

Call for papers

The World and God – God and the World?

On the relation of the religious and the secular in the “Christian Middle Ages”

International Congress

**Institut für Realienkunde des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit,
Zentrum Mittelalterforschung
of the Austrian Academy of Sciences,
Krems, October 10 – 12, 2011**

Subsequent to the fourteenth symposium of the German *Mediävistenverband* (“God’s Work and Adam’s Contribution: Forms of Interaction between Man and God in the Middle Ages”), the *Institut für Realienkunde* of the Austrian Academy of Sciences is inviting to a congress that will focus on basic relations between the religious and the secular in the Middle Ages. The “Christian Middle Ages” – seen as the transcendental saturation of all areas of life – have become an axiom for a long time. The objective of this conference is to discuss and challenge this assumption, in particular with regard to the daily life and the material culture of the Middle Ages.

A focus is put on the question of the meaning of the secular and, respectively, the relationship between the secular and the religious: Is it possible to identify competing models of thought and value systems in secular objects, signs and patterns of action, or can the secular only be interpreted within a religiously conceived world view? Is the Christian quest for God and search for meaning an ubiquitous monopoly or is it possible to trace models of thought, ways of life or patterns of behaviour that eluded religious interpretation, competed against it or were not reached by it at all? Can secularization processes be identified?

Following the interdisciplinary research direction of the *Institut für Realienkunde*, the contributions to the congress should be concentrating on comparative analyses with regard to the spheres of everyday life and material culture.

Possible topics:

- Between martyrdom, habitus and disinterest: Which approaches to religion were possible and at disposal?
- religious space – secular space; concepts, norms and adoption
- material culture between religious norm and secular quotidianity
- views on nature and environment
- different ways of coping with life
- economy and religious practice
- self-conception and conception of the others
- individuality in religious and social contexts
- competing belief systems
- Was there anything like “secular” art?

The discussion about the degree of religious permeation of all areas of life as well as the possibilities and limitations of a Christian “monopoly of meaning” might be especially fruitful and stimulating for the temporal and spatial border zones of the “Christian Middle Ages” (such as late antiquity/early Middle Ages, early modern period/confessional age; Byzantium).

These suggestions should just be seen as thought-provoking impulses. Any other topic addressing the issue of the relationship between the religious and the secular in the Middle Ages is also welcome.

Reading time must not exceed 30 minutes. Financial support will be offered to the active contributors. Proposals including an abstract (not more than one page, languages: English, French, Italian, German) should be sent to

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or e-mailed to imareal@oeaw.ac.at no later than March 31, 2011.

We would like to ask you to make this call accessible to others on notice boards or through distribution.