Empirical Theology & Postcolonial Theory

10. – 12. April 2024

Book of Abstracts

Wednesday, 10. April 2024 – Key Note (13.30 – 15.00) – US-S 002

Emmanuel Lartey (Emory University, Atlanta, USA) -

"Lived Religion": The Kpeehe of empirical and postcolonial theological endeavors

Kpeehe is a Gã (language of people of Accra, Ghana) term which can be translated as 'meeting place' or "gathering center". The central argument of this paper is that rather than texts, doctrines, or beliefs, 'lived religion' is the focus of attention of both empirical theologians and postcolonial theorists. The manner of life and the quotidian practices of ordinary people provide the data for the work of postcolonial theological studies as well as empirical theology. It is interest in the way religion or spirituality is evidenced in and impacts the life of the colonized that galvanizes the efforts of postcolonial theologians. Similarly, empirical theologians explore ways in which religion and spirituality show themselves in individual, social, and institutional spaces, utilizing methods of empirical study. Convergences and divergences between these two endeavors are explored and suggestions for more collaborative research and pedagogical activities are proposed.

Wednesday, 10. April 2024 – Collegial Session 1 (15.30 – 16.30) – US-S 002

Types of Religious Education, Postcolonial Theology and Its Impact. An empirical study among High School Students in Tobelo, North Moluccas, Indonesia (Handi Hadiwitanto)

In religious education, we recognize at least three types of approaches, namely doctrinal education (where the emphasis is on absolute/universal truth), education with ethical formation (emphasis on cultural inheritance and the provision of knowledge), education with identity formation (emphasis on experience in learning process) (Christiani & Hadiwitanto, 2022, 41-44). The last two types assume a more inductive approach to religion, where students are invited to understand religion from the context of their culture and individual-social experiences. Religion is not aged traditions that are repeated but reflects a theological reflection that is open to the context. Meanwhile, the first type is about theology from above, where context, culture, and diverse experiences are not taken into account as part of the attitude of faith. In this sense there is a common thread between ethical and identity formation in religious education and postcolonial

theology. Postcolonial theology encourages creative thinking that religion and theology are not just a matter of doctrine and tradition brought by missionaries in the past. In postcolonial theological thinking, religion and theology must have the ability to build critical awareness and cultural humility as well as inductive theology that departs from context and experience (Heaney, 2019, 63; cf Pui-Lan, 2021, 147ff). Meanwhile, doctrinal education will tend to depart from theology and religious teachings which are assumed to have not changed even since the missionary and colonial era. As a consequence, doctrinal religious education will also tend to avoid or ignore context, culture and experience because of the universal assumptions it carries. The question that arises are: what kind of religious education approach is implemented in schools, especially in high schools' Can postcolonial theology which tends to oppose doctrinal education be found in the practice of religious education? What are the characteristics of each type of religious education when associated with the context, such as religious participation, religious goal and favoritism within religious differences? This quantitative research attempts to answer these questions by starting from a specific context in Indonesia. The research examines how high schools students in Tobelo, North Moluccas, perceive the implementation of religious education, and then examines the characteristics of the religious education approaches when correlated with religious participation, religious goal, and favoritism within different religious groups. The city of Tobelo in particular, and the Christian community in the provinces of Moluccas and North Moluccas - Indonesia in general, have an interesting history, where Dutch missionaries in 19th - 20th century were quite successful in bringing Christianity to the community (Steenbrink & Tapilatu 2008). Christianity is quite popular compared to what happened on other provinces in Indonesia. Another important fact is that in 2000 – 2005 the city of Tobelo was one of those that suffered from very serious interreligious conflict between Christians and Muslims. This conflict created bitter experiences between the two religious groups. In this sense there is an interesting reason to see whether postcolonial theology is reflected through religious education that is not just teaching doctrine but also developing ethical and identity formations contextually.

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Postcolonial empirical research and the uneasiness of enduring struggles. Wrestling with conflicting voices and questions on normativity (Annemie Dillen)

In this paper I will discuss questions on empirical research design, based on recent research projects in the Philippines and Belgium (on religious education, transnational mothering, missionary work and LGBTQI-experiences in relation to Catholic views). I show how a postcolonial perspective can mean among others that ongoing critical questions about power and the own position have to be asked, without finding final answers. One of these questions is: if empirical research is focused at listening to voices 'in the margins', how can empirical theologians deal with questions that show up when voices of different groups or individuals within a group are contradictory? This paper will search for ways to deal with the tensions between normative voices (from postcolonial and feminist theologians, but also from the perspective of the Catholic church and society) and conflicting voices 'on the ground'.

Design of educational practices to arouse a hopeful future for each and every student (Theo van der Zee)

Education is a future-oriented endeavour. Although it is conceived as an intrinsic good, education is closely connected to future goods as professional success, social standing, economic status, and humanization. While it is uncontested that education is future-oriented, it isn't obvious at all at which future educational practices are aimed. Actual societal developments as cultural, personal, social and economic inequality urge the question on the future-oriented. Much is expected from schools to weaken the meritocratic ideology of own merits. What should schools do realize educational practices that will open up a hopeful future for each and every student and keep it open? Based on the reflections of Paul Ricoeur (1986) on ideology and utopia, educational practices cannot but altered from within (Scott, 2021). From an educational design perspective (McKenney & Reeves, 2019), a design is presented by means of design propositions and requirements that help teachers and school leaders to use transformative strategies. Findings of the research are discussed with a view to the challenges of Postcolonial Theory on Empirical Research on Religion.

Characteristics of Ordinary Theology (Winnie-Lotta Weghaus & Ulrich Riegel)

Ordinary Theology reconstructs the way how believers think about God and the world. Research could show that such theology is very much situated, context-related, provisional, and tentative. Ordinary believers use own word to express their theological ideas and their theology is very much fed by lived religiosity. This talk raises the question whether the current research on Ordinary Theology has a contextual bias itself. The hypothesis is that much of the reconstructed characteristics are an effect of the situation in which Ordinary Theology has been analyzed. Therefore, the discussions of 23 church-related groups all over Germany about the meaning of Jesus' death at the cross will be analysed by thematic analysis and documentary method. These analyses indicate that the participants use theological concepts rather than own concepts, are related to institutional religiosity rather than lived religiosity, etc. There is some indication that the context in which Ordinary Theology is assessed has to be reflected more intensively.

Christian organizations in the field of refugee aid: Examining the role of religious beliefs for the generation of social trust (Alexander Unser)

It is a remaining assumption in social capital research that religious communities are beneficial to the formation of social trust because they provide and maintain particular religious beliefs that foster prosocial behavior and universal ethics. However, this so-called belief hypothesis has been insufficiently tested so far since many studies in this field of research are drawing on large-scale datasets that allow only a limited operationalization of the assumptions underpinning the belief hypothesis. Our study is the first one that addresses this research gap with specific instruments and data from members of Christian congregations and parishes in Germany (N=394). Using structural equation modeling (SEM), the study tests whether particular religious beliefs mediate the effects of individual religiosity on social trust. Our findings support the belief hypothesis and show that prosocial, contemplative, and exclusivist beliefs explain the relationship between individual religiosity and social trust.

Connections between religion, authority and spirituality from the perspective of Finnish older adults (Jonna Ojalammi, Heidi Toivanen & Suvi-Maria Saarelainen)

Older adults' religiosity is often represented as traditional and institutional, but in highly secularized Nordic societies, their religious heterogeneity is increasing. Still, little is known about their spirituality outside

religious traditions and organizations. In this paper, we present findings based on our mixed-methods study (Ojalammi, Toivanen, Palmi & Saarelainen, in progress) concerning the relationship between Finnish older adults' religiosity and spirituality. The quantitative data consists of 313 older adults' responses to the Finnish translation of Sources of Meaning and Meaning in Life questionnaire (SoMe, Fin. MerTa, see Schnell, 2009; Peltomäki, Ojalammi, Palmi & Saarelainen, under review). The qualitative data includes 23 thematic interviews. The quantitative data was analyzed with descriptive statistics and two-step cluster analysis and the qualitative data with template analysis. Findings from the quantitative data indicate that older adults were slightly more spiritual than religious. In addition, religion was more divisive than spirituality. The qualitative results suggest that older adults were in many ways religious, but they resisted aspects of religion connected to authority; as central religious concepts were negatively associated with power, they preferred to frame their religiosity in spiritual terms. In this presentation, we discuss these results in the light of why religion might be intertwined with these associations in Finnish older adults.

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Wednesday, 10. April 2024 – Symposium 1 (16.45 – 18.00) – US-S 002

Role of Congregations in Reforming Power Structures (Kobus Schoeman, KJ Pali, Cobus van Wyngaard, Lourens Bosman, Pieter van der Walt)

Theoretical framework: Apartheid has often been described as "colonialism of a special kind", referring to the somewhat unique settler colonial situation where the dominant colonial power of the 20th century was wielded by those who were sharing the geographic space of the majority indigenous population. The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) played a notorious role in the moral and ideological justification of this particular colonial structure. Following the end of legalized apartheid, the "post-colonial" context of South Africa continue to be marked by the presence of a significant numerical minority white population, and the Dutch Reformed Church continue to function as the spiritual home for a large portion of white Afrikaans South African Christians. Our work looks at the place of Christian faith, faith communities, and religious leadership among this population historically tied to the construction and maintenance of apartheid, looking at how Christian faith and faith communities among this predominantly white and Afrikaans South African church respond to the shifting socio-political landscape of a post-colonial context. While this at times include the use of Christian discourses and identity in ways white reproduce historic power relations, our interest is specifically in the ways in which grassroots Christian communities and religious leadership in such communities draw from faith traditions to reform historic structures of power and chart new ways of Christian participation in working for the good of local communities at large. Congregations are locally embedded, their members come from the local community, and they function within a local context. However, this does not mean they are not part of or influenced by the broader community or society. The trends that influence society, like the social, political, and economic environment, also influence the congregation.

Methodological framework: A congregational analysis is a methodological process and the focus in this instance is a mixed methodology. A mixed methodology is more than just collecting data from a quantitative or qualitative perspective but involves the connection, integration, and linking the analysis and findings into a comprehensive picture. In congregational analysis, it is essential to create space for a qualitative and quantitative approach and even a narrative perspective to position congregational vitality withing a society. A mixed methodology will undoubtedly add value to the research because of the complexity of congregational life. Quantitative surveys (attender questionnaire and congregational questionnaire) and qualitative interviews with the ministers or pastors of the congregations are used as part of a mixed methodology.

Papers

- Inclusive congregations' moving beyond practices that limit congregational involvement (Kobus Schoeman)
- A post-colonial reflection on the relationship between spiritual growth in township congregations and their impact in the wider community (KJ Pali)
- Exploring the narratives of inclusive congregations as they overcome a separated past (Marelize Maritz)
- Dismantling local remnants of apartheid (Cobus van Wyngaard)
- Our questions are not neutral? empirical research about congregational leadership during Covid-19 (Lourens Bosman)
- Inclusive discernment? From giving answers to seeking dialogue (Pieter van der Walt)

Wednesday, 10. April 2024 – Symposium 2 (16.45 – 18.00) – US-V 005

Religion and Migration (Britta Konz, Manfred Pirner, Marcus Penthin, Daniel Engel, Ulrich Riegel)

The symposium will present research on the relationship between migration and religion regarded through the lens of postcolonial theory. Moderated by Manfred Pirner it will comprise three presentations that address the intersection of religion, migration and childhood (Britta Konz), the effect of religiosity on the development of perceived discrimination of adolescent refugees (Daniel Engel & Marcus Penthin), and the possibility to measure Muslim religiosity via the concept of halal/haram (Ulrich Riegel). The latter two represent findings from the DFG-funded research project "Religion as Resource and Risk" (www.rereri.phil.fau.de).

Religion, migration and childhood (Britta Konz): Childhood is always involved in processes of social transformation. In (post)migration societies, different ways of doing family and doing childhood coexist. Children contribute significantly to both the doing family and to society and produce child cultures. Nevertheless, the structural limitations of childhood through generational orders establish a fundamental difference between children and adults. Thus, a complex interplay of vulnerability and agency of children within societal power structures is to be assumed. How can empirical research deal with this intersectional power structure created by adultism, migrantism and religious othering, which individual researchers cannot completely escape? How can the perspectives of children actually be taken up by empirical research and what are the conditions for the success of participatory research? Bitta Konz' talk deals with "generation" as a dimension of inequality at the intersection of religion and migration from a postcolonial perspective. It addresses the resulting challenges for methodology, research designs and analytical procedures of empirical studies with children.

Religiosity and discrimination among adolescent Muslim refugees (Daniel Engel & Marcu Penthin): Migrants often suffer discrimination due to various reasons. Such discrimination normally hampers the migrants' attempts to adapt to the so-called host society. Religion may affect this process in ambivalent manner. On the one hand, migrants normally are more religious than "natives" and therefore more likely to experience discrimination. On the other hand, individual religiosity may contribute to coping with the various challenges as well as with feelings of strangeness in the "host society". An exploratory study on adolescent Muslim refugees shows that perceived discrimination increases slightly over one year. Individual religiosity, however, does not affect this process. Daniel Engel and Marcus Penthin will discuss this non-effect.

Measuring Muslim religiosity via the concept of halal/haram (Ulrich Riegel): In most empirical research religiosity is measured with a Protestant Christian bias. From a postcolonial perspective, the question arises as to whether there are alternative measures that are more in line with the spirituality of non-Christian religious traditions. For example, in Muslim traditions a life-world related religious distinction is that of halal/haram. Ulrich Riegel presents an empirical measurement instrument that has been developed and applied in the context of the ReReRi Project and discusses its consequences

Food and Faith from Local to Global: Critical Lived Theology and Faith-Based Food Assistance (Anna Sofia Salonen, Marjukka Laiho, Rosa Huotari)

This symposium looks on a basic human need: food. In the context of global sustainability crisis, both food security and food production as well as eating per se have gained momentum (e.g. Hunt & Roos 2010; Raposo et al. 2021), pointing to critical discussions on the politics of food and eating (cf. Caldwell & Watson 2005). Such views on eating and food are not new to empirical theology either (e.g. Albala & Eden 2011; Barton & Muers 2013).

In this symposium, we explore the intersections of food and faith starting from empirical observations of faith-based food assistance in Finland and reaching to complexities of global food justice. In Finland, the role of the Lutheran church and other faith-based actors has been both significant and ambiguous in organising food assistance. Anna Sofia Salonen (2018; Salonen & Silvasti 2019; Salonen & Laiho forthcoming) has shown that while food assistance providers aim at fighting against poverty, they also become actors in the charity economy, and middlemen in rescaling and decriminalizing food excess and transforming it into a virtue. Theological constructions maintain the assistance system, and thus empirical theological research is needed to understand these dynamics.

In this symposium, we approach the topic from the framework of critical lived theology and holistic theologising, developed by Marjukka Laiho (2021; 2023). Critical lived theology starts from the premise that all theology is lived, i.e. encompassed by human experience and agency. Thus, there is no such thing as non-lived theology. It is not the "livedness" that separates theologies and theologising, but the power and position of theological agents. Laiho"s ongoing research analyses cognitive, affective and pragmatic theologising of charitable food assistance by representatives of religious organisations, the public sector, education, and the commercial sector. The focus is on people in power enabling food assistance in contemporary Finland. Thus, their theological and other value-based views are influential in thinking about the future of food assistance.

Then again, the assistance recipients' voice is often marginalized. This reflects the colonial structures still effective in both assistance and research. As Rosa Huotari (2023) has shown, the food assistance recipients' viewpoint provides a window into theologizing 'from below' in a manner that is not reduced either to official(ised) doctrine, nor to individual experience (Laiho 2021). By processing their collective identity as the urban 'others', people experiencing poverty and social exclusion do not just tell a story about themselves, but they do theology as well (Huotari 2023).

In the symposium, each participant will give a short presentation related to the topic, followed by a facilitated discussion. The premise of this symposium is that lived theology can and should be explored on different levels of theologising, including professionals and non-professionals, both the top levels of the hierarchy and the grassroots. Critical lived theology brings these voices together (Laiho 2021). Through local examples, we look at global horizons, and both analyse and theorise 'power' in food assistance and in empirical theology.

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Wednesday, 10. April 2024 – Symposium 4 (16.45 – 18.00) – US-S 0102

'Orientalist' and 'Occidental' stereotypes in postcolonial theological research. Researching yoga in churches (Elisabeth Tveito Johnsen, Kristin Graff-Kallevåg)

Postcolonial theory has become an influential body of theory within theological research (Ramsay, 2020). Yet, colonial impact is a complex matter. As argued by Leela Gandhi, some of the often forgotten 'content of postcoloniality effectively reveals the story of an ambivalent and symbiotic relationship between colonizer and colonized' (Gandhi, 2008, p. 11). Being scholars from 'the West', Gandhi also reminds us about Said's definition of 'Orientalism', as 'every occasion when a Westerner has either imagined or written about the non-Western world' (Gandhi, 2008, p. 76). She claims that Edward Said in his 'obdurate determination of Orientalism' ironically also silenced opposition. By defeating the logic of Eurocentric intellectual egalitarianism, Said also produced a reversed stereotype: the racist Westerner. Thus, the task after Orientalism is, according to Gandhi, 'not only to demonstrate the ambivalence of the Orientalist stereotype, but also - and crucially - to refuse the pleasures of an Occidental stereotype' (Gandhi, 2008, p. 79).

This paper asks: How can postcolonial theological research integrate stories about ambivalent and symbiotic relationships between colonizer and colonized? We would also like to discuss: How is it possible to do postcolonial research in ways that reconstruct and deconstruct 'Orientalist' and 'Occidental' stereotypes, both related to our research subjects and to us as researchers?

In line with the empirical foundation of ISERT, we believe that an important part of the answer to these challenges is to continue our work empirically. Rather than questioning empirical research from normative standards of postcolonial theory, we argue that a descriptive methodology is particularly important when researching postcoloniality. Following the lived religion pioneer, Robert Orsi, one way to avoid the tendency to categorize groups or people as either religiously 'good' or 'bad' is to pay close attention 'to institutions and persons, texts and rituals, practice and theology, things and ideas - all the media of making and unmaking worlds' (Orsi, 2003).

This paper will analyze 'modern yoga' in churches. The empirical material illustrates how complex and not straightforward colonial influence is. According to the religious scholar Knut A. Jacobsen, yoga, as it is known in the West from the 1960s, is a result of active missionary work (Jacobsen, 2006).

Today, every gym has daily yoga lessons, the number of yoga-instructions videos on YouTube are endless, and more recently, yoga has also found its way into churches. This paper analyzes empirical data established to examine how churches enact yoga. The data consists of participant observation conducted by the three involved scholars. Kirstine Helboe Johansen has obtained material from church organized yoga practices in Denmark, and Kristin Graff-Kallevåg and Elisabeth Tveito Johnsen have studied yoga in churches in Norway. All the visited congregations are part of the majority churches in each country, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark and the Church of Norway. Interestingly, some churches integrate yoga movements and

worship elements into a seamless unity, while others keep yoga separate from prayer and scriptural readings. This paper theorizes how the dynamic between purification and hybridization takes place in different churches, contributing to an understanding of postcoloniality as fundamentally impure (Afdal, 2022). Yet, even if religion, not in churches, nor in India, or any place else, have ever been 'pure', we ask if the postcolonial quest for reconstruction and deconstruction might be epistemologically premised by the existence of 'a pure pre-colonial religious past'?

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Thursday, 11. April 2024 – Key Note (08.30 – 10.00) **– US-S 002**

Tone Stangeland Kaufman (MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society, Oslo, Norway)

Included but Indecent? Postcolonial approaches to methodologies and epistemologies in empirical and qualitative inquieries

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Thursday, 11. April 2024 – Collegial Session 4 (10.30 – 12.00) **– US-S 002**

Three Modes of Co-Theologizing: Possibilities and Power of "With" in Lived Theology (Marjukka Laiho)

This presentation is based on many years of studying cosmopolitan and critical lived theology with Finnish young adults. Here, I will take a bird"s eye perspective on both empirical and theoretical work on cosmopolitan theologizing, bringing together both critical insights but also opportunities of recent methodological discussions in the fields of theology and social sciences. In this presentation, I will particularly focus on exploring power dilemmas and possibilities of more equal power-sharing prevalent in current processes and practices of academic knowledge production. The empirical context of this exploration lies in reflexive in-depth interviews that I carried out in 2019-2020. These interviews were informed by the diversity of recent discussions on lived theology, finding inspiration for example in ethnographic, collaborative, and situated methodologies. In my empirical study, I wanted the interviews to embrace an intersubjective, participatory, collaborative, and constructive approach to theology and theologizing. As such, the aim was not only to describe young adults' lived theology but to explore the processes of theological reflection that the young adults engaged in *with* me, as a researcher (or I *with* them). Through this experimentative approach and its analysis, three modes of co-theologizing were shaped: cognitive, affective, and pragmatic. They all point to gaps or wounds experienced by young adults with regards to their respective religious tradition – and the ways to overcome such gaps. Similar holistic approaches, where the academic researcher and the research participants engage in intersubjective encounters, have lately gained momentum under the titles of collaborative research or co-research. In addition to power critique, co-research seeks to find ways to support cultures and practices of democratic knowledge production. Companions for such thinking can be found, for example, in cosmopolitan methodology, phenomenology, and critical discursive studies. Following such insights, it is important to note that lived does not only present itself as an object

for study; rather 'livedness', as a methodological key, unites all humans and other living creatures. Thus, instead of being divided by 'livedness', the world is divided by power and positioning. To find ways to collaboration, we need to both be rooted in our equal natavity and find novel practices that challenge power hierarchies. Inspired by the writings of Hannah Arendt, I claim here, that engaging and exploring the possibilities of 'power-with' could present a way forward in times of epistemological and methodological gaps in the academia, and beyond.

Mental Health Stigma in Turkish Minority Group in Germany: Are Mental Health Disorders seen as a result of weakening faith or as a tool of strengthening faith? (Havagül Akçe)

Stigma for persons with mental illness is related to reduced quality of employment, housing, and social support as people with mental illness are often seen as unpredictable, unattractive, and dangerous (Corrigan et al., 2001). Social psychiatry has been focusing on the role of culture on mental health stigma by conducting cross-cultural research (Brenner et al., 2018; Arnault, 2009; Abdullah & Brown, 2011; Anglin et al., 2006). According to previous findings, ethnic minorities perceive psychological help seeking more as a -social-stigma than the majority members, and religious people within an ethnic minority group tend to be more skeptical of treatment from secular psychologists or psychiatrists and see, therefore, mental health seeking more as a stigma (Çiftçi et al., 2013; Vally et al., 2018; Mantovani et al., 2017; Youssef & Deane, 2006). As religion provide meaning systems for understanding the world, the interaction with others, and interpreting human events, religious beliefs touch upon information about the causes and the treatment of mental illness (Nakash et al., 2019). For example, religious people may make the attribution that mental health disorder is a result of weakening faith, demonic possession, a punishment for a conducted sin or sinful lifestyle (Stanford, 2007; Lloyd, 2021) or a tool of strengthening their belief, an exam given by God to improve the bond between God and believers. The use of religious belief of mental health in both two-sided ways can have an impact on the relationship between mental health stigma and religious coping strategies. The study aims to understand whether mental health stigma differs among an ethnic minority population depending on acculturation strategies (e.g., integration, assimilation etc.), especially in the Turkish ethnic minority group in Germany, which represents a secular country in Europe. This project will examine how religious coping strategies are related to mental health stigma among Turkish ethnic minorities; and whether religious beliefs of mental health mediate the relationship between religious coping strategies and mental health stigma. Moreover, the research includes reports of active and verbal prayer as a tool for religious coping to examine the relationship between prayer and mental health stigma. This study will employ quantitative research for hypothesis testing and use convenience sampling. For the hypothesis testing, an anonymous online questionnaire will be distributed to at least 300 Turkish participants who live in Germany. Research will use a Demographic information questionnaire, Religious Coping Scale by Abanoz (2023), Stigmatization Scale, measures of mental health stigma within religious and moral ground (Ayten & Hardal, 2020), Social Stigma Scale for Receiving Psychological Help by Topkaya (2011), Attitudes towards the identity of the Mentally Ill Scale by ?ehito?lu (1988), Psychological Help Seeking Scale by Kap?k?ran and Kap?k?ran (2013), Muslim Verbal and Active Prayer Scale by Chen et al., (2021), additional items to measure the perception of mental health disorders as a tool for strengthening faith. Statistical analyses will be run via SPSS.

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Finnish older adults making meaning out of the covid-19-pandemic and Russia"s invasion to Ukraine (Jonna Olajammi & Suvi-Maria Saarelainen)

Previous studies show that a person"s age can affect how an individual experiences and makes sense of a societal collective crisis. In this paper, we discuss the meanings constructed by Finnish older adults regarding the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine as collective crises. With the help of thematic analysis, we have looked at the interviews of 24 aging persons, which were carried out between June 2022 and January 2023. The interviewees were 69–92 years old. The results show that Russia"s attack on Ukraine threatened older adults" worldview. In particular, the weakening of temporal coherence was perceived as a threat: one"s own childhood and intergenerational war memories surfaced from the past, and religious worldview did not provide the expected hope for the future. Instead, the corona pandemic was accepted as a part of life"s uncertainty. However, the war in Ukraine and the corona pandemic were connected by one source of meaning: concern for their own descendants in the future, which the elderly themselves would no longer experience. In summary, it can be stated that the experience of temporal coherence in relation to the past is particularly important for elderly people to experience the meaning of life.

Who Do You Think You Are? A theological reflection on a visit to the Anglican diocese of Mauritius, my mother's land (Andrew Dunlop)

This theological reflection uses O'Neill and Shercliff's four sources approach to reflect on a visit to the Diocese of Mauritius in the Anglican Province of the Indian Ocean. The inciting incident for the reflection was a comment made by a member of the clergy during a diocesan retreat which the author was leading. In the reflection, aspects of the author's Mauritian heritage are held together alongside Anglican tradition, the history of Anglican work on the island, and postcolonial/non-western theology. Through engagement with Willie James Jennings' work on languages of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2) alongside the missionary work of the Diocese of Mauritius in the 19th century, the author makes suggestions to further the ministry and mission of the Anglican Church in Mauritius. This may be through further engagement with the lingua franca on the island, Mauritian Creole, alongside an in-depth knowledge of the culture and customs of this multi-ethnic society in order to create a posture of mission and ministry that is authentically derived from the culture rather than imposed upon it through colonial legacy.

Citizenship education in Dutch textbooks of Islamic Religious Education (Kamel Essabane)

To what extent do Dutch primary school textbooks of Islamic Religious Education contribute to citizenship education?

In this paper two widely used textbooks for Islamic Religious Education in Dutch primary schools are systematically analysed for indicators for citizenship education. The central question is: To what extent are the most widely used Dutch IRE textbooks: 'The Trust' (Al-Amana) and 'Becoming who you are' (Worden wie je bent), group 7 and 8 (age 10-12), in line or in conflict with citizenship education in a liberal democracy?

The paper builds on an analytical framework to relate Islamic Religious Education to Citizenship Ecuation. Four dimensions are considered: how the textbooks deal with citizenship dimensions of 'identity', 'legal status', 'participation' and 'rights'. Among others, we discuss whether textbooks stress: identification with the Muslim community or a larger citizenship community; religious uniformity or plurality; conformity or autonomy of the child ; serving the interests of Muslims as a group or serving society as whole; and human rights and environmental rights framed within Islam. A qualitative content analysis of the textbooks is done with Atlas.ti, with the help of a coding system based on indicators of the aforementioned citizenship dimensions. Next to citizenship dimensions, the use of Islamic key concepts, educational goals and pedagogical, didactical and embodiment aspects related to citizenship are also considered.

The Promise of Post-Colonial Catholicism: An Empirical Practical Theology (Bryan Froehle & Sean Thomas)

As the saying goes, before colonialism, Europeans had the Bible and the world's peoples had land and the wealth their lands could produce. By the end of colonialism, Europeans had the wealth and their conquered peoples had the Bible. Yet conquering and commercialization does not necessarily lead to conversion. Empirical Research on Religion (ERoR) has up to now failed to test the impact of post-coloniality or multiple forms of coloniality on religious development. Even less work has been done on the theological implications. Data is now available to test the hypothesis that Christianity, specifically Catholicism, develops after missionaries leave, not before. This may be established by evaluating correlations between Catholic ecclesial data and decolonization across applicable countries and dioceses. Having established quantitative and contextual patterns, qualitative empirical methods may then be combined with rigorous statistical methods in case studies for explanatory depth.

Postcolonial theologizing reflects the aftermath of the various colonial projects of the past quincentenary. Decolonial theory deconstructs and reconstructs the power of colonialism within social, cultural, economic, psychological, and other contexts. The European Age of Reason was in fact an Age of Racism, culminating

in the evils of National Socialism and the genocides within Europe after centuries of the same by European transoceanic empires. Coloniality was ultimately a destructive othering process that carried profound contradictions for Christianity. World War II, the Holocaust, and the rapid collapse of colonialism that followed are all connected.

The destruction of peoples under colonialism over the past quincentenary was never simply of the body. The evils of the colonial metropole were no less in the quotidian destruction of the mind than the episodic torture and murder of bodies, the 60 million indigenous persons murdered by the diseases, destruction, and domination in the so-called New World and soon thereafter the 12 million Africans condemned to chattel slavery and the torture, the whip, and carefully calculated deaths by exhaustion. When Africans could no longer be profitably worked to death elsewhere, their lands were divided in the Congress of Berlin (1884-1885), leading to the mass-scale German murders of some 75,000 people in Namibia along with the mass murders and starvations of other colonizers.

Colonialism has wrought the present reality, and empirical research on religion (ERoR) must therefore address these legacies. Today, colonial structures continue within intellectual life. Research agendas remain largely set by those from the outside. Scholarly networks continue to be dominated by those whose institutions benefited from the immense transfer of wealth under colonialism and the intellectual dismissal of the ways of knowing of the colonized people. Careful ERoR studies have promise to advance an Empirical Theology of postcoloniality based on rigorous hypothesis testing. Theological understanding thus emerges dynamically from the pre-colonial through the disruption of colonial encounter and control, through the post-colonial agenda of decolonizing societal structures and mental ones rooted in religious imaginaries, to future realities taking shape. This is why ERoR is critical for post-colonial Empirical Theology.

Thursday, 11. April 2024 – Collegial Session 6 (10.30 – 12.00) – US-S 0101

Teaching religion in secondary schools: Does it still make sense? (Lluis Oviedo)

Religious education in secondary schools is a common practice in many European countries, even if it is not as compulsory as it used to be. However, there are many voices discussing its usefulness and its role in a deeply secularised context marked by a modern division between the state and the churches. There is not much direct knowledge about such teaching, as its main actors - the teachers - and their experiences are usually ignored in discussions about this educational dimension. Our team carried out qualitative research using semi-structured interviews with a sample of 57 religious education teachers in the Region of Murcia, in south-eastern Spain. The results clearly point to very positive experiences, as this education continues to play an important role and helps many students in a specific way, and to difficulties, often due to a certain hostile environment and restrictive legal conditions. The abolition of this type of education would have negative consequences for many students and for the whole system, which would not be able to replace its services.

The role of catechesis for the faith formation of the adults: A path to deepened faith of the adults in the archidiocese of Bangalore (Francis X. Joseph)

The subject of Catechesis touches all layers of Christian life. Catechesis plays a significant role from womb to tomb. There is a need for Catechesis from infancy to the preparation for a good and a happy death. Catechesis is the need of the hour for infants, children, adolescents, youth, adults, family, aged and the list goes on. Name any field, Catechesis holds prime place in imparting the knowledge of faith.

The Doctoral study is focused on the Catechesis oriented towards the faith formation of the adults. It should be noted that the adults face challenges in the realm of social, religious, moral, faith oriented and spiritual

in their day today lives. They also try hard to find solutions for their challenges. Adult Catechesis can be seen as providing solutions to their variety of challenges that they face in their everyday life.

In focus, this doctoral study analyses the situation of the adults and the role of Adult Catechesis in particular in the Archdiocese of Bangalore in order to meet the spiritual needs of the faithful and also to fulfill the missionary mandate of Christ.

We are living in a world of secularisation, which has influenced many factors like politics, education, social life, economics and media, that result in making a drastic influence on the life of the adults. One could argue that we are moving towards a world where God has no prominent place. In this situation of modernism and materialism; secularisation and fast moving world, one could opine that, it is quite difficult to form the faith of the adults in order to bear witness to Christ and to be role models to their children and the young ones that come into their contact in day today life.

The situation in the Archdiocese of Bangalore is completely different from the situations in the other metropolitan cities in India. Bangalore is an IT Centre, and people here find difficult to make time for family and for themselves. Most of the time is spent in the office or at home with the Social Media. Traveling to and from the office in the dense traffic is another factor for the office folk to lack time. When it is so then one can imagine how much time the adults would be able to spend with God and form oneself in becoming a spiritual being. Furthermore to form the young ones in the faith and spirituality is a greater challenge for the adults.

My experience and recent discussions held with the priests of the Archdiocese of Bangalore prove that there is a drastic decline of the adults that frequent the Church and attend the Sunday Services in the City of Bangalore. The schedule of the adults is one reason and the failure of the Pastors in attracting the adults to the Premises of the Church is another cause for the drastic decline in the Church attendance of the adults.

High religiosity and sustainability. An Empirical Study of Attitudes and Behavior of Highly Religious Christians (Tobias Faix)

We have been doing research with the Research Institute empirica on Social-Ecological Transformation for the last two years and I would like to present the relevant results and ask what they can mean for the church. On the one hand there was a qualitative preliminary study with 12 interviews with young adults and on the other hand a quantitative study in Germany and Switzerland on the major topic of Social Justice and Environmental Sustainability. The main question was whether one"s own faith and one"s own implicit and explicit beliefs (images of God, understanding of creation, eschatology, etc.) have an influence on attitudes and behavior.

Theoretical Framing: The concept of sustainability describes the principle that future generations must have the same opportunity to live on earth and satisfy their needs as current generations. This goes hand in hand with the responsibility to create this opportunity. Sustainability always encompasses the dimensions of ecology, economy and social issues.

The concept of sustainability: The concept of socio-ecological transformation is an umbrella term for a holistic process of social change toward a climate-compatible lifestyle for people. This process includes the permanent change of systems such as economy and society as well as a new relationship definition of people"s relations to each other and to nature. The publication of the Brundtland Report represents, in a sense, the birth of the concept of sustainability in the recent past (Grunwald & Kopfmüller, 2022, p. 27; Schneidewind, 2018, p. 34).

Methodology of the empirical Research: A Mixed-Method study. The design of the overall study is based on a "mixed methods" approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methods in one study. This involves a mixed-method model (multi-level approach), this approach allows for both methods to be employed on several levels in parallel, in order to achieve a joint result.

Results of the qualitative research; 12 young people were selected for the qualitative interviews according to different quotas or characteristics using a criterion-guided procedure (convenience sampling). These were analyzed with the qualitative content analysis according to Kuckartz (Kuckartz, 2018). From the 12 interviews, three basic types could be identified, which are followed by a category-based presentation and interpretation of the results along the main categories.

Results of the quantitative study; Here, central results are presented as examples and various correlation analyses (regression analyses, etc.) are shown (churchpraxis, images of God, understanding of creation, eschatology, etc.).

Critical comments and reflections: Finally, the central results are reflected on the basis of the theories at the beginning and initial implementation ideas for church practice are developed.

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Thursday, 11. April 2024 – Collegial Session 7 (10.30 – 12.00) – US-S 0102

Importance of Reflectivity for the Position of the Researcher (Suvi-Maria Saarelainen)

Contemporary practical and empirical theology involves analysing various religious and spiritual positions. In addition, many theologians and religious studies scholars work in interdisciplinary projects where theology or religious studies is seen as one of the disciplines bringing insights into methodological choices, analysis and interpretation. It has been noted that empirical insights and analytical findings are likely to include new aspects and bring deeper insights if empirical theological studies included more aspects of reflection on the researcher's position (Wyller 2022). However, it seems that in (Nordic) research in practical/empirical theology, this kind of reflection on personal positions is rarely included in empirical research (Vähäkangas 2021). Based on these notions, I will analyse my personal position in research interviews and seek an understanding of the question: What are the implications of being a theologian when interviewing people during their palliative care process?

Through three different cases, the paper shows how Tapio, Kari and Aino all found very different attitudes when being interviewed by a theologian. For example, Tapio hoped to develop more of a pastoral relationship to share his spiritual search. Kari, on the other hand, found it difficult to find out between his two interviews that one of the interviewees was also an ordained pastor. Aino gently asked if it was OK to talk about her spiritual faith, as it was something personally constructed. The presentation also discusses ethical issues raised by these cases.

It is concluded that dialogical aspects are needed in interviews to be able to balance between the personal position of the academic researcher and the thoughts, wishes and fears of the interviewee. Postcolonial methods can provide a stronger toolkit for identifying and disentangling the power structures that are always present in the interview setting. There is also a call for research to make both power structures and the position of the researcher more visible in academic articles.

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Sisters on a Mission (Jane McBride)

My doctoral research has taken the form of 18 semi-structured interviews with retired women missionary religious. I have then analysed the interviews through the lenses of feminism, post/de colonialism and power in order to draw out some reflections on the work and lives of the Sisters given contemporary debates about colonialism in particular.

Named after the hunting ground on which their mother house is built, the Zusters van de Jacht is one of the oldest female Flemish missionary congregations. Founded in 1897 by Dame Marie-Louise de Meester, they have worked in many different countries. They began in India, spread to the Philippines, China and Taiwan, taking in controversially the former Belgian colony of Congo, and extending to the United States and South America. They are today mainly a retired community with no new Belgian postulants, but still welcoming vocations from local women in the countries where they served.

As nationals of the colonising country of Belgium and as members of an established Church, the Sisters had a certain power and authority in the mission field which they exercised in different ways. As foreign women and members of a religious congregation, they held roles of leadership and influence abroad which allowed them to be effective bringers of change and help, as well as active entrepreneurs. The word 'help' is a contested one in postcolonial discourse but it is the word the Sisters use about the work they did. These roles transcended the gendered roles of submission they would have held as religious Sisters in the Roman Catholic Church back in Belgium. Whilst seeking to explore the spirituality and motivations of the Sisters I am also aware that the women they served have not been given a voice, and are represented only through the Sisters' perceptions of them.

I consider, in the light of recent discussions on the extent of missionary complicity in colonialism, whether the Sisters contributed to or have reflected on their roles in the Belgian colonial project, given that missionaries have been referred to as the third member of the Holy Trinity of colonialism, alongside industry and the State. In addition I explore how the Sisters' spirituality and views were influenced by the spirituality and views of the local women in the missions alongside whom they lived and worked for many years.

The impact of body language on position taking. A qualitative study on classroom communication with focus on nonverbal communication (Sarah Delling)

One goal of religious education in Germany is to enable the students to develop a personal point of view and learn to take part in public discourse when it comes to questions of religion and worldviews (DBK 2017, 19). A prominent means to reach these goals is theological reasoning in classroom discussion (Büttner 2006; Roose 2020). According to Watzlawick et al. (2011), such discussions are about the exchange of information on a verbal level as well as about negotiating social relationships on a nonverbal level. This paper focuses the nonverbal dimension of classroom discussion to uncover the potential impact of body language of the teacher on processing theological information. Therefore, 15 videotaped RE lessons will be analysed according to documentary method (Asbrand/Martens 2018; Bohnsack 2014). The analysis will show that the teacher not only negotiate social relationships nonverbally, but also use body language to communicate how they deal with different perspectives on a topic. In the given case the nonverbal negotiation of social relationship as well as the nonverbal negotiation of different topical perspectives explain most of the line of argumentation in theological reasoning. The paper highlights the crucial role of the nonverbal communication in processes of position taking and therefore identifies a desideratum of current research in religious education.

Postcolonial Theology and its impact on attitudes towards suicide in Nigerian digital media (Collins Nwafor)

Responses to suicides in Nigeria differ depending on personal perspectives of the phenomenon and their connections to the victim. These reactions frequently mirror various motifs that exist within society. In the Nigerian environment, attitudes to suicide deaths are largely impacted by religious convictions and cultural restrictions linked to such fatalities. However, research in this field has been limited, primarily concentrating on the effect of media coverage on suicide, rather than exploring responses in full. This study delves into the realm of postcolonial theology and seeks to illuminate the religious emotions conveyed in reactions to suicide deaths, as highlighted on numerous digital media platforms. Using a netnographic approach, we gathered information on suicide cases from 13 social media platforms and web-based news outlets. Our analysis of 164 comments allowed us to identify the theological and religious views that formed the basis of the reactions. The findings revealed the significant influence that religious beliefs have in dealing with the aftermath of suicide. The analysis explores themes such as prayer to God, belief in God"s influence during tragic events, considerations of judgment and sin, and contemplation of earthly and supernatural forces. It highlights the ongoing trend among certain segments of the Nigerian population to interpret and analyse the alarming increase in suicide rates amongst both young individuals and adults through a theological, religious, or spiritual lens within the context of postcolonial theology.

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Postcolonial theory from the perspective of the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage (Berenika Seryczyńska)

In the first place, one can point to the perspective of St James the Apostle, who, understanding the missionary message very literally, went to the edge of the world. Folliwing, pilgrims in medieval times chose three directions of mobility: Jerusalem (palmeros), Rome (romeros) and Santiago de Compostela (peregrinos). The latter were fully described as pilgrims because they travelled to the ends of the world. When

they reached Finisterre (the end of the world), gazing out at the ocean they were convinced that its waters were overflowing the edge of the world.

The expedition of Christopher Columbus and the colonial cause crossed this world boundary. The New World was discovered, which was baptised by giving it the names of saints. Nowadays, descendants of the colonists come from "that world" to Santiago de Compostela to make pilgrimages in the manner of medieval pilgrims - it seems that their numbers are significant (the United States is fifth among the most represented countries, Argentina seventh, Brazil ninth, followed closely by Mexico and Canada). However, by reaching Finisterre, they already know that they have not reached the edge, and this also makes a significant difference. However, they undoubtedly feel a strong desire to cross the ocean back, to return to their roots and follow this medieval pilgrim way.

One could point to one further perspective here - the 'conquest of the cosmos', according to which the Earth globe is no more than a "pale blue dot" - in this way another world boundary is crossed. It would therefore be worth asking how these new perspectives on empirical theology should be explored. Do the "new conquistadors" still aim to evangelise the "New Worlds"? What is their motivation - do they intend, like Columbus, to give them the names of saints? Or is modern colonialism of a completely different nature? It seems that we are once again on the edge of a new perception of crossing another borders, but modern conquistadors do not seem to need companions to support them in the spiritual respect, they believe so strongly in matter. On the other hand, post-colonial generations are so enthusiastic to return to their Christian roots.

It seems that finding the difference between these two attitudes is at the same time a search for an answer to the question of the difference between tourism and pilgrimage, the former being described in the literature as an economy of experience in the paradigm of leisure and entertainment, while the latter is analysed in the key of the search for authenticity.

Many places in the world are currently experiencing a crisis due to mass tourism, which destroys the local culture and disrupts the daily life of the inhabitants. Therefore, an analysis of the above-mentioned successive stages of the development of pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in the light of post-colonial theories, can also provide an indication of the search for good strategies for the tourism sector.

Empowering Church Communities Struggling with Poverty in Dedza Diocese, Malawi: A Methodological Reevaluation Essentializing Systematic Empirical Research Approaches within Pastoral-Theological Knowledge Systems Aimed at Flourishing (Peter N. White)

Poverty experiences in postcolonial communities are intricately linked to the historical legacy of colonialism with economic, social-political and cultural ramifications of colonial rule persistently shaping poor communities" development trajectories. Scholarly debates contend that addressing poverty in the postcolonial communities requires not only socio-economic reconstruction but also a critical reevaluation of the pastoral-theological knowledge systems that have been complicit to colonial histories through erosion of indigenous knowledge systems and practices. Scholars like Emmanuel Katongole, Emmanuel Lartey, John Patton and Kathleen Cahalan agree that, notwithstanding the significant shifts unfolding within the socio-political spheres, there exists a conspicuous dearth of reevaluation with regard to the pastoral-theological knowledge systems, indicating that religion remains entangled to colonialism within successive generations of pastoral praxis. The scholars underscore the significance of centering the voices and perspectives of indigenous communities as essential facets within research trajectories aimed at producing theological and pastoral (practical) frameworks that foster the empowerment of local communities.

This paper aims at reevaluating methodologies for gleaning pastoral-theological knowledge, particularizing the church communities in Dedza Diocese, in view of acquiring dynamic and innovative views that inform pastoral-theological frameworks towards people's empowerment and flourishing. By highlighting systematic empirical research as a methodology for doing pastoral-theological research, classicist approaches to pastoral-theological knowledge systems are deconstructed, instead, a broader approach is proposed that

acknowledges that religious praxes bear social implications and require collaborative and methodical epistemic foundations to benefit indigenous communities. The broader approach essentializes engagement of church members struggling with poverty as active participants within pastoral-theological research initiatives, wherein they share lived experiences while simultaneously comprehending their religious and socio-economic milieu. Participants' experiential narratives imbue the pastoral-theological framework and practices with dynamic and innovative perspectives, concomitantly, they are empowered to cultivate competencies that enable them to effectuate meaningful changes consonant with their aspirations, fostering socio-religious frameworks and praxes that are life-affirming.

I argue that the broader approach firmly underscores pastoral care as a contextual praxis that exhibits sensitivity and respect for cultural milieu, moreover, its theological framework is rooted in the lived experiences of the community. The approach acquires social and religious relevance because, departing from critical evaluation of the context, the ultimate goal becomes empowering and improving lives of the members of the church communities by developing pastoral and theological strategies that are based on people's experiences and values. In conclusion, this project aims at contributing towards the contemporary discourses on empirical theology and postcolonial theory, by offering a concise pathway of integrating systematic empirical research within the pastoral-theological knowledge systems to ensure that theology and practice are intertwined, and that members of the church communities become co-authors of their own transformation.

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Thursday, 11. April 2024 – Collegial Session 9 (14.30 – 16.00) – UV-S 005

Culture / Cultures as a context of reference in religious education. Postcolognial inquiries on the concuptualisation of "culture" in (empirical) research on religious education (Konstantin Lindner)

Empirical studies often conceptualize the aspect "culture" with a focus on difference; for example, scales on "cultural beliefs" (cf. Hachfeld 2012). Postcolonial theories, on the other hand, point to potentials of a meaning-oriented understanding of cultures (cf. among others Bhabha 1996; Lee 2010; Said 1978 & 2003). In this paper, at first, selected studies on "religious education and culture" are analyzed in relation to the understanding of "culture" used. Then, alternative, postcolonial-inspired research possibilities are presented.

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A Consideration of Mexico-United States of America Border Migrants in the Context of Postcolonial Residue and Empirical Theology (Raymond Webb)

Research has demonstrated that people of faith often report higher levels of purpose in life than the general population. It has been suggested this may be because they hold a meaningful world view rather than as a consequence of faith. It can be argued that humanists, like people of faith, also hold a meaningful world view, albeit one that is based upon a philosophy of naturalism. This article compares a sample of 1,042 members of Humanists UK with population norms, and a sample of religious groups, using the Purpose in Life Test to assess their reported levels of purpose in life. The data demonstrate that humanists record higher levels of purpose in life than the general population.

Postcolonial theology as decolonial and/or intercultural: an empirical approach (Francis-Vincent Anthony)

Religious traditions with their universal intent on human salvation or wellbeing have de-territorialized themselves or migrated from the place of their origin along trade routes in the company of merchants, invaders and colonizers. Moreover, in the postcolonial world, every other aspect of society, namely, economic, socio-political and cultural, tend to de-territorialize. The intersection of the complex features of diverse cultural and religious traditions in a globalized world thus poses daunting challenges and innovative opportunities to Christian theology. Does postcolonial theology mean decolonial theology? Is it enough to remove the traces of colonial power structures still underlying the traditional ecclesial organization that condition the theologizing in the churches of the southern hemisphere? Underlying the ecclesial power structures, there is still the subtle conviction of the traditional churches regarding their cultural supremacy to give expression to Christian faith. There is no gainsaying that efforts to promote inculturation among the younger churches since the Second Vatican Council have offered fresh opportunities for postcolonial theologizing in the non-European context. Does postcolonial theologizing in the western churches merely

mean decolonializing traditional theology making space for inculturizing theology in the non-western churches? Should it not call for intercultural theologizing in which younger churches have their contribution to make and the older churches have an unforeseen opportunity to evolve theologically? The paper seeks to address postcolonial theology as intercultural theology taking an empirical approach.

Thursday, 11. April 2024 – Collegial Session 10 (14.30 – 16.00) – US-S 0101

E pluribus unum? Construction a typology of contemporary Dutch Evangelicals (Paul Vermeer)

Against the background of the assumed polymorphous character of evangelicalism as a trans-denominational movement, this paper aims to construct a typology of Dutch evangelicals and, subsequently, to test whether this religious typology also manifests socio-demographic differences. Two research questions are addressed: Which types can be distinguished among contemporary Dutch evangelicals on the basis of their core religious convictions and religious orientations? To what extent do these types also display socio-demographic differences? Analyzing survey data on more than 1,100 Dutch evangelicals using latent class analysis reveals five types of evangelicals: Proclaiming Orthodox, Engaged Orthodox, Spiritual Orthodox, Seeking Orthodox and Questing Liberals. These five categories basically seem to represent an orthodox - liberal continuum and mainly differ in terms of gender, age, income, education and marital status.

Diversity and Divides: An Exploration of Christian Engagement among Ethnic Chinese in Britain (Yinxuan Huang)

Using data from a ground-breaking survey on the social life and Christian engagement of ethnic Chinese people in Britain (2022, N=1,179), this study aims to establish a comprehensive understanding of the Chinese Christian community in Britain, which is at a critical historic juncture amid the large influx of Hong Kong migrants to the UK and the influence of prominent social and political events in Asia.

We found that, notwithstanding a high level of religiosity, perceptions of Christianity and patterns of Christian involvement are highly diverse within the Chinese (Christian) community, which manifests in mainly two ways. First, it is evident that political views, especially attitudes towards mainland China, are shaping both the supply-side and the demand-side of the Chinese Christian market. Second, a considerable amount of Hong Kong arrivals are 'hunkering away' from the Chinese church due to a discernible trust gap across different immigrant generations and between the new Hong Kong immigrants and their mainland Chinese counterparts. In summary, this research underscores the imperative for multi-faceted theological and sociological interventions that account for the observed heterogeneity in religiosity and political orientations. Such nuanced frameworks are essential for enhancing ecclesiastical inclusivity and bridging social and political divides in the British Chinese Christian diaspora and beyond.

Positionalities in Practical Theological research (Auli Vähäkangas)

I have been reflecting on my own position as a researcher since my PhD study on Childlessness on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro in the 1990´s. I have noticed that the context where research is conducted does influence my role as a theologian in the studied communities as well as the relationship between me and the research participants. In this paper, I bring examples from two end-of-life research which I have conducted and discuss how the context has influenced my positionality in them. Additionally, I will discuss how postcolonial theories have influenced my positionality.

Decolonizing knowledge generation processes on Latin American religion. Methodological considerations (Catalina Cerda-Planas)

For a long time, Europe and the United States have exerted an enormous influence on the knowledge generation processes in Latin America, also concerning the religious phenomenon. Theories, categories, and instruments are received in a rather uncritical manner (Frigerio, 2013, 2018; Parker, 2009, 2010), without sufficiently considering that these do not adequately correspond to the particularity of the cultural and religious background of the continent. This has prevented or at least made it more difficult to recognize the religious diversity and the specific features of Latin American religiosity (Frigerio, 2018, 2020).

Therefore, when empirically studying the religious phenomenon in different regions or cultures (even if these are within the same society), it becomes necessary to look critically, from a postcolonial perspective, at the question of the conceptualization and operationalization of key notions, to delve in more detail to what extent categories proper to (the) hegemonic culture(s) are being imposed through uncritical assimilation of theories and measuring instruments used to interpret and study the religious phenomenon, in this case, in Latin America (Panotto, 2022). This would make it necessary, on the one hand, to recognize the local and contextual character of the existing and hegemonic conceptualization and operationalization, disrupting its pretensions of universality (Silber, 2022); and, on the other hand, to generate conceptual and instrumental apparatus for the study of the religious phenomenon in regions with other cultural matrices.

In this context, this paper seeks to present the progress achieved to date and the projects underway in terms of conceptualization and, especially, of generation of more appropriate instruments for the study of the religious phenomenon in Chile hand in hand with a recently finished doctoral research (Cerda-Planas, 2023) and further projects inspired by it. The presentation aims to discuss with the other participants, how this contributes to the decolonization of knowledge generation in Latin America and, in turn, to the necessary intercultural dialogue in empirical studies within theology.

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Tools of the Discourse Network Analysis as tools of Contextualising European Theology!? (Dara Straub)

This paper argues that the method of Discourse Network Analysis (dna) can be a beneficial tool in the research of power-knowledge structures in theological knowledge production. Postcolonial Theory sets theology the task of tracing its practices of knowledge production further and further back, to identify the creation of centre and periphery within theological discourses (Gruber 2018). By unearthing the nuances, entanglements, and intricacies of practices of doing theology within the European context, the underlying project to this paper aims to bring to the fore European theology as a tension-ridden, complex and divers context. The hypothesis motivating the usage of dna is that such an approach is necessary for the de-

construction of Eurocentrism, that – oftentimes intransparently – conceptualises Europe as a homogenous entity that the rest of the world needs to let itself be measured by.

While there have been developments in theology since the 1970s to bring theologies in their contextuality to the fore, this has manly signified that African, Latin-American and Asian theologies have been 'accepted' as 'Contextual Theologies', while the contextuality of European theologies is hardly ever made evident or not often enough becomes part of the reflection, when doing theology in a European context. I argue that text-based research of practices of theological knowledge production can give insights into how contextuality or universality are being constructed epistemologically. The tools of the Discourse Network Analysis, which originated from the political sciences (see for example Janning et al. 2009), allow to code passages of theological journal articles form inner-European contexts regarding content-related concepts and discourse strategies that are being used to present them. The transfer of this data into networks gives insights into which linkages exist between specific concepts, between specific discourse strategies and between these two variables.

This visualization of linkages between different practices and spaces of theology gives insights on power-knowledge-relations by a) quantitative and b) qualitative means The networks quantitatively show which strategies have been identified most frequently and which have been used in combination the most. Qualitatively, the way certain strategies are grouped around specific content give insights into what is being made explicit and what is not. A further reflection on possible unspoken certainties of theological knowledge production directly leads into the heart of soteriological, ecclesiological, and Christological questions.

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Exploring Religiosity Beyond (Western) Christianity: An Empirical-Psychological Perspective and Implications for Application (Sarah Demmrich)

For several decades, the ERoR has been criticizing its own theoretical and methodological constraints focused almost exclusively on Western Christianity. This critique has grown in intensity over the past decade.

In my presentation, I aim to provide a social-scientific, especially psychological perspective that offers insights and encourages exploration of religiosity beyond (Western) Christianity. Induced from theoretical considerations and empirical findings, I show major challenges of imposing 'Western' psychological concepts and their measurements on 'non-Western' contexts, including translation issues, misapplication of measurements, reversed findings of our textbook knowledge, and inappropriate discussion of findings. From years of my own research in this field, I plea first and foremost in favor of a strictly empirical, since predominantly non-normative approach applied by culturally and religiously well-informed researchers in order to start addressing these issues.

This approach not only questions (in Western contexts) established concepts and measurements but also pronounces the possibility of their cross-cultural and cross-religious validity. It navigates between culturally universal and culturally relativistic positions within the realm of a convergent perspective. Thereby, it aims to identify universal forms of religiosity (e.g., transcendence, meaning in life, dimensions of religiosity and their centrality in the lives of individuals) and imbue them with religion- and culture-specific contents. Methodologically, this approach allows not only for both emic and etic methods, but is particularly economic as it enables comparability across cultures and religions. This framework facilitates the identification of both the commonalities between (Western) Christian and non-Christian religiosity and the specificities inherent in non-Christian forms of religiosity. It not only acknowledges the complexity of religiosity but also

allows us to expand our understanding of, and even appreciation for, religiosity that exists beyond the mainstream of ERoR.

Ultimately, this approach not only enables the ERoR to explore a nearly limitless field of basic research but also provides a robust empirical, social-scientific foundation for various practical applications that are gaining increasing social relevance. These applications include areas such as therapy, migration, and counseling for religious institutions. Therefore, they are vital for the future of the ERoR, ensuring its continued relevance and impact in addressing societal challenges and serving the common good in various domains.

Friday, 12. April 2024 – Key Note (08.30 – 10.00) – US-S 002

Jaco Dreyer (Pretoria, South Africa)

Empirical theology at the crossroads: a decolonial reflection on responsible research practice

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Friday, 12. April 2024 – Collegial Session 12 (10.30 – 12.00) – US-S 002

Post-colonial reflection on the relationship between spiritual growth in township congregations and impact in the wider community of their own context (Pali Khamadi)

The township in the context of South Africa, is a human settlement established for the blacks during apartheid South Africa. The township is one area that is under-researched, in particular the ministry and challenges of the congregations in the township. There are a lot of phenomena in the township congregation ministry that warrant empirical research and a need to test or develop new theories for the township congregations. Since the township itself and congregations in the township are the relics of the imperial regime, the research done in the township cannot follow the conventional western scientific approach of research. The epistemologies, methods, theories must embrace the local context and contribute to healing and transformation of the context. This article is empirical and post-colonial theory is the main theory guiding this study. This article has two objectives: The first objective is to explain from empirical data how participating congregations score between their spiritual growth and relationship with the wider community in their own context. The second objective is to apply post-colonial theory to interpret the empirical result from the participating congregations.

Gen Z As Religious Agents. An Ethnographic Study of Religious Agency in Finnish Confirmation Training (Heidi Toivonen)

Studies indicate that young people in Western countries are no longer socialized into institutional religion and are the most likely age group to distance themselves from it (Ketola 2020; Sohlberg & Ketola 2020; Tervo-Niemelä & Spännäri 2023). The evolving nature of religion among younger generations can be attributed primarily to distinct childhood circumstances (Tervo-Niemelä & Spännäri 2023). However, studies on religious socialization often compare the young people's religiosity to only traditional forms, inadvertently 'othering' them. Understanding the evolution of religiosity requires micro-level investigations into the religious preferences and their origins for the younger generations. (Klingenberg and Sjö 2019.)

This study examines the religiosity of young people and their relationship to an institutional form of religion, Finnish confirmation training, through the concept of religious agency. Despite decreasing institutional religiosity, confirmation training has remained popular, with 75% of the age group annually participating (Church statistics 1975-2022). Drawing on sociological theories of agency, religious agency refers to the young people's capacity to act and make independent choices. It is enacted in relation to religious structures

that both constrain and are reproduced by individual agents. Utilizing constructivist grounded theory methodology (Charmaz 2014), the empirical data were gathered through ethnographical methods (observations, notes, interviews, photography) among one confirmation group in 2023. The data sets were analysed using Atlas.ti coding, aiming at formulating a conceptual model of the phenomenon.

The preliminary results indicate that the young people's religious agency unfolds in an interplay of confirmation training, church, religion, and Finnish culture. In these structures, young people are socialized into the church community and confirmation training, which is constantly reproduced by the confirmation group. In this process, the ways of being a member of the community are predestined through rules, practices, language, and humour. The young people, however, demonstrate agency by utilizing confirmation training as an instrument to achieve their goals, becoming godparents, having a church wedding, or receiving gifts. In doing so, they tolerate religious content and practices they consider constraining or even oppressive. They are constrained by social pressure to attend; however, they emphasize attendance as their individual choice. They are also agentic in their desire to theologize from 'bottom-up' and come up with their own ideas without being constrained by a strict set of doctrines. Furthermore, their agency contains a desire for authenticity in relation to religion, thereby alienating themselves from practices they were unable to adhere with genuine conviction.

Agency is a central concept in postcolonial theory (e.g, Bignall 2010). Studies investigating religious agency of individuals, especially women, have explored how they negotiate their identities and operate in religious traditions considered conservative or oppressive from a Eurocentric perspective. (e.g., Avishai, 2008; Leming, 2007; Mahmood, 2011.) These studies have challenged the conceptualization of religious agency as merely resistance and incorporated forms of compliance to its definition. This study contributes to these discussions by highlighting how young people navigate amidst influences of the wider globalized society and a form of religious education encompassing traditional religious beliefs, structures, and norms.

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Learning from an awful legacy: Theological lessons from a Church endowment fund's response to Transatlantic Chattel Slavery (David Walker)

In 2019 the Church Commissioners for England embarked on a forensic analysis of their predecessor fund's investment in the transatlantic slave trade. Doing so shone fresh light on various non-financial documents also in the church's custody. This paper describes the nature of the research and its findings and draws from some of the documents. It goes on to categorise the public responses to the research, including to the announcement of a £100 Million Impact Investment Fund. Three particular theological themes that are of current as well as historic interest are then explored in greater depth: baptism; responding to past sins; human and Christian identity. It is concluded that exploring core theological issues through the lens of the transatlantic slave trade is important both to properly address the ongoing legacy of slavery and to inform

theological concerns rooted in major present day social issues such as inclusivity, sexual abuse and residualised working class communities. Conclusions drawn point to the value for further research, including that undertaken by those whose personal heritage overlaps with those enslaved.

Friday, 12. April 2024 – Collegial Session 13 (10.30 – 12.00) – US-V 005

Negotiating cultural identities in post-colonized communities: Social and psychological issues. (Wakil A. Asekun)

Introduction of new religion and new system of government in pre-colonial communities of Nigeria, no doubt, changed the trajectories of social and cultural lives of the people. In line with the theory of collective memories as proposed by Halbwach (1950), the present study examined how the culture of the people of selected communities became affected by the incursion of imperial process of colonization. The study was conducted among 200 people within the age range of 40 and 65 who were purposively selected. They responded to a questionnaire that was adapted from literature which measured the participants on collective memories (negative and positive) of the colonial period, they also gave responses on another questionnaire which measured how the memories of colonial past were received and, or shared. The study provided an answer to how these historical memories shaped the cultural identities of selected participants. Result further showed a significant shift in gender ideology, level of religious and spiritual engagement, and socio-cultural values of the people. The study discussed the implication of these findings on the evolution of Nigerian theological and cultural dispositions.

Decolonizing Love in African Theology: A Moral Imperative (William Orbih)

In Alan Paton's Cry the Beloved Country, a South African novel written during apartheid, Absalom, son of a black Anglican priest, "unintentionally" murders Arthur Jarvis, a white man. What makes the murder particularly tragic is that the white man in question was among the few white settlers sympathetic to the plight of the black natives and committed to tearing down the walls of segregation. More fundamentally, he believed in the God-given human dignity of blacks and white-black equality. His love for the natives was never in doubt; his tragic death inspired a revolution of white-black love.

Arthur Jarvis was what many missionaries to Africa during the colonial era unfortunately weren't. While the missionaries proclaimed the essence of the Christian message with their lips, their hearts and actions often contradicted this holy message. Many African novels written during colonialism and in the decades after colonialism officially ended highlight this contradiction that often existed between the sermons and attitude of missionaries towards the natives they purport to be evangelizing.

Saint Peter Catholic Church at Dangan in Ferdinand Oyono's Houseboy is segregated, with the whites sitting in more comfortable seats nearer the altar than the natives. Witnessing white-on-black brutality throws Toundi Ondoua, the narrative voice in the novel, into a crisis of faith. "Is the white man's neighbor only other white men? Who can go on believing the stuff we are served up in the churches when things happen like I saw today?"

African theology cannot continue to ignore this fact, which this novel above and numerous other African novels have rightly bemoaned. The Gospel of Christ"s redemptive love was first proclaimed in sub-Saharan Africa within the context of colonial hate, racism, and violence. In many instances, it was weaponized into a colonial tool. "Nineteenth-century European missionaries," says Franz Wijsen, "saw Europe as the cradle of Christianity and civilization as opposed to the non-Western World, which was perceived as unsaved and uncivilized." This significantly impacted the gospel they preached, not just by word of mouth but also by way of life.

It perhaps had an even more significant impact on how Africans received the gospel and its perennial impact on African society. Ugandan theologian Emmanuel Katongole thus rightly laments that "Christianity in Africa, despite its outward appearance to the contrary, still operates under the burden of a Western legacy, both in its social outlook and self-understanding."

This paper is divided into three parts. The first part affirms the Christian gospel of Christ's redemptive love as the heart of Christian evangelization. It explores the different aspects of this message of love, emphasizing its potential for transforming the world through justice and peace. In the second part, I will subject the missionary evangelization of the African continent to a decolonial critique to demonstrate the many ways colonial logic and politics shaped and hampered the Christian message.

This forms the basis of the third and final part, a response to Katongole's persistent call for greater involvement of Christianity in African politics. I will argue that decolonizing the gospel of love is both an urgent step and a moral imperative. Freeing the gospel of colonial entrapments energizes the gospel to inspire a more just and peaceful African continent.

Friday, 12. April 2024 – Collegial Session 14 (10.30 – 12.00) – US-S 0101

What about God in Empirical Theology? (Theo Pleizier & Sabrina Müller)

The role of theological concepts remains a significant challenge in empirical theology, prompting questions about their origins and utility within research designs. Of particular interest in the realm of empirical theology is the theological concept of "God." Addressing the concept of God involves navigating a nuanced path. On one hand, traditional theological approaches do not seek empirical evidence to prove the existence of God, adopting a substantial perspective. On the other hand, radical social constructionist perspectives on theological concepts suggest a functional understanding, potentially reducing God to a linguistic or cultural construct.

Within this complex landscape, our research, part of a larger project on Grounded Theory and Empirical Theology, seeks to chart a third way. We propose an approach aimed at developing theological concepts while transcending the limitations of the substantial and functional dichotomy. We argue that "God" is indeed a conceptual construct, while the divine entity God transcends the confines of mere conceptuality. In this paper, we explore various methodological, theological, and epistemological considerations associated with this assertion.

Christian Influencing on Instagram. (Patrick Todjeras, Maike Ritzer, Sabrina Müller, Aline Knapp)

Faith communication in the digital space is a new guiding star of churches and theology associated with hope. Several observations can be made:
- It is clear that on the sender side, hierarchical and traditional regulations are undergoing a change. A democratization of Christian proclamation is taking place.
- Likewise, the conditions of communication as a whole, i.e. the partial dissolution of sender-receiver dynamics, can be observed. In this respect, postcolonial dynamics have been favored by the digital space, which are slowly being perceived and reflected in practical theology and faith communication.
- Finally, new communication figures are emerging, as can be seen in the case of Christian influencers.

We (Patrick Todjeras, Maike Ritzer) took this circumstance as an opportunity to conduct a quantitative study investigating which religious changes can be described among followers of Christian influencers on Instagram. For this purpose, more than 2500 followers were surveyed online between April and June 2023.

In the first part of the presentation, the results of the study will be presented from three perspectives: (1) Religious influencing will be classified and described in terms of the underlying logics. The focus is on the

role of the perceived authenticity of the influencers. Authenticity is operationalized in terms of the 'Perceived Authenticity of Social Media Influencers (PASMI)' scale as a multidimensional construct. The validity of the scale for the German-speaking digital space is tested in the statistical analysis. (2) A second perspective looks at the prerequisites and conditioning factors for religious changes in followers. (3) Finally, these changes will be described and understood in more detail. This analysis is based on the Religious Conversion Process Questionnaire (RCPQ), which was adapted for the German-speaking digital world and tested for its validity in this context. Furthermore, the relationship of the underlying constructs of conversion is tested with key indicators. This contributes to a better understanding and conceptualization of conversion in the digital space.

In the second part of the presentation, the results of Sabrina Müller and Aline Knapp and their qualitative studies of Christian influencers from German-speaking countries come to the fore. By analyzing the appearance and the content of the influencers, interpretations for the transformational dynamics of the followers are created. Three things come into view here:
- Characteristic for the phenomenon of influencing is the interplay of topic and person, which condense into an offer of meaning.
- The results of the follower study are compared with qualitative research on the self-image of Christian influencers. Among other things, it will be asked how influencers understand their own work on Instagram and to what extent this coincides with the effects that can be observed on the part of the followers.
- Finally, power-analytical and postcolonial questions will be asked about how influencers deal with their reach.

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Friday, 12. April 2024 – Collegial Session 15 (10.30 – 12.00) – US-S 0102

Social Conservatism without Christianity in Central and Eastern Europe and Christians: Old Victims, New Oppressors? (Michal Opatrný)

Societies in Central and Eastern European countries are not always fully aware of the issues addressed by postcolonial theory. In addition, at least a significant part of these societies openly reject this view of the contemporary world and its problems, especially the interconnection of Europe with the geopolitical, social and environmental problems of Africa, the Middle East, etc. Social conservativism without Christian belief is characteristic of this situation. Nevertheless, the Churches and especially the representatives of the Catholic Church, often openly support these rejecting attitudes, i.e. rejecting refugees, for example.

One reason for this is that the thesis of the so-called colonial history of Europe does not hold for Central and Eastern Europe because the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was no colonial superpower. From this point of view, to speak in the sense of the Postcolonial Theory about the colonial history of Europe as a whole means the new colonisation of Central and Eastern Europe with Western situations and historical and social problems. On the other hand, the Soviet Union and its internal supremacy of Russian nationalism heavily influenced this area in the 20th century. Therefore, different models of interpreting the current situation in Central and Eastern European societies should also be considered. Working with the anti-oppressive theory developed in sociology, and especially social work, also seems realistic. The current post-communist and post-soviet situation and the history of Central and Eastern Europe during the 20th century can thus be interpreted as a history of oppression generating further oppression, a history in which the

abuse of elementary democratic principles eventually leads to their further abuse, a history in which the victims become the new aggressors.

In this sense, the rejecting attitudes of Churches support and multiplicate such an oppressive situation. Deconstructing the influence on Central and Eastern Europe by the former Soviet atheism and the current Russian nationalist understanding of Orthodox Christianity with its prejudice against the West seems possible through the descriptive approach of empirical theology. Empirical theology can deconstruct this influence, or at least a part of it, as a religious and pseudo-religious colonisation of Central and Eastern Europe of sorts.

Reported levels of purpose in life among a population of British Humanists (Mandy Robbins & Gareth Longden)

Research has demonstrated that people of faith often report higher levels of purpose in life than the general population. It has been suggested this may be because they hold a meaningful world view rather than as a consequence of faith. It can be argued that humanists, like people of faith, also hold a meaningful world view, albeit one that is based upon a philosophy of naturalism. This article compares a sample of 1,042 members of Humanists UK with population norms, and a sample of religious groups, using the Purpose in Life Test to assess their reported levels of purpose in life. The data demonstrate that humanists record higher levels of purpose in life than the general population.

Religion in right-wing ecological discourse. A racism-critical content analysis of a new right periodical (Claudia Gärtner)

There is scientific consensus that planetary boundary overshoot (Rockström et al 2009) is caused by human. It can also be shown that the Global North emits a large part of the CO_2 (e.g. Hickel 2020), whereas the Global South is disproportionately confronted with the ecological consequences. Brand & Wissen (2017) speak in this regard of an "imperial way of life", which passes on the costs to the Global South. In this view, the ecological crisis stands in an unbroken tradition of imperialism and colonialism. This goes hand in hand with the fact that it is primarily the richest 1% of the world"s population who are responsible for a large part of CO_2-emissions (Oxfam / IEEP 2021). The ecological crisis is profoundly a crisis of social inequality, which is also evident in the Global North. For example, discriminatory and racist structures can be seen when persons of colour or with a migrant background live in neighbourhoods with higher levels of toxic waste, air pollution or heat (Downey/Hawkins 2008; Fecht et al 2015; Senatsverwaltung 2019). These and similar findings are summarised under the term "environmental or climate racism" (Bullard 1994; Quent et al.2022; Ituen / Tatu Hey 2021), which has so far received little attention in ecological discourse, especially in German speaking countries.

In view of these discriminatory and racist structures in the ecological crisis, it is revealing how right-wing movements deal with the ecological crisis (Sommer et al. 2022; Quent et al. 2022). While the climate crisis in particular was denied for many years, shifts in discourse have become apparent recently. Right-wing populists and extremists are developing their own narratives and arguments, such as population growth in the Global South or the ideology of the "Great Replacement", to explain biocapacity overshoot or the loss of biodiversity, from which they derive racist measures. Religious references also become relevant in right-wing narratives, with explicit recourse to the Christian tradition (e.g. Gen 1:28) (Forchtner 2019; Forchtner / Özvatan 2020; Veldman 2019; Zaleha / Szasz 2015) or natural religious motifs (Taylor 2009).

Empirical studies on religion in right-wing environmental discourse have been rare for the German-speaking region so far. I therefore examine religious motives and arguments of the new-right periodical "Die Kehre. Zeitschrift für Naturschutz", published since 2019, which represents an important intellectual format of the new-right discourse on ecology in Germany. Zimmermann (2022) presents an initial analysis of "Die Kehre" in terms of the history of ideas and describes the journal as a "right-wing interpretive, meta-political

Kulturkampf project" (Zimmermann 2022, 111), without going into detail about the religious motifs and argumentation patterns it contains. With the help of the structuring qualitative content analysis according to Kuckartz/Rädiker (52022), all 13 issues of the journal are examined for their religious motives and arguments. The aim is to make a first descriptive assessment of the significance of religion in the new right-wing, German-language ecological discourse. In doing so, the paper also aims to contribute to a racism-critical reception of religion and religious motifs in ecological discourse. At the conference, the results and the chosen research method will be discussed in depth within the horizon of postcolonial theory.

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