

**EELC Pre–Conference
Debrecen
(22)23–25 April, 2025.**

Canon and Beyond

(Diesseits und jenseits des Kanons)

Reception of Biblical Figures

(Rezeption biblischer Figuren)

Program

23 April

09,00–09,30: Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr: *Biblical Figures in the Epistle of James*

09,30–09,45: *Discussio*

09,45–10,15: Petr Mareček: *Andrew and Philip: Their Role and Significance in the Gospel of John*

10,15–10,30: *Discussio*

10,30–11, 00: **Coffee break**

11,00–11,30: Károly Bácskai: “*Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*” (John 20:29) – *The Confirmation of the Apostle Thomas*

11,30–11,45: *Discussio*

11,45–12,15: Sidonia Horňanová: *The Reception of the Apostle Paul as an Apocalyptic Hero*

12,15–12,30: *Discussio*

12,30–14,30: **Lunch & break**

14,30–15,00: Emese Jasper-Makay (Drs.): *The Use of the Expression “Christ’s Blood” in the Pauline Theological Universe*

15,00–15,15: *Discussio*

15,15–15,30: Mariana Kušiaková (Drs.): *Interpretative Problematic Areas in the Gospel of John*

15,30–15,45: *Discussio*

15,45 – 18,00: *Relaxing*

18,00: **Reception dinner**

24 April

09,00–09,30: Virgil László: *The Figure of Sophia in the Bible and in reception History*

09,30–09,45: *Discussio*

09,45–10,15: Mihai Ciurea: *Is It All About Money? The figures of Ananias and Sapphira in an Ecclesiological Reading*

10,15–10,30: *Discussio*

10,30–11, 00: **Coffee break**

11,00–11,30: Ljiljana Jovanović: *Enoch From Person To The Metaphor*

11,30–11,45: *Discussio*

11,45–12,15: Cosmin Pricop: *Retelling the Story of Apostle Andrew. Reception of the apocryphal Acts of Andrew in the liturgical texts of Andrew's feast*

12,15–12,30: *Discussio*

12,30–14,.30: **Lunch & break**

14,30–15,00: Petra Krisztina Ratkovics (Drs.): *The influence of the book of Jeremiah on Paul's theology*

15,00–15,15: *Discussio*

15,15–15,30: Zoltán Orémus (Drs.): *„I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God” (John 20:17) – Resurrection and Ascension in the Gospel of John*

15,30–15,45: *Discussio*

15,45 –18, 00: *Relaxing*

18,00: **Dinner**

25 April

09,00–09,30: István M. Ledán: *The traitor's character in Matthew and its Hellenistic background*

09,30–09,45: *Discussio*

09,45–10,00: Éva Éles (Drs.): *Mysterious Encounters. The Spirits in Prison in the Context of 1Peter 3:18–22*

10,00–10,15: *Discussio*

10,15–10, 45: **Coffee break**

10,45–11,00: Ákos József Debreczeni (Drs.): *The figure of Asclepius, Dionysus and Orpheus*

11,00–11,15: *Discussio*

11,15–11,45: Viktor Kókai-Nagy: *The Figure of Cain in the Johannine Writings*

11,45–12,00: *Discussio*

12,00–14,00: **Lunch & break**

14,30–16,00: **Cultural program**

Abstracts

Day 1

Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr: *Biblical Figures in the Epistle of James*

(Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Germany)

Abstract:

There are several personalities known from the Bible that the letter of James is alluding to. Obviously, he can assume that his readers will be able to understand the ideas he wants to express by mentioning them. Perhaps, he and they would also have access to motifs and interpretations of biblical stories known from Second Temple literature. Thus, the epistle of James can be read as one example of different voices of pre-Rabbinic Judaism that base their arguments on the Scriptures of Israel.

Petr Mareček: *Andrew and Philip: Their Role and Significance in the Gospel of John*

(Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic)

Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to offer an interpretation of the texts of John's Gospel that are about Andrew and Philip, who belong to the circle of the twelve disciples of Jesus. The number of mentions of Philip (John 1:43, 44, 45, 46, 48; 6:5, 7; 12:21, 22[twice]; 14:8, 9) and Andrew (1:40, 44; 6:8; 12:22[twice]) in the Gospel of John may already indicate that in the Johannine tradition they have the greatest importance within the New Testament. These two disciples appear together three times in the Gospel of John, in chapters 1, 6, 12. They form a pair of disciples even though they are not a pair of brothers. Right at the beginning, they belong to Jesus as disciples and they carry out their discipleship as missionaries of their Lord (chapter 1). Their missionary function then emerges again in chapter 12. A detailed exegesis of the texts where these two disciples appear in John's Gospel will help us to outline the main characteristics of their portrait and to highlight their role and their common significance in John's Gospel. **Károly**

Bácskai: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29) – The Confirmation of the Apostle Thomas

(Lutheran Theological University Budapest, Hungary)

Abstract:

This presentation explores the significance of Jesus’ resurrection and the nature of faith through the story of the Apostle Thomas. The author emphasizes that Jesus did not offer His disciples theoretical knowledge but rather His personal presence and the power of the Holy Spirit, which led to the strengthening of their faith. The case of Thomas is not an example of disbelief but rather of deepening faith: his doubt represents an earnest search, resolved by the love and proximity of Jesus. The presentation also highlights that Jesus’ resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit are not confined to a specific time or place but are intrinsically linked to His person. Faith is not merely based on rational certainty but on the experience of divine presence, which Thomas comes to understand not through sight but through Jesus’ gaze and words. The story of Thomas teaches that Christ is able to reach humanity despite any obstacles and that faith is not a matter of perfect knowledge but of trust. This idea is further supported by the interpretation of a 13th-century miniature, in which the painter depicts Thomas with a halo, signifying that even the searching and doubting individual is surrounded by divine love. The presentation concludes with a quotation from Psalm 139, which underscores the incomprehensibility of faith and divine knowledge, linking the story of Thomas to the limitations of human understanding and the possibility of certainty through faith.

Sidonia Horňanová: *The Reception of the Apostle Paul as an Apocalyptic Hero*

(Evangelical Lutheran Theological Faculty of Comenius University, Slovakia)

Abstract:

Mystical experiences, visions, and revelations of the Apostle Paul in his authentic letters were later developed in apocalyptic tradition, namely in two apocalypses of Paul which were inspired by Paul’s account of his ascent to heaven in 2 Cor 12:2-4. The former is a second-century Valentinian text, preserved in the fifth codex of the Nag Hammadi collection. The latter dates back to the 4th century and it is known as the Christian Apocalypse of Paul (*Visio Pauli*). In

these writings, Paul is represented not as a theological thinker but rather as an apocalyptic hero and the mediator of God's mysteries. The contribution deals with the superior position of Paul among the group of apostles. It also points out how the figure of Paul was appropriated in later Gnostic and Christian apocalypses for theological purposes of their writers to validate their theologies and practices.

Emese Jasper-Makay (Drs.): *The Use of the Expression "Christ's Blood" in the Pauline Theological Universe*

(Lutheran Theological University Budapest, Hungary)

Abstract:

The presentation focuses on Paul's use of the expression "Christ's Blood" in the context of his theological understanding of Christ's work as a "crucial transition" (James Dunn). The complementary aspects of his theological concept take shape in the language of justification, mysticism, and gift, all providing an access point to understanding salvation in Christ. The role and use of "Christ's Blood" need to be clarified in the Pauline linguistic pattern. The presentation offers an overview of the topic based on a few selected, relevant passages for exegesis.

Mariana Kušiaková (Drs.): *Interpretative Problematic Areas in the Gospel of John*

(Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic)

Abstract:

Transnationally challenging passages can often be identified almost immediately after a first reading of the biblical text. They are characterized by reduced comprehensibility and polysemy. In an effort to understand, we often resort to the original, in our case the Greek text of the Gospel of John. This paper focuses on the changes in the text of the Gospel of John that have been incorporated in the various revisions of the Slovak Ecumenical Translation of the New Testament since its first edition in 1995, and analyses them in relation to the Greek original. It examines the significance of words as potential within their prototypical environments in specific

textual blocks. In this regard, it takes into account domestic confessional translations and parallel texts from selected foreign language translations (in Czech, English, and German), currently published on the United Bible Societies' websites. This creates a comparative corpus of biblical texts that can assist in clarifying the meaning of specific original texts, as well as in seeking suitable grammatical, lexical, syntactic, and stylistic equivalents in the receiving (target) language. Addressing interpretively problematic passages through the analysis of the original text and parallel texts offers an opportunity to discern the different semantic potential of identical expressions with varying onomasiological motivation, and to attempt to create a functionally expressive, appropriate, and adequate translation that preserves a certain iconicity of expression and the aesthetic aspect of God's Word.

Day 2

Virgil László: *The Figure of Sophia in the Bible and in reception History*

(Lutheran Theological University Budapest, Hungary)

Abstract:

The personification of Divine Wisdom appears in the protocanonical and deuterocanonical sapiential books of the Old Testament like Proverbs, Wisdom of Solomon, and Ben Sirach. The New Testament builds on this tradition in manifold ways. In Luke 7:35 Wisdom is shown to be right by his children. The wisdom tradition has a huge impact on Pauline Christology. For New Testament research the contemporary Jewish Philo of Alexandria also provides a lot to scrutinize in this regard. The reception history of the personificated Sophia is also very rich if we take into consideration its role for instance in Gnosticism, or the Eastern Christian tradition. My lecture aims to map these in various degrees.

Mihai Ciurea: *Is It All About Money? The figures of Ananias and Sapphira in an Ecclesiological Reading*

(University of Craiova, Romania)

Abstract:

The account of Ananias and Sapphira's death in Acts 5:1-11 marks a pivotal moment in Luke's theological narrative, focusing not on individual salvation but on ecclesiological concerns. This pericope disrupts the "golden age" depiction of early Church (Acts 2-5) and highlights the transformative power of the Holy Spirit. It also expresses the ecclesial expansion amid conflict with Jewish authorities. According to the traditional chrysostomic interpretation, this analysis argues that Luke's theological intent is to demonstrate the Church's ontological unity and the severe consequences of any internal discord, exemplifying this in relation to financial matters. The narrative structure, including its diptych gradual presentation and the surrounding summaries, reveals that the story serves as a critical example of the Church's shared integrity and its role in spreading the Word. Ananias and Sapphira's deceit represents a profound internal threat, a sin against Pneuma, illustrating the importance of morality and unity within the ekklesia. This account reinforces the eschatological dimension of the Church and its dependence on the Spirit's guidance, emphasizing that while individual judgments are not repeatable, the call for sharing remains essential. Luke's portrayal of this episode not only addresses the ethical implications of material wealth but also reveals the Church's resilience and the divine protection against both internal and external challenges.

Ljiljana Jovanović: *Enoch From Person To The Metaphor*

(University of Belgrade, Serbia)

Abstract:

The paper examines the transformation of Enoch from a righteous man to the prophet and a person taken to heaven using the texts of Judaism and Qumran scrolls as well as Christian texts and texts of intertestamental literature. The aim of the paper is establishing the reasons and traces

that led to the fact that Enoch grew up over time from a historical figure into a symbol of righteousness and a metaphor for the pre-excited Son of Man.

Cosmin Pricop: *Retelling the Story of Apostle Andrew. Reception of the apocryphal Acts of Andrew in the liturgical texts of Andrew's feast.*

(University of Bucharest, Romania)

Abstract:

The questions that my presentation attempts to answer are: what do the liturgical texts tell us about the Apostle Andrew? How is he portrayed in the context of such texts and what information is referred to in them? The main reason for my reference to the liturgical texts of the feast of St. Andrew on November 30th lies in the conviction that for many members of the Church such texts often constitute the only contact with information about personalities or saints of the Church such as St. Andrew the Apostle. In other words, liturgical texts enjoy the enormous advantage of dissemination and theoretically easier access for church people.

Petra Krisztina Ratkovics (Drs.): *The influence of the book of Jeremiah on Paul's theology*

(Károli Gáspár University, Hungary)

Abstract:

The goal of this paper is to offer an overview of three main theological themes, found both in Jeremiah and in the Pauline letters, and to argue for an influence of Jeremiah over the theology of Paul. The themes are: God's calling to be a servant of the Lord; the new covenant and consequentially the knowledge of the Lord and boasting; lastly God's presence in the redeemed community. We will be paying special attention to the direct Jeremiah-quotations found in the Pauline corpus, however we expand our arguments to include intertextual and thematical references.

Zoltán Orémus (Drs.): „I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God” (John 20:17) – Resurrection and Ascension in the Gospel of John

(Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic)

Abstract:

The Risen Lord's command to Mary Magdalena in John 20,17 has many variety of interpretations. This verse is one of the most difficult and certainly among the most disputed in the New Testament. The main question is how in John resurrection and ascension are related to one another. This relationship is often discussed in terms of chronological sequence. Some say that resurrection and ascension are the same for John and it all happened in Jesus exaltation on the cross. Other place the ascension between the appearance to Mary Magdalene and the appearance to the disciples without Thomas. The third group of scholars suggests that the ascension happened after the appearance to the disciples with Thomas. According to some scholars John depended directly on the Synoptics. With this hypothesis and with a comparison of John 20:17 with Matt 28:9-10 I try to give answer on the question how death, resurrection and ascension relate to one another in John?

Day 3

István M. Ledán: *The traitor's character in Matthew and its Hellenistic background*

(Debrecen Reformed Theological University, Hungary)

Abstract:

The figure of Judas as traitor appears only in the Gospels and in Acts (and possibly in 1 Cor 11), and only in a fleeting way. Moreover, Judas' betrayal is not psychologically prepared. The reader is merely informed about it, without being able to be really shocked, since the evangelists indicate beforehand, already in the list of disciples that Judas betrayed Jesus. There is no vivid picture of his personality: we do not read about his family, his occupation, his kinship. However, despite the fact that his personality is quite blurred (at least in the Synoptics), his character seems to have been shaped by the evangelists for certain purposes. In my lecture, I will examine how

Matthew sees and displays the character of Judas. I do this by analysing Judas' personality (his complexity, his possible development, his inner life) as he appears in the Gospel of Matthew. The narrator is obviously not neutral about Judas, nor is the narrative itself. But for me the task is not to draw an objective picture of Judas (if this is possible at all). I am not going to investigate the "historical Judas". I am specifically interested in how the evangelist, with his biases and (theological) preconceptions, saw and interpreted Judas' deed. In the course of the analysis, I will also highlight potentially useful Hellenistic analogies.

Éva Éles (Drs.): *Mysterious Encounters. The Spirits in Prison in the Context of 1Peter 3:18–*

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(Protestant Theological Institute of Cluj-Napoca, Romania)

Abstract:

1 Peter 3:18–22 is one of the most enigmatic and challenging passages in Scripture. The paraenesis addressed to unjustly suffering Christians in Asia Minor is supplemented by a confession of faith. This pericope attests that Christ's death, resurrection, ascension, and redemption have far broader spatial and temporal implications than one might initially assume. This article seeks to establish the exegetical and theological coordinates of the mysterious encounter between Christ and the souls in prison. Three key questions will be explored: Who are these souls? What did Christ preach to them? When did this encounter take place?

Ákos József Debreczeni (Drs.): *The figure of Asclepius, Dionysus and Orpheus*

(Debrecen Reformed Theological University, Hungary)

Abstract:

Although the idea of resurrection and revival mostly appears in Judaism and Christianity, Greek religions have also created their own resurrection beliefs. The cults of Asclepius, Dionysus and Orpheus present a more colourful image of resurrection than other Greek cults existing in this period. These three focus mostly on afterlife: the initiated who follow the instructions of their

gods can hope for a reward in the otherworld. Resurrection is an essential element in the myths of these deities. Several examples, and relevant New Testament parallels will also be presented.

Viktor Kókai-Nagy: *The Figure of Cain in the Johannine Writings*

(Debrecen Reformed Theological University, Hungary – J. Selye University Komárno, Slovakia)

Abstract:

I have dealt quite extensively with the figure of Cain in Josephus' account. In doing so, I was made aware that the Jewish tradition contains much more information about Cain than we have from the Old Testament. This is not surprising, because Cain's deeds and his person had far-reaching consequences for the fate of the entire human race. Despite the rich Cain tradition, we only rarely find his name in the New Testament (Heb 11:4; 1 John 3:12 and Jude 11), which of course does not mean that the story itself does not appear elsewhere in the background (e.g. John 8:44; James 5:1-6; Matthew 5:21-24; Revelation 6:9-11). But these appearances alone suggest that the authors of the New Testament also knew more about the first murder than Gen 4 tells us. I have chosen the figure of Cain in the Johannine writings as the subject of my lecture because here we find the most complex picture of Cain, whose sonship of the devil was not just a secondary theme of Johannine theology. It was a leitmotif.