

# Program for *Religion: Memory and Innovation* Summer School & Conference 11-15.6.2023

## Sunday 11th June

18.00 Informal get-together for Summer School participants (optional):  
Theologicum, Polin Institute (Biskopsgatan / Piispankatu 16)

## Monday 12<sup>th</sup> June

10.45-11.00 Summer school opening & Welcome, Room: Argentum

11.00-11.15 Break

[11.15-12.45 Workshop 1 \(tutors: Björkander & Bongmba\)](#)

Room: Rhodium

**Blumgrund:** “Qualitative study on asylum seekers’ conversion from Islam to Christianity”

**Nilsson:** The Societal Impact Of Theological Research: Theoretical, Practical And Communication Related Considerations

**Nikanne:** Perspectives on the asylum migrants’ post 2015 conversions from Islam to Christianity – Narrating conversion in the context of global Finland

13.00-14.00 Lunch: Kårkafé Aurum

[14.00-15.30 Workshop 2 \(tutors: Devaney & Laato\)](#)

Room: Rhodium

**Pompeo:** Walking in Newness of Life: Memory, History and Innovative Thrust in Contemporary Paulinism

**Helenius:** “The role of memory and memory resources regarding John Duns Scotus’ life and philosophy, Franciscan educational customs, and the transmission of knowledge”

15.30-15.45 Coffee Break: Kårkafé Aurum Bistro

[15.45-17.15 Workshop 3 \(tutors: Behar & Hovi\)](#)

Room: Rhodium

**Dahl:** The notion of ‘sameness’ in the Finnish university students’ life-views

**Christensen:** What we talk about when we talk about Yiddish. Negotiating Jewish identity in Sweden through meta-linguistic practice and speech community

**Banyanga:** The Identity of Sub-Sahara African Christians in Finland

18.00 Summer school dinner: Kårkafé Arken (Tehtaankatu 2)

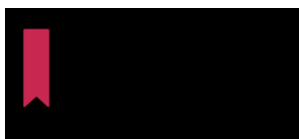
## Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> June

[9.15–10.45 Workshop 4 \(tutors: Vikström & Sjö\)](#)

Room: Rhodium

**Inkilä:** World Views behind Forest Policy: Views of Nature and Forest Political Agency in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

**Wickström:** The Position of Social Movements within Environmentalism in the Middle East



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10.45-11.15 Break

[11.15-12.45 Workshop 5 \(tutors: Broo & Sakaranaho\)](#)

Room: Rhodium

**Korpi:** “How modern spiritualities in Finland construct collective identities or in-groups’ perceptions of themselves in relation to their temporal and cultural landscapes”

**Gebraad:** “ways Discordian practice is created by practitioners and the meanings they assign to it”

**Elgabsi:** Religion, memory, and cultural heritage (“grey areas between religion and culture in the school culture in Swedishspeaking lower secondary schools in Finland”)

13.00-14.00 Lunch: Kårkafé Aurum

[14.00-15.30 Workshop 6 \(tutors: Kraft & Moberg\)](#)

Room: Rhodium

**Ray:** European Theology meets Asian culture and technology – old meets new in Malaysian worship

**CANCELLED: Högberg:** “how the menstrual cycle and religious aspects interplay in Protestant Christian women’s lived everyday experience and what theology emerges from these experiences”

**Amwe:** On Our Way to Appease the Gods!: Asserting Gender and Religious Ritual Capitals in the Nigerian Public Sphere

15.30-15.45 Coffee Break: Kårkafé Aurum Bistro

[15.45-17.15 Workshop 7 \(tutors: Berglund, Kwaku Golo\)](#)

Room: Rhodium

**Yola:** Innovative Use of Pedagogical Strategies as a Means of Sustaining Christianity’s Memory among the Youth in Contemporary Cameroon

**Tom:** Tracing the Epistemological Foundations of African Religions – A decolonial exploration of David Chidester’s work

18.00 Excursion: Walking tour starts from in front of Donner Institute (Biskopsgatan 13). Information: <https://esotericturku.wordpress.com/>

## Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> June

9.00-9.15 Welcome to the conference. Room: Argentum

[9.15-10.45 Session 8 – Societal Transformation \(chair: Kapinde\)](#)

Room: Rhodium

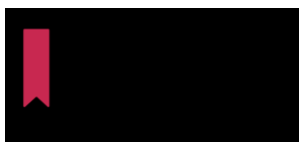
**Äystö:** The Satanic Panic as a Cautionary Memory: Could it Happen Again?

**Hulkkonen:** Alternative Spirituality, Well-being and Innovative Understandings of Christianity

[Parallel session – Pilgrimage 1 \(chair: Ahola\)](#)

Room: Palladium

**Laato:** Virgin Mary and the Birth of Jesus in the Ascension of Isaiah



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**Devaney:** Old Stories and New Stones (“how the combination of the invocation of antiquity and the appeal of novelty functioned both during early modern religious upheavals and today”)

10.45-11.00 Break

11.00-12.30 **Keynote 1: Prof. Elias Bongmba (Rice University)**

**Room: Argentum**

12.30-13.30 Lunch: Kårkafé Aurum

[13.30-15.00 Session 9 – Who is remembered \(chair: Illman\)](#)

Room: Rhodium

**Waheed:** Body, Place and Memory: Sufism in Egypt throughout the 21st century

**Sakaranaho:** Religion and ‘Irish cultural memory’

[Parallel session – Bible: \(chair: Tanskanen\)](#)

Room: Palladium

**Berglund:** The Innovation of a Master Wonderworker  
in the Character of Simon Peter

**Syreeni:** Suppressed, Adopted, and Invented Memories: The Death of Jesus in the Gospel of John

15.00-15.30 Coffee break: Kårkafé Aurum Bistro

15.30-17.00 **Keynote 2: Prof. Ruth Behar (University of Michigan)**

**Room: Argentum**

18.00 Conference dinner: Restaurant Boat Svarte Rudolf (Itäinen Rantakatu 13)

## Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> June

[9.15-10.45 Session 10 – Theology: \(chair: Kapinde\)](#)

Room: Rhodium

**Golo:** Christian Panentheism, Indigenous Ecological Knowledge, and Theology of Environmental Sustainability in Ghana

**Björkander:** Memory and Justice in Post-Genocide Rwanda: A reading of Timothy Longman

**White:** Missional Church and the Healing of Memories: African Pentecostal Perspective

[Parallel session – Pilgrimage 2: \(chair: Mahlamäki\)](#)

Room: Palladium

**Dahlbacka:** The Retrieved Altar Cross Of The Luther Church Helsinki – Sacred Waste Transformed Into Sensational Frame

**Kuuva:** Therapeutic Aspects of Colours Described by Rudolf Steiner: Case Madonna

10.45-11.15 Coffee break: Aurum 2<sup>nd</sup> floor in front of Argentum

[11.15-12.45 Session 11 – Memory construction: \(chair: Hovi\)](#)

Room: Rhodium

**Mikeshin:** Russian Baptist Eschatological Tranquility and Memory Construction During the Pandemic



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**CANCELLED:** **Snellman:** *"Laestadianism in the late 1900<sup>th</sup> century in the north of Sweden"*

**Nahnfeldt:** *"New wine in new wineskins". On social innovation in Church of Sweden since 2015.*

[Parallel session - How is remembered: \(chair: Sjö\)](#)

Room: Palladium

**Hellsten:** Dancing Memory And Innovation

**Raunola:** Remembrance of Living on Light – How to Interpret Data with ANT Mapping

12.45-13.45    Lunch: Kårkafé Aurum

13.45-15.15    **Keynote 3: Prof. Siv Ellen Kraft (The Arctic University of Norway)**

**Room: Argentum**

15.15-15.30    Closing words. Room: Argentum

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## [Workshop1](#)

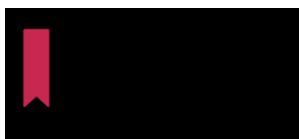
Conversion narratives of Muslim-background Christian refugees. A lived religion approach?

*Ilona Blumgrund, Åbo Akademi University*

In my research, I have interviewed six Christian converts coming from Muslim backgrounds and having converted to Christianity during the asylum process in Finland. I focus on their conversion process and the meaning of Christianity in their everyday life. The aim of the study is to map the different meanings dimensions of Christianity that played a role in the conversion process and see whether these meanings are recognized in the asylum process. I conduct my research in the field of systematic theology, combining empirical methods with systematic theology. I write an article-based dissertation and this project will be the second article of my dissertation.

To give space for the interviewees, I chose to do the interviews in a very open manner. In the beginning of the interview, I asked the person to present themselves, and talk about the events upon arriving to Finland. I had a set of follow-up questions relating to the conversion divided into to five themes: time, relations, materialities, and places. However, I soon realized that I should not ask all questions from all themes unless they appeared important in the interviewees' opening narrative. Thus, I concentrated the follow-up questions on themes relevant for each interviewee.

In addition, I asked the interviewees a set of questions related to the asylum process and experiences of it, as this will be the topic of my third article. Thus, I tried to organize the



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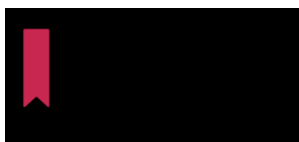
interview in two sections, first one concentrating on conversion and the second on asylum process. However, this proved to be difficult, and the themes are entangled. The interviewees talked simultaneously about both themes, so it was occasionally difficult to know whether I as the interviewer should ask follow-up questions about the conversion or about the experience of the asylum process.

The material that I got is very varied. Some of the interviewees strongly emphasized the theological aspects of Christian doctrine as motivational aspects of their conversion while others emphasized relational aspects. One person did not contemplate so much on their reasons of conversion but rather gave a detailed narrative of the events upon arriving to Finland which included conversion. Especially this story includes detailed description of the spaces and materialities of the person's everyday life.

Example of a detailed description is this interviewee telling me about living in an almost empty apartment as an asylum seeker, and how the person only had two glasses so the person could not drink anything themselves while having two guests from a church visiting, and how the church representatives realized this and appeared some time afterwards behind the person's door with a box of kitchen utensils. The interviewee could still remember very detailed what was in that box and lists the utensils in the interview. This list bears a deep emotional meaning, and it is this kind of material stories I would like to give space for in the article.

Questions:

- 1) My main question is: how to make (systematic) theological analysis of my interview material? As a starting point of the research I had a somewhat vague idea of lived religion, meaning that I would concentrate on their own narratives without making judgments beforehand about concentrating only on e.g. the doctrinal ideas. However, I would need a clearer theoretical approach that would enable me to see all the aspects of their lives as told to me as relevant for the analysis. This includes the doctrinal, the relational, and also the material aspects.
- 2) I have found a theory called practice theory that I think would be a good ontological starting point for my research, because it is holistic and sees the variety of stories in my interview material to belong to the realm of religion. I do not have space to develop here further my understanding of the theory of practice, but as I understand it, I would still need something beyond this theory to deepen the analysis. As a follow-up question to the question 1, I would like to ask if the readers think there are any strands within the field of lived/everyday religion/theology they recommend?



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- 3) Lastly (and this is connected to the theoretical choices made before) I would like to ask whether I should concentrate in my analysis on individual cases or thematic analysis across the interviews?

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## The Societal Impact Of Theological Research: Theoretical, Practical And Communication Related Considerations

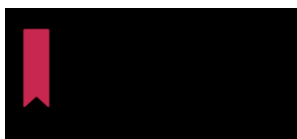
*Mikael Nilsson, Åbo Akademi University*

In this workshop, I would like to discuss what can be considered in order for theological research to enhance its societal relevance and impact. Some would argue for a kind of return of religion in western societies. However, what has “returned” is neither a religiously monolithic situation nor a state-religion-alliance, but rather a religious pluralism in the civil society, lived and expressed within the arrangements of a secular state. The complex situation makes it disputed what kind of religion that has “returned”, what it means, and how to understand the changing state.

My specific interest has to do with what significance the development has for theological research, beyond the primacy of any single religious or secular worldview or language. In my doctoral research I am investigating healing experiences and practices regarding the needs of workplace bullying victims. In a sense I am “testing” the adequacy of systematic theological discourse by contributing to the interpretation of human experiences and the management of an urgent societal problem. The theologian Alistair McFadyen details the task of testing by referring to “the meaningfulness and explanatory power of a functioning theological language” in relation to concrete phenomena. For the research to have explanatory and descriptive power regarding exposure to workplace bullying, health outcomes and healing, I would like to propose and discuss some considerations that I find important and constructive.

Firstly, theoretical considerations highlight the need for a subject of concern and interdisciplinary discussions. An incarnational approach to theology clarifies the situatedness of theological speech in particular time and space, in culture and society. Thus, it preferably engages in topics that are under consideration, also outside theological institutions and faith communities. It also entails a critical and self-critical examination of the theological perspective through interdisciplinary dialogues. In my case, it means discussing experiences of exposure to workplace bullying, its health effects, and the healing of victims in interdisciplinary dialogues with psychology, philosophy etc.

Secondly, practical considerations, which primarily challenge systematic theology, touch upon contextualization and applicability in relevant practices. This step requires of the contribution to bridge the gap between the often abstract and universal level of systematic theology and the practical and particular level of everyday practice. That may also include a



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dialogue with empirical and practice-oriented sciences. To me, it means to draw out some implications and applications of a theological and philosophical discussion on the question of what healing practices and procedures might mean regarding bullying victims.

Finally, communication related considerations revolve around for example disseminations in complementary publications, lectures, and digital activities. This might also include the challenge to initiate collaboration with relevant partners on the practical field.

Keywords: Theological research, societal impact, theory, applicability, communication.

Questions for discussion:

- How do you face the challenge of enhancing the societal impact of theology and religious studies in the light of contemporary developments?
  - What have you considered regarding theory, applicability, and research communication?
  - What else have you considered?
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## Narratives of religious conversion in the context of global Finland: Perspectives on the asylum migrants' post-2015 conversions from Islam to Christianity

*Iiris Nikanne, University of Helsinki*

### Introduction

The PhD studies religious conversion and narratives<sup>1</sup> related to conversion in the context of global Finland, meaning Finland as part of the global world where people and ideas move and interact—or Finland that includes Iraqis as the third largest migrant group, and Christianity and Islam as religions that have both originated in the Middle East. Through interviews with Iraqi migrants in Finland who have converted from Islam to Christianity and Finnish converts from Christianity to Islam, the study seeks to increase understanding of the processes these people have gone through. The PhD also aspires to offer perspectives on the asylum migrants' post-2015 conversion phenomenon.

In 2015 Finland received a record number of asylum seekers, mainly from Muslim-majority countries in the Middle East, and especially from Iraq. Christian churches were among those who came to help them, and some churches also engaged in evangelization. Since 2016, approximately 2000 asylum seekers in Finland have invoked conversion from Islam to Christianity as a basis for their asylum applications. Among people seeking asylum from Finland, there have always been those who have presented religious conversion in their asylum claims; however, the post-2015 conversion phenomenon was of a magnitude that made it the most studied topic at the Finnish Immigration Service and sparked wider societal

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<sup>1</sup> Or experiences?





debate. It can be assumed that the claims are made with various motives, including genuine security risks following conversion. (Nikanne 2018.)

The dissertation will consist of four peer-reviewed articles and a summarizing report. The first article studies the conversion narratives of Iraqi men who have sought asylum in Finland and converted from Islam to Christianity, interviewed in 2017–2018. The second article is a follow-up study where the same participants are re-interviewed to examine how the narratives have evolved after time has passed. The third article looks at the aspect of gender by analyzing the conversion narratives of Iraqi female forced migrant converts from Islam to Christianity, and considering the women's narratives in relation to those of men interviewed for the previous articles. The fourth article brings the research to the researcher's "own" Finnish cultural context and provides cross-cultural analysis through the narratives of Finnish converts from Christianity to Islam and reflecting them in light of the earlier interviews with Iraqi converts from Islam to Christianity.

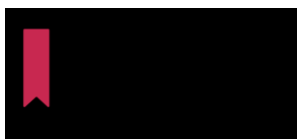
The research follows a data-driven approach and seeks to convey the participants' own narratives on their conversion. The material is collected through semi-structured interviews and is analyzed by the analysis of narratives (Polkinghorne 1995). The epistemological framework of the study is in narrative psychology that considers that a person makes sense of the world through constructed stories that evolve in interaction with the surroundings (McAdams 2009).

The post 2015 conversion phenomenon is relatively little-studied regarding its societal significance in Finland and internationally, and my PhD is one of the first studies analyzing the converts' own narratives in the Finnish context.

**Keywords:** conversion, Islam, Christianity, migration, narratives (or experiences?)

**Questions to discuss:**

- I am currently considering whether to discuss narratives or experiences related to the conversion processes. Both of these theoretical options have their pros and cons, and I would like to hear about your views regarding the choice.
- My main material is from the converts themselves, but as supporting background information, I will be also interviewing some experts (pastors, imams, migration officials). Should I approach these 'expert interviews' as data or sources?
- The PhD will take part in the academic discussion regarding religious conversion. Someone also recommended to link it to migration studies, whereas others have said that it can be difficult to take part into too many discussions and it would be



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better to narrow it to conversion studies. What is your opinion on this? If you recommend including migration studies as well, do you have ideas on how to do it in practice?

- If someone happens to know good studies that apply the 'global paradigm' on religious conversion, please share.

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## Workshop 2

### **Walking in Newness of Life: Memory, History and Innovative Thrust in Contemporary Paulinism**

*Lorenzo Pompeo, University of Trieste*

#### **Synopsis**

The aim of this paper is to analyze the relationship between memory and innovation, history and newness, as it emerges from contemporary philosophical and theological Paulinism. The intent is to briefly introduce the Pauline thought and moreover, to present three perspectives: philosophical, theological and theological-political.

Firstly, the philosophy of Martin Heidegger will be outlined, as starting point for much of the contemporary philosophical and theological Paulinism. Heidegger dedicates to Paul some lessons collected in the *Phenomenology of Religious Life* (1920-1921). For the philosopher, the Christian experience of the religious life is centered on the "new proclamation". This proclamation always remains co-present as alive, not only as a thankful memory. This new historical dimension of the Christian religious experience imposes therefore a "new comportment", but historical consciousness incessantly accompanies, like a shadow, each attempt at a new creation, hindering its realization. Consequently, the aspiration to a new spiritual and religious culture requires a struggle against history.

To follow, the paper will examine the theology of Paul Tillich. In his *Systematic Theology* (1951-1963), Tillich states that it is only in the self-transcendence of life that the "memory" of the essential unity with the infinite is preserved. The temporal, in a continuous process, becomes "eternal memory": past, present, and future are united in a transcendent unity. In order to understand this conception and the overall Tillichian theology, a comprehension of the concept of the "New Being" is required. The desire for a "new being" is a hallmark of all religious experiences but also of many expressions of non-religious life. Tillich considers that time and history are oriented towards the new: even better, they create an absolute "new" expressed symbolically as "New creation", a newness placed beyond any particular and relative innovation.



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This study cannot disregard a reference to the theological-political perspective, in this case to *The Time That Remains* (2000) by Giorgio Agamben. In a chapter dedicated to memory, Agamben writes that messianic time (i.e., a summary recapitulation of the past) is linked to a sort of memory that shows itself as a propaedeutic and anticipation of salvation. Recapitulation means that time is a contraction of past and present and means also that the community will have to deal first and foremost with her past and with her memory, a memory which does not imply a nostalgia but above all a judgment pronounced on the past.

Considering this rethinking of time, the newness of the messianic instance is not just a written text containing new precepts, but a concrete religious experience which is written “on hearts of the flesh”. In other words, in this relationship between memory and newness it is not just a text at stake, but the life of the community.

Focusing on some key aspects, the philosophical methodology elucidates this dialectic between memory and renewal, but it reveals itself also opened to a plurality of perspectives and to an interdisciplinary dialogue, with the view to understanding this issue as a key to a fruitful reinterpretation of the religious experience.

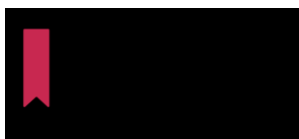
**Keywords:** Memory; History; Newness; Paulinism; Contemporary Thought.

**Question to discuss:**

- 1) Is the relationship between memory and innovation, old and new, etc., designed to be understood only as a rupture or as a struggle?
  - 2) Is a true and effective dialogue between past, present and future of one or more religions still possible or a mere overcoming of memory (or worse, her instrumentalization or manipulation for use by the immediate present) is the unavoidable outcome of religious dynamics?
  - 3) Theology and religious experience suggest that the conception of linear historical time (Chronos) is unsuitable for explaining the mysteries of God: similarly in their fields they seem to conclude the natural sciences or psychology, for example. Does a different conception of time represent an opportunity for a fruitful interdisciplinary, interreligious dialogue to understand the relationship between memory and innovation and to encompass the appearing of something truly new?
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## Duns Scotus' Theological Innovation and Memory

*Visa Helenius, University of Turku*



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## Synopsis

My article deals with the connection between memory, educational resources, and innovation regarding Franciscan John Duns Scotus' (1265 or 1266–1308) thinking. Scotus is a pivotal figure in scholasticism, and his philosophy had a significant impact on the evolution of Christian theology and Western metaphysics. For example, he did not follow Aristotle's and Aquinas' view that substance is a fundamental subject of metaphysics, but instead he thought that the task of metaphysics is to explain intelligibility and possibility of existence. Later, Francisco Suárez (1548–1617), a prominent theologian of the Second scholasticism who drew inspiration from Scotus' philosophy, is a mediator, so to speak, between Scotus and the German rationalist school of the 18th century.

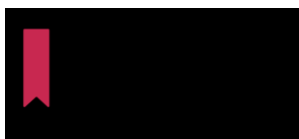
I think that the context of Scotus' philosophy and especially his use of educational resources need more clarification. Therefore, I propound a reading of the role of memory and educational resources regarding Scotus' education and thinking. I also touch on Scotus' own view of memory, Franciscan educational customs, and the transmission of philosophical ideas and theological dogma. The methods are contextualization, historical analysis, historical interpretation, and close reading (to a lesser extent). Tentatively, the article consists of the following sections: Introduction; 1. Remarks on Scotus's Life and Background; 2. Educational and Intellectual Context: Medieval Academic Monasteries and Universities; 3. Scotus, Memory, and Educational Resources; 4. Scotus' Theological Innovation and Memory; 5. Conclusions. My aim is to clarify connections between prevailed intellectual traditions and Scotus' originality by means of interpretation.

I would like to discuss on the following themes: Practices of medieval academic monasteries and universities; outlining of an extensive research topic; the nature of qualified and plausible theologico-historical reading; improving of source criticism; use and value of obsolete sources.

Keywords: medieval views of memory, medieval educational resources; John Duns Scotus; theological innovation

Questions to discuss:

- 1) What were practices of medieval academic monasteries and universities?
  - 2) How to outline an extensive research topic?
  - 3) What kind of a reading is a qualified and plausible theologico-historical reading?
  - 4) How to reach a good skill of source criticism regarding medieval and/or theologico-historical studies?
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## Workshop 3

### “I think it’s quite the same, but...” Life-views of Finnish University Students – Remembering Continuity (and Change) with help of Faith-Q Sort

*Karoliina Dahl, Åbo Akademi University*

#### Abstract for the Doctoral Thesis:

The aim of the thesis is to contribute to the field of life-view and worldview studies by exploring continuities and changes in Finnish emerging adults’ life-views within the time of two years. Furthermore, the intent is to contribute methodologically to ways, in which continuities and changes in life-views are examined and analysed by using the instrument Faith Q-sort (FQS), an instrument based on Q-methodology and designed to explore variety of worldviews, together with theoretical categories of transition, remembering experiences and autobiographical remembering.

The focus is on life-views of 20 university students of age 18–30 coming from different backgrounds and from different parts of Finland. The study includes a longitudinal aspect and consists of two research stages including a survey, the FQS and interviews: the first stage was conducted in 2016 and the second one in 2018. The study combines perspectives from the fields of study of religions, youth and life-span studies, and social memory studies. The approach is an intersubjectivist and social constructionist one and the emphasis lies on an abductive qualitative content analysis. By exploring (1) what kinds of life-views the participants had in 2016 and 2018 (2) changes and continuities in the participants’ life-views during this period were identified and analysed. Furthermore, the thesis sheds light on (3) how the participants described and understood transition, change, and continuity regarding their life-views.

By using FQS, life-view perspectives from 2016 and 2018 were compared. FQS consists of 101 statements, which the participants sorted according to their viewpoints. The analysis of the participants’ Q sorts resulted in three similar perspectives – Rationalist, Believer and Pluralist perspectives – both in 2016 and 2018, but also when the two data sets were combined. The similarity of the perspectives points to strong consistency in the life-views, yet the analysis of the Q sorts together with the interviews also reveal changes, both smaller and bigger, as parts of the experienced continuity.

At the last stage of the data collection, the participants related to the research material by comparing the individual survey responses and Q sorts from 2016 and 2018. This comparison encouraged the participants to remember their life-views and showed that many participants experienced that they had almost the same life-view as before. Changes were often expressed as part of the continuity, which resulted as strengthened life views. Some expressions of continuous change were found, but experiences of conversion or deconversion were marginal. Whereas changes and uncertainties in life were common, these did not reflect the participants’ life-views directly. Changes characterized as “ordinary”



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changes in these emerging adults' lives did not result as changes in life-views. However, changes characterized as "dramatic" (e.g., illness, death of a close person) often resulted as bigger changes or transitions in life-views. With help of the mixed methods and theoretical perspectives that are strongly grounded on the empirical material, the study reveals and addresses the complexity of the experienced continuity in life-views, but also the meaning of both smaller and bigger changes included and at times almost disguised in the experienced continuity.

Keywords: life-view, emerging adult, change, continuity, Faith Q-sort, Q-methodology, remembering, Finland

Questions for discussion:

- 1) Does this abstract follow the criteria of an abstract for a doctoral thesis? If not, what is missing?
  - 2) Based on the abstract, what do think of the title of the thesis?
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## Yiddish spaces as nexus for past, present and future

Anita Christensen, Norwegian School of Theology

### Background

My dissertation explores the role of Yiddish in contemporary Sweden, a topic that has received almost no scholarly attention, despite the fact that Yiddish is a national minority language in Sweden. The number of speakers is highly contested, but the Swedish Yiddish Association writes on its website: "About 4000 people can be assumed to have a certain ability in Yiddish. A number of these would say they understand Yiddish, but can't speak it themselves. A large number feel a connection to the language and often use certain words or expressions in Yiddish." The national minority status has made Yiddish more visible in Sweden, as it has led to a huge influx in resources, rights to language instruction through the public school system, and tv and radio productions in and about Yiddish. My project focuses on how Yiddish is perceived by its speakers (and non-speaking aficionados), the Jewish community more broadly, and by the authorities, and what the language is seen to be, do and represent.

Some topics I am interested in exploring:

- The motivations for engaging with a language that does not primarily hold a communicative, but affective function.
- The social and ideological dynamics that arise in Yiddish-oriented gatherings



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- The effect of government interventions on the perceptions of the language and its future

## Memory and innovation

For this summer school, I want to discuss how Yiddish provides both physical and conceptual spaces for connecting the past and the future; memory and vision Two examples of how this is expressed in my empirical material:

### Yiddish gatherings as nexus for past, present and future.

In my fieldwork, I am struck by the way in which Yiddish gatherings seem to facilitate reflections on the past – personal memory, memory of one’s family, and collective memory – even when the topic of the gathering is something quite different. Sometimes, the memories will be negotiated or reinterpreted in the present, often in the interaction with other people’s narratives. It appears that these episodic Yiddish gatherings become spaces for both memory work and identity work.

### Ideas of futurity

So far, my informants have presented fairly vague ideas about the future of Yiddish in Sweden.

With the state as a stakeholder, and a changing demographic of speakers, there are multiple potential outcomes for the future role and function of Yiddish . Who will speak the language in the future and why? What will the language signify in the coming decades? How connected will this national minority language be with the Jewish minority? In other countries, we observe the emergence of strong, ideologically informed ideas of Yiddish futurity, particularly among young people, but my data do not reflect similar patterns in the Swedish context.

### Questions for discussion

I am still in the midst of my fieldwork/ “data collection”, so I am grateful for this possibility to get external perspectives on my research. I would particularly benefit from input such as:

Q1: What may be fruitful theoretical entry points to the topics I am discussing above?



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Q2: Which perspectives / discussions from Religious Studies are relevant in the framing of this project? (My project is placed in a Religious Studies department, but I do not have a background in the field.)

Q3: What kinds of questions / prompts can I give informants to get them to explore ideas of futurity more deeply?

(Bonus Q: I'd also love to hear what piques your interest the most in this project – what may I want to learn from or about informants/ gatherings/ networks/ institutions/ processes that I may not have explored yet?)

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## Coping strategies used by Sub-Sahara African Christians against Racism and Discrimination in Finland.

*Jean Banyanga, Åbo Akademi University*

Keywords: Coping strategies, Sub-Sahara, Christians, racism, discrimination.

To be integrated into another group of people, economically, socially, politically, and traditionally takes time. Acculturation is a process in which an individual adopts and adapts to a new culture. Individuals try to integrate themselves into the new culture by participating in events of other cultures of the host country such as their traditions and religion but still hold their original cultural values and traditions (Liebkind, 1989a). How the cultural minority wishes to relate to the dominant cultural group has been termed acculturation attitudes (Berry et al., 1987).

The researchers have established the two basic ways members of ethnic-cultural minorities have to address which are (a) to maintain their cultural identity and characteristics and (b) to maintain relationships and contact with the dominant group (Berry et al., 1987). The first argument can lead to isolation because of lacking interaction with people from the majority group. Moreover, some migrants consider themselves to be in the middle, they hold on to their culture and tradition and balance with the culture of their new home country. Based on existing theory, residing in a new cultural environment demands the capacity of applying new communicative codes and simultaneously live in and between two or more "worlds," (Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000; Sam & Berry, 2010). Thus, integration implies the maintenance of the own culture as well as having a relationship with the majority group. Studies by Berry et al. (1987) and Sue & Sue (1990) show that maintaining both one's cultural tradition and contact with the majority culture gives the best integrational and psychological outcomes. Furthermore, studies on assimilation have demonstrated that



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positive assimilation leads to good emotional and physical health, high self-confidence, good work performance, and good grades in school (Liebkind, 2001).

Racism and discrimination can cause direct dangers toward ethnic groups and individuals, where equal opportunity in the labor market and service, as well as stereotyping and negative attitudes in the media and public discourse, are rampant. Coping is defined as the process by which an individual attempts to manage and resolve, psychologically and behaviorally stressful events (Plummer & Slane, 1996; Lazarus & Folkman 1984). Thus, Individuals develop coping strategies from their close network of people, such as family and their ethnic cultural group (Pearlin, 1993).

For people to protect their mental health from chronic exposure to ethnic harassment and abuse, empowerment theory suggests that the harassed victims should choose proactive coping strategies that only protect their mental health but also attempt to redress the structural nature of such harassment and abuse (Molix & Bettencourt, 2010; Adams et. al., 2016). Researchers have organized coping strategies into different types according to their intended functions such as optimism (Scheier & Carver, 1992), Psychological mastery or control (Bandura, 2006), self-esteem (DuBois & Flay, 2004), and social support (Maercker, Schutzwohl, & Zahava, 1999, 215) as essential psychological resources that would help to manage racism and racial discrimination. In addition, they have pointed out that ethnic identification (Phinney, 1992; Phinney & Ong, 2007) and acculturation (Suinn, 2010) status may be essential factors in predicting mental health outcomes among migrants. There are certain essential concepts to bear in mind. Contemporary studies have demonstrated that culture and religion are cornerstones for migrants to cope with racism (Wester, Kuo, & Vogel, 2006; Lam & Zane, 2004).

## Questions

1. How can a Christian behave in situation of racism where the existence of the living God as Creator, and Redeemer-God, the renewal of the world in Christ, the dynamic work of the Holy Spirit, and the acceptance of Scripture is normative for the Christian life?
  2. What are the coping strategies that would be used by Sub-Sahara Africans against Racism and discrimination?
- 



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## Workshop 4

### Views of Nature and Forest Policy in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

*Hilla Inkilä, University of Eastern Finland*

In my thesis, I explore the views of nature directing the forest use of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (hereafter “the ELCF”). The ELCF is a significant forest owner in Finland. Finnish forests, amongst which the forest property of the ELCF, are currently targeted by contradictory pressures. On the one hand, industrial forest use forms a crucial basis for the economy of the whole Finnish society. The need to use forests as a financial resource has increased in Finland because of Russian’s war in Ukraine. Meanwhile, on the other hand, forests also play a central role in fighting climate change and biodiversity loss. The ELCF can be seen as balancing between these two objectives as well since it’s committed to, for instance, a carbon neutrality goal by 2030. However, for many of the forest owner congregations their forest property is also playing a central economical role that might even increase given the situation with decreasing number of members in the ELCF.

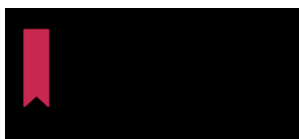
On this account, I argue it is important to observe the forest policy of the ELCF particularly through views of nature. According to the theory I’ve adopted, view of nature is a mental framework of the human mind that constructs of values, beliefs, and value orientations. Some earlier studies suggest that views of nature affect, for instance, the ways people talk and think about nature. Based on an earlier research, one key aim of my study is to find out whether views of nature have an explanatory effect on my informants’ forest political perceptions, including their opinion about how the ELCF should use its forest property.

I approach my research scheme through the following research questions:

- 1) What kinds of views of nature do the ecclesial decision-makers have?
- 2) Do the ecclesial decision-makers’ views of nature affect their forest political perceptions and if so, how?
- 3) Based on the ecclesial decision-makers’ views of nature as well as the environmental documents of the church, what are the grounds of the forest political agency of the church like?

In my thesis, the ecclesial decision-makers are represented by a sample of parish councilors as well as the representatives of the General Synod of the ELCF, both focal actors when considering the forest policy of the church. By forest political agency I mean all the forest-related communication and action pursued by and within the ELCF.

My data will consist of two parts: 1) a survey conducted for the ecclesial decision-makers and 2) the official environmental work documents of the ELCF. I’m planning on using an integrative mixed method approach for combining these two types of data (survey and



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literature) as well as qualitative (open questions) and quantitative (closed questions) data within the survey data.

My research helps understand views of nature affecting forest policy not only in the ELCF but also more largely in Finland. This is important for steering through the contradictory interests targeted to forests in the current situation where forest use is related to both problems and solving them.

Questions:

- 1) What would be the central concepts for my study? Especially I've been wondering the possible difference between views of nature and relation to nature.
- 2) What would be as reasonable and functional data and methods as possible for answering my research questions and, perhaps even more importantly, my whole research scheme and aim?

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## The Position of Social Movements within Environmentalism in the Middle East

*Laura Wickström, Åbo Akademi University*

The purpose of this paper is to present some views on the social movement and its role as describing the environmental movement in the Middle East. Concepts such as “civil society” and “social movements” include various meanings and cannot be labelled with one single description. They are inflected by the national and regional context they are operating in (Esteves, Motta & Cox 2009). Cotgrove & Duff (2003) place emphasis on the social and class related aspects of contemporary environmentalism. They argue that environmentalists are drawn predominantly from a specific fraction of the middle class whose interests and values diverge from other groups in industrial societies. It seems that the crucial difference in values and beliefs between environmentalists and e.g. the representatives of the market sector is partly found in their relations to the core economic institutions of society. Nagel & Staeheli (2016) add that what might seem as non-contentiousness of environmental activism can provide a sort of cover for political activity in form of training people to take direct protest action against the government and political parties.

Altan-Olcay & Icduygu emphasize that the boundary between state and civil society is not clear-cut, meaning that the state intervenes in several degrees in the work of the civil society. States are integral to the shaping of what comes to be known as the civil society. The Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) cannot often measure up to the expectations for triggering gradual political liberalization because of their embeddedness in local and international networks of power relations. In their research focusing on the civil society in Egypt, Lebanon and Turkey, Altan-Olcay & Icduygu states that even though the three countries represent different regime types and degrees of authoritarianism (Egypt an authoritarian state, Lebanon a hybrid regime with a past of failed state, Turkey an uneasy location between a hybrid regime and consolidating democracy), civil society actors evaluate their own work in similar ways. (Altan-Olcay & Icduygu 2012)



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There is a discrepancy between the values the participants hold and their everyday experiences. In Turkey, CSOs perceived themselves to play an important role in promoting environmental sustainability. In Lebanon, values such as tolerance, non-violence, gender equality, poverty eradication and environmental sustainability are given by the CSOs activists strong efforts to be promoted and practiced, even though there are strong indications that values such as democracy and tolerance were not always practiced internally. (Altan-Olcay & Icduygu 2012) This is often due to the structure of patron-client relationships. (Kingston 2001)

There are two further arguments that needs to be made. First, power inequalities, institutional arrangements and the history of state-society relations determine to a great extent who becomes part of the civil society and what they can do. Second, there is a need to rethink what can be expected from CSOs. The history of associational life, the intense debates and indications of what communities desire show that formal CSO activity is only one aspect of political life and transformation. Civil society actors can be part of a larger social mobilization that pushes for change. However, their very specific formation and embeddedness in existing power relations also make it possible that they help to sustain the status quo.

Keywords: environmentalism, civil society, state structure, Lebanon, Turkey

Question 1: In the introductory part of my theses (the “kappa”), I have approx. five pages to discuss the social movements. How would it be wise to narrow it down and where would the focus be?

Question 2: How much should be given space for the (Western) theory and how much for examples from the field?

Question 3: Should “religion”, or in this case Islam, be written out more clearly?

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## Workshop 5

### Historical counter-narratives and the case of Willie Angervo’s “esoteric patriotism”

*Ossi Korpi, University of Turku*

In my article-based dissertation, I explore historical counter-narratives connected to modern spiritualities in Finland from the early 20th century to the present. The focus is on historical imagination which I consider to be an essential but rarely recognized part of all kinds of worldviews. The study examines how representations of the past construct collective identities, reflect values of their time and challenge dominant narratives. I’m especially interested in representations of history that aim to question the prevailing ways of seeing the past. In the workshop, I would like to discuss the first dissertation article I’m currently writing. The article examines the historical views of Willie Angervo (1875–1938).



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Although many books and articles have been published about Finnish occultism/esotericism of the late 19th and early 20th century in recent years, Angervo has only been mentioned briefly in the research so far. However, he was a prominent figure in Finnish esoteric circles of his time. Angervo founded two theosophical lodges and acted as a national representative of the Order of the Star in the East. He was also a popular speaker and produced a wide array of literary works. In my article, I intend to analyze two of Angervo's published texts that seem most relevant to my study: a short booklet *Isänmaa* (1937, "Fatherland") and a posthumously published book *Kalevalaisten esi-isämme usko* (1939, "The Faith of Our Kalevalaic Forefathers").

The end of the 1930s is an interesting period to study from the perspective of Finnish uses of history. Finland had gained its independence only twenty years earlier. Nationalistic interpretations of history and ideas of primordial ethnic origin were prevalent. National epic *Kalevala* (1835/1839) played a big part in the project of constructing the unifying past. But how one was to feel about these "ancient origins" in an area in which written history only started in the late Middle Ages? What was Christianity's place in Finnishness when the Christianization of Finland was connected to Swedish rule? Angervo set out to answer these issues through imaginative interpretations of historical and prehistorical times that stretched back to the mythical continent of Atlantis, where he argued that events of *Kalevala* took place.

So far I have investigated Angervo's life history from digital archives and gone through the research materials doing extensive notes and collecting everything related to Angervo's views of the past. This includes his criticism of mainstream historical research and historical narratives promoted e.g. by the church. After that, I organized my notes and highlighted the main points of Angervo's historical narrative(s) to get a clearer understanding of his claims. Next, I will situate them in a wider context (both mainstream and within alternative religiosity) to find out what narratives he challenged and took part in. This is done mostly by utilizing previous studies about Finnish history culture but also some relevant primary sources (e.g. writings of contemporary theosophists and pseudohistorians).

In my analysis, I intend to apply Hanna Meretoja's (2021) dialogical approach to narrative which emphasizes the reciprocity and power relations of individuals and narratives. From this perspective, counter-narratives are seen as "critical reinterpretations of dominant narrative models". Unlike counter-narratives, dominant narratives are typically implicit and might not be fully realized by those who challenge them. I have also planned to include in the article some theoretical discussions about historical imagination as an object of research (see e.g. Hanegraff 2017).

Keywords: historical imagination, uses of history, Western esotericism, counter-narratives



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Questions: 1) How to make my article interesting and relevant for researchers outside Finland? 2) Thoughts on theory? (Studying "historical imagination" as "counter-narrative") 3) Does my methodology seem reasonable?

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## Cosmic Play? Creative meaning-making among Discordian practitioners

*Hanna Gebraad, University of Turku*

Keywords: Ethnography, play, meaning making, discordianism

Discordianism is a religion created in 1958. It spread in the countercultural milieu of the 1960's and later increasingly online. Discordianism is rife with absurdist humour and satire aimed at religion and general conformism, and it is often labelled parody religion. Its philosophical core idea is that the universe is inherently chaotic, and order and disorder are arbitrary human constructs. Once dubbed "dada zen for westerners", Discordianism encourages critical thinking and creativity. It has no formal organisation, and individual practitioners are free to create their own practice.

My research is a qualitative study on how Finnish Discordians craft their identity and practice. The method for compiling the data is ethnographic fieldwork. Research material will consist of thematic accounts written by participants, interviews, and (documentation of) participant observation. First, I spread a writing invitation in Discordian social media groups and Turku Eristic Association. After this, I conduct interviews and do participant observation. I hope to gather some 10–12 texts and have 6–10 participants to interview, but it could become less. I am considering spreading the writing invitation in English as well. Methods of analysis include, but are not limited to, content analysis, narrative analysis, and activity analysis.

The research draws on social constructivism, narrative and cognitive psychology, and occupational science. Key concepts are meaning making, narrative, occupation, and play. I see meaning making as an active process in which narration, affect, and occupations interact. I examine both the process and the resulting constructs of meaning and what they give to the practitioners. While I study narratives, I also want to consider the nonverbal side of meaning making, as Discordianism itself often aims at breaking coherent narrative forms. This is the curious paradox: while on one level Discordianism offers a coherent narrative, there is simultaneously an in-built effort to question all narratives.

Play has two roles. It is central to Discordianism and I examine the meanings practitioners give to it. On an etic level, play is a theoretical concept I want to test in understanding the way practitioners make meaning. There are at least two (compatible?) theoretical approaches. One is the reversal theory and its view on oscillating motivational states, particularly the telic-paratelic- (serious-playful-) binary. Another, used in study of religion by Outi Pohjanheimo, is a cognitive psychology approach in which play is seen as one element



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of affective cognitive systems that can foster intuitive and magical thinking. Play has also been theorised in occupational theory, mainly its function as self-realisation.

I'd especially like to discuss methodological questions and the concept of play. Some questions could be:

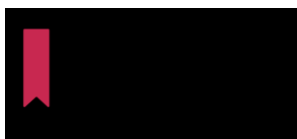
1. Identification and insider/outsider. What does it mean to identify as Discordian? Not all those who practice identify as Discordian. I am involved in a Discordian community yet do not necessarily identify as Discordian. How to deal with these ambiguities?
  2. Using participatory methods in ethnography, how, when, why?
  3. Play as etic & emic concept, how to combine relevant theoretical takes on it?
- 

### Religion, memory, and cultural heritage

*Ada Elgabsi, Åbo Akademi University*

In this paper I present my ongoing research project and discuss central questions related to the project. In my doctoral project I analyze grey areas between religion and culture in the school culture in Swedish-speaking lower secondary schools in Finland. My primary sources are interviews with teachers and headmasters, the teachers' and headmasters' own written reflections about their experiences, as well as the curriculum and the law. I use a qualitative research interview method for the interviews, and I conduct a thematic analysis of the material. The primary sources will be investigated using the concepts of religious literacy and cultural heritage, in which theoretical discussions about memory are central. In this paper I particularly focus on theoretical discussions about religion, memory, and cultural heritage within a schoolculture context.

The status of religion in the comprehensive schools in Finland is a debated issue. Some of the discussions concern whether religious elements are allowed in schools but also what is to be classified as "religious" and as "cultural." One example is the hymn *Den blomstertid nu kommer* (in Finnish *Suvivirsi*) and whether it can be sung in schools in Finland by the end of the schoolyear. In this case the Finnish National Agency for Education decided that it is allowed to continue to sing the hymn in schools, since it is a part of the Finnish culture (Poulter et al 2017). In light of recent scholarship, one could understand this phenomenon of classifying religious elements as "culture" or as "our heritage" as a process of culturalization. Culturalizing a religious element is done in order for it to live on, in this case in the schoolculture (Taira & Beaman 2022). One could argue that these culturalized elements are part of larger cultural heritage that is transmitted in schools, which often include elements of the majority religion (Lindhart 2022).



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I analyze the transmission of “cultural heritage” and the grey areas between religion and culture. Cultural heritage is seen as something that needs to be taken care of and preserved to not vanish and thus needs to be transmitted. (Lowenthal 1998: 1–2; Hartog 2017: 149–154) Because of the feeling of having a responsibility to transmit something from the past into the future, I intend to discuss what role the sense of being part of a generational chain has in discussions about the transmission of cultural heritage in a school-context. That is, a chain that contains the past, the present, and the future, or an intersubjective and intergenerational lifeworld. To be in this chain is to be connected to those who have lived before us as well as to those who have not yet been born. (Ruin 2023: 54–55) I would like to discuss further the role that collective memory plays in these cultural heritage questions in the school-context (Halbwachs 1992; Hervieu-Léger 2000).

Questions:

Heritage includes an understanding of one being in a generational chain. A chain with a past, present and a future. In what ways can one understand schools – as a phenomenon (all the schools) and as individual schools – as part of a generational chain? What role does collective memory play in this heritage discussion?

Keywords: cultural heritage, memory, school, religion, generational chain

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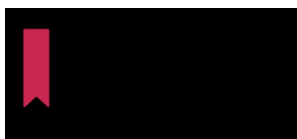
## Workshop 6

### European Theology meets Asian culture and technology – old meets new in Malaysian worship

*Tomas Ray, Åbo Akademi University*

During the Corona pandemic, people could not meet physically for worship and Holy Communion. In many churches in Europe, clergy told people just to sit the pandemic out and partake in the communion when it again was possible to meet in person. In the Lutheran churches in Malaysia, there was another thinking.

In Europe and within the Lutheran World federation the argumentation focused on the fact that people could not meet in person and that Eucharist had to be served in a physical manner. The argumentation was focused on that real people in an existing congregation, in a real church, eat real bread and drink real vine handed out by physical priests. In churches in Europe, people were told to wait for the possibility to celebrate communion.



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In at least three Lutheran Churches in Malaysia, the thinking was quite different. During the pandemic all the churches in Malaysia were shut, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Church and the Basel Christian Church went online with their Sunday services.

In this paper, I will focus on the theological argumentation for communion online. During the pandemic I followed some Sunday services of the Lutheran church in Malaysia, and heard how Reverend Thomas Low, who later became bishop in the same church, introduced communion online in the Lutheran church in Malaysia. The same happened also in the other Lutheran churches. The argumentation started from classical theological thinking, communion of the saints, about who is participating in the Eucharist, through Lutheran dogma, *ex opere operato*, to the use of technology of today. "Prepare your elements" was the saying and challenge. People were told to have bread and vine or juice prepared, before they met for Sunday service online.

This happened in February 2021, a few Sundays later, on Easter Sunday service was celebrated with communion service on Zoom, where everyone partaking in the service had their cameras switched on for the communion. Now there was a congregation present for the celebration of the Eucharist. The congregation was not present in a physical manner in a church, but present in real time through the medium of Zoom.

The Swedish theologians Sara Gripe and Jonas Idestrom, who write about this kind of work, use the thinking of Edward Soja's "third space". In this kind of thinking the term "third space" can be used similarly to "cyberspace". Christians, who gather online in the "third space", can at the same time be united with the saints. The Communion of the saints that appears already in early Christianity, has not been developed much in Western theology. However, Rev. Dr. Eric Trozzo develops the connection between ancestral worship, common in religions in Asian, to the communion of the saints, in the book he edited with several authors named *Communion on the Saints in Context*. (2020)

This paper will investigate what happens when Lutheran theology meet Asian culture and technology. It will give examples on contextualization and online practices.

Questions:

- 1) Do I need to make a deeper comparison between no and yes to communion online? Or can I focus on the positive aspects?
- 2) Does the "third space" thinking of Edward Soja work?

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## Methods for researching women's experiences of hormones and faith

*Sara Högberg, Åbo Akademi University*

Keywords: qualitative methods, data gathering, experiences, women, lived religion



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My doctoral research is shaped as a case study on Protestant Christian Swedish speaking women in Finland's experiences of their menstrual cycles. Since research on the combination of menstrual and religious experiences is scarce, I have chosen an explorative research approach. The research is strictly qualitative to its character, aiming at a deeper understanding of individual participants' experiences and the within-person variations the menstrual cycle may cause. The research question is currently: How is the relationship between the menstrual cycle and lived religion expressed in a Christian woman's life, and what factors influence this relationship? At this point, my theoretical framework is an understanding of both religion and the menstrual cycle as everyday phenomena related to the whole human being as situated in a social context. This framework is grounded in theories of lived religion and lived theology, and a steadily increasing amount of menstrual cycle research in various academic disciplines.

I have recently commenced a pilot study to get familiar with my research field and explore research methodology in order to develop the main study research design. So far I have conducted a focus group consisting of three young adult women with fairly regular menstrual cycles and none or only a few negatively perceived cycle related symptoms. The purpose of the focus group was to get a first glimpse of possible participants' shared social realities as well as their (and my) ability to talk about these topics. By the time of the summer school, I will also have conducted three in-depth interviews. Those interviews are part of a planned diary-interview method (Bartlett & Milligan 2015), in which the first interview gives material to create semi-structured solicited diaries individually tailored to the research participants. Follow up interviews will be conducted to interpret the data from the diaries together with the participant. For the pilot study, the solicited diaries are kept for 3–4 menstrual cycles. If I use the diary-interview method in the main study, diaries will span over minimum 6 menstrual cycles.

For this summer school, I would like to focus on two present challenges related to data gathering:

1. In the focus group, participants easily talked about their menstrual cycles and their faith and faith practices separately, but combining them was hard because they had never noted a connection. It was a little helpful to have them choose pictures describing their faith practices and ask them to reflect on if they remembered any situation when this practice was affected by their menstrual cycle experiences, but the exercise was obviously hard and slightly uncomfortable for them. This raised questions about how to talk to participants about things they have never reflected on or processes they are not aware of. How do I ask questions to make them reflect? Are there tools other than pictures that may be worth exploring in the in-depth interviews?
2. Now, when I have collected the first material for my pilot study, I have to start figuring out how exactly to use my experiences to develop the main study. I am open to suggestions on methods of procedure.



Questions:

How to talk to research participants about things they have never reflected on or processes they are not aware of.

Suggestions on how to best use a pilot study to develop a main study.

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## Summer School Synopsis

*Ruth V. Amwe, Princeton Theological Seminary*

On July 23, 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic quarantine mandate, thousands of naked and semi-clothed women stormed the streets of Atyap Kingdom in Zangon Kataf, in northeastern Nigeria. They were responding to the massacre of a contested number of Atyap indigenes the night before. Although they consisted mainly of evangelical Christians, the women based their action on the age-long practice of byanfwo kagbang performed by members of the satirr women's cult and rooted in their pre-Christian African indigenous spirituality rather than a conventional understanding of civil protest.

Orchestrated in both large and small scale, the practice of women bearing their naked bodies in public as acts of defiance is not restricted to Africa alone. However, the religious, social, and cultural elements that validates its enactment and its efficacy makes its occurrences in Africa unique. Hence, scholars have approached this phenomenon with an interest in understanding its historical roots, causative circumstances, its meaning and consequent effect on the immediate and distant context from a sociological, historical, anthropological, political science and psychiatry lens. The most recent works on this subject include Laura Grillo's *Intimate Rebuke* (2018) and Naminata Diabate's *Naked Agency* (2020). Although both works focused on such a scenario as it played out among Ivorian women, both scholars approached the subject of women's bodies from different yet complementary perspectives providing a rich context for understanding its meaning, contemporary relevance, and efficacy.

When examined within the context of Nigeria, previous research on women's naked protest have focused primarily on majority ethnic groups in southern and western parts of the country such as the Yoruba and the Igbo. Little to no research has been conducted in northeastern Nigeria or among the satirr women's cult within the Southern Kaduna region. It is this gap I wish to fill by investigating the nature, scope, and rituals of the satirr women's cult and their practice of byanfwo kagbang. My research attempts to examine the positionality of these women's bodies in public discourse against the backdrop of African religions and spirituality. It seeks to explore how these women engage in the deployment of their ritual power in public discourse through the age-long practice of byanfwo kagbang. My research seeks to understand the indigenous religious cosmologies and worldviews that legitimizes such actions vis a vis the contestation and renegotiation of their religious identities, cosmologies, worldviews and lived experiences.



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I plan to employ empirical ethnographic approach and qualitative case study method. Primary data will be sourced through observation, in-depth and semi-structured individual, and focus group interviews with up to thirty members of the Atyap community including some of the women who participated in the “naked protest.” I also hope to collect relevant archival data from the Kaduna National Archive and source other applicable documented materials including secondary sources. The outcome of this research will remedy the current lack of data on “naked protest” in northeastern Nigeria as well as contribute significantly to studies on how African women experience, challenge and assert their agency in the face of violence.

Questions:

- 1) My research context continues to remain in a volatile state, and I have lost key interlocutors who would have had to flee the vicinity in fear for their lives. What is the best way to navigate safety and maintaining interlocutors during data collection?
  - 2) Though my research focuses on the womens naked protest, discussion with my interlocutors often involves personal narratives of near-death experiences, the loss of loved ones among other traumatic experiences. I am often at a loss regarding how best to manage the situation in ways that completely respects their emotions and possibly guide the conversation forward. I would be happy to receive best practices from colleagues who have been in similar situations.
  - 3) I am curious about how others practice self-care when researching on difficult and traumatizing topics or contexts. Any recommendations on what has worked for you?
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## Workshop 7

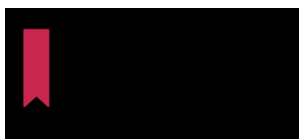
### **Innovative Use of Pedagogical Strategies as a Means of Sustaining Christianity's Memory among the Youth in Contemporary Cameroon**

*Yure Comfort Yola, ECWA Theological Seminary*

#### **Introduction**

The twenty-first century context is faced with the challenge of increasing decline in effective engagement of the population in Christian activities, especially the youthful age group among some mainline denominations in Cameroon. This is a sign of the gradual loss of a religious memory among this age group. In finding out some of the factors accounting for this, the literature reveals secularism and modernization as competing forces which transform lifestyles, concepts, perceptions, and worldviews that attract more youths. These forces, divert their attention from involvement to church activities that are meant to help orient them towards a Christian heritage as a means of sustaining Christianity's memory, as well as give them an avenue to express their religious affiliation.

This paper seeks to examine some pedagogical approaches that are being used for youth ministry among some churches of the Cameroon Baptist Convention in order to suggest a framework (MPKKK), which the author thinks could be contextually relevant for this age group.



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Problem: One of the effects of secularism and modernization is the decline of interest towards religion in general, and religious activities in particular, a phenomenon which is demonstrated especially among the youthful population in Cameroon through less involvement to church activities such as weekly Bible studies, prayer meetings, choir practice, and others. Such activities help in sustaining a religion's memory as well as orient right beliefs and value systems that define a person as a member of a given religion, in this case, Christianity.

#### Key Words

1. Innovation
2. Pedagogy/Teaching strategies
3. Religious identity
4. Christianity's memory

#### Questions

1. What are the causes of the rapid decline of interest for church activities among the youthful population in Cameroon?
2. What pedagogical strategies are being used in youth ministry in the churches of the Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC)?
3. How can we improve the interest of the youth towards church activities in our contemporary secularized society?

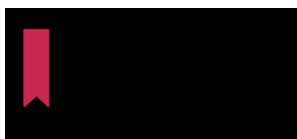
#### Methodology

This study shall be an action research, to be conducted among selected churches of the Cameroon Baptist Convention that have a youth ministry program. Purposive sampling shall be used for this design because participants shall be selected based on a criterion, churches that have a youth ministry program. Focus-group interviews shall be used to collect data. The research instrument shall consist of five items which are developed from the questions identified above. The researcher shall validate the instrument through peer review. Content analysis shall be used to discuss the data. The researcher shall observe the principles set forth in the Belmont report for research concerning humanity.

Biblical Framework: Deut. 6:6-9

Proposed Theoretical Framework: M-PKKK

"M" stands for modeling, "P" stands for pedagogical knowledge, "K" stands for knowledge of learner's context, "K" stands for knowledge of content (Christian heritage), and the last "K" stands for knowledge of educational technology. This framework is personally developed in view of the focus of the study. That is, the study proposes a new framework for doing ministry



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in the context of Cameroon that can improve on youth involvement to church activities as a way of sustaining religious memory among this age group.

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## Tracing the epistemological foundations of African Traditional Religion – A decolonial exploration of David Chidester's work.

*Nobesuthu Tom, University of the Western Cape*

### Introduction

This study expands on the body of work concerned with the epistemological foundations of African Traditional Religion. Epistemological shifts within the academy raise questions about knowledge: how it is produced, who produces, and why. In light of this “questioning”, the academic writings of Chidester on African Traditional Religion are used as a case study.

### Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to investigate; 1) What are the epistemological foundations of African Traditional Religion can that be traced in David Chidester's work? 2) How and why were these epistemological foundations produced in the ways that they were? 3) What can be learned from the case study of a decolonial exploration of Chidester's work on African Traditional Religion?

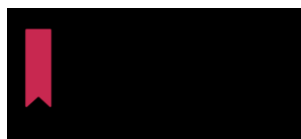
### Theories and Methods

This is a qualitative, text-based study in which decolonial theory is used as a theoretical framework. In addition, discourse analysis is used as both a theory and a method and is supported by reflexive thematic analysis as a secondary analytical tool.

### Summary of literature review

Literature on the production of knowledge about African Traditional Religion points to a strong relationship between Christianity and colonisation. Reports written by traders, missionaries and colonial government agents representing Africans as having no religion were used to justify colonisation as a bringing of regeneration or development to Africa (Platvoet, 1996:5), hence Shaw (1990), Ranger (1992), Platvoet (1996), and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) posit that what is known about Africans and their religions are inventions of Western scholarship. Chitando (2001:48-49), Afolabi (2020:104), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018:20) and Mott and Cockyane (2017:955) point out various systemic ways through which knowledge production and publication about Africans and their religions still favour western scholarship above knowledge produced by scholars of African origin, leading to some forms of perpetuation of untrue understandings about this category.

### Summary of preliminary findings



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Chidester (1996, 2014) brings up for scrutiny not only the knowledge that was produced about African Traditional Religion in southern Africa but also the social and political conditions under which it was produced. This exposes how the production and dissemination of this knowledge served to justify and advance colonial enterprise in southern Africa, results of which are aptly summarised by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018:17) that “Africa is one of those epistemic sites that experienced not only colonial genocides but also ‘theft of history’, epistemicides and linguicides.”

### The contribution of this study

The contribution, thus innovation, of this study lies in possibly three areas: 1) identifying and naming discourses coming out of Chidester’s work, 2) linking these discourses to praxis in the South African context and 3) highlighting and filling any gaps to help advance the study of African Traditional Religion for practical and useful purposes. By doing this, this study will be contributing to the disruption and re-construction of the memory and understanding previously held about African Traditional Religion already pioneered by Chidester.

Keywords: Epistemology, African Traditional Religion, David Chidester, decolonial theory, reflexive thematic analysis.

### Questions for discussion

1. How to choose the right name: African Traditional Religion versus African Religion.
  2. How to triangulate theories and concepts.
  3. How to manage data in a text-based study.
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## Session 8

### The Satanic Panic as a Cautionary Memory: Could it Happen Again?

*Tuomas Äystö, University of Helsinki.*

The satanic panic was a nationwide moral panic and conspiracy theory that started in the early 1980s in the United States and later traveled to many other countries, including Finland. It was initially a widely shared narrative about highly organized and secretive “satanic cults” allegedly involved in the sexual abuse of children and that their demonic symbolism was propagated via popular culture. The Finnish version, occurring during the 1990s, was a milder affair that involved less serious allegations of criminal activity (mostly the damaging of burial grounds and other youth delinquency). Still, it shared a similar cultural framework of Christian values and the same logic of moral panic and conspiracy theory.



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From the 2000s onwards, the satanic panic has become a memory that the media – a critical party in stoking the original moral panic with its inflammatory headlines – and other public actors have viewed in a critical or even ironic light. In this paper, I investigate the social change in US and Finland and argue that there really are no conditions for the satanic panic part two. I also consider how we collectively remember the satanic panic as a cautionary memory that makes its return even more improbable.

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### Alternative Spirituality, Well-being and Innovative Understandings of Christianity

*Katriina Hulkkonen, Åbo Akademi University*

Contemporary alternative spirituality has become increasingly characterized by an emphasis on the well-being of body and mind rather than “metaphysical” concerns. This type of holistic spirituality is particularly centered on helping people to manage and deal with everyday problems and issues. One example of this kind of practical spirituality is the case of angel healing. Angel healing also provides a clear example of the ways in which alternative spiritual and Christian notions often remain closely entwined with one another. As alternative spiritualities have continued to change and diversify, so has the relationship between alternative spirituality and Christianity also shifted over time. In addition to continuous borrowing and mutual influence, this shift has also entailed new forms of boundary-drawing. This paper examines the development of alternative spirituality and its relationship with Christianity since the 1990s in light of Finnish alternative spiritual magazines. Particular focus is put on how these spiritual magazines focusing on well-being, healing practices and therapy write about Christianity, and Christian ideas, notions and practices. What kinds of understandings and meanings do they produce about institutional Christianity and have these perceptions changed over time?

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## Parallel Session 8

### Virgin Mary and the Birth of Jesus in the Ascension of Isaiah

*Antti Laato, Åbo Akademi*

The Ascension of Isaiah (= Asclsa) is an early Christian pseudepigrapha which has been preserved completely only in Ge'ez (the ancient Ethiopic language). Asclsa contains an interesting story about the Virgin Mary and the birth of Jesus (Asclsa 11:1-17) which provides some important parallels to the New Testament and early Christian writings. The aim of this conference paper is to examine this story and its relevance to understand the formation of early Christian picture of Virgin Mary.

The paper is a part of the research project “Isaiah between Judeo-Christian Borderlines” which have received funding from the Polin Institute (2022-2024) and from the Academy of Finland (2022-2026).

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### Old Stories and New Stones

*Thomas C. Devaney University of Rochester*



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Early modern Iberian pilgrimage was characterized by an unlikely combination of tradition and invention. Successful shrines required a lengthy pedigree of holiness and so, for instance, Pedro de Burgos compiled a lengthy history of miracles performed by 'La Moreneta,' a Marian image housed at the Benedictine abbey of Montserrat. But, though the majority of stories Burgos collected were set in the distant past, some were contemporary. And this link between past and present was emphasized through the construction of a new basilica at Montserrat shortly thereafter, in which a purportedly ancient statue was granted a modern setting, one appropriate for pilgrim traffic. Such a pattern of archaic stories and new buildings appears again and again in the period—Nuestra Señora de la Cabeza ('La Morenita'), del Pilar, de la Peña de Francia, etc. While focusing on the past, this paper explores how the combination of the invocation of antiquity and the appeal of novelty functioned both during early modern religious upheavals and today – old stories and new stones have not lost their charm. In doing so, it aims to highlight an enduring dichotomy in Christian practice.

**Summer school:** I am also happy to serve as a commentator/tutor at the summer school.

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## Session 9

### Body, Place and Memory: Sufism in Egypt throughout the 21st century

*Dr. Mariam Waheed, Cairo University*

Waliyy shrines in Egypt have long considered a place of special importance in the hearts and minds of many Egyptians. Waliyy means a righteous man known for his piety, devoutness and closeness to God. People have always wanted to visit waliyy shrines for taking Karamat or Baraka which means a blessing power. Of course, not all Egyptians believe in Sufism especially Salafists in Egypt who perceive this as a kind of heresies and they are completely separate from true and right Islam.

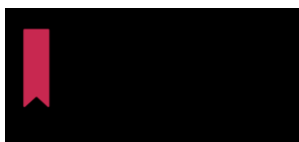
Egypt is well known of the shrines of Prophet Muhammed family (Ahl Al Bayt); Imam Hussein, Al Sayyida Zeinab, Al Sayyida Aisha, Al Sayyida Nafisa.

People who are raised in the neighborhoods where there are Sufi shrines have certain memories of those places as well as individuals who go there continuously.

In this research paper, the focus is on the interaction between body and place in Sufi places. I will seek to provide answers to the following questions: How does memory relate to body and place in Sufi traditions? What has changed in Sufi places? How the interaction of bodies is different in those places now from previous decades and centuries? Which memories remain in those places and how those places have changed? What were those places known for in previous decades and which stories remain in the minds of people till now?

The following places will be the focus of the study are:

- Bimaristan Al-Mu'ayyad Sheikh, El Darb El Ahmar, Cairo.
- Demerdash hospital, Cairo and Seidi El Muhammadi Mosque.
- Abd El Rahim El Qenawi mosque (Qena, Upper Egypt)
- Al Sayyida Nafisa mosque, Cairo.
- Al Sayyida Zeinab Mosque and Mouled, Cairo.



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- Imam Hussein Shrine, Cairo.
- Sabil-Madrasa Mohammed Ali, Cairo.
- Khalwa (Seclusion) places.

Key words : Sufism, Place, Body, Memory, Egypt, Ahl Al Bayt,

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## Religion and 'Irish cultural memory'

*Tuula Sakaranaho, University of Helsinki*

The aim of this paper is to reflect on some methodological questions pertaining to memory studies within the framework of my research in progress, which concerns the reconstruction of 'Catholic Ireland' as Irish Catholic contemporaries (in the Republic of Ireland) remember it. To start with, I will look at a recent project entitled *Memory Ireland* that has brought together scholars from different fields to study what memory collectively means in Ireland. The main classificatory term used in this project is 'Irish cultural memory', which for analytic purposes is used in the singular although it is recognized that it also includes a plurality of Irish cultural memories. In this paper, I will critically discuss different meanings which 'Irish cultural memory' is invested with in various articles in the four volumes published in connection with the *Memory Ireland* project and, in so doing, draw some conclusions concerning the study of religion and cultural memory in the Irish context.

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## Parallel Session 9

### The Innovation of a Master Wonderworker in the Character of Simon Peter

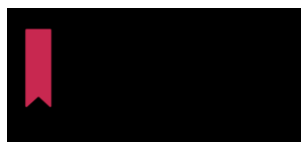
*Carl Johan Berglund, Åbo Akademi University*

Although it is likely that the character of Simon Peter we first encounter in the Gospel of Mark is based on the memory of a historical person, the character undergoes considerable innovation in later narratives such as the Lukan Acts of the Apostles and the apocryphal Acts of Peter. While the Markan Peter witnesses Jesus performing a multitude of miracles without himself being named as the performer of a single one, later stories have him walking on water (Matt 14:22–33), healing paralytics (Acts 3:1–10, 9:32–35), receiving visions (Acts 10:9–16; Acts Pet. 17.8–15; Mart. Pet. 6.7–13), making a dog speak (Acts Paul 9.9–15), and even raising people from the dead (Acts 9:36–42; Acts Pet. 27.1–11, 28.63–66). This paper analyzes how each of the miracles ascribed to Peter contributes to the narrative plot in view, develops the characterization of Peter, and responds to the putative needs of the author.

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### Suppressed, Adopted, and Invented Memories: The Death of Jesus in the Gospel of John

*Kari Syreeni, Åbo Akademi University*



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The Gospel of John reflects several layers of social memory and theological creativeness concerning Jesus' death. In the early material, there seems to be a suppressed awareness of Jesus' fate and an unwillingness to unfold it in narrative form – something that reminds of the hypothetical sayings gospel Q and the Gospel of Thomas. There is also a search for alternative, figurative ways to visualize the endpoint of Jesus' earthly life. Eventually, the narrative memory of Jesus' passion, as told in Mark and Matthew, was adopted with some modifications. Among the modifications of the passion storyline is the narrativization of the image of Jesus as a Paschal Lamb, an image already known to, or perhaps coined by, Paul (1 Corinthians 5:7). The most remarkable innovation, however, was the figure of the "Beloved Disciple" as an eyewitness to Jesus' passion and death.

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## Session 10

### Christian Panentheism, Indigenous Ecological Knowledge, and Theology of Environmental Sustainability in Ghana.

*Ben-Willie Golo Kwaku, University of Ghana*

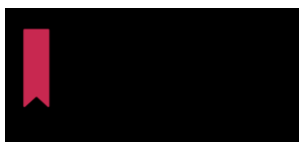
Christian responses to environmental degradation and climate change are largely grounded in the Christian responsibility as earth-keeping stewards. This is similar to the claims of many indigenous people and communities in Africa whose claims are grounded in and guided by their beliefs about the natural world and their place in it. This would mean, conceptually, both the Christian and indigenous African traditions have a common goal regarding their environmental responsibility and sustainability of the natural world. The continuous degradation of the natural world and the urgent need for concerted efforts towards safeguarding the environment from further degradation, therefore, provides an opportunity for innovative exploration of a reservoir of knowledge and ontologies in these traditions if considerable progress would be made towards environmental sustainability in Ghana. Consequently, this article aims to ethnographically examine the ecological beliefs and ontologies of the indigenous Dormaa-Akans of Ghana, and discuss how the Christian faith's teaching on panentheism finds a common theological ground with these indigenous ecological beliefs and ontologies towards bridging the theological divide and enriching a contextualized ecotheology in Ghanaian Christianity. I conclude that Christian panentheism provides a conveniently negotiable bridge between the Christian faith and indigenous religious-cultural ecological ontologies and strategies for a shared doctrine of covenanted bondedness with the natural world towards a contextually relevant ecotheology – theology of environmental sustainability – in an environmentally ravaged Ghana without compromising the integrity and identity of the Christian faith.

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### Memory and Justice in Post-Genocide Rwanda: A reading of Timothy Longman

*Martina Björkander, Åbo Akademi University*

Timothy Longman has been a leading scholar on Rwanda for the past twenty years. His works are read and referenced by scholars all around the world. As a political scientist and



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Africanist interested in religion, he has been instrumental in providing the academic community with a deep and nuanced understanding of the Rwandan genocide, its aftermath, and especially of the role of churches and religious groups in that particular political context. In this paper I will introduce two of his most important books: *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda* (2010) and *Memory and Justice in Post-Genocide Rwanda* (2017). I present the main arguments put forward by Longman and provide a critical reading.

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## Missional Church and the Healing of Memories: African Pentecostal Perspective

*Peter White, Stellenbosch University*

A missional church is fundamentally and comprehensively defined by its calling and sending, as well as its purpose to serve God's healing purposes for all the world as God's witnessing people to all the world. Although there are many articles and publications on missional church and missional ecclesiology, scarcely would one see academic discourse on how these missional theories and praxis are expressed from a Pentecostal perspective. This paper therefore seeks to explore how the missional church concept is expressed in African Pentecostal churches. The paper submits that there is nothing like perfect theology. No matter the church tradition and theological orientation, every theology is influenced by culture, church traditions, and human philosophies. This therefore makes theology, more contextual than straight jacket subject. Bevans and Schroeder (2004:35-72), shared a similar view in their discussions of the six constants of mission (Christology, Ecclesiology, eschatology, salvation, anthropology, and human culture). They argued that although the constants are always present in every mission theology, their interpretations are sometimes influenced by contexts - culture, church traditions, human philosophies, and experience. Given the above, the paper would discuss African Pentecostal's missional orientation and its expression in their missional ecclesiological theology and praxis.

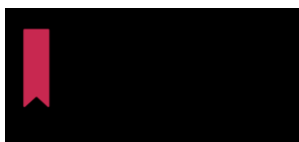
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## Parallel Session 10

### The Retrieved Altar Cross Of The Luther Church Helsinki – Sacred Waste Transformed Into Sensational Frame

*Jakob Dahlbacka, Åbo Akademi University*

In 2016, the Luther Church Helsinki opened its doors again after a long series of events. The re-inauguration was accompanied by nationwide media coverage. The attention was due, to no small extent, to the exceptional history of the church. However, even more than exceptional history, one single object appeared to be of decisive importance in the process of reclaiming the sacred space. The object was a simple, wooden altar cross, which was lost (thrown in the garbage heap) in dismantling the religious interior some 20 years earlier but found again in the wake of the reopening announcement. Elsewhere, I have argued that the cross was used to legitimize the church's ownership and re-sacralize it. In light of the alleged protestant fear of materiality – where language is privileged over other material sign systems



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and meaning is privileged over media – I intend to discuss the prerequisites that enabled the altar cross to play this important role. Which circumstances made possible the transformation from so-called "sacred waste" to what I – in further development of James Bielo's typologization of Protestant engagement with materiality – would call "sensational frame," or – with reference to Krzysztof Pomian's notion of "semiophors" – would label a materialized remembrance of something invisible and ungraspable.

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## Therapeutic Aspects of Colours Described by Rudolf Steiner: Case Madonna

*Sari Kuuva, University of Jyväskylä*

The colours have significant role in anthroposophy where they function as windows through which to ascent spiritually into the spirit world. In his lectures Steiner widely described the functions of colours and their therapeutic possibilities. My paper focuses on Steiner's teachings of colours particularly in the context of Madonna theme whose therapeutic aspects he reflected both through words and images. For Steiner the long history of images of mother and child worked as cultural memory and he aimed to further develop this motif through innovative use of colours. Through colours Steiner aimed to open possibilities for new kind of emotions. His ideas of the spirituality of colours have been further developed by modern artists.

Key words: Colours, Spirituality, Therapy, Anthroposophy, Steiner, Madonna

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## Session 11

### Russian Baptist Eschatological Tranquility and Memory Construction During the Pandemic

*Igor Mikeshin, University of Helsinki*

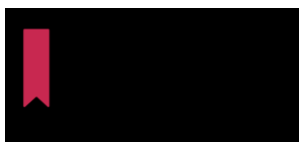
Based on my study of the Russian Baptist response to the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions, I put their reaction in the perspective of theology and historical memory. Initially shocked and affected by the pandemic as anybody else, Russian Baptists promptly accommodated to the restrictions and even found some positive aspects, like the advancement of online fellowship and elderly care. Despite the unprecedented situation, Russian Baptists did not see it as an eschatological threat.

In my paper, I will discuss the reasons for such tranquility. First, I will present the theological tenets that allowed for the adaptation and accommodation of a global crisis. Then, I will discuss the memories of the Great Patriotic War, one of the most powerful historical narratives in today's Russia, as an important element of eschatological tranquility.

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## Religion: Memory and Innovation

*Gerd Snellman, Åbo Academi University*



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In my paper, I focus on Laestadianism in the late 1900th century in the north of Sweden. In the 1880s, the inhabitants of Torne-river-valley were subject to assimilation. The tool used was the development of the school system. The Finnish-speaking children (and the Sami-speaking, but they are not included in this study) were forced to partake in education in Swedish. The Laestadians continued using Finnish as the sacred language, though. Since the Torne-river-valley was a stronghold for Laestadianism, this study will shed light on the attitudes of the Laestadian leaders regarding language usage. A special interest lies in the state church minister and school visitor, P.O. Grape (1844–1901). He advocated Swedish in schools, however, he preached in Finnish in Church services and Laestadian services himself. His acting has been considered incomprehensible. The sources of the study are archive-material, such as letters and sermons, and Laestadian periodicals.

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### [“New wine in new wineskins”. On social innovation in Church of Sweden since 2015.](#)

*Cecilia Nahnfeldt, Åbo Akademi University*

In diaconal work there is a skill to recognize social needs in people's everyday lives. Therefore, it is not strange that ideas for social innovation and change appear and can be developed. In Church of Sweden a strategic work for identifying and supporting social innovations started 2015. Parish initiatives and strategic support from the diocese has been followed in research.

This presentation aims for presenting examples of social innovations in diaconal practices and focus on tensions between existing and innovative working methods in parish diaconia discussing aspects of practice, resources, organization and theology.

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## [Parallel Session 11](#)

### [Dancing Memory And Innovation](#)

*Laura Hellsten, Åbo Akademi University*

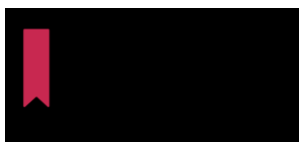
In one of the artistic collaboration that sprung out of the Forcing the Impossible project where artists and scientists met to learn from each other a dance performance was created. In Echoes four dancers made a choreography based on their experiences of being minorities and feeling excluded from the Finnish culture. The artistic piece played with memories of past events and pushing towards change, yet contained a sense of tension from the beginning to the end. In this article I want to compare and contrast the traditional religious methods of using dance and ritualised drama with the possibilities found in non-religious art scenes to work with embodied trauma release methods prescribed by Resmaa Menakem in *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* (2017).

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### [Remembrance of Living on Light – How to Interpret Data with ANT Mapping](#)

*Ilona Raunola, Freelance researcher, Joensuu Finland*

Qualitative research often attaches to the notion of "letting the data speak". How to know what the data might hold and how to get grip of it? In my presentation I will discuss an exemplary case with Actor-Network theory as a reflecting point. By examining the interaction



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between the different human and non-human actors within the data it is possible to create questions and novel ideas on how to read and understand the data. This kind of mapping with ANT can be a useful phase of research even if the ultimate theoretical apparatus would be different. I will present examples from my own research in the field of anthropology of religion, more specifically on spiritual phenomenon of living on light or inedia. I find the societal relevance to be significant concerning living on light since the phenomena is still much unknown. My presentation is both methodological yet interpretative. The question to be asked concerns remembering: how the phase of inedia appears after a decade since it happened?

