

‘My Soul doth Magnify’

The Appropriation of the Anglican Choral Evensong in the Dutch Context – Presentation of a Research Project

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1. Introduction

There’s something remarkable going on in the Netherlands. In increasingly more places there are choral evensongs following the model of the Anglican cathedrals. Dutch boys’ choirs and mixed choirs, dressed in traditional English red choir vestments with white collars, sing a complete traditional English liturgy: English hymns, preces and responses, psalms, canticles and an anthem, and there are also English lessons and spoken prayers. The evensongs, often performed in monumental churches, attract many people.¹ In some places, participants have to buy an admission fee to attend the evensong. The phenomenon raises many questions. What exactly is going on here? Is this evensong a concert, liturgy, theatre, or all of them at the same time? What are the reasons for its popularity? Why do visitors go to the evensong? Do these visitors also go to regular church services? What does the popularity of the choral evensong mean against the background of secularization?

The Anglican choral evensong in the Netherlands is the central topic of the research project presented in this article. In November 2012, our research was presented at the conference ‘Performances of religious music in medieval and late modern culture’ with Professor John Harper from Bangor University. The central theme of the conference was that religious music is no longer the exclusive property of religious communities. It has become part of the culture. The performances of Anglican choral evensongs in the Netherlands are an example of this phenomenon.

In our research, we will investigate the appropriation of the choral evensong in the context of a previously noted transformation of religiosity as well as the changing position of the churches and theology. In the Netherlands, there is a shift occurring with respect to the position of faith. The Academic Council for Government Policy published a report in 2006 titled *Geloven in het publieke domein* (Belief in the public space).² This report shows the results of research that was conducted into the position of religion in the Netherlands. One of the conclusions is that the influence of churches is diminishing, but that religion does not

¹ For example, the *Janskerk*, Utrecht is completely filled during the monthly choral evensongs of the Schola Davidica.

² W. VAN DE DONK et al.: *Geloven in het publieke domein. Verkenningen van een dubbele transformatie* (= WRR verkenningen 13) (Amsterdam 2006).

disappear. It is transferred and transformed, and it emerges in unexpected forms and in unexpected places. We notice this also in international studies, for instance Wolfe's *The transformation of American religion. How we actually live our faith*³ and Norris' and Inglehart's *Sacred and secular. Religion and politics worldwide*⁴ as well as in the more recent Dutch publications of Frans Jespers⁵ and Joep de Hart.⁶ The Anglican choral evensong in the Netherlands, outside as well as inside the framework of the institutional churches, is an interesting case with respect to the transfer and transformation of religion.

From 1 May 2013, we started conducting a PHD-research project that is embedded in the Research Program 'Practices of faith in socio-cultural networks' of the Protestant Theological University, Amsterdam. The supervisor is professor Marcel Barnard and co-supervisor is dr. Martin Hoondert (Tilburg University). In this article, we will describe the design of the research project. First of all, we will give an overview of the phenomenon of choral evensongs in the Netherlands (2). Secondly, we will present the research questions and the aim of the research (3). Thirdly, we will elaborate on the method (4). Fourthly, we will explore some key concepts of this study, including 'appropriation', 'transfer and transformation', and 'religiosity, religion, and culture' (5). Afterwards, we will give some final remarks (6).

2. Choral evensong in the Dutch context

2.1. Choral evensong in the Netherlands

In 1983, the Schola Davidica Utrecht was one of the first choirs to introduce Anglican worship in the Netherlands. Gert Oost, organist, and one of the founders of the Schola was one of the initiators. Jan Valkestijn, Director of Music of Haarlem Cathedral, and Bouwe Dijkstra, founder and first conductor of the Roden Boys Choir, were two other 'pioneers' in this respect in the country. For the last thirty years, there have been Anglican-styled choral evensongs in more places in the Netherlands.⁷ Boys' choirs and evensong choirs have

³ A. WOLFE: *The transformation of American religion. How we actually live our faith* (Chicago 2003).

⁴ P. NORRIS & R. INGLEHART: *Sacred and secular. Religion and politics worldwide* (Cambridge 2004).

⁵ F. JESPERS (red.): *Nieuwe religiositeit in Nederland. Gevalstudies en beschouwingen over alternatieve religieuze activiteiten* (Budel 2009).

⁶ J. DE HART: *Zwevende Gelovigen. Oude religie en nieuwe spiritualiteit* (Amsterdam 2011/2013). And in the earlier publication J. DE HART & J.W. BECKER: *Godsdienstige veranderingen in Nederland. Verschuivingen in de binding met de kerken en de christelijke traditie* (Amsterdam 2006).

⁷ For instance in: Aalten, Alkmaar, Almelo, Amersfoort, Amstelveen, Amsterdam, Arnhem, Assen, Berkel en Rodenrijs, Boxtel, Breda, Breukelen, Brielle, Bussum, Cu-

been founded, for example the Kampen Boys Choir (2002) and the Culemborg Chapel Choir (2004). Choirs performing choral evensong are, for example, Northern Voices Roden, Anthem Zwolle, Kamerkoor Carmina Amantes, Martinus Cantorij Zwaag, Schouws Kamerkoor, Leidse Cantorij, Laurencantorij Rotterdam, Choral Voices Groningen, Capella Vesperale Eindhoven, Cappella pro Cantibus, Sweelinck Cantorij Amsterdam, Vocaal Theologen Ensemble, Dutch Choral Singers, The Anglican Singers Haarlem, Boys Choir Dalfsen, Anthem Amstelveen, Capella Nicolai Amsterdam, Vocaal Ensemble Magnificat, Boxtelse Cantorij, Kerkkoor Hoornaar, and Martini Boys Choir Sneek.⁸ New books with translations of Anglican hymns and chants have been published, for instance the hymn book *Het liefste lied van overzee*.⁹ In the new Dutch hymnal of the Protestant churches, *Liedboek. Zingen en bidden in huis en kerk*,¹⁰ more than 70 Anglican hymn tunes are published.¹¹ The editorial board commissioned theologians to create (new) translations of Anglican hymns and carols.¹² The new hymnbook also includes chants¹³ and preces and responses¹⁴ for a choral evensong in a Dutch translation.

We notice three different types of contexts in which choral evensongs in the Netherlands are performed. First, in some places it is performed as a service connected to a church community, parish, or congregation. Such is the case, for instance, in the Roman Catholic *Nicolauskerk* of Amsterdam wherein the choral

lemborg, Deventer, Dirksland, Doesburg, Dordrecht, Dreischor, Edam, Eindhoven, Emmen, Enkhuisen, Enschede, Gorinchem, Gouda, Groningen, Haarlem, Hardenberg, Harlingen, Haskerdijken, Hattem, Heusden, Holten, Hoozevee, Hoorn, Hoornaar, Huizen, Kampen, Katwijk, Leersum, Leeuwarden, Leiden, Leiderdorp, Lochem, Middebeemster, Mijnsheerenland, Noordwijk, Nijmegen, Oegstegeest, Oosterbeek, Oudewater, Papendrecht, Rotterdam, Sneek, Uden, Utrecht, Veenendaal, Vianen, Vlissingen, Winterswijk, Zaltbommel, Zeist, Zoetermeer, Zierikzee, Zuidbroek, Zutphen, Zwaag, and Zwolle.

⁸ More detailed quantitative data will be collected in the course of the research in order to complete the picture.

⁹ S. DE VRIES: *Het liefste lied van overzee. Zestig vertalingen en nieuwe teksten op bekende Engelse melodieën* (Vught 2012).

¹⁰ *Liedboek. Zingen en bidden in huis en kerk* (Zoetermeer 2013).

¹¹ For instance: Song 8a, 23c, 90a, 103c, 150a, 156, 214, 215, 237, 243, 247, 248, 259, 263, 268, 281, 377, 378, 381, 389, 393, 416, 425, 443, 462, 463, 479, 496, 498, 503, 505, 506, 507, 512, 534, 542, 545, 578, 624, 633, 634, 673, 700, 705, 706, 712, 719, 725, 727, 737, 745, 753, 754, 756, 767, 769, 791, 793, 798, 801, 836, 867, 870, 871, 910, 913, 943, 951, 968, 969, 973, 984, 985, 993, 1008 and 1014.

¹² For instance: Song 150a: *Geprezen zij God*. Text: Henry Williams Baker; ‘O Praise ye the Lord’, translation: Gert Landman; melody: Charles Hubert Hasting Parry – Laudate Dominum.

¹³ For instance: Song 989: *Gelukkig de armen van geest. Zaligsprekingen*. Text: Gert Landman – Matthew 5, 3-10; music Matthew Camidge.

¹⁴ Song 191: *Vaste Gezangen voor een avondgebed volgens de Anglicaanse traditie. Preces and responses*. Text: Sytze de Vries; melody: Daniël Rouwkema.

evensong is part of the services of the community. Other examples are the evensongs in the Protestant *Oude Kerk* Amsterdam. Secondly, in other places, choral evensongs are performed as worship and a concert at the same time, which is how the choirs describe it themselves on their websites. The choirs that are responsible for these performances are unaffiliated to a church or church community and they simply rent a church for the performance of a choral evensong, as is the case, for example, with the Schola Davidica in the *Janskerk* in Utrecht. On its website we read: ‘Choral evensong is both a concert and a service; a place to become quiet, to refresh your soul, to meditate and to enjoy inspired beauty’.¹⁵ Thirdly, in some places, choral evensongs are performed as a concert. There is no connection with the local church, and the evensong is an independent event. Listeners have to buy an entrance ticket for the choral evensong. Although the choral evensongs in this third category are performed as a concert, they are highly ritualized, with liturgical robes, lessons, and spoken prayers. The ‘concert-like’ choral evensong still takes place inside the church building, but not in the context of a church community. It is important to realize that these contexts do not tell anything about the individual appropriation of the choral evensong.

Judged by the number of choirs performing evensong and the number of Anglican melodies in the hymn books, it seems that choral evensong wins ground in the Netherlands. What is this choral evensong historically?

2.2. Historical background

The choral evensong is a daily prayer service that is in use in the Anglican Church, celebrated in the late afternoon or evening. It is the equivalent of the vespers in the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church. The choral evensong was originally established in the sixteenth century, during the English Reformation, but its roots lie in the Early Church. During the English Reformation, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer introduced liturgy in the vernacular in England. The monasteries were closed and from that moment on the daily office became part of the congregational worship. The services were intended for use by everyone: daily public worship. Cranmer reduced the liturgy of the hours to the matins (morning prayer) and the evensong (evening prayer). Vespers and complines were merged into one evensong liturgy. In the evensong, the Magnificat (from the vespers) obtained a place after the First Lesson, and the Nunc dimittis (from the complines) after the Second Lesson. In 1549, the first *Book of common prayer* was published, including an order for the evensong. After some revisions, in 1662 the *Book of common prayer* reached its final form. This 1662-order is still celebrated daily in choral evensongs in Anglican cathedrals.

¹⁵ www.scholadavidica.nl (30 May 2013).

drals and colleges.¹⁶ Singing choral evensongs is one of the main tasks of every English choir connected to a cathedral or college.



Illustration 1: Schola Davidica – *Janskerk* Utrecht [photo Hanna Rijken]

2.3. Pilot study

We started our research of the evensong in the Netherlands with a pilot study at some choral evensongs of the Schola Davidica in Utrecht, and published its results as a master's thesis (Tilburg University).¹⁷ The first thing that struck us was that there were many visitors in every choral evensong. An important question here was then: why are they visiting the evensong and what qualities make the evensong attractive to them? During interviews, people described the meaning of the choral evensong for them. From the analysis of the interviews and from participant observation, we provisionally established a list of qualities or characteristics of (the performance of) the evensong. First of all, the quality 'musicality' appeared to be important: participants, both visitors and choir

¹⁶ For instance: in Ripon Cathedral, Manchester Cathedral, Durham Cathedral and Rochester Cathedral. It's remarkable that in English cathedrals, for instance in Durham, choral evensong is celebrated according to *Book of common prayer* (1662) and cathedral Eucharist according to *Common worship* (2000).

¹⁷ H. RIJKEN: *My Soul doth magnify. The appropriation of the Anglican choral evensong in the Dutch context* (Research Master Thesis, Tilburg University, August 2011).

members, mentioned the high vocal quality and the rich musical repertory in the choral evensong. The musical level in the evensong is comparable to the high standard of Dutch professional chamber choirs in the concert circuit. To some of the interviewees, music is a gateway to transcendent experiences. In the choral evensong there is an opportunity to join in the singing of the hymns, but there is also the possibility to be silent and listen. People do not have to join in the singing all the time. They can choose to just experience the beauty of the music. This is a contrast with a lot of Protestant practices, where it is found that in services there is only congregational singing.

The second quality which is of importance for the participants in choral evensongs is 'rituality', which is to be conceived as a syntax of symbolic language, symbolic acting, and symbols.¹⁸ This aspect refers to the highly ritualized performance of the choral evensong. We only recall the opening rite: a robed choir that strides into the church in procession, while singing the opening hymn. 'Rituality' itself has several sub-qualities. For instance, in the evensong 'openness', in a hermeneutical sense, is an important aspect of rituality. People told us that the fact that there is no sermon and that they do not have to say the creed gives them the opportunity to generate their own meanings.

The third attributed quality is the role of tradition. Connection with the past was reported to be important for the popularity of the evensong. There is respect for old traditions, but at the same time, the choral evensong is not old-fashioned. The rite is constantly being adapted to the current time. Contemporary composers and poets compose new pieces for the traditional liturgical form. James Macmillan, John Rutter, and the Dutch composer Daniel Rouwkema are only a few of them.

Finally, the fourth quality, we indicate as 'flow and spirituality'. An important aspect of the choral evensong is the 'flow' in the liturgy, the elements follow up in a streaming, fluent way without words in between. Tex Sample pleads in his book *The spectacle of worship*¹⁹ for 'worship as an experience' and according to him it is important that there is continuous 'flow' in the worship.²⁰ The evensong is characterized by a musical spirituality that crosses the borders of the institutional churches. People are touched and want to be touched, they want to have a spiritual experience and, according to their own perception, that is what happens in the choral evensong, due to the flow of the music.

¹⁸ M. BARNARD & P. POST (red.): *Ritueel bestek. Antropologische kernwoorden van de liturgie* (Zoetermeer 2001).

¹⁹ T. SAMPLE: *The spectacle of worship in a wired world. Electronic culture and the gathered people of God* (Nashville 1998). Although he writes about forms of worship other than the choral evensong, the common element is 'flow'.

²⁰ SAMPLE: *The spectacle of worship in a wired world* 106.

3. Research question and aim of the research

The qualities of the Anglican evensong as it is performed and appropriated in the Netherlands, which we formulated on the basis of our pilot study and literature research, raise many questions. We formulate the main research question that we will answer in this research project, as follows:

How is the Anglican choral evensong appropriated in the Netherlands? Which liturgical-ritual qualities can be found in the choral evensong in the Dutch context? What do these appropriations and qualities tell us about the transformation of religiosity? How can this process be theologically evaluated?

This research is relevant for several reasons, some of which will be explained in what follows.

We have noticed a growing popularity of choral evensong in the Netherlands against the background of secularization. The first aim of the research is to gain insight into the appropriation of Anglican choral evensong in the Netherlands. Because of the growing popularity of the Anglican choral evensong in the Dutch context it is appropriate to conduct research in this domain.

The second aim is to investigate the meanings that participants attribute to the performance of the Anglican choral evensong in the Dutch context. The third aim is to explore the role of this liturgical-ritual form in relation to the transformation of religiosity in our late modern culture. By analyzing and interpreting the processes of the appropriation of Anglican choral evensong in the Dutch context we seek to gain more insight into changing religiosity and theology in the Netherlands. The fourth aim is to investigate the theological meaning of the transformation of religion. What consequences does this transformation of religion have for faith? Is the liturgical ritual of the choral evensong still a form of worship? Is it still about belief, theology, and church? In order to avoid vagueness, we want to study the transformation of religiosity located and materialized in Anglican evensong. The academic research will be valorized on a practical level for local churches, by reporting to them as to which liturgical-ritual qualities are found in the evensongs outside the institutional frame of the church, on the border of church and culture. Insight into this area may provide churches with new perspectives in a time of secularization.

4. Research method: liturgical-ritual ethnography

To explore the transformation of religiosity in relation to the liturgical ritual of the choral evensong is quite a new perspective to take; it requires approaching the area from the inside. That is why the methods used will be ethnographic in character: participant observation, analysis of orders and websites, and interviews with key informants. In this research we deliberately have selected the

term 'liturgical ritual' because of the double focus of our analysis. 'Liturgical' refers to the theological perspective of worship, and 'ritual' refers to the cultural-anthropological perspective. In the forthcoming book *Worship in the network culture. Liturgical ritual studies - fields and methods, concepts and metaphors*,²¹ Marcel Barnard, Johan Cilliers and Cas Wepener describe that a liturgical ritual²²

must be understood in the first place within its cultural and anthropological contexts, that is, within its immediate and wider cultural contexts, as well as from its anthropological context, that is, from the perspective of its participants or performers. Liturgical ritual must in the second place be understood from the way it is theologically informed and be evaluated from theological perspectives.

Which liturgical-ritual qualities can be found in choral evensong in the Dutch context? We use 'qualities' according the description of Paul Post: 'identity-determining characteristics, traits, dimensions or tendencies in a ritual repertoire'.²³ In the research, we will try to discover the meanings that performers and listeners attribute to the choral evensong. Studies of liturgical ethnographers, for instance of Mary E. McGann,²⁴ Martin Stringer,²⁵ Martin Hoondert²⁶ and Mirella Klomp²⁷ show that the ethnographic method is useful in the research on liturgical rituals.

The empirical part comprises three phases: mapping the field, description and analysis, and evaluation.

First, we will make a general overview of choral evensongs in the Netherlands, a 'mapping the field'. *Where are choral evensongs organized, by whom and how often? Who 'performs' choral evensongs and who goes to choral evensongs?* Afterwards, we will select three evensong choirs in the Netherlands: First, a choir that performs choral evensong as a service connected to a church, second, a choir that performs choral evensong unaffiliated to a church, as both a service and a concert

²¹ M. BARNARD, J. CILLIERS & C. WEPENER: *Worship in the network culture. Liturgical ritual studies - fields and methods, concepts and metaphors* (= Liturgia condenda 28) (Leuven / Paris / Walpole, MA 2014) forthcoming.

²² BARNARD, CILLIERS & WEPENER: *Worship in the network culture*.

²³ P. POST: 'Introduction and application. Feast as a key concept in a liturgical studies research design', in P. POST, G. ROUWHORST, L. VAN TONGEREN & A. SCHEER (eds.): *Christian feast and festival. The dynamics of western liturgy and culture* (= Liturgia condenda 12) (Leuven / Paris / Sterling, VA 2001) 47-77, p. 58.

²⁴ M.E. MCGANN: *A precious fountain. Music in the worship of an African-American Catholic community* (Collegeville, MN 2004).

²⁵ M.D. STRINGER: *On the perception of worship. The ethnography of worship in four Christian congregations in Manchester* (Birmingham 1999).

²⁶ M. HOONDERT: *Om de parochie. Ritueel-muzikale bewegingen in de marge van de parochie. Gregoriaans, Taizé, jongerenkoren* (Heeswijk 2006).

²⁷ M. KLOMP: *The sound of worship. Liturgical performance by Surinamese Lutherans and Ghanaian Methodists in Amsterdam* (= Liturgia condenda 26) (Louvain / Paris / Walpole, MA 2011).

at the same time and, third, a choir that performs choral evensong solely as a concert.

The second phase involves participant observation in each of the three evensong contexts. Participant observation is the basic method of ethnography. We use it to gain information on the actual performance of the liturgical ritual of the evensong (*what are they actually doing?*). We will join rehearsals and evensongs to observe what they are actually doing in the evensong. We have to 'learn their language' to get to know the inside perspective.²⁸ We follow Martin Stringer who says about ethnography:²⁹

the first question we must ask of ethnography is: what is it that is actually being studied? A distinction can be made, when discussing what the ethnographer is studying, between 'what a person says they should be doing', 'what they say they are doing' and 'what they are actually doing'. The ethnographer must be interested in all three of these things and must attempt to provide some kind of analysis that links them.

We will use various shapes of participant observation: participation in the choir, but also as a participant-observer in the 'congregation'.³⁰ We will collect empirical data consisting of field notes, sound recordings, videos and pictures of evensongs, as well as interviews with participants.

The next step in this phase is processing the empirical data.

To describe the characteristic elements of the choral evensong, we use as an analytical tool four double perspectives derived from Barnard, Cilliers, and Wepener.³¹ They investigate the field of liturgical ritual from the perspective of liminality. This concept, liminality, enables a preliminary ordering of the field, from a cultural anthropological as well as theological perspective.³² In their book various aspects of the liminal field are elaborated in six double perspectives on the arena of liturgical ritual. These perspectives are bricolage/particularity, language/silence, image/sound, embodiment/performance, play/function, and time/space. From these perspectives and in relation to the qualities attributed to choral evensong by participants as result of our pilot

²⁸ M. BARNARD et al.: 'Dots on a blank sheet. Procedures in ritual and liturgical research', in *Jaarboek voor Liturgieonderzoek / Yearbook for liturgical and ritual studies* 25 (2009) 35-46, p. 35.

²⁹ STRINGER: *On the perception of worship* 49-50.

³⁰ M. HAMMERSLEY & P. ATKINSON: *Ethnography. Principles in practice* (London / New York 2007) 82.

³¹ The term 'liminality' is derived from the work of Arnold van Gennep. See: A. VAN GENNEP: *The rites of passage* (Chicago 1960). Initially the term referred to the stage 'betwixt and between', the pre-liminal and post-liminal stages in 'rites of passage'. Victor Turner noticed that this stage, liminality, can be a more permanent condition and that *communitas* can originate in this stage. See: V. TURNER: *The ritual process. Structure and anti-structure* (New York 1995).

³² BARNARD, CILLIERS & WEPENER: *Worship in the network culture*.

study, we chose four double perspectives and will use them as an analytical tool to study the phenomenon: music/sound, language/silence, embodiment/performance, and time/space.

First, the perspective of music/sound. We will approach 'music' as a 'ritual practice'. In this we follow Martin Hoondert who explains that music (performance) is a ritual practice that gives possibilities for the processes of meaning making and of experiences of transcendence.³³ According to Christopher Small, music also gets meaning through performance and the musical experience is analogue to the ritual experience.³⁴ Music is an important element in the choral evensong. The choir sings most of the liturgical texts, as the preces and responses, but also the Magnificat, Nunc dimittis (also called 'Mag and Nunc'), and an anthem. Psalms are recited as chants. There are certain musical peculiarities, such as the so-called 'descant' (a high upper voice) sung in the last verse by the trebles above the congregational singing. The vocal quality of the choirs especially in the English cathedrals and colleges is very high. There is a long tradition of daily choral education of the boys' voices in the cathedral choir schools. The Westminster Abbey Choir School, for instance, is thought to have been founded around 1560 CE. In English cathedrals nowadays, the altos, tenors, and basses are professional singers and they are paid for their contribution in the daily choral evensong. This high vocal quality is mirrored in the Dutch context. At least, Dutch choirs try to reach the high vocal level of the English choirs.

Secondly, we will describe and analyze choral evensong from the perspective of language/silence. Most of the texts sounding in the cathedral evensongs, spoken as well as sung, conform to the *Book of common prayer* 1662. In English cathedrals, the texts of the preces and responses, Magnificat and Nunc dimittis, belong to the ordinarium. The psalm, readings from Holy Scripture and the first collect of the day are also prescribed, but belong to the proprium. The hymn(s) and anthem are freely chosen, the intercessions are the only freely spoken text. In England, choral evensong is performed in the vernacular: the English language. That is an important aspect, because the evensong was established during the English Reformation, when Latin was replaced by the vernacular. In the Netherlands, most choral evensongs are performed in the non-vernacular, the English language. English is neither the native language of (most of) the Dutch choristers, nor of the listeners. Sometimes there is a mix of languages: some parts of the evensong are performed in English, and other parts in Dutch, for example Dutch readings from Holy Scripture and the hymns in English, or one psalm chanted in English and one in Dutch. An important

³³ M. HOONDERT: 'Muziek die er toe doet. Over de ervaring van muziek als betekenisvolle structuur', in R. SCRUTON, V. MEELBERG & M. HOONDERT (red.): *Meer dan ontspanning alleen. Over het belang van muziek* (Budel 2010) 65-79. IDEM: *Muziek als rituele praktijk. Gelineau berlezen* (Heeswijk 2007).

³⁴ C. SMALL: *Musicking. The meanings of performing and listening* (Hanover / New Hampshire 1998).

aspect of the choral evensong is the silence before, during, and after the evensong. This silence is in strong contrast to the common practice of the Sunday morning services in Protestant churches.

The third perspective is embodiment/performance. Characteristic of the choral evensong is that movements and gestures are performed in a very strict and precisely, ritualized way, for instance the above described introit procession of the choir. Characteristic also are the paramentics, for example the choir wears choral robes with white collars. In the Netherlands choirs also dress up in traditional British liturgical choral robes. On the website of the Kampen Boys Choir, pictures are shown of Dutch boys, dressed in traditional English red choir vestments with white collars, exactly copied from King's College Cambridge. It is remarkable that in some evensongs in the Netherlands the choir wears choral robes, whereas the preacher or lector is asked to wear 'casual' clothes.



Illustration 2: Kampen Boys Choir – *Bovenkerk* Kampen [photo copyright: Freddy Schinkel]

The last perspective is time/space. The specific space is an important factor in the performance of the Anglican choral evensong; on the one hand: it is located somewhere between the cathedral or monumental church and the public domain. Hoondert describes that the process of meaning making can be influenced by the active framing or re-framing of musical repertoires.³⁵ The appropriated meaning is influenced by the social-cultural context or the frame in

³⁵ M. HOONDEERT: 'Muziek en beleving', in *Speling* 63/1 (2011) 76-80.

which the music is performed or listened to. A church building functions as a frame; music performed in a church might more easily be appropriated as having religious meaning. The venue of the Anglican evensong in the Dutch context is often a monumental church, sometimes candle-lit. The acoustics play an important role. Some pieces for the evensong are specially written to perform in churches with a lot of acoustics. In Britain, the choral evensong is performed in the high choir stalls with kneeling banks. In the Netherlands, the evensong as a rule is performed in Protestant churches without kneeling banks, and in churches without a high choir. Sometimes in the Netherlands the 'décor' of an Anglican cathedral is imitated with portable stands and choir stalls. In the Netherlands, choral evensong is not a daily activity, and it is not part of the daily worship that is so common in England. Evensongs are held weekly (for instance in the *Nicolaaskerk*, Amsterdam), monthly (Schola Davidica, *Janskerk*, Utrecht) or sometimes only two times a year. In the Netherlands, a choral evensong is rather an exceptional, one-time 'event'.

In the third phase, we will bring the empirical results in relation to the transformation of religion in our late modern culture. Is the choral evensong still an expression of religiosity? To investigate this we will focus on the dimensions of religiosity, as systematized by Glock and Smart.³⁶ In the course of their research into religious attitudes and behaviors, they have systematized six 'dimensions of religiosity': the intellectual, ideological, or cognitive dimension; the dimension of social ethics; the ritual dimension; the institutional dimension; the aesthetic dimension; and the psychic dimension. The dimensions should be seen as a network; they partly overlap. In our research into the transformation of religiosity in relation to the choral evensong, we will focus on the liturgical-musical dimension of religiosity (1), the institutional dimension (2) and the aesthetical dimension (3). We chose these dimensions because of the qualities found in the pilot research. Aesthetics (the beauty of music and ritual) is an important factor in the appropriation of a liturgical ritual and thus of the choral evensong as a liturgical ritual performance. According to Wessel Stoker there is a relationship between the secular and religious experience of beauty.³⁷ In the case of the choral evensong, it seems that the liturgical ritual can be experienced in a secular and in a Christian way. We will adjust an extra dimension, the spiritual one (4), because of the qualities derived from the pilot.

Finally, we will investigate the theological meaning of the transformation of religion. Is the liturgical ritual of the choral evensong in the public domain still a form of worship? Is it about belief, theology, and church? What consequences does transformation of religion have for churches? We will focus on the rising of a theology outside the authority structures of the institutional churches.

³⁶ As described by C. AUFFAERT & H. MOHR: 'Religion', in *The Brill dictionary of religion* 3 (Leiden / Boston 2006) 1607-1619, p. 1611.

³⁷ W. STOKER: 'Beauty as a theological concept. A critical examination of the aesthetics of Hans Urs von Balthasar and Gerardus van der Leeuw' in: H. ZOCK (ed.): *At the crossroads of art and religion* (Leuven 2008).

Theologically, we will investigate this from the perspective of ecclesiology and ministry theology. We will use concepts such as ‘Body of Christ’, ‘incarnation’, and ‘all people’s ministry’.

5. Terminological clarification

In this last section of our article, we give a first glance at how we will use the central concepts in our research. Contemporary Dutch culture is characterized by change and diversity, processes of transformation, and appropriation in many areas.³⁸ This is reflected in the ritual practices with which individuals and groups position their identity. These coincide with a reinvention and appropriation of ritual and musical-ritual repertoires. As we have said before, in view of this, the choral evensong in the Netherlands is an interesting *casus*. Research into the practices of the choral evensong in the Netherlands is expected to support the thesis that religiosity in our culture happens in unexpected places. Our pilot study showed that choral evensongs are appropriated as a complete liturgical order outside the church community.

Our research perspective does not focus on the processes of attribution: the way culture and cultural elements are described from the outside, but rather focuses on the specific way of dealing with culture embedded in the community itself, appropriation.³⁹ We follow the definition of the Dutch cultural historian Willem Frijhoff:⁴⁰

appropriation is the process of interpretation with which groups or individuals provide a new meaning for external bearers of meaning, so that the latter become acceptable, liveable, bearable, or even dignified.

The accent of the research has shifted: from top-down to bottom-up. The community is the central locus, so that more attention is paid to the reception side. Besides the contextual widening, this change of approach means that the Anglican choral evensong is not only considered as a prescribed musical ritual form, but especially as a bearer of meaning in a process of finding meaning and significance, with which groups or individuals experience and attribute meaning to a musical ritual form that is presented to them.

Closely connected to the concept of appropriation is the term ‘re-inventing ritual’ of Ronald Grimes:⁴¹ transferred rituals in a new context get new mean-

³⁸ VAN DE DONK et al.: *Geloven in het publieke domein*.

³⁹ HOONDERT: *Om de parochie* 67.

⁴⁰ W. FRIJHOFF: ‘Toeëigening: van bezitsdrang naar betekenisgeving’, in *Trajecta* 6 (1997) 99-118, p. 108 (translation is ours).

⁴¹ R. GRIMES: *Deeply into the bone. Re-inventing rites of passages* (California 2000) 83.

ings. Rituals are built on tradition, but ‘constantly being reinvented in the very process of being enacted’.⁴²

The central topic of the research is ‘transformation’, and more specifically a transformation of religion. We use this term as it is described in the aforementioned report *Geloven in het publieke domein* of The Academic Council for Government Policy.⁴³ The influence of churches is diminishing, but religion does not disappear. There’s a surprising ‘coming back’ of religion. Some people speak about post- or de-secularization, but according to Alan Wolfe it is better to speak about the ‘transformation’ of religion.⁴⁴ Religion is back, but in new, and sometimes radical, forms other than institutional religion. Sengers speaks about the ‘transformation of religiosity’,⁴⁵ and Borgman speaks about a ‘metamorphosis’.⁴⁶ The transformation demands a re-evaluation of academic concepts. Concerning religiosity in transformation, we use the concept of Pete Ward, ‘a liquid church’.⁴⁷ This implies a religiosity that is migrating away from the walls of the church to outer domains, and that is consequently also a religiosity in transformation.⁴⁸ Gabriël van den Brink speaks about a ‘migration of the “divine”’.⁴⁹ In his book *Heiligen, idolen, iconen* Willem Frijhoff mentioned the term ‘transfer of sacredness’:⁵⁰

... a phenomenon that we can call *transfer of sacredness*, namely the widening of the use of religious and sacral categories to the domain outside the church, which monopolized the right for a long time.

This transfer of sacredness implies transformation. In the Dutch context, we notice the transfer of the choral evensong to the public space.

In our research, the very concepts of religiosity, religion, and culture are themselves in need of re-evaluation. With regard to ‘religiosity’, an open and situational description has been opted for. A good point of departure is the typology of the sacred as has been elaborated by Mathew Evans.⁵¹ A broad spectrum of religion and religiosity is discussed (from religion bound to tradi-

⁴² GRIMES: *Deeply into the bone* 214.

⁴³ VAN DE DONK et al.: *Geloven in het publieke domein*.

⁴⁴ Cfr. W. VAN DE DONK & P. JONKERS: ‘Geloven in het publieke domein: een introductie van deze verkenning’ in: VAN DE DONK et al.: *Geloven in het publieke domein* 14.

⁴⁵ E. SENGERS (ed.): *The Dutch and their Gods. Secularization and transformation of religion in the Netherlands since 1950* (Hilversum 2005) 26.

⁴⁶ E. BORGMAN: *Metamorfosen. Over religie en moderne cultuur* (Kampen 2006).

⁴⁷ P. WARD: *Liquid church* (Peabody 2002).

⁴⁸ BARNARD, CILLIERS & WEPENER: *Worship in the network culture*.

⁴⁹ G. VAN DEN BRINK: ‘De migratie van het goddelijke. Over geloof en kerk in de moderne maatschappij’ in: VAN DE DONK et al.: *Geloven in het publieke domein* 417-435.

⁵⁰ W. FRIJHOFF: *Heiligen, idolen, iconen* (Nijmegen 1998) 35-38, p. 37 (translation is ours).

⁵¹ M. EVANS: ‘The sacred: differentiating, clarifying and extending concepts’, in *Review of religious research* 45/1 (2003) 32-47.

tion and the institution – the religious sacred – to spirituality connected to individual appropriation – the spiritual sacred). In the aforementioned book *Worship in the network culture* Barnard, Cilliers, and Wepener explain that religion is expressed in the wake of culture.⁵² Culture forms the bed in which the streams of religion flow. The practices of worship can be observed by utilizing the methods of social sciences. The analysis of, and reflection on, these symbolic practices also requires consideration on a theological level.

6. Some final remarks

As we mentioned in the introduction, our research project was presented at the conference ‘Performances of religious music in medieval and late modern culture’ with key-note speaker Professor John Harper. In his first lecture ‘Investigating medieval ritual through liturgical enactment’, Harper focused on the combination of historical research and the re-enactment of religious musical repertoires. The performances of choral evensong in the Netherlands are also a kind of re-enactment of a religious musical repertory, because the Dutch evensongs are an imitation of the evensongs in England. However, there is an important difference with the re-enactment of the medieval ritual in Harpers research: choral evensong in England is still a living tradition. In the Netherlands, the Anglican choral evensong is copied from England, but it is performed in a new context. Which meanings are attributed to these performances in the new context?

The second lecture of John Harper was titled ‘Spatial, sonic and sensory experiences’. Harper focused on the aspect of experience during participation in the performance of religious musical repertoires. In our research, we also focus on the performance aspect of the choral evensongs in the Netherlands. Participant observation is part of the method we will use. How is the Anglican choral evensong appropriated in the Netherlands? What do these appropriations tell us about religiosity, culture, church, and theology? To find an answer to these questions we need to conduct ethnographic research.

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⁵² BARNARD, CILLIERS & WEPENER: *Worship in the network culture*.

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