



Call for papers

CYCLE OF CONFERENCES

(2016-2018)

Convenors: Paula Barros and Chrystel Bernat

Religious Attachment Exercises of Faith, Spiritual Commitment and Resignation in Early Modern Europe

Séminaire d'Histoire Moderne des Religions

Institut protestant de théologie – Faculté de Montpellier

Laboratoire d'études sur les monothéismes (UMR 8584, CNRS-EPHE)

Université Paul-Valéry, Montpellier 3

Institute for Research on the Renaissance, the Neo-Classical Age and the Enlightenment (IRCL, UMR 5186, CNRS)

2nd and 3rd conference

25 November 2016 and 17 March 2017

This three-year cycle of conferences aims at promoting exchanges between the humanities and the social sciences. It is organized conjointly by the Séminaire d'Histoire Moderne des Religions (Institut protestant de théologie, Montpellier) and the Institute for Research on the Renaissance, the Neo-Classical Age and the Enlightenment (IRCL, UMR 5186, CNRS – Université Paul-Valéry, Montpellier).

Annual or biannual encounters are scheduled in March and/or October over a three-year period (2016-2018) and will take the shape of one- or multi-day conferences.

Under the heading “Religious Attachment. Exercises of Faith, Spiritual Commitment and Resignation in Early Modern Europe”, participants are invited to enquire into five areas of research bearing on the analysis of corporality, the emotions and the senses in early modern spirituality. The main focus will be on the French- and English-speaking worlds, but papers dealing with other European areas will also be welcomed.

Topic

“Attachment” refers to a feeling or a bond. Focusing on the concept of attachment, this cycle of conferences seeks to explore early modern ways of relating to God, a faith or a community. How did early modern individuals or groups express, conceal or disguise religious or spiritual bonds? Did they criticize the dissimulation or value the expression of such bonds?

This cycle of conferences aims at understanding the devotional, corporal, linguistic or symbolic patterns of religious attachment as well as its modes of physical or verbal expression in the context of emerging confessional identities on either side of the Channel. Participants are thus invited to explore:

- moments of religious and political confrontation, spiritual (re)conquest, religious prohibition and oppression: e.g. the wars of religion, the Counter-Reformation, the decades following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes or the time of the Huguenot Refuge in France; religious change in Tudor and Stuart England from the Henrician Reformation to the civil wars and revolutions of the seventeenth-century;
- moments of religious hesitation and internal division (e.g. debates and controversies within and about the Church of England, the French and the English civil wars), conflicting spiritual options (conformity, open or clandestine resistance, abjuration, exile), doctrinal reformulations or theological separatisms (e.g. Jansenism, Arminianism or Laudianism).

Consideration will be given to the feelings and actions through which early modern individuals or groups conveyed religious bonds or modes of belonging, whether intimately or publicly (e.g. through confession, proclamation or protestation), as well as to the ways in which spiritual directors could require or prohibit, defend or attack such testimonies in times of trial or prosperity, when the faithful wavered in their commitment, let it grow weak, were tempted to conceal it or even to give it up.

In Antoine Furetière's *Dictionnaire Universel* (1690), the notion of attachment is said to refer both to a bond someone has with someone else and to the idea of applying oneself diligently to something¹. The concept of attachment thus simultaneously conveys the ideas of completion and of persistent endeavour to accomplish what is undertaken. Accordingly, this cycle of conferences will try to scrutinize not only the act of bearing witness, but also the faithful's resolution – or conversely, their lack of diligence – to testify to their religious bonds. Attention will also be paid to *how* the faithful testified or were asked to testify. Were there different theological codifications of religious attachment in different areas and at different moments in the early modern period? Were there different normative discourses? Were there specific philosophical or theological approaches? Were there forms of rhetoric, particular literary modes, appropriate practices and values associated with the expression of one's attachment? Were there processes of control and validation? And how did one express and/or effect one's detachment or disengagement?

Central to the discussion of religious attachment are the closely related concepts of commitment and resignation. Indeed, according to Furetière, the notion of attachment is related to the ideas of obligation and commitment². One of the aims of this cycle of conferences will thus be to analyse the concept of attachment in its connection with issues revolving around the exercise and the defence of faith. How did one commit oneself to one's faith in early modern Europe? How did one promise and thereby bind oneself? How did one put oneself at the service of one's beliefs? How did one bind oneself to a religion? How did one exercise one's faith, i.e. how did one perform it and put it to the test? Possible topics include the forms of militancy, modes of behaviour ranging from self-exposure to self-protection, the uses of faith to express adherence, filiation or affiliation, the motivations underlying the expression of one's religious bonds. Why did one commit oneself? Why did one need to express one's faith? How did one express it? Which practices of piety were associated with different

¹ L'attachement "ne se dit qu'au figuré de la liaison qu'on a avec quelque personne ou quelque parti, de l'application qu'on donne à quelque chose".

² L'attache "se dit figurément en morale de l'engagement qu'on a à quelque chose".

forms of commitment? How did adversity shape the experience of commitment? Which particular forms of piety and devotion did it generate?

The subject of commitment raises the symmetrical issue of spiritual resignation, its meanings and challenges and the practices it involved. The articulation between commitment and resignation is all the more thought-provoking as the concept of resignation refers to an act of relinquishing which, as Furetière points out, is an act of deference, of giving oneself up to somebody else – or to God³. Insofar as it implies the act of accepting and enduring the superior will of God without complaining, resignation can be constructed as a form of commitment. This double process – of giving up and selflessly giving oneself up to God – is one of the issues that this cycle of conferences will seek to explore, examining how resignation was addressed from a theological point of view, surveying the figures that were conjured up to convey resignation, the forms of commitment and renunciation they were made to embody, the hopes they raised and the reproaches they voiced. The cycle of conferences will analyse the ways in which the faithful and their directors of conscience engaged with these notions of commitment and resignation, in connection with different forms of militancy and discourses of combat.

Themes

Discussions will be organised around five major themes:

- **“Spiritual affiliation / disaffiliation”** will address the issue of confessional belonging and will look closely at how thresholds were defined from an ideological, spiritual, theological and pragmatic point of view, the lines along which boundaries were drawn and the practices which contributed to delineate them.
- **“Spiritual trials and tests of faith”** will focus on the different modes of expression and reception of the act of bearing witness.
- **“Withdrawal(s), sacrifice and renunciation”** will examine the concept of resignation through the lens of its articulation with the concept of commitment. Particular attention will be given to the tension between attachment and detachment in the intimate sphere and to the motives and expressions of disengagement or surrender.
- **“Militancy, protest and combat”** will discuss forms of partisan piety arising in situations of conflict and contest outside and beyond the private sphere, investigating the conditions in which individuals committed themselves to the defence of a cause or the conquest of rights and liberties.
- The **identification of a body of texts** in French and in English will be a special concern throughout the cycle, as it is intended to structure the enquiry. The aim will be to identify texts specifically related to the topic of religious attachment, with a special focus on little known and/or as yet unpublished sources.

This cycle of conferences aims at confronting two areas, France and England – including French- and English- speaking areas outside the borders of the two kingdoms and places of exile such as the Huguenot Refuge. Examining these areas through the lens of their geographical and confessional

³ “Résignation signifie aussi, deference entiere, abandonnement qu'on fait de soy-même à la volonté, à la discretion d'autruy. Un bon chrétien doit avoir une entiere *resignation* à la volonté de Dieu, recevoir toutes les afflictions de sa main”.



otherness, it will try to bring to light similarities, differences and specificities and identify cultural transfers and interpenetrating discourses.

In spite of this focus on the French- and English-speaking worlds, which implies a strong emphasis on early modern Protestantism and Catholicism, discussions of religious attachment in other areas and/or faiths will also be welcomed. The cycle of conferences seeks to take into account the diversity of early modern Christianity (Roman Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Lutheranism, Calvinism, Presbyterianism, Anglicanism, etc.) and encourages comparisons with the other monotheistic religions. Cross-temporal comparisons within the early modern period are strongly encouraged: the aim will be to identify elements of continuity and change, point out regularity as well as novelty and distinguish reactivations and adaptations from more innovative discourses and practices.

The languages of the conferences will be English and French.

Proposals, consisting of a paper abstract (no more than 1,500 signs) and a short biography should be submitted to paula.barros@univ-montp3.fr and chrystel.bernat@gmail.com by 15 September 2015. Please indicate for which of the two conferences you are submitting.

Advisory committee

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