



IEG

Leibniz-Institut für
Europäische Geschichte

Battles over Belief: Religion and Violence in Catholic Europe, 1848-1914

Dr. Eveline G. Bouwers



The German Research Foundation (DFG) is a research funding organization that is co-financed by the German federal government and the states. It is the largest of its kind in Europe. In its aim to support junior staff, it has created the Emmy Noether Programm, which funds small research groups. Recently, the DFG has awarded funding to Dr. Eveline G. Bouwers to set-up a research group entitled 'Battles over Belief: Religion and Violence in Catholic Europe, 1848-1914'. The project will investigate the relationship between violence / iconoclasm and religion in Europe during the period 1848-1914, and will be based at the Leibniz Institute of European History in Mainz (Germany). Within the research group, PhD positions are available in the following fields:

- *The Iberian Peninsula, with a focus on Portugal or the comparison Portugal / Spain.*
- *The Balkans, with a focus on Catholic peoples (e.g. Croatians or Slovenians), possibly in comparison with other denominations.*

Interested candidates are encouraged to consult the Institute's website for further information (www.ieg-mainz.de). Applications should be submitted by **Monday 16 December 2013**. The appointment will start on **1 May 2014** and is awarded for **four years**.



Synopsis of the research project

In the wake of recent terrorist attacks, interest in the use of violence for negotiating the place of religion in the modern world has increased. Scholars have variously argued that such violence is innate to (monotheistic) religion, a sacrifice to avoid greater ills, a reaction to secularization, or a political construction that legitimates State-building. Until now, these theories have rarely been put in a historical context. For Europe, scholars have in fact claimed that the Peace of Westphalia (1648) ended an era in which belief unleashed violence. Yet, this is not what happened. Even if the early-modern religious wars do not have a pendant in modern Europe, violence played a more important role in rethinking the role of religion in nineteenth-century public life than has been admitted. How elites reacted to changing Church-State relations is well-known. But the story of how men and women who lacked political access responded to this conflict in everyday life remains largely untold.

This Emmy Noether Research Group aims to tell that story. By focusing on case-studies in western/central-Europe, the Iberian Peninsula and the western-Balkan – regions that shared a Catholic identity, a strong sense of local belonging, and a legacy of Napoleonic rule – it proposes the first systematic analysis of how believers in nineteenth-century Europe used violence in defence of their religion. During the years spanning the revolutions of 1848/9 and the First World War, Church and State competed for influence over the people. No group sensed this competition as keenly as Catholics, who were confronted with the dilemma between loyalty to a (national) state and devotion to an international church. The research group will look at how disenfranchised Catholics protested against attempts at curtailing the role of religion in public life. It asks how actions interacted with the behavior of opponents (the State, secularists, other religious groups), and probes how violence – be it physical, verbal or visual – was used to mediate dissent. The research group will argue that rather than checking progress or confirming failed modernization, the use of violence in defence of Catholicism increased political participation and cultural awareness among those very same Europeans, who have often been viewed as the rearguard of nineteenth-century society.

During 1848-1914, conflicts over religion became progressively interlocked with socio-economic, political and regionalist/ethnic conflicts. The research group will ask how factors such as a strong State, class divisions, multi-



confessionalism and ethnic diversity affected the relationship between religion and violence. When and how did believers use violence to oppose efforts at limiting Catholic influence in the modern world? What role did religious elements play in nineteenth-century European popular violence? By looking at acts, discourses and representations of violence, the project will probe the social dynamics and cultural meaning of religious protest. It will analyze the aims, legitimation and occasions for violence as well as scrutinize the social and cultural background of protesters and the interdependence between local and European conflicts. In doing so, the Emmy Noether research group 'Battles over Belief: Religion and Violence in Catholic Europe, 1848-1914' will shed new light on the importance of religion for popular protest in post-1848 Europe, on the transformation of the nineteenth-century political space, and on the dynamics of local belonging in an age of rising nationalism.

(This text is intended for information purposes only. Do not quote from it without the author's permission.)

