

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

2026 SESSION PROGRAM

ABSTRACT

The earliest Christian thought and literature took shape within the context of canon consciousness. This consciousness was not primarily an awareness of a canonical list(s) but rather an awareness of an authoritative tradition. This tradition shaped the Jesus movement in two ways. One is an awareness of texts already functioning authoritatively within Second Temple Judaism (i.e., Israel's Scriptures). A second is how the movement's own canonical message (i.e., the kerygma proclaiming the Christ event) emerges within this context of the authoritative texts of Second Temple Judaism. This message then also exercises a norming function over the movement's interaction with Israel's Scriptures and decisively shapes the movement's own growing body of scriptural literature (i.e., the New Testament). A combination of older (i.e., Israel's Scriptures) and newer (i.e., the kerygma, the New Testament) authoritative traditions then exercises a norming function with regard to (a) the assessment of which texts were canonical and (b) the relationship(s) canonical texts and testaments have to each other. Ironically, this tradition even shapes the content of emerging literature not broadly judged to be canonical (i.e., New Testament apocrypha). The combination of these traditions has influenced readers of these canonical texts in subsequent centuries to the modern period, including how readers understand the relationship between the two testaments of Christian Scripture. Therefore, this group explores how canon-consciousness manifests itself in Israel's Scriptures, the New Testament, the earliest Christian writers (i.e., apologists and earlier), and this consciousness's ongoing hermeneutical implications for modern interpreters. To propose a paper, please email david@jdavidstark.com with a title and abstract (80–100 words). To join the group's mailing list, please register at <https://www.jdavidstark.com/ibr>.

SCHEDULING

All participants have been notified that (a) they will have to register for the SBL conference and that (b) they will also need to have a current membership unless they have reached out regarding a membership waiver and received approval for one.

The group has been well attended in recent years, last year having about 120, which was more than double the attendance from the previous year (about 45–50). To accommodate a group in the usual range (45–50) with additional capacity, should the group continue drawing larger attendance, we would prefer a theater-style room where presenters stand. In this setup, we would prefer 4 seats at the head table from which speakers can present. And if the group will be assigned a larger room, it would be helpful to have access to whatever audio equipment IBR can provide to make it easier for all participants to hear, including those who may have some degree of hearing impairment.

Our group can meet either Friday or Saturday, but we need to avoid scheduling conflicts with both the Scripture and Church Seminar and Scripture and Hermeneutics Seminar sessions as we both have commitments in those sessions also. Any other scheduling conflicts that can be avoided with Kirby Laing Centre sessions will be helpful, as a number of our group's attendees have commitments in those seminars also, but not strictly necessary.

PREVIOUS YEARS' PAPERS

Additional proposals should avoid duplicating topics the group has already been covered.

2024

- David Stark (Faulkner University), "Canon-consciousness as the Relationship between the Testaments"
- Dana Harris (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School), "Interpreting and Reinterpreting the Canonical Whole: The Appropriation of Zechariah in Revelation"
- Collin Cornell (Fuller Theological Seminary), "The Bible Is Not One Big Unilinear Story: Canon Consciousness and the Geometric Bible"

2025

- Heath Thomas (Oklahoma Baptist University), "Canonical Pressure from the Other Direction: Mal. 3:19–24 [MT] in the Law and Prophets and the Presentation of Jesus,"
- Stephen B. Chapman (Duke University), "Testamentary Priority: Canon-Consciousness in Contemporary Christian Biblical Interpretation"

CURRENT YEAR'S PROGRAM - OR SHOULD WE TAKE A HIATUS THIS YEAR AND ORGANIZE A REVIEW SESSION ON THE HEBREWS VOLUME?

, moderator, introduction and welcome, 5 mins

, 20 mins

Megan DeVore (Colorado Christian University), "In Pigment and Stone: Early Christian Canon Consciousness and Visual Production," 20 mins

Scholarly investigation into canon consciousness in early Christianity typically focuses on texts. Yet antiquity was largely a world of visuality, and Christians in this context were no exception. This paper attends to early Christian visual productions – catacomb frescoes, carved inscriptions and statues, and sarcophagi scenes from the second through early fourth centuries – to explore the ways that material works might contribute to ongoing conversations regarding canon. As studies in early Christian art have made clear, the iconographic programs of early Christian painting and stonework display

compelling patterns: specific scenes and figures are consistently invoked and grouped together. What initially might appear to be a pastiche of illustrations from various texts ('old' and 'new') reveals active pictorial hermeneutics that employ a fundamental kerygma to convey the relationships among and centrality of those texts. Like their verbal counterparts, the visual images produced by Christian communities correlate specific texts with one another within a Christocentric interpretive matrix. Images in pigment and stone convey a reception of narratives in a way that reveals a governing hermeneutic for received texts and their interrelationships, and also affirms their norming authority. Ultimately, this paper suggests that if early Christian canon-consciousness was not foremost a possession of lists but a reception of norming kerygmatic traditions involving and interpreting texts, then visual expression reflects this consciousness. The inclusion of visual culture in conversations about canon may offer a valuable addition to a text-centered dialogue ... and might prompt introspection about the role of the visual in contexts that hand down this canon today.

SBL program tags: Methods - Theological Interpretation, Methods - Ideology & Theology - Christian, History of Interpretation / Reception History / Reception Criticism - Art, Film, Music, and Literature

, 20 mins

, respondent, 25 mins

Discussion, 30 mins