

# RELIGION AND AUTHORITY: CONTEST AND LEGITIMACY

## CALL FOR PAPERS

**Fondazione per le Scienze Religiose Giovanni XXIII**

*in collaboration with*

**The International Network for Interreligious Research and Education**

**5-10 July 2020**

**La Pira Library and Research Center**

**Palermo, Italy**

Political and transcendental authority are problematic in themselves and at odds with each other. Each religion has defining moments when the core questions become contested and are opened for debate, modification and change. Where is authority coming from or based upon? How is authority defined, invested and limited? Who wields authority, and how does it become legitimized and delegitimized?

In those moments, more often than not, when transcendental authority is challenged, the relationship with the political authority undergoes change, highlighting emergent tensions, and resetting the balance of authority. These watershed moments are most obvious where central religious authority holds sway over the faithful, but even religions that purport to have no such structure are shaped by transitions in religious and political authority. Debates on the canon, especially scripture, are especially poignant at such crisis moments.

Secularization has **apparently** reframed the debate on authority. Most productively understood as decline in the scope of religious authority, it has sought to redefine the binaries of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, continuity and change, state and religious community. It has triggered further dispersion of religious authority (and consolidation of political one), and reshaped social hierarchies and gender roles. The contest of religious and political authority under totalitarian regimes has highlighted the new clash of authorities.

In our post-secular society, the questions of religious authority and its relation to the secular, of religious cannon and literature, religion and nationalism, and religion in the public sphere remain the focus of public attention, debate and research. The conference in Palermo will provide a multidisciplinary framework for academic discussion of these questions by looking at the three Abrahamic religions and especially their interrelationships.

Proposals on any aspect of Religion and Authority: Contest and Legitimacy are welcome. Suggested topics include:

- Authority of interpretation and canonization of holy texts
- Secularization and issues of religious vs. state authority
- Religious texts and political debate
- Conflicting ideas of supreme authority
- Heritage, patrimony and cultural capital
- Authority performed, 'staged' and 'established'
- Who owns religious property and endows it with meaning?

- Controversy on holy places, objects and their meaning
- Totalitarian regimes and religious authority
- Religious authority and minority rights
- Moral authority and human autonomy
- The authority of sacred rites
- Ideological belief systems
- Musealization of religion as an authority issue

Please send paper proposals of 300 words (plus 150 bio) by 1 February 2020 to [religion.authority@gmail.com](mailto:religion.authority@gmail.com) (Papers should be limited to twenty minutes.)