

The Bible in the Management of Material Life in Christian Societies (4th-16th Centuries) | BibGes

Call for Papers
(workshops and congress,
December, 2026 – June, 2027)
Deadline : August 25, 2026
Arras, Lyon, Grenoble



The question of the role a society assigns to a sacred text within its organisation has gained increasing prominence, as evidenced by debates on secularism in France and, more recently, the biblical rhetoric employed by Donald Trump and Peter Thiel in the United States. However, the history of the **Bible's appropriation**—often examined through inventories of rhetorical appeals or 'uses' of the Holy Scriptures in ideological contexts—has been studied primarily within the frameworks of religious or cultural history, rather than through the lens of a social history economic history, which examines concrete practices and normative frameworks¹. To address the broader question of the social effects of a sacred text—a question to which we seek to draw attention—, *The Bible and the Management of Material Life in Christian Societies (4th-16th Century) Project* | BibGes aims to explore one of its key dimensions.

Project Objective: The BibGes project aims to define **the role that both clergy and laity assign to the Holy Scriptures (as text) and the Bible (as artifact) in their management of material life**. In other words, it seeks to determine how the appropriation of the Bible **influences the administration and transmission of estate, goods and rights within communities or families**—whether in the normative or doctrinal conceptions related to these practices, in their concrete implementation, or in their representations.

Methodological Approach: BibGes builds on existing research focused on the uses of the Bible, the relationship between theological and economic developments, and the literate mentality. However, it introduces two key shifts in perspective. First, it focuses specifically on the interplay between the Bible and the management of estate, goods and rights. Second, it **prioritizes the study of praxis as much as doxa**ⁱⁱ—that is, concrete practices alongside doctrinal or ideological frameworks. This call for papers is open to historians, archaeologists, and art historians—both medievalists and early modernists—regardless of prior expertise in biblical studies. We welcome contributions that explore the economic, legal, and practical dimensions of biblical influence in these periods.

Scope of Study : BibGes examines the various Christian communities from their initial organisation in the 4th c. to one of the pivotal moment of division with the Protestant Reformation in the 16th c. By considering Byzantine, Latin, Coptic, and Ethiopian contexts, we aim to explore how the Bible was appropriated within diverse sociopolitical framework. The variations—and even contrasts—that emerge from these case studies will deepen our understanding of the historical processes through which different Christian groups socially appropriated their Holy Book.

Historiographical Approach: This project also seeks to strengthen a historiographical current that moves beyond the academic segmentation often applied to the study of these distinct communities. From the

4th to the 16th c., the fluidity of practices and conceptions among the various Christian traditions was, in fact, far greater than previously assumedⁱⁱⁱ.

Structure of the Collective Inquiry: First, two workshops will be dedicated to the BibGes theme, scheduled for **December 9–10, 2026 (Lyon); and March 2027 (Grenoble)**. **This call for papers aims to their organization. They are designed as an initial exploratory phase, which precise themes will be determined by the proposals received.** The second phase of BibGes will involve organizing a **concluding conference in June 2027 (Arras)**. The third and final phase will be the publication of a **collective volume**, whose structure and chapters will draw on the discussions held during the workshops and the conference. The publication proposal will be submitted to academic publishers in **September 2027**.

Workshop Objectives: As these meetings will lay the groundwork for BibGes, they will be structured around the following questions: In what actions do clergy and laity articulate the Bible with the management of their material lives? What types of discourse, representations, or norms underpin these actions, and in which milieus are they produced or circulated? They will focus on identifying and conducting a preliminary analysis of *ad hoc* documents—documents that appears to be as **interfaces** between the Bible and the management of assets, goods and rights. These documents must demonstrate an articulation between:

- On the one hand, the Bible:

- o In its textual form: —not merely as a semantic universe, but as concrete textual engagement: quotations from Scripture; (re)oralization in liturgical contexts; micro- or macro-exegetical forms; dramatizations or teachings of Scripture; and so on— ; OR ...
- o In its material form —as an artifact: Bibles, liturgical books, copies of exegetical commentaries, homilies or sermons structured by Scripture, iconographic representations, or textual references to these books— ;

- And, on the other hand, the management of property and assets—whether in the form of theoretical reflection or practical administration concerning goods, rights, and individuals.

Documents may be textual, iconographic, or material in nature.

Presentations will last approximately 30 minutes and will be held in person, in a roundtable format, adopting the flexible framework of a "work in progress". The goal is to clarify the potential of a specific type of source, documentary corpus, or case study in relation to the heuristic objectives of BibGes. Therefore, the discussions on these interfaces will aim to: Assess their quantitative and qualitative significance by situating them within the broader context of known practices and thought in the field of economic management; Historicize the appropriation of the Holy Book, its actors (considering gender, status, etc.), its contexts, and its social parameters; Compare practices across different Christian communities; And so forth.

To allow ourselves exploratory work, attendance will be limited to students (for educational purposes) and researchers who have expressed interest in contributing to the project. Members of the scientific committee of BibGes (see below) will also participate in the discussions, either in person or online.

For reference, the following interfaces 'BibGes' have been integrated into the program through preliminary studies; nonetheless, we encourage interested researchers to submit proposals that may overlap with these examples:

- Iberian charters (11th–13th c.) quoting the Bible;
- Iberian liturgical manuscripts containing copies of charters and administrative letters;
- Ethiopian Gospels (15th–16th c.) containing copies of archival documents;
- Carolingian treatises on royal administration, with biblical references;
- 16th-c. Protestant community regulations on common funds that quote the Bible
- Discourses by 16th-c. theology masters.

Participation and Logistics: Researchers wishing to participate in one of the two BibGes workshops are invited to submit a synopsis of their contribution (350–700 words). The synopsis should highlight: The type of document, dossier, or case study; The link it establishes or reveals between the Bible and the management of material life; The actors involved, as well as the chronological and geographical scope considered; Where applicable, the potential contributions to the questions raised by the project.

Eligibility and Support: Proposals from PhD candidates, postdoctoral researchers, established scholars, and emeriti, in French or in English, will be given equal consideration. Logistical support (transport, two meals, one overnight stay and breakfast) will be provided in full or in part, depending on the overall organisation.

Deadline and Submission: **The deadline for proposals is August 25, 2026.** Proposals should be sent to: amelie.delasheras@univ-artois.fr. Applicants will be notified of the committee's decision between late August and mid-September 2026.

Amélie De Las Heras
Univ. Artois, UR 4027, Centre de Recherche et d'Études Histoire et Sociétés (CREHS), F-62000 Arras, France

Organisation: MESHS de Lille | Maison Européenne des Sciences de l'Homme et de la Société (UAR 3185) ; with the CIHAM | Histoire, Archéologie, Littératures des mondes chrétiens et musulmans médiévaux (UMR 5648), the (French) National Agency of Research | ANR, ETHIOKONGROME « Les chrétiens d'Éthiopie et de Kongo face à Rome », the IEFR | Institut d'Étude des Faits Religieux and the CREHS | Centre de Recherche et d'Études Histoire et Sociétés.

Coordination: Amélie De Las Heras (Université d'Artois, CREHS), avec Olivia Adankpo-Labadie (Université Grenoble-Alpes, LUHCIE & ANR ETHIOKONGROME) et Valentina Toneatto (Université Lumière Lyon 2, CIHAM).

Scientific Committee:

Olivia Adankpo-Labadie (Université Grenoble-Alpes, LUHCIE & ANR ETHIOKONGROME),
Thierry Amalou (Université d'Artois, CREHS),
Amélie De Las Heras (Université d'Artois, CREHS),
Maxence Miéra (Université d'Artois, LEM | Lille Économie Management - UMR 9221),
Ismaël Moya (CNRS, LESC | Laboratoire d'Ethnologie et de Sociologie Comparative - UMR 7186),
Ana Rodríguez López (CSIC – Madrid, CCHS | Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales),
Valentina Toneatto (Université Lumière Lyon 2, CIHAM).

Ill.: "The Expulsion of the Merchants from the Temple by Jesus"; BnF, ms. Nv. Acq., 15940, fol. 50r [Vincent of Beauvais, *Miroir Historial*, fr. transl. by Jean of Vignay], website Mandragore (<https://mandragore.bnf.fr/mirador/ark:/12148/btv1b8449693p/f107>)

ⁱ The contributions of historiography on the "uses" of the Bible remain fundamental to these investigations. For key references, see in particular: Richard Marsden et E. Ann Matter (eds.), *The New Cambridge History of the Bible: from 600 to 1450*, Cambridge University Press, 2012 ; Michel Lauwers, « Usages de la Bible et institution du sens dans l'Occident médiéval », *Médiévales. Langues, Textes, Histoire*, 20 décembre 2008, n° 55, p. 5-18.

ⁱⁱ Forthcoming: Amélie De Las Heras, « Étudier la Bible et les pratiques sociales au Moyen Âge : pour une histoire à parts égales ».

ⁱⁱⁱ For instance: *La réception des Pères grecs en Italie au Moyen Âge* CABOURET Bernadette, PETERS-CUSTOT Annick et ROUXPETEL Camille (eds.), *La réception des Pères grecs et orientaux en Italie au Moyen âge (v^e-xv^e siècle)*, Paris, Le Cerf, 2020.