

Religious Conversions: Then and Now

Call for Papers (CFP)

We invite you to submit proposals for the 6th annual international conference of the **Center for the Study of Conversions and Inter-Religious Encounters (CSoC)**, entitled:

Religious Conversions: Then and Now

The conference will take place at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (Beer-Sheba, Israel), **May 28th-31st 2018**.

In past conferences held at CSOC, religious conversions (whether individual or collective, voluntary or forced) and inter-religious encounters (harmonious or polemical) were analyzed in specific historical contexts and circumstances. In this 6th International conference we seek to explore both phenomena from explicit and implicit comparative perspectives. Our attempt is to emphasize analogies between different religions in similar and different spacial and temporal settings attempting to identify internal transformations within each of the three Abrahamic faiths and cultures regarding conversion and inter-religious encounters. Among the topics we envision as interesting for comparative discussion in different sessions are:

- Conversion and universalism
- Conversion and bio-politics / ethno geo-politics
- Gender and conversion
- Manifestations of resistance to conversion and backsliding
- Legal aspects and implications of conversion
- Interfaith couples - Mixed marriages and conversion – how does the nuclear family respond to a mixed religious message;
- How conversion was conceptualized in the past and today;
- Acculturation, Syncretism and Cultural Hybridity
- Conversion and Society
- Techniques / technologies of conversion (“from the pulpit to paypal” and from religious texts to text messaging)
- Ruth, Paul and Muhammad – changing perceptions of three scriptural figures who are perceived as having undergone conversion and inter-religious encounters over time

We do not expect all lectures to be comparative; we are expecting scholars to be open to such a discussion within the same session in an attempt to better understand discrepancies between the different religions and within the same religion over time. The comparative dimension of the conference will be also stressed by juxtaposing different topics in single sessions, or similar topics along a historical timeline commented and debated by respondents and participants. Some of the following

overarching questions will be at the center of the discussion we envision for the conference:

- Can past conversions and religious encounters help understand contemporary conversions and religious encounters and vice-versa?
- Is it possible to address a common phenomenology of conversion, or should each religion be studied separately endorsing idiosyncratic patterns of religious change?
- When facing a highly variegated and evolving phenomenon, is it possible that religious conversion, as a moment or even process denoting a radical change, has too many contingent factors to make it a useful category for examining the past and the present?

Historians of Judaism, Christianity and Islam of different periods and geographic locations, political scientists, anthropologists, sociologists, theologians, scholars of comparative religions, literatures and cultures are welcomed to apply. We expect talks **not to exceed 20-25 minutes** as we wish to have a respondent in every session.

The timetable we envision is as follows:

Deadline for sending titles and brief abstracts: January 15th 2018

Acceptance notes: February 15th 2018.

Finalizing panels and list of participants: March 15th 2018

Send lecture to respondent and accompanying materials: April 15th 2018.

Please send your title and abstract to Bat-el Gozlan: hirik@bgu.ac.il