



REAL COLEGIO COMPLUTENSE AT HARVARD CAMBRIDGE (MA)

RESEARCH GROUP ON *EARLY CHRISTIANITY* *CONFLICT AND COEXISTENCE IN ANCIENT CHRISTIANITY:* *RHETORIC STRATEGIES AND CONCEPTUAL DEBATES*

I. Presentation

This Group of Advanced Research is composed of eleven researchers from different universities: Universidad Complutense, Universidad de Cantabria, Universidad de Granada, Universidad de León, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (Spain) and Harvard University (Department of the Classics and the Divinity School). In the group are Greek philologists, Latin philologists, historians and specialists in Early Christianity and Coptic Studies. All have a broad professional and research backgrounds and have published in their respective fields. Early Christianity is the common research area of all of them. The Group's purpose is an interdisciplinary approach to ancient Christianity in order to gain, through coordinating philology, history and literature, a better knowledge of the Christian reality in the Greco-Roman world.

Ancient Christianity arose as a minor movement within Judaism and suffered deep transformations between the first phases of its formation (1st to 3rd centuries) and the second ones where Christianity became the majority religion (4th-7th centuries).

Our aim is to study the interaction between Christianity and paganism in the changes that led, in the 4th and 5th centuries, to the emergence of a new type of religiosity. We will focus our attention on the religious pluralism and toleration in the first phases of Ancient Christianity and on the debate of ideas and rhetorical strategies as a means to support or rebuke certain pagan positions. We will produce some case studies of the Christian inheritance of pagan culture and religion as a way to integrate both cultures.

The Group is coordinated by Mercedes López Salvá from UCM.

II. Sponsors at Harvard University:

Dr. John Duffy: Full Professor of Byzantine Literature. Chair of the Department of the Classics, Harvard University.

Dr. Albert Henrichs: Full Professor of Greek Literature. Department of Classics, Harvard University.

Dr. Annewies Van den Hoeck. Early Christianity. Divinity School, Harvard University and Boston Theological Institute.

III. Members of the Group:

1. Dra. Mercedes López Salvá. Professor of Greek Philology at the Universidad Complutense, Madrid. Graduated in Classical Philology and Biblical Philology at the UCM and in Philosophy at the Univ. Autónoma (Barcelona). Ph D. in Classics at University Complutense (highest honors). Research stays at the University of Munich and Göttingen. Fellowships in Greece, Germany (DAAD), Uppsala and RCC at Harvard. Fellow of the RCC. Member of advisory boards of peer reviews. Member of research teams financed by the Spanish Ministry of Culture. Participant in two research projects: 1) Greek Medicine and 2) Cosmogonies and Eschatology in the Mediterranean area. Research interests: Ancient Christian literature, Greek medicine, Greco-Roman world and Byzantine literature. Published papers and chapters in books on those topics. Author of translations from Greek into Spanish of Plutarch (13 treatises), Apocryphals Old Testament, and Anatomical treatises of Galen (*Anatomicae administrationes* and *De usu partium*). Co-editor of the book *Charis didaskalías* (Madrid 1994). Member of the Institute of Religions Sciences (UCM). Visiting and Research Scholar at Harvard University. Director of this Group of Advanced Research at Real Colegio Complutense at Harvard.

2. Dr. Enrique Otón Sobrino: Professor of Latin Philology at the UCM Ph.D in Classical Philology from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid; awarded the best dissertation of the year His research areas are: lexicography, medieval Latin, and Latin literature. Author of a translation and commentator to Tibullus and of *De ira* of Seneca. Published an introduction to Lucretius. Author of the Lexicon of Valerius Maximus (5 vol.). Co-funder of the University of Ciudad Real (Spain). Member of a Research Project about the Historiography of the Latin Literature in Spain. Member of advisory boards of several peer reviews.

3. Dr. José Fernández Ubiña

Professor of Ancient History at the University of Granada (Spain). Was a Visiting Scholar at Cambridge University (1988), Oxford (1990 and 2006) and Keele University (1993). Research interests: the Late Antiquity and Early Christianity. Currently directing a research project with support from the Spanish Ministry of Culture and Education on “The Genealogy of Christian Intolerance”. Written several books and a number of articles and chapters on Early Christianity (The most recent ones: *Cristianos y militares. La Iglesia antigua ante el ejército y la guerra*, Granada 2000; *Historia del cristianismo en el mundo antiguo*, Madrid 2006, in collaboration with M.Sotomayor et alii. *Libertad e intolerancia religiosa en el Imperio romano*, Madrid 2007, (in collaboration with Mar Marcos) .

4. Dra. Sofía Torallas Tovar Ph D in Greek Philology. Academic member of the Reial Academia de Bones Lletres de Barcelona since 2004. Teacher at the University of Stockholm Sweden. Researcher at University of Ruhr-Bochum (Germany) and at University of Uppsala. Fellow at University College London. Visiting Scholar at University of Chicago. Curator and Coordinator of the papyrological Collection at the Abbey of Montserrat (Barcelona). Tenured Researcher. Principal researcher of the project: Written Heritage. Member of the Institute of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Languages and Cultures. Participation in four National Research Projects and member of two international research teams: Marc Multilingue and Edition of Shenute's Literary Corpus. Researchs Interest: Early Christianity, Greek and Coptic Papirology, Graeco-roman Egypt. Author of 6 books and editor of five volumes. Among her publications stand out: *Gramática del copto sahídico* (Madrid 2001), *The origin of Greek Stenography* (Madrid 2006), *Identidad lingüística e identidad religiosa en el Egipto Grecorromano* (Barcelona 2005), *Biblica Coptica Montserratensia* (Barcelona 2007), "Egyptian Lexical Interference in the Greek of Byzantine and Early Islamic Egypt" in *Papyrology and the History of Early Islamic Egypt* (Leiden 2004).

5. Dra. Juana Torres

Doctor in Classics (University of Salamanca) and Associate Professor at the University of Cantabria (Spain). Teaches Latin and Christian Literature. Was a Visiting Scholar at the University of La Sapienza (Rome). Research interests include: Women in Ancient Christianity; Religious Conflicts in Late Antiquity; Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Christianity. Collaborated in various researcher projects financed by the Spanish Ministry of Culture. Published several books and articles, including *Los Padres de la Iglesia. La sabiduría de sus textos*, Madrid 2000; Raúl Gabler, *Historias del Primer Milenio*, Madrid 2004, "La ocupación de espacios sagrados como fuente de conflicto entre paganos y cristianos" en J. F. Ubiña y M. Marcos (eds.) *Libertad e intolerancia religiosa en el Imperio Romano*, Madrid 2007.

6. Dra. Mar Marcos

PhD in History (1990) and currently Associate Professor in Ancient History/History of Religions in Antiquity at the University of Cantabria (Spain). Chair of the Department of Historical Sciences. Post-doctoral research at the University of Oxford (1990-1992). Visiting Scholar at Wolfson College (Univ. of Oxford, September-December 1998) and at the Université Paris 13 Villataneuse (May-June 2007). Research interests include the History of Religions in Greece and Rome, Early Christianity and Judaism, Religious Pluralism and Conflict, Women and Religion in Antiquity. Currently directing a research project with support from the Spanish Ministry of Culture and Education on "Religious Pluralism and Conflict in the Roman Empire (III-V century AD)". Written two books (*Women and Religion in Late Antique Rome (AD 312-410)*., *Religious Freedom and Intolerance in the Roman Empire* (with J. F. Ubina), Madrid, 2007 in Spanish), and a number of articles and chapters on religion in Classical Antiquity. Membership Secretary of the European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR). Member of the Steering Committee of the Women Scholars Network of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR).

7. Dr. Francisco García Jurado

Dr. in Classical Philology at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. Associate Professor of Latin Philology, Universidad Complutense de Madrid. First Researcher of the project MEC HUM2007-60326/FILO “Historiografía de la literatura grecolatina en España: la Edad de Plata (1868-1936)”, financed by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation.

8. Dr. Miguel Herrero de Jáuregui (Greek Philology, Ramón and Cajal Fellow UCM). Graduated in Law and Classics. PhD in Classics from the Universidad Complutense of Madrid. Pursued research at the Max-Planck Institut für Europäische Rechtsgeschichte in Frankfurt, Harvard, Oxford (Christ Church), Zurich, and in the Real Colegio de España in Bologna (2nd PhD in History of Religions). Taught at the University of Oviedo. Teaches ancient Greek language and literature at the Universidad Complutense. Published various papers on ancient religion, philosophy and literature, and on early Christianity. Doctoral thesis, awarded the first prize of the year (2005) was recently published in the book *Tradición órfica y cristianismo antiguo*. Now preparing a commentary to the *Protrepticus* of Clement of Alexandria.

9. Dra. Purificación Ubric Rabaneda (Researcher of Ancient History, U. Granada). Graduated with first class honors in History from the University of Granada (Spain) in 1999 and received a national award for academic record. PhD in Ancient History at the University of Granada (Spain) in 2003 about *The Church and the Barbarians in Fifth-Century Spain* (409-507). Postdoctoral MCR at Wolfson College, University of Oxford, under the supervision of Professor Fergus Millar. Significant publications include *La Iglesia en la Hispania del siglo V*, Granada, 2004, “La coexistencia religiosa en la cotidianeidad de la Antigüedad tardía”, in M. Marcos and J. Fernández Ubiña (eds.), *Libertad religiosa e intolerancia en el Imperio romano*, Madrid, 2007 and “The Church in the Suevic Kingdom (A. D. 409-585)”, in D’Emilio J. (ed.) *Culture and Society in Medieval Galicia: A Cultural Crossroads at the Edge of Europe*, Brill.

10. Dr. Charles Stang, Assistant Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity, Divinity School, Harvard University. Research and teaching focus on the history and theology of Christianity in late antiquity, especially Eastern varieties of Christianity. Recent research centers on the development of the ascetico-mystical tradition in Eastern Christianity, and focuses on the early-6th -century theologian "Pseudo" Dionysius the Areopagite, who is widely regarded as the fountainhead of "negative" theology. Interests include Syriac Christian literature; the history of ancient philosophy, especially Neoplatonism; early Islam, especially the history of early Sufism; religions of the late antique Mediterranean; and modern continental philosophy and theology, especially as it intersects with the study of religion.

11. Lawrence Myer, Graduated in Classical Philology at Harvard University, Ph D. candidate. Dissertation: “Rejection of Blood Sacrifice in the Roman Empire”. Member of American Academy of Philology. Member of American Academy of Religion. Member of American School of Classical Studies in Athens. Participated in excavations in Athens and Corinth. Taught at Harvard Divinity School and in the Department of Classics. Research interests: Early Christianity and Greek and Latin Literature.

IV. Justification:

The ancient Mediterranean area was a pluralistic world where different ethnic groups, religious cultures, and confessions co-existed. It deserves attention to investigate: 1) how conflicts emerged in early Christianity and which resources were used to resolve problems that altered common life. Some case studies of those problems and their solutions will be analyzed; 2) the rhetoric strategies in those polemics, such as the use of persuasion; the hexametrical polemics between pagans and Christians in late Antiquity; and the religious value of epic exhortation for courage; 3) the switch from toleration into intolerance and from intolerance to co-existence; 4) Christian inheritance of pagan culture: for example, pagan theurgy, the animal killing in early Christian ritual, deification or the use of Greek medicine to explain the beginning of the Biblical *Genesis* or the religious person's journey to spiritual experiences; 5) reception by the Roman world of some Greek concepts, such as how the soul was imagined (Arnobius or Agustin) and how the old Christian-pagan conflicts are revisited by modern constructions of Latin-Christian literature.

V. Goals:

Our aim is to study first how the conflicts with paganism were generated in Ancient Christianity and how they were managed to be solved. It is our purpose to clarify the mechanisms of the relationship of Christianity with political power, paganism and within its own different groups. This research will be carried out from a historical and a philological point of view.

The goal of the historical part is to analyze Christianity roots of intolerance and co-existence with other cultures and the political and cultural atmospheres which fostered them. The philological part is the presentation of case studies, such as animal sacrifices, pagan theurgy, oracles, prophecies, revelations or the idea of the soul's journey as paradigmatic means of interaction between Christianity and the pagan world. We will also pay attention to some rhetoric resources, such as the use of hexameter as apologetic and doctrinal tool.

We aim to show that the Christian inheritance of pagan culture contributed to the expansion of Christianity in the Greco-Roman world and how, through the integration of Christian and pagan beliefs in the framework of Greek culture and philosophy, Christianity became more universal. We will use all this material to study how is the modern construction of west Christian literature.

VI. Forthcoming book (Provisional Table of Contents):

1. Episcopal Strategies for Solving Conflicts in Early Christianity (José Fernández Ubiña)
2. Religious persuasion and religious coercion in Late Antiquity (Mar Marcos)
3. Rhetoric and arguments in the polemic between Christians and Pagans (Juana Torres)
4. Religious Co-existence Strategies in Late Antiquity (Purificación Ubric).
5. Conflicts in pachomian monasticism (Sofía Torallas).
6. Hexametrical polemics between Christian and Pagans in Late Antiquity (Miguel Herrero).
7. Early Christian Incorporation and Re-interpretation of Animal Sacrifice (Lawrence Myer).
8. Christian inheritance of Pagan Theurgy (Charles Stang)

9. The influence of Galen on Gregory of Nissa *De hominis opificio* (Mercedes López Salvá).
10. Soul in Arnobius of Sicca (Enrique Otón).
11. Christian and Pagan Conflict Revisited: Modern Construction of Latin-Christian Literature (Francisco García Jurado).

VII. Tasks and Abstracts:

1. **José Fernández Ubiña:** “Episcopal Strategies for Solving Conflicts in Early Christianity”

The purpose of this paper is to do research on the resources used by the Christians of the first four centuries in order to resolve their spiritual and disciplinary conflicts. This is an interesting topic because it can show how the Christians of the first centuries were able to reach agreements and to adopt a communitarian, but plural and conflictive life, without coercive methods, disqualifications or generalized excommunications as was frequently found after Constantine’s reforms, i.e., when the privileged situation of the Church made it possible for bishops to resort to coercive means to solve internal disagreements of a strictly religious nature..

2. **Mar Marcos:** “Religious Persuasion and Religious Coercion in the Roman Empire”

As was the situation over the history of the ancient Mediterranean world, a plurality of religious traditions co-existed under the Roman Empire, generally in peaceful terms, before a theoretical discourse over religious freedom had ever been formulated. Religious pluralism and cohabitation changed dramatically with the spread of Christianity. As a monotheistic, exclusivist religion with a universal scope, Christianity was incompatible with traditional, polytheistic religious practices of the Greco-Roman world as well as with the religious demands of the Roman state. Persecutions led to a great deal of apologetic literature, in which the Christians defended themselves from a wide range of accusations; claimed legitimacy and reflected on the need of religious freedom, which Tertullian considered as one of the natural rights of the individual. The Great Persecution of Diocletian originated a further debate over the efficacy and legitimacy of religious coercion and about the advantages of ‘tolerance’, a set of ideas later assumed by Constantine, at least on the theoretical level, in the so-called Edict of Milan and in other documents during his reign.

3. **Juana Torres:** “Rhetoric and Arguments in the Polemic between Christians and Pagans”

Due to the varied conflicts in the early centuries with which the Christian Church had to deal, a wealth of literary activity of a controversial nature was developed, the majority of which has survived. The authors used the literary genre considered by them as the most suitable for refuting ideas and for convincing others. The generic name “controversial literature” includes dialogues, speeches, homilies, treatises and letters.

Since the different genres of controversial literature had in common the aim of persuading someone of something in order to achieve these aims, it was necessary to use rhetoric, defined as “the art of expressing and of persuading”, as well as dialectic or more precisely argument, which provides reasons in defense of an opinion. This project consists in studying those strategies followed by Christian writers in the early centuries to overcome and convince their adversaries, the pagans, making it clear the rhetorical and argumentative resources used in their disputes. In fact, they had inherited the literary genre of controversial

literature from pagan literature; so, they had not created a new genre at all. Its originality is in the selection of arguments and in specific techniques, different from those of their pagan predecessors. Besides highlighting the new literary contributions of Christian controversial literature, we are interested also in pointing out the derivations from classical literature. In short, we are analyzing rhetoric, not in a technical sense but in a much wider sense, as a linguistic tool used by Christian authors to exercise the power of persuasion.

4. **Sofía Torallas Tovar:** “Conflict in Pachomian Monasticism”.

The Council of Chalcedony took place in October 451. Canons were agreed on and the status of Constantinople was established. In the fifth session, the first draft for the Definition affirmed that Christ had two natures: “The two natures are united without change, without division, without confusion in Christ”. 452 bishops signed this definition. The Egyptians knew what would await them back home if they signed the definition. Definitely Chalcedon failed to satisfy the fields in dispute and bring together a consensus, a unitary orthodoxy which would guarantee the stability of the Empire. In this situation, the monophysite movement would take a final shape.

5. **Purificación Ubric:** “Religious Co-existence in Early Christianity”

During the Late Antiquity, persons who shared a similar cultural context but had different religious beliefs co-existed in the same geographical area. This was not always easy as conflicts caused or justified by religious reasons were very common. As a consequence, religious co-existence was a major concern for emperors, religious authorities, and people who lived in the Roman Empire at that time. The main purpose of this study is to reflect on the strategies they applied to maintain religious co-existence and on the impact that these strategies had in society.

6. **Miguel Herrero de Jáuregui:** “Hexametrical Polemics between Pagans and Christians in Late Antiquity”

Epic poetry, the ancient pre-philosophical form of religious revelation, was revived in Late Antiquity after several centuries of decay. Both pagans and Christians, struggling with each other in a fierce cultural debate, came back to hexameter as a tool of expression with apologetic and doctrinal goals. The search for a divine revelation and the revalorization of ancient Greek traditions are the grounds for this reemergence of epic poetry in which central thinkers from both sides like Julian or Gregory of Nazianzus play a fundamental role.

7. **Lawrence Myer:** “Early Christian Incorporation and Reinterpretation of Animal Sacrifice”.

I study instances of animal killing in early Christian ritual. One important example of this phenomenon is found in the writings of the early 5th century bishop, Paulinus of Nola. In one poem, Paulinus speaks with approval of the killing of animals at the tomb of St. Felix. We do not know how widespread this practice was, but it was apparently condoned by some Church authorities. The ritualistic killing of animals in Christianity would have facilitated the process of conversion from other ancient religions that were centered around animal sacrifice. At the same time, in describing these Christian rituals, Church leaders were very careful to distinguish them from “pagan” sacrifice. The ritual killing of animals in the Christian context

is never called “sacrifice” and the animal is not spoken of as a gift to God. Thus, the ritualistic killing of animals in Christianity should not be seen as a simplistic survival of earlier practices.

8. Charles Stang: “The Christian Inheritance of Pagan Theurgy”

Pagan “theurgy” is usually associated with the so-called “Chaldean Oracles,” the traditions of post-Plotinian Neoplatonism and the brief apostate career of the emperor Julian. In the early 6th century, however, an elusive Christian theologian—writing under the name of Paul’s convert from Athens, Dionysius the Areopagite (Acts 17)—rather daringly placed theurgy at the center of his mystical and ecclesiastical theology. This paper investigates the nature and extent of “Pseudo” Dionysius’ reception and transformation of the pagan theurgical tradition. It argues that there is deep continuity between these pagan and Christian theurgies, but that a full understanding of the Dionysian theurgical innovation depends on appreciating his Christological reworking of that tradition, for which he looks to his pseudonymous master, the apostle Paul.

9. Mercedes López Salvá: “The Influence of Galen on Gregory of Nyssa’s *De hominis opificio*”.

In a moment of religious coexistence, Gregory of Nyssa and Basilus the Great used Galen’s concepts and rhetoric to explain man’s creation in their commentary on the *Genesis*. The Cappadocian Fathers, by integrating Greek culture into Christian thought, contributed to the expansion and universality of Christianity. These concepts will be analyzed.

10. Enrique Otón: “Soul in Arnobius of Sicca and Saint Agustin”.

Reflections about development of the concept of soul in Arnobius and Saint Agustin.

11. Francisco García Jurado: “Conflicts between Christians and Pagans Revisited: the modern construction of Latin-Christian literature”.

History is not only the way to study the Antiquity, but a manner to evoke and imagine it. When we study an ancient conflict, we are reflecting also our modern problems and ideas. Antiquity is seen from our own present. The ancient conflicts between Christians and Pagans illustrate this proposal. Modern Literary Historiography has isolated literatures in different national fields, such as Latin or Greek literatures. Since the beginning of Literary Historiography, a question arose about what to do with Latin-Christian Literature. During the 19th century, this Literature became an independent field of study. We shall analyze the ideological and aesthetic reasons for that process.

VIII. Methodology:

The persons of the group will work on his/her paper individually and then each chapter will be discussed among all. We will be always in touch to discuss any problems, issues, ideas during the process of elaboration. We will meet three days per week to discuss the working papers. We are also open to the contributions of other researchers at the Real Colegio Complutense and from Harvard University.

IX Schedule of Activities: Lectures (abstracts):

Wednesday, July 8th: “*Tharsei!* The religious value of epic exhortation to courage” (Miguel Herrero de Jáuregui)

Tharsei! is an epic formula of exhortation to courage which Homer used in the context of confrontation with death. Out of these poetic contexts, the formula acquired a religious value which appears clearly in funerary epigrams, in the rites of some mysteries, in literary texts which echo liturgical sayings, and finally in Jewish and Christian texts. Epic courage was not only adopted in Greek thought as a philosophical virtue, but also as a divine blessing. The ancient poetic formula was, thus, transformed into a ritual utterance to meet death with confidence, from archaic times to Late Antiquity. “*Tharsei*: religious value of epic exhortation to courage”

Wednesday, July, 15th: The Christian Inheritance of Pagan Theurgy” (Charles Stang).

Pagan “theurgy” is usually associated with the so-called “Chaldean Oracles,” the traditions of post-Plotinian Neoplatonism, and the brief apostate career of the emperor Julian. In the early 6th century, however, an elusive Christian theologian—writing under the name of Paul’s convert from Athens, Dionysius the Areopagite (Acts 17)—rather daringly placed theurgy at the center of his mystical and ecclesiastical theology. This paper investigates the nature and extent of “Pseudo” Dionysius’ reception and transformation of the pagan theurgical tradition. It argues that there is a deep continuity between these pagan and Christian theurgies, but that a full understanding of the Dionysian theurgical innovation depends on appreciating the Christological reworking of that tradition, for which it looks to its pseudonymous master, the apostle Paul.

Monday, July, 20: “From Christianity to Paganism: Emperor Julian’s Attitude to Religious Coercion” (Mar Marcos).

Emperor Julian’s religious policy was controversial in his time and it continued to be for several generations afterwards. Many pagans considered it to be excessive; while the Christians perceived it as a persecution. The aim of this paper is to revise the commonly assumed idea that Julian was an intolerant emperor. Julian’s attitude to religious coercion as expressed in his writings, trying to establish a link between Julian’s ideas on religious freedom, persuasion and coercion and the arguments in favor of religious tolerance developed by Christian apologists from the Second to the beginning of the 4th century during the time of persecution will be analyzed.

Monday, July 27th: “Conflicts between Christians and Pagans Revisited: the modern construction of Latin-Christian literature” (Francisco García Jurado).

During the 19th century, Latin-Christian Literature became an independent field of study. We shall analyze the ideological and aesthetic reasons for that process.

Wednesday, July 29th: “La longa via” (Enrique Otón).

Man’s journey: from the knowledge of himself to spiritual experience. Two examples - Apuleyo and Saint Agustin – will be examined.

Wednesday, August, 5th: Wednesday, August, 5th: “Antimartirial Rhetoric: Emperor Julian and the Cult of Relics” (Juana Torres).

In this paper, I will study Emperor Julian’s criticism of the Christian martyr’s cult. In his program of religious reform, Julian tried to re-establish Hellenism, promoting the revival of pagan rites and cults and discrediting Christianity. Julian’s passionate attack on the cult of the martyrs in his writings was instrumental to this strategy.

Monday, August 10th: “Early Christian Representation of Pagan Animal Sacrifice” (Lawrence Myer).

One important example of this phenomenon is found in the writings of the early 5th century bishop, Paulinus of Nola. In one poem, Paulinus speaks with approval of the killing of animals at the tomb of St. Felix. We do not know how widespread this practice was, but it was apparently condoned by some Church authorities. The ritualistic killing of animals in Christianity would have facilitated the process of conversion from other ancient religions that were centered around animal sacrifice. At the same time, in describing these Christian rituals, church leaders were very careful to distinguish them from “pagan” sacrifice.

Wednesday, August, 12: “The Pagan Background to the Council of Iliberris” (José Fernández Ubiña)

Although the precise date of the Council of Iliberris (modern Granada, Spain) has been debated for centuries, most of its 81 canons probably belong to the beginning of the fourth century. Drawing on these canons, I would like to focus on two subjects: first, the Council of Elvira as seen by classical and ecclesiastical historiography. With that I intend to show to what extent historical research has simply projected onto the past the religious ideas of modern times. And secondly I would like to discuss whether Christianity involved a break with paganism or if it was instead the more suitable religion for the survival of the Roman Empire during the turbulent centuries of Late Antiquity.

Monday, August, 17th: (Sofía Torallas Tovar)

“Hell as a mean of coercion in Shenoute”. Shenoute was one of the most important monastic founders in 4th, 5th century Egypt as well as one of the most important authors of Coptic literature. His corpus, recently re-established and now under the process of edition by an international team, is an extremely useful source for understanding the early communities and the way they worked. The use of the threat of going to Hell is a common occurrence in Shenoute’s writings. I will study the context of these threats and the meaning it acquired in his discourses and canons in the light of early monastic literature in general. Some case studies of threats of hell aimed at directing monks will be investigated..

Wednesday, August 19th: “Religious Co-existence Strategies in Late Antiquity” (Purificación Ubric).

During the Late Antiquity, persons who shared a similar cultural context but had different religious beliefs co-existed in the same geographical area and this was not always easy. Conflicts caused or justified by religious reasons were very common. As a consequence, religious co-existence was a major concern for society, emperors and religious authorities. Which strategies did they apply to maintain religious co-existence? What impacts did these strategies have in society? Were they just “theory” or did they have a practical application?

These and other questions related to religious co-existence will be the main focus of this lecture.

Wednesday, August 26th: “The Concept of Deification in Ancient Christianity”. (Mercedes López Salvá).

The Christian concept of deification has its background in Plato, the orphics and the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman world. How the Church Fathers applied this concept to their own doctrines will be reviewed.

X. Expected Results:

We expect to find some keys to understand the dynamics of religious and moral conflicts: how they arise and are removed, and to understand the switch from tolerance to intolerance and from intolerance to co-existence in a plural world very different and also very similar to our world of today. With some case studies of co-existence through Christian integration of pagan practices and concepts, we expect also to show how cultural and philosophical Greek Paganism gave Christianity tools to expand as an universal religion throughout the Greco-Roman world.

XI. Seminars and workshops:

Mondays at 6 PM

Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10 AM

Public talks: Wednesdays at 6 PM

XII. Dates:

July 1 to August 30, 2009.

XIII. Basic Bibliography

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- P. Badham, *Christian Beliefs about Life after Death*, Londres 1976.
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- -L. Cracco Ruggini, “Pagani, ebrei e cristiani: Odio sociológico e odio teológico nel mondo antico”, en *XXVI Settimane di Studio del centro italiano di studi sull’Alto Medioevo*, vol. 1, 1980, pp. 13-117.
- -L. Cracco Ruggini, “Intolerance: equal and less equal in the Roman World”, *Classical Philology* 82 (1987) 187-205.
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- -T. Donaldson, *Religious Rivalries and the Struggle for Success in Caesarea Marítima*, Waterloo (Ont) 2000.
- -H.A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops. The Politics of Intolerance*, Baltimore-Londres 2000.-
- -H.A. Drake (ed.), *Violence in Late Antiquity. Perception and Practices*, Santa Barbara 2006.
- -R. Edmonds, *Myths of the Underworld Journey: Plato, Aristophanes and the “Orphic” Gold Tablets*, Cambridge 2004.
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