



Research at the European Academy on “Religion and Change”

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30 August 2021 - Annual Conference of the “European Academy of Religion” (EuARe) has begun – Conference comes to Germany for the first time in August – 900 researchers expected at the University of Münster – Cluster of Excellence represented with 15 panels: Political Islam, Religion and Emotion, Church under National Socialism, Religion and Sustainability – Participation for interested parties possible online or on site.

The annual Conference of the “European Academy of Religion” (EuARe) in Münster has begun. Under the title “Religion and Change”, the conference will see 900 international scholars involved in interdisciplinary research on religion come to Germany for the first time. As a founding member of the Academy, the Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics” will host 15 of the 160 panels with themes from its current research programme. “The spectrum ranges from political Islam in Europe to religion and sustainability, from religious emotions in literature to controversies surrounding Pope Pius XII under National Socialism”, says Cluster spokesperson and legal historian Nils Jansen. The Cluster of Excellence is looking in its current funding phase at the dynamics of religious change between tradition and innovation. “We are investigating the potential of religion across epochs to drive or slow down social processes. The panels hosted by the Cluster will provide insights into such dynamic processes of religious-social change”.

“For many people, religions are the only stable element in a world of permanent change”, explains the president of the Academy, the Protestant theologian and Cluster of Excellence member Hans-Peter Großhans. “But religions and religious practices are subject to change, as we can see in different interpretations of sacred texts. At the same time, religions can initiate social transformations”. The fourth annual conference of the “European Academy of Religion” (EuARe), which was founded in Bologna in 2017, will be hosted by the University of Münster from 30 August to 2 September, the registration for participation is still possible until 27 August. Around 900 researchers from all over the world will come together to discuss issues to do with religion in 160 panels held both in Münster and in online formats, the conference language being English. Renowned guests will give keynote papers: the former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams will speak on tradition, traditionalism and culture wars; and the theologian and philosopher of religion Judith Wolfe from St. Andrews will address the question of progress in theology. Other keynote speakers will be Azza Karam (Religions for Peace, New York), Vassilis Saroglou (Leuven), and Guy G. Stroumsa (Jerusalem).

Put together under the supervision of the religious scholar and theologian Perry Schmidt-Leukel, the Cluster of Excellence programme takes “Dynamics of Religious Change” as its guiding theme and will deal with past and present issues from contemporary history back to antiquity. The Islamic theologian Mouhanad Khorchide will host a roundtable discussion with politicians to talk about political Islam, and the church historian Hubert Wolf will explain how recent insights into sources allow new interpretations of the role of Pope Pius XII under National Socialism. The panel chaired by Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf will open up literary perspectives on emotion and religion, while political scientist Doris Fuchs will address the connection between religion, spirituality and sustainability. Other topics will include the politicization of Islam (Islamic scholar Dina El Omari), Christians under Islamic rule in medieval Spain (historian Wolfram Drews), religious authority in

regions of conflict in West Africa (anthropologist Dorothea Schulz), and local religious practices in antiquity (historian Hans Beck and Egyptologist Angelika Lohwasser). Individual papers will focus on hate in the Old Testament (theologian Johannes Schnocks), religion in climate politics (political scientist Hannah Klinkenborg), and religion and gender (contemporary historian Olaf Blaschke).

The “European Academy of Religion” was founded with the participation of the Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics” in Bologna in 2017. Its aim is to provide university and non-university centres and persons in Europe who are involved in research on religion with a permanent forum that enables them to network across and between disciplines, and to disseminate research findings more strongly in politics and society. Its model is the renowned “American Academy of Religion” (AAR), which brings together researchers on religion from all over the world in North America.

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