

Translating Christianity

*Word, image, sound and object in the circulation of the sacred
from the birth of Christ to the present day*

**Ecclesiastical History Society
Summer Conference
University of York, 28-30 July 2015**

Plenary speakers

Simon Ditchfield (York), *President*

James Grayson (Sheffield)

Anne Lester (Colorado)

Joan-Pau Rubiés (Barcelona)

**Proposals of c. 200 words
are to be sent to Dr Tim
Grass by 15 November
2014 (early applications)
or 15 April 2015 (deadline)
tgrass.work@gmail.com**

For the full Call for Papers see
www.history.ac.uk/ehsoc/conferences

Gustave Doré, 'The Confusion of Tongues' or 'Babel', c. 1866

Ecclesiastical History Society 2015-16

28-30 July 2015: Summer Conference – Humanities Research Centre, University of York

16 January 2016: Winter Meeting – Dr Williams's Library (T.B.C.), London

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***Word, Image, Sound & Object in the Circulation of the Sacred
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'Translation is always a shift not between two languages but between two cultures'
Umberto Eco

Christianity today is a religion of over 2,000 language groups. Moreover, more people pray and worship in more languages in Christianity than in any other religion and it has been the impulse behind the creation of more dictionaries and grammars of the world's languages than any other force in history. Behind this lies the fact that Christianity is a translated religion without a revealed language. Translation is its second nature: 'the Church's birthmark as well as its missionary benchmark', in the words of Lamin Sanneh. The transformation of Christianity into a world faith is the direct result of 'the triumph of its translatability'.

However, Christianity is also a translated religion in a very different sense. For much of its history (and in the majority of its variants), its ritual practice has been predicated upon the translation of material objects - relics. Their movement in time and space has traced shifting lines of power and influence in illuminating ways, as well as making a significant contribution to the eventual global spread of Christianity.

In turn, missions have been the spur to what, cumulatively speaking, must be the greatest campaign of cultural translation (and description) ever attempted, which even its not infrequent blunders and tragic misunderstandings cannot gainsay. Finally, translation can be understood not only linguistically and physically but also metaphorically, as in the case of the handing on of authority from one place or person to another. This theme and plenary speakers have therefore been chosen with the intention that they might encourage papers which address the issues raised by, among other things:

- ❖ the challenge of translating or editing scripture, catechisms and related literature from one language to another (to be sung and spoken as well as read)
- ❖ the quest for linguistic common ground (by means, for example, of 'Jesuit Slovak' or of other so-called 'general languages' such as Quechua in Latin America)
- ❖ relics (their discovery, identification, transportation, collection, display and reception)
- ❖ the translation of the Christian message as shaped and impacted by various media: from papyrus to the pdf via print and the print/woodcut as well as painting, sculpture and architecture
- ❖ missionary narratives as history, hagiography and ethnography
- ❖ the challenges of attempting religious dialogue and mediation
- ❖ the construction (and deconstruction) of textual canons
- ❖ the emergence and practice of vernacular worship.

Confirmed plenary speakers to date:

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| Summer Conference: | Simon Ditchfield (York); James Grayson (Sheffield, emeritus); Anne Lester (Colorado at Boulder); Joan-Pau Rubiés (ICREA, Barcelona) |
| Winter Meeting: | Joel Cabrita (Cambridge) |