

Call for Papers for a Postgraduate Workshop:

Intellectual Interaction Between Paganism and Christianity

It is a truism to call the Late Antique world a Christian world. The imperial families became Christian and so eventually did most of the imperial elite and also step by step most of the inhabitants of the empire. One could say Constantine's embracing of Christianity was a turning point that led from a pagan to a Christian world. Yet the *Lebenswelt* of the average Late Antique person was far from being Christianised in a total sense of the word. On the contrary, the remains of centuries of pagan culture were present in every part of everyday life. Of course, pagans did not suddenly disappear but for a long time constituted a significant part of the inhabitants of the empire. This pagan presence challenged, provoked or inspired intellectual interaction with it. In most cases it could not simply be ignored. The ways that Christian authors dealt with it were very different: Assimilation, condemnation or reinterpretation are among the most common approaches. But some authors might not even have considered the dichotomy to be problematic, and thus engaged with paganism in a casual manner even though this (at least for our conceptions) was not in accordance with their public function.

Within the scope of this postgraduate workshop we ask you to present thoughts and cases on those intellectual interactions. PhD students and recent PhD holders from all fields that study the Imperial Roman Era and Late Antiquity are welcome to apply. Chances are that you have been confronted with these discourses in your texts as well while working on your dissertation. We encourage you to send in short proposals for case-study oriented presentations (20-30 minutes) on this topic. Every presentation will be followed by a discussion on the presented case among early-career peers that will lead to a broader understanding of this complex phenomenon. Guiding questions can include but are not limited to: How and why did certain authors engage with elements of pagan culture? Were certain parts of pagan culture more likely to be embraced or rejected as part of one's background? What was considered specifically pagan by Christians? And how did pagan authors for their part react to the rise of Christianity? How did the political or social background of our authors shape their view of the dichotomy? Is the outlined dichotomy still fruitful for analysing and interpreting Late Antique sources or is it a careless simplification that does not reflect the *Lebenswelt* of some of our sources?

A proposal can be sent until the 31.03.26 to Gregor Kirilov (gkirilov@uni-bonn.de) or Jacob Bernitzki (jbernitz@uni-bonn.de). It should not exceed 500 words and must be (like the presentation itself) in English. The workshop itself will be held on the 26th and 27th of June at the University of Bonn. Further information about scheduling will be sent to all participants after the evaluation of the proposals. We aim to secure additional funding to cover travel expenses and accommodation but applicants are strongly encouraged to seek compensation from their home university.