

In collaboration with North American Association for the Study of Religion

“When the Chips are Down,” It’s Time to Pick Them Up:

Thinking with Jonathan Z. Smith

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Trondheim, Norway

June 4-5, 2019

Confirmed keynote speaker:

Aaron W. Hughes, Philip S. Bernstein Professor of Jewish Studies in the Department of Religion and Classics at the University of Rochester

In his bio-bibliographical essay, J.Z. Smith wrote that he was fond of the expression “when the chips are down” in the sense of all being said and done. With his passing away in December 2017, the phrase has gained an additional layer of sad finality. Now, the chips are really down. And that means, it is time for us to pick them up. With this in mind, we would like to invite interested scholars to submit abstracts considering theoretical and methodological issues central to J. Z. Smith’s oeuvre in the context of their own research.

For example, in “When the Chips are Down” (in *Relating Religion*, 2004) Smith described his “persistent preoccupations”: the questions of taxonomy, comparison, similarity and difference, translation, defamiliarization, redescription, and generalization. To what extent, if at all, can we implement, reinterpret, and develop these concerns in new directions and in new data domains? What advantages and limitations do the perspectives that J. Z. Smith illuminated present when applied to the various items that we each study? Is thinking with J. Z. Smith still a road worth pursuing and, if so, where can it take us—either in our own work or collectively, as a field? By answering these and similar questions, we want to test the adequacy and applicability of Smith’s concerns for new situations, historic periods, and regions, and thus to provide an indirect assessment of J. Z. Smith’s influence and legacy in the field of Religious Studies.

200-300 words paper proposals should be sent to smithtrd2019@gmail.com and accompanied by one-paragraph biographical information.

Deadline for proposal submission: December 15, 2018.

Final decisions on conference participation will be sent out by January 21, 2019.

The conference has no registration fee. Meals and hotel accommodations in Trondheim will be covered.

Presenters will be invited to submit full-text articles for a planned publication in the NAASR Working Papers series.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact conference organizers Barbara Krawcowicz (barbara.krawcowicz@ntnu.no) or Ann-Kathrin Bretfeld-Wolf (ann.k.bretfeld-wolf@ntnu.no).