



The Department of Medieval Studies of Central European University
cordially invite you to the public lecture of



Marianne Sághy

Central European University

on

Pagans and Christians in the Late
Roman Empire:
The Fall of a Master Narrative?

at 18:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 16, 2013
CEU–Faculty Tower #409
Budapest, V. Nádor u. 9.

In the past two centuries, from the Enlightenment to the Cold War, the master narrative of the Fall of Rome in European historiography was the struggle between paganism and Christianity, recycling a Eusebian interpretation of history. Few historians would subscribe to this narrative today. This “conflict-model” has been replaced in the past fifty years by a ‘multicultural assimilation, acculturation and integration’ paradigm. Clearly, these narratives reveal more about the *mentalité* of the age in which they were formulated than about late antiquity. On the 1700th anniversary of the Edict of Milan, however, it is fitting to review important changes in the interpretation of the relationship between pagans and Christians, as these interpretations influence our perception and understanding of past and present religious and political conflict. In the post-Cold War post-modern culture, the post-Roman history of the West acquires a sudden relevance.

This lecture unravels the rise and fall of a master narrative in Western



74. Rome, Cemetery under St Peter's. Vine-Shoots and Christ as the Sun God.

historiography. Generations of historians understood the Edict of Tolerance as the beginning of Christian intolerance. It might be then useful to examine who were the ‘pagans’ and in which context the term was used, especially when we face, throughout the fourth century a vigorous revival of the Classics in literature and in art, and a proliferation of ‘crossover’ genres.

Marianne Sághy has been teaching at CEU Medieval Studies Department since 1993. She started as a late medievalist before she converted to late antiquity. Her present research focuses on the convoluted connection between the rise of the bishop, the rise of saints’ cults, and private patronage in late antique Rome. Recently, she organized a conference in Rome on *Pagans and Christians in late antique Rome*, to be continued in an extended and enlarged version at CEU this March. She was a consultant to BBC4’s new history series *Rome: The Eternal City*.