

## Call for papers

Radboud University, Nijmegen

### *Devotio*

## Individualization of religious practices in Western European Christianity (c. 1350 – c. 1550)

Wednesday, 26 – Thursday, 27 October 2016

Religiosity was ubiquitous during the later Middle Ages. Divine services influenced both the public domain and the course of each individual's life, and thus established a widely experienced communality. Individual believers, however, had ample opportunities to develop a highly personalized devotion, side by side with, and sometimes even slightly detached from official doctrine. Their creativity and the diversity of their inner beliefs are the main focus of this conference.

The transmitted source material is perhaps as diverse as the many forms of personal devotion, and meditational literature and prayer books are on closer inspection often highly individualized products, sometimes sizeable compositions demonstrating personal choices and convictions, and testifying to inner development as well as interchanged experiences.

Recent historiography has pointed at this individualization of Western Christianity in the later Middle Ages, and focused on the preponderance of personal devotion at the cost of shared religious practices. Thus, representatives of the Modern Devotion especially propagated that the quality of religious life was determined no less by personal, inner devotion in one's own heart than by shared liturgy. Thomas a Kempis, for instance, emphasizes the importance of an intense, and personal, desire for God. Who lacks this, 'must long for this desire' (*Imitation of Christ*, III, 14, 8).

Individualization inevitably resulted in greater diversity of religious life, but did not automatically lead to too much divergence. Religious communities, but lay groups also, discussed about beliefs and practices, sometimes very candidly. They could disagree, but nevertheless did not lose touch of one another. This conference aims to establish how individual believers were not only children of their age, but shaped this age as well.

#### **Keynote speakers:**

Prof. dr. John van Engen (University of Notre Dame, USA): "Alijt Bake (1413-1455) of Utrecht and Gent: Self-conscious Author and Spiritual Autobiographer".

Prof. dr. Jeffrey Hamburger (Harvard University, USA): "How to read a picture book: Visualizing Scripture in the Prayer Book of Ursula Begerin".

Prof. dr. Nigel Palmer (Oxford University, UK): "Anti-Seuse, or: Meditation on the whole life of Christ in the fifteenth century".

Dr. Kathryn Rudy (University of St Andrews, UK): "Pimp my Medieval Manuscript: How Readers Altered the Physical Book".

#### **Call for papers**

We invite proposals for papers on 'Individualization of Religious Practices' from various

disciplines and perspectives, in particular in relation to the history of culture, literature, religious life, spirituality, liturgy, psychology, hagiography, etc, presenting the findings of new or ongoing research. Contributions should be in German or in English. Each individual will be given a total of 30 minutes, i.e. 20 minutes for presentation and 10 minutes for discussion.

This call is directed to senior researchers and PhD students, but MA students are also cordially invited to submit a paper for separate sessions.

**Organisers.** Radboud University, Nijmegen: Faculty of Arts – Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies – Titus Brandsma Institute.

**Organising committee.** Prof. dr. Johan Oosterman (Radboud University Nijmegen), Prof. dr. Peter Nissen (Radboud University Nijmegen), dr. Rijcklof Hofman (Titus Brandsma Institute), dr. Charles Caspers (Titus Brandsma Institute).

**Venue.** Radboud University Nijmegen.

**Time.** 26–27 October 2016. The conference will begin around 10.00 on Wednesday and end around 16.00 on Thursday.

**Deadline.** Please submit a paper or session title and an abstract of not more than 300 words before **1 May 2016**. Abstracts and papers should be mailed to Rijcklof Hofman:

[rijcklof.hofman@titusbrandsmainstituut.nl](mailto:rijcklof.hofman@titusbrandsmainstituut.nl)

The text of the email should include name, position, affiliation and contact details of the author of the abstract. Those whose proposals are accepted are reminded that registration fees and travel and accommodation expenses for the conference are the responsibility of speakers and/or their institutions.

**Registration.** Registration costs are € 70 for senior researchers, € 40 for junior researchers. A € 20 discount is available for members of NOSTER and of the Research School for Medieval Studies, as well as for students. Registration includes coffee/tea breaks, the conference dinner on Wednesday evening, and a lunch on Thursday.

**Accommodation** can be found in various categories. For this and further information on Radboud University Nijmegen please consult the information guide:

[http://www.ru.nl/english/@698777/ects\\_guide/](http://www.ru.nl/english/@698777/ects_guide/), a brief version on accessibility, with maps, is available here <http://issuu.com/radbouduniversiteit/docs/radboudwegwijzer-nl?e=6804048/11267045>, cfr also

<http://www.ru.nl/english/vm/search/@701941/bereikbaarheid/> (in Dutch).