatological covenantal people of God, under the promised shepherd-leaders.

AKMA Adam, University of Oxford, *'Jesus and Jolene: One Lesson Exegetes Can Learn from Popular Music'*

For centuries interpreters have tied themselves into exegetical knots trying to make sense of the Auseinandersetzung between Jesus and his anonymous Samaritan interlocutor in John 4. How did she accumulate so many spouses? What happened to them? What is Jesus's interest in her most recent relationship? As Meredith Warren points out, scholars tend to show a leering interest in slut-shaming the Samaritan (in a conversation in which Jesus issues no criticism of her); that impulse obscures a possible straightforward explanation of Jesus's odd-seeming questions and response. All that is required to make greater sense of John 4:16–19 is fluency in both Greek and American popular music, perhaps particularly the oeuvre of Dolly Parton. Rather than fussing over details in the laws of marriage and divorce, fatality statistics for husbands, and other matters that John doesn't call to our attention, we need only remember Jolene: The Samaritan woman has had five men over the course of her life, and the one she has now isn't her man.

Session 2: Joint Session with Book of Revelation

David Ray Johnson, Regents Theological College, *'Flesh, Resurrection, and the New Creation: A Johannine Embodied Eschatology'*

This study examines the goodness of creation from an eschatological perspective as a motif shared in the Johannine literature (FG, 1–3 John, and Revelation). While Platonic assumptions have been considered as influences of the Johannine worldview, including the privileging of the spiritual over the material, this study argues that the Johannine texts affirm creation and materiality presented in their shared eschatological vision. This study provides a literary-thematic analysis of creation, materiality, and eschatology in the Johannine texts to demonstrate the affirmation of creation, particularly through the incarnation and bodily resurrection of Jesus, which underscores the hope for the resurrection of all the dead and the union of creation with the divine realm in the new creation (Rev. 21–22). This framework ultimately provides the ethical directive for the community to care for the bodily and material

needs of others in love, grounded in the 'flesh' of Jesus (1 John 3.16–4.3). The study concludes that embodiment, creation, materiality, and eschatology are underlying motifs shared in the Johannine corpus.

Francis Watson, Durham University, *'John the Prophet and John the Apostle: the Johannine Writings and the Montanist Controversy'*

The early identification of the anonymous "beloved disciple" with the apostle John created a link with the prophet of the same name who authored the Book of Revelation, and who is associated with Ephesus and western Asia Minor. As a result, Montanist beliefs about the promised coming of the Paraclete and the imminent descent of the heavenly Jerusalem could both be traced back to "Johannine" texts, which thus became implicated in the fierce controversies generated by the "New Prophecy". This paper investigates the anti-Montanist rejection of both texts that can plausibly be linked to Caius of Rome, drawing on the evidence of Irenaeus, Eusebius, Epiphanius, and Dionysius bar Salibi to reconstruct key themes in Caius's lost Dialogue with Proclus, a Phrygian (i.e. Montanist). The paper aims to locate the Book of Revelation within a Christian prophetic tradition in Asia Minor that extends to Montanus, Maximilla, Priscilla, and beyond. Later ambivalence about the place of Revelation within the New Testament collection can be traced back to this early controversy.

Session 3: Johannine Literature and Synoptics Joint Seminar

John Nelson, London, *'The Next Quest for Jesus' Physical Appearance'*

The physical appearance of Jesus is more distinctive and recognisable than any other. Yet until recently, historical Jesus scholarship has largely overlooked the subject of Jesus' physicality. This paper offers a critique of recent studies of Jesus' appearance – including Joan Taylor's 'average-looking' Jesus (2018) and Isaac Soon's 'little Messiah' (2023) – and offers some further suggestions towards re-imaging Jesus' physical appearance. Taking my cue from *The Next Quest for the Historical Jesus* (2024), I propose that paying attention to the use (and absence) of physiognomy in ancient biography (Petrey, 2024) and insights from disability studies in the context of Jesus' labour in ancient Galilee (Gosbell, 2018) offers two means to destabilise our cultural iconography of Jesus. By reading the Gospels' silence on Jesus' physical traits within its socio-historical and literary milieu, historians are enabled to think more sensitively about Jesus' image.

Respondent – James Crossley, University of Cambridge

6. LATER EPISTLES

Chairs: Nicholas Moore & Kelsie Rodenbiker

Session 1: Reception and the Catholic Epistles

Daniel Fook Boon Eng, University of Glasgow, *'Navigating the Scripture through Paratexts in GA 181'*

This paper explores the paratextual complexity and interpretive potential of the 11th-century Greek manuscript GA 181 (Reg. gr. 179), a Praxapostolos codex produced in Calabria. GA 181's dense network of paratexts including prologues, lection lists, hypotheses, chapter titles, and quotation systems function not merely as organizational aids but as interpretive frameworks that guide reading behaviour and theological reflection. To illustrate this, I engage in a thought experiment, crafting a historically grounded fictional narrative of Leon, a monk and scribe in Southern Italy during the Norman invasions. Through Leon's eyes and engagement with the manuscript, this paper demonstrates how the Euthalian features could help readers navigate Scripture in their quest for answers. Drawing from codicology and manuscript culture, this study affirms that GA 181 is not just a textual witness but a social artifact—shaped by, and shaping, the devotional and intellectual life of its users. The goal is to offer a favourable case for the formative role of paratexts in ancient Byzantine monastic reading and interpretive practice.

Jacob A. Lollar, Durham University, *'The New Testament, Apocrypha, and Negotiating Tradition: the Case of Ephesians and the Evangelisation of Ephesus'*

Later traditions do not always agree with details found in New Testament writings. The letter to the Ephesians, for example, has always been attributed to Paul but was not always addressed to Ephesus. Indeed, the connection between Paul and Ephesus is ambiguous in the NT. Acts claims that Paul was there but was not the first evangelist, and Paul acknowledges his time there but says very little about it. Meanwhile, in later texts, such as the Acts of John, Irenaeus, and Eusebius, Ephesus's evangelisation is directly tied to John the son of Zebedee. Interestingly, the later received traditions appear to go against the NT in this instance, siding instead with texts normally classified as apocryphal. This paper explores the influence of apocryphal texts on the reception of NT apostolic traditions. The case of Ephesus's evangelisation provides important insights into how bishops, historians, and theologians reconstructed their past by negotiating the classificatory boundaries of scripture versus non-scripture. This paper shows that different writers relied on various sources to make their cases about who evangelised Ephesus.

Lily Su, University of Glasgow, *'The Pastoral Epistles in the Euthalian Tradition'*

In manuscript tradition, the information regarding the places of origin of the three letters addressed to Paul's coworkers, also known as the Pastoral Epistles (PE), presented in the Euthalian *hypotheses* often contradicts the information in their subscriptions (Willard 1970). Further, the information contained in their subscriptions is in conflict or difficult to reconcile with the contexts of the PE (Paley 1840; Metzger 1981). In order to elucidate the reception and interpretation of the PE from the perspective of early Christians, this study

examines the manuscript paratextual evidence, which has been handed down to us by ancient scribes and readers. These paratextual features include the Euthalian apparatus, the subscriptions, and other early traditions related to the PE. Despite the awareness of some inconsistencies, late antique scribes and readers used paratexts to convey their reception of the PE and incorporated exegetical traditions into the Euthalian materials and the subscriptions to place the PE within the broader Pauline narrative. This study argues that manuscript paratexts provide valuable information for understanding the early reception and interpretation of the PE.

Session 2: Joint session with Ancient Judaism and Christianity: Book Review Panel

Panel review of Nicholas Moore's (Durham, Cranmer Hall) *The Open Sanctuary: Access to God and the Heavenly Temple in the New Testament* (Baker Academic, 2024).

Madison N. Pierce, University of St Andrews; Philip Alexander, University of Manchester; Yael Fisch, Hebrew University

Session 3: General Session

Michael Francis, The Catholic University of America, *'Sympathy and Suitable Help: Jesus' Affective Excellence in Hebrews 4:14-5:10'*

The paper will address the emphasis on Jesus' affective traits in relation to his qualifications and performance as high priest in Hebrews 4:14–5:10. The paper will focus, first of all, on the portrayal of Jesus as one able to sympathize with human weaknesses (4:15), an attribute parallel but not identical to the emotionally generous posture predicated of other high priests (5:2). The paper will then consider the portrayal of Jesus' emotionally intense experience in the days of his flesh (5:7-10, whatever the link to Gethsemane traditions), and the relationship between this former fleshly experience and Jesus' present posture as compassionate high priest suitably qualified to offer effective assistance to others (4:16; 2:17–18). The paper will argue that the portrayal of Jesus in affective terms across 4:14–5:10 is shaped so as to accommodate the fundamental change in Jesus' own experience brought about by passage through the heavens as one now perfected (4:14, 5:9), yet without compromising the emotional realia of necessity somehow common to Jesus and those whom he is qualified to help.

Alan Garrow, Independent scholar, *'The Law Reflected in James'*

There is every reason to suppose that James 1:21–25 refers, in different ways, to a single written authority. The "implanted word" is also the "word" the reader is enjoined to hear and do; which is also the mirror into which he or she may look; which is also the perfect law; which is also the law of liberty. This expression of the law was evidently well-known to the intended audience—they probably received it at baptism—but its precise identity has long since been lost to us. In 1883, Philotheos Bryennios discovered a multi-layered text with two features of interest. Not only does the Didache's "Two Ways" contain every command specifically referred to in James but also it serves as a pre-baptismal catechism—causing it to fit the description of an "implanted word." This paper argues that the law reflected in James was an element of the Complete Apostolic Decree—a document hidden within the folds of Bryennios' Didache.

Magnus Rabel, University of Zurich, *'Can There Be Too Much Knowledge? The Relationship Between* **γνῶσις** *and* **ἐγκράτεια** *in 2 Peter 1:6'*

The sequence of virtues in 2 Peter 1:5–7 has traditionally been examined through the lens of ancient virtue ethics. This paper, however, explores the epistemological structure underlying the text, focusing on the relationship between **γνῶσις** (knowledge) and **ἐγκράτεια** (self-control) in 1:6. While Stoic influences on this passage are widely recognized, the question of whether knowledge can ever be excessive remains largely unexamined. Does 2 Peter suggest that knowledge, if unregulated, poses a danger? Or does the text assume that true knowledge necessarily entails self-control, making any excess inconceivable? This study argues that 2 Peter aligns with Stoic and Hellenistic Jewish thought in presenting **γνῶσις** as inherently self-regulating: genuine knowledge produces **ἐγκράτεια** as its logical consequence. By reassessing the epistemological dynamics of this passage, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of 2 Peter's intellectual framework and its implications for early Christian conceptions of knowledge and ethical formation.

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7. NEW TESTAMENT AND CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

Chairs: Sydney Tooth & Jamie Davies

Session 1

Dorothea H. Bertschmann, College of the Resurrection, Mirfield, '*The interceding Spirit: Prayer and the limits of knowledge in Romans 8:26-27'*

In Romans 8:26-27 Paul describes the *pneuma* twice as interceding for the believers. Though the idea might have parallels such as in Wisdom (Dodson) the statement is unique in the *Corpus Paulinum* in its description of the spirit as acting and speaking beyond inspiring human speech. The passage has been duly noted as strengthening the notion of the spirit as a person (Fee), which makes it easier to see it in parallel with Christ, who is also said to intercede for the believers in 8:34. This paper will explore the similarities and differences in both acts of interceding, arguing that unlike Christ in 8:34 the spirit's interceding deals with a communication impasse at the limits of knowledge. The spirit's interceding *kata theon* does not so much improve the believers' prayers but shows the act of interceding as pleasing to God. In both instances of interceding Paul creates a 'static dynamic' between Father, Son and Holy Ghost, which navigates the tension between fully assured salvation and the concretely experienced threats to it.

Joshua Chan, University of Oxford, *'When the Spirit Prays and the Mind Falters: Ancient Exegesis and the Question of Tongues as Languages in 1 Corinthians 14:14'*

A central argument against interpreting the Corinthian tongues as actual human languages appeals to 1 Cor 14:14: "My spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful." If, as recent scholarship (e.g., Tupamahu) contends, Paul regards tongues as human languages, how did early interpreters reconcile this verse with such a view? This paper explores the reception history of

1 Cor 14:14 to illuminate how ancient exegetes navigate this tension. One interpretive strand links the unfruitful mind to the lack of edifications (or fruits) produced among hearers. Another invokes linguistic hierarchies in antiquity, whereby languages such as Greek and Hebrew were deemed sacred and used without comprehension by non-Greek/Hebrew speakers. Notably, most Greek patristic commentators interpret "spirit" not as the human spirit or the Holy Spirit per se, but as a synecdochic reference to the spiritual gift (i.e. tongues) imparted by the Spirit. These early readings challenge modern assumptions and offer a more theologically nuanced understanding of tongues within early Christian thought.

Session 2: Joint session with Early Christianity "The Four Last Things: death, judgement, heaven and hell"

Irene Barbotti, Trinity College Dublin, *'"This being so, this is the judgment of God" (Ps.-Cl. Hom. 12,29). Exploring the Judicial Background of Couplings of Beatitudes and Woes in Early Christian Writings'*

This paper examines the judicial framework underpinning the pairing of beatitudes and woes in early Christian literature. By analysing these paired sayings, it traces the development of the eschatological judgment motif, structured around the contrast between the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked. Building on prior observations of the link between beatitudes and woes in Second Temple Jewish and New Testament texts (cf. Pogor 2022), the study advances the discussion in two key directions. First, it expands the textual corpus to include lesser-studied early Christian writings—such as the Gospel of Thomas, the Didache, the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies, the Book of Thomas the Contender, and the Apostolic Constitutions and Canons—where this literary form also plays a significant role. Second, it argues that the beatitude–woe pairing constituted a distinct literary form already in Second Temple literature and retained, in early Christian usage, its original focus on the expectation of imminent eschatological judgment, thus offering fresh insights into the Jewish roots and theological evolution of this motif in early Christianity.

Piotr Ashwin-Siejkowski, King's College London, *'Valentinus' Harvest: Chasing the Shadow of a Theologian'*

In the early third century work the Refutation of all Heresies we find a poem, whose author is identified as Valentinus. The hymn depicts a positive, not frightening, climax of the visible reality as a collection of the fruits. In my discussion, I place this cosmological hymn close to some parallel motifs of harvest in the New Testament, but also, I reaffirm its setting within the second century philosophical mind of the author, especially influenced by the eclectic Middle Platonic cosmology. Looking through this poem, we can see that Valentinus, while wishing to ground his poem in the New Testament metaphors, eliminated their apocalyptic connotations and creatively and succinctly combined them with his philosophical position. The hymn does not allow any speculations about other aspects of the philosophical position of the author (such as e.g. ethics or anthropology), but his understanding of salvation linked with the image of a baby/Saviour. It offers a very positive comprehension of the final moment of the current world.

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The ninth parable of the Shepherd of Hermas provides a convoluted collection of spiritual possibilities. The vision and its interpretation describe at least thirteen possibilities for the state of an individual's relationship to church and Christ, with both positive and negative outcomes for some failings in the preliminary judgment of the Son of God. And while some errors, like apostasy and false teaching, have dire consequences, others, even the dreaded double-minded, are redeemable. This paper places this parable in conversation with the Gospel of Matthew, particularly the passages concerning judgment from the Sermon on the

Mount (7:1–5) and the parable of the sheep and the goats (25:31–46). By including Matthew in the conversation, several things become clearer in the Shepherd. First, the established concern in the Shepherd regarding the activity of the wealthy reinforced. Second, judgment considers the impact of errors on the community and the potential for community restoration and reparations. Finally, the identity of the judge as the Son of God points the reader towards the final judgment.

Session 3

Jonathan Rowlands, St Mellitus College, *'The Spirit-led Interpretive Community: Reading Scripture in Conversation with Robert Jenson'*

This paper offers a defence of Robert Jenson's 'creedal-critical exegesis' (outlined in his 2009 Burns Lectures) by engaging issues of interpretive communities and pneumatological ecclesiology. Recent developments in literary theory have prompted much discussion about the nature of 'interpretive communities' and textual meaning. Rather than texts possessing a fixed, universal meaning, textual interpretation is contingent upon the shared assumptions and reading strategies of social groups. Elsewhere, much has been said about the church's pneumatological ground; that the church is a creature of the Spirit. What does it mean to think of the church as a pneumatologically-grounded interpretive community with regards to Scripture? I argue the pneumatological ground of the church allows us to think meaningfully and substantively of the catholic church across time and space as the same 'interpretive community', with the creeds of the catholic church therefore providing the 'shared assumptions' of the church's reading strategy as interpretive community. In other words, as Jenson argues, the creeds are the 'critical theory' of Scripture.

Laura J. Hunt, University of Wales, Trinity Saint David, *'Check for Breathing: The Metaphor of Birth John 3.1–21, 34'*

This passage in the Gospel of John uses the word **πνεῦμα** six times. The NRSVue translates it four times as "Spirit," once as "spirit," and once as "wind." But in the context of a metaphor about childbirth, it seems that translating **πνεῦμα** as "breath" ought to be considered, particularly in verse 8. Furthermore, attending to the metaphor of new birth throughout this passage clarifies the theology of flesh and spirit in John, not as antagonists but interdependent. Finally, the ancient use of "to come into the light" to describe birth (e.g. Plutarch, *Mor.* 496B) suggests that vv. 20–21 might best be read within the birth

metaphor of the larger passage. Doing so gives this translation: For anyone who practices evil hates the light and *refuses birth*, so that his works might not be exposed, but he who does the truth *is born*, so that his works might be revealed because they are accomplished in God.

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8. PAUL

Chairs: Andy Boakye & Ryan Collman

Session 1: Gender and Sexuality in the Corinthian Correspondence

Kate Bowen-Evans, University of Manchester, *'Broadening ableism beyond disability in the Body of Christ – 1 Corinthians 12.12-27'*

Ableism is the under explored exclusionary assumption that bodies that do not fit an able norm are of less value. This paper broadens the definition of ableism, identifying its negative impact on bodies beyond those labelled disabled including those outside cis hetero norms. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and other gender non conforming identities (LGBTQIA+) bodies are also devalued by the reproductive economy, fixed binary boundaries of ableism and the assumed male hetero supremacy of Jesus as God's perfect image. Ableism rejects the fluidity, unintelligibility and indecency of disabled bodies and LGBTQIA+ bodies alike. This makes ableism a wide reaching unidentified oppressive hermeneutic. In biblical studies it has been primarily examined through the lens of disability hermeneutics, by John Swinton, Amos Yong, and Roji T. George amongst others. By applying this expanded understanding of ableism to 1 Corinthians 12:12–27, Paul's metaphor of the body of Christ, this paper uncovers unidentified ableism in translation and commentary and challenges norms that exclude both disabled and LGBTQIA+ people.

Junette Galagala-Nacion, University of Edinburgh, *'Upholding the Gender Tension In 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 and 1 Corinthians 14:33-35: a Reading from Filipino Patriarchal-Egalitarian Dynamics'*

The role of women in Christian ministry has been embroiled in never-ending debate and the Pauline corpus is among the texts subjected to intense scrutiny. First Corinthians is an interesting case because it contains divergent perspectives within a single work that is commonly attributed to Paul. These seeming contradictions are located: (1) within 1 Cor 11:2-16; and (2) between 1 Cor 11:2-16 and 14:33-35.

I argue that Paul's contrasting statements in 1 Corinthians are an attempt to deal with an existing patriarchal-egalitarian tension in Corinthian society that influenced the church. Using historical-grammatical exegesis, tensions were established (1) within 1 Cor 11:2-16 (vv. 2-10, 13-16 against vv. 11-12) and (2) between 1 Cor 14:33-35 and 1 Cor 11:5, 13. Using cultural exegesis to analyze tensions in the passage, I describe parallels between the patriarchal-egalitarian gender dynamics of the Filipino society-family and the Corinthian society-household. The similarities between Filipino and Corinthian gender dynamics are drawn from societal changes leading to women's wider public participation and social structures that moderated male privilege and accommodated female influence.

Annalisa Phillips Wilson, University of Cambridge, *'"All Things are from God": An Examination of 1 Corinthians 11.2–16'*

1 Cor. 11.2–16 has been thoroughly analysed, but its preoccupation with prepositions has been neglected. In this paper, I will propose that this feature suggests that the *topos* of causation provides important discursive context for Paul's argument. I also suggest that this context may, in turn, explain other features such as the meaning of **κεφαλή**, the analogy of the pairs in 11.3, and the relationship of 11.10 to the entire rationale. In 11.3 Paul presents three causal relationships that bear upon gendered head covering practices. Since he is primarily concerned to justify covered female heads, he focuses on the man's effects upon the woman that render her nature capable of honouring the man and sharing in his glory. Paul argues that by wearing head coverings, the women display both their own honour and the men's in Christ, something Paul depicts as an act of dominion that participates in the cosmic triumph of Christ and recognises God as the cause of all.

Session 2: Gender and Sexuality in Paul's Letters

Brian W. Bunnell, Clemson University, *'Paul's Manly Women in Romans 16'*

A scholarly trope suggests that the descriptions of women in Romans 16 offers evidence for the egalitarian Paul: the portrayals of women as key participants in the church at Rome means that they were in no way inferior to men and indicates that they were given prominent leadership roles alongside their male counterparts. However, scholars have yet to examine Paul's descriptions of his female associates in Romans 16 with due consideration to the impact ancient gender ideologies would exert on his language. In this paper I argue that Paul's descriptions of women in this chapter do not offer a clean break with ancient gender norms but are a reinscription of them. Paul names nine women in Romans 16 and seven of these receive descriptions of praise (e.g., Phoebe [vv. 1–2]; Prisicilla [vv. 3–4]; Mary [v. 6]; Junia [v.7]; Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis [v. 12]) not because Paul is an egalitarian, but because Paul understands their actions as embodiments of masculine virtues worthy of commendation. He values them because they are manly women.

Mattie E. Motl, University of St Andrews, *'Paul and the Passive Patriarch: Paul's Ideal Masculinity Through the Construction of Abraham in Romans 4:1-25'*

Raewyn Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity posits that societies perpetuate ideal masculinity through the construction of fantasy figures. In this paper, I analyze Paul's construction of Abraham in Romans 4.1-25 as one example of a fantasy figure through whom Paul communicates a masculine ideal. I will identify and evaluate the masculinity of Paul's Abraham in Rom 4.1-25 through the four criteria of 1) virtue, 2) role, 3) relationship, and 4) body. In utilizing these criteria, I will demonstrate that Paul's Abraham is remarkably passive—especially when compared with contemporary depictions of Abraham's masculinity (*Wis,* 10.5; Philo, *On Abraham,* XXII. 109b-110b, XIX. 90, XXXVII.208; Sirach 44.20; Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities,* 7.1, 10.3). To conclude, I consider the ways that Paul's Abraham influences his own self-presentation of ideal human masculinity in contrast to the ideal divine masculinity of God (Phil 4:13; 2 Cor 11:16-33).

David E. Bell, 'The Lord as ἔκδικος in 1 Thess 4:6: Paul's Response to Sexual Exploitation'

Paul gives little clue as to the situation prompting his instruction to avoid **πορνεία** in 1 Thess 4:3-8. However, his description of Jesus as **ἔκδικος** offers some insight into his perspective on this sexual transgression. This paper briefly surveys Greco-Roman uses of the term, looking beyond unnuanced translation as 'avenger' to argue that common use to signify a legal representative for minors and adult women resonates particular with this context. Further vocabulary in 4:3-8 conveys power dynamics of neglect and exploitation (**ὑπερβαίνειν καὶ πλεονεκτεῖν**, 4:6). Those most vulnerable to such sexual exploitation – lower status women and children – would also typically be those requiring an **ἔκδικος** in legal hearings.

Attention to Paul's vocabulary, alongside recognizing sexual abuse of children as an assumed element in contemporary discourse on **πορνεία**, here brings those of lower power and status into view. This expands the range of possible sexual scenarios into which Paul might be seen to speak, and adds a new dimension to his portrayal of Jesus (and perhaps his own role): as speaking or acting on their behalf.

Session 3: Open Session

Kai Akagi, Rikkyo University, *'Pentateuchal Terminology and Specific Correspondence to Deuteronomy 7 in the Eulogy of Ephesians 1:3–14'*

This paper will argue that Pentateuchal terminology is used in the eulogy of Ephesians 1:3–14 for the purpose of expressing inclusion of gentiles with Jewish people in accordance with the epistle's ecclesiology. In addition to using language associated with Abraham (thus implicitly appealing to Abraham for a soteriology inclusive of gentiles in a manner consistent with more explicit appeals in other Pauline literature), the eulogy displays specific correspondence to Deuteronomy 7 through a distinctive combination and order of terms. After noting the implications of differences from LXX Deuteronomy, this paper will use the theories of allusion of Carmela Perry and William Irwin to consider the interpretive significance of a text exclusive of gentiles (Deut 7) for a seemingly opposite purpose of expressing their inclusion in Ephesians.

Daniel Mikkelsen, University of Edinburgh, *'"All Flesh" (πᾶσα σάρξ) in Paul in Light of Its Usage in the LXX: A Key to Understanding Paul's Anthropology'*

It is undeniable that the apostle Paul often uses the word **σάρξ** ("flesh") negatively, but it is less clear why he does so. It is generally accepted that Paul's usage is multifaceted, but recent scholarship often presumes that Paul uses **σάρξ** negatively because he understands it as a weak and mortal material which causes humans to sin and rebel against God. But is this correct? Interestingly, Paul uses the common LXX phrase **πᾶσα σάρξ** ("all flesh") most frequently of all New Testament writers, and half of Paul's usages are clear allusions to the LXX. The question, then, is: how are Paul's usages informed by the LXX, and how does it shape his anthropology? This paper seeks, firstly, to investigate the LXX usage of **πᾶσα σάρξ** – arguing that there it denotes human materiality, not the reason for mortality or sin – and, secondly, to demonstrate that **πᾶσα σάρξ** in Paul follows this LXX usage, suggesting a potentially better frame for interpreting **σάρξ** in Paul.

Corinne Noonan-Samuelson, University of Edinburgh, *'Greatness and Humility: Comparing Ethical Themes of Paul and Cicero'*

This paper will explore Roman ethics in the late Republic and early Empire with an emphasis on social lowliness and greatness. Rather than reading Paul's letters as an injection of morality into a world without any, it is important to remember that Graeco-Roman culture prided itself on moral sophistication. Paul was speaking into a world with extensively developed ethical frameworks, to which Cicero, the father of Roman philosophy, was a key contributor. This paper seeks to analyse Paul's concept of humility (Rom, 2 Cor, Phil) alongside Cicero's greatness of spirit (*De officiis*) to illuminate how joining the Christ-movement may have impacted, even jeopardised, individuals' social position. By highlighting first-century Roman moral ideals and social values, this paper seeks to (1) better position Paul in his world, not as a unique arbiter of morality, but as one moral agent among many; and (2) distinguish between that which Paul inherited from the broader Roman worldviews and that which he actively rejected.

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9. RECEPTION, CRITICAL THEORY, & INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

Chairs: Siobhán Jolley & Tom de Bruin

Session 1

Aminta Arrington & Rosemary Flaaten, *'Decolonising Hospitality: Gender and the Rightful Host in Luke 7:36-50'*

Power structures underlie hospitality frameworks. Guests might have a "seat at the table," but it is the host on whose terms hospitality is conducted. Spaces of hospitality, such as meals, can be codified and hierarchical, involving implicit boundary construction. These power dynamics are at play in Luke 7:36-50 when a woman thought to be a "sinner" shows up to the banquet where Simon is the host and Jesus a guest. This woman, like many who are marginalized, was made both notorious (by reaffirming the label of "sinner") and invisible (by blocking her humanity and denying her right to tell her own story). In a cultural milieu in which honor and hospitality are deeply intertwined, Jesus does not just insist that this woman be seen; he nominates the scandalous intruder as the "new and better host." Drawing upon feminist and postcolonial theories, this paper contends that hospitality may reinscribe logics of power and domination, or can restore a consciousness towards inclusivity that draws all to the table.

Melissa Chia Mei Tan & Emma Swai, *'Positionality in Biblical Studies: Unavoidable Pitfall, or Invaluable Asset?'*

Where critical self-awareness is integral to practice within many social science and humanities subjects, positionality is not widely reflected upon within the academic field of biblical studies. Positionality, the intentional practice of considering inherited methodological biases, has the potential to be invaluable in the study of biblical texts; it highlights the inherent

subjectivity of the researcher – of any social location – not necessarily as an unavoidable pitfall, but as a valuable asset. By facilitating nuance and sensitivity, research taking positionality into account is open to previously disregarded questions. This paper will discuss the key questions: What does positionality mean practically? What real impact does taking positionality into account have on research questions and textual interpretation? Acknowledging that positionalities can be wide and varied, we provide specific examples by considering short texts through our own respective positionality lenses, showing the variety of alternative questions which can be asked and answered. For example, why is the woman in Luke 13:10-17 considered passive? Or, why is there resistance against a social reading of Philippians 2:7-8?

Lynda Burnhope, *'Reading the Vice List in Romans 1 with Bakhtin and "Novelised Dialogism"'*

In contrast to traditional readings, Jeremy Punt's postcolonial reading of Romans helps us to focus on Paul's audience, within the epicentre of the Roman Empire in 57AD. Furthermore, Punt shows how Pauline metaphorical language of slavery for salvation is problematic. There is an undeniable entanglement of slavery with rape culture; both in the ancient world and today. Whilst Bakhtin has been used extensively by biblical scholars for his contribution to literary and narrative theory, his idea of the carnivalesque has not been recognised as a tool for subverting the power structures in non-narrative texts. I propose a way of reading with his concept of carnivalesque alongside his dialogic epistemology, by reading 'underneath' the vice list in Rom 1:29-32.

Session 2

Cambry G. Pardee, *'Inheriting Satan's Disguise: The Reception of 2 Corinthians 11:14 from the New Testament to Today'*

In 2 Corinthians 11, Paul inveighs against false apostles "disguising themselves (**μετασχηματιζόμενοι**) as apostles of Christ". He warns, "Even Satan disguises himself (**μετασχηματίζεται**) as an angel of light" (2 Cor 11:14). This paper explores the reception of this passage, paying special attention to the *rhetorical* use of the disguised-demon motif. For some of Paul's fourth- and fifth-century readers, the demonological assertion in this verse was interpreted quite literally (e.g., Athanasius, Shenoute). Paul, however, was not especially interested in making a demonological assertion, but rather used his claim about Satan's angelomorphic disguise to make a practical argument about his human opponents. Similarly, in the fourth-century *Act of Peter in Azotus* the didactic potential of the theme takes precedence over metaphysical speculation; the fiction of masquerading demons is used to expose the "wiles of the devil" so that humans might resist various temptations. A similar usage occurs much more recently in the American television show *The Good Place* (2016–2020), where devils masquerading as angels are used to expose the faults in today's culture of moral relativism.

U-Wen Low, *'Re-reading the mutable body of Christ in the Book of Revelation'*

The 'protagonist' of the Book of Revelation is a curious figure. Introduced as 'someone who looks like a human' per Koester, the figure morphs to become a slain lamb *despite* being

announced as a lion, and finally shifts to being a Divine Warrior toward the end of the narrative. Scholarship has almost always assumed this protagonist to be male, though the figure is clearly not human and thus not subject to gender norms. In this presentation, I suggest that drawing on two interpretive mindsets—Christa-feminist theology and biblical performance criticism—can help interpreters to call this assumption into question. Re-reading this body as embodied by a performer shifting between roles allows us to consider ways that women are represented in Revelation, and the way that the Lamb is portrayed. Such a view creates possibilities for re-imagining the protagonist figure of Revelation, and creates room for us to imagine a Christ figure that is male and female, or perhaps neither.

James Crossley, *'The Bible of the English Uprising of 1381: The Cases of William Grindecobbe and John Wrawe'*

The importance of the lower clergy in the 1381 English uprising (aka the Peasants' Revolt) has long been noted, including the associated biblical interpretation of its most famous priest, John Ball. Against this backdrop, this paper will turn to two relatively neglected figures and their followers: John Wrawe (the chaplain of Sudbury) and William Grindecobbe (educated at St Albans monastery). Wrawe has regularly been dismissed as little more than a violent gangster, but his violence should be seen in line with the wider violence of 1381 and its disciplined targets backed up by biblical authority and millenarian expectations (e.g., Eucharist interpreted in light of liberation). He was also understood in priestly messianic terms, albeit with relatively modest aspirations connected to the county of Suffolk and its role in a transformed England. Seeking liberties away from the authority of St Albans monastery, Grindecobbe represents a more diplomatic tradition, though one seemingly supported by threatening biblical allusions and references to the rich defrauding labourers (Mark 10.19, among others), the destruction of Jerusalem (Matt. 24.2; Mark 13.2), liberation from the oppressor, and a new age. This paper will look at varied material factors driving the theologies of Grindecobbe and Wrawe and how their ideas fit into biblical interpretation elsewhere in the revolt. It will conclude with some theorising about why the lower clergy and the Bible were prominent these late medieval understandings of a transformed England.

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10. SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

Chairs: Tim Carter & Séamus O'Connell

Session 1

Lydia Lee, University of Aberdeen, *'Not an Echo but a Reverb: Transformative Dynamics within Aesthetic Figural Interpretation'*

This paper proposes an aesthetic model for interpreting intertextual echoes, drawing on Richard Hays's intertextual method alongside Frank Ankersmit's theory of historical representation. I argue that traditional one-to-one typological correspondences limit our understanding of scriptural interconnections by reducing rich textual relationships to linear fulfillment patterns.

Instead, I introduce the concept of *reverberation*: an intertextual echo that functions not as a direct mirror but as a layered resonance, where meaning emerges through a pluriform network of overlapping reflections. This framework reimagines intertextuality as a dynamic icon-to-icon relationship, rather than a fixed typological alignment.

I demonstrate this approach by analyzing Jesus's title as the "beloved" son at his baptism in the Synoptic Gospels. Read aesthetically—as a mimetic depiction of divine phenomena—the title evokes and transforms earlier "beloved" motifs, with Isaac emerging as a central, though not exclusive, representative within this broader typological connection. By addressing reverberative intertextuality, this paper calls for an aesthetically attuned hermeneutics that invites deeper engagement with both textual and nontextual traditions.

Session 2

Aminta Arrington, John Brown University, USA, University of Otago, NZ, *'The Foreigner Who Returned: Narrative Repair and Counterstory in the Healing of the Ten Lepers (Luke 17:11-21)'*

Jesus often uses words and rhetoric in ways to interrupt conventional thinking about those on the margins, question assumptions concerning those who have been excluded, and present a new story about people with damaged identities. In the story of the Healing of Ten Lepers, Jesus uses a series of three successive questions to launch a counterstory concerning the Samaritan who returned to give thanks. Questions, in an oral culture, often carry the rhetorical peak of a passage; each of Jesus' three questions has blunt rhetorical force on their own. But when asked successively, polar question—contrastive question—polar question, they ratchet up the intensity, leaving the counterstory self-evident and tangible, all the more powerful for it has remained unspoken: The foreigner is the most righteous of all.

By using counterstory in the work of narrative repair, Jesus offers up the **ἀλλογενὴς**, the outsider, the alien, as the one who, in his return for the purpose of praising God and declaring his gratitude, is, ironically, the ideal Israelite.

Session 3: Synoptics and Johannine Literature Joint Seminar

John Nelson, Independent Scholar, *'The Next Quest for Jesus' Physical Appearance'*

The physical appearance of Jesus is more distinctive and recognisable than any other. Yet until recently, historical Jesus scholarship has largely overlooked the subject of Jesus' physicality. This paper offers a critique of recent studies of Jesus' appearance – including Joan Taylor's 'average-looking' Jesus (2018) and Isaac Soon's 'little Messiah' (2023) – and offers some further suggestions towards re-imaging Jesus' physical appearance. Taking my cue from *The Next Quest for the Historical Jesus* (2024), I propose that paying attention to the use (and absence) of physiognomy in ancient biography (Petrey, 2024) and insights from disability studies in the context of Jesus' labour in ancient Galilee (Gosbell, 2018) offers two means to destabilise our cultural iconography of Jesus. By reading the Gospels' silence on Jesus' physical traits within its socio-historical and literary milieu, historians are enabled to think more sensitively about Jesus' image.

Respondent – James Crossley, University of Cambridge

11. SIMULTANEOUS SHORT PAPERS

Session 1

Chair: Josh Bloor

Ronit Dassa, MF Oslo, *'The Land of Israel, Christian Zionism, and the Quest for the Historical Jesus'*

This paper explores discourses surrounding the land of Israel, Christian Zionism, and Jewishness in the so-called Third Quest in historical Jesus research. The paper focuses on the significance of the work of W. D. Davies—especially The Gospels and the Land (1974) and The Territorial Dimension of Judaism (1982)—which provides insights into the interplay between Christian theology, critical Gospel scholarship, and modern Zionism. Davies's scholarship has been pivotal in clarifying the complex questions surrounding Israel and the Land within historical Jesus studies, particularly concerning Jesus's relationship to land claims in both spiritual and physical contexts. This paper locates Davies's work and the wider reception of his ideas in the context of the rise of evangelical and broader cultural support for Israel in America and after the Six-Day War in 1967. Building on the work of James Crossley on discourses about a 'very Jewish' Jesus in scholarship and Zygmunt Bauman's theorising of 'allosemitism,' this paper shows that the positive rhetoric about Jews, Judaism, and Israel found in Davies and his reception represent an updating of the traditional supersessionist view that positions Christianity as a successor to Judaism in line with late-twentieth-century Anglo-American interests. By analysing Davies's contributions, the research reveals how his systematic approach helped construct the bridge between the quest for the historical Jesus and the narratives of modern Christian Zionism, a task continued by subsequent scholarship, including scholars with overt Christian Zionist connections. This examination underscores the significance of understanding the rhetoric of the Jewish Jesus and the role of 'the Land' in Christian thought, providing a nuanced perspective on the intersections of faith, identity, and politics.

Norbert Nagy, University of Oxford, *'Once in a Lifetime? The Historical Jesus and His Only Recorded Contact with a Slave'*

The relationship between slavery and the historical Jesus has largely been neglected in biblical scholarship. In alignment with The Next Quest for the Historical Jesus, which highlights the urgency of this overlooked field, this paper proposes a future path forward. The fact that almost no scholar has focused exclusively on the connection between real slavery and the historical Jesus may be attributed to the absence of slaves in the Gospels. What is extremely interesting is that there is a single story where Jesus has direct contact with a slave; however, nobody has highlighted this until now. The story of Jesus touching a slave's ear appears with minor differences in all four Gospels, which also increases the importance of the Gospel of John in the interpretation. Therefore, through close reading and exegesis, I intend to highlight the intersectionality of that slave, trying to explain the reason for the conspicuous uniqueness of this case.

Session 2

Chair: MiJa Wi

Emanuele Scieri, University of Glasgow, *'Codex H as a Living Artifact: Layers of Text and Layers of Use in a Fragmented Pauline Manuscript'*

This paper explores the complex material and paratextual history of Codex H (Gregory-Aland 015), a sixth-century fragmentary manuscript of the Pauline Epistles, now dispersed across collections in Paris, Turin, and Mount Athos. Traditionally valued for its early witness to the Pauline text, Codex H is more than a textual vessel; it is a dynamic artifact of Christian scribal culture with a rich history of production, use, and reuse. This study brings attention to two layers of paratextual engagement: first, the initial production layer, which preserves significant portions of the so-called Euthalian apparatus—a modular set of editorial tools including prologues, chapter lists, stichometric data, and supplementary texts on Paul's life and writings second, the later interventions by various users, including scribes, librarians, and lay readers, who added annotations, epigrams, prayers, and other marginal notes unrelated to the biblical text. These additions, while often overlooked, are essential for understanding the manuscript's post-production history and its continued religious and intellectual use over centuries.

Drawing on discoveries made through the AHRC-funded "Annotating the New Testament" project (University of Glasgow), including the recovery of new fragments and multispectral reconstructions of damaged folia, this paper argues that Codex H exemplifies how Christian manuscripts were living objects—read, repurposed, and reshaped across time. By combining material philology with paratextual analysis, this study repositions Codex H not just as a textual witness but as a cultural artifact. In doing so, it invites a re-evaluation of the manuscript's role in the transmission of the New Testament and its reception in early, medieval and modern Christian communities.

Nathanael Vette, KCL, *'"By Way of Sidon in the Region of the Decapolis" (Mark 7:31): Mark's Jesus and the Restoration of the Land of Israel'*

Jesus' circuitous route from Tyre to the Sea of Galilee in Mark 7:31 is often taken as proof the evangelist was unfamiliar with the geography of the land of Israel. This paper contends that by walking this route Mark's Jesus perambulates territory long held to be part of an idealised Israel from the legendary kingdom of David to the Hasmonaeans. In Babylonian and Roman law, surveying by ritual walking established territorial boundaries, formalised conquest and transferred property ownership. The Rabbinic principle of ḥazakah ties the concept to Abraham's survey of the land in Gen 13:17. By having Jesus walk through territory disputed by Jews and gentiles, Mark is making a tacit land claim reflecting the territorial ambitions of some Judaeans and Messianic hopes for the restoration of the land. While Mark's Gospel was written after the Roman conquest of Judaea-Galilee in 66-74 CE, Jesus' travels in so-called gentile territories in Mark 5-8 reflect Rome's annexation of city-states bordering Galilee in 67-37 BCE. On one level, by walking this territory Mark's Jesus symbolically restores the ideal borders of the land of Israel. On another level, the evangelist knows that this claim is complicated by Rome's recent conquest of the region which dispossessed and exiled many Jews living there. To resolve this ambiguity, Mark presents a land restored but not yet restored; a kingdom 'sown' but not yet 'grown'. This paper challenges the entrenched view that the early Jesus movement and indeed Jesus himself was without territorial aims.