

## Soul Travel: Spiritual Journeys and Sacred Voyages in Early Modern Europe



[Woodcut of St Michael, from Pierre Le Charpentier, *Instructions pour la confrérie des pellerins du Mont St Michel érigée en la paroisse de St Niçaise en Rouen* (Rouen, Jacques Héroult, 1668)]

**Date:** 14 September 2017

**Location:** De Montfort University, Leicester.

In recent years, scholars have been increasingly interested in recovering personal spiritual experiences and their representation in the early modern period. Personal spirituality has been one important lens through which scholars have scrutinised the nature of religious change in this period and its impact on communities and regions. One of the most enduring historiographical debates has centred upon the ‘rise’ of the individual as an autonomous, consciously-expressed self in the Reformation era. Linked to this has been the relationship between personal, interiorized spirituality and external actions. Already in the fifteenth century, Franciscan and Carthusian practices and *Devotio moderna* traditions encouraged withdrawal, self-examination and mental prayer. The growth of interiority, it is argued, augmented further, during and after the Reformation. For example, John Bossy’s interpretation of the transformation of early modern Catholicism, from a communitarian to an

individual and personal faith, has been enormously influential, the purpose of devotion becoming reconciliation to God rather than obligation to the community.

The purpose of this one-day colloquium is to examine a particular manifestation of interiority and its relationship to material experience: that of the spiritual journey or pilgrimage. This could take the form of an imagined real journey, such as Louis Richeome's *The Pilgrim of Loreto* or an allegorical voyage such as John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. This meeting has as its objective an exploration of spiritual and interior journeys, understood broadly.

We would like to bring together theologians, literary scholars and historians, to discuss the nature, construction and evolution of the variety of spiritual journeys, across confessional and religious boundaries. We seek proposals for 25 minute papers on any aspect of spiritual journeys. **Themes might include (but are not limited to):**

- Pilgrimage: Local, Global and Virtual
- Sacred Voyages, Affect and the Senses
- Pilgrims, Sacred Landscapes and Travel
- Spiritual Autobiography, Conversion Narratives and the 'Self'
- Writing Lives: Spiritual Biography and Hagiography
- Interiority and Meditative Literature

An abstract of 250 words should be sent by 30 April 2017 to Elizabeth Tingle:  
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Organisers:

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