

On the crossroads of modernity. New perspectives on religion, culture and society since 1750

Veranstalter: CCSCE Network; Katholisch-Theologische Fakultät, Ruhr-Universität Bochum; KADOC, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

Datum, Ort: 24.06.2019–25.06.2019, Bochum

Bericht von: Alina Potempa, Katholisch-Theologische Fakultät, Ruhr-Universität Bochum; Kristien Suenens, KADOC, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

The CCSCE-conference aimed at discovering new perspectives on the crossroads of religion, culture and society in modernizing Europe (after 1750). It departed from the assertion that the religious field not only interacted permanently and creatively with modern ideas and methodologies but also was emphatically part of it.

DRIES BOSSCHAERT (Leuven) presented the keynote lecture about Vatican II and human labor. He argued that integrating the topic of labor at the Council was on the one hand a genuine effort to come to terms with Catholicism's troubled relation with the developments of the modern world, more specifically with the social question and its working-class stakeholders in the 1950s and 1960s. On the other hand, it was also a *locus theologicus*, bringing to the surface, yet also covering, some persistent divisions in twentieth century Catholicism. From a three-angle perspective, he tried to answer the questions if the Second Vatican Council, by formulating an answer to the social question, was indeed the Catholic First International and if its treatment of labor finally brought Catholicism to terms with the social struggles raised one hundred years earlier by the socialist First International.

LAURA POPA (Gießen) opened Session I – Concepts and new perspectives on the role of religion – with a contribution on the Christian perspective on femininity between the Bible and feminism. Popa presented the first results of a theoretical research into a conceptual history of femininity from both a Christian and feminist perspective. She analyzed how the concept of femininity can be used as a critical

and analytical tool in the study of women and religion. The contestation of femininity by the feminist movements and feminist theory was reconsidered from the perspective of a group of religious women engaged in Italian second-wave feminism, namely the Evangelical Italian Waldensens. Starting from this case study, Popa approached the discourse on womanhood within the Protestant culture considering femininity as a matter of essentialist religious identity, cultural transformation and social construction.

PAULA ARANA BARBIER (Salamanca) presented a lecture on religious accommodation, co-written by ÁNGELA SUÁREZ COLLAIDO (Salamanca). She referred to the significant evidence that assimilated minority groups always retain some traditional practices of their original religious or ethnic group. For this reason, she argued, other states choose for the „integration“ approach, aiming at including new groups into the societal framework, while at the same time acknowledging and respecting their identity. It is within this framework that the ideas of accommodation and religious accommodation emerged, however, without the concepts being properly discussed theoretically. Barbier pleaded for an interdisciplinary definition of religious accommodation focusing on different questions: What is religious accommodation? Who asks for it and who provides it? Where does it happen, and how is it influenced by different actors in society?

EVELINE BOUWERS (Mainz) examined the link between religion and violent action in post-revolutionary Europe. She argued that it is too simplistic to claim that the „disappearance of religious violence“ (Claude Langlois) was one of the key characteristics of post-revolutionary Europe. According to Bouwers, these theories do not adequately recognize the emotive power and violent potential that religion continued to hold in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Drawing on a string of incidents in Western Europe during the period 1864–1914, Bouwers revealed how Catholics with little to no influence on political decision-making processes used the street to defend the role of religion and the Roman Church in everyday life. In terms of methodology, the contribution focused on two tradi-

tions that, for post-revolutionary Europe, are rarely thought together: the history of religion, including Catholicism, and the history of protest as well as violence.

In her lecture, JANNEKE VAN DER LEEST (Nijmegen) identified two lines of parallels between idolatry in a religious context and in present-day pop culture. One line goes from the Christian martyrs to modern pop stars, especially the young deceased among them. The fascination for those stars shows many parallels to the adoration of the martyrs. Those „secular saints“ emerge as a variation on religious idolatry and adoration. The other line springs from Enlightenment thought and draws a secularizing line to the death of the traditional God. Thanks to Kant, eventually, not God but man had to give meaning to the world, including to himself. Almost simultaneously, the artists obtained their divine status. Death marks the moment at which the icons become abstractions, at which meaning on a mythological level (Roland Barthes) can be projected on the icons, it is the moment from which they can be qualified for the prototype that parallels the martyr.

Session II – Enlightenment and reforms (18th–19th centuries) – was opened by AMIR-PASHA TAVAKKOLI (Paris) with a contribution on the Christian origins of the French revolution. Tavakkoli argued that under the influence of Marxism considering the raise of an agnostic middle class and the economic crises of the absolute monarchy as the main reasons for the start of the French revolution (Albert Soboul, Christopher Hill, Eric Hobsbawm), the Christian interpretation was forgotten by the majority of historians. Using George V. Taylor ideas, Tavakkoli reread important authors as Michelet and Tocqueville and their interpretation of the Revolution: In correspondence with the ideas of Tocqueville, Michelet believed that the French revolution reacted against the dominance of the catholic clergy, while trying to rediscover the real spirit of Christianity. Ideals like the desire of perfectibility and the importance of empathy for poor people were considered as ancient Christian beliefs, re-empowered by the French revolution.

MIKOLAJ GETKA-KENIG (Kraków) looked to the relationship between religion

and modernity from an architectural perspective with a special focus on the case of Poland between 1770 and 1830. In his contribution, he analyzed the rise of neoclassicism in architecture at the turn of the 19th century as a crucial moment in the history of Roman Catholic ecclesiastical building. Getka-Kenig argued that it can be viewed as an ecclesiastical response to the modern socio-cultural transformations of the late 18th and early 19th century. Not only was it an instrument of symbolic discipline in the age of enlightened revolution (the classical form was an expression of the natural order), but it also served to legitimize new practices of public life. In the case of ecclesiastical architecture, neoclassicism often served to engage religion in the enlightened ideological discourses of the period and above all to stress (through the symbolism of architectural expression) the affinity between religion and the rationalized national community.

ALINA POTEMPA (Bochum) concentrated on the economic perspective. She argued that the discourses of modern liberal economy arising around 1800 could, contrary to popular opinion, be very promising for religion – if adequately discovered in terms of a necessarily religious argument. For contexts of Catholic Romanticism and Catholic Enlightenment she demonstrated how basic principles of liberal economic thought were attributed a genuinely Christian origin, which enabled those Catholics to participate in one of the most powerful and even symbolic discourse of modernity itself. By taking the challenge of modern economy for a moment of demonstration instead of decision, the entrance of modernity seemed to be no crossroad at all.

DMITRII STERKHOV (Moscow) focused on early-nineteenth-century Prussia. Sterkhov argued that the Prussian Protestant clergy supported the introduction of the municipal self-government in Prussia (1808) through their sermons preached and published on the occasion of the municipal elections. The preachers combined Christian ideas and symbols with democratic and liberal vocabulary to make the new reform understandable and acceptable for the population. The municipal self-government

was regarded as a divine gift from heaven, an act of God's benevolence towards the Prussian people. God was acting through his representative on the Earth, the Prussian King Frederick William III, who was stylized as a „citizen King“ (Bürgerkönig), close to his people. The preachers abundantly resorted to the terminology of family relations between the King and Queen as Father and Mother and the Prussians as grown-up children upon whom their wise Father (the King) granted the right to govern themselves the way they thought best.

Session III – 20th-century perspectives – was opened by OLGA PCHELINA (Yoshkar-Ola, Russia). Pchelina introduced Dmitry Merezhkovsky as an iconic figure of the Russian religious Renaissance, a symbolist, poet, novelist, writer, literary critic, religious philosopher and thinker, one of the founders of the St. Petersburg Religious-Philosophical Society (1901–1903) and initiator of a dialogue of the clergy and intellectuals on the matters of faith and social problems. According to Merezhkovsky, religion should go beyond the institution of religion and become an integral part of public life. He interpreted a „symbol“ as the language of religion, as the bridge connecting that world and this world. Recognizing religion as the source of and basis for culture and creativity, Merezhkovsky concluded that culture „came out of the sacrament“ and from its birth culture was religion.

JOHANNA SCHMID (Mainz) analyzed the impact of the First World War on the Bavarian Catholic Church. She argued that church papers, official journals and parish chronicles could not evade the euphoria about the propagated defensive war. The editors used the enthusiasm at the beginning to advertise their own goals and to maintain their prerogative of interpretation: with their religious terms of purification or atonement, they were part of a propaganda sanctifying war. The priests were part of the local elites and were bound by duty to participate in the war. Either they did it by serving as chaplains or paramedics in the field, or they participated at the home front by stabilizing the system. Thereby clerics projected an image of maximizing the economic efforts for the war and actively participating in the war. They were supposed to serve as

multipliers, as keepers of morals and to be the extended arm of the authorities.

SANTE LESTI (Pisa) examined the political role played by Pope Paul VI during his pilgrimage to the Holy Land (4–6 January 1964). He argued that Paul VI's pilgrimage provides a unique opportunity to study his role as a global political actor for it was a global media event. Lesti showed that Paul VI entered the public sphere of global modern society to call for peace and, to a lesser extent, to speak out in support of the Roman Catholic Church's teaching on family and work. Thereby, Lesti emphasized, Paul VI presented himself as the herald of the only message capable of ensuring peace and answering to all the unknowns of the present. In this sense, Paul VI's political action in the Holy Land demonstrates that Catholic political „exclusivism“ (Miccoli) still held sway at that time.

BOSCO BANGURA (Leuven) presented the final lecture. He stressed that although current research has expanded understanding of the migratory patterns and residency status of the African Diaspora in Belgium, the same could not be said of African Pentecostalism. In his contribution he focused on the ways African Pentecostalism (a significant part of the Protestant minority) is redeployed by the African Diaspora to engage the Belgian state's liberal neutrality policy. He pointed out that the coming of African Pentecostalism to Belgium could be explained by Belgium's colonial policy and the rapid industrialization of the 1960s. Bangura employed a rationalistic and functionalist argumentation of secularization to argue that Belgium's policy of liberal neutrality recognizes and supports six religions and one secular philosophy. For conclusion, he argued that African Pentecostalism has employed several techniques that allowed the movement to respond to and to survive within Belgian liberal neutrality.

Details about a new CCSCE-conference and Call for Papers will be available in September 2019: www.ccsce.eu

Conference overview:

Keynote

Dries Bosschaert (Leuven): Vatican II, the Catholic First International? Human labor healing divisions in Catholicism

Session I: Concepts and new perspectives on the role of religion

Laura Popa (Gießen): The Christian perspective on femininity between the Bible and feminism from modernity to post-modernity. A conceptual history

Paula Arana Barbier, co-written by Ángela Suárez Collado (Salamanca): Accommodating the ideas. Towards an interdisciplinary definition of religious accommodation

Eveline Bouwers (Mainz): Protest and religion. The nineteenth century as a transnational phase for Catholic crowd action

Janneke van der Leest (Nijmegen): Old Idolatry in a new shape

Session II: Enlightenment and reforms (18th–19th centuries)

Amirpasha Tavakkoli (Paris): Christian origins of the French revolution

Mikołaj Getka-Kenig (Kraków): Neoclassicism and the search for modernity in ecclesiastical architecture in the Age of Enlightenment – The Polish case in an international Context

Alina Potempa (Bochum): How to discover modern economy for religious thought. International perspectives on a creative interaction of ideas after 1800

Dmitrii Sterkhov (Moscow): God, King, Country – and elections. The introduction of the municipal self-government in Prussia (1808) by means of religion

Session III: 20th-century perspectives

Olga Pchelina (Yoshkar-Ola, Russia): „God came to the world and left His traces in it, which are the symbols“: Dmitry Merezhkovsky’s Perspectives on Religion, Culture and Society

Johanna Schmid (Mainz): Critical mass or pain killers. World War I and the Catholic Church in Bavaria

Sante Lesti (Pisa): Travelling the Public Sphere. Paul VI in the Holy Land as a Global Political Actor (1964)

Bosco Bangura (Leuven): African Pentecostalism, liberal neutrality and the Belgian state

Tagungsbericht *On the crossroads of modernity. New perspectives on religion, culture and society since 1750*. 24.06.2019–25.06.2019, Bochum, in: H-Soz-Kult 22.08.2019.