

CALL FOR PAPERS

Writing Religion in Early-Modern and Enlightenment Europe
An international conference on religious letters and correspondence

Friday 19th June – Saturday 20th June 2009

Institut de Recherches sur la Renaissance, L'Âge Classique et les Lumières (CNRS, UMR 5186)

University of Montpellier, France

In centuries profoundly marked by intense discussion of religious doctrine, putting one's name to anything could be a hazardous undertaking. The dispatch of a letter, in particular, could be an especially dangerous indiscretion ; entrusted to a carrier, it left the safety of the author's protection and was vulnerable to interception or misrepresentation, serving as a mute witness to what was construed as (and may indeed have been) deception, treachery or heresy. Often expressing personal commitments that questioned, contradicted or even ridiculed the official positions of governments and churches, letters were often poised uneasily between the public and the private domain. Many different motives were involved in their dispatch.

Letters are therefore key documents for the study of religious communication, feeling and piety in Early-Modern and Enlightenment Europe. This conference will examine epistolary writing from c. 1600-1800, focusing on correspondence in which the writers explore their religious commitments and doubts, and investigating the way letters served as the principal means of communication between the members of the clergy and believers, and between believers and the Churches.

Papers in the following areas are particularly welcome :

- the nature of letters : pastoral letters, prison letters, patent letters, mission letters, scientific letters, public, private or fictional correspondence.
- relationships between writers : letters between Churches, letters from ministers to their flocks, letters from the ecclesiastical hierarchy (either papal, episcopal, synodal) to the clergy, religious correspondence between believers.

- the role of the letters : daily communication about the affairs of the Church, spiritual counsel, cases of conscience, questions of discipline, letters as testimonies to private conversion, letters as vehicle for religious orthodoxy and heterodoxy.
- the epistolary models : Pauline writings, Classical, Patristic and Reformed models
- the circulation of manuscript letters in Europe.
- the transmission of the letters by private agents, traders, hawkers.
- censorship : spying and the interception of letters, strategies to avoid censorship such as codes and ciphers.
- the passage from script to print : the cultural intermediaries, the role of the book-trade, the translation of letters, the change of contents between manuscript and printed text.
- the status of « silence » : the interruption of correspondence.
- challenges for the scholar : how to study religious correspondence in Early-Modern and Enlightenment Europe.

Proposals for 30-minute papers (in English or French) should be sent **before 30th June 2008**

to the conveners :

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Selected contributors will be notified by 30th September 2008.