

EERSTE AANKONDIGING / FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT

22e Mediëvistendag / 22th Medieval Studies Day:

Readjusting the Middle Ages

Utrecht, 11 November 2016

For as long as we can remember, the idea of the 'Middle Ages' has been under review. As medievalists we have accepted, if only for practical purposes, the periodisation of European history in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the (Pre-) Modern Age. In doing so, we have unwittingly allowed negative connotations of the 'Middle Ages' to persist in education, politics, and the received ideas of the public at large. Yet, through our research we have come to a set of rather different views. We no longer hold to the established periodisation of Western civilisation. Indeed, we are coming to question the very notion of 'the West', and are slowly beginning to react in our research and in our teaching to the study of the western Middle Ages in isolation. Neither do we see the story of our continent as one of unfettered progress from the 'cradle' of the Middle Ages to the blessings of contemporary modernity. Nor do we see the Middle Ages as a thousand-year-long hiccup in the advance of civilisation from Greek and Roman Antiquity to our own age. We have come to realise that in the panoply of developments taking place during the Middle Ages there were some we might be tempted to applaud, whereas there were others that we have reservations about – as with developments in any other period of history, including our own. And we are keenly aware that we have to understand both the developments and our judgement of them.

These are some of the considerations that inform the continuing readjustment of the study of the Middle Ages, and, as a result, of the Middle Ages themselves. What are the Middle Ages? When did they take place? Where did they take place? And: how do they relate to the periods that went before and followed? One thing is certain: the Middle Ages, no matter how we wish to define them, were no Dark Ages.

At the *Mediëvistendag* of 11 November 2016, we will address some of these problems. During the morning's general session, we will ask prominent medievalists to reflect on key issues in medieval developments and their continuation later on. During the afternoon's sessions, we have a chance to hear about research currently carried out, which will in time help further adjustments of the Middle Ages. We will then move to Museum het Catharijneconvent for a lecture on St Martin and a visit to the exhibition 'Heilige Schrift – Tanach – Bijbel – Koran'. The *Mediëvistendag* will end with a *borrel*.

The definitive programme will be made available in September. Those who wish to present their current research are asked to read the attachment and send their proposal by 1 September to M.Mostert@uu.nl.

All lectures and papers will be presented in English, to allow all scholars, PhD students and Research MA students, irrespective of their linguistic abilities, to take part.