

Talmud and Christianity: Rabbinic Judaism after Constantine

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Organizers:

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This international conference will bring together leading and fresh voices in Talmudic studies and select experts in Roman and Persian Christianity in order to explore the complex relationship of both emulation and enmity between the rabbis and their Christian neighbours. A new look at the Talmud and Christianity, moreover, will synergize three of the most central developments in the study of rabbinic Judaism: our more precise understanding of the indebtedness of the Babylonian to the Palestinian Talmud; our growing sense of the editorial artistry that gave both Talmudim their present form; and a better understanding how closely both Talmudim respectively reflect the early Byzantine and Sasanian culture in which they evolved.

The conference aims to further scholarly collaboration within Europe and beyond. The time is right for a synthesizing and collaborative event enabling scholars to come together in order to assess and draw attention to relations between the Talmudic texts and the surrounding Christian culture, textuality, and theology. In broader scholarship on Late Antiquity, increasing attention has been given to cultural context and literary interactions. This conference will enable a 'returning of the gaze', illuminating important new elements of Jewish/Christian relations as well as of classical rabbinic Judaism itself. Its goal is to work towards a new understanding of how to read rabbinic Judaism with an emphasis on the Christian elements of the rabbis' Palestinian and Sasanian context.

The conference will consist of four parts, dedicated to exploring various aspects of the complex subject matter. Each part will consist of four papers twenty minute papers, summarizing the written version for all present and leaving twenty minutes for discussion of each paper. The first part will seek to reevaluate how the Palestinian Talmud (along with the Amoraic Midrashim) reflects the Christianization of the Roman Empire from both a cultural and political point of view. The second part will focus on the encounter between the rabbis of the Babylonian rabbis and their Persian Christian neighbours. The third part will focus on how the Babylonian Talmud, in reworking of Palestinian Talmudic traditions,

adopts and adapts Palestinian rabbinic responses to Christianity to fit its own Persian Christian context. The fourth and final part will consist of papers seeking to formulate a new synthesis on how the rabbis relate to Christianity, and what this can tell us about rabbinic culture as a whole. This session will be dedicated to formulating what its Christian context can tell us about rabbinic Judaism, what implications our historical insights may have for Jewish/Christian relations, and how to continue an assessment of these questions collaboratively.