

# The Epistle to the Hebrews as a Frontier/Border Writing

LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE (BELGIUM), APRIL 7<sup>TH</sup>-9<sup>TH</sup> 2014

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews produces a “border writing”. Situated at the border between the pagan and Jewish intellectual worlds, the author claims to stand “in these last days” (Heb 1:2), when the old realities he describes as *skia*, shadow, will be fulfilled in the new world. This may explain why it was somewhat ignored among the texts of the New Testament. He also thinks of himself as a pioneer. He initiates the use of typology and defines the Christian life as a “frontier” life in which, like the patriarchs, we are required to live as “strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb 11:13). His writing itself stands at the boundaries of the canon; it only slowly gained acceptance among the books received.

This conference will explore the concepts of border, boundary, and frontier related to Hebrews, not only in the letter itself, but also in its reception.

The meeting will first focus on the definition of Hebrews as a text at the confluence of various cultural worlds: Elaborated in the Diaspora, can the letter/sermon be characterized as a middle course between a so-called “Jewish world” and a so-called “pagan world”? Within the Jewish cultural world, did it really hold a marginal position? Is its nuanced attitude toward the priesthood and the Temple the first step outside Judaism, as it has long been claimed?

Then, we will consider the history of reception. Why did Hebrews stand so long at the boundaries of the canon? How did the Church Fathers and later theologians receive the writing? Today it seems less known and less used than Paul’s letters or the Gospels. Was it always “at the margin”? And what can we say today of the situation of foreigners and pilgrims that the letter assigns to Christians?

This interdisciplinary conference welcomes contributions from biblical scholars, patrologists, historians, theologians, liturgists or other researchers interested in the Letter to the Hebrews. Free communications sessions are organized for young researchers. Contributions may be made in English or French.

*Scientific Committee:* Raimund Bieringer (KU Leuven), Régis Burnet (UCL), Didier Luciani (UCL), Peter Tomson (University Faculty of Protestant Theology), Geert van Oyen (UCL)

*Organization and contact:* Régis Burnet ([regis.burnet@uclouvain.be](mailto:regis.burnet@uclouvain.be))