

I am pleased to be able to announce that a conference will be held this summer that looks to be outrageously fun and interesting. It will be at King's College, London. And it will be on the *Life of Brian* and the Historical Jesus. I have been asked to give one of the papers, and how could I refuse! I'm going to have to cut short a family vacation in France, but there's no way I'm missing this. Here's the publicity for it.

Jesus and Brian



**Or: What have the Pythons done for Us?
A Biblical Studies Conference
King's College London, The Strand, London WC1
Safra Lecture Theatre**

Friday June 20th to Sunday June 22nd, 2014

Monty Python's Life of Brian provoked a furious response in some quarters when it first appeared in 1979, even leading to cries of 'blasphemy'. However, many students and teachers of biblical literature were quietly, and often loudly, both amused and intrigued. *Life of Brian* in fact contains numerous references to what was then the cutting edge of biblical scholarship and *Life of Jesus* research, founded on the recognition of the historical Jesus as a Jew who needs to be understood within the context of his time. Implicitly, in setting 'Brian' within the tumultuous social and political background of his age, *Life of Brian* sets Jesus within it also. It assumes the audience has some knowledge of the gospel accounts, which directly inform the comedy.

Ever since Philip Davies first wrote on the film 15 years ago, other scholars too have turned their gaze to consider exactly what *Life of Brian* does in regard to Jesus scholarship, and have increasingly delved into its curious corners to reflect on what it says both about the tumultuous times of Jesus and also contemporary scholarly discussions. Biblical scholarship has moved on greatly in the past 25 years, and various aspects of *Life of Brian* correlate with themes now intensely explored. Every Bible scholar knows what 'blessed are the cheese-makers' means among us!

This conference opens up *Life of Brian* to renewed investigation, using it in an innovative way to sharpen our view. Papers presented by some of the world's most eminent biblical scholars and historians will discuss the film's relevance to history, biblical studies and *Life of Jesus* research (see below). There will be discussion of the socio-political context and Josephus; costuming and setting; and other topics. The aim is to use the film to reflect on history, interpretation and meaning, as a tool that can help us consider our assumptions and the historical evidence: a 'reception exegesis' approach. There will be a book produced with selected conference papers, with a publication date of mid-2015.

It is also a celebration of a British movie masterpiece. Photo used, *The Life of Brian* © 1979 - Sony Pictures.

Confirmed Speakers:

Dr. Helen Bond, University of Edinburgh

'You'll probably get away with Crucifixion': How Brian (and Jesus) ended up on a Roman Cross'

Prof. George Brooke, Manchester University

'Brian as a Teacher of Righteousness'

Prof. Richard Burridge, King's College London

"The Church of England's *Life of Python* - or what the Bishop saw"

Prof. James Crossley, University of Sheffield

'Monty Python's Life of Jesus'

Prof. Philip Davies, University of Sheffield

'Monty Python's Life of Jesus'

Prof. Bart Ehrman, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

'The *Life of Brian* and the Apocalyptic Jesus'

Prof. Paula Fredriksen, Boston University

' "Are You a Virgin?": Biblical Exegesis and the Invention of Tradition'

Prof. Martin Goodman, Oxford University

'The *Life of Brian* and the Politics of First-Century Judaea'

Prof. Amy-Jill Levine, Vanderbilt University,

'Brian, Gender and Sexuality'

Prof. Steve Mason, University of St. Andrews

'What Have the Romans Ever Done for Us?' *Brian* and Josephus on Anti-Roman Sentiment'

Dr. Aaron Rosen, King's College London,

'Laughing at Brian, Laughing at Christ: Some Reflections on Film and Modern Art'

Prof. Joan E. Taylor, King's College London,

'The Historical Brian'

Dr Bill Telford, Durham University

'*Monty Python's Life of Brian* and the Jesus Film'

Dr. David Tollerton, University of Exeter

'Blasphemy!' On Free Speech Then and Now

Costs:

- *Conference registration fee: £180; students/unwaged £90*
- *Day tickets may be available.*
- *Conference dinner: £65*
- *Strictly limited participation (220 places only). Early booking is essential. Participants will be responsible for finding their own accommodation in central London, for further information on local hotels, click here.*
- *Bookings will open electronically in November 2013.*

- Tickets are available from [HERE](#)

Conference Schedule

Friday, 20th June, 2014

From 4 pm, arrivals and registrations, King's College London, Strand, entrance foyer

Safra Lecture Theatre, Ground Floor, King's Building, Strand

4.30-5 pm : Welcome and introduction: Prof. Joan E. Taylor, 'The Historical Brian'

Session 1: Chair: Joan Taylor

5.00-5.45 pm : Prof. Martin Goodman, 'The *Life of Brian* and the Politics of First-Century Judaea'

5.45-6.30 pm : Prof. George Brooke, 'Brian as a Teacher of Righteousness'

6.30 pm : *Chapters, First Floor, King's Building, Strand* Reception and welcome from Prof. Rick Trainor, Principal of King's College London.

7.30 pm : Panel discussion with Mystery Guests, hosted by Prof. Richard Burridge, Dean and Prof. of Biblical Interpretation, King's College London, followed by screening of *Monty Python's Life of Brian* (93 mins)

Saturday, 21st June, 2014

Safra Lecture Theatre, Ground Floor, King's Building

Session 2: Chair: Aaron Rosen

10 am-10.45 am : Prof. Bill Telford, '*Monty Python's Life of Brian* and the Jesus Film'

10.45-11.15 am : Prof. Philip Davies and Prof. James Crossley, 'Monty Python's Life of Jesus'

11.15-11.45 : Morning coffee

Session 3: Chair: Jonathan Stökl

11.45-12.30 : Dr. Helen Bond, 'You'll probably get away with Crucifixion': How Brian (and Jesus) ended up on a Roman Cross'

12.30-1 pm : Dr. Aaron Rosen, 'Laughing at Brian, Laughing at Christ: Some Reflections on Film and Modern Art'

1 pm -2.30 pm : Lunch

Session 4: Chair : Edward Adams

2.30 pm-3.15 pm : Prof. Steve Mason, 'What Have the Romans Ever Done for Us?' *Brian* and Josephus on Anti-Roman Sentiment'

3.15-4.00 pm : Prof. Paula Fredriksen, ' "Are You a Virgin?": Biblical Exegesis and the Invention of Tradition'

4.00-4.30 pm : Afternoon tea

Session 5 : Chair: Joan Taylor

4.30-5.15 pm : TBA

7.30 pm : Conference reception and dinner at the Hall at Inner Temple, London, hosted by Rev. Robin Griffith-Jones, Master of Temple Church, with Mystery Guests

Sunday, 22nd June, 2014

Safra Lecture Theatre, Ground Floor, King's Building

Session 6. Chair: Prof. Ben Quash

10 - 10.30 am : Katie Turner, 'The Costuming of the *Life of Brian* and the Clothing of First-Century Judaeans'

10.30-11.15 am : Prof. Bart Ehrman, *The Life of Brian* and the Apocalyptic Jesus'

11.15-11.45 am : Morning tea

Session 7: Chair: Prof. Paul Joyce

11.45 - 12.30 noon : Prof. Richard Burridge, The Church of England's *Life of Python* - or what the Bishop saw

12.30-2 pm : Lunch

Session 8: Chair: Rev. Robin Griffith-Jones

2.00 - 2.45 pm : Dr. David Tollerton, Blasphemy! On Free Speech Then and Now

2.45-3.30 pm : Prof. Amy-Jill Levine, 'Brian, Gender and Sexuality'

3.30-4.00 pm : afternoon tea

4.00 - 5.00 pm : End of conference wrap up and speeches

Organizing Team

Conference Organizer:

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