

The Northern Universities PGR Biblical Studies Conference was held on Friday, 12 May 2017 at the University of Manchester. This conference began between the Universities of Manchester, Durham, and Sheffield a couple of years ago. It is held annually in the Spring and hosting is alternated between participating institutions. This year we invited participants from Liverpool and Chester as well. A postgraduate student from the host institution typically organises the conference with assistance from peers. This year PhD student Justin Daneshmand was appointed as the organiser. Papers were welcomed in a variety of areas, including Biblical Studies, Reception of the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Early Christianity, Early Judaism, and Biblical Archaeology. We accepted papers reasonably relevant to the conference theme offering exposure to interdisciplinary research from across the humanities. Postgraduate students presented 15 minute research papers followed by 10 minutes of Q&A. At the morning check-in we provided catered coffee, tea, and biscuits from Kro Catering. After a morning of presentations, a catered lunch was provided followed with a plenary lecture by Dr. Peter Oakes (Greenwood Senior Lecturer in New Testament at the University of Manchester) on 'faith' in Galatians. Presentations continued into the afternoon.

This conference provided postgraduates a rewarding opportunity to participate amongst peers in a professional academic setting, gaining experience and receiving feedback on their research whilst promoting their departments and universities. The opportunities afforded by this conference provided students invaluable experience, shared knowledge, and professional skills at this critical stage in their training and development which ultimately benefits their careers. The invitation of other northern universities created social networking opportunities for postgraduates not only to meet peers and scholars within their disciplines, but also to gain critical feedback on presented research. Participants were exposed to various research methods and approaches whilst presenting on their own. This allowed for students not only to test and hone their research, but also to consider new possibilities of applying and integrating methods.

Additionally, the postgraduate organiser and assisting colleagues learned a great deal from taking on leadership roles. This organising responsibility required the postgraduates to engage in administrative planning, involving navigating obstacles, which demanded problem solving or decision making, and securing necessary resources and funding. The organisers experienced the necessities of collaboration, networking, dissemination of information, and proper time management which were required to create and carry out a successful and professional academic conference.

We are grateful to Artsmethods for awarding the necessary funding for this conference. The generous award proved sufficient for a beautifully catered morning and lunch. Participants from longer distances were able to attend and participate thanks to the travel reimbursement assistance from Artsmethods. Participants and visitors have expressed their praise and gratitude for the conference and for the hospitality of the University of Manchester. We certainly look forward to hosting again in due time and to the generous support of Artsmethods!