

Introduction

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The so-called 'return of religion' in world-affairs has by now become rather obvious. At universities special courses, even at undergraduate level, are dedicated to this topic. Peter Berger's maxim of 'the desecularisation of the World' has in a surprisingly short time become something of a commonplace.¹ The secularisation process in Western culture has proven, if not a myth, at least grossly overrated, and as Berger points out: 'secularization on the societal level is not necessarily linked to secularization on the level of individual consciousness.'² Peter Berger sees the assumption that we live in a secularised world as false. Perhaps even the supposedly 'secular' political theory from the 18th and 19th centuries is really 'theology in disguise', as William Cavanaugh argues.³ The weberian claim of 'die Entzauberung der Welt' is perhaps nothing more than a wishful myth of the High Priests of Modernity.

Belief and religion are certainly returning as focal concerns in modern philosophical debate. Interestingly, this religious turn is most clearly seen in so-called post-modern or post-structuralist thinking.⁴ As Santiago Zabala states in his introduction to the discussion between Richard Rorty and Gianni Vattimo on the future of religion: 'Today, [...], we are witnessing the dissolution of philosophical theories such as positivist scientism and marxism that thought they had definitively liquidated religion. After modernity, there are no more strong philosophical reasons either to be an atheist refusing religion or to be a theist refuting science.'⁵

This, or similar, attitudes form a common point of departure for all the contributors to this anthology, being the reason why we all feel that the studies of matters concerning religion in all aspects of life are of utmost importance. Today's situation in Europe illustrates the need for historical knowledge and perspective on culture and religion, particularly Christianity and all its denominational varieties. Christianity's influence *on* and *in* European culture cannot be overestimated, particularly understood as a dynamic and multifaceted force.

¹ See Berger, Peter L. (ed.): *The Desecularization of the World. Resurgent Religion and World Politics*. Washington D.C. 1995.

² Berger 1999, p. 3.

³ Cavanaugh, William T. : *Theopolitical Imagination*. London 2002, p. 2.

⁴ An important contribution to this debate is the Italian philosopher Mario Perniola's book: *Del sentire cattolico. La forma culturale di una religione universale*, from 2001. See also his contribution in the present anthology.

⁵ Zabala, Santiago (ed.): *The Future of Religion*. New York 2005, p. 1. One of the foremost representatives of this philosophical attitude, in addition to Mario Perniola, is Gianni Vattimo. For references see Zabala's introduction.

The outwardness of belief

An important element in Christian cultures is devotion, a phenomenon that articulates itself as practices expressed through instruments. Instruments can be broadly defined as all actions, rituals, gestures, and material devices such as books, images, music etc. that are articulated in and by devotional practice. The contributions in this anthology have their main focus on such religious practices and devotional instruments – that which we could call the material or physical and expressive aspects of religion. This active or external aspect of religion, which religious practices and artefacts represent, is what creates religious communities and makes it possible for humans to act as social beings by making things memorable. Through actions, objects and places one creates a cultural memory that passes on values, ideas, and insights to coming generations. This is clearly seen in the core ritual of Christianity – the eucharistic celebration – as formulated by St. Paul: ‘This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’⁶ This is no mere reminder of a past event: ‘Strictly speaking, *anamnesis* is much more than the simple sign of a fact distant (in time) from itself; it is rather the actual “re-collection” of a truth which eternally *is*, so that to recollect the sacrifice of Christ is to make it really and effectively present.’⁷ This is a memory that is retrospective, present and prospective. In this sense Christianity can be seen as a memory-religion or a religion of remembrance: ‘[...] weil das Gedenken der Heilstaten Gottes Hauptinhalt des Glaubens ist. Deshalb entscheidet auch das Gedenken Gottes an die Menschen (wie sein vergessen) über Heil oder Verdammnis. Durch Erinnerung (Anamnesis) wird die Gemeinschaft der Gläubigen konstituiert.’⁸

The idea that religion is fundamentally an interior disposition of the individual toward the Transcendent is after all an invention of fairly recent historical origin. There is no *homo interior* without the *homo exterior* as Henrik von Achen states in his contribution to the present anthology. The external aspects of religion, its instruments, have played their part in the cultural construction of society and may be studied to understand the beliefs, attitudes and practices they manifest. Therefore, studies of devotional instruments may lead us to an understanding of piety. Such studies are by necessity intrinsically and irreducibly interdisciplinary, since the objects in question express themselves as such multifaceted phenomena.

⁶ 1 Cor. 11:24.

⁷ Watts, Alan: *Myth and Ritual in Christianity*. London 1983 (1954), p. 95 n.

⁸ Oexle, Otto G. : “Memoria, Memorialüberlieferung” i *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, vol. VI. München 2002, pp. 510-512. For a more in depth discussion of this see also his article: ”Memoria in der Gesellschaft und in der Kultur des Mittelalters”, i Heinzle J. (Hrsg.): *Modernes Mittelalter. Neue Bilder einer populären Epoche*. Frankfurt am Main 1999, pp. 297-323.

Faith or religion has necessarily horizontal aspects, in terms of sociological and organisational structures and attitudes within mankind, as well as a 'horizontal practice' in and towards society, but no religion can survive without a 'vertical aspect': cults and rituals. In Christianity, where rituals do not serve magical purposes of control or protection, the religion cannot survive if this vertical practice does not engage the hearts of the faithful. Therefore, in a Christian context, all ritual practices must to some extent become devotional practices. Integral to any *praxis pietatis* is a certain order, a structure of this particular devotion, its process and apparatus being not merely a question of form, but of substance. Most such practices have a clear instrumental (material) component, be it a book, a pattern of prayers, a structuring of the day, the use of devotional objects, pictures or songs etc. It belongs to the nature of practical piety that it is not just a question of pious thoughts, but also of something done in a certain way to evoke and structure such thoughts. A living religion then, must express itself in devotional practices. Fundamental to such practices are order and instrumentality, which create a significant relationship with the more generic concept of collective ritual, and thus memory, culture and the sense of a dynamic tradition.

What is the European Network on the Instruments of Devotion?

The above stated ideas about religion, devotional practice and culture forms the basis of a network formed in 2003 called *European Network on the Instruments of Devotion* or ENID, an international research network coordinated from the University of Bergen, Norway.⁹ It focuses on the instrumentality of Christian piety and devotional practices, from 14th century *devotio moderna* to Vatican II in the 20th century.¹⁰ Scholars from aesthetics, history, art history, literature, musicology, philosophy and theology form a cross disciplinary group. Through interchange of ideas, sharing of knowledge and critical discourse, the cross disciplinary research of ENID aims at gaining a deeper insight into the mechanisms of piety and devotion. The phenomena and their instruments, the relation between which must be seen as dialectical, since the instrumentality of devotions both expresses and forms piety, are seen and sought explained as essential features in the religious and cultural development of Europe. At least after the Reformation one cannot understand the religious culture of Europe

⁹ ENID was established in Bergen on 16th November 2003. The network is coordinated by Professor Henrik von Achen, and its host institution is the University of Bergen through its museum, Bergen Museum.

¹⁰ See the ENID charter on the network-website: www.enid.uib.no. The charter is a basic document, defining what ENID is, what the network wants to do, and briefly outlining how it intends to do it. The present version is the first, accepted by the members in January 2004.

without studying the entire denominational pattern. Thus ENID focuses on both denominational and interdenominational features of Christian piety.

The broad time frame allows the network to focus on a variety of themes, ranging from the roots of late medieval piety to the explosion of devotional items in the 19th and 20th centuries. It further provides opportunities for diachronic approaches, for instance in studies of the dialectics between monastic and lay piety, the relationship between theology and piety, the phenomenon of secularisation or, indeed, iconographical, musicological or literary developments.

The historical perspective is seen as crucial for the understanding of religion in its cultural contexts and varieties, and therefore central to the research conducted by the ENID-members. Religion is culture, and culture and religion are closely knit together. One cannot understand Europe without understanding its history and culture, and this history is incomprehensible unless one understands the religious components which have been, and still are, such important characteristics of European culture. But this understanding, and this necessary knowledge of Christianity in Europe, both past and present, is about to disappear, particularly perhaps among the younger generations.¹¹

Traditions of Devotion

Questions concerning cultural and religious continuity, change, and interchange between denominational preferences are shown much attention within the research conducted by the members of ENID. A piety expressed in devotional practices is obviously an important ingredient in understanding medieval, particularly late medieval, Christianity. To the *devotio moderna* of the 14th century and to the entire late medieval piety, the devotional image (Andachtsbild) was a vital instrument serving as a point of focus. It gave each devotion its particular character derived from the motif depicted or practice involved, and this instrumentality distinguished it from any other pious practice. Thus the instrument played a constitutive role in creating that special, intense, spiritual, and fundamental or existential meeting between God and the individual believer which we call 'devotion'.

¹¹ See Grace Davies article: 'Europe: The Exception That Proves the Rule?' in Berger 1999, pp. 65-83. Her conclusion is that today there seems to be a generation-by-generation drop in religious knowledge, and an ignorance of even the most basic understandings of Christian teaching especially among young people. See also her book *Religion in Modern Europe. A Memory Mutates*. Oxford 2000. If this really is so, it will have heavy cultural and historical consequences, and is something that underlines the need for a broad scholarly interest and research on the importance of religion in the European culture(s). See also her book *Religion in Modern Europe. A Memory Mutates*. Oxford 2000.

Lutherans, in the post-reformation period, were by no means without pious practices. Among the most prominent were perhaps the ‘house service’ and the use of edifying books containing prayers for each day or time of day, imposing a religious structure on the everyday life of the individual – not unlike the late medieval book of hours. In this respect something done, ‘actions’ as it were, still had a role to play as a Lutheran *praxis pietatis*, and they were defined precisely as spiritual actions, something pertaining to the spiritual life and hence belonging to the life of prayer.

Following the controversialist theology of the 16th century, a new interest in ‘homo interior’, the inner man, developed in Lutheran as well as Catholic areas. Intensely practiced devotions (devotional practices) rooted in late medieval spirituality emerged, heavily influencing the mentality of 17th and to a certain extent even 18th century Europe. This development can be observed on both sides of the denominational border, on the Catholic side with the *École française* for instance, and on the Lutheran side with the devotional piety of Johann Arndt and his followers, and the Pietist continuation of this tradition in the 18th century. Such devotions were not just meant for the religious elite, but also for lay people. In varying degrees Christian piety, expressed as devotional practices with corresponding instrumental dimensions or aspects, thus engaged large parts of the European population.

The Enlightenment of the 18th century might have accelerated a process of secularisation,¹² and even if it does not seem to have had great influence on popular piety, it might have widened the gap between the theological-intellectual reflection on faith on the one hand, and devotion (piety, spirituality) on the other hand. How are we, then, to understand the revitalisation of many, often collectively expressed, devotions, or the creation of new ones, in the 19th century? This epoch, with such a great variety of new mass produced devotional instruments, drew inspiration from the history of Christianity, its religion heavily influenced by middle class ideals, yet marked by a certain ambivalence in its relations with secular society.

When studying piety or devotion, it is important not to sever such phenomena from official Christianity with its churches and theologies. There is a dialectical relationship between piety and theology, between devotional practice and the rituals of a church. Piety of course both influences and is influenced by official church teachings and liturgies.

¹² The idea of secularisation is, as we have stated earlier, a rather dubious concept. Secularisation can of course not be understood without being related to religion, as a response to or protest against it. But secularisation can also be understood in some sense as a product of the Christian religious tradition(s) of Europe. Here again see Berger 1999 and Cavanaugh 2002. See also Zabala’s introduction in: Zabala 2005, pp. 1-27.

The anthology

The present anthology aims at giving a presentation of the work of ENID and its individual members. The scope of the anthology is rather broad; spanning in time from the medieval times to the present. The topics range from medieval visual theories to post-modern perspectives on the idea of Catholicism. In this respect the book reflects the wide range of scholarly interests and research activities of the ENID members, even though the whole network is not represented here.

The anthology has no intention of giving a coherent, comprehensive or chronological account of the history of instruments of devotion in European culture. A project like this, with such a wide topic and involving so many different scholarly contributions, inevitably results in different constructions of meaning. Recognizing this fact, the anthology represents a way of writing history which adheres to collaboration of specialised scholarly forces rather than synthesizing efforts. Thus, the scope of this anthology and of ENID as such, is to present a variety of studies which often take very different approaches and make use of different theoretical perspectives and methods.

The contributions to the anthology have been divided into two different sections. The articles in the first section deal with continuities and discontinuities of devotional practices related to instruments, while the second section contains articles dealing with specific instruments and the devotional practices related to them. Since none of the articles have been written with the others in mind, the division into sections is merely an editorial construct which highlights the main topical interests of ENID as a network, rather than the specific methodological or scholarly interests of the individual contributors. The aim of such a juxtaposition of articles and their different ideas is of course to foreground specific topical issues which, then, also becomes the aim and justification of the book; to illustrate how cultural history can be approached by way of its instruments and to give some examples of the kind of answers such an approach produces.

The first section begins with Henrik von Achen's contribution 'Piety, Practice and Process'. From an introductory definition of two central terms, piety and practice, von Achen continues to investigate the process of conversion as it was described and articulated in some early 17th century illustrated devotional books and how they relate to the late 14th century devotional treatise, *The Scale of Perfection* by the Augustinian canon Walter Hilton. The article argues that there are substantial affinities between Catholic and Protestant spirituality converging in the symbol of the human heart and advocating 'a sincere, heartfelt, emotional Christianity, expressing itself in a life of prayer following certain patterns and structures

thought to be expedient in terms of sustaining the *nova oboedientia* of the order of salvation, to stay in Grace as long as possible or successfully to convert again.’ He points out that in spite of changes in theological ideas and ideals introduced by the Protestants, relations can be traced in the devotional patterns and their instruments. Daniel Cramer has the last word: in 1623 he simply exclaimed ‘St. Bernhard is ours too.’

While Henrik von Achen focuses on continuity and likenesses between Catholic and Protestant devotional instruments and practices, Mario Perniola’s philosophical contribution ‘The Cultural Turn of Catholicism’ focuses on the specificities of Catholic cultural identity. He argues that ‘ritual feeling’ is the one aspect that particularly determines Catholicism even though it dwells in the Catholic unconscious. This is due to an ongoing engagement in a ‘relation of mimetic rivalry with Protestantism and Enlightenment, instead of reflecting independently on the specificity of its own feeling.’ Modern Catholicism seems to be caught between institutional dogmas and norms on one side and Catholic identity on the other. This bad integration of moral and cognitive aspects of religion results in a discrepancy which, from the outside, is ‘generally considered a sign of superficiality and opportunism, if not of bad faith and hypocrisy.’ With his article Perniola aims at unveiling the *intrasystematic consistency* of Catholic feeling, and making way for a Catholicism without orthodoxy.

In a certain respect the attempt made by Mario Perniola in arguing for a more ‘true’ Catholicism has parallels in earlier attempts to reform or revitalise religious practices, such as the one described in Mette Birkedal Bruuns article on ‘Manual Labour as *praxis pietatis*. Sketch of a Motif in the 17th century Cistercian Reform at La Trappe.’ This particular example is of course of a much more radical kind: in the late 17th century Armand-Jean de Rancé introduced his idea of reform in a monastery in La Trappe with manual labour playing a crucial role. Bruun illustrates how Rancé founded his ideas in a long monastic tradition, with the Rule of Benedict as an important inspiration in order to authenticate his attempt. However, through this shines the personal ideals of the reformer: that manual labour was not only a matter of cultivation of land but a devotional practice of penitence and humility which he regarded should be the focal monastic deeds. This is a demonstration of how change or revitalisation is inseparably intertwined with continuity.

Rob Faesen’s contribution ‘The Great Silence of Saint Joseph: Devotion to Saint Joseph and the 17th century Crisis of Mysticism in the Jesuit Order’ is dedicated to the historiography of the devotion of St. Joseph. In the mid 17th century the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Muzio Vitelleschi, attempted to prohibit devotion to St. Joseph in what he regarded as a ‘new and unusual manner’. By investigating the writings of a young Jesuit,

Jean-Joseph Surin, a contemporary of Viteleschi's, Faesen shows that devotion to St. Joseph can be affiliated with a mystical tradition deeply rooted in the Middle Ages, which spoke of the 'indwelling of Christ' as a complete mutual love between man and God. However, Christian thought of the 17th century, as represented by the Superior General of the Jesuit Order, was heavily influenced by nominalism and the idea of the individual. 'Indwelling' was incomprehensible within this regime of thinking and regarded as mere imagination. Viteleschi regarded the contemplative dimension of the devotion to the father of Jesus as a threat to the identity of the Jesuit Order. Faesen's article contributes with a demonstration of how devotional practice and theological thought sometimes collide and challenge the established identity of a religious society.

The last contribution in this section is Fred van Lieburg on 'The Medical Market Compared with the Pastoral Market: A perspective from early modern Dutch history.' Lieburg argues that there are several affinities between the medical hierarchical division of labour and the pastoral in the 17th century. The pastoral sector had its doctores and quacks too, which were to some extent controlled by market mechanisms. Different clientele sought different kinds of healers, be it medical or pastoral. In spite of the Old Testament words: 'O, everyone that thirsteth, come to the waters, and he that hath no money, come, buy and eat, yes, come buy wine and milk without money and without price' (Isiah 55.1) there seems to have been a subtle mechanism of service and reward. Lieburg thus touches on a very central theme in the history of religion and religiosity: the difference between practice and theory.

What binds the above mentioned articles together, in spite of their obvious differences in both theme and approach, is the idea that change and continuity of religion and religiosity is shaped by ideals, theological thought and doctrine as well as practices. There is no necessary contradiction between the two, but at times they collide and create an atmosphere of need for renewal, reform, and re-definition of religious and devotional identity. The contributions in the first section all illustrate such balances and tensions within the history of religious thought and practice.

Historical perspective is by no means absent in the second section, which deals more specifically with certain instruments of devotion, just as specific instruments are not absent from the contributions in the first section. The articles in the second section deal with the instruments themselves as the primary point of focus, and the contributors all attempt to shed light on the devotional qualities of specific instruments and the specific practices related to them. The materiality of the objects is the focal point. Perhaps it would clarify their devotional status to call them 'subjects', because after all, all six contributions in this section

demonstrate how the meeting between instrument and devotee can be characterised as communication. The instrument is not just a silent object articulated by the one approaching it; it speaks and influences the devotional situation. The articles in this section illustrate the importance of instruments as well as their individual specificities as contributors to the devotional experience.

In his article 'Weapons of Redemption: Piety, Poetry and the Instruments of the Passion in Late Medieval Ireland' Salvador Ryan investigates a very common type of passion iconography which spread over most of Europe in the late Middle Ages: the *Arma Christi*. Examples of such images, which often featured a variety of 'props' of the Passion story such as the cross, the lance, the nails, a hammer, the crown of thorns, the sponge, the flagellation column just to mention a few, and especially their meaning in an Irish context, are investigated by way of bardic poetry. Hence the article also introduces a little known poetic genre to a larger audience. Bardic poetry describes the Passion of Christ as a war against evil and shows Christ as a victorious militant hero, something which must have appealed to the medieval warrior society. This might help explain why images of the instruments of the Passion became so popular in late medieval Irish tomb-sculpture: the commissioners placed their trust in the saving power of Christ's Passion and death before they arrived before God on Judgement day, as Ryan concludes. As if the victorious Christ went to war for man with all his artillery.

The only contribution to deal with the relation between the Eastern and the Western Church is that of Peter De Mey. In his article 'Looking at the Mystery of the Incarnated God. Eastern and Western Iconography as a Source of Theological Reflection', the iconography and theological message of the Eastern Anastasis or Resurrection icon is compared with the Isenheim Altar by Matthias Grünewald. De Mey argues that the visual traditions of both the Eastern and the Western Church have emphasised the catechetical value of images as tools for moving the hearts of the beholders. The two images in question here, both contain the message of Salvation: what they have in common is their communication of hope. De Mey concludes with a rhetorical question: 'Could God's love not ultimately touch the heart of every Adam and Eve of the Resurrection Icon, and even that of the most arrogant fallen angel of the Isenheim Altar?' Thus he attempts to bridge modern theology of the Eastern and the Western Church by showing their affinities with outset in their visual expressions and instruments of devotion.

Nils Holger Petersen's article '*Sepolcro*: Musical Devotion of the Passion in 17th - 18th century Austria' deals with a specific musical genre associated with the devotional activities

at the Viennese court under Leopold I (1658-1705). A *sepolchro* was a staging of a narrative related to the Passion of Christ performed in a church in front of an Easter sepulchre. By analyzing one particular *sepolchro*, *La vita nella morte* (Life in Death) by Antonio Draghi (music) and Niccolò Minalti (poetry), Petersen sheds light on some characteristics of imperial devotional practice at the time. *La vita nella morte* creates a space for theological instruction and devotional identification by combining theological discourse and representational technology which brings the beholder of the *sepolchro* directly to the Crucifixion by letting the Good Thief on the cross give an ‘eye witness’ report of the events. Music and drama can thus be understood as instruments of devotion. This type of religious drama in some respects resembles the medieval liturgical plays and Petersen argues that it might have influenced the music of the young Mozart.

In the 19th century a much more portable devotional edifice became widely popular. Eli Heldaas Seland's article ‘19th century Devotional Medals: A Presentation’ introduces her ongoing research on devotional medals with some thoughts about how to define and analyze these often small objects. Most of them are mass produced and made of cheap materials and it makes little or no sense to speak of them as ‘valuable’ in a traditional sense. Numismatic research tends to systematise them under categories such as ‘miscellaneous’. Anyhow, these medals or medalets have been connected with other kinds of values: many of them were blessed or had indulgences attached to them. As with most of the other instruments investigated in this anthology, medals were, and still are, associated with certain powers, reflected in the devotional practices related to them.

The article by Henning Laugerud, ‘Visuality and Devotion in the Middle Ages’ investigates late medieval conceptions of sight and vision in order to shed light on medieval reception of images. According to the theological thinking of prominent figures such as St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, to ‘see’ was to ‘know’, and vision was regarded as the most important of senses. Seeing was not just an act of sensing which, in conjunction with images, could be used in the act of pious devotion: seeing had an almost sacramental character and an aspect of identification. Seeing could transfer grace because of its ability to give knowledge about God. The medieval visual culture, Laugerud argues, was far more complex than ours: medieval men and women ‘saw’ much more in images than the modern understanding of the verb ‘to see’ indicates today.

Along the same line as Laugerud, Laura Katrine Skinnebach’s article ‘...”the solace of his image”’: Images and Presence in Late Medieval Devotional Practice’ investigates images as mediators of divine presence. Using a variety of visual and textual sources Skinnebach

argues that images could produce a devotional experience which eliminated the barrier between Heaven and Earth and made the divine beings present to the devotee. Devotional practices related to images were largely directed by this 'longing for divine presence'. Much was acquired by the actual practice, however. Only if approached in an appropriate and devout manner could the images open the way for an experience of divine presence.

The purpose of this anthology is, as stated earlier, to present a variety of studies on devotion and its instruments and to give a presentation of the work of ENID and its individual members. The aim of our work is to shed light on what we believe to be central aspects of Christianity and its influence on and in European culture(s), and it is our hope that this anthology can present some new insights into the histories and cultures of Europe.