

## Call for Papers

### Colloquium

### "Translating God"

Friday, 5 May 2017

Hosted by the *Translating Christianities* Research Group,  
Literature and Languages,  
Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Stirling

When faced with the spread of Christianity into a non-Christian culture, the translator faces obvious difficulties: the expression of abstract religious concepts presents a range of problems which have always preoccupied philosophers and theologians. We may think for example of the spread of Christianity in medieval Europe, or of the Spanish Jesuits in Peru attempting to convert the indigenous peoples. How are concepts firmly enshrined in written form in an original language (Hebrew, Greek or Latin) or later in a mediating language (like Spanish in South America) to be transferred comprehensibly into the languages and hence the minds of the converted?

The 'translation of God' also reflects power-relations which are revealed in the imposition of new ideologies across Europe, by medieval and renaissance rulers, in the contexts of the British, Iberian or other empires, or even in more recent times. Things may be especially difficult when there is contact between missionary Christianity and an already well-established and complex religious system, as in India, China or the native Americas.

We would like to examine how God is translated, how the idea of the supreme being is rendered in another language and culture, or that of other spiritual concepts such as Holy Ghost. The Trinity, the Virgin as mother of Jesus and the idea of the Immaculate Conception, or of the saving Christ, and indeed the whole area of angels and devils (or the Devil) are parts of the same problem, as all these concepts are translated into different languages and registers.

In all cases the target culture will already have a concept of the supernatural, but how does the missionary or theologian make sure that everyone is eventually talking about the same thing? Who are the translators and what is their agenda? What exactly are their working texts and how reliable are they? Which methods do they use to reformulate Christian terms and their meanings in the languages of the other(s)? And to what extent can we gauge how the recipients (might have) understood or reacted? How can the outcomes be interpreted - as syncretism, fusion or hybridity, as parallelism or convergence?

We invite papers of 15-20 minutes (plus discussion) on aspects of these questions; the results will be summarised in a roundtable session.

Organisers: Sabine Dedenbach-Salazar; Brian Murdoch; Stephen Penn

**Abstracts of 150 words, to be received by 20 February 2017.**

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