

## Dr Karen J. Wenell BA, PhD

Lecturer in New Testament and Theology

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### About

I am a New Testament scholar concerned with the engagement between Biblical Studies and the Social Sciences, and the ways the text relates to lives in the ancient and contemporary world. Contemporary moral, educational and theological interpretation of the Bible are the primary areas in which I have engaged in knowledge exchange as a journal editor and co-investigator on funded research projects.

### Qualifications

- BA (with Departmental Honors) in Biblical and Theological Studies, North Park University, Chicago (1998)
- PhD in Theology and Religious Studies, University of Glasgow (2004)
- PGCert in Academic Practice, University of Glasgow (2010)

### Biography

Prior to joining the Department of Theology and Religion in Birmingham in 2001, I was co-editor of the *Expository Times* (2005-2011), and Lecturer in Creativity, Culture and Faith at the University of Glasgow (2006-2011).

My PhD work focussed on the theme of the Abrahamic land promise in relationship to Jesus and Second Temple Judaism, arguing that Jesus, like the sign prophets, symbolically evoked the land promise, particularly in the calling of twelve disciples who participate in the establishment of the new space of the Kingdom of God. This thesis was developed in my book, *Jesus and Land* ([http://www.amazon.com/Jesus-Land-Judaism-Library-Testament/dp/0567031152/ref=sr\\_1\\_24?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1309868878&sr=1-24#reader\\_0567031152](http://www.amazon.com/Jesus-Land-Judaism-Library-Testament/dp/0567031152/ref=sr_1_24?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1309868878&sr=1-24#reader_0567031152)), and my interests in spatial-critical interpretation of the bible are furthered in the forthcoming edited book, *Constructions of Space III* (with Jorunn Økland and Cor de Vos).

At present, I am writing a monograph developing a critique of the dominance of 'context' in Biblical Studies, and Historical Jesus Studies in particular, in dialogue with the work of Bruno Latour, John Law and others associated with Actor-Network Theory.

I am a member of the Society of Biblical Literature, the British New Testament Society, and the European Association of Biblical Studies, for which I co-chair the research programme '[Bible and Sacred Space](http://www.eurassbibstudies.group.shef.ac.uk/sacspace.htm)' (<http://www.eurassbibstudies.group.shef.ac.uk/sacspace.htm>) with Cor de Vos (University of Münster).

### Teaching

In the 2011-12 academic year I will be teaching the undergraduate modules:

- Introduction to Biblical Studies (with Charlotte Hempel)
- The Bible Through Contemporary Scholarship (with Andrew Davies)
- The Bible and Sacred Space

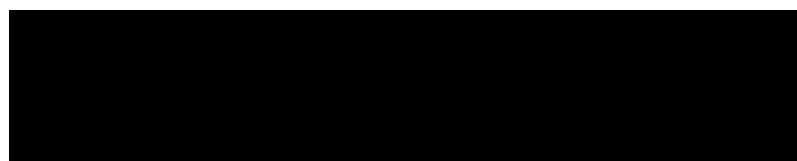
### Postgraduate supervision

I am interested in supervising research students who would like to work in any of the following fields:

- Historical Jesus studies
- Actor Network Theory, theology, and biblical interpretation
- Spatial-Critical theory and the New Testament
- Reading the bible in schools, especially the parables of Jesus
- Christmas and ethical consumption

### Research

**Video: Karen talks about her research into the bible in the ancient and contemporary world, christmas and ethical consumption and the historical Jesus**



Adobe Flash Player or QuickTime is required for video playback. [Get the latest Flash Player](#) [Get the latest version of QuickTime](#)

- [Transcript \(/accessibility/transcripts/artsandlaw/ptr/karen-wenell.aspx\)](#)

My core research centres on the relationship between New Testament Studies and the Social Sciences, asking questions about how we establish 'context' in the ancient world, and how that context is then utilised in the construction of figures such as Jesus and Paul. As Latour suggestively writes, Context is a place that can never be reached: 'At Context, there is no place to park' (*Reassembling the Social*).

A common theme running through various strands of my research activity is ethics and morality in relation to the bible and contemporary life. I have been co-investigator on the AHRC-funded workshop, 'Not Just for Christmas: Consumption, Popular Culture and Religious Observance', exploring ethical consumption as it relates to cultural and biblical narratives of Christmas and everyday life.

- [Case study for the 'Not Just for Christmas' project \(http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundedResearch/CaseStudies/Pages/Not%20just%20for%20Christmas.aspx\)](#)
- ['Not Just for Christmas' project blog \(http://www.notjustforchristmas.org/\)](#)

I have also researched the presentation of ethical issues in textbooks as co-investigator on a [large grant \(http://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/education/research/currentresearchprojects/doesreligiouseducationwork/#d.en.153511\)](#) under the AHRC's 'Religion and Society' programme on Religious Education provision across the UK. The place of the bible in schools is an ongoing interest, developed previously in relation to the teaching of parables (with Professor John Riches and Dr Alison Jack), and in connection with the work of [Just Trading Scotland \(http://www.justtradingscotland.co.uk/pages/education\)](#), considering the potential for engagement between the bible, Religious and Moral Education, the wider curriculum and issues of fair trade.

## Other activities

Karen Wenell is Admissions Tutor for the Department of Theology and Religion.

## Publications

### Books

- *Jesus and Land: Sacred and Social Space in Second Temple Judaism* (Library of New Testament Studies 334; London: T&T Clark International, 2007).
- *Paul, Grace and Freedom: Essays in Honour of John K. Riches* (ed with P. Middleton and A. Paddison; London: T & T Clark International, 2009).
- JC Conroy, D Lundie, RA Davis, V Baumfield, LP Barnes, T Gallagher, K Lowden, N Bourque and K Wenell, *Does Religious Education Work?: A Multi-dimensional Investigation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).
- *Constructions of Space III: Biblical Spaces and the Sacred* (ed with J Økland and C de Vos; London: T&T Clark International, 2014).

### Articles and Chapters in Books

- 'Spatial Morality: The Moral Geography of the Kingdom of God' in J. Økland, C. de Vos and K. Wenell (eds), *Constructions of Space III: Biblical Spaces and the Sacred* (London: T & T Clark International, 2014).
- J. Økland, C. de Vos and K. Wenell, 'Introduction' in J. Økland, C. de Vos and K. Wenell (eds), *Constructions of Space III: Biblical Spaces and the Sacred* (London: T & T Clark International, 2014).
- 'Testing the Boundary: Ritual, Moral and Supramoral Responsibility in Jesus and Paul' in P. Middleton, A. Paddison and K. Wenell (eds), *Paul, Grace and Freedom: Essays in Honour of John K. Riches* (London: T & T Clark International, 2009), 65-81.
- P. Middleton, A. Paddison and K. Wenell, 'Introduction' in *Paul, Grace and Freedom: Essays in Honour of John K. Riches* (London: T & T Clark International, 2009), 1-5.
- 'All Consuming Christmas? Religion, Popular Culture and Challenges of Consumption' *The Expository Times* 121:3 (Dec 2009), 105-114.
- 'St Peter's College and the Desacralisation of Space' *Literature and Theology* 21:3 (Sept 2007), 259-275.
- 'Contested Temple Space and Visionary Kingdom Space in Mark 11-12' *Biblical Interpretation* 15:3 (July 2007), 291-305.
- 'Land as Sacred and Social Space: Some Reflections on the Early Jesus Movement and the *Hauhau* Religion' in L. Lawrence and M. Aguilar (eds.) *Anthropology and Biblical Studies: Avenues of Approach* (Leiden: Deo Publishing, 2004), 208-26.

### Chapters in Textbooks/Handbooks

- 'Scripture' in S. McKinney and L. Franchi (eds) *A Companion to Catholic Education* (Gracewing, 2011).
- 'Jesus and the Holy Land' in S. Porter and T. Holmén (eds), *Handbook of the Study of the Historical Jesus* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).
- 'The Geography, History and Archaeology of the Bible' in M. Gorman (ed.) *An Ecumenical Introduction to the Bible* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2005).

### Other Publications

- 'Exegetical Notes: Mark 10:35-45' *The Expository Times* 117/12 (September 2006), 507-508.
- 'Exegetical Notes: John 6.56-69' *The Expository Times* 117/10 (July 2006), 417-418.
- J. Riches, S. Miller and K. Wenell, 'Contextual Bible Study Notes for May Lectionary Readings' *The Expository Times* 117/7 (April 2006), 286-290.
- 'Exegetical Notes: John 12:20-33 and Acts 3:12-19' *The Expository Times* 117/6 (March 2006), 245 and 249-50.
- 'Exegetical Notes: Mark 1:40-45' *The Expository Times* 117/4 (January 2006), 153-154. 'Exegetical Notes: Luke 1:26-38' *The Expository Times* 117/2 (November

2005), 28-29.

- J. Riches, S. Miller and K. Wenell, 'Contextual Bible Study Notes for March Lectionary Readings' *The Expository Times* 117/5 (February 2005), 192-195.

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