



**Annual Conference of the
New Testament Society of Southern Africa
25-28 March 2019 - University of Johannesburg**

PROGRAMME BOOK

Gender and Human Sexuality in/and the New Testament

Conference Theme:

“Embodied Hermeneutics: Texts, Discourse, Performance”



Venue:

UJ Library Floor 6: Chinua Achebe Auditorium
University of Johannesburg
Auckland Park Campus; Kingsway
Auckland Park

S26 10 54.9

E27 59 53.9

Monday 25 March 2019

12:00-14:00 Neotestamentica Editorial Board Meeting: Chair—Chris de Wet

Venue: AR 610 Dept of Religion Studies

14:15-15:45 NTSSA Executive Meeting: Chair of the NTSSA—Lilly Nortje-Meyer

Venue: AR 610 Dept of Religion Studies

16:00-17:30 Arrival and Registration

*Venue: Madibeng Council Chambers
Level 3: MEC Offices & Conference Venues*

17:30-18:30 Light Refreshments

*Venue: Madibeng Restaurant Council Chambers
Level 3: MEC Offices & Conference Venues*

18:30-19:00 Opening of the Conference: Chair of the NTSSA—Lilly Nortje-Meyer &

Prof Maria Frahm-Arp Executive Director of Library and Information Centre

Venue: Madibeng Council Chambers Level 3: MEC Offices & Conference Venues

19:00-20:30 SESSION 1: Keynote Lecture

Prof Musa Dube (Department of Theology and Religious Studies; University of Botswana)

Colonialism, which refers to the taking of the body of the Earth from the Other, who as, Edward Said argues, involves taking it away from those with flatter noses and darker colors - does not only involve the feminization of the targeted lands and their occupants, but also racialized bodies. This paper will first explore the intersection of colonialism, heteronormativity, race, and anthropocentrism in the construction of gender and sexuality. It will further explore how the embodiment of the HIV and AIDS epidemic on the bodies of nations, communities and individuals called for breaking of the silence concerning the construction of gender, sexuality and power in the reading of social, creative and sacred texts.

*Chair: Lilly Nortje-Meyer
Venue: Madibeng Council Chambers*

Tuesday 26 March 2019

08:15-08:30 Devotions: Clementine Nishimwe (UJ)

Venue: 6th Floor: Chinua Achebe Auditorium

08:30 - 09:30 SESSION 2: Plenary Paper

Annette Weissenrieder (Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, Germany): *Of Childbirth and Salvation: 1 Timothy 2:15 in Light of Ancient Medicine and the Artemis Cult in Ephesus*

Chair: Elna Mouton

Venue: 6th Floor: Chinua Achebe Auditorium

9:30-10:20 SESSION 3: Parallel Papers

Jesus and the Gospels

Ernest van Eck (UP): *A Samaritan merchant and his friend: Revisiting the “parable of the Samaritan*

Chair: Marius Nel

Venue: 1st Floor: Ben Okri Room

Early Christian Studies

Gerhard van den Heever (UNISA): *Twilights of Greek and Roman Religions*

Chair: Peter Nagel

Venue: 1st Floor: Es’Kia Mphahlele Room

Pauline Studies

Philip La G. du Toit (NWU): *Was Paul a Christian?*

Chair: Hennie Goede

Venue: 2nd Floor Andre P Brink Room

10:20-10:50: Refreshments *Library 6th Floor*

10:50-11:35 SESSION 4: Parallel papers

Gender and Human Sexuality in/and the New Testament

Honore Sewakpo, University of Nigeria, Ibadan, Nigeria: *'Unacknowledged Rape' in the Cultural Milieu of the Corinthian Christian Community (1Corinthians 5:1) and the Traditional Yoruba Community of Nigeria*

Chair: Christoph Stenscke

Venue: 6th Floor: Chinua Achebe Auditorium

Jesus and the Gospels

Jean-Claude Loba Mkole, (UFS): *Gospel. Eponym for Canonical Scripture in Early Christianity*

Chair: Paul Decock

Venue: 1st Floor: Ben Okri Room

Early Christian Studies

Francois Tolmie, (UFS): *The portrayal of God in Early Christian commentaries on the Letter to Philemon*

Chair: Pieter Botha

Venue: 1st Floor: Es'Kia Mphahlele Room

13:00-14:00: Lunch *Library 6th Floor*

14:00-15:00 SESSION 5: Plenary Paper

Miranda Pillay (UWC): *Revelation 18: Exploring Fear and Hope in Patriarchal Normative Contexts*

Chair: Johnathan Jodamus

Venue: 6th Floor: Chinua Achebe Auditorium

15:00-15:30 Refreshments *Library 6th Floor*

15:30-20:00: Film: Questioning Masculinity in the SA Context

“The Wound” (88 min)

Xolani, (Nakhane Touré) a closeted South African Xhosa man is a lonely factory worker. He joins the men of his community in the mountains of the Eastern Cape to initiate a group of teenage boys into manhood. He mentors a westernized teenage boy named Kwanda (Niza Jay Ncoyini) during a traditional rite of passage, which includes a ritual circumcision in the woods. Xolani feels pressured to prove his own masculinity as the ritual proceeds, while his secret relationship with his childhood friend Vija (Bongile Mantsai) is soon put in jeopardy. When the defiant initiate from the city discovers his best kept secret, Xolani's entire existence begins to unravel.

“Kanarie” (124 min)

When Johan Niemand, gets called up for military service at the age of 18 in 1986 South Africa, he auditions and is accepted to the South African Defence Choir called the 'Canaries'. Against a landscape where law and religion oppress individuality, Johan and the Canaries have to survive military training and go on a nationwide tour of the country, travelling from town to town, entertaining people whilst also fortifying the belief in the military effort and promoting the cause of both Church and State. On tour, Johan falls in love with a fellow choir mate and starts to question everything about himself and his world. He meets a myriad of characters; some proud of the choir efforts and others who awaken him to the realities and truth of Apartheid South Africa. As Johan starts questioning his religion, patriotism, and sexuality, his emerging creativity and passion for music leads to direct conflict with his commanding officers.

Panel discussion:

Venue: Library Nadine Gordimer Auditorium

Wednesday 27 March 2019

08:15-08:30 Devotions: Elna Mouton (SUN)

Venue: Library Level 6

8:30-9:30 SESSION 6: Plenary Paper

Johnathan Jodamus (UWC): *Mothering as Embodied Experience and Troubling Childbearing as Constitutive of Femininity in 1 Timothy 2:8-15*

Chair: Jeremy Punt

Venue: Level 6: Chinua Achebe

9:35-10:20 SESSION 7: Parallel Papers

Jesus and the Gospels

June Dickie (UKZN): "Lord (Jesus), teach us to lament": praying the Lord's Prayer on the Cape Flats in 2019

Chair: Lammie Marx

Venue: 1st Floor: Ben Okri Room

Gender and Human Sexuality in/and the New Testament

Chris Ukachukwu Manus (National University of Lesotho): *Phoebe, Junia and Damaris in the New Testament: Examples of Androcentricity. Biased Sex Change of the Roles of Women/Omission by Translators*

Chair: Nina Müller van Velden

Venue: 6th Floor Chinua Achebe Auditorium

Pauline Studies

Jeremy Punt (SUN): *Dressing gender in the New Testament: μαλακός as cypher*

Chair: Gerhard van den Heever

Venue: 2nd Floor Andre P Brink Room

10:20-10:50: Refreshments *Library 6th Floor*

10:50-11:35 SESSION 8: Parallel papers

Early Christian Studies

De Wet, Chris L. (UNISA / Australian Lutheran College): *Slavery in the Life of Euphemia and the Goth*

Chair: Jean-Claude Loba-Mkole
Venue: 1st Floor: Es’Kia Mphahlele Room

Jesus and the Gospels

Llewellyn Howes (UJ): *Reading Q 11:9-13 from Below*

Chair: June Dickie
Venue: 1st Floor: Ben Okri Room

11:40-12:25 SESSION 9: Parallel papers

Gender and Human Sexuality in/and the New Testament

Jacobie Helena Visser (SUN): *An anomalous juxtaposition: An intersectional approach to Abraham and Rahab in James 2*

Chair: Gertrud Tönsing
Venue: 6th Floor Chinua Achebe Auditorium

Jesus and the Gospels

Peter Nagel (SUN): *Problematising the divinity of Jesus - Why Jesus is not θεός*

Chair: Annelie van der Bank
Venue: 1st Floor: Ben Okri Room

Pauline Studies

Christoph Stenschke, (UNISA): *Paul’s References to Women in his Letter to the Romans and their Function in the Argument of the Letter*

Chair: Philip du Toit
Venue: 2nd Floor Andre P Brink Room

13:00-14:00: Lunch Library 6th Floor

14:00-14:30 SESSION 10: Short Papers

Pieter J. J. Botha, (UNISA): *Work and Labour: A Neglected Revolution Brought about by Early Christianity?*

Chair: Mphumezi Hombana
Venue: 1st Floor: Es’Kia Mphahlele Room

Paul B Decock (UKZN): *Responding to literalist biblical fundamentalism: a theological task for biblical scholars*

Chair: Dumisani Vilakati
Venue: 2nd Floor: Zakes Mda Room

Lammie Marx (UNISA): *Transcending Maleness in Theodoret of Cyrus’ Lives of the Syrian Monks (Historia religiosa)*

Chair: Chris Ukachukwu Manus
Venue: 1st Floor: Ben Okri Room

14:30-15:00 SESSION 11: Short Papers

Annelie van der Bank, (UNISA); *Ephrem the Syrian’s Poetry and Prose as ‘Body-Language’*

Chair: Hennie Viviers
Venue: 1st Floor: Es’Kia Mphahlele Room

Dirk van der Merwe (UNISA): *The Divinity of Jesus in the Gospel of John: The ‘Lived Experiences’ It Fostered when the Text was Read*

Chair: Izaak Connaway
Venue: 2nd Floor: Zakes Mda Room

Gertrud Tönsing (UNISA): *Victims of Compromise: Women and the Household Codes - Col 3:18-4:1 and Eph 5:21-33*

Chair: Stefan de Klerk
Venue: 6th Floor: Chinua Achebe Auditorium

15:00-15:30 Refreshments *Library 6th Floor*

15:30-16:15 SESSION 12: Business Meetings of NTSSA Subgroups

Pauline Studies (Jeremy Punt & Francois Wessels)

Venue: 2nd Floor Andre P Brink Room

Early Christian Studies (Chris de Wet & Gerhard van den Heever)

Venue: 1st Floor: Es’Kia Mphahlele Room

New Group: Hermeneutics / Decoloniality?

Venue: 2nd Floor: Zakes Mda Room

Gender and Human Sexuality in/and the New Testament (Elna Mouton & Johnathan Jodamus)

Venue: 6th Floor: Chinua Achebe Auditorium

Jesus and the Gospels (Llewellyn Howes & Marius Nel)

Venue: 1st Floor: Ben Okri Room

**17:00-20:30 Conference Dinner: Waterford Restaurant
School of Hospitality & Tourism; Bunting Rd Campus**

Thursday 28 March 2019

08:15-08:30 Devotions: Brima van Niekerk (UJ)

Venue: 6th Floor Chinua Achebe Auditorium

08:30-09:30 SESSION 13: Plenary Paper

Lilly Nortje-Meyer (UJ): *On Animals and Women: Formulating a Christology for Animals*

Chair: Miranda Pillay

Venue: 6th Floor: Chinua Achebe Auditorium

9:35-10:20 SESSION 14: Parallel Paper

Gender and Human Sexuality in/and the New Testament

Nina Müller van Velden (NWU): *Navigating graveyard spaces: A gender-critical reading of John 20:1-18*

Chair: Jacobie Helena Visser
Venue: 6th Floor: China Achebe Auditorium

Jesus and the Gospels

Marius Nel (SUN): *“Jesus and the blood of the covenant”*

Chair: Llewellyn Howes
Venue: 1st Floor: Ben Okri Room

10:20-10:55: Refreshments *Library Level 6*

11:00-12:30 SESSION 15: Business meeting 2: Chair of the NTSSA Lilly Nortjé-Meyer

Venue: Library Level 6: Chinua Achebe Auditorium

12:30-13:00 Closing of the Conference

The NTSSA gives recognition to the
Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg for sponsoring the
welcoming Cocktail and the Conference Dinner

Abstracts of Papers

Botha, Pieter J. J. (UNISA); *Work and Labour: A Neglected Revolution Brought about by Early Christianity?*

The relative economic success of the Roman Empire until medieval times is quite noteworthy – and there are no lack of propositions for explaining the eventual “decline” or “break down.” In line with the call to explore aspects of innovation and continuity, this paper explores subtle shifts and alterations to cultural concepts such as “work,” “labour,” and “professions” in the world of the Roman Empire with the spread of Christianity. While natural conditions, capital accumulation, technology and political stability all contributed to economic success, ultimately economic performance depended on the ability to mobilize, train and coordinate human work efforts. The growth of early Christianity, and the concomitant changes in social structures and institutions brought about changes in such efforts. Obviously a vast topic, but in this paper I explore possibilities of bringing new insights, ideas and interpretations on the changes in the roles of labour and human resources in the (slow) “christianising” of the Roman economy. For instance, the topic of slave labour and early Christianity have mostly been studied within the frameworks of family life, humanity, abuse and bondage. Issues relating to a perspective of “work” and “labour” and economic systems have received less attention. Options concerning conceptualising the various ways in which work was mobilised and organised and how such processes were regulated as a social and cultural phenomena are explored.

De Wet, Chris L. (UNISA / Australian Lutheran College); *Slavery in the Life of Euphemia and the Goth*

Located somewhere between ancient fiction and Christian hagiography, and set in 395 CE Edessa with the invasion of Mesopotamia by the Huns (although possibly composed much later in the fifth century), the *Life of Euphemia and the Goth* recounts the tale of a young woman, Euphemia, who is deceived and manipulated into marrying an unnamed Gothic soldier. Unbeknownst to Euphemia and her mother, Sophia, the Goth already has a wife in a different city in the West. The theme of the deceived and abducted bride is a common one in the literature of the time. When he arrives at his home, the Goth gives Euphemia as a slave to his wife. The wife treats Euphemia with great cruelty. When Euphemia has a son, the child is poisoned by the Goth’s jealous wife. In retaliation, Euphemia poisons the wife of the Goth and is imprisoned by the victim’s relatives. Like Dorothy in the land of Oz, it is only when Euphemia prays to the martyrs of Edessa that she is miraculously transported back to Edessa; later, Euphemia and her mother exact revenge on the Goth by reporting him to the authorities. Slavery functions as a constant yet complex theme in the Syriac ascetic literature of late antiquity, and the *Life of Euphemia and the Goth* is no exception. In this narrative slavery intersects with discourses of cultural identity and ethnicity (especially Syriac identity), law and warfare (and displacement), and morality and asceticism. The purpose of this paper is to investigate more closely these doulogical dynamics in the *Life of Euphemia and the Goth*. Geopolitically, the narrative betrays the anxieties of inhabitants living in regions plagued by military conflict, where captivity/kidnapping, enslavement, and displacement were very real possibilities. Socially, the story also relies on the common ancient stereotype and anxiety of the slave as the foreigner and domestic enemy, and the dangers of treating slaves cruelly. Finally, from a moral and especially ascetic perspective, the tale further builds on the common Syrian-Christian motif of marriage and sexual intercourse as slavery, and may act as a warning (perhaps similar to earlier works like the *Acts of Thomas* or *Jerome’s Life of Malchus*) against

embracing the pleasures of the secular life. An analysis of the Life of Euphemia and the Goth will give us a glimpse not only into the complicated dynamics of slavery, displacement, and freedom on the margins of the Roman Empire, but will also lay bare the complicated dynamics of slavery as an ascetic discourse in the late ancient Christian cultures of Syria and Mesopotamia.

Decock, Paul B (UKZN); *Responding to literalist biblical fundamentalism: a theological task for biblical scholars*

Since literalist biblical fundamentalism asserts the public claims and values of biblical texts, biblical scholarship can no longer restrict its public to institutionalized religions and to the in-house discourse of the academy. Rather, biblical scholarship must acknowledge the continuing political influence of the Bible in Western culture and society.

This is what Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza said many years ago in her 1988 SBL presidential address (Schuessler Fiorenza 1988:15).

She further asks, “What does the language of a biblical text “do” to a reader who submits to its world of vision?” The crucial word is ‘submits.’ Contextual theology has understood this and speaks of ‘talking back’, of ‘ideology criticism’, of ‘dialogue between text and context in terms of an ideo-theological stance’. Such a response also requires a theological foundation about which there is as yet not enough clarity. This paper looks at the work of the Leuven NT Scholar, Reimund Bieringer for some theological directions.

Dickie, June (UKZN); *“Lord (Jesus), teach us to lament” : praying the Lord’s Prayer on the Cape Flats in 2019*

Lament was an important part of the relationship between YHWH and Israel under the old covenant. A study of psalms of lament shows certain features which were typical of personal / communal lament. In the New Testament, the practice of lament was not a common liturgical feature, although Jesus and others lamented, or highlighted lament in their writings. Among these are Matthew, Mark, and Paul. Lament under the new covenant shows some variance with the older practice, but it clearly is still a valid and important part of relating to God. When Jesus was asked to teach his disciples to pray, he gave them an outline which can serve as a helpful template for including lament prayer. Indeed, in the situations faced by many people today, there is a need for lament for personal difficulties. But for all of us there are issues that need addressing if God’s kingdom is to come (as in the template of “the Lord’s Prayer”). Thus, to encourage contemporary believers to bring these needs, concerns and frustrations to God, a workshop was conducted using the Lord’s Prayer (Mark 11) as the basis for composing communal lament. Participants came from the Cape Flats, a poor area of Cape Town beset with violence and economic hardship. Over a period of two hours, they composed together their joint lament. The results show that lament using biblical principles is still important, and the Lord’s Prayer can serve as a useful outline to help those in pain bring their anguish to God.

Du Toit, Philip La G. (NWU); *Was Paul a Christian?*

While the “Jewishness” of Paul has been accentuated in the New Perspective in Paul, in the Radical New Perspective on Paul, he is portrayed as remaining within “Judaism” and thus not as a Christian. In the latter approach, Paul’s Damascus encounter is perceived to be merely a call and not as a conversion. In addition, in scholarship in general, both Judaism

and Christianity as full scale religious systems are strictly speaking understood as later developments after the second temple, making it problematic to contend that Paul converted from Judaism to Christianity. This paper reconsiders both the definition of Christianity and whether Paul has undergone a change of core-identity, which is argued to be foundational to the question whether Paul underwent a conversion or not. An assessment of whether Paul underwent a change of core-identity is pursued along four categories: (1) the way in which Paul utilises “now” and “us/we” language in describing the in-Christ identity, (2) his use of the concepts of “flesh” and “Spirit” in respect of identity, (3) the way in which Paul describes the in-Christ identity relative to the law and (4) the way in which Paul refers to Judaeans as outsiders.

Howes, Llewellyn (UJ); *Reading Q 11:9-13 from Below*

In my view, the Sayings Gospel Q has a unique message for the socio-economic underclass in antiquity. The aim of this paper is to uncover the intended message of Q 11:9-13 when considered from the perspective of the peasantry and poor in the ancient world. It is my contention that this passage is almost universally misunderstood, mainly due to an erroneous interpretation of the verbs “ask”, “search” and “knock”, but also due to the abstractification and spiritualisation of a text that was originally intended to be taken literally. My interpretation of Q 11:9-13 is therefore comparable to Ernest van Eck’s literal reading of the parables of Jesus. According to this interpretation of the chosen text, Jesus had a definite plan to address the unfortunate circumstances of the poor and hungry in the ancient world.

Jodamus, Johnathan (UWC); *“Mothering as Embodied Experience and Troubling Childbearing as Constitutive of Femininity in 1 Timothy 2:8-15”*

The portrayal of childbearing as constitutive of punitive femininity in the text of 1 Timothy 2:8-15 is aligned with contemporary discourses on motherhood (often drawing on this particular text) concerned with the social, religious and political constructions of women’s lives. Early feminist scholars (mostly Western) saw motherhood as the ultimate oppression - an institution that confined women’s choices and was constitutive of femininity. Similarly, drawing on the lived experiences of “childless women” and weighing in on the oppressiveness of the institution of motherhood, African scholars have written extensively about the effects of sterility on women’s reproductive self-determination, in contexts where men control women’s reproductive capacities through religious and cultural beliefs and practices. On the other hand, some feminist scholars have drawn on the cultural value associated with motherhood in Africa and have proposed the contested notion of “motherism” as providing a more plausible organising principle for feminism to thrive in Africa. This concept, however, has come under critique for its essentialist ideas drawn from a very narrow and binary understanding of gender. More recently a new turn can be discerned in the literature on motherhood where attention is given to the embodied and philosophical experience of “mothering” as opposed to the conventional focus on the institution of motherhood. In this paper I wish to bring this notion of mothering as experience versus motherhood as a patriarchal institution to bear on an analysis of 1 Timothy 2:8-15. In doing so, I answer in the affirmative to Mouton’s (2016:2) question “whether these canonised texts have the potential to reshape the memory, imagination, language and behaviour of present days Christian households (in Africa)”. Through a blending of socio-rhetorical interpretation (SRI) and gender-critical interpretive strategies applied to the text of 1 Timothy I will demonstrate, that mothering can be viewed beyond the essentialist feminine identity, and that when viewed in this way the notion of mothering as salvific in this text is not as oppressive as some feminist scholars have argued, and in fact opens up

new possibilities for soteriology beyond gender confinements. This argument also holds potential to queer this text beyond the feminine and masculine binary and to respond to calls from theologians advocating for more redemptive masculinities.

Loba Mkole, Jean-Claude (UFS); *Gospel. Eponym for Canonical Scripture in Early Christianity*

In its oral and written formats, the gospel of Christian authors generally include texts from the First/ Old Testament and the Second/New Testament. It specifically and traditionally refers to the preaching of Jesus as recorded by four authors (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), or to some extent it even embraces the whole of the New Testament collection. This paper argues that since the early Christianity onwards and even beyond Church splits, the term gospel can also be used as an eponym for the entire Christian Bible with New Testament and Old Testament books. The paper uses extrinsic canonical approach to support this argument, discussing some historical-literary evidences such as codices, canons and translations. These evidences include catalogues (ranging from the Eusebian Catalogue to the Syrian one of St Catherine's), codices such as Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, and Alexandrinus, and translations like Vulgate, Peshitta and Ge'ez. Expected outcomes of this paper pertain to an increased awareness about the contents of the Bibles during the early Christianity, less confusion between the contents of those Bibles with those of the post-schism Bibles, and more insights on the source-texts of the contemporary Bible translations.

Manus, Chris Ukachukwu (National University of Lesotho); *Phoebe, Junia and Damaris in the New Testament: Examples of Androcentrically Biased Sex Change of the Roles of Women/Omission by Translators*

Over the years New Testament readers in the world church and in African Christianity in particular have been led to hold these earliest women of faith as unfit to fulfil roles that have been held the preserve of men. The case of Phoebe and Junia as are evidenced in the RSV, the NRSV and The African Bible (1999) where translators use the terms, "minister" instead of "deacon" and "deaconess" for Phoebe and fail to adopt the term, "apostle" for Junia grammatically appear misleading. The translators' terms egregiously depart from Paul's original Greek (intention). The feminization of the terms is not only un-Pauline but also a reflection of patriarchal hegemonic androcentricism that has continued to hold sway even in our times. The case of the omission of the name of Damaris, a beneficiary of and convert to Paul's Areopagus preaching (Acts 17:34) in the Western text, the Codex Bezae represents an anti-female attitude which reflects the culture of the Western Roman Empire. The critical exegetical method will be adopted to re-assess the texts and concepts in dialogue with previous authors. The findings shall be tailored to generate ideas that can help fertilize and "force" the process of the de-masculinization of androcentric biased categories that eclipse the roles of women in Bible narratives. At the end of the day, the paper is concluded with the proviso that such feminized translations are faulty as they have led pastors and church leaders to consciously delude the church to continue to assign subordinate roles to women in regular ecclesial functions and activities. This is demonstrated in the manner women have been regarded in the churches of today; especially in the Roman Catholic Churches among others.

Marx, Lammie (UNISA); *Transcending Maleness in Theodoret of Cyrus' Lives of the Syrian Monks (Historia religiosa)*

During late antiquity rules for same-sex desire and preference for members of the same sex afforded a metaphor for substantial friendships. This relied on inequity in friendly and erotic associations between members of the same sex which was acknowledged in texts. This implied a refuted but concealed awareness of forbidden pleasure and appeal which enhanced the person of authority's standing. This enabled men to, by means of metaphor, describe another man's magnificence whilst consequently establishing and maintaining ranks of hierarchy in sociably accepted ways. Language used to describe same-sex relations was composed in order to accommodate extensive metaphoric speech in order to establish and maintain these hierarchies. Communal opinions about overt "unmanly" relations remained, however derogatory. Most often the existence of these kinds of acquaintances served to improve the stateliness and power of one of the individuals involved. What this paper aims to investigate is the constructed and perceived male identity of the Syrian monks as depicted by Theodoret of Cyrus in his *Lives of the Syrian Monks*. Did another moral masculinity exist in Syria? Was Theodoret merely defending the monks of Syria against those in the West who perceived them as heretical or was it an attempt to create an alternative transcendence of manliness applicable to those living in the mountains and desert of Syria? Theodoret of Cyrus was by inference well acquainted with philosophy of his time. When reading his work on the lives of the Syrian Monks many metaphors come to the fore. Often the monks in this work are described as unfailingly immaculate and great and spectacular in both their physical and moral presentation. Often they have one or two very close assistants like Aphrahat who had as closest assistants the "great Flavian and godly Diodore". The work is driven by terms such as "sowing fertile seeds", "passion", "dryness" and more. This paper will look more closely at such discourses and metaphors to establish possible links between transcendence and the formation of masculinity.

Müller van Velden, Nina (NWU); *Navigating graveyard spaces: A gender-critical reading of John 20:1-18*

The narrative of John 20:1-18 describes the events of the empty tomb on "the first day of the week," involving three prominent characters: Mary Magdalene, Peter and the Beloved Disciple. In the liminal space of death - in a graveyard setting, in the early hours of the morning, with emotions of sorrow and mourning running high - each of them have a unique experience of the One whose body is not where it had been left after the crucifixion.

This paper explores the ambiguity of the confirmation of Life amidst (apparent) death; of new beginnings amidst what appears to be the ultimate end. From a gender-critical perspective, I will propose how this biblical narrative may create a space for reflection on the ambiguity of the spaces in which gender scholars in biblical studies navigate the ongoing journey toward gender-just and gender-inclusive societies. How do the experiences of the characters Mary Magdalene, Peter and the Beloved Disciple connect with our own - and how do we engage the more *and* less obvious "evidences" of resurrection whilst standing in and around gendered graveyard settings?

Nagel, Peter (SUN); *Problematizing the divinity of Jesus - Why Jesus is not θεός*

The debate on Jesus' divine nature is as old as the New Testament text itself. The so-called 'titles' ascribed to Jesus often took centre stage in these discussions. I will, however, problematizing this notion by firstly arguing that the term θεός was widely accepted and used term when reference is made to the Hebrew deity. Secondly, I will show and argue that Jesus is never θεός, and therefore his divinity questionable.

Nel, Marius (SUN); *Jesus and the blood of the covenant*

Matthew 26:28 is the only account in the New Testament of the Last Supper that explicitly relates the forgiveness of sins to the death of Jesus. The link between the death of Jesus and the forgiveness of sins is thus “disconcertingly slender” according to Carter. While this link is slender the reference to Jesus’ blood as “the blood of the covenant” which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins has numerous intertextual links to the Old Testament. It for example, alludes to the covenant ceremony at Sinai in Exodus 24:8 and Israel’s envisioning of the restoration of the covenantal community as it is cited in Zechariah 9:9-12. This paper will therefore explore how the themes of covenant, exile, blood, sin, and the death of Jesus are linked to each other in Matthew.

Nortjé-Meyer, Lilly (UJ); *On Animals and Women: Formulating a Christology for Animals*

Animal theology or animal liberation is a recent initiative lead by Andrew Linzey (1986). The wider field to which animal liberation belongs, namely ecology/ecotheology was soon anchored in the feminist movement and (eco-) feminists drew parallels between the oppression and exploitation of the environment and the oppression and abuse of women. Feminist theologians realised that human injustice is connected to ecological injustice and that women, across the world, bear the weight not only of gender discrimination but also of the consequences of ecological destruction. Feminism suggests a worldview which places a high value on connection and relationship, instead of the androcentric dualism and separation. Feminism as a liberation movement provides a theoretical framework for the formulation of a liberation of animals. Two aspects of the feminist approach, namely the suspicion towards hierarchy and power will be utilised to undermine the *humanarchy* of humans over animals. However, my intention is to dislodge the links between women and animals to emphasise the intrinsic worth of animals.

The First and Second Testaments are ambivalent on the position and circumstances of animals and their associations with humans, mostly anthropocentric with here and there a bio-/eco-centric voice. Applying a critical approach to the God-human-animal relation, the outcome of the paper will be a formulation of a Christology anchored in the Johannine Jesus as the transcended God who became the immanent Jesus, physically and bodily embedded in life on earth. This emphasises his interconnectedness with the earth and the common origin of all beings. This approach will be employed to define the location of animals and the undermining of sacred spaces as an exclusively consecrated human domain. I will focus on animals, although keeping in mind that animals cannot be separated from the entire ecological environment. This avoiding of a new dualism is implicit in the argumentation.

Pillay, Miranda N. (UWC); *Revelation 18: Exploring Fear and Hope in Patriarchal Normative Contexts*

There is much ‘talk’ in South Africa about Christian preachers who claim special anointing by, and revelation from God. This claim gives them the credibility quote and interpret texts from the Christian bible in authoritative ways. Some preachers also claim to have been given

a 'mandate' from God to call people to obedience. Selected texts are often interpreted and packaged in such simplistically attractive ways that preachers are followed blindly by many who are desperate for solutions to complex societal problems. When Christian leaders preach that God's favour will rest upon those who show obedience and that doom will befall those who do not respond appropriately to God's call, tension between fear and hope becomes an interpretive frame of reference to preacher and hearer. In this way a rhetoric of fear is employed by those who have authority to amplify the call to obedience. The Book of Revelation exhibits what may be understood as a "rhetoric of fear". Through its words and images Revelation 18, in particular, encourages "proper behaviour" and highlights in graphic terms the consequences to both the obedient and disobedient. In this paper I will foreground the 'genderedness' of obedience in light of crisis rhetoric in patriarchal normative contexts - using examples from contemporary South Africa and the Revelation of John. Aware that this will provide a particular set of lenses to read Revelation 18, I will explore how the text might serve to uphold patriarchal normativity or provide an alternative, liberative interpretation in contemporary contexts where there appears to be a backlash to feminist discourses of liberation.

Punt, Jeremy (SUN); *Dressing gender in the New Testament: μαλακός as cypher*

The interrelationship between clothing, gender and sexuality in the 1st CE context and as portrayed in New Testament texts often goes unnoticed. Using queer theory as heuristic framework for making sense of the intersections between physical appearance, gender and sexuality, the focus here is on the term μαλακός. Its translation and interpretation contested, in 1 Cor 6:9 μαλακοί it is part of stereotyped slander that appears to refer to those involved in homoerotic practices. In other NT instances of the μαλακ-lemma it, apart from sickness (Mt 4:23; 9:35; 10:1), also denotes expensive clothing (Matt 11:8; Lk 7:25). Using μαλακός as cypher for the investigation, attention is given to the construction of gender and sexuality in a socio-historical context where clothing formed part of such constructions with their related ambiguities

Sewakpo, Honore (University of Nigeria); *'Unacknowledged Rape' in the Cultural Milieu of the Corinthian Christian Community (1Corinthians 5:1) and the Traditional Yoruba Community of Nigeria*

Unacknowledged rape, which often occurs between a male and a female of a close acquaintance with a detailed description of a date in which the male used low or moderate force to obtain sex, is evidently implied in the practice of the Corinthian Christian Community in 1 Corinthians 5:1. Sexual slander and gendered insult were culturally encouraged among the Corinthian Christians who were basically Greek, with additions from the racial spectrum of the eastern Mediterranean. Likewise among the traditional Yoruba community, particularly people of Ayegbaju community in Ekiti State, Nigeria, it is cultural for the siblings of the deceased man to have sexual right over the wife after the death of her husband. The wife of the defunct man, at the start, puts less resistance to her brother-in-laws who desire to have her. Extant literature on 1 Corinthians 5:1 have focused largely on the incestuous and immoral acts of the couple with a little attention paid to the initial less physical force by the perpetrator (man), less physical injury to the victim (stepmother) and less resistance by the victim (stepmother) which are traits of unacknowledged rape. The paper, therefore, examines 1 Corinthians 5:1 from the perspective of unacknowledged rape within the context of the Ayegbaju community of Nigeria. This is with a view to establishing the occurrence of unacknowledged rape in the culturally promoted life partnership. Abogunrin's approach of Decolonisation of Biblical Interpretation in Africa was adopted. While Qualitative data are subjected to exegetical analysis, quantitative data are

analysed using percentage scores. Findings of this study will have implications for appropriate decisions whenever cultural practice conflicts Christian's faith beliefs.

Stenschke, Christoph (UNISA); *Paul's References to Women in his Letter to the Romans and their Function in the Argument of the Letter*

While the women mentioned in the Gospels or passages mentioning women in the letters of the New Testament have often been studied, Paul's variegated references to women in all of his letters to the Romans and their backdrop against the situation in Rome in the mid-fifties of the first century AD have rarely been examined. This article first addresses some of the methodological challenges involved in this quest. It then discusses Paul's references to some women, to women in general, to named individual women and to female characteristics/ activities in Romans 1:26; 4:19; 7:2-3; 9:9, 16:1-2 and 16:3-15. Discussion also includes Tacitus' account of a particularly unsettling account in *Ann* 11, 12-38 and its possible bearing on Romans. While on some occasions in the letter, Paul paints a fairly traditional picture of women and their roles in family and society and seems to affirm them, he also indicates that some Christ-following women (and their Old Testament predecessors) venture beyond what was expected of women and praises them for it. These activities could be considered subversive.

Tolmie, Francois (UFS); *The portrayal of God in Early Christian commentaries on the Letter to Philemon*

This paper focuses on the way in which God is depicted in Early Christian commentaries on Philemon until the end of the fifth century CE. God is only mentioned three times in the Letter to Philemon, twice explicitly (in verses 3 and 4) and once implicitly in a divine passive in verse 15. However, God is mentioned much more often in early commentaries on the letter. In this paper the commentaries of Ambrosiaster, Jerome, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Theodoret of Cyrus are scrutinised in order to determine the perception of God reflected in the particular commentary. The wide diversity in the ways in which this happens is highlighted, as well as the way in which the aims and context of the commentator sometimes influenced the portrayal of God.

Tönsing, J. Gertrud (UNISA); *Victims of Compromise: Women and the Household Codes - Col 3:18-4:1 and Eph 5:21-33*

This paper gives a brief overview of the authorship debate of Colossians and Ephesians and argues that the letters were written as an attempt at compromise between Paul's controversial views and the congregations of Asia Minor, written mainly by his co-workers. The household code of Colossians is analysed as a possible accompaniment to the letter to Philemon and the sending back of Onesimus, using as a basis the Pauline passage on submission in Romans 13 and known Graeco-Roman traditions on the household. Slaves, and not women were the primary addressees of this probably earliest Christian household code, but undoubtedly then the status of women became an issue of contention. The paper argues that Ephesians was written as a modification to the Colossian letter, which had left out key controversial Pauline terms. The letter to the Ephesians pleads for unity, reintroduces Pauline terms in formulations acceptable to the mainstream, and carefully formulates a

position on women in the household, which was to become dominant in the early church. It is argued that the household codes were seen as a necessary compromise at the time, but were not initially intended to suppress women's participation and leadership. However the controversy heated up and became more bitter, leading to the later Pastoral letters and other early Christian writings completely suppressing women's leadership in the church.

Van den Heever, Gerhard (UNISA); *Twilights of Greek and Roman Religions*

According to the conventional construction of the religious history of the Roman Empire, the dense variety of Greek and Roman religions had ceased to exist sometime around the fourth to fifth centuries CE, during the so-called Constantinian Revolution. Certainly, at some point in Late Antiquity, there were no longer functioning cult centres for deities like Apollo, Dionysus, Isis, Cybele, and the like. However, far from indicating the triumphal supersession of Greek and Roman religions by Christianity, the evidence of religious history is more complex. Christianity/-ies is, one can say, an epiphenomenon of processes of cultural shifts and demographic changes (helped along by the changes wrought by migrations and the emergence of diasporic religions as the main manifestation of cultic formations) that swept the circum-Mediterranean world. The 'old religions,' woven into the cultural fabric of inhabitants of the Mediterranean world as they were, did not suddenly cease to exist - the discourses, the practices, the iconographies, cultic performances continued to shape nascent Christian discourses and practices. This process was not an even one, it differed in pace and shape from one geographic locale to the other, and from one epoch to the other - hence the plural, twilights. Hence one can say that Christianity was the big sponge that absorbed all the others (which does not exclude that from time to time there were indeed legislation and mob action aimed at destroying the vestiges of 'pagan' cults). Thus, reading the evidence from outside the triumphalist framework characterizing early Christian writers on the nature and fate of 'paganism,' one is left with the unavoidable impression, now strongly asserted in Late Antique scholarship, of the interpenetration of 'paganism' and Christianity. Christianity was born as a syncretic phenomenon in a process of cultural bricolage. This has some implications, not only for how we conceived of the origins of Christianity, but also for how we conceive of religion as object of theoretical reflection.

Van der Bank, Annelie (UNISA); *Ephrem the Syrian's Poetry and Prose as 'Body-Language'*

Ephrem the Syrian from Nisibis, who spent the latter part of his career in the Syrian city of Edessa, was a prolific writer of poetry [hymns and verse], and prose [sermons, discourses and letters] in the Syrian language. The focus in this paper is on his extensive corpus of hymns, and especially the way in which hymnody functioned as discursive strategy in aiding the construction of emerging orthodoxy, as well as the various techniques employed by Ephrem to facilitate this. Thus, the paper deals with the 'body-language' of Ephrem's poetry and prose in how he utilised his hymns and discourses as discursive strategies in the construction of a particular kind of Christian society. The paper is simultaneously a demonstration of the broad application of New Historicism to illuminate the ideological and rhetorical strategies underlying the social and identity formations at the base of the various trajectories that, collectively, circumscribe early Christianities. In this manner the paper functions on two levels, namely focusing on an ancient textual corpus in its context, as well as on the contemporary interpretive context, in which these texts are engaged in order to construct meaning for the present. This paper is based on my Master's

thesis work, which research will demonstrate that not only did Ephrem employ his poetry and prose to convince the Edessans of the ‘truthfulness’ of his type of orthodoxy as opposed to Bardaisan ‘heresies’, but that he strategically incorporated ‘body language’, to change the social and religious landscape in Edessa.

Van Eck, Ernest (UP); *A Samaritan merchant and his friend: Revisiting the “parable of the Samaritan*

Almost all interpretations of the parable of the Samaritan are in agreement on three points; the description of the Samaritan, the identification of the three step-structure of good storytelling in the parable, and the surprise in the story. This paper, using the *Mishna*, the two *Talmuds*, and the *Tosefta* as texts, questions the stereotyped depiction of the Samaritan in the history of the interpretation of the parable of the Samaritan. Second, building on the so-called “rule of three” of good storytelling, the paper questions the commonly accepted “surprise” in the parable. It is argued that the “rule of three” can only work if the third person arriving on the scene is understood as a merchant. From this perspective, it is argued that the parable addresses much more than the question “who is my neighbor?”. At stake here is the basic way in which first-century Mediterraneans got to know and interacted with those outside the ingroup. What the parable challenges is the stereotypical description and explanations that were used to describe people. From a modern perspective, the parable disrupts our own stereotypes and challenges the reader to rethink what it means to be human.

Visser, Jacobie Helena (SUN); *An anomalous juxtaposition: An intersectional approach to Abraham and Rahab in James 2*

This paper investigates important connections relating to gender and economy in James 2:20-26, with special reference to the characters Abraham and Rahab. An intersectional approach is used as an analytical tool to investigate and evaluate the manner in which 1st century CE gender and economic issues functioned as distinctive but overlapping features in the ancient Greek, Roman and Jewish world. Abraham is described as father (2:21), righteous (2:23) and friend of God (2:23) whereas Rahab is described as the sex worker (2:25) justified by her hospitality towards the messengers (2:25). Rahab is placed on equal footing with Abraham by the letter of James despite the obvious difference in social status. Thus, this paper is about the foreseen effectiveness and plausibility of the author’s rhetoric within the context of a late 1st century CE diaspora setting. Intersectionality is useful for mapping out the interrelationships between apparently separate social aspects, also those in ancient texts and contexts. This paper aims to address the gap in current scholarship pertaining to the peculiar parallel between Abraham and Rahab as well as the nature of their gendering which have largely been ignored in research on the letter of James.

Weissenrieder, Annette (Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg; Germany); *Of Childbirth and Salvation: 1 Timothy 2:15 in Light of Ancient Medicine and the Artemis Cult in Ephesus*

The term *τεκνογονία* in 1 Timothy 2:15, a *hapax legomenon* in the Greek Bible and only used four times in Greco-Roman antiquity as far as the texts are preserved, is a *crux interpretum* in New Testament exegesis.

The author of 1 Timothy borrows, so my thesis, a medical argument, which is applied in the medical texts and Stoic moral discussion of political life, using its terms in an oscillating ambivalent fashion in an attempt to assert a measure of physical control over (the undomesticated) wealthy women of his community. Ancient medical texts show that the term τεκνογονία applies to women who for various reasons have not given birth and are afflicted by physical, mental, or moral maladies. These rich women have particularly claimed the right to teach and exercise authority over men, elite and non-elite, and have therefore not respected the gender-specific roles which the Christian community has provided them. Verse 15 gives a résumé of the entire passage 9-15, in that it shows that the category of the female body interacts with other categories like gender hierarchy (dresscode and teaching), social behavior (exercise of authority) and religion (the Artemis cult).

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