



Center for the Study of Information and Religion

2014 Conference on Information and Religion
Paper / Poster Proposal

All proposals must be submitted on this form and emailed as an attachment to csir@kent.edu. Incomplete forms will not be considered.

Form with fields: Last Name of Primary Author (Curran), First Name of Primary Author (Charles), College, University or Other Affiliation (SLIS, University of South Carolina), Professional Title (Distinguished Professor Emeritus), City, State, Country (Columbia, South Carolina), Phone Number (803 777 3858), Email Address (drchuckie@yahoo.com), Preferred Format (Paper checked, Poster unchecked). Includes a note about format selection.

Note: The "Primary Author" will be main contact for this proposal and will be responsible for sharing information with additional authors. Please use the spaces at the end of this form to indicate additional authors, if appropriate.

Please tell us how you heard about this conference; check as many as apply:

Form with fields: [] Listserv (Specify:), [X] Advertising (Specify: Internet, maybe on JESSE), [] Website (Specify:), [X] Other (Specify: saw note online; submitted and presented at Conference #1)

Proposal

Title of Presentation
For Christ's Sake, Laugh
Presentation Summary (approx. 100 words)
<i>[Note: this summary may be used in the conference program and other materials if your presentation is selected for the conference.]</i> Jesus returns to heaven and discovers that He misses the laughter and jokes He heard while on earth. He petitions the Father to let Him do some jokes at a party the Father is giving for the martyrs. The Father reluctantly agrees but plays His own joke on Jesus, and Jesus bombs. Discouraged, Jesus retreats backstage, where He is counseled and coached by several departed comedians, including Milton Berle and Lou Costello. Finally, Thomas Aquinas explains to Jesus why He got no laughs and informs Him of what He must do if He wants to hear laughter again. Jesus listens and makes a remarkable decision.
Research Problem and Research Methods (approx. 250 words)
This is a script for Readers Theatre (RT). RT involves attendees as participants, not as performers. There are no props or costumes, and there is no memorization required. RT methodology has a proven track record for involving and engaging participants and audiences. In composing this play I have relied upon Biblical references and religious traditions. Its purpose is to provoke laughter and raise questions. It is respectful of Christ's divinity and speculative about His humanity. Volunteers read the several parts. Clearly, this is not a standard research product. I have tested it, however, with clergy and religious groups. I know the results it produces: laughter and discussion. While the format differs from the kinds most often presented at conferences, it is perfectly suited for presentation to an audience of serious inquirers. I plan 30 minutes for presentation and 30 minutes for Q&A, during which several research questions can be explored: Does the Diety possess a sense of humor? Is there laughter in heaven? What is heaven like and how do we know? If salvation involves transformation, what is the nature of that transformation? Obviously, the "answers" to these questions will be in the room, not in the play.
Anticipated Results and Significance to Research at the Intersection of Religion and Information (approx. 250 words)
The participants will laugh at Jesus' standup routine, in part because it is funny, but mostly because the heavenly audience only responds reverently and because the Evangelists offer explanations for His jokes, not laughter. Some may admire the logic of Thomas Aquinas and chuckle at the fact that Jesus finds Thomas annoying. This event intersects with religion and information because views of heaven are intensely personal and substantially speculative. Christ's divinity is anchored in scripture, but questions about His humanity linger. We know He wept; did He laugh? What information supports arguments that He displayed a sense of humor? This RT play advances one argument that He loves jokes. Significance may be measured in terms of what an audience for research papers takes from a presentation, gifts like inspiration, knowledge, and encouragement. In fact, Readers Theatre methodology, itself, provides a novel and very useful way to observe and study the intersection of Religion and Information. Can an audience take enjoyment, appreciation for a story, insight into problems, or discovery of alternative ways of looking at an issue, like salvation, for example from RT and RT methodology?

My answer to the questions is Yes. I have witnessed such significant events.

Statement of Author's Credentials (approx. 100 words)

[Explain why the primary author is qualified to address this subject.]

I have studied RT, written about RT, presented at a conference about RT, performed RT, and composed RT. I have seen audiences engage and come alive at RT events. I know the purposes of the CSIR Conference and have presented there. In 2012 I earned an MA in Theatre from USC.

Statement of Intent

By submitting this proposal, I indicate my intention to deliver my presentation at the 2014 Conference on Information and Religion if selected. *(Primary author should sign and date below.)*

Charles Curran	1 December 2013
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Signature *(may be typed)* Charles Curran

Date 1 December 2013

Please provide information on additional authors/presenters in the boxes below.

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