

PROFESSOR JEROME CREACH PRESENTS ON PSALMS

This summer the Rev. Dr. Jerome Creach, Robert C. Holland Professor of Old Testament, enjoyed the distinct honor of attending the first International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature held in Latin America. As an invited guest speaker, Jerome traveled to Buenos Aires, Argentina, in July along with some 400 other participants in the conference.

“SBL was founded in North America in 1880,” says Jerome, “but its annual meeting outside the United States—its international conference—has taken place for only the last 20 years, and always in Europe,” he notes. “This summer’s location in Buenos Aires facilitated a rich mixture of many scholars from Latin America, about 40 scholars from South Africa, and other members of SBL who cannot often attend meetings in the U.S. or Europe.”



Known for his expertise in the study of the Psalms, Jerome accepted an invitation to present a paper for the conference’s Persian Period group, which this year focused on the changing views of monarchy from 539-323 BCE. His paper, titled “Mortality and the King . . .,” focused on several, probably Persian Period psalms that present the kingly figure in a light that was likely surprising for the day. “In Psalms 144, 146, and to a certain extent 89, the king’s power is downplayed and his mortality is highlighted,” Jerome points out as an unexpected picture of an ancient Near Eastern monarch.

He also notes that “the king” in these psalms is always unnamed and therefore probably refers to the people’s ideal of a king, not to a particular king from Israel’s past. “In the end, the idealized king in these psalms is presented as the ultimate, righteous, suffering figure, and so they inform the Christian understanding of the Messiah, embodied in Jesus Christ,” Jerome concludes. His and other presenters’ papers will likely be published in a conference volume in the near future.

Jerome has also recently published Ten Commandments in the Being Reformed: Faith Seeking Understanding series (Westminster John Knox Press). His study probes each commandment for its meaning in ancient times and its implications today, with the series including biblically based mini-courses to give adults a foundational understanding of the Reformed faith.

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