

Change – Conflict – Adjustment

Foreword

A change in social and economic circumstances often questions the usefulness of existing cultural models, imposing the transformation of previously valid social and cultural practice. This also applies to the functioning of religious life, the practical ways in which religion is experienced. Together, the change, the conflicts appearing as a consequence, and the adjustment strategies raise the question of modernisation conceived as a process seen as a long series or cycle of transformations. Modernity is characterised by combination with traditional values and continual transformation, as a result of which modernity comes to have differing meanings and programmes in the different societies.

The studies in our volume, emphasising the diversity of modernity and culture, examine local adaptations of modernity and local manifestations of change in the 19th-21st centuries. Thus in the individual studies we find among the generators of this transformation, the technical, societal and civilisational changes of the Industrial Revolution, as well as of globalisation, transnationalism or the migration processes of the present time. The case studies thus focus on the transformation that took place in pilgrimages – that had for centuries remained unchanged – with the appearance of mass transport and the railways; the way Orthodox Jewry as a group culture adapted railway travel to its own world; the prayer books that responded to the changing female roles from the 19th century; the 20th-21st century movements urged by private revelations, or the changing role and relationship of minister and congregation in local communities. The trend in religious popular music in all denominations shows the ambivalent connection between tradition and change or innovation, reflecting the new religious demands and the tensions generated as a consequence. On the other hand, the modern mythologies that arise show the constant presence of a turning back to tradition and past values, in which the persons of mediaeval saints can gain new interpretations in the light of the present circumstances and can show how the view of the past is changing. The interactions between different Christian denominations, new religious movements, atonement devotions that have risen to oppose secularisation convey the same message. In the light of current political events it is becoming of vital importance to know about how Muslim identity is being restructured in the interaction of European Christian societies and European Islam.

Consequently, the studies in our volume are of interest and value not only for specialist researchers in the study of religion, but for representatives of all disciplines dealing with the past and present, as well as for the enquiring general reader.