



Call for Papers

Version 12.12.2018



SUMMARY:

The School of Theology (University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu) plans the next international and ecumenical conference on patristic understandings of diakonia. It is the fourth edition of such a conference.

The topic is 'What did deacons do?'. Our purpose is to continue the work that has already begun with a symposium in the fall of 2014, 2015 and 2017. These symposia were based on reflections on the results of the 2009 conference "Diaconia, diaconiae, diaconato" in Rome. In our series of conferences, the period under investigation covers the first six centuries. Now we focus on the Late Antiquity, especially on the 3rd and 4th centuries.

Most of the 2017 congress is published by Mohr Siebeck 2019 (Deacons 2019). Our co-operating partners are Prof. Bart J. Koet (Tilburg), and Dr. John N. Collins (Melbourne); as well as Finnish Association for Research in Diaconia.

The next conference will be held on May 12th – 14th 2020 in Joensuu, Finland.

An Invitation and Call for Papers

Background

1. Today churches are often very active in extending help to those in need. Such social engagement has been understood as an important Christian responsibility and is conducted in Christian circles under names like Charity or Caritas or Philanthropy or – as commonly in central, mostly protestant circles of Europe – Diaconia. A common understanding has been that this word was used in the early church for a charitable activity of early deacons. (See Latvus 2017)

2. In 1986 Dieter Georgi noted difficulties in the translation of the Greek "diakonia" words. Since the publication in 1990 of the study by John N. Collins, *Diakonia: Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources*, we have seen widespread discussion of the meaning of diakonia in the New Testament. Many Protestant Churches have adopted Collins' view of the deacon as an agent of the community, encouraged in this by Anni Hentschel's dissertation *Diakonie im Neuen Testament* (2007). These two studies are to be borne in mind in evaluating some papers on diakonia in the first centuries CE from the major conference of 2009 in Rome (with prof.

B.J.Koet as one of the initiators and organizers) and published as *Diakonia, diaconiae, diaconato*, (2010). Collins' keynote address was published in Collins 2012.

3. For the first centuries CE we have for example an overview of activities of deaconesses (Madigan - Osiek 2005). We still lack such an analysis for deacons, but the newly published book of Mohr Siebeck gives light to the two first centuries (Deacons 2019). This book also includes some of the presentations in the Joensuu conference 2017.

4. The character of ecclesial ministry has been a lively question within the churches over recent decades. The churches exhibit different ministerial arrangements but at the same time have been working towards mutual recognition of ministry. WCC's BEM report of 1982 presented one proposal, and the Porvoo Agreement of 1992 built on this. Such ecumenical initiatives are ongoing. The big question is, how shall the "serving" character of the ministry be understood and how shall this kind of tasks be distributed between ministries.

5. Discussion of deacon/deaconesses in the New Testament arising from the investigations by Collins and Hentschel are currently expanding into later periods. See Pylvänäinen (2017), reports of two symposiums in Joensuu (2013, 2015) in *Diakonian tutkimus* 3/2015, and *Deacons* 2019. Earlier specialist studies (e. g., Theodor Fliedner, Paul Philippi) have been shown to be running to an agenda in their reading of some patristic texts (Ryökäs 2011, Ryökäs 2015). Is the early Christian documentation unclear on the diaconate?

The Theme

6. In this context, we are calling for papers on patristic understandings of deacons (incl. deaconesses). Instead of taking studies of diakonia further, we think a more fruitful undertaking is to concentrate on the status and functions of deacons. This will reveal the variety of activities as well as something more about the inner workings of early Christian communities. Further light may also be cast upon the semantics of diakonia – and this would be a bonus – but the main focus will be on the identity and activities of the deacon within individual patristic texts.

7. The conference will examine evidence especially from the third and fourth centuries. However, we are asking for papers which take account of the development since the New Testament as well as looking into consequences during later periods, until about 6th century.

8. At the same time, we aim to account for the variety in the interpretations of these texts. Accordingly, we are keen to hear how these texts have been read during the Reformation (e. g., Calvin, Luther, Zwingli, Bucer, but also in the catholic and orthodox tradition) and within the diaconia movement since the mid-19th century. Even an analysis of the modern use of patristic material can be enlightening. From such investigations, we may be in a better position to assess where we stand today and how we might make modifications as necessary.

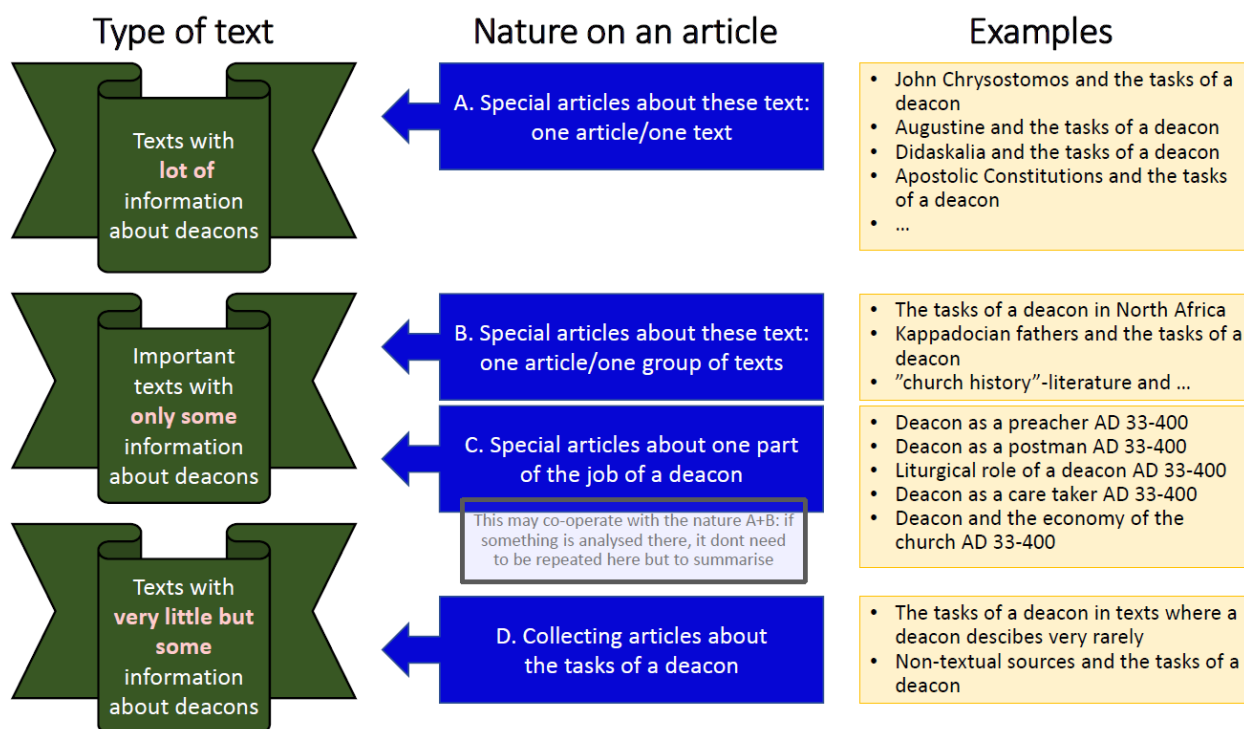
Call for Papers



9. Our idea is for a conference in 2020 examining the question "What Did Deacons Do in the Late Antiquity?" According to TLG, at that time deacons are mentioned by many hundreds of authors, this providing sufficient material for the occasion. If our plans come to fruition and if we attract sufficient numbers, we will follow up with further biennial conferences in, 2022 (3-6 c.) and 2025 (5-6 c and further.). The overlap in the schedule will allow for later conferences to round off earlier investigations.

10. Selective papers will be published in an academic publication. We prefer titles like "What did deacons do according to John Chrysostom in his letters to Olympia?", or "How does the Anglican Church understand the Early Fathers' views on Deacons." For the first period (0-2 centuries) a publication is produced (Deacons 2019, in cooperation with Prof. Bart J. Koet, Tilburg). If this plan works, we could eventually have sufficient material for a series of books about deacons.

11. If you see possibilities for your involvement in this project, we would be glad to receive a proposal from you for a 30-minute paper in Joensuu on 12-14 May 2020. Some ideas are presented in the figure below. This is a preliminary call, but we would like to get your theme before mid of May 2019 so that we can arrange the themes. In autumn 2018 we will publish a Preliminary Program.



12. Bonus: The biannual fest of Finnish orthodox choir music is organized in Joensuu 15.-17.5.2020

Literature

Collins, John N. (1990). *Diakonia: Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources*. New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Collins, John N. (2012). A Monocultural Usage: *διακον*- words in Classical, Hellenistic, and Patristic Sources. *Vigiliae christianae* 66.3 (2012) 287-309.

Collins, John N. (2014). *Diakonia Studies*. Oxford.

Diakonian tutkimus 3/ 2015 – <http://dts.fi/files/2009/10/DT3-15.pdf>

Deacons (2019). [Deacons and Diakonia in Early Christianity, The First Two Centuries](#). Ed. by Bart J. Koet, Edwina Murphy, and Esko Ryökäs. *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 2. Reihe 479.

Diaconia, diaconiae, diaconato (2010). *Diaconia, diaconiae, diaconato. Semantica e storia nei padri della chiesa*. (eds. Vittorio Grossi, Bart J. Koet and Paul van Geest) *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 117. Roma: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum.

Georgi, Dieter (1986). *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians: A Study on Religious Propaganda in Late Antiquity*. English translation and greatly expanded edition of the German original 1964; Philadelphia: Fortress.

Hentschel, Anni (2007) *Diakonia im Neuen Testament. Studien zur Semantik unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Rolle von Frauen*. *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament*. 2. Reihe 226. Mohr Siebeck. Tübingen.

Latvus, Kari (2017). [Diaconia as Care for the Poor?](#) Helsinki/Tampere.

Koet, Bart J. (2019). *The Go-Between. Augustine on Deacons*. *Brill's Studies in Catholic Theology*, 6. Leiden: Brill.

Madigan, Kevin – Osiek, Carolyn (2005). *Ordained Women in the Early Church. A Documentary History*. Edited and translated by Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek. The Johns Hopkins University Press. Baltimore & London.

Pylvänäinen, Pauliina (2017). *Agents in Liturgy, Charity, and Communion. The Tasks of Female Deacons in the Apostolic Constitutions*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Eastern Finland (unpubl.).

Ryökäs, Esko (2011). *Zur Begründung der Diakonie bei Theodor Fliedner. Anmerkungen zum "Gutachten, die Diakonie und den Diakonat betreffend"*. – *Diakonische Einblicke*. Herausgegeben von Christian Oelschlägel. *DWI-Jahrbuch* Bd. 41. Diakoniewissenschaftliche Institut der Theologischen Fakultät, Heidelberg, 49–71.

Ryökäs, Esko (2015). *Diaconia - A Make-Believe Which Continues?* – *Diaconia*, Volume 6, Issue 1, 61–74.