

CALL FOR PAPERS

SECOND UNISA SYMPOSIUM OF NEW TESTAMENT AND EARLY CHRISTIAN STUDIES, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE RESEARCH PROJECT “JESUS IN CULTURAL COMPLEXITY”, UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

University of South Africa, Pretoria

THEME: Memory and Identity in Early Christianity

DATE: October 6-8, 2010

Papers are invited on the many aspects of the development of early Christian identity(-ies) in the Mediterranean world of the first centuries. Tradition, and the contextualizing of tradition, was at the core of claims and perceptions of self-understanding by those who claimed allegiance to Jesus of Nazareth during the first and second centuries of the Common Era. Yet, what was remembered and invoked as authoritative? By whom and why? A growing sense of identity correlates with distinct memories. Memory is cultural, local, embodied. Memory is social, ideological, processual. Memory is power, but also ephemeral. Above all, memory is discourse. With this conference we seek to explore how identity and tradition interrelate and how they were contextualised within the social dynamics of the time (see abstract below). Apart from literary/textual investigations, we encourage contributions with an historical or archaeological concern. Enquiries regarding theoretical and methodological issues, the design of interpretive strategies and the fabrication of a socio-historiography are also welcomed.

This year's symposium is a collaborative effort of the Department of New Testament & Early Christian Studies at the University of South Africa and Dr. Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, participant in the “Jesus in Cultural Complexity” Research Project, University of Oslo.

Abstracts and submission date

Please submit abstracts of appr. 200 words via e-mail attachment to bothapjj@unisa.ac.za by April 30, 2010.

For more information please contact Prof. Pieter J.J. Botha (bothapjj@unisa.ac.za | tel. +27 12 429 4062 or +27 12 803 0933) or Dr. Marianne Bjelland Kartzow (m.b.kartzow@teologi.uio.no | +47 22 85 03 00/86)

Abstract of the conference theme

Memory and Identity in Early Christianity: complexity and hybridity

In the New Testament writings and even more so in other early Christian literature, we have the memory of not only Jesus but also of those participating in remembering. Understanding those memories requires studying the relationships among these early Christians *as well as* the cultural complexes they were negotiating with their memories. Claims of breaking with cultural codes — or the opposite claims of true continuity — are always simplifications. Authentic and hybrid, style and tradition, original and syncretistic: these are massively complicated discursive markers of claims to historical identity. This conference provides opportunity to reflect on possible themes, practices (or even models) by means of which various identity markers combine into larger and interconnected systems. Our aim is to analyse the social mechanisms related to gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, age, beliefs (and others) interacting to manifest memories and concepts of tradition.

That the early Christians successfully communicated to and persuaded significant groups/individuals cannot be doubted. But what made their words, claims, actions persuasive to some and not to others? Why certain groups? At stake here is understanding the problematic intersections of memories about Jesus and his movement with cultural diversity and socio-religious practices. How were boundaries set and how were they crossed?

The planned discussions seek to reflect aspects of the lived experiences of men and women, situated in concrete webs of social relations. The questions involved deal with how the social, political, and institutional forces that shaped early Christian identities can be understood. How and why did their specific value systems develop? Did the early Christians have a sense of themselves as belonging to (or dissenting from) a tradition, generation, or community?

More on the conference

The Unisa Early Christianity Symposium is a pleasant and intimate conference in a relaxed atmosphere with ample opportunity for discussion. Over two and a half days, appr. 20 papers from scholars around the world are presented. We try to avoid parallel sessions to promote unity and focus in the conference, and attendants get to know one another properly. We also try to show guests from abroad a little of the country during the conference.

Venue

The Conference takes place at the University of South Africa (UNISA) in Pretoria, capital of the Republic of South Africa.

(<http://www.southafrica.info/travel/cities/pretoria.htm>).

Programme

We start on Wednesday morning the 6th and end on Friday the 8th of October.

Conference Fee

The conference fee will be \$150 for overseas visitors, inclusive of transport (from and to the airport and during the conference) and

meals during the conference. You may work on an exchange rate of roughly ZAR 8.00/\$, ZAR 13.50/£ or ZAR12/EUR.

Postgraduates, other students and interested parties not able to claim their conference fees back from their institutions should please contact the organisers for a discount.

Accommodation

We will provide more information on accommodation in due course. Pretoria offers a variety in this regard. During past conferences, guests stayed at the Brooklyn Guest Houses (<http://www.brooklynguesthouses.co.za/>) situated in a safe and attractive neighbourhood close to Unisa and the Brooklyn and Hatfield shopping centres.

Publication

The conference papers will be published in the *Journal for Early Christian History*. Submitted papers are subject to a refereeing process.