

RELIGION AND POLITICS

The Magazine

Research and Researchers
from the Cluster of Excellence
“Religion and Politics” at the
University of Münster





Fig. (cover page, above, and p. 87): Details of interior illustrations from *Religion and Politics: The Magazine*.

Religion is involved in the political and social conflicts of the past and present in many ways. This is evident for pre-modern societies. There, religion provided ideological justification for political authority and was the cause of military conflicts, but also helped to bring about peace agreements. What is surprising and for many people unexpected is its continued political virulence today. Whether one thinks of the worldwide engagement of Christian groups to mitigate climate change, the xenophobic nationalism of the Russian Orthodox Church, the American evangelical belief in the United States' mission of global freedom, or also the acts of terror committed daily throughout the world in the name of Allah – religion is a political factor of the first order.

But what does the political influence of religious communities and actors actually rest upon? In what ways does religion influence social and political change, which external conditions promote, and which constrain, its ability to mobilise people? By concentrating its forthcoming work on this question, the Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics” at the University of Münster (WWU) turns its attention to the active role of religion in historical and present-day political conflicts. To this end, it can build upon research over the past ten years that has dedicated itself to the changing relationship between religion and politics and other social realms such as law, economics, the media and art.

Drawing on a variety of examples, *Religion and Politics: The Magazine* offers glimpses into the adventure of scholarly discovery to which the scholars of the Cluster of Excellence devote themselves day in, day out. In interviews, essays, articles, and portraits, they describe how larger discoveries have grown from detailed and occasionally

unassuming beginnings, and how they work together with colleagues from other fields. The richly illustrated articles range from the religious-political ambitions of the “Black Pharaohs” of Ancient Egypt to the political strategies of present-day religions, from images of the transcendent in Judaism and Christianity to the tolerance of ambiguity in Islam, from the role of music in Hinduism to the relationship of Buddhism to violence. The Cluster of Excellence consists of 200 researchers from 20 fields of the humanities and social sciences. Studies like those carried out by the Cluster, often covering the long-term, from antiquity to the present day, or working comparatively across cultures from Asia to Europe and beyond, are only possible with interdisciplinary cooperation.

Scholarship requires creativity. *Religion and Politics: The Magazine* thus also includes portraits of some of the individuals who conduct research in the Cluster of Excellence. The most important evidence of a scholar's research activities is, nevertheless, his or her publications. The magazine pays tribute to these in its collection of articles about key books produced at the Cluster of Excellence, which also serve as an inducement to further reading. Definitions of key terms such as religion, fundamentalism, ritual, and religious policy are given to facilitate understanding. But neither is there any lack of well-founded, scholarly opinions taken on subjects like circumcision and migration.

It is our conviction that scholarship honed on history and open to interdisciplinary perspectives has the power to create an analytical distance to present-day conflicts and provide considered, socially relevant knowledge.

Detlef Pollack
Speaker of the Cluster of
Excellence “Religion and Politics”

Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger
Speaker of the Cluster of
Excellence “Religion and Politics”

Viola van Melis Head of the Centre for
Research Communication of the Cluster
of Excellence “Religion and Politics”

TABLE OF CONTENTS



INTERVIEW

- 6** “That’s what makes working in an interdisciplinary research group so exciting.” | Interview with the speakers, sociologist of religion Detlef Pollack and historian Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger
- 9** **Thinking Beyond Disciplinary Borders** | Research by philosopher Michael Quante

RELIGION AND POLITICS IN THE ANTIQUE WORLD

- 10** **How Pharaohs Secured Their Power Through Religion**
Essay by egyptologist Angelika Lohwasser
- 13** **From Local to Imperial Cult: A Near-Eastern Religion Becomes Global** | Essay by ancient historian Engelbert Winter
- 16** **The Judean Ideology of Kingship and the Ancient Near East** | Research by Protestant theologian Reettakaisa Sofia Salo
- 16** **The Power of the Oath in Foreign Policy** | Research by ancient historian Sebastian Scharff

RELIGION AND ECONOMY

- 17** **How Religion Delayed the Industrial Revolution**
Essay by economic historian Ulrich Pfister
- 19** **Islamic Banking** | Interview with law scholar Matthias Casper

RELIGION AND VIOLENCE

- 20** **With the Bible into Battle** | Essay by Old Testament scholar Johannes Schnocks
- 22** **Violence or Love: What Does Islam Want?** | Essay by Islamic theologian Mouhanad Khorchide
- 23** **What is ... Fundamentalism?** | By sociologist of religion Detlef Pollack
- 24** **The Catholic Church and Violence** | Research by historian Silke Hensel and church historian Hubert Wolf
- 25** **Hinduism and Buddhism: Not as Peaceful as Presumed** | Research by religious studies scholar Perry Schmidt-Leukel

PORTRAIT

- 26** “I would never otherwise have asked how important religion is in law.” | Law scholar Nils Jansen

THE MIGRATION DEBATE

- 28** **What Would Kant Say about the Refugee Crisis?**
Essay by philosopher Matthias Hoesch
- 29** **Social-Ethical Touchstones for Migration Policy**
Research by Catholic theologian Marianne Heimbach-Steins
- 30** **From Western India to South Africa** | Research by anthropologist Julia Koch
- 31** **When Refugees and Germans First Meet**
Interview with psychologist Mitja Back

RELIGION AND GENDER

- 32** **The Creation of the Genders** | Essay by historian Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger
- 35** **Of Gods and Men** | By historian Daniel Gerster
- 36** **Battlefield Woman** | Research by historian Iris Fleßenkämper
- 37** **The Qur’anic Image of Women Should Not Be Left to the Populists** | Essay by Islam scholar Dina El Omari

MEDIALITY: RELIGION, PICTURED

- 38** **No Depictions of the Transcendent in Jewish Art**
Essay by Jewish studies scholar Katrin Kogman-Appel
- 42** **The Irruption of Transcendence into the Earthly World**
Essay by philologist Christel Meier-Staubach
- 45** **What is ... Religion?** | By sociologist of religion Detlef Pollack

PORTRAIT

- 46** “I want to show Jewish culture in all its richness.”
Jewish studies scholar Katrin Kogman-Appel



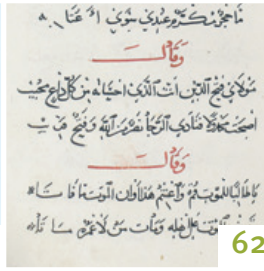
48



51



54



62



76

MEDIAILITY: RELIGION IN SOUND AND VOICE

- 48** **Voices from Beyond** | Research by literature scholar Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf
- 50** **Music as Key to the Universe** | Research by religious studies scholar Annette Wilke

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

- 51** **“Renewal from the Margins of the Church”**
Research by social ethicists Karl Gabriel, Christian Spieß and Katja Winkler
- 52** **More than One Catholicism** | Essay by church historian Hubert Wolf

RELIGION AND MODERNITY

- 54** **The Return of the Gods or the Decline of Religiosity?**
Research by the sociologists of religion Detlef Pollack and Gergely Rosta
- 58** **“There is no longer a Christian Germany.”** | Research by contemporary historian Thomas Großbölting
- 59** **Religion and Climate Politics** | By political scientist Katharina Glaab
- 60** **“Religious policy should no longer be neglected.”**
Research by political scientist Ulrich Willems
- 61** **What is ... Religious Policy?** | By political scientist Ulrich Willems
- 61** **The Political Influence of the Churches** | Research by Catholic theologian Judith Könnemann and political scientist Christiane Frantz

PORTRAIT

- 62** **“I can reach young Muslims in Germany and other countries.”** | Islam scholar Thomas Bauer

RELIGION AND LAW

- 65** **The Worldly God** | Interview with philosopher Ludwig Siep
- 66** **Crises of Tradition** | Research by legal philosopher Thomas Gutmann
- 67** **Religion in Court** | Research by religious studies scholar Astrid Reuter
- 67** **Optimised Genes** | Research by law scholar Lioba Welling

THE CIRCUMCISION DEBATE

- 68** **Fighting Over the Foreskin** | Essay by criminal justice scholar Bijan Fateh-Moghadam
- 69** **Crafting the Body: A Cultural-Historical View** | Essay by Catholic theologian and historian Thomas Lenten
- 71** **Conflict between the Secular and the Religious?**
Interview with sociologist of religion Detlef Pollack
- 71** **Policy Failure** | Research by political scientist Ulrich Willems
- 71** **What is ... a Ritual?** | By historian Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger

PORTRAIT

- 72** **“I imagined the situation of early-modern women as being much darker.”** | Historian Iris Fleßenkämper

RELIGION AND HEALTH

- 74** **Contacting the Dead** | Essay by historian Klaus Große Kracht
- 76** **Spirit Healing and Psychiatry in India** | Research by anthropologist Helene Basu

DEBUNKING CLICHÉS

- 78** **Delightful Ambiguity** | Research by Arabist Thomas Bauer
- 79** **What is ... Tolerance of Ambiguity?** | By Arabist Thomas Bauer
- 81** **Passionate Debates** | Research by historian Sita Steckel
- 82** **“Blessed is the Persecutor”** | Research by historian Gerd Althoff
- 82** **A Celebration of Civil Religion** | Research by historian Heike Bungert
- 83** **“Not a Pop Religion”** | Research by religious studies scholar Perry Schmidt-Leukel
- 84** **Political Pastors** | Essay by Protestant theologian Arnulf von Scheliha
- 85** **Far and Yet so Near** | Research by religious studies scholar and theologian Perry Schmidt-Leukel
- 86** **Imprint, Picture Credits and Contact**

“That’s what makes working in an interdisciplinary research group so exciting.”



When the University of Münster attracted funding for the Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics” in 2007, this created a site for the interdisciplinary study of religion that was unique in Germany in terms of both size and diversity. The roughly 200 members from 20 disciplines and 14 nations work across cultures and periods, adopt a historical perspective and a perspective related to the present day, and study religion from a denominational and a non-denominational point of view. How interdisciplinary collaboration can succeed, and which hurdles sometimes need to be cleared, is described in an interview with the Cluster’s speakers, sociologist of religion DETLEF POLLACK and historian BARBARA STOLLBERG-RILINGER. They also discuss why members of the Cluster of Excellence have been so active over the years beyond their academic research in communicating their expertise to politics, the media and society.

Professor Stollberg-Rilinger, Professor Pollack, as a historian and as a sociologist respectively, you represent two important but also very different disciplines in the Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics”. How much does this affect your role as speakers in communicating internally and externally?

Detlef Pollack: That depends on your perspective. Inside the Cluster, what matters most to us is to develop the intrinsic value of the Cluster’s work in terms of increasing scholarly knowledge.

Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger: Communicating what we have discovered to the outside world is also important, of course – we have even institutionally anchored the task of research communication in the Cluster in a dedicated Centre. The debate about religion and politics has gained momentum since 2007, when it went largely unheeded.

Who or what is “the outside world”?

Detlef Pollack: Politics, the broader public, the media. We pursue a dual goal in relation to these. We can observe a great interest on the part of the public in the area of “religion and politics”, and a considerable need to provide advice in politics and society. But we believe that scholarship “helps” society most when it is allowed to work undisturbed. Being assigned specific tasks – “do this now!” – may lead to new answers to old questions. But it is more important when conducting fundamental research to discover new questions.

That sounds as though you want to keep the public at arm’s length.

Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger: Not at all. As politically conscious members of society and scholars, we are also of



course influenced by the questions and issues that concern society. But we pursue these questions not because someone told us to – but because they arise from the interrelationships of our work.

And your “Centre for Research Communication” is the channel of transmission?



Historian Prof. Dr. Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger

Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger: The communication of research findings is the most obvious task of the Centre’s work; we founded it ten years ago as a model project because there was a lot of catching-up to do in the humanities. And it is just as important for us as scholars to become sensitised to the inherent logic of the media.

Detlef Pollack: Insisting on scholarly autonomy implies accepting the autonomy of other areas. We have learned in the Cluster of Excellence that you can’t protect yourself by taking refuge in media-bashing! I say this with complete conviction: what I cannot express clearly does not deserve to be communicated further.

This is surely true also of the exchange between the disciplines. The Cluster contains more than twenty disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, studying periods from pre-Christian antiquity to the present day. As speakers of the Cluster of Excellence, how do you deal with the relationships between the disciplines internally?

Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger: Oh, there we take great pleasure in fostering dispute, precisely because we pursue in essence different research approaches – and thus represent precisely what makes working in an interdisciplinary group so exciting. We all have our favourite methods. There are clear differences in approach between the quantitative-empirical and the qualitative-hermeneutic scholar, or between the empirical and normative disciplines – for example, between historians on the one hand, and law scholars and theologians on the other.

Detlef Pollack: In an interdisciplinary group, you are challenged to say quite fundamentally what it is that you actually do, and to work out with others how far you can go together.

Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger: As a historian, for example, I actually have little interest in Detlef Pollack’s numbers, the results of his representative surveys. Even behind the apparently objective numbers, there is always already in my opinion an interpretation.

Detlef Pollack: I would counter that by saying that all qualitative research also has a quantitative, measurable foundation.

Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger: Of course, it is not immaterial whether a specific phenomenon appears only singularly in a society or en masse. To that extent, I would agree. But it depends entirely on the way the question is asked. To take as an example the rule of the Anabaptists in Münster in 1534/35: as a historical phenomenon, this establishment of a “kingdom of God on Earth” is a unique case – but one that is nevertheless extraordinarily interesting and revealing for the historian precisely because of the unique intermingling of political thought, eschatological belief, and propensity for violence.

Detlef Pollack: But the success of the Anabaptists depended on religious ideas having a broad acceptance among the majority of Münster’s citizens. It was only in such a society that the Anabaptists were able to make their idea of the kingdom of God plausible.

Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger: Why people found it plausible is not discoverable through numbers, though.

Detlef Pollack: It would be for the best if it could be counted – but it can certainly be weighted in any case. And that is why I still maintain that whoever works qualitatively cannot dispense with numbers. Even those scholars who work historically-hermeneutically must ultimately always weight what is dominant and what is not.



Is there something from the work thus far that would definitely belong in a Cluster of Excellence “Hall of Fame”?

Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger: In terms of public impact, I would single out the contributions of the Arabist Thomas Bauer on the tolerance of ambiguity – that is, a society’s ability or otherwise to cope with indeterminacy. His research, which focuses on Islamic culture, has provided a new key for understanding many societies, including that of Christian Europe in the Early Modern period, when the different confessions increasingly delineated themselves from each other. It was only under political pressure that believers were forced into religious disambiguation. They were coerced into organising themselves into confessional pigeonholes – which never entirely happened. Being forced to embrace unambiguousness resulted in hypocrisy.

Detlef Pollack: I’m happy to say that I’ve learned an incredible amount from collaboration at the Cluster of Excellence. For example, I didn’t realise before how very different Christianity is from other religions in terms of its claim to shape the world and reality. I can build nicely here on the concept of tolerating ambiguity. In many respects, Christianity is not tolerant of ambiguity. It requires decision. At the time of the Reformation, for example, Christian missionaries were sent throughout the world and demanded religious decisions in cultures that were entirely unfamiliar with such decisions. People who had become Christians in these cultures suddenly had to take a stand on concepts that had previously been unimportant or indeterminate for them – for example, on the question of whether Christ was corporeally present in the Eucharist or not. This pressure to decide gave rise to a radicalism that still shapes our world today. These were moments of learning that helped me develop the hypothesis that modernity as we know it may have first developed out of strong reactions against the claim of Christianity to global superiority. I would never have arrived at this insight had it not been for the collaborative work at the Cluster of Excellence.

Does such a mammoth undertaking with 200 scholars not mean that early-career researchers fall by the wayside?

Detlef Pollack: On the contrary! The professors in the Cluster of Excellence do not hinder free and open discussion, but often function as catalysts. In my experience, discussions are often less cohesive when the professors aren’t present. They should not dominate discussions with doctoral students and post-docs – which, I have to admit, sometimes happens, too. But I’m convinced that it’s especially the early-career researchers who benefit from the mixture of senior and junior researchers. The Cluster of Excellence is for this reason an ideal habitat.

Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger: But sometimes the reverse is also true. It is often the younger scholars who have the new and original ideas! But we also have to be honest with the early-career researchers: not everyone with a doctorate can or wants to stay in academia. There is not enough money and not enough positions – academia is simply too small. Even so, many students should do their doctorates in the humanities because their skills can also be used elsewhere. And I would say that what we have to offer in expertise at the Cluster of Excellence is also useful where our graduates ultimately pursue their careers – many now work in politics and in the media, culture and education.

And how do you imagine work at the Cluster of Excellence continuing in the future?

Detlef Pollack: We’ve been working together closely for ten years now. We’ve become closely interlinked and have consolidated our collaboration. In the future we want to devote ourselves more to the dynamic effects of religion in society. We want to look at the role of religion as a driving force behind political and social change, and focus centrally on the dynamics of tradition and innovation specific to religion.

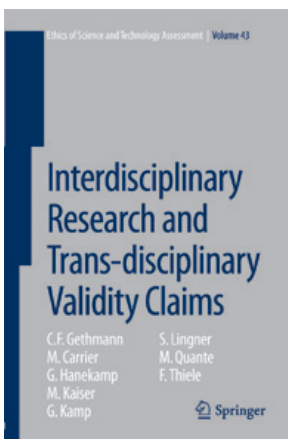
Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger: The core research question will be: What potential for social change does religion itself actually open up? This is very topical and has certainly not been studied sufficiently yet. In terms of structure, an important goal is to open the Cluster of Excellence even more to the University, and to give it even greater anchorage in the University as a whole.

Detlef Pollack: By carrying out an interdisciplinary investigation of the changing relationship between religion and politics across periods and cultures, we hope to make a significant contribution to international research on religion. In order to ensure the scope and diversity of research

activities and international exchange, the University has created permanent structures, new professorships, and centres. These will be joined by a *Campus der Religionen* (Campus of Religions), which will bring together old and new research structures in the same space – and reinforce both interdisciplinary cooperation and interreligious understanding.

The interview was conducted by Joachim Frank, Chief Correspondent of DuMont Mediengruppe, specialising in churches and religions.

Thinking Beyond Disciplinary Borders



With more than twenty disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, the Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics” has achieved a high degree of interdisciplinarity in its research on the central questions of the future. “Our societies are confronting fundamental political, social and ethical challenges”, says philosopher

Michael Quante. “Such complex questions can no longer be answered by one discipline alone. The disciplines thus need to wrestle with them together.” Interdisciplinarity has become a crucial component of modern scholarship. “Here in Germany, Clusters of Excellence certainly play a pioneering role in this.”

But scholarly exchange across disciplinary borders is no easy task, emphasises Quante, who has worked with eight authors on a fundamental study of interdisciplinarity. “When vastly different terminologies and methods meet, the scholar requires all the more competence in his or her own discipline”, says Quante. “Every researcher is challenged to explain his or her own discipline convincingly and to represent it with a clear methodological

self-understanding.” Respect for each of the other disciplines is also crucial. This is shown on a daily basis, argues Quante, in the exchange between the working groups and project groups of the Cluster of Excellence, in which researchers from around eighty individual projects address overarching questions in the field of tension of religion and politics, and reflect on theoretical principles. “Interdisciplinary collaboration thus always poses new questions”, says Quante. “The challenges that emerge ultimately also have to do with the design of the institution in which this kind of research can be organised for the longer term, the career planning of early-career researchers, and the way that scholarly findings are published. We are still facing many innovations here.”

Carl Friedrich Gethmann et al.: *Interdisciplinary Research and Trans-disciplinary Validity Claims*, Heidelberg et al.: Springer 2015.



Michael Quante is Professor of Practical Philosophy and Vice-Rector for Internationalization and Knowledge Transfer at the WWU as well as principal investigator at the Cluster of Excellence, michael.quante@uni-muenster.de

How Pharaohs Secured Their Power Through Religion

Religion and politics: a charged relationship that did not arise only with the great monotheistic religions. The two spheres were already closely interwoven in Ancient Egypt. Egyptologist ANGELIKA LOHWASSER studies Egypt's southern neighbours in present-day Sudan, who in the eighth and seventh centuries BCE also ruled Egypt for a good sixty years as the "Black Pharaohs". In the following article, she shows that the sacred monarchy of the Nubians appropriated the Egyptian religion specifically to assert their political sovereignty.

Every regime requires legitimation – including that of the Egyptian pharaohs. This is true both for the practical assumption and maintenance of power, as well as for the sacral promise of salvation. Both levels of leadership – on the concrete political as well as the supernatural level – must be set up and legitimated. The goal was ensuring that the pharaoh be recognised as the rightful king, able to carry out successfully the tasks intended for him.

Both Nubian rulers were able to draw upon religion to assert their political sovereignty over Egypt.

The research project "Religious Legitimation in Ancient Egypt" of the Cluster of Excellence "Religion and Politics" focuses on the legitimation strategies of two kings in the first millennium BCE, both of whom came from Nubia. Piankhy (Piye) is the ruler who between 730 and 725 BCE conquered Egypt from the South. This campaign is described in minute detail in the longest continuous text that has come down to us from ancient Egypt, on the so-called

Victory Stela of Piankhy (Fig. 1). Roughly half a century later, King Taharqa ruled a giant empire, which united Nubia, Egypt, and parts of the Levant. His reign was the pinnacle of this Nubian Dynasty until the Assyrians in turn supplanted the Nubian rulers after several wars.

In both cases we see rulers who did not come from Egypt but who had to legitimise themselves as Egyptian pharaohs – by means of various strategies. One such strategy is presented here as an example.

The text of the Victory Stela describes a campaign of conquest during which a number of Egyptian cities were captured. But the climax is Piankhy's visit to the central sanctuary of the sun god at the ancient holy site of Heliopolis. There the king performs the rites reserved for him alone, in order to be elevated in the end to the status of a pharaoh. At the same time, this account is to be understood on a supernatural level, with Piankhy being integrated into a myth. This "myth of the Eye of Ra" tells of the sun god's wrathful Eye, which fled south, to Nubia. It is placated by Egyptian gods and brought



Fig. 2: Pictorial field of the Victory Stela of Piankhy.

back to Egypt. It unites in the end with the sun god and is transformed into the Uraeus, the royal snake on the forehead, symbol of the Egyptian pharaoh.

Piankhy is to be understood as this Eye of Ra: he is located in the South and is in a rage because his army is not entirely successful. He finally comes to Egypt himself and is pacified. He then performs a ritual in the sanctuary of the sun god that endows him with the dignity of a pharaoh. Whereas the text on the Stela comprises 159 lines, the pictorial field above it – illustrated in a drawing (Fig. 2) – summarises the recounted events. At the centre stands Piankhy, albeit chiselled out later. Behind him stand the divine couple Amun and Mut, the highest divinities of the then-capital Thebes. Piankhy is adopting the role of Khons, the child of the gods, here. Subservient princes of city states are visible in front of and behind Piankhy, most of them on the ground in *proskynesis*, a gesture of submission.

But what is very unusual is how the prince of Hermopolis, Nimlot, and his wife are represented. Whereas she is standing in front of (!) her consort and thus directly opposite the king, Nimlot is leading a horse: an episode from the text in which Nimlot is severely reprimanded for neglecting the horses in the stables. But it is his wife who steps before the king and is able to placate the raging Piankhy. While the Eye of Ra in the myth is feminine, and is pacified by male gods, Piankhy – a male embodiment of the Eye of Ra – is placated by a female figure.

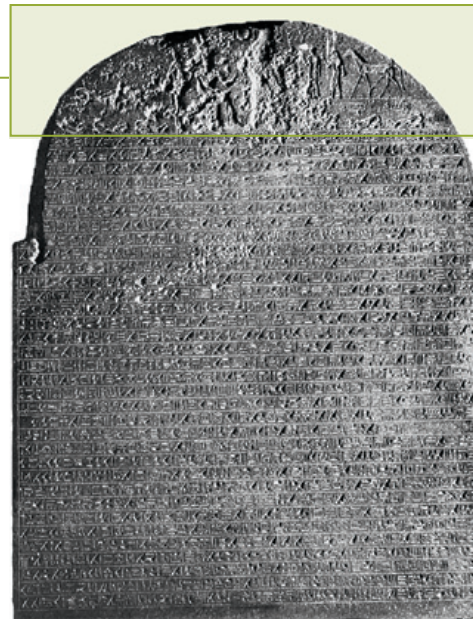


Fig. 1: The Victory Stela of Piankhy, around 725 BCE.

Piankhy came at the beginning of Nubian rule in Egypt, and it can be assumed that the presentation of his legitimisation lay not with Piankhy himself but with Egyptian priests. A detailed analysis of the text shows that its composition can be traced back to the Theban elite. The integration of the king from the South into the myth of the Eye of Ra proves to be an astute method of justifying Piankhy's rule.

Roughly half a century passes and, after the rule of two further Nubian kings, King Taharqa is able to take possession of a consolidated empire in 690 BCE. He, too, uses the myth of the Eye of Ra to justify his power. But this time it is not he who comes from the South; instead, he represents himself as the Egyptian god who can placate the Eye of Ra, thus portraying himself as the *Egyptian* saviour.

The fact that Taharqa saw himself above all as an Egyptian pharaoh is clear in the fact that he conceived of himself as Onuris: in the sanctuary of the temple for the Eye of Ra that he built in Nubia, he depicts himself as the Egyptian god who brings the Eye of Ra back to Egypt (Fig. 3). Taharqa wears the crown with four feathers characteristic of Onuris, and offers up sacrifices to the goddesses identified with the Eye of Ra. He thus presents himself not as a Nubian ruler but rather as an Egyptian pharaoh, who unites Nubia with Egypt by satisfying and especially by bringing home the Eye of Ra.

Both Nubian rulers, Piankhy and Taharqa, were able to assert their political sovereignty over Egypt under entirely different circumstances by drawing upon religion and by identifying with supernatural figures. Their two differing interpretations of a single Egyptian myth reveal how the position of the Nubian kings changed with respect to the legitimation of their rule in Egypt: from sacred figure coming from Nubia to Egyptian guarantor of order.



Angelika Lohwasser is Professor of Egyptology at the WWU and principal investigator at the Cluster of Excellence, a.lohwasser@uni-muenster.de



Fig. 3: The central sanctuary of the temple for the Eye of Ra at Jebel Barkal.

From Local to Imperial Cult

A Near-Eastern Religion Becomes Global

These two archaeological finds were a surprise. First, a basalt stele with the first Roman-era representation of the soldier-god Jupiter Dolichenus from his homeland – here still represented in a markedly ancient Near-Eastern style (Fig. 1) – who in the second century CE became one of the most important deities of the Roman Empire. Second, a Roman-era bronze figure, which depicts the deity in Roman military dress and a Phrygian cap, now in the Western manner (Fig. 4). A comparison between the basalt relief and the bronze figure shows that the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus, whose ancient sanctuary in southeastern Turkey has been the site of exploration for archaeologists from Münster since 2001, grew from a local to an empire-wide cult. How an ancient Near-Eastern religious concept could survive for so long and “globalise” so successfully that it even made its way far into the West, to the Rhine and the Danube, is elucidated by ancient historian and excavation director ENGELBERT WINTER.

The cult of Jupiter Dolichenus, a powerful celestial god, usually represented standing on a bull and wielding his attributes of thunderbolt and double-headed axe, was among the most important in the Roman Empire during the second and third centuries CE. His homeland was the ancient town of Doliche, a settlement on a hill located at the periphery of the modern city of Gaziantep in the South-eastern Anatolia Region of Turkey, about forty kilometres west of the Euphrates and about fifty kilometres north of the Syrian border.

A decisive factor in the spread of the cult was its popularity among the soldiers of the Roman army. The military networks and circulation of troop units enabled the god to integrate quickly into the religious world, especially along the Empire’s borders. But, despite extensive archaeological and epigraphic evidence (especially from the Rhine and Danube provinces), our knowledge of Jupiter Dolichenus and the way that he was worshipped has long been unsatisfactory. This is especially true even for the – until recently largely unknown – centre of the cult in his native city. It has

been possible to locate this site on Dülük Baba Tepesi, a 1,204-metre-high mountain approximately three kilometres from the ancient city and visible from a great distance (Fig. 7).

In 2001, the Asia Minor Research Centre at the University of Münster succeeded in obtaining an official excavation permit from the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. This allowed us to begin our ongoing historical-topographical and archaeological investigations at this “sacred site”, which have decisively expanded our knowledge of the development of this cult site from the early first millennium BCE into the Middle Ages (Fig. 2).

One of the most surprising and significant findings in light of the contentious question of the continuity of many Near-Eastern cults is the clear evidence that the worship at this site of the god from Doliche dates back very far. Already remarkable in the early years of excavation was the discovery of a qualitatively and quantitatively unique complex of beads, amulets, stamp seals, and cylinder seals, especially from the eighth to

The Archaeological Excavation

The sanctuary of the god Jupiter Dolichenus is located near the ancient city of Doliche in southeastern Turkey. The Asia Minor Research Centre of the University of Münster has been excavating there since 2001 under the direction of Engelbert Winter of the Cluster of Excellence with the support of the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (German Research Foundation; DFG). The excavation team of roughly sixty members has uncovered finds from all periods of the site’s 2,000-year history – for example, the massive foundations of the first Iron Age *temenos* walls, numerous fragments of monumental architecture from the Roman main temple, but also extensive ruins of an important Byzantine monastery complex which Christians built on this site after the demise of the ancient pagan sanctuary. To make the excavation area near the city of Gaziantep accessible to a broader public, an archaeological park is planned. Closely linked to the excavation is the research project “The Visibility, Self-Representation and Reception of Syrian Cults in the West of the Imperium Romanum” at the Cluster of Excellence.

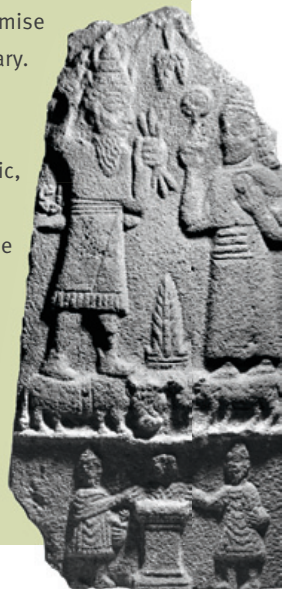


Fig. 1: Basalt stele depicting the divine couple, from Doliche, Roman.



Fig. 2: A day at the dig at the temple of Jupiter Dolichenus.



Fig. 3: Iron Age votive offerings.

fourth centuries BCE (Fig. 3). The practice of mass seal dedication is not known from other contemporary cult-sites. With its more than 3,000 beads and amulets, and 660 predominantly late Iron-Age stamp seals and cylinder seals, this complex of finds is one of the largest groups of seals from this period ever discovered. It is unique on Turkish soil. Added to these are numerous additional votive offerings from the period between the ninth and seventh centuries BCE (Fig. 5).

Especially significant was the surprise discovery of a basalt stele with the first Roman-era representation of the god in his own homeland. This discovery was to cast new light on how he was worshipped and open up new research perspectives on one of the most important so-called Oriental cults in the Roman Empire (Fig. 1). The strong dependence on ancient Near-Eastern models is striking. The local population in Doliche clearly worshipped their gods in their original form for longer than previously assumed.

in which the gods were worshipped in their homeland. They depict the gods within an ancient Near-Eastern tradition and convey an idea of how the local population saw them.

The find of a particularly beautiful Roman bronze figure depicting Jupiter Dolichenus (Fig. 4), which belonged to a banner attachment and

The new finds show more clearly than all the images from the west of the empire how the gods were worshipped in their homeland.

A large amount of additional evidence has subsequently proven to be highly pertinent to the question of the continuity of local religions from the Iron Age to the Roman era. The very high-quality representation of a hitherto unknown deity, which was found in the remains of the Christian monastery and which is presumably a fertility or vegetation deity and companion of Jupiter Dolichenus in his sanctuary, has confirmed once again that the sanctuary on Dülük Baba Tepesi was obviously a site where early traditions endured into the Roman era (Fig. 6). These new finds shed more light than all the images that we have from the west of the empire on the form

had the character of a mobile cult image, demonstrates, when set against the aforementioned basalt stele, the various facets of the cult and the integration of divergent religious systems during the Roman period. Whereas the stele, also from the Roman period, clearly depicts the divine couple in an ancient Near-Eastern tradition, the bronze figure, which in principle follows the same pictorial scheme, shows the god in Roman military attire and a Phrygian cap, elements that are familiar from the majority of western images. The bronze figure thus reflects the cult transformed by western influences, having become a Roman cult.



Fig. 4: Bronze figure depicting Jupiter Dolichenus, Roman.

This cosmopolitan manifestation of the cult in the sanctuary on Dülük Baba Tepesi thus existed concurrently with the autochthonous belief systems and idioms that continued to be potent. Because this cult continued to perceive Doliche as a constitutive centre and *lieu de mémoire*, despite the expansion of its boundaries through migration, the transformed image of the deity was able to return to the sanctuary as “backflow” and there encounter the traditional forms of worship.

The connection of local and empire-wide cult at this “sacred site” is surely one of the most remarkable research findings, and shows that, after the expansion of the cult in the Roman age, the sanctuary at Doliche no longer served the religious needs of the local population alone, but also represented a point of reference for the god’s

devotees from other regions of the empire. Doliche thus proves to be a point of intersection where the image and idea of an ancient Near-Eastern concept of religion was preserved and finally successfully “globalised”.



Engelbert Winter is Professor of Ancient History at the WWU, director of the excavation at the sanctuary of the god Jupiter Dolichenus, and project head at the Cluster of Excellence, ewinter@uni-muenster.de



Fig. 5: Votive in the form of a bronze bull, eighth century BCE.



Fig. 6: Basalt stele depicting an unknown deity, Roman.

Fig. 7: View of the current excavation area at the temple of Jupiter Dolichenus on Dülük Baba Tepesi near Doliche.



The Judean Ideology of Kingship and the Ancient Near East

Cultural transfer in Antiquity: the Hebrew Bible shares many features with ancient Near-Eastern historical myths, since its authors were connected to the cultural traditions of the ancient Near East through a variety of state interactions. One such example is its ideology of kingship. In her dissertation in the history of religions from the Cluster of Excellence, the Protestant theologian Reettakaisa Sofia Salo reveals the close connection to neighbouring cultures: “The Judean ideology of kingship is deeply rooted in the ancient Near-Eastern cultural ‘koine’, the common cultural region of Mesopotamia and the eastern Mediterranean region, and shares its central ideas with the neighbouring kingdoms. According to these ideas,

the king can care for his subjects because he has a special relationship with the divine world. He goes into battle with divine equipment, fights for law and justice, and wears various insignia as signs of his power. The king is depicted as a cult actor, granter of blessings, and son of god.” In her work, Salo has examined and classified the biblical Royal Psalms 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, and 72 from the perspective of the history of religions. Comparison with neighbouring cultures shows that the pre-exilic royal ideology was integral to the ancient Near East. Analysing the different editorial stages of the texts shows that the Judean specificities of these psalms first developed in the Exilic period.

Reettakaisa Sofia Salo: *Die jüdische Königsideologie im Kontext der Nachbarkulturen. Untersuchungen zu den Königspsalmen 2, 18, 20, 21, 45 und 72* (The Judean Ideology of Kingship in the Context of Neighbouring Cultures. Studies on the Royal Psalms 2, 18, 20, 45, and 72), Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2017.



Reettakaisa Sofia Salo holds a doctorate in Theology and works in the Faculty of Protestant Theology at the WWU.

She worked from 2013–2016 at the Cluster of Excellence as part of the project *Altorientalische und biblische Geschichtsmotivtypen und ihre Rezeptionsgeschichte* (Ancient Near-Eastern and Biblical Historical Myths and their History of Reception) under the direction of the Protestant theologian Prof. Dr. Reinhard Achenbach, sofia.salo@uni-muenster.de

The Power of the Oath in Foreign Policy

When states in pre-Roman Greece reached agreements, they were able to draw upon a religious basis. “Oaths had an integrative power which underpinned the internal order of the Greek polity”, explains ancient historian Sebastian Scharff. “Ancient sources attest to this and modern research has often verified it. But what happened when an oath went beyond the boundaries of a polis? How could the oath function in a context in which the right of the strongest could be an openly declared principle of action?” Scharff studied in his dissertation *Eid und Außenpolitik* (The Oath and Foreign Policy) how lists of gods invoked in oath-taking in Greek treaties, oath-taking rituals, and the practice of drawing up treaties in sanctuaries functioned. “These elements of Greek religiosity were deployed to secure relations between states, since such relations were consistently unstable at the time.” The oath served not only to guarantee specific treaties, but also as a central argument in foreign-policy debates. Scharff used as sources for the first time all the

Greek treaty oaths that have been handed down epigraphically and historiographically from the archaic period to the so-called Day of Eleusis in 168 BCE.

Sebastian Scharff: *Eid und Außenpolitik. Studien zur religiösen Fundierung der Akzeptanz zwischenstaatlicher Vereinbarungen im vorrömischen Griechenland* (The Oath and Foreign Policy. Studies on the Religious Legitimation of Inter-State Treaties in Pre-Roman Greece), Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag 2016.



Sebastian Scharff holds a doctorate in Ancient History and is a recipient of the Gerda Henkel Stiftung research fellowship. He worked at the Cluster of Excellence from 2008–2013 in projects on *Die Rolle von Kulte und Heiligtümern in antiken Staatsverträgen* (The Role of Cults and Sanctuaries in Ancient State Treaties) under the direction of Professor of Ancient History Prof. Dr. Peter Funke, and has subsequently worked at the Department of Ancient History of the University of Mannheim and at Harvard University’s Center for Hellenic Studies in Washington, DC, religionundpolitik@uni-muenster.de

How Religion Delayed the Industrial Revolution

Industriousness and consumption are virtues of the modern market economy: at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the economic motivations of today already largely shaped European economic life – but at that time, it was also strongly influenced by religion, as economic historian ULRICH PFISTER shows in this article. While the church in continental Europe adhered to the principle of Christian humility and prescribed that people devote a great deal of time to God (thus leaving little time for work), parishes in England gave their inhabitants the space for secular activities. The English “revolution in industriousness and consumption” brought growth and a widespread enjoyment of consumption. It ultimately became the model for the continent, whose growing industriousness finally made up for the economic delay caused by its confessional legacy.

In the late eighteenth century, the Industrial Revolution began in England, mechanising the production of numerous goods and centralising production in factories. Steam power was widely used in commercial production as well as transportation. This rapid development would not have been possible without a large increase in working hours: in the seventeenth century, people on the British Isles had begun to work harder and, above all, for longer hours. This gave rise to large groups of workers in manufacturing, who produced textiles and hardware at home and in scattered workshops. This in turn promoted technological innovation, since research and development paid off all the more when there were more potential users, and led to the industrialisation of manufacturing.

But what had prompted the British to embrace more work? The cause of the increased industriousness lay above all in the fact that an improvement in trade organisation had made increasingly differentiated consumer goods available. This helped people to construct their own individual identity. Such goods included differently produced, dyed, and printed fabrics, various kinds of earthenware for domestic use, and utensils adorned with many different kinds of handles. People

loved this variety: appearing fashionably dressed and having tasteful interior furnishings led to higher social status. The differentiation of consumer goods thus heightened the benefit of consumption as such, and people were therefore prepared to work more to be able to consume more.

In contrast, the central European interior witnessed no such Industrious Revolution in the eighteenth century, which is an important reason for the relative economic backwardness of this region in the nineteenth century, as compared to Great Britain. Its absence resulted not least from a different church organisation. In Germany, churches claimed, at least, to be essential for the organisation of religion for all the inhabitants of a territory;



The choice of differently produced, dyed, and printed textiles rapidly increased during the course of the Industrial Revolution through the process of making people “more industrious” and the rise in productivity: Johannes Schiess, Appenzell weaver couple at work, c. 1830.

especially in England, though, congregationalist, voluntary communities with a great amount of autonomy had been growing in importance since the seventeenth century. In eighteenth-century Germany, more strongly than in Great Britain, many aspects of everyday life were thus still regulated by the collaboration between ecclesiastical and worldly authorities in a manner that was obligatory for all the inhabitants of a territory.

This included, for one thing, consumption. In many German states, state rules for commodities remained in effect longer than in other parts of Europe, and local church authorities were sometimes responsible for their enforcement. Two concepts went hand-in-hand here: the principle of Christian humility and the mercantilist aim of allowing as little money as possible to flow abroad for the importation of traded consumer goods. In the Württemberg community of Wildberg, for example, ministers took rigorous action against forbidden ribbons and handkerchiefs. People were therefore not exactly encouraged to buy a variety of consumer goods.

In addition to consumption, people's schedules were collectively shaped to a significant degree. Unlike in Britain, people on the continent did not have individual control over their time: according to Christian belief, time belonged first and foremost to God, and the period between Christ's resurrection and the Last Judgment was at his discretion. In the course of the separation of Protestantism and Catholicism, as well as the formation of denominational churches, the churches' temporal regimes in Early Modern Germany were especially closely connected to church holidays. From the seventeenth century, refraining from work was increasingly linked to the holidays as an expression of their sanctification. Thus, attempts in the eighteenth century to increase productive time focused their sights in particular, if not exclusively, on holidays and on reducing them.

The high number of holidays became an issue especially in relatively undeveloped Catholic areas. On the insistence of the Bavarian electoral prince to reduce the number of holidays, representatives of the relevant bishoprics met in 1770. The Salzburg cathedral dean opened the meeting with the statement that a reduction in the number of holi-

days was considered in many circles a pressing need, "if we want to give commerce, agriculture, and the manufactories of the Catholic states the same momentum that benefits the Protestant states, because their inhabitants can devote themselves to their trades for around eleven months but the Catholics to theirs for only around eight." The number of holidays was reduced in the following two decades – in the secular states, more; in the territories ruled by bishops, somewhat less – from originally forty, fifty or more to around twenty-five. Here, at the latest, was set in motion a

secularisation of everyday life, for church princes were now administering church policy with values other than ultimately religious ones – economic development had replaced the salvation of the soul as the goal, even in the case of the regulation of religious activities by church authorities.

But the increasing industriousness of the inhabitants in particular of Catholic territories in Germany, and the increase in their working hours between 1770 and 1790, did not yet mean that

individual households could now determine their time for themselves. This is shown by the fact that, even in the late eighteenth century, people rarely bequeathed clocks when they died and witnesses in court were seldom able to locate a course of events in chronometric time.

More so than in Britain, Germans became industrious above all because their authorities ordered them to work a lot – this, too, is ultimately the legacy of the corporative organisation of religion in the age of confessionalisation. Not until around 1900 were households, and especially women, trained to be consumers – in the course of urbanisation, the rise of department stores as temples of consumption, and the spread of advertising. But that is a different story.



Fashion and other consumer goods enabled people to increase their social prestige, for which they were willing to work more and longer. Drawing from the *Gallery of Fashion*, one of the first English fashion magazines, 1796.



Ulrich Pfister is Professor of Modern and Contemporary Social and Economic History at the WWU and principal investigator at the Cluster of Excellence, pfister@uni-muenster.de

Islamic Banking



Law scholar **MATTHIAS CASPER** on his research on financial transactions in accordance with Islamic precepts

Why are there financial products specifically for Muslims? This has to do with requirements in the Qur'an and other legal prescriptions in Islam. They contain prohibitions against interest, as well as against speculation and betting, which excludes many traditional financial products such as interest-based loans or derivatives. In addition, according to Islamic law, investing in unethical businesses such as weapons, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, prostitution, or pork should be avoided.

How are financial transactions carried out without interest? Put simply, there are two models. In the first, the capital lender gives the entrepreneur money that the latter can put to work. In return, the capital lender receives a portion of the profits. In the financing of a consumer good, though, the bank buys the product that has to be financed (for example, a car), and then sells it to the customer with a surcharge that the customer repays in installments. At the Cluster of Excellence, we have studied these attempts to avoid payments of interest, because the surcharge is in effect interest; but this is accepted as long as the bank also bears the entrepreneurial risk, in this case in the purchase of the car.

What are the historical roots of the prohibition against interest? The prohibition against interest is older than Islam. In the research project, we examined interest and religious prohibitions against it in Christianity and Islam from the perspective of legal history. The prohibition is

already in the Old Testament and repeated in the New Testament. As a consequence, there was a prohibition against interest for a long time in what is Germany today, which was not relaxed until the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The central argument for a prohibition against interest can already be found in Aristotle, who justifies it according to natural law.

Who buys Islamic financial products? Islamic financial products are purchased by devout Muslims. Even in traditionally Muslim countries, Islamic finance is voluntary. In a global context, Islamic finance remains, despite a high rate of growth, rather a niche market, and this is especially true in Germany. Many Muslims living here have Turkish roots and were socialised in a secular society in which Islamic finance did not play a role until the 1990s. But, since the summer of 2015, Germany now also has its first Islamic full-service bank, the KT Bank, whose total balance-sheet, however, is no larger than that of a smaller cooperative bank such as a *Volks- und Raiffeisenbank*.

How can the devout Muslim be sure that a financial product does in fact comply with Islamic law? Islamic financial institutes almost always have a "sharia supervisory board", whose governance problems we looked at closely in the project. This committee is composed of external sharia scholars and certifies the financial products as complying with sharia. We can observe that the many sharia councils

repeatedly create differences of opinion, since in Islam there is no central authority like the Vatican.

Are products that comply with Islam safer than traditional banking transactions? This cannot be answered definitively. Empirical studies by economists have come to diametrically opposed conclusions. Our studies – for example, on interest-free Islamic loans – indicate that the prohibition against speculation and the strong basis of many Islamic financial products in the real economy have a stabilizing tendency. Of course, there can also be speculation bubbles in real, existent commodities, as the real-estate bubble in Dubai a few years ago showed spectacularly.

Are products that comply with Islam the better choice from an ethical point of view? That depends on what you understand by ethical products. In practice, it is possible to identify overlaps with so-called ethical banks, which, for example, stay away from the armaments industry. But Islamic funds also invest in businesses that are not managed sustainably, which is usually considered unethical. On the other hand, ethical banks have no problem with interest.



Matthias Casper is Professor of Civil Law, Social, Business, and Capital Market Law at the WWU and principal investigator at the Cluster of Excellence, casperm@uni-muenster.de

Fig. (background): A slot for the *zakat* in the Moroccan mosque Zaouia Moulay Idriss II – a contribution to charitable causes that is also required in Islamic banking.

With the Bible into Battle

It was not only during the medieval crusades that verses from the Old Testament were seen as justifying warlike conflicts. Using the example of Psalm 79 and the first two books of the Maccabees, the Catholic theologian and Old Testament scholar JOHANNES SCHNOCKS shows in this article how biblical texts were used in history to legitimate political violence.



The battle of the army of the Maccabees against the troops of Gorgias is represented in Codex Perizoni F 17, fol. 15v, a manuscript from the early tenth century (1 Macc. 4).

In pursuing the question of how religion can be used to legitimate violence, it is worth looking at the Old Testament and its reception. Violence – suffered or perpetrated – is discussed, for example, in the books of the Maccabees. These cases can help explain how older texts and ideas from the Hebrew Bible were used in history to justify the use of political violence. Rhetorical patterns can be found here that appear again in the later history of biblical reception, and that are adopted unconsciously even today.

First, it can be seen that some Old Testament texts played a significant role in a religious-historical innovation: whereas ancient religion was essentially oriented towards the performance of cultic activities, some prophetic – but also legal – texts reveal that just behaviour promoting the community was or was supposed to be part of religious identity, too. We can read in the Book of Amos, for example, that the cult festivals of God are unfavourably contrasted with just action: “I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. [...] But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5: 21, 24).

This kind of connection between religion and ethos can also be found in the Ten Commandments, and there it is felt to be unproblematic and generalisable. In his novella *The Tables of the Law*, Thomas Mann referred to the Decalogue as “God’s terse

moral law” and the “quintessence of human decency”. Jews and Christians who, referring to this shared religious tradition, refrain from stealing or remain faithful to their spouse, for example, are scarcely suspected by society of being extremists.

Scripture supplies here the heuristics for responsible, moral behaviour. To this end, it must be interpreted critically, and can then become a generator of ideas, a corrective, and a standard of behaviour for an autonomous moral subject whose identity is also indeed a religious one. Thus, when reference is made to religious texts in calling for a specific – in some cases, violent – action, even religious persons remain entirely autonomous and responsible for what they do.

When it comes to the question of how violence can be motivated by religious texts, the first and second book of the Maccabees are interesting because they interpret the violent conflict with the Seleucid Empire in the second century BCE at least partly religiously. The conflict is in both books about questions of identity that lead to the legitimation of violence. According to the farewell address of the Jewish priest Mattathias (1 Macc. 2: 49–68), what is at stake in the battles are “covenant” and “law”. These are terms that are crucial to Israel’s collective religious identity. Israel – the book seeks to convince us – is facing losing its covenant with God and the law that he handed down, and is thus in danger of becoming indistinguishable in the midst of the Hellenised world. To oppose this loss of identity, Israel therefore uses violence – directed primarily against the Seleucids, but also against resistance among its own people – and the establishment of its own dynasty.

In contrast, the more theological second book of the Maccabees sees the victories of the military leader Judas Maccabeus primarily as an act of rescue by God. Here, too, the main concern is with preserving Israel’s religious identity. The account of the beginning of the battles in Chapter 8 is introduced by a prayer lamenting the desecration of the temple, the impending destruction of Jerusalem, and the blasphemies against God (2 Macc. 8: 2–4). Conversely, the fighters claim the covenant with the ancestors for themselves, and call attention to their worship of God (2 Macc. 8: 15). Here, too, violence is

therefore justified by the fear that Jerusalem could lose its religious (and political) identity entirely. These battles were also linked in Christianity to the battles between virtue and vice inside a person. Because some vices resemble virtues, the adversaries in the illustration from the Codex Perizoni (on the left) can be scarcely distinguished from each other.

A particularly striking text that fears the irretrievable loss of religious identity is Psalm 79, which begins in verses 1 to 4 with an alarm call: “O God, the nations have invaded your inheritance; they have defiled your holy temple; they have reduced Jerusalem to rubble. They have left the dead bodies of your servants as food for the birds of the sky ...”

(Ps. 79: 1 f.). Afraid that religious identity will dissolve if its symbols are razed and moral standards flouted, the psalm anti-

pates salvation from God. The psalm had already been taken up in the books of the Maccabees and would play an important role during the medieval crusades: invocations and liturgies therefore articulated an ostensible fear concerning religious identity, a fear that could be met with a violence that regarded itself as justified religiously.

As scholars, we are only now beginning to understand better the rhetorical patterns of religious texts in the context of violence. What is indispensable here is cross-disciplinary work in this field, as is practised in the Cluster of Excellence by, for example, Christian and Islamic theologians, as well as by historians and legal scholars.

Scripture supplies the heuristics for responsible, moral behaviour.



Johannes Schnocks is Professor of History and Religion of the Old Testament in the Faculty of Catholic Theology at the WWU, and designated principal investigator at the Cluster of Excellence, j.schnocks@uni-muenster.de

Violence or Love: What Does Islam Want?

An Islamic claim to truth and a literal interpretation of the Qur'an are two factors that encourage religiously justified violence. In this article, the Islamic theologian MOUHANAD KHORCHIDE critically considers both and advocates a historical-critical interpretation of the Qur'an and a theology of compassion.

Especially since the attacks of 11 September 2001, Islam is often suspected of containing a marked potential for violence in its doctrine and practice. But there is no doubt that an analysis of Islamic doctrines alone cannot explain the phenomenon of violence in the name of this religion. Violence is a highly complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon in which social, economic, political, and often also psychological factors play a role in addition to the religious dimension, which is why cause and effect cannot be assigned here.

Thus, not everyone who is socially marginalised and dissatisfied with the course of his or her life can be characterised as a potential assailant. Nor is every religious fundamentalist prepared to advocate violence or even perpetrate violence personally. On the other hand, we cannot rule out that someone who is successful in society is nonetheless prepared to engage in violence. Neither the social, nor the political, personal, or religious dimension can alone explain the phenomenon of violence or radicalisation. Rather, it is an interplay of many factors that

creates the framework conditions encouraging the affirmation of violence. I speak deliberately of factors that encourage an acceptance of violence, and not of factors that cause it.

Yet, we also cannot deny that there are elements in Islamic doctrine itself that can serve to support, or perhaps even drive, the emergence of violence, even if Muslims repeatedly emphasise, and especially with an apologetic intention, that violence represents merely a kind of instrumentalisation of Islam. I would like to address two ideas



The open Qur'an shows the beginning of the first chapter, which refers to God's compassion.

in Islamic doctrine, both of which can be identified as having the potential for violence and therefore need to be scrutinised critically by Muslims.

First, the claim to absolute truth.

Anyone who insists that his or her own beliefs possess an exclusive claim to truth leaves little room for other claims to truth. Religiously founded exclusivism insists that no salvific realisation of transcendental reality or revelation can be imparted outside a particular religion. Other religions are therefore denied a salvific function. This claim to exclusivity should not be mistaken for a religion's own claim to truth, however, since the latter can – but need not – be exclusivist: if I believe that my religion is the path to truth and claims the truth for itself, this does not necessarily mean that there can be no other paths to truth. This in no way relativises my own claim to truth.

Religious exclusivism conceals a basis for violence, since it represents a form of rejecting the “other”. If this rejection takes place in the name of God, then it takes on absolutist features, and we are now not far from what are referred to as religious wars. The history of the three monotheistic religions shows this all too well. Religiously founded exclusivism is by no means represented in Islam only by Salafists and Muslim fundamentalists. Even today, this attitude is widespread in Islamic theology. This poses the following questions: How can this position be reconciled with talk of a God who approaches all mankind with unconditional love and compassion? How just is a God who damns people to a hell for eternity

What is ... Fundamentalism?

by Detlef Pollack | Do not be afraid of the big questions – this is one of the prerequisites for acquiring new scholarly knowledge. Is it possible to define fundamentalism? Given the many preconceptions about allegedly fundamentalist attitudes held by Christians, Jews, or Muslims, is it appropriate to try to define fundamentalism at all? Research on religion is repeatedly confronted in its everyday work with the many different ways in which religions understand themselves as exclusive, an understanding that places one religion above others, that claims to be in possession of the one religious truth, and explicitly sets out the indisputable premises upon which this truth is based. It has become customary in research on religion to describe such an understanding of religion as fundamentalist. In contrast to traditionalism, in which a religion aims to preserve its own beliefs and practices, fundamentalism is characterised by a tendency to behave aggressively to its environment. The followers of fundamentalist groups are not satisfied with preserving their religious and ideological traditions. They want to make these traditions the basis of how every person lives. Their attitude is just as exclusive as it is expansive. For this reason, they find it difficult to acknowledge or even tolerate other interpretations of the world and other lifestyles.

Detlef Pollack is Professor of Sociology of Religion at the WWU and speaker of the Cluster of Excellence, pollack@uni-muenster.de

on the basis of what they are (namely, non-Muslims), and not for something wrong that they have done? Which God do we as Muslims want to believe in?

Second, violent verses in the Qur'an.

Both the Bible and the Qur'an speak to violence. The relevant question today is how to deal with such passages in our sacred scriptures. If we read them ahistorically, then we run the risk of allowing them to be used for political purposes. Even if Muslims consider the Qur'an as the word of God, this by no means rules out the possibility of placing its statements in a historical context. What is important here is to understand the act of revelation as a dialogic communication between God and the human being rather than as a monologic directive by God.

Seen historically, the Qur'an is thus both medium and outcome of a communication between a messenger and Muhammad's community on the Arabian peninsula in the seventh century. To understand the Qur'an, we need to take into account the context of this communication.

A literalist interpretation of the Qur'an ignores the fact that the Qur'an was proclaimed discursively, and can therefore also only be understood this way. There is a difference, then, between understanding chapter 2, verse 191 (“And kill them wherever you overtake them, and expel them from where they had expelled you”) as an injunction to kill non-Muslims, or as a descriptive statement made in a specific, historically determined military conflict.

A historically critical approach to the Qur'an, such as is practised in the Qur'an research at the University of Münster's Cluster of Excellence "Religion and Politics", defuses the potential for violence that it contains, since this potential is no longer read ahistorically as an imperative from heaven, but understood as the product of historical conflicts.

Strengthening the ethos of love as a potential for peace. Like Christianity and Judaism, Islam possesses a religious ethos that implies a moral universalism. This does not mean a global ethos that is intended to replace other religions, but rather a

religious ethos that encompasses all people, regardless of the religious belief or worldview to which they belong.

The ethos of love of the three monotheistic religions goes beyond the ethos of justice: it is about love for one's neighbour. Love does not preclude justice; it is wider. It is precisely Muslims who today should be advocating a coalition of various religious and non-religious moral universals. An alliance of universalists against particularists (religious exclusivists, nationalists, racists, and so on) is more necessary today than ever. Religious people are challenged to think about how they can release

the powers of love that lie within them. The Islamic idea of the human as the medium for realising God's love and compassion constitutes both the quintessence and benchmark of religiosity, and emphasises the responsibility that believers have for the peaceful cohesion of their society.



Mouhanad Khorchide is Professor of Islamic Theology at the WWU and principal investigator at the Cluster of Excellence, khorchide@uni-muenster.de

The Catholic Church and Violence

In the twentieth century, the Catholic Church made itself the accomplice of violent regimes in a number of countries, but also engaged in resistance against injustice and persecution. The Church repeatedly took a stand in word and deed with regard to violence, argue the church historian Hubert Wolf and Latin America historian Silke Hensel – such as during the civil wars in Spain and Mexico, as well as in its stance towards the Soviet regime, Italian Fascism, National Socialism, and South American military dictatorships. In addition, liberation theology discussed the use of violence as a means in the struggle against structural injustices. Hensel and Wolf have presented key research findings in their edited volume *Die katholische Kirche und Gewalt* (The Catholic Church and Violence). Drawing on newly accessible sources, renowned historians and theologians from Latin America and Europe show in the volume how church groups have behaved towards perpetrators of violence – and how they have justified violence or denied its legitimacy. Wolf sees an important turning point in the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), which expressly committed itself to democracy and human rights. But, for Wolf, we should take

into account the diversity of the Catholic Church in the world as a whole. "In Latin America, it can be seen neither in principle as a peacemaker, nor as a support for undemocratic rule", underscores Hensel. Thus, despite the stipulations of the Second Vatican Council, the episcopate in Argentina mostly supported the military dictatorship that ruled from 1976 to 1983.

Silke Hensel, Hubert Wolf (Eds.): *Die katholische Kirche und Gewalt. Europa und Lateinamerika im 20. Jahrhundert* (The Catholic Church and Violence: Europe and Latin America in the 20th Century), Cologne: Böhlau Verlag 2013.



Silke Hensel is Professor of Non-European History at the WWU and principal investigator at the Cluster of Excellence, shensel@uni-muenster.de



Hubert Wolf is Professor of Medieval and Modern Church History in the Faculty of Catholic Theology at the WWU and principal investigator at the Cluster of Excellence, hubert.wolf@uni-muenster.de

Hinduism and Buddhism: Not as Peaceful as Presumed

The religious legitimization of violence is not limited to Jews, Christians, and Muslims: research by the religious studies scholar Perry Schmidt-Leukel shows that, now and in the past, Hinduism and Buddhism have not been as peaceful as people frequently presume. Their relationship to one another, in particular, has been shaped by hostilities since the beginning. “Even the oldest Buddhist writings radically criticised the Brahminical religion, from which Hinduism deve-

loped”, says Schmidt-Leukel. “While both religions strongly influenced each other and at times recognised certain elements of truth in one another, they both usually judged the other religion very negatively.” This also plays an important role in the tensions and violent conflicts between Hindu Tamils and Buddhist Sinhalese that have scarred Sri Lanka for decades. Buddhists and Hindus have not always coexisted equally and peacefully in other South Asian countries, either. Thus, Nepal’s

constitution favoured Hinduism as the state religion until 2006. “And in India, the country where both religions originated, Buddhism has almost completely died out after centuries of conflicts that occasionally took the form of bloody persecutions.”



Perry Schmidt-Leukel is Professor of Religious Studies and Intercultural Theology at the WWU, and principal investigator at the Cluster of Excellence, perrysl@uni-muenster.de



Quoted from ...

Religious Pluralism and Interreligious Theology. The Gifford Lectures – An Extended Edition, by Perry Schmidt-Leukel

It is not the case that in religious or interreligious conflicts, religion is entirely innocent and simply the victim of abuse. It may be correct that religions are frequently used to increase conflicts that are basically rooted in nonreligious causes and motives. Yet this is possible only because one can be sure that religions are suitable instruments for this kind of use or misuse. If you wish to burn down a house, you will use petrol, not water. If there were nothing within the religions themselves that contains seeds of conflict, that is, if religions were peaceful through and through, it would be impossible to misuse religion for instigating or fueling religious conflicts. This insight may further underline the need for an interreligious theology. In this way religions can jointly address, self-critically examine, and, if possible, solve, or at least control, the religious roots of interreligious conflicts (pp. 11 f.).



King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī (= Gemunu) (2nd or 1st century BCE) fights for Buddha’s honour against the Hindu Tamils on Sri Lanka. Cover of the modern retelling by M. E. A. Abeysekara, *King Gemunu and the Ten Giant Warriors* (Gemunu Raja Saha Dasa Maha Yodhayo), Colombo: M. D. Gunasena 1998.

PORTRAIT



“I would never otherwise have asked how important religion is in law.”



Anyone entering the office of law scholar NILS JANSEN can see at a glance: hard work is done here. The director of the Department of Legal History at the University of Münster has books, journals, and a notebook spread around his desk in a semicircle and stacked up in piles. Hugo Grotius' *De iure belli ac pacis* of 1625 is among them, as is volume one of Jeremy Bentham's *Moral, Political and Legal Philosophy*, but also Jansen's own *Theologie, Philosophie und Jurisprudenz in der spätscholastischen Lehre von der Restitution*, produced at the Cluster of Excellence. On the table rests an aluminium bottle beside a biscuit tin. All in all, no set designer could possibly have furnished a scholar's chamber more archetypically – even down to the potted plant with its drooping leaves.

In contrast, Nils Jansen seems all the more dynamic. He speaks quickly and smoothly, the Hanseatic intonation betraying his familial roots. In turn, the literature on the parquet floor offers clues to the questions that occupy him: Why and how did law develop into an independent system in society? Starting with legal tracts of Spanish late scholasticism in the sixteenth century, Jansen traces the emergence of secular legal systems from Catholic theories of natural law. “For centuries, these writings were scarcely noticed in Germany, because late scholasticism, with its counter-reformist aims, was considered suspect. But they help us greatly in understanding the development of law.” Jansen studies this using the example of the “doctrine of restitution”, which imports the legal idea of compensation for damages into the theological context of confession and penance: without restitution, no absolution. This principle was made by late-scholastic natural law into a component of a spiritual regime that determined people's everyday lives. Priests decided whether the legal conditions (restitution) for a spiritual act (absolution) had been fulfilled.

Jansen carries out important work on the sources by critically editing and providing a translation of key late-scholastic publications such as *De iustitia et iure* by the Flemish Jesuit Leonard Lessius (1554–1623), a pioneer of natural law and economic ethics. Jansen has been a member of the Cluster of Excellence from its beginnings, and was already a principal investigator in the first round. He characterises the atmosphere at the time, a good ten years ago, as a “gold-rush mood” – and for him personally, too. “I have since written books that would not have come out in the way that they did without the interdisciplinary work

in the Cluster of Excellence. Had I not become involved in this dynamic network, I would probably never otherwise have understood how important religion is in law.”

Nils Jansen has worked in the Cluster's Board of Directors since 2010, and wants to continue shouldering responsibility for shaping the Cluster in the future. He sees these commitments as having to do with fairness and integrity and speaks surprisingly openly about how working for the Cluster also has its downsides, demanding as it does both time and energy. “But the Cluster has given me so much in terms of knowledge, financial support, and also reputation, that I would like to give something back.”

Not having a reputation is something that Jansen – who was admitted into the North Rhine-Westphalian Academy of Sciences, Humanities and the Arts in 2015 – can certainly not complain about. He has long been considered a luminary in the field of International Comparative Law. Jansen, who has worked at Cambridge and for half a year at Duke University in North Carolina, has written much of his work in English. Several years ago, he was offered the Regius Chair at Oxford, where he had worked as a visiting professor in 2009. But he declined the “dream job in academia” – because of his family. He saw a country that “was increasingly moving away from the European continent” as holding in store too many difficulties for his wife and three daughters. Jansen is thus at peace with himself and with the prospect of staying in Münster, and already has a number of plans. He wants to address in his research at the Cluster of Excellence legal ideas of universal justice – from antiquity to the human rights of today.

Joachim Frank, Chief Correspondent DuMont Mediengruppe

What Would Kant Say about the Refugee Crisis?

With his idea of a cosmopolitan law that included a kind of right to asylum, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) was in the history of philosophy a precursor to current thinking about human rights. For Kant, helping refugees does not amount to an act of moral generosity; rather, receiving help is a right that every citizen of the world can claim. In this article, philosopher MATTHIAS HOESCH shows what Immanuel Kant contributed to the ethics of migration, and compares Kant’s contribution to current philosophical discussions on the influx of refugees.

Philosophers in Germany tend to discuss current problems by drawing upon old masters. This is no different in the refugee crisis. Surprisingly, though, the great philosophers in history ignored the moral problems associated with migration, despite the fact that emigration and immigration are by no means new phenomena. An ethics of migration is virtually non-existent in traditional philosophy.

The most important exception is Immanuel Kant. In the 1795 essay *Perpetual Peace*, which became famous throughout Europe even at the time, the philosopher from Königsberg (today’s Kaliningrad) formulated the

thesis that a foreigner can only be turned away if this “can be done without wrecking him.” The “wrecking” in this context is to be understood first and foremost in a literal way: Kant is referring to the shipwrecked, whose turning away would deny them any chance of having solid ground beneath their feet.

This “right to asylum” is located in the framework of a legal dimension that was new at the time: that of a cosmopolitan law. With this law, Kant expanded the traditional areas of law (constitutional law and international law) to include a third: not only are people to be granted civil



Rescue of refugees on 15 June 2015 in the southern Mediterranean by the Irish Marines as part of Operation Triton of the European border control agency Frontex.

rights on the basis of their citizenship; they are also to be seen as world citizens, as part of a notional “universal human state”. As such, they have direct claims with respect to the entirety of all people – claims that cannot be fitted into the traditional conception of international law, which only regulates relationships between states.

The cosmopolitan law includes a “right to hospitality”; that is, the right to come into contact with strangers without being treated with hostility. Expressly not included would be a blanket right to settle in a foreign territory without the consent of the inhabitants there. The right to asylum mentioned above is the important exception here; in an emergency situation, the right to hospitality becomes a right to remain. Kant stresses that these cosmopolitan entitlements do not need to appeal to the moral magnanimity of potential helpers, but represent rights that can be claimed.

Why should cosmopolitan law and especially the right to asylum be able to claim validity? Kant points out that the earth was originally the common property of all people. If parts of the earth’s surface have now become private property or a territory is claimed by a state for itself, this can only be reconciled with the idea of original common property if it can be guaranteed that every person has at least some place where he or she can stay.

Kant thus assumes a pioneering role in the history of philosophy: both the idea of an international human right that is independent of the institutions of the nation-state, and the idea of a right to asylum would later meet with wide acceptance. But is Kant still relevant today, when it comes to the philosophical justification of such principles?

The length of philosophy’s silence on migration is matched by the suddenness with which a lively international debate emerged in the 1980s, one triggered in part by an essay by the political theorist and philosopher Joseph Carens. Some proponents of liberalism defend a universal freedom of international movement, which they believe should have the status of a human right. According to advocates of cosmopolitanism, the freedom to be able to choose a state is a question of equality of opportunity, since currently the life plans that people can realise are unacceptably strongly predetermined from birth on. Proponents of a theory of freedom of association, in contrast, point to the right of every political community to choose new members as it pleases.

Social-Ethical Touchstones for Migration Policy

“For Germany and Europe, flight and immigration have become a focal point of the struggle for social justice”, says social ethicist Marianne Heimbach-Steins. Rather than closing their borders, European countries should agree on ethical measures for admitting and distributing refugees. Europe should also do more to alleviate the causes of flight, believes the Catholic theologian. An immigration policy that follows Christian social-ethical criteria cannot ignore what triggers flight, such as the crises in the Near East and Africa. “Ultimately, the key lies in a just economic and trade system, an international peace policy, and a sustainable climate and environmental policy.” In her book *Grenzverläufe gesellschaftlicher Gerechtigkeit* (Boundary Lines of Social Justice), Heimbach-Steins discusses the significance of borders and belonging, including the hierarchisation of otherness, multiple affiliations, and precarious rights of participation. She develops socio-philosophical criteria for a just migration ethics, as well as ethical contours for an integration policy.

Marianne Heimbach-Steins: *Grenzverläufe gesellschaftlicher Gerechtigkeit. Migration – Zugehörigkeit – Beteiligung* (Boundary Lines of Social Justice: Migration – Belonging – Participation), Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh 2016.



Marianne Heimbach-Steins is Professor of Christian Social Sciences at the Faculty of Catholic Theology at the WWU and principal investigator at the Cluster of Excellence, m.heimbach-steins@uni-muenster.de

Communitarians see another argument for “closed” borders in the danger of the demise of national cultures; for others, it would threaten the functioning of democratic systems. The economic consequences of open borders are also discussed heatedly, of course. Even opponents of “open” borders generally concede that the responsibility to help those in need leads in some cases to a point where the right to stay and eventually the right to citizenship status should no longer be withheld.

A survey of the current debates reveals that they go far beyond what Kant had contributed to the ethics of migration for good reasons: the massive growth in population, the significant inequality between poor and rich countries, the expansion of protection for human rights, and the development of social structures have led to the fact that quite different aspects now assume a normative significance.

And yet there is one idea in Kant's work that could enrich the present discussion: Kant correctly points out that every restriction on migration is bound up not only with the exclusion of foreigners from a political community, but also with the exclusive claim of a territory. But if from a moral perspective every person can assert an equal claim to the globe, there is not only an abstract moral obligation to grant a right of residence to those in need. Rather, every state that claims a portion of the earth exclusively for itself does no more than its duty when it assumes appropriate responsibility for humanity as a whole.

Exactly which concrete obligations arise from this responsibility is tied to many additional questions that can ultimately only be answered within the framework of democratic organs of decision-making. But, in my opinion, the academic-philosophical debate gives rise to two clear conclusions for public discussion. First, we should become aware that helping refugees is not an act of moral magna-

nimity, but rather the appropriate response to the claims on human rights that foreigners have. Second, it is true of almost all Western states that the absolute minimum of what must be done from a moral perspective to support those who have left their homes for important reasons has certainly not yet been achieved.

Shortened extract from of a guest contribution in the Frankfurter Rundschau on 5 January 2016 and in the Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger on 29 December 2015 with kind permission of DuMont Mediengruppe.



Matthias Hoesch is presently Substitute Professor for Political Philosophy at the Philosophical Seminar of the WWU and member of the postdoctoral programme at the Cluster of Excellence, matthias.hoesch@uni-muenster.de

From Western India to South Africa



Qawwali concert at a holy shrine, Gujarat 2008.

Field research has led the anthropologist Julia Koch over the years to Gujarat in Western India and to rural areas of South Africa. The researcher from the Cluster of Excellence's Graduate School accompanied members of the Indo-Muslim caste of the Sunni Vohras on their way from two Indian villages to the region of two former South Af-

rican "Homelands". "The journey of the Sunni Vohras serves as an example of the current, complex processes of migration between India and South Africa, and also of the tensions between styles of Islam that are being negotiated globally", explains Koch. In her dissertation *Migration und religiöse Praxis* (Migration and Religious Practice), she views each place from the perspective of the other, and embeds the present-day migration within a historical context. She illuminates the international migration by investigating the

longstanding networks of an Indian caste. By adopting the perspective of the caste members, Koch is able to examine changing Muslim practice, since the conflict between social change and continuity is conducted in a religious idiom.

Julia Koch: *Migration und religiöse Praxis. Gujarats sunnitische Muslime in den ehemaligen "Homelands" Südafrikas* (Migration and Religious Practice: Gujarat's Sunni Muslims in the former "Homelands" of South Africa), Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag 2016.



Julia Koch holds a doctorate in Anthropology and is research associate at the University of Göttingen. From 2008–2011 she conducted research at the Graduate School of the Cluster of Excellence, religionundpolitik@uni-muenster.de

When Refugees and Germans First Meet



First impressions count: first impressions of other people develop quickly and have a lasting impact on our behaviour. Psychologist MITJA BACK investigates in his empirical study “Integration at First Sight” at the Cluster of Excellence what first impressions Germans and refugees have of each other and which factors might foster integration.

How do you conduct your investigations? We have so far conducted two online studies in which German participants were asked to assess individual photographs of Germans, migrants, and refugees according to criteria such as likeability, trustworthiness, selfishness, and hostility. We gather in the same way the first impressions that refugees have of Germans. Then we expand the investigation to include direct encounters between Germans and refugees.

What have you discovered? Thus far we have found few systematic differences between the assessments made of refugees and Germans as such, but we have found differences within the groups doing the assessing and within those being assessed. That is, we found little evidence for general stereotypes that all Germans share and apply to all refugees; rather, there are large differences among the assessing Germans, and among the assessed refugees.

What does this mean? It is equally true for both the assessed refugees and Germans that appearance and facial expression play an important role: people who smile and are attractive are assessed more positively. Someone who scowls is assessed as more hostile. These are effects that we are already familiar with from research, and have much more influence than the factor of being a refugee or German.

The socio-demographic background plays an important role among the assessing Germans: older people, for example, assess those who look Middle Eastern as well as refugees more negatively. Other factors such as a low level of education, right-wing political attitude, and personality traits such as a tendency towards authoritarian attitudes also tend to lead to a negative evaluation of refugees.

What conclusions do you draw from your findings?

First, results show that, in assessing concrete individuals, people find in every group those that they consider likeable, and others that they consider more unlikeable. In contrast, more general surveys about abstract attitudes often confirm widespread stereotypes, which do not necessarily apply when judging concrete individuals. Second, when considering political interventions or educational measures, we cannot identify any “one-size-fits-all” solutions. Whether it is a question of integrating refugees better or dismantling German stereotypes, it is always necessary to do justice to people’s diversity.

What role does religion play?

The issue is religiously charged in many ways; there are appeals to Christian charity as well as groups calling for the defence of the Christian West. For this reason, we also provided in parts of the study information about the religious affiliation of the persons depicted, and found that those whom we identified as devoutly religious Muslims tended to be evaluated negatively. We plan to investigate more thoroughly the degree to which a person’s own religious affiliation or the strength of a person’s religiosity influences his or her evaluation of refugees.

likeable
assertive
sociable
egotistical
trustworthy
in need
hostile
intelligent



Mitja Back is Professor at the Department of Psychology at the WWU and project head at the Cluster of Excellence, mitja.back@uni-muenster.de

RELIGION AND GENDER



The Creation of the Genders

by BARBARA STOLLBERG-RILINGER | Religions give meaning to this world and shed light on the next. Probably every religious system of meaning contains direct or indirect statements about the organisation of the genders: in myths and symbols or commandments and prohibitions. Religious norms determine how a man is to be a man, and a woman a woman, how men and women are to interact with each other and with the holy, when, for whom, and what kind of sexual contact is allowed, and so on.

Religions reflect in many ways the social structures from which they emerge. The great monotheistic book-based religions, whose holy scriptures mirror the pre-modern, pre-state, patriarchal relationships of the time in which they arose, all assign the man power over the woman, with this hierarchy being passed down through the centuries by the dominant interpretations of the religion. But the word of God, the prophetic writings, the heavenly signs – these are all ambiguous. Their complexity allows for selective interpretations, and different conclusions can therefore be drawn for the relationship between the genders. What is crucial is who holds the prerogative of interpretation. This is generally the institutional authorities of a religious community, who – almost without exception – are male. The interpretation of religious traditions does not take place in a vacuum of pure religious truths, however. Instead, it is always embedded in the respective social reality, with all its conflicts.

All religions probably contain mythical narratives about their origins that enshrine the relationship between the genders in the collective imagination of

the faithful. The gender hierarchy thus appears to be the will of God and beyond human control. This is true of the pantheon of gods of pagan antiquity, of Hindu myths, even of many Buddhist legends. But it is also true of course of the story of Adam and Eve and the snake, as handed down over the centuries in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

But the Old Testament certainly did allow for different interpretations of the gender relationship. The Book of Genesis has a second story of Creation, one that is in many respects incompatible with the first. In it, God

created humans “as man and woman” from the very beginning, and did so in his own image (Gen. 1: 26–31). We could refer to this story if we wished to emphasise the – spiritual – equality between man and woman, as we could to Paul, who wrote in the Epistle to the Galatians: “there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Jesus Christ” (Gal. 3: 28). But egalitarian interpretations of scripture remained rare exceptions until into the twentieth century.

Religions consist not only of myths and religious truths, but also of collective practices and rules of behaviour. Many religious rituals and symbols distinguish between men and women, thereby embedding the male/female distinction in everyday life and rendering it visible at every turn. Common to Christianity, Judaism, and Islam is that men and women have different access to sacred spaces and objects. Most religious rites are conducted by men and

women in separate spaces.

Thus, there is in the traditional Christian church service the side for men and the side for women; Jewish women are directed in the synagogue to the gallery,

and at the Wailing Wall to a separate section; Islamic mosques are places of male prayer and male activity, and, while women are not excluded from them, they do perform their prayers, if not at home, then separately.

Additionally, women had – or have – in all three religions scarcely any share in religious scholarship. Even when there were certainly areas in which women were able to excel as religious virtuosos, as prophets or mystics, this was always viewed with suspicion by the male guardians of the institutional order.

Mythical narratives about their origins enshrine the relationship between the genders in the collective imagination of the faithful.

Fig. (left): God creates Eve from the rib of the sleeping Adam; Nuremberg Chronicle, 1493.

One key concept with which these and many other exclusionary rules were traditionally justified is the concept of purity. The female body is considered impure during menstruation and the postpartum period; sexual commingling with women also defiles men. The ancient idea that bodily impurity makes people unfit for ritual acts serves in many religions as a justification for insisting that those in a spiritual position should lead a life of abstinence, and for prohibiting women from entering certain sacred spaces, from engaging in sacred acts, and from occupying sacred offices.

Questions of who cohabits, has sexual relations, procreates, and raises children, with whom and when, are of central importance for every social order. Every religion thus contains commandments and prohibitions that regulate the practice of sexuality. Sexual purity and religious purity are intimately connected in patriarchal societies. The chastity of women represents the purity of the entire religious group. Conversely, the false belief of the other is often tied to the accusation of sexual licentiousness. For this reason, the gender relationship is an issue that can be used to conduct conflicts between different religious communities. It is not surprising from a historical perspective that present-day fundamentalist movements in Christianity, Judaism and Islam should propagate the return to strict patriarchal-hierarchical gender roles. They find in the literal interpretation of the holy scriptures a bulwark against modern individualism and liberalism.

But this is true not only of religious fundamentalists. People with close bonds to a religious community are more inclined to support the traditional gender hierarchy. Women are significantly more religious, attend church services more regularly, and take religious norms more seriously than men. Clearly, then, traditional religiosity can in some circumstances be attractive for women, even if this religion supports the old traditional gender hierarchy. Stricter sexual norms oblige men to assume responsibility for their children. Spiritual communities have offered women educational opportunities and spheres of activity not open to them in marriage.

Historians speak of the “feminisation of religion” in western societies beginning in the nineteenth century. Through the secularisation of the state, religion became



Quoted from ...

Maria Theresia. Die Kaiserin in ihrer Zeit (Maria Theresa: The Empress in Her Time), by Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger

[...] she herself did not place her femininity at the centre of her self-presentation at all – quite to the contrary. Instead, she separated her physical gender from her role as regent [...]. She placed great value on wearing two male crowns, and appeared in ceremonies as *rex*, on horseback and with a sword, not as *regina*. She did not question the traditional gender hierarchy in marriage; rather, she told all her daughters to subordinate themselves to their husbands (or at least to appear to do so). Only [...] for her herself, as heir to a male crown [...], was the gender hierarchy partially suspended. Her hereditary position as ruler trumped, as it were, her gender affiliation. Indicative of this is the fact that she herself never made use of the obvious opportunity to have herself portrayed in the archetypal Christian image of Mother and Child, and to profit from being associated with the Queen of Heaven [...] (pp. 838 f.).

a private matter, and tended to be assigned to the house and family. But that allowed it to be seen as a woman’s matter, while the political sphere was considered male. In the nineteenth century, the relationship between “father state” and “mother church” was compared to the relationship between man and woman in the bourgeois marriage: the modern state is placed above the churches, just as the husband is placed above his wife; both the state and the husband provide protection and demand obedience in return.

We are currently experiencing a rapid transformation of gender norms and an equally rapid growth of religious diversity due to worldwide migration movements, with both resulting in an increasing pluralisation of society.

The accompanying conflicts are typically sparked off by the differing gender roles. The most prominent recent example is perhaps the conflict over the veiling of Muslim women, with a piece of cloth serving to polarise public opinion. As a religious symbol itself, it is nonetheless ambivalent: what in the one case is a manifestation of patriarchal subordination can under different social conditions be a demonstrative affirmation of female self-determination.

This shows that religious meaning cannot be isolated from social context. How religion and gender relate to each other must be continuously renegotiated and contested.

Shortened prepublication of an essay for the catalogue “Violence and Gender” for the special exhibition of the same name at the Bundeswehr Museum of Military History (Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr) in Dresden. The catalogue Gewalt und Geschlecht (Violence and Gender) for the special exhibition will be published in 2018 by Sandstein Verlag.



Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger is Professor of Early Modern History at the WWU. The recipient of the *Historikerpriis* and Leibniz Prize is deputy speaker of the Cluster of Excellence, stollb@uni-muenster.de

Of Gods and Men

by **DANIEL GERSTER** | At first glance, religions frequently reinforce male dominance over women: whether because the one god is conceived of as a man, or the male divinities in a pantheon are placed above the female; or whether because religious precepts permit only men to become priests, or legitimise their elevated position in society or the family. By ascribing social gender polarities to a divine order, religions thus seem to have a large stake in constituting and stabilising “masculine rule” (Pierre Bourdieu). At the same time, they also seem to contribute significantly to justifying “hegemonic masculinity” (Raewyn Connell).

But a closer look shows that this is not always so simple. There are examples in history – including that of Christianity in Europe – that emphasise the female side of god or place a special focus on female religiosity. In 1978, for example, Pope John Paul I stressed that God was people’s “father, but much more their mother”. And a global perspective reveals how diverse, fragile, and fluid concepts and practices of masculinity can be between different religions, but also even within a single religion. Comparing the Hindu deity Vishnu illustrated here with traditional European ideas of masculinity speaks volumes in this regard. Even though with his bow and arrows he displays the attributes of a warrior, his graceful pose and abundant jewellery stand in stark contrast to those ideas. One task of future research will be working out the commonalities, differences, and interrelations.



Daniel Gerster holds a doctorate in History, and is research associate at the Center for Religion and Modernity (CRM) at the WWU, which developed out of the Cluster of Excellence, daniel.gerster@uni-muenster.de



Graceful and warlike – Rama is the seventh incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu; Southern India, around 1820.



Quoted from ...

Ehe, Liebe und Sexualität im Christentum
(Marriage, Love and Sexuality in Christianity),
by Arnold Angenendt

If “clean hands” in Christianity were originally a metaphor for a morally pure way of life in the sense of spiritual sacrifice, they became in Late Antiquity a precondition for the performance of the Eucharist. Those serving at the altar were required to be unmarried and celibate. The advent of daily Eucharistic celebration must have reinforced the demand for permanent abstinence. [...]

Religious purity was linked to the idea of spiritual bridehood. The church, as the bride of Christ, appears “immaculate”, is “without spot or wrinkle” (see Eph. 5: 27: *non habentem maculam aut rugam*). This gave rise to the demand for officiants to be immaculate, initially a demand for ethical purity, but then also the demand that they lead a celibate life: priests should be bound to Jesus Christ in “pure bridehood” (pp. 78 f.).

Battlefield Woman

In many cultures, the woman embodies the purity of her religious and social group, so that any attack on her always affects the honour of her family and of the entire community. “Sexual violence symbolises the weakness of the men who cannot protect their women”, explains the historian Iris Fleßenkämper, using the example of India. When the border with Pakistan was drawn in 1947, Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs deliberately defiled the other groups by torturing and raping their women, and carving religious symbols into their skin. The public acts of violence and the marking of the victims were intended to make visible the enemy’s powerlessness in comparison to the “victorious desecrator”. In present-day India, the female Dalits, the “untouchables”, are particularly frequent victims of violence, especially if they attempt to move up the social ladder: men of higher castes use sexual violence to humiliate the Dalit community and ultimately to stabilise the traditional religious caste structure. Comparative studies, such as one developing out of a collaboration between Indian and German researchers as part of the Cluster of Excellence, show similar practices in Europe’s past and present. In the Thirty Years’ War, women of a conquered city were subjected to public “violation”; similarly, for Fleßenkämper, the Nazi violence against Jewish, Sinti and Romani women also pursued the goal of humiliating the women not only as individuals, but also as representatives of their religion and ethnic group.



Iris Fleßenkämper is a postdoctoral researcher in History. She is project head at the Cluster of Excellence and its executive coordinator, irisfle@uni-muenster.de



Visitors to the Cluster of Excellence ...

PUBLICIST KHOLA MARYAM HÜBSCH | “The exotic-erotic seduction in the harem on the one hand, and the repressed, captive Muslim woman [on the other:] Even today the news coverage on Muslim women remains a construct of the West, and has little to do with the reality of Muslim women in Germany or the countries of the Near and Middle East, but rather assumes the function of implicitly cementing a group’s own superiority.”

From the article “Zwischen Gewaltopfer und Haremsphantasie. Zum Selbst- und Fremdbild der muslimischen Frau”, in: Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger (Ed.): *Als Mann und Frau schuf er sie* (Male and Female He Created Them), p. 259. Khola Maryam Hübsch spoke on 25 October 2011 as part of the lecture series *Religion und Geschlecht* (Religion and Gender) at the Cluster of Excellence.

RABBI ELISA KLAPHECK | “An ethics of religious obligation that incorporates the demands of feminism [...] could bring new momentum from religion at a time when political feminism seems to have become exhausted. But this would mean that feminist women rabbis, like women clerics of all religions, do not settle merely for the changes that they bring about within their religions [...], but learn to see themselves as constitutively active in the larger field of tension in state and society.”

From the article “Frauen im Rabbinat. Feministische Aufbrüche im Judentum von der ersten Rabbinerin Regina Jonas bis heute”, in: Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger (Ed.): *Als Mann und Frau schuf er sie* (Male and Female He Created Them), p. 276f. Prof. Dr. Elisa Klapheck spoke on 6 October 2011 as part of the lecture series *Religion und Geschlecht* (Religion and Gender) at the Cluster of Excellence.



The scholar Abu Zaid teaching men and women in an Islamic school, Yahya ibn Mahmud al-Wasiti, Baghdad, 1237 (details).

The Qur'anic Image of Women Should Not Be Left to the Populists

Women in Islam: many people think of repression and disenfranchisement. A few extreme Qur'an verses suggest this. The Islam scholar DINA EL OMARI places these verses in their historical context, thus drawing a more nuanced picture of women. Her postdoctoral research project on feminist Qur'an hermeneutics is part of the larger project "Historically Critical Qur'an Commentary", led by the Islamic theologian MOUHANAD KHORCHIDE at the Cluster of Excellence. In this essay, she uses an example to illustrate the advantages of modern exegesis.

The public discourse around the question of the images of women in Islam is often conducted from a populist perspective, and especially so in Europe. Use is made of verses from the Qur'an that, if not located within the historical context of their origins, could appear to discriminate against women. Islamic theology itself also frequently uses this kind of ahistorical understanding in order to legitimise patriarchal structures. A contemporary interpretation of the text, as carried out in the Cluster of Excellence, locates the Qur'an and important exegetical statements within the historical context of their origins, and thus arrives at a contemporary understanding of the text and image of women. This can be seen in the Qur'anic statement, "O mankind, fear your lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate" (4:1). Traditional exegesis often interprets this verse as being the creation of Eve from Adam – as a derivative of him. According to this, man has been sovereign over woman from the beginning of Creation. But the Muslim exegete Razi (1149–1209) pointed out that the verse does not mean "from it", but rather "of the same kind". It becomes clear – in light of the context of the origins of the Qur'an, along with texts from Late Antiquity that were widespread at the time, with some flowing into the Qur'an – that there is apparently a reference here to a source from Jewish Midrash literature, the Bereshith Rabbah 8:1. This describes the first human creation as an androgynous being, from which both genders originated. The verse from the Qur'an seizes upon precisely this idea of a non-hierarchical creation of both genders. Thus, an historical awareness in interpreting the Qur'an in the twenty-first century opens up new levels of meaning.



Dina El Omari holds a doctorate in Islamic Studies and is research associate at the WWU's Centre for Islamic Theology (CIT) as well as designated project head at the Cluster of Excellence, dina.elomari@uni-muenster.de



ק רוא בגרון פגא החרשים **א**שי תננים אשר על צפי חורש
ר אותם פיה הודש מגור שישיר **ח**רש והגא מדרשים
ת רננה שפתיי בשודרי **א**רבעה חרשים
ארבעה חרשים פנמיחזה **פ**י ארתה זה מזה לחזה
באשר שמענו פי עוד נחזה **ב**רבינו בשלום בהדרש היה
בר אתי המכרך את עמו בשלום



מילבנוז פלה מראש אמנה תשודרי בטוחה ער
 לובש התבהני והתפארי פושם ריקוח התבשמי מור
 הלכונה התקטרי כי בא עת והגיע שעה אשר למולך
 תשודרי בין שודרי ילוי אשרול הסופר מינפנפת
 תנאמת פלה באומרי שפר בני מוכוז זכילו רוחשים

No Depictions of the Transcendent in Jewish Art

Religions can be represented in a variety of media: in text, sound and image, in objects, space and the body. Communicating through images has a centuries-long tradition in monotheistic religions. Judaism and Christianity have illustrated and reflected on religious ideas over the ages in painted, drawn and printed images – despite all the debates over a prohibition on images. Whereas Christian artists seek to visualise the transcendent, even to the point of figurative images of God, Jewish art focuses on religious festivals, rituals, and symbols. KATRIN KOGMAN-APPEL, Alexander von Humboldt Professor of Jewish Studies at the University of Münster, illustrates this by looking at richly illustrated manuscripts and printed books from the late Middle Ages.

“You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them” (Exod. 20: 4-5). These well-known lines long fed the misconception of Judaism as a non-visual or even anti-visual culture. But, as the recently deceased American scholar of Jewish philosophy Kalman Bland was able to show some years ago, these ideas are a non-Jewish construct of the Enlightenment. Although, as Bland pointed out, modern Judaism has partly appropriated this construct, it has little to do with medieval and early-modern Jewish approaches to the subject of images. Unlike in Christian art, however, where anthropomorphic representations of God are very common, Jewish art has largely refrained from representing the transcendent pictorially, and has refrained almost entirely from representing it in figurative form. Thus, when in the fourteenth century a Hebrew manuscript in Aragon visually represented the Creation, it merely alludes to divine intervention by depicting golden beams of light (Fig. 1).

A bold and unique example was produced in the early fourteenth century in Worms, where God’s love for his people was allegorised in a prayer book. The image illustrates a liturgical hymn that addresses the relationship between God and his people against the background of

descriptions of the lovers in the Song of Songs. The image translates the theme of the coronation of the Virgin, which was very popular in Christian art, into a Jewish visual language. A man identified by his Jewish hat sits across from the elaborately clothed figure of a woman, a female personification representing God’s presence (*shekhina*). We cannot assume a figurative representation of God here; rather, we find an allegorical interpretation of the biblical motif of divine love (Fig. 2).

What was particularly richly illustrated in the late Middle Ages were the so-called Passover Haggadot. The Passover festival is celebrated in spring to commemorate Israel’s exodus from Egypt. The Haggadah, the text read during

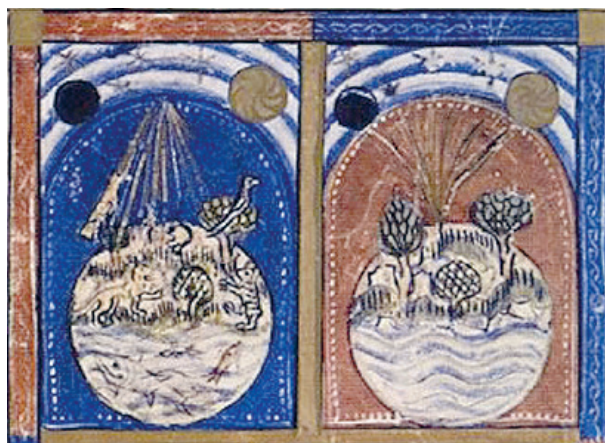


Fig. 2 (left): Allegory of Divine Love; Leipzig Mahzor, Worms, c. 1310.

Fig. 1: The creation of the world; Sarajevo Haggadah, Aragon, c. 1330.



Fig. 3: Israelites flee Egypt with unleavened bread; Birds' Head Haggadah, Rhineland, c. 1300.

the ceremonial meal on the eve of the first Passover festival, developed in the late Middle Ages into an independent and relatively small book. This format, as well as the didactic character of the Haggadah, which is aimed at the entire family and especially the children, made it particularly suited to illustration. Among the earliest examples was the Birds' Head Haggadah (c. 1300), so called because the majority of its figures are adorned with birds' heads rather than human faces. While early research assumed that the birds' heads resulted from the attempt to circumvent the so-called prohibition on images, more recent research argues that the animal heads served to divide humanity into religious or social groups. In the Birds' Head Haggadah, for example, only the children of Israel have birds' heads (Fig. 3). One of the images depicts the Israelites, who had no time to let their bread dough rise before their exodus from Egypt.

The hurriedly snatched dough was made into unleavened bread on the way. In remembrance, only unleavened bread (*matzah*) is eaten during the seven days of the festival.

The scribe and illuminator Joel ben Simeon emerged in the late fifteenth century as a key figure in Haggadah iconography. He is responsible for developing a rich repertoire of imagery, which would long have an effect on later printed versions. Born in around 1420–25 in the Rhineland, possibly in Cologne, he emigrated in around the middle of the century to northern Italy, where he learned elements of early-modern Italian book art (Fig. 4). The core of the Haggadah and of the ceremony is the passing down of the story of the Exodus to the next generation. To this end, the text depicts the questions of four different sons, who represent different human characters: one wise, one wicked, one diligent but simple, and “one who does not know how to ask”, as the Haggadah has it. Joel drew on various types in his surroundings, and gave visual form in many of his Haggadot to these four characters: a scholar, a knight who represents the non-Jewish persecutor, a jester, and a poor vagabond (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4: The questions of the four sons as human character types; Washington Haggadah, Joel ben Simeon, Germany, 1478.

After the invention of book printing, this technology also developed rapidly in Jewish books, despite the fact that Jewish book printers initially had to struggle against numerous restrictions. Early examples were first produced on the Iberian peninsula, initiating a tradition that ended abruptly with the expulsion of the Jews in 1492 (from Spain) and in 1496 (from Portugal). Jewish book printing then first shifted to Italy, where Joel ben Simeon was also surely able to learn about the technology – which he never

used, however. And yet his work also displays elements that we can trace back to the book culture that was developing. Joel's visual language indicates that, like book printers, he was facing questions about producing his books more rapidly, and that his drawing technique was aimed at duplicating his repertoire.

The illustrated Haggadah also evolved in early book printing. One Haggadah for Sephardic Jews, which survives only in fragments, was produced in around 1500. But the pioneer of this book genre was Gershom Hacoen in Prague, who published the famous Prague Haggadah in 1526. While borrowing from medieval predecessors, including from Joel ben Simeon, this was a book that set about adapting the visual language of the manuscript, which was always a unique object with a private patron in mind, to a broader readership (Fig. 5). Among other things, the printer took the character types of the four sons created by Joel ben Simeon, and transferred them into the medium of the woodcut.

Like other Hebrew manuscripts, Haggadot did not depict transcendence; their producers were not preoccupied with questions of representing God. They focus on the rituals to be performed during the festival, and on their symbolic meaning, intended to commemorate Israel's exodus from Egyptian servitude. This is common to all the examples presented here, although they were produced in different periods and used different media.



Katrin Kogman-Appel holds the Alexander von Humboldt Professorship of Jewish Studies at the WWU and is principal investigator at the Cluster of Excellence, kogman@uni-muenster.de



Fig. 5: The questions of the four sons as human character types; Prague Haggadah, Gershom Hacoen, Prague, 1526.



The Irruption of Transcendence into the Earthly World

A prohibition on images – yes or no? In Christianity, scholars debated for centuries whether images were permissible or not. Some rejected the visual representation of religious motifs by referring to the Ten Commandments and the prohibition on images. Others made the case for images, since they could communicate biblical subject matter to everyone who was unable to read. In this article, **CHRISTEL MEIER-STAUBACH**, Professor of Latin Philology, presents the debates, and outlines how religiosity was figured in images in the Middle Ages – images that make the transcendent visible.

The centuries-long controversies surrounding the veneration of images in Christianity – from Late Antiquity to the Reformation and Counter-Reformation – were summed up by the twelfth-century Benedictine abbot and great exegete Rupert of Deutz in his critique of the attitude of Judaism towards religious images. He juxtaposed in a dialogue between a Jew and a Christian (1129) the abundance of images in Christian churches on the one hand, and the Jewish prohibition on images on the other (Exod. 20), but established the legitimacy of religious images already in Jewish history, where God instructs Moses

and Solomon to decorate the Holy of Holies with images (I Kings 6). This, for Rupert of Deutz, was also the reason that all the walls of Christian churches are fully decorated with pictures and sculptures – not only with Mosaic cherubs, but also with a vast array of visual decoration representing the memorable “deeds of the saints, the faith of the patriarchs, the truth of the prophets, the glory of the kings, the blessedness of the apostles, the victory of the martyrs”.

In the same century, the theologian Alan of Lille described in his tract against heretics, Jews, and Muslims

the basic Christian position: these images were objects of veneration (*veneratio*), but not of worship (*adoratio*), which was due to God alone, since devoting a divine cult to the created amounted to idolatry (*idolatria*). According to John of Damascus, a Greek Doctor of the Church, this was the doctrine of Christianity in East and West. And Durandus, for centuries the authority on liturgy, said, “Not God, not man is the [...] image you see, but rather it is God and man, which the holy image contains in the form of a likeness [not ontologically].” Thus, in the Latin West, the history of salvation,



Fig. 2: God’s wisdom in a beautiful human form and God’s omnipotence as a monstrous figuration because of its inaccessibility to human comprehension; Hildegard of Bingen, Liber Divinorum Operum, vision III 4, fol. 135r.



Fig. 3: The circular diagram as an abstract figuration of God, in which the history of the world up to its completion in God is represented in purely graphic fields of colour; the form of a human being sitting in it stands for God’s love, which, together with omnipotence and wisdom, represents the Trinity; Hildegard of Bingen (see Fig. 2) fol. 143r.

Fig. 1 (left): The Creator God creates heaven and earth according to measurement and number; Bible Moralisée, Vienna.

Jesus' life on earth, the history of the church, as well as typological references between the old and new eras, were legitimate subjects for religious images, whose stories had didactic-catechetical functions and were thus also intended as "books for the laity" – as the Church Father Gregory the Great († 604) and many after him put it.

The pictorial representation of the divine, of the transcendent, remained conflictual in the Western church, too. The problem was ignited by the question of whether an image of Christ could adequately represent his divine-human dual nature: to what extent was it possible to paint only his earthly life, and how could his divinity be represented visually? How, moreover, was it possible to make the Trinity sufficiently clear? These problems are unknown to both Judaism and Islam. For the theology of the image in the High Middle Ages, it was the incarnation of God that legitimised the religious image. As the Franciscan scholastic theologian Bonaventure and others wrote, the act of God becoming human in Jesus Christ lifted the Old Testament prohibition on images, since God had revealed himself in human form.

The pictorial representation of the divine, of the transcendent, remained conflictual in the Western church, too.

Christian art found various means of illustration for religious images: narrative sequences of events, representational images, symbols, as well as new and special forms of iconography based to a greater degree on theological-philosophical reflection. Images narrate beliefs from the creation of the world to the birth and deeds of Jesus; they

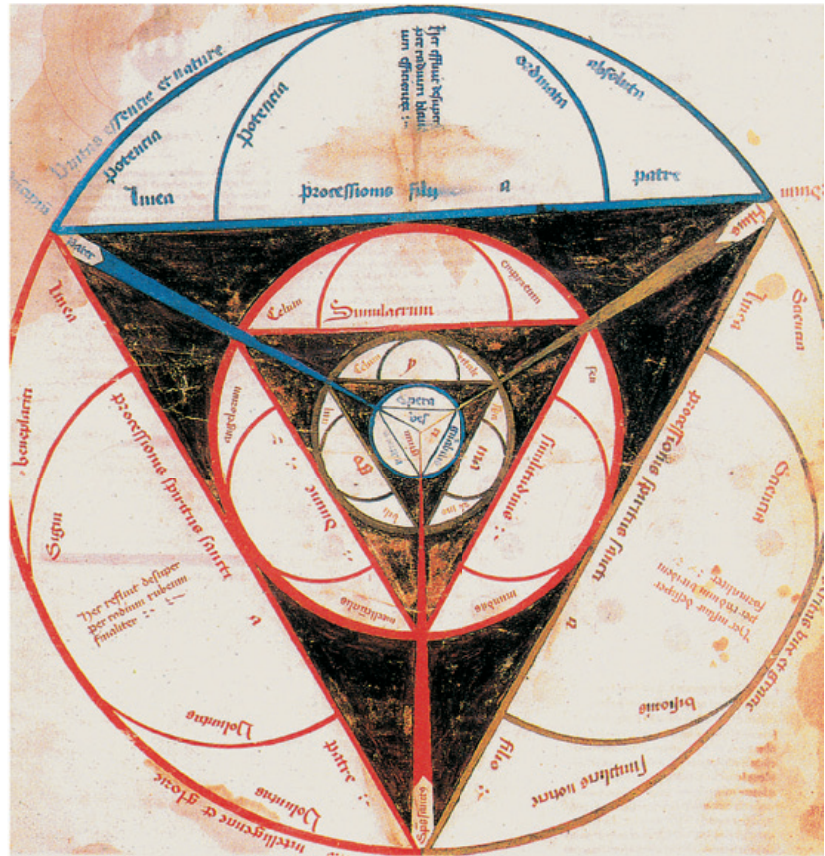


Fig. 4: The diagram "Seal of Eternity" (Sigillum eternitatis) of the university scholar Heymeric de Campo captured God, the Trinity, and the world of archetypes in an abstract form.

represent Christ as the good shepherd, the teacher, the high priest, the Almighty on the throne. Symbols such as the lamb, the mandorla, the empty throne, and the book (= the Word, *logos*), the cruciform halo, the divine hand, and the monogram of Christ represented the Son of God visually. All these forms of representation conveyed specific ideas of transcendence in the medium of an image.

Particular challenges to pictorial art were posed by biblical and later reports of the direct irruption of the transcendent into the earthly world. Prophetic visions, the Apocalypse, and the experience of numerous visionaries in church history described

images received while in a state of inspiration. Their translation from the medium of the word – which described them but at the same time attested to the impossibility of adequately expressing such transcendental experiences with deficient human language – into the medium of the image constantly placed new demands on the creativity of the illustrators who tried within their means to translate pictorially such experiences into images. This problem was reflected upon with clarity and astuteness in the Western tradition above all in neo-Platonic, pseudo-Dionysian philosophy, where a doctrine of the image arose that took the radical difference between transcendence and immanence seriously. The doctrine inspired images that corresponded pictorially to this problem.

This doctrine moved away from the representational and beautiful to the non-representational and ugly or monstrous, the latter being the more suitable figuration of the divine through difference. “When I read in the holy visions of the holy prophets”, explained the theologian and philosopher Eriugena (c. 877), “about a human image, beautiful, complete, and natural in every way, which signifies him who beyond all form and figure exists in himself without form and figure, I can more easily be deceived to think that the unlimited God himself can be delimited in a human image, and the invisible and ineffable be made visible and that there is anything to be said about him” (Fig. 2).

Another means to pictorial appropriateness were abstract-diagrammatic forms as an “analytical” manner of representation that left the multiplicity of the world behind and strove for simplicity; such forms could lead human seeing away from distraction and intimate the ascent to God (Fig. 3). The development of ancient doctrine reshaped geometric-diagrammatic figurations into theological-mystical conceptual images (Fig. 4). One idea emerging from late antique Platonism that was used frequently in Christian areas up to the modern era was that of God designing the world with geometry (*deus geometra*) (Fig. 1); thus mankind’s return to these forms also led *per visibilia ad invisibilia*.

The most fitting, but also most difficult, approximation to the figureless-infinite and simple God, compared to everything pictorial, was, for mystical theology, the imageless

ascent (*anagoge*) of the human, as the highest “form of vision”, which could be found for example in the work of Meister Eckhart.

Abstract-diagrammatic forms as an “analytical” manner of representation: such forms can intimate the ascent to God.

In the conflict between the religious need for sensuous elevation to the divine on the one hand, and the warning against anthropomorphically degrading him and the danger of idolatry on the other, the medieval theology of the image developed various representational modes, which extended from mimesis, to alienation and abstraction, to the emphatic imagelessness of the *unio mystica*.

Thus, religious affinity and the religious need for pictorial affirmation of the divine have been in conflict (even an irresolvable conflict) with theological reservations about determining the divine visually. This conflict can be experienced strongly, for example, in the contrast between the austere furnishings of the Großmünster in Zurich and the Asam Church in Munich, which overflows with visual images. In the disputes over the religious image in various eras, this paradox has surfaced again and again.



Christel Meier-Staubach is Emerita Professor of Medieval and Modern Latin Philology at the WWU and project head at the Cluster of Excellence, christel.meier@uni-muenster.de

What is ... Religion?

by Detlef Pollack | We should not overestimate the importance of definitions. They are conventions, agreements among scholars that allow them to communicate about the object of their research. Especially when it comes to the definition of religion, the number of suggestions offered by scholars runs into the hundreds. No agreement is in sight. But it is nevertheless useful to adopt a definition of religion as a basis for concrete historical and empirical work; that way, anyone seeking to understand the research in this field knows what is being talked about. My suggestion here is to understand “religion” as such phenomena in which:

- a distinction is made between transcendence and immanence – whatever the inaccessible transcendence may constitute in each case: God, gods, spirits, cosmic energy, or a feathered snake
- and forms are provided to make the inaccessible communicable, be they rituals, personal prayers, holy writings, revelations, visual symbols, segregated places or buildings.

Detlef Pollack is Professor of Sociology of Religion at the WWU and speaker of the Cluster of Excellence, pollack@uni-muenster.de

PORTRAIT



“I want to show Jewish culture in all its richness.”



What would a scholarly network with a focus on “Religion and Politics” be without Jewish Studies? With the Jewish studies scholar KATRIN KOGMAN-APPEL, the WWU succeeded in 2016 in bringing one of the most internationally renowned experts in this field to Münster. As holder of a Humboldt Professorship of Jewish Studies, she enriches conversations about world religions, conversations for which the University offers ideal conditions, not least with the “Religion and Politics” Cluster of Excellence.

Kogman-Appel is in many ways a traveller between worlds. Born in 1958 in Vienna, she began studying history there in 1977. At first, Jewish Studies was only her subsidiary subject. Her interest in Jewish history and culture was initially determined by contemporary history. It was the era of Willy Brandt in Germany, and of Bruno Kreisky in Austria. The “Third Reich” was the subject of debate in both countries, and also in Kogman-Appel’s family. “I assumed it was natural for Austrians and Germans to concern themselves with the Nazis and the annihilation of European Judaism”, she says. “Perhaps that was somewhat idealistic.”

But from the present day and the recent past, the young historian soon leapt into a much earlier epoch. Her future dissertation supervisor, Kurt Schubert, pioneer and doyen of Jewish Studies in Austria, awakened her interest in Jewish illuminated manuscripts. “Anyone who studied with Schubert could scarcely avoid them”, says Kogman-Appel and chuckles. “But I also found medieval book culture so appealing because I always liked dealing with ‘tangible’ things from the past. Old things have never daunted me; on the contrary: the older they were, the more fascinating.”

With a research grant in hand, Kogman-Appel went to Jerusalem and “got stuck there”. Israel became central in her life privately, too. She met her husband, started a family, and converted to Judaism. “But our family is non-practising”, says Kogman-Appel. To her, being Jewish means solidarity with her family, with Israel and its people. Kogman-Appel certainly sees herself as its advocate, even if she is not politically active in the narrow sense. Above and beyond a “lachrymose” historiography that views Jewish life primarily from the perspective of oppression and persecution, she wants to present Jewish

culture in all its richness. This is a kind of “mission” in her teaching, too. She is establishing in Münster the cultural-historical programme in “Jewish Studies”.

Kogman-Appel spends her semester breaks in Israel. And she tries to fly home for a weekend every three or four weeks – to her husband and her three grown-up children. Just how deeply Kogman-Appel has become acculturated to her new homeland is shown sometimes in passing. Such as in language. Asked about how the study of medieval manuscripts fits into the “Religion and Politics” Cluster of Excellence, for example, she refers to the increasing importance of sociological perspectives in Book Studies. Book culture has a role in shaping opinions in society, she explains: “We don’t just look at ... how do you say in German? ... ‘watermarks’”. *Wasserzeichen* – that’s right.

Her current research focuses on a work by the Jewish scribe Elisha ben Abraham Cresques (1325–1387), who held a privileged position as a cartographer at the royal Court of Aragon. He compiled a personal collection of religious texts. Kogman-Appel refers to the manuscript as a “windfall” – due to its rare private character and the author’s delight in communicating. Another scribe, Joel ben Simeon, active in Germany and Italy in the fifteenth century, lived in a period of transition – from the manuscript produced individually according to the needs of the person who commissioned it, to the beginnings of serial production, but still before the invention of book printing. “There was something in the air.” Like today. In the age of transition from analogue to digital culture, from book to e-book, Kogman-Appel is not only a traveller, but also a mediator, between spheres that are distant, and yet, after all, so close. *Joachim Frank, Chief Correspondent DuMont Mediengruppe*

Voices from Beyond

The voice is a fleeting medium. As the primary means of human communication, it also plays an important role in religion. And yet it is difficult to grasp and seems to elude discussion. But a research project at the Cluster of Excellence has nonetheless approached the voice in a religious context: scholars from various disciplines have studied the voice as a medium of religious communication, and have discovered in historical testimonies, as well as in literature and artwork from various religions and cultures from antiquity to the present day, what can be called “voices from beyond”.

Literature scholar Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf explains: “Whether in texts or images, radio programmes or films: in numerous works from various ages and religions people have heard voices they regard as divine. There is,

for example, the conversion of Saul at Damascus, as narrated in the Acts of the Apostles: Saul hears a voice from heaven together with an apparition of light, and the voice says to him: ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ When demons are exorcised, spirit beings can also be heard. These occurrences of voices link this world with the beyond”. With a team of researchers from the fields of religious studies, history, literary studies, ethnology, theology, and sociology, she has investigated the medium of the “voice” in Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, and other religions.

The team has found in numerous sources both human voices that arise during religious performances, as well as incorporeal voices that come to the hearer from the outside, and that are often attributed to gods or spirits. One example of the latter is to be found in St. Augustine’s conversion narrative, the Confessions,

when he hears a voice calling on him to read (“take up and read”). The idea that sacred texts are revealed by God is also based on the idea of a voice heard by the writer: Christian art has depicted this, for example, as a scene between angel and evangelist. Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf again: “But ‘inner voices’ are also seen as connecting people to a divine sphere, as in the idea of a ‘voice of the inner light’, as arose among the Quakers in seventeenth-century England.”

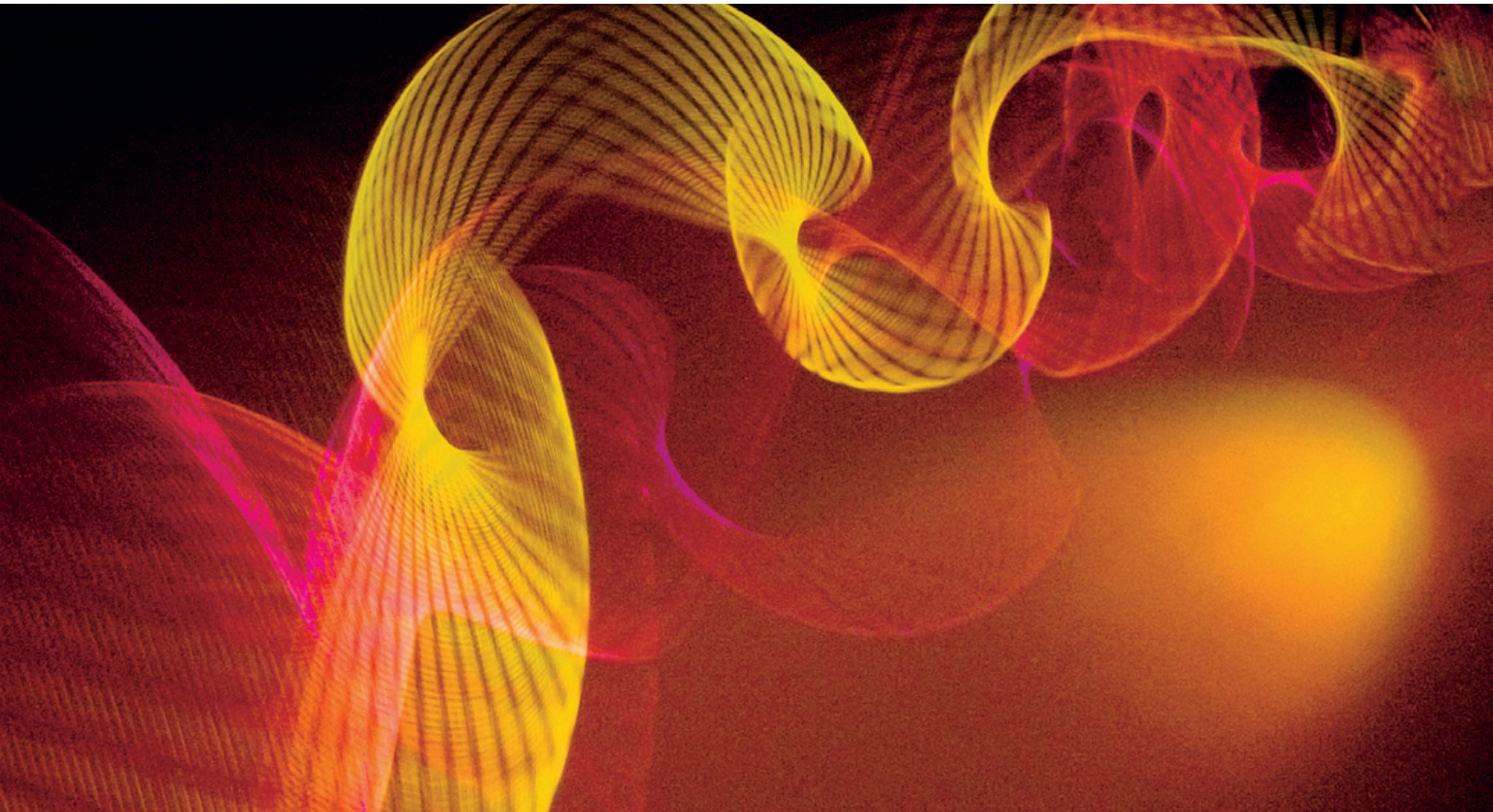
How human voices function in religious rituals is made clear in the example of the Muslim Sufi shrine of Baba Ghor in India: pilgrims suffering from forms of possession bring the demonic spirits torturing them into dialogue with the spirits of saints – with the help of their own human voices. In this way, the power of the spirits is intended to defeat the demons. Sermons by the Hindu guru Morari Bapu are understood

A Book that Speaks

The findings of the interdisciplinary research project appeared under the title *Stimmen aus dem Jenseits / Voices from Beyond*.

Besides the German and English essays by those involved in the project, the book also includes the sources that they investigated: texts and images, as well as audio and video on an accompanying DVD. “Because a book about the voice must also be able to speak”, says Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf.

Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf (Ed.): *Stimmen aus dem Jenseits / Voices from Beyond. Ein interdisziplinäres Projekt / An Interdisciplinary Project*, Würzburg: Ergon-Verlag 2017.



Audio frequencies: the voice as a medium is characterised by a sound shape that is difficult to apprehend.

by the researchers as part of a “religious soundscape” that creates the feeling of religious community and the experience of the individual not through eye-contact, but through ear-contact.

In different religions, human voices sometimes also interweave with those from the world beyond. Thus, discussions of doctrine between a Hindu guru and his students create a person-to-person connection, while at the same time what he teaches is believed to have divine origins and is conveyed through the sound

of the voice. An interweaving of voices from this world and the world beyond can also be seen in a conversion account from the nineteenth century: words that a schoolteacher from Saxony travelling through the USA first heard inwardly prompted him later to convert to Mormonism when he heard the very same words spoken by a missionary.

For Wagner-Egelhaaf, radio voices and Ingeborg Bachmann’s radio play *Die Zikaden* (The Cicadas) show how voices whose origin is not discernible are also sometimes attri-

buted metaphysical significance and political authority outside the world religions. Media Studies therefore sees a “particular affinity of the radio for metaphysical subjects”.



Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf is Professor of Modern German Literature at the WWU and principal investigator at the Cluster of Excellence, ndlmwe@uni-muenster.de

Music as Key to the Universe

Perhaps no other religious culture has developed such an unbroken link to music as Hinduism, says the religious studies scholar ANNETTE WILKE. Religious texts are hardly ever read silently in Indian Hinduism – they are declaimed, sung, danced, and performed. Sacred texts thereby become sensory realms of experience.



Śiva beats the rhythm of Creation with his hand drum. South Indian bronze, tenth century.

“Language, music, consciousness, and sentience are an inseparable unity”, explains Wilke. Music is defined in terms of its ability to “colour the mind”, i. e. elicit emotions and delight in everybody, and states of deep immersion. One example is the complex concept of Nāda Brahman, with which music in India is often connected. “Behind this is the idea of a ‘Sonic Absolute’ pervading the world and all existence – an ultimate divine reality which can

be sensually experienced in Rāga music”, says the religious studies scholar. This was formulated by the indigenous thirteenth-century music scholar Śārṅgadeva and later musicians. There, “music becomes a key to the non-dual nature of the universe and a pleasant form of yoga, a merging with the divine.”

Nāda Brahman also became popular in Europe and America at the end of the twentieth century, with expressions such as “The World is Sound” and “Sound is God”. “A crucial role in this was played by the 1983 book *The World is*

Sound: Nada Brahma, by jazz historian and New Age propagandist Joachim-Ernst Berendt”, explains Wilke, who is a researcher at the Cluster of Excellence. She refers to the cultural context of Nāda Brahman as a “decidedly sound-centred lifeworld”. The devotional texts are often songs or poetry set to music. “There are many music-making and dancing deities, the goddess Sarasvatī and the great gods Śiva and Kṛṣṇa, which represent the many different religious ideas of sound and music.”

With her study *Sound and Communication*, Annette Wilke has provided a new kind of cultural history of India, one that investigates the linguistic practice and ritual performance of Hindu texts, and that establishes the centrality of sound in religious and profane contexts. In this fundamental work, which is considered groundbreaking in international research on Hinduism, Wilke argues for religious studies to be pursued as a “cultural hermeneutics” that does not limit itself to individual elements such as textual content or ritual, but looks at the cultural context as a whole. “When we Europeans think about texts, we think about the written word, about statements and doctrines, but not about sound or ritual”, says the scholar. Hinduism in contrast is “a culture of performance, in which the primary medium is the spoken and sounding word and not the written text.”

Annette Wilke, Oliver Moebus: *Sound and Communication. An Aesthetic Cultural History of Sanskrit Hinduism*, Berlin, New York: De Gruyter 2011.



Annette Wilke is Professor of Religious Studies at the WWU and project head at the Cluster of Excellence, wilkeann@uni-muenster.de

“Renewal from the Margins of the Church”

The Catholic Church took an epochal step when the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) recognised religious freedom as a human right in the encyclical *Dignitatis humanae*. “After all, the Church had still rejected religious freedom right up until the Council”, explains the social ethicist KARL GABRIEL. Together with CHRISTIAN SPIESS and KATJA WINKLER, he has investigated the reasons for the change in Church doctrine, and concludes that its origins lay not in the Roman centre, but on the margins of the Catholic Church.



The bishops of the Catholic Church assemble for deliberation at St. Peter's Basilica. At the front, the honorary places for the patriarchs of the Eastern Catholic Churches.

“It was like a revolution when, after serious conflicts, the Council did ultimately push its way through to religious freedom on the final day”, recounts Gabriel. But, contrary to the view widespread in scholarship, the change cannot be explained only by the events at the Second Vatican Council. According to the study by Gabriel, Spieß and Winkler, the change in the Church's doctrine only came about when the faithful at the grassroots brought their positive experiences of democracy and civil liberties to Rome. “The considerable plurality and openness among Catholics in clubs and associations, as well as in theology, led the Church to dispense with the use of political force to assert its claim to truth, to recognise the separation of religion and politics, and henceforth to limit itself to being one power in civil society among many.”

The book *Wie fand der Katholizismus zur Religionsfreiheit?* (How did Catholicism Find its Way to Religious Freedom?) meticulously traces the origins of the Council declaration *Dignitatis humanae*, which were characterised by “serious controversies and crises”, explains Gabriel. “An important role was played here by US theology, especially that of the Jesuit John C. Murray, which employed a line of reasoning that was plausible and clever. It presented the shift towards religious freedom not as a break in tradition, but as representing continuity with the tradition of the Church.”

But, for Gabriel, the Council's turn towards religious freedom cannot be attributed to the intervention of the US bishops alone. “Rather, the arguments from the US fell upon fertile ground, which had been prepared for the recognition of religious freedom by many political and social factors.” These included the experiences of Nazism and the Second World War, the codification of human rights, the Cold War and the confrontation between East and West, the role of political Catholicism and of lay Catholicism in general, and the historically unique economic growth following the Second World War.

The study defines the terms “modernity” and “religious freedom”, and provides an overview of research on the subject. The scholarly positions that the study deals with range widely: from the view of Swiss social philosopher Arthur Fridolin Utz that a “break” in Church doctrine is not possible, to the differentiation between the theological and the constitutional levels by the later curial cardinal Walter Kasper, and up to the thesis put forward by constitutional scholar Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde that the Council's decision amounts to a clean break with tradition, to a “Copernican revolution”.

The book is part of the series *Katholizismus zwischen Religionsfreiheit und Gewalt* (Catholicism Between Religious Freedom and Coercion), which also includes four other books edited by the authors: *Die Anerkennung der Religionsfreiheit auf dem Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil* (The Recognition of Religious Freedom at the Second Vatican Council) contains sources on the debates over religious freedom; the anthology *Religionsfreiheit und Pluralismus*

(Religious Freedom and Pluralism) describes the relationship between Catholicism and religious freedom; the book *Religion – Gewalt – Terrorismus* (Religion – Violence – Terrorism) examines religious motives for terrorism and ethical problems in combating it; *Modelle des religiösen Pluralismus* (Models of Religious Pluralism) offers perspectives from history, the sociology of religion, and religious policy on ways of dealing with religious diversity.

A Model for Islam?

Whether the modernisation process undergone by the Roman Catholic Church when it recognised religious freedom can serve as a model today for other religions such as Islam is difficult to answer, believes the social ethicist Karl Gabriel. “One difference lies in the structure of the religious community. Catholic centralism made it possible to decide centrally on a reorientation, and to implement it throughout the entire religious community. Here, centralism paid off in a positive way. This would hardly be possible in less centralised religious communities.” But we can say at the same time: “Religious communities are more likely to connect with the modern constitutional state, with democracy and human rights, when their experiences in democratic states are positive. It would therefore be counterproductive to put pressure on them and force them into a normative modernisation.”

Karl Gabriel, Christian Spieß, Katja Winkler: *Wie fand der Katholizismus zur Religionsfreiheit? Faktoren der Erneuerung der katholischen Kirche* (Katholizismus zwischen Religionsfreiheit und Gewalt, vol. 2) (How did Catholicism Find its Way to Religious Freedom?), Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh 2016.



Karl Gabriel is Emeritus Professor of Social Ethics at the Faculty of Catholic Theology at the WWU and project head at the Cluster of Excellence, karl.gabriel@uni-muenster.de



Christian Spieß is Professor of Christian Social Sciences and head of the Johannes Schasching SJ Institute at the Katholische Privat-Universität Linz. He was research associate at the Cluster of Excellence from 2008–2012, religionundpolitik@uni-muenster.de



Katja Winkler holds a doctorate in Theology and is research associate at the University of Tübingen. She was research associate at the Cluster of Excellence from 2008–2012, religionundpolitik@uni-muenster.de

More than One Catholicism

How did Catholicism find its way to religious freedom? The question sounds innocuous, but it is not. It amounts to an explosive charge in the development of Catholic doctrine, for Rome finally caught up at the Second Vatican Council with what a “cluster of Catholicisms” in other regions were already convinced of, writes the church historian HUBERT WOLF in his commentary on the study by the social ethicists Karl Gabriel, Christian Spieß, and Katja Winkler.

Some theologians hold the view that the doctrine of the Catholic Church does not experience breaks; at most, it witnesses an organic growth, like a tree allowing new shoots to sprout forth from old branches. Corrections are not possible; each and every proposition of the Catholic magisterium remains true for all time. Thus, *Dignitatis*

humanae could not contain anything that contradicted previous doctrines, even if the popes of the nineteenth century condemned freedom of religion and conscience in the most severe terms. In 1832, Pope Gregory XVI even considered it a “pestilential error”.

But other scholars speak openly of a break, of a “Copernican revolution” undergone by the Catholic Church. They see the Council as having been able to reconcile religious truth with individual freedom by drawing on the concept of the person, which had a basis in both theology and natural law. The result of this was that religious freedom was lifted from secular law and placed into the Catholic theory of the state.

In brief, the attempts to construe continuity between Gregory XVI and the Second Vatican Council seem very laboured. Instead, the example of freedom of religion and conscience demonstrates that the doctrine of the Church can change fundamentally – as, indeed, it sometimes must do, too.

And the line of reasoning used at the Second Vatican Council has implications that go even further. The dignity of the human person makes that person a bearer of rights: this is true not only at the level of politics, but also in the Church itself. Thus, attempts were made to codify fundamental “Christian rights” in a *lex ecclesiae fundamentalis* – unfortunately without success.

In their study, Karl Gabriel, Christian Spieß, and Katja Winkler argue that the Catholic Church underwent a process of learning, and they trace the factors underlining this process convincingly. But there is one point that I would like to emphasise even more strongly: even in the nineteenth century, liberal Catholics had already experienced the constitutional state positively, especially in Germany – for example, in Catholic clubs and associations, and in lay Catholicism. Catholicism in the modern period has always been more than what the Curia is advocating at any given moment; it has always been a cluster of Catholicisms. In the nineteenth century, the opponents of civil liberties had gained the upper hand in the Curia. But, with the Second Vatican Council,



The Second Vatican Council convenes in St. Peter's Basilica for deliberation and Mass.

alternative currents prevailed that could also look back on a long tradition, even if it had been rejected by the popes. There were in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries already Catholics and Catholicisms that had found their way to religious freedom. Rome just needed somewhat longer.



Hubert Wolf is Professor of Medieval and Modern Church History in the Faculty of Catholic Theology at the WWU and principal investigator at the Cluster of Excellence, hubert.wolf@uni-muenster.de



The Return of the Gods or the Decline of Religiosity?

In the debate about the role of religion in the modern world, sociologists of religion DETLEF POLLACK and GERGELY ROSTA have produced one of the most comprehensive empirical investigations to date of religious developments in the world since 1945. In this fundamental work, they have identified international patterns of religious change, as well as causal developments that influence religious upswings and declines.

“The present age is experiencing a real proliferation in the field of religion”, explains Detlef Pollack. “Fundamentalist movements are taking hold of highly educated young people, Christians are turning away from their church in the millions, esoteric worldviews are increasingly encountering positive resonance in medicine and science. Shedding light on the patterns and factors of change can help sort out what has become a confusing religious field.” To this end, the authors do not aim at a universal theory such as the thesis of secularisation; rather, they offer theoretical elements that can be combined in various ways in research.

According to the authors, factors that negatively influence the vitality of religion include a high standard of living, a high degree of individualisation, a wide variety of consumerist and entertainment offerings, and a high degree of cultural and ideological diversity. On the other hand, there are positive effects on the vitality of religion when religious identities merge with political, national, or economic interests. “At the same time, there is potential for conflict here, especially when small, aggressive religious groups are involved that exploit this potential for conflict for themselves and are able to become more appealing at the expense of religious majorities”, says Pollack.

Key Results of the Study

Functional Diffusion: When religious identities merge with political, economic, or national interests, this often helps to strengthen religion and the church. The study shows this connection in the example of the US. There, not only are rituals such as collective prayer in Congress and the veneration of the American flag part of a civil religion, but so too are the infusing of military actions with religious significance and the view of the American nation as “God’s chosen people”. These kinds of connection between religion and politics help to anchor religion in the life and society of the US.

Functional Differentiation: Religious ties frequently weaken, however, when the political, economic, or national goals that had been pursued through religious means have been achieved. This is true of most countries in Western Europe in the decades after 1945. In Germany, after the end of the national, social, and moral catastrophe of Nazism, church services were full with people. Religious and non-religious interests united: the churches were a place of social order, moral orientation, and political direction. A few years later, however, the church had become for many an authoritarian institution that citizens valuing autonomy should free themselves from.

Present-Day and Historical Analyses

The study *Religion and Modernity* paints a detailed panoramic portrait of religious change in various societies. Present-day analyses are supplemented by historical perspectives. “Many socio-religious constellations can only be understood in the context of their previous history”, explains Pollack.

The researchers undertake case studies for Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, Poland, Russia, the US, South Korea and Brazil, and draw generalisable conclusions from a comparison between Eastern and Western Europe, the US, and Asian and South American countries. Numerous representative datasets from different periods are included: the World Values Survey (WVS), International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), Allgemeine Bevölkerungsumfrage der Sozialwissenschaften (ALLBUS), Religionsmonitor der Bertelsmann Stiftung, General Social Survey (GSS), Pew Forum, and church and state statistics.

Functional Absorption: But when religion and politics become too close, there is often a negative effect on the ability of religion to act as an integrative force. In the Netherlands, the cultures of denominational groups, which were a dominant feature of life for decades through their influence on politics, social welfare work, university, and school, collapsed like a house of cards after 1950. This was because, while occupying the secular institutions, they also became dependent on them, thus cutting themselves off from their own religious motives.

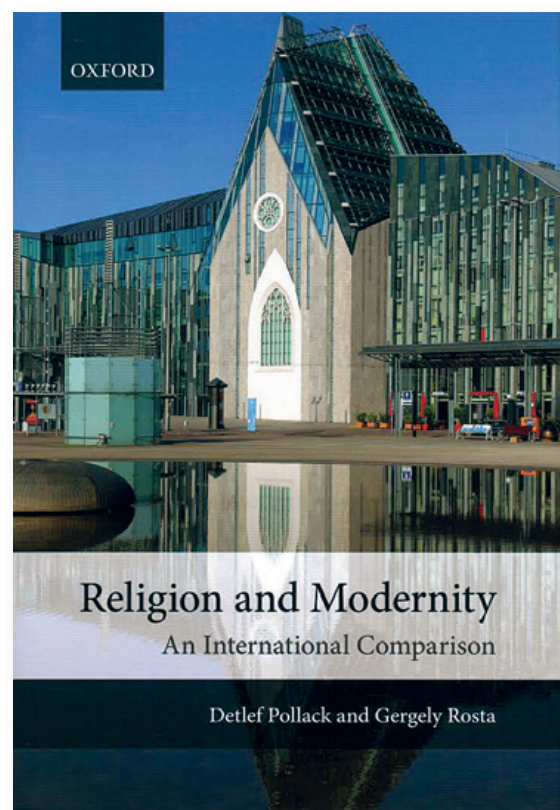
Existential Uncertainty: The influence of existential crises such as poverty, war, and natural catastrophes on individual religiosity cannot be determined clearly. Large analyses based on comparisons among countries have concluded that the level of religiosity is higher in states with sharp social inequalities, a low standard of living, and systematic corruption than in affluent societies with pronounced existential security. But, in many regions and periods, it has been predominantly the economically lower strata of the population that are particularly estranged from the church.

Communalisation: Religious ideas gain persuasive power when an individual shares them with others, for example by taking part in a church service, and experiences ritual and institutional support. But when the institutional pressure on the individual becomes too great and churches are seen as being patronising, the openness to religion decreases.

Individualisation: The more value that people place on self-determination, enjoyment of life, and personal fulfilment, the greater their distance is from the church. Although the majority of people in Germany believe that they can be individually religious without a church, this cannot be substantiated statistically. Very few people live out the Christian faith without an ecclesiastical institution and community. Highly individual forms of esoteric spirituality outside of church and Christianity often fluctuate strongly and are very unstable.

Cultural and Religious Diversity: In contrast to the frequently maintained assumption that competition is good for the vitality of religious communities, more religious plurality often results in a decrease in the intensity of religious life. In denominationally cohesive countries such as Poland, Italy, Ireland, and Denmark, religion has a higher social significance than in the religiously plural Netherlands or the UK.

Conflict and the Diaspora Effect: In some circumstances, religious diversity can also stoke religious passions, namely when minorities feel challenged by the majority. The greater commitment of minorities can be observed, for example, among Protestants surrounded by a Catholic leaning majority, or among Evangelicals in the context of a Protestant national church.



Religion in the Modern Consumerist and Entertainment Culture: The more work-related and non-work-related opportunities (for example consumerist and entertainment offerings) exist, the more people's attention shifts from religious to secular activities. The weakening of religious ties is often the result not of a conscious decision, but more of a subtle, scarcely considered process of redefining value preferences.

Detlef Pollack, Gergely Rosta: *Religion and Modernity. An International Comparison*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2017.

In 2015, the book was published in German by Campus Verlag under the title *Religion in der Moderne*; in 2016, a special edition was published by the *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung* (Federal Agency for Civic Education).



Detlef Pollack is Professor of Sociology of Religion at the WWU and speaker of the Cluster of Excellence, pollack@uni-muenster.de



Gergely Rosta is Associate Professor of Sociology at the Catholic Pázmány Péter University in Budapest. From 2009–2012 and 2016–2017, he was research associate at the Cluster of Excellence, religionundpolitik@uni-muenster.de



Quoted from ...

Religion and Modernity, by Detlef Pollack and Gergely Rosta

The abandonment of the church takes place here not as the result of a rational cost/benefit analysis, but in practice, silently, without reflection and almost automatically, as an act of voting with the feet that simply do not want to start to move. The silent nature of this farewell explains why people's distancing from the churches is barely motivated by any criticism of the church and its actions [...], why it is influenced more by external factors than by what the church actually does [...], why the churches surrender so meekly to these movements of rejection [...], and why the decline of the church is something of an inevitable process (p. 420).



SOCIOLOGIST OF RELIGION JOSÉ CASANOVA | “As long as we maintain this concept of a single cosmopolitan modernity as a general process of secular differentiation, indeed as a normative global project, we are compelled to characterize all forms of religion we cannot accept as our own as threatening ‘fundamentalism’ and we become ourselves unwittingly partisans in a supposedly worldwide secular-religious conflict [...]”

From the essay “Public Religions Revisited”, in: Hermann-Josef Große Kracht, Christian Spieß (Eds.): *Christentum und Solidarität* (Christianity and Solidarity), pp. 336 f. Prof. Dr. José Casanova talked with members of the Cluster of Excellence about religion in modernity on 16 April 2010 (in the photo with political scientist Ulrich Willems).



Visitors to the Cluster of Excellence ...

SOCIOLOGIST OF RELIGION PETER L. BERGER | “How was secularization theory wrong? Basically, it was a very Eurocentric enterprise, an extrapolation from the European situation. [...] In retrospect, I think that we made a category mistake: We confused secularization with pluralization, secularity with plurality. It turns out that modernity does not necessarily produce a decline of religion; it does necessarily produce a deepening process of pluralization – a historically unprecedented situation in which more and more people live amid competing beliefs, values and lifestyles.”

From Peter L. Berger: *Nach dem Niedergang der Säkularisierungstheorie* (After the Demise of Secularisation Theory), p. 2. Prof. Dr. Peter L. Berger (1929–2017) spoke at the opening of the *Centrum für Religion und Moderne* (Center for Religion and Modernity) on 7 May 2012 (in the photo with sociologist of religion Detlef Pollack).

“There is no longer a Christian Germany.”

Politics and the church in Germany remain frozen in the 1950s when it comes to religious policies, observes the contemporary historian THOMAS GROßBÖLTING. The two major Christian churches are given preference by the state in line with the model in place then, even though a large number of other religions have appeared in the meantime, and there are many people who are not religious. In his book *Losing Heaven*, Großbölting presents the first historical synopsis of religion and politics in Germany since 1945.

“Christian congregations are shrinking, private religiosity is on the decline, and public life has almost entirely lost its Christian character”, reports Großbölting. According to his study, today only about two-thirds of the German population belong to a church; in around 1950, it was 95%. Participation in church life is continuously declining. “Christianity has become merely one provider among many for providing meaning and structuring Sundays”, he says. His book traces the dramatic changes, and elucidates their

consequences for religious groups in Germany today and for the community as a whole.

According to Großbölting, the close cooperation between church and state that is still in place today has its basis in the 1949 Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany: “At a time when society was predominantly Christian and a new spiritual beginning was sought after Nazism, this interrelationship functioned extremely well for politics and churches.” In the 1950s, says Großbölting, the

churches prescribed ideals and ways of life for many spheres such as family, sexuality, education, but also for political projects. But this changed rapidly. “What was then still a moral benchmark”, Großbölting says, “was two decades later just one position among many.”

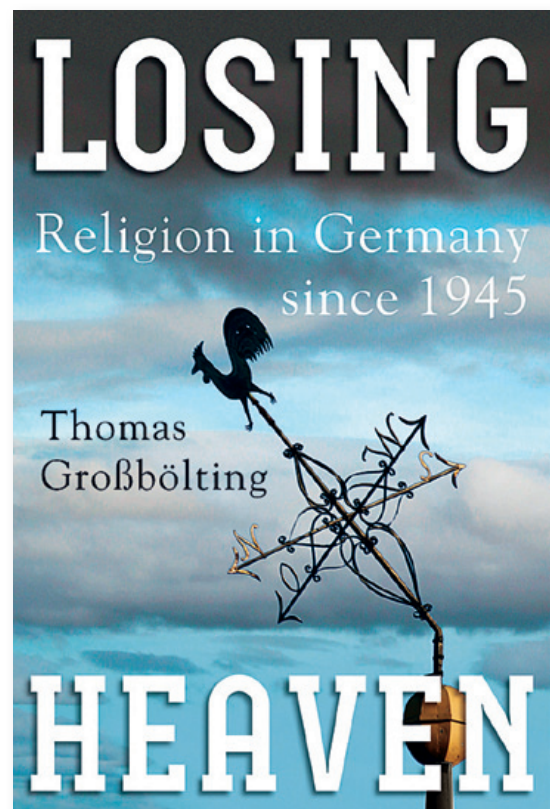
“Today there is no longer a Christian Germany”, Großbölting stresses. “Instead, the number of conflicts over religious policy is on the rise.” There are many examples of this: the discussion about the turning away

Losing Heaven

In his detailed study, contemporary historian Thomas Großbölting traces religious change in the former Federal Republic, in East Germany and in the reunified Germany. He traces developments from the ideal of re-Christianisation after 1945, through conflicts over sex, family, and authority, as well as the crisis of the church in the 1960s, pluralisation from the 1970s, the special case of East Germany, and up to the growth of Islam and Judaism in Germany. Großbölting analyses three factors in particular: religiosity in practice, the relationship between religion and society, and change within the church, with regard, for example, to theology and church congresses (*Kirchentage*).

Thomas Großbölting: *Losing Heaven. Religion in Germany since 1945*, New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books 2016.

In 2013, the book was published in German by Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht under the title *Der verlorene Himmel*; in 2016, a special edition was published by the *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung* (Federal Agency for Civic Education).



by two Catholic clinics of a woman who had been raped, the right of church officials to go on strike, the circumcision debate, and the distribution of the Qur'an by Salafists. "Politics and church are notorious for underestimating the need for action. They only become aware of changes when they emerge as problems."

A far-sighted politics that treats all religious groups equally is not in sight. "Instead, what dominates is a system that arose in the post-war period and that incompletely separates church and state", says Großbölting. "Much of this system has been preserved to the present day: church tax, religious lessons in state schools, and the presence of church representatives on broadcasting committees."

"Religious policies are not drawn up on the drawing board of political planning; rather, they are the result of arbitrary

constellations of power and politics", he explains. This is especially true of the church article of the Basic Law: "By dealing hesitantly with the question of the relationship between church and state, and resorting to old formulas of the Weimar Republic as a compromise", the members of the Parliamentary Council that drew up the Basic Law aimed when it came to religious policy at finding continuity and avoiding conflict. Given these "hesitant origins" of the system of religious policy, there is little reason to see the present-day relationship between church and state "as especially sacrosanct or worth protecting".



Thomas Großbölting is Professor of Modern and Contemporary History at the WWU and principal investigator at the Cluster of Excellence, thomas.grossboelting@uni-muenster.de



Quoted from ...

Losing Heaven, by Thomas Großbölting

For state and society, growing religious pluralism means that "business as usual" is not an option when it comes to the privileged position of the Protestant and Catholic Churches – if this means ignoring other religious communities and the concerns of the non-religious. State policies on religion can improve on their past performance by treating the religious communities equally and thus justly. At present this is mainly an issue for Islam in Germany. It is not just in media reports, which frequently present it as a foreign threat associated with jihadism, that Islam finds itself hitting a glass ceiling (p. 304).

Religion and Climate Politics

by **KATHARINA GLAAB** | Religious actors are working intensely at an international level to champion political solutions to climate change. Interreligious communities, as well as Buddhist, Muslim, and especially Christian organisations such as Bread for the World, the Lutheran World Federation, and the Vatican, regularly contribute to climate policy. They fight for ethical dimensions and criteria of justice to be taken into account, as the research project *Religiöse Akteure in der Global Governance* (Religious Actors in Global Governance) at the Cluster of Excellence has shown. The example of the negotiations for the Paris Agreement of the United Nations in 2015 shows that the degree of organisation of religious involvement is increasing, and interreligious coalitions are growing. The religious actors organised themselves into the interdenominational "Interfaith Liaison Committee" network, which is in dialogue with the Secretariat of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. In addition, many religious actors cooperate with other NGOs, for example in the Climate Action Network. The climate policies of the religious actors rely more on emotional than on technical language. Moreover, they prioritise working in institutions over public protest – even though they share in substance some of the reservations of NGOs that act in more radical ways, for example towards market-based solutions to climate change.



Katharina Glaab is Associate Professor of Global Change and International Relations at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU). From 2012–2015, she was research associate at the Cluster of Excellence on the project *Religiöse Akteure in der Global Governance* (Religious Actors in Global Governance) under the direction of Political Science Professor Doris Fuchs, religionundpolitik@uni-muenster.de

“Religious policy should no longer be neglected.”

Whether teaching Islam at school or the issue of circumcision, the headscarf debate or the court decision on the crucifix, the growing diversity of religions in Germany has given rise to conflicts. Political scientist ULRICH WILLEMS appeals to the political parties to stop neglecting the field of religious policy: “We have reached a high degree of polarisation, something that has long been predictable.” It is high time now for the parties – and the population – to engage in an open and objective debate on the role of the Christian churches, Islam, and other religious minorities, as well as those without any religion.

“Politics on the federal and state level is reacting to the growing religious diversity only slowly and haltingly, although many of the current problems to do with religious policy are caused by the historical proximity of the state to the Catholic and Protestant Churches”, says Willems. The headscarf legislation, for example, “intensified rather than solved the problems”. Conflicts have been left to the courts, which has led to significant pressure, as shown by the debates about the burqa, the kosher and halal slaughter of animals, and the building of mosques. “We cannot yet talk of a systematic and comprehensive religious policy to ensure equal religious freedom for Muslims.”

In Willems’ assessment, the population is insufficiently prepared for the growing religious diversity and the necessary reforms in this policy field. He sees this as resulting from the neglect of religious policy and as leading to considerable uncertainties, which are then exploited by populist forces such as the *Alternative für Deutschland* (Alternative for Germany; AfD). “Only when the population develops an appreciation of the reality of religious diversity can processes of weighing up the rights of religious and non-religious majorities and minorities succeed, for example concerning religious prescriptions on clothing or holidays”, says Willems. Otherwise, the Christian and non-religious majority will perceive the demands made by the Muslim minority as



The cross has been removed from the courtroom of the former Düsseldorf regional court.

attempts to claim special rights or as posing a threat to the secular constitutional order. “Conversely, minorities feel that they are not accepted, and that they are defined by majority traditions.”

Politics would be well advised to initiate nationwide processes of discussion about general and concrete questions of religious policy, as has been successfully done in Canada. “What is crucial are the kinds of procedures and forums in which debates and decisions on religious policy can be organised in the future”, says Willems. The German Islam Conference in Berlin was a beginning; and further forums, including at the state and municipal level, should now follow.

Willems concludes: “We need informed and nuanced conversations about whether the model of close cooperation between church and state is still suited to granting equal religious freedom to religious majorities and minorities; or about how the model needs to be altered to redress the discrimination against the non-religious and Muslims.”



Ulrich Willems is Professor of Political Science at the WWU and principal investigator at the Cluster of Excellence, ulrich.willems@uni-muenster.de

What is ... Religious Policy?

by Ulrich Willems | Religious policy refers to all those political processes and decisions that govern the individual practice of religion and its collective forms of expression, as well as the public status of religious communities and religious symbols. Because of its high degree of juridification, this policy area is marked by competition between political and judicial regulation. At the same time, it has become heavily politicised: Muslims demand access to the same public resources as the churches, and a public critical of religion criticises religious practices such as the wearing of headscarves and circumcision. Behind the demands on religious policy are profound changes to the religious landscape: immigration has increased the variety of religions; Islam has become the third largest religious community in Germany. The constant process of dechurchification since the 1960s and Germany’s reunification have increased the number of those without a religion. At the same time, religious individualisation is on the rise. This is expressed in the weakening social and moral power of the churches to shape people’s lives, and in the blending of religious traditions.

The Political Influence of the Churches

Despite advancing secularisation, the Christian churches in Germany are constantly involved in political debates and processes. “They have made use for decades of professional political instruments, and are also accepted by non-religious actors in ethical, socio-political and educational debates”, says Catholic theologian and sociologist Judith Könemann. In discussions about human dignity, medical ethics, and immigration, the churches have succeeded by using predominantly secular arguments, as Könemann’s analyses of media reports on political statements made by the churches (1970–2004) have shown. “The sources show how much the churches seek to help shape politics and society. But only the ninth most

frequent argument, which makes reference to Jesus and God, is explicitly religious. Otherwise, arguments are presented that are also put forward by secular forces: the protection of life, human dignity, social and legal measures.” Political scientist Christiane Frantz has supplemented the studies that appeared under the title *Religiöse Interessenvertretung* (Representing Religious Interests) at the municipal level: her qualitative interviews with local politicians connected to the church have shown that they barely see any conflict between political and religious interests. “Rather, they see it as their task to shape local politics in such a way that Christian interests benefit.” Christians are in any case more frequently and strongly involved

in local politics than other citizens, even in religiously weak East German regions.

Judith Könemann, Anna-Maria Meuth, Christiane Frantz, Max Schulte: *Religiöse Interessenvertretung. Kirchen in der Öffentlichkeit – Christen in der Politik* (Representing Religious Interests: Churches in the Public Sphere – Christians in Politics), Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh 2015.



Christiane Frantz and **Judith Könemann** are Professors of Political Science and Catholic Theology at the WWU and project heads in the Cluster of Excellence, christiane.frantz@uni-muenster.de, j.koenemann@uni-muenster.de

PORTRAIT



“I can reach young Muslims in Germany and other countries.”



It is sometimes enough to drive one to despair. For twenty years, Islam scholar THOMAS BAUER has been working hard to create a nuanced image of Islamic culture, writing books and articles, giving interviews, and speaking with politicians. And then what happens? Germany is suddenly talking about “barbaric hordes of Muslim men gang-raping women”, or about whether politicians of the *Alternative für Deutschland* (Alternative for Germany; AfD) are guilty of hate speech in their tweets.

But fortunately for him – and for his research – Bauer has a tendency not to lose hope. “I build upon the force of the arguments”, says the 56-year-old about the perception of Islam in Germany. He will not be able to banish the – deliberately – wrong ideas held by people with prejudices. But his depictions of the enormous cultural diversity in the tradition of Islam find a sympathetic audience among young, educated Muslims in Germany and other countries – among those, “looking for a third way between a rigid, conservative Islam and a superimposed, liberal Islam that seeks to break with all traditions.”

And fortunately – again! – Bauer has developed a concept for his literary-studies view of “a different history of Islam”, a concept that has become a hermeneutic key for understanding Islamic culture better and that has been repeatedly taken up in a short space of time in cultural studies: namely, “tolerance of ambiguity”, by which Bauer means the ability or lack of ability of a person or a society, “to endure equivocality, to allow conflicting values and truths to stand side-by-side without insisting on the validity of one’s own convictions”.

Bauer adopted the term “tolerance of ambiguity” from psychology, and transferred it to the level of cultural mentalities. It occurred to him in dealing with a thousand years of Islamic art and poetry that Islam had cultivated a virtual “relish” for ambiguity and diversity in all basic realms of life – politics and religion, art and jurisprudence, family and sexuality – up until the nineteenth century. Restriction, rigidity, and strict dogmatism only arose when Islamic societies came into contact with “the West”,

and believed that they needed to assert themselves with their own identity to counter the supposedly superior other. “It can be shown, for example, that homophobia – supposedly a timeless characteristic of Islamic masculinity – first arose as a reaction to Victorian prudery”, says Bauer. “It allowed a tradition of homoerotic love poetry that was more than a thousand years old to lapse into silence in the Arab world of the 1830s.”

In his book *Die Kultur der Ambiguität* (The Culture of Ambiguity), Bauer masterfully traces these kinds of developments and connections. His work was awarded the Leibniz Prize in 2013 by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (German Research Foundation; DFG); Bauer’s colleagues at the Cluster of Excellence see his work as one of the most important catalysts in the entire research group for stimulating discussions with a broad social impact.

Bauer himself, it would seem, also takes pleasure in life’s ambiguities. “He is the artist among our professors”, jokes Viola van Melis, Director of the Cluster of Excellence’s Centre for Research Communication. Bauer lives not only for classical Arabic literature, but also for coins and music. He clearly takes great pleasure in talking about initiating many song recitals and the lecture series “Music and Religion” in Münster. “That is a card I keep up my sleeve as a scholar of Islam”, says Bauer, who in 2012 was admitted into the North Rhine-Westphalian Academy of Sciences, Humanities and the Arts. In addition to many lecture tours, visits to all the important German opera houses have helped fill Bauer’s German railway card with abundant loyalty points. The Nuremberg native has discovered that there

Fig. (left): Arabist Thomas Bauer (arabist@uni-muenster.de) travels frequently to conferences and panel discussions, interviews and talks with politicians in order to relate “a different history of Islam” in scholarship, politics, and the media.

are twelve musical venues close enough to Münster for him to attend performances without staying overnight.

But the opera repertoire since the late eighteenth century is one example of the constructed, picturesque, and also condescending and discriminatory, ideas present in the “Occident” about “the Orient”, “the Musselmen” and their culture. Osmin and Bassa Selim in Mozart’s *Entführung aus dem Serail* (The Abduction from the Seraglio), harem ladies, eunuchs and choirs of Janissaries, coffee cantatas, and rondo alla turca – can someone like Bauer, who knows so much more about the subject than the librettists and composers, endure all this? No problem, he says and laughs. Peter Cornelius’ *Barbier von Bagdad* (Barber of Baghdad) is even his favourite among the genre operas – with its material from the “One Thousand and One Nights”. Bauer even recently reviewed the work for a guidebook, calling it “probably the most caricature-free of all the Orient operas”.

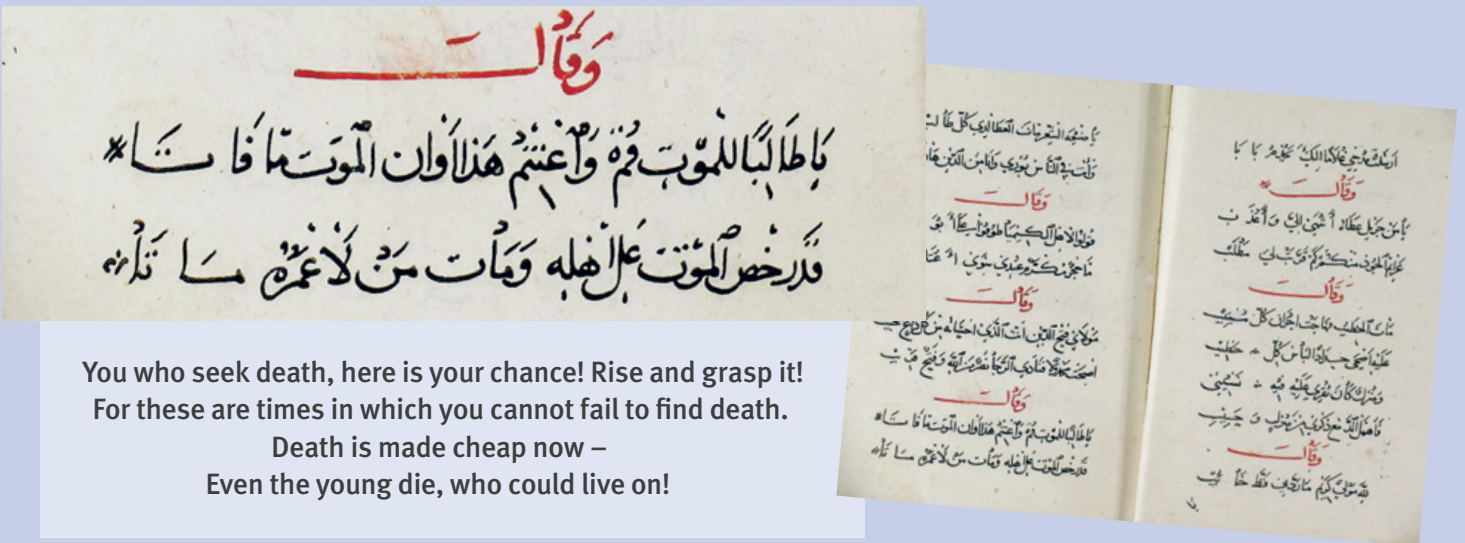
It is the changing clichés and (hostile) images that also give Bauer hope that, with patience and perseverance, persuasion may be possible – and that not only the majority society but also Muslims themselves might learn about the richness of their tradition. He undertook the first institutional attempts in 2002, two years after his appointment to the University of Münster, by founding the Centre of Religious Studies, whose director he remained until 2005, and which was one of the springboards for the Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics”. The Institute for Arabic

and Islamic Studies has also grown continuously since Bauer became director in 2000. He also helped in setting up the Centre for Islamic Theology (CIT) at the University.

A different form of enlightenment regarding the cultural diversity of Islam is represented by another of his projects in Münster. Bauer and his team are working on an edition of the work of the popular Mamluk-period poet Ibrahim al-Mi‘mar (d. 1348). His *Diwan*, a collection of highly erotic, sensual poems bursting with life, is completely unknown today even in Arabic regions and, in Bauer’s opinion, could not “appear in a single country there, with the possible exception of Tunisia.” The edition consists of a textual-critical comparison of the surviving manuscripts and a commentary.

Bauer also follows current social developments passionately. One of his diagnoses is that there has been an increasing loss of tolerance of ambiguity in all realms of life – up to and including art. The reproach that scholars in the humanities have abandoned their former function of “public intellectuals” rankles him. And he is therefore all the more committed to working with the Cluster of Excellence to communicate about scholarship in the humanities. Wherever the opportunity presents itself, he shares his expertise. And word has long since spread in university and media contexts that Thomas Bauer has something to say – and he says it clearly, comprehensibly, and with humour.

Joachim Frank, Chief Correspondent DuMont Mediengruppe



You who seek death, here is your chance! Rise and grasp it!
 For these are times in which you cannot fail to find death.
 Death is made cheap now –
 Even the young die, who could live on!

Arabist Thomas Bauer and his team have prepared over the last few years an edition of the forgotten poems of Ibrahim al-Mi‘mar. In his poem “Plague”, the poet sings of the illness to which he would soon succumb, in 1348.

The Worldly God



Who gives rulers and states their power over people? God does, it was believed in the Middle Ages. This Christian idea was then secularised by the political theorists of the modern era: the state draws its legitimacy either from the people or from reason, independent of any otherworldly God. Since Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), the state also acquires “divine” attributes. This development culminates with the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), for whom, according to the philosopher LUDWIG SIEP, the state itself becomes a “worldly god”. This led to the accusation against Hegel that he “deified the state”, something that threatened human rights. In this interview, Ludwig Siep explains why we should nonetheless still read what Hegel has to say on the relationship between state and religion.



Rational and “divine”: the modern state should use its great power to protect and rule; title page of Thomas Hobbes’ *Leviathan* (1651).

“The actuality of the heavenly kingdom is the state itself”, writes Hegel. No one would say this today. Hegel assumes that Christian doctrine, especially Enlightenment Protestantism, is consummated in the constitutional state. The state is a manifestation of the absolute, of the “absolute unmoved end in itself”: an attribute traditionally assigned to God. The sovereignty of the state is a necessary demand of rational law; the state does not gain this sovereignty from any authority superior to it.

How does Hegel arrive at this idea? He sees the state not only as offering legal protection and a minimal social safety net, but also as competing

with religion in endowing life with meaning. It must be worthwhile to the citizen to subordinate his or her private interests to the state, no less than to the church.

What kind of relationship, then, does the state have to religion? Hegel sees no conflict between the two when religion is in harmony with the rational state order and its justification. It is then even an important pillar of the state, but the state must have legal supervision of the churches.

How modern is Hegel’s state? Hegel assigns the state the task of protecting basic rights and religious freedom, and of stabilising a market society.

Hegel’s state is to that extent modern. “Absolute” in the Hegelian sense does not also mean “totalitarian” – that is, it does not necessarily mean oppressing people. From today’s perspective, though, Hegel does assign citizens insufficient rights of defence. He believes that a citizen must be prepared to sacrifice his life for the state, and not only in order to defend it.

How does looking at Hegel help us today? The secular state is challenged today by religious fanaticism and global economic forces. Analysing Hegel shows that the constitutional state should not allow itself to be relativised and exploited, but neither need it provide absolute meaning. If religious communities affirm human rights and accept the neutral state, then the state has no need for a civil-religious aura.

Siep, Ludwig: *Der Staat als irdischer Gott. Genese und Relevanz einer Hegelschen Idee* (The State as a Worldly God: Genesis and Relevance of a Hegelian Idea), Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2015.



Ludwig Siep is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the WWU and project head at the Cluster of Excellence, siep@uni-muenster.de

Crises of Tradition

How do we justify our norms in morality and law today? How do we judge ethically sensitive questions such as abortion, assisted dying, and biomedical innovations, as well as social innovations like “marriage for all” and homosexual couples being parents? Whereas arguments were based on religion in pre-modern times, the grounding of norms has become radically secularised today. Legal philosopher THOMAS GUTMANN researches “normative modernity” at the Cluster of Excellence; that is, the way that we justify norms today – and especially when they challenge traditional values. In an age when social and economic processes take place beyond the reach of citizens, Gutmann seeks to preserve “refuges of individual freedom”.

The essential building blocks of normative modernity were shaped within a Christian theological framework, explains Thomas Gutmann. These include the ideas of the equality of all people, of the person and his or her dignity, and of justice. “And yet the specifically Christian content of these concepts has completely disappeared from law”, says Gutmann. “Or, more precisely, it has been utterly transformed or removed. Questions of law are decided today in a field no longer touched by theology.”

At the same time, he says, our expectations in terms of justification have changed: “We demand good and sound reasons today when someone denies us equality or freedom.” The “logic of equal freedom” has to prevail against discrimination based on religious and other traditional ideas of “naturalness”. “This results in conflicts that generally follow a two-stage dramaturgy – I call these ‘crises of tradition’.”

When groups of citizens demand the same rights, then old norms and practices come under pressure to justify themselves. If this pressure becomes so great that they lose their claim to validity, public discourses generally then fall back initially on “scientific” arguments. “When people in the US argued about non-heterosexual couples raising children, opponents argued that gay and bisexual people



were less suited to parenthood than heterosexuals – a thesis that is dressed up as a scientific finding, but that is without an empirical basis”, explains Gutmann.

“When this ammunition is spent and the ‘scientific’ line of reasoning has not been able to win the argument, then the second and final stage in the crisis of tradition sees the playing of the normative card. Certainties of faith are invoked once again that simply demand discrimination against specific ways of life, such as that of homosexuality.” But this quickly comes into conflict with the constitution and the principle of equal freedom. Thomas Gutmann thus sees little chance of resisting the logic of non-discrimination in constitutional states.

Even though humanity has developed religious systems of meaning over millennia, Gutmann sees one advance as having first come about in Immanuel Kant’s idea of creating a legal order that is based on equal freedom and equal respect. Gutmann: “I think that this idea is as good and true now as it was in the eighteenth century, and that it’s worth continuing to pursue this project.”



Thomas Gutmann is Professor of Civil Law, Philosophy of Law, and Medical Law at the WWU and principal investigator at the Cluster of Excellence, t.gutmann@uni-muenster.de

Fig.: Depiction of the religious justification of norms in the pre-modern period: “God writes the Ten Commandments for Moses on Mount Sinai on two Tablets of Stone”, Joseph von Führich, 1835 (detail).

Religion in Court

Debates in court about crucifixes in schools, the teaching of religion and ethics, and the kosher and halal slaughter of animals are also about the definition of religion. “Judges determine in cases of conflict what counts as religion under the basic right to religious freedom – and what doesn’t”, says religious studies scholar Astrid Reuter. “Whatever they decide, their judgement stakes out the range of possibilities for a religious way of life. At the same time, a legal judgement can initiate reflection among the faithful about the religious character of specific cultural practices, and thus influence the religious way of life and identity formation.”

How law influences religious cultures can also be seen in the processes of institutionalisation undergone by Islam in Western Europe. “Muslims in France make different demands for recognition than in Germany because the legal constellation and the legal culture differ”, says Reuter. A dispute over whether Muslim women teachers should be allowed to cover their heads during class would be just as unthinkable in France, with its principle of *laïcité*, as the German debate about granting Islamic organisations a status under public law.

Astrid Reuter: *Religion in der verrechtlichten Gesellschaft. Rechtskonflikte und öffentliche Kontroversen um Religion als Grenzarbeiten am religiösen Feld* (Religion in a Juridified Society: Legal Conflicts and Public Controversies over Religion as Boundary Work in the Religious Field), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2014.



Astrid Reuter holds a postdoctoral degree in Religious Studies. The executive coordinator of WWU’s Center for Religion and Modernity is designated principal investigator at the Cluster of Excellence, astrid.reuter@uni-muenster.de

Optimised Genes

Interventions in the human genome that do not serve therapeutic purposes, but rather the improvement of healthy people, are permitted in Germany under current law, as soon as research finds safe ways to achieve this. This is the conclusion that the law scholar Lioba Welling has reached. “An absolute prohibition on genetic ‘enhancement’ cannot be justified legally, since the process does not violate any constitutional rights”, explains Welling in her pioneering study. “Many people harbour the desire for genetic improvements in the hope of achieving beauty, health and success.” Medicine, says Welling, cannot yet fulfil such desires. But research is moving quickly, and society should be prepared.

“Should it decide on a legal ban, then it will not be able to draw on any religious arguments”, says Welling. These could include the argument that the human genome is inviolable or that humans cannot be their own creators. “The neutral constitutional state cannot admit any religious or other types of particularist arguments that are not accepted by a section of the pluralistic public. It must stay out of the fight over worldviews.”

Lioba Welling: *Genetisches Enhancement. Grenzen der Begründungsressourcen des säkularen Rechtsstaates?* (Genetic Enhancement: Limits of the Resources of Justification Available to the Secular State?), Berlin: Springer 2014.



Lioba Welling is a judge in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia and received her doctorate in 2013 after completing her dissertation under the supervision of legal philosopher Professor Thomas Gutmann at the Cluster of Excellence from 2010–2013, religionundpolitik@uni-muenster.de



Visitors to the Cluster of Excellence ...

LAW SCHOLAR ERNST-WOLFGANG BÖCKENFÖRDE | “The liberal, secularised state lives from preconditions that it cannot itself guarantee. [...] On the one hand, it can only exist as a liberal state when the freedom it grants its citizens regulates itself from within [...]. On the other hand, it cannot seek to guarantee these internal regulating powers of its own accord, that is to say with the means of legal coercion and authoritative prohibition, without surrendering its liberal character [...]”

From Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde: *Staat, Gesellschaft, Freiheit* (State, Society, Freedom), p. 60. The Cluster of Excellence held a symposium in 2010 with and about Prof. Dr. Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde on the occasion of his eightieth birthday.

LAW SCHOLAR DIETER GRIMM | “The free unfolding of religious self-conceptions can take place under conditions of religious heterogeneity only when any claim to universal social validity is rejected and at the same time the state safeguards this boundary. [...] For this reason, the secular constitutional state is an achievement that must not be sacrificed in the newly ignited battle against it.”

From the article “Nach dem Karikaturenstreit: Brauchen wir eine neue Balance zwischen Pressefreiheit und Religionschutz?” (After the caricature controversy: Do we need a new balance between freedom of the press and the protection of religion?), in: *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 133/6 (2008), p. 592. Prof. Dr. Dieter Grimm spoke at the opening of the Cluster of Excellence on 5 December 2008 on *Religion im säkularen Verfassungsstaat* (Religion in the secular constitutional state).

Fighting Over the Foreskin

The circumcision of underage boys is punishable as criminal battery – this was the decision of the Cologne state court in May 2012, and it triggered an emotional debate in Germany on circumcision. Muslim and Jewish representatives saw their religious freedom as being under attack; paediatricians highlighted the risks of the procedure; and, in most surveys, more people were against the circumcision of underage boys than in favour. The *Bundestag* passed a law in December 2012 that clearly stated – against the opinion of the Cologne state court – that parents could validly consent to the circumcision of boys carried out *lege artis* by competent specialists. Scholars from every field of the Cluster of Excellence had their say in the debate, including the criminal justice scholar BIJAN FATEH-MOGHADAM, whose 2010 study was one of those used by the *Bundestag* in drafting the law and who sets out his argumentation below in this essay.

Parents who have their sons circumcised according to Jewish or Muslim tradition are not invoking a special religious right, but rather act within the general laws. They are not overstepping the limits of care and custody. Opponents of circumcision argue that medical interventions in the case of underage children are only legal when they are urgently required. Parents seem somehow to lose their right to the care and custody of the child as soon as they enter a doctor's practice. The state pushes in front of the parents and decides uniformly for all children what is best for them regarding the question of circumcision.

But, if we look at the *Grundgesetz* (German Basic Law), then we can soon see that this kind of paternalistic understanding of the well-being of children on the part of the state misconstrues basic constitutional decisions concerning the tripartite relationship

between state, parents, and their children in a liberal and pluralistic constitutional state. Parents and children are not antagonistically opposed to one another in terms of their basic legal positions. Rather, children are dependent on their parents when it comes to exercising their basic rights, so that parents always codetermine what constitutes a child's well-being. Whenever parents consent to medical interventions, to vaccinations, plastic surgery, ear

piercing, and indeed to circumcision, the requirements of the child's well-being are not entirely fixed but need to be defined with respect to each individual case. And this task resides primarily with the parents as a constitutionally protected part of their right to care for the child. This primacy of parental care for the child restricts the state to monitoring within the bounds of its role as a guardian of the child whether the parents' determination of the child's well-being is untenable in an individual case. Parents thus have a margin of discretion that is only transgressed when the decision amounts to an abuse of care and custody.

The typical cases of religious circumcisions of boys performed *lege artis* by trained professionals do not qualify as an abuse of care and custody. Male circumcision represents a relatively insignificant intervention that has no negative consequences for the boy's health; and, when performed professionally, it is associated with only minor risks. But these risks are counterbalanced by considerable benefits in terms of preventative medicine, since circumcision not only prevents specific medical conditions related to the foreskin (such as phimosis), but also reduces the risk of developing urinary tract infections, cancer of the penis, and specific sexually transmitted diseases.



Fig.: A circumcision knife, c. 1700. Today, a modern medical utensil such as a scalpel is used instead.

But in such a situation, one in which the minor risks of a medical intervention are balanced by benefits in terms of preventative medicine, it is left to the parents to decide what is in the best interests of their child. In doing so, they may also take into account aspects of religion and tradition. In this respect, the fundamental right to religious freedom informs the interpretation of parental care and custody, and reinforces this interpretation to the extent that it concerns the religiously motivated care of the child. Religious circumcisions do not involve in the final analysis specific modalities of intervention that are injurious to the child's well-being – modalities that would function to prohibit the intervention. Unlike corporal punishment or female genital mutilation, religious circumcision of boys is not castigatory or humiliating, or otherwise damaging to the person's dignity – as long as in each case the existing veto rights of underage children are not ignored.

Since the scope of parental care includes their consenting to the professional circumcision of boys independent of whether this is motivated by religion or preventative

medicine, we do not require religious freedom to justify religious circumcision. On the other hand, it is clear that a statutory prohibition against religious circumcision impinges not only on parental rights, but also on the freedom to practise religion. And it is obvious that the fundamental constitutional decisions and risk-benefit ratio involved in the circumcision of boys that I have outlined here mean that criminalising circumcision, which is targetted at the heart of how Jewish and Muslim parents understand themselves religiously and parentally, cannot be justified constitutionally.

Shortened version of a talk given by Bijan Fateh-Moghadam at the Hochschule für Jüdische Studien in Heidelberg on 22 July 2012.



Bijan Fateh-Moghadam is Professor of Fundamentals of Law and Life Sciences Law at the University of Basel, and produced the study of circumcision during his time as research associate at the Cluster of Excellence from 2009–2016, religionundpolitik@uni-muenster.de

Crafting the Body: A Cultural-Historical View

The Cologne circumcision decision of 2012 posed not only legal questions. It also showed how models of the body have changed. During the course of the debates, in essays such as the following that took a religious-historical perspective, the Catholic theologian and historian THOMAS LENTES drew attention to a cultural self-contradiction.

To put it polemically: whereas the tattoo worn by Bettina Wulff, wife of the then president of Germany, was celebrated by some as a sign of the entry of modernity into Bellevue Palace, religious intervention regarding the body is stigmatised as archaic custom and mutilation. Religious intervention on the body belonged to the unquestioned core of religion for centuries, and it is only since the beginning of the modern period that it has been increasingly questioned and rejected. Virtually all cultures consider intervention on the bodies of newborns as an act of perfecting the body. The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss already drew attention to the necessity of transforming the

body culturally, when he wrote about tattooing and body painting: “One had to be painted in order to be human: those remaining in their natural state did not distinguish themselves in any way from animals.”

Obviously, many cultures ascribe the naked body of the baby to uncultivated nature. It is only through cultural and religious transformation – through clothing, tattooing, mutilation – that the baby achieves humanity and integration into the cultural and religious group. Like foot binding in Asian cultures, or head binding in some African cultures, the cultural manipulation of ears and the

prick of tattooing in many cultures – circumcision has one aim in mind, too: the cultural-religious perfecting of the body and in no way its mutilation! [...] This was encapsulated for circumcision by the Christian theologian Abelard in the twelfth century: God sought through circumcision to cultivate people, just as when a tree is grafted so that it produces better fruit. Those who casually dismiss this as archaic bodily mutilation and injury simply do not take account of their own cultural markers. [...]

Religious and traditional systems of logic seem merely to have been replaced here by medical and aesthetic systems of logic. The medical and aesthetic perfecting of the body seems to be increasingly supplanting the religious perfecting of the body. Whereas vaccination, tattooing, and piercing are culturally acceptable, religious mutilations of the body are seen as suspect. Judaism and Islam are now

confronting what Christianity had to confront in debates about the crucifix. This is always beneath the surface a matter of the corporeality of religion, too – and certainly when numerous plaintiffs argue that the sight of a disfigured body can traumatise children. The Cologne judgement is lacking in cultural self-enlightenment and tolerance. [...]

Shortened extract from a guest contribution in the Frankfurter Rundschau and the Berliner Zeitung on 3 July 2012 and in the Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger on 10 June 2012, with kind permission of DuMont Mediengruppe.



Thomas Lentes is a historian and Catholic theologian, and was research associate at the Cluster of Excellence from 2009–2017, lentes@uni-muenster.de



Circumcision of Christ, Tucher Altarpiece. The Nuremberg Master of the Tucher Altarpiece focused in around 1450 on the foreignness of the ritual.

Conflict between the Secular and the Religious?



Sociologist of religion DETLEF POLLACK on contentious religious issues in secular societies

Why is circumcision discussed so emotionally? There are very strong reservations about Islam in Germany – as there are, albeit fewer, about Judaism. We have found that only 30–35% of German people have a positive attitude towards Muslims.

Does the debate about circumcision stand in for a general conflict between secular and religious views?

Most Germans are pretty indifferent to religion and the church. But there are polarisations. This is related to the fact that religion has re-entered the public sphere in the past fifteen years. And it has done so first and foremost as something that unleashes conflicts. [...] More than 70% [of the population in Germany] see

religion as a cause of conflict in the world. When people are asked about whether scarce resources such as oil and water are sources of conflict, those who respond in the affirmative do not exceed 70%. This perceived potential for conflict has led to the fact that the group that was religiously indifferent or areligious has now become more aggressive.

How can religious conflicts be defused? Education and explanation of course play an important role. [...] Nuanced reporting that does justice to both sides is also important. [...] We can sharply criticise Islamophobia in the media. But there should also be some sort of understanding. Many conflicts are at least aggra-

vated by religion, and we can also be critical of religion here. I view discourses that deny that Islam has any potential for tension as problematic. We need to take account of all the facts in an open discussion, one of which is that, in most countries in which Christians are persecuted, Muslims are in the majority. It is almost arrogant for the West always to search for the blame in itself. We have to talk with Muslims on an equal footing, and demand from them the same standards that we also demand of ourselves.

Shortened extract from an interview with tagesschau.de on 28 September 2012, with kind permission of Norddeutscher Rundfunk (NDR).

Policy Failure

During the circumcision debate, the political scientist **ULRICH WILLEMS** criticised on n-tv.de the lack of debate and of measures pertaining to religious policy.

“The fact that many Germans favour a ban on circumcision is due essentially to the failure of politics. The population is uncertain because it sees itself confronted with a growing religious diversity. People often perceive this as if they alone have to accommodate themselves to other religions. There has never been a debate on how to deal with the growing religious plurality. Religious policy has always been the preserve of political elites and court decisions; it has never been the subject of a truly public debate. This needs to change.” *With kind permission of Nachrichtenmanufaktur GmbH*



Ulrich Willems is Professor of Political Science at the WWU and principal investigator at the Cluster of Excellence, ulrich.willems@uni-muenster.de

What is ... a Ritual?

by Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger | What comprises a ritual? Rituals have for every society and every social group a fundamental, structure-creating function. They are sequences of actions that are standardised in their outer form and performed on specific occasions; this makes them predictable and recognisable (even if they are by no means entirely immutable). Rituals point beyond themselves to a greater context of order. They symbolise the unity of a community, its origins, its boundaries, its internal organisational principles, and guiding values. By symbolising all this in a condensed form, they constantly reinforce it anew and bind the participants to it in the future. And, by effecting a change of status for the individual (for example, by accepting someone new into the group), rituals sustain the community and its structure as a whole.

Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger is Professor of Early Modern History at the WWU. The recipient of the *Historikerpreis* and the Leibniz Prize is deputy speaker of the Cluster of Excellence, stollb@uni-muenster.de

PORTRAIT



“I imagined the situation of early-modern women as being much darker.”



Exciting – this is the word that the historian IRIS FLEßENKÄMPER uses most often when speaking of her work. Her post-doctoral research project addresses competition between norms in the Early Modern period. The suspicion could arise that she is merely seeking to compensate rhetorically for what – to a naïve view – her subject lacks in “excitement”. But, as soon as Fleßenkämper embarks on her theme, it becomes more vivid with every sentence. In her project at the Cluster of Excellence, Fleßenkämper, originally from Bonn, investigates *Ehekonflikte zwischen Verbrechen und Sünde* (Marital conflicts between crime and sin). More precisely, the project examines trials in secular and ecclesiastical courts in which women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries sued their husbands, because, for example, their husbands had physically attacked them.

How did Fleßenkämper arrive at this subject? “I wanted to know exactly how strong the disciplinary influence of the church, which is often claimed to have been far-reaching, really was.” Approaching this question through marital conflicts was something that occurred to Fleßenkämper when she stumbled across an “unbelievable wealth of sources” in records from various courts in the archives of the former Protestant county of Lippe. “I thought at first that no one at the time could possibly have understood this jumble of jurisdictions. But then I noticed that there may well have been distinct advantages in appealing sometimes to this and sometimes to that court.” So Fleßenkämper discovered that there were, “in practice a great many opportunities to circumvent disciplining by the authorities.” She found that fascinating. “I had imagined the situation of women in the Early Modern period as much darker, more constricted”, she says. “I learned in dealing with the sources that there was in fact a lot of room for manoeuvre.”

What Fleßenkämper has discovered so far certainly warrants the attribute “exciting”: in the wake of the Reformation, with its conception of marriage as a “worldly thing” and with its new moral values, women gained the option of divorce for the first time – no longer merely a temporary separation. Adultery, “malicious desertion”, and very occasionally also domestic violence were introduced as legitimate grounds for divorce.

A crucial innovation were also the territorial marriage courts in which representatives of church and state dispensed justice together. And there, explains Fleßenkämper, different norms came into conflict with one another. In

addition to the stipulations of the territorial lords and traditional Roman Canon Law (*ius commune*), these norms also included everyday norms, the “unwritten laws”. In a village community, for example, future spouses had to pledge their troth three times and confirm this with gifts. “But why three times, I wondered”, said Fleßenkämper. “The Holy Spirit is not hard of hearing.” No, but human communication is sometimes cumbersome. The repeated marriage vows were meant to allow for sufficient opportunity to raise objections to the union; the multiple gifts to “create an individual form of commitment”, beyond legally fixed norms.

Fleßenkämper also calls exciting her job as executive coordinator of the “Religion and Politics” Cluster of Excellence. “I wear two hats – the hat of scholarly practice and the hat of academic policy and strategy.” The two responsibilities differ in nature, but anyone today who wants an academic career has to be good at both. “Management qualities are more important than ever because acquiring third-party funding, contributing to research networks and forging alliances are all important components to working at a university today.”

When Fleßenkämper says this, she sounds in no way regretful. She discovered early on in the Cluster of Excellence that networks between disciplines and departments have a positive effect on research. “I benefit enormously from the legal historians, for example, and not least because they help make accessible to me the legal vocabulary and the legal logic of the seventeenth century. The Cluster of Excellence provides an ideal setting for scholarly conversations to take place.”

Joachim Frank, Chief correspondent DuMont Mediengruppe

Contacting the Dead

Mysterious banging sounds, dancing tables, and automatic writing: séances were fashionable in nineteenth-century bourgeois society, as the historian KLAUS GROSSE KRACHT recounts in this article. Contacting the spirits of the dead was usually performed by female “mediums”, so that it was not only tables that shifted during the séances, but also the relations between the sexes.



Photograph of a Spiritualist séance with the medium Eusapia Palladino (centre) at the house of Camille Flammarion in Paris on 25 November 1898.

The ritual making of contact with the dead is a phenomenon that reaches far back in human history and is widespread among different cultures. In contrast, “modern” Spiritualism is a relatively recent phenomenon, and it has attracted, or at least unsettled, not a few people since around the mid-nineteenth century. “Revenants” – that is, dead people who supposedly return to

the realm of the living – had existed in the European imagination for centuries. Whereas in the past they had tended to be terrifying beings from the underworld, this perception changed with the Spiritualism of the nineteenth century, when they began to be seen more as friendly guests in the family circle and messengers of hopeful news about the continuation of life after death.

Behind this shift was nothing less than a fundamental transformation of the idea of the afterlife that broad sections of the population held from about the mid-eighteenth century. Previously, the souls of the dead, provided that they had been freed from purgatory, were imagined as more or less passive beings engrossed in the vision of God; now, the idea

spread that the individual also retains his or her subjectivity after death, and that life in the hereafter is comparable to that on Earth. Heaven was, as it were, interpreted as the continuation of bourgeois existence with other means, or rather in a different sphere.

The early Spiritualists, though, drew not only on the writings – much read at the time – of “ghost-seers” such as the Swedish naturalist Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772); they were also fascinated by the teachings and practices of “animal magnetism”, a method of healing developed by the Paris-based Austrian physician Franz Anton Mesmer (1734–1815).

Central to the Mesmeric method of treatment was inducing in the patient a sleep-like state of consciousness, the “mesmeric sleep” for which the term “trance” would later gain currency. The utterances that the hypnotised persons would voice in trance would generally be taken at face value by the Spiritualists and interpreted as messages from the spirits of the dead. Added later were speculations about a supposed fourth dimension in which occult powers were believed to cause phenomena of telekinesis and other inexplicable occurrences.

Spiritualism became a veritable fad in the second half of the nineteenth century, especially in the USA, but in parts of Europe, too. Mysterious banging sounds, dancing tables, speaking in trance, and automatic writing became sensations of bourgeois entertainment culture, rivalling religious services. At the centre of a Spiritualist séance was usually an individual “medium”, a person who was thought to possess the special

occult abilities to make contact with the spirits of the dead. The medium would fall into a kind of semi-conscious state that the Spiritualists believed enabled him or her to become a direct mouthpiece of the spirits. What is striking in comparison to other religious and ideological communities of the time is the central role played by women in the gatherings of Spiritualist circles: it is estimated that around two-thirds of all “mediums” were women. The spirits of the dead thus had a predominantly female voice.

The Spiritualists’ unsettling of the gender order repeatedly gave rise to criticism.

But the remarkably high status that Spiritualism as a religious practice and worldview granted to women did not itself yet question the established patriarchal, family-centred gender order of the Victorian age. On the contrary, the prominent role of female mediums fitted easily into the existing religious gender order, for young women and girls, especially those suffering from fragile health, had long been considered especially predisposed to somnambulistic states, mystical ecstasies, and forms of clairvoyance – we need only recall the numerous apparitions of the Virgin Mary in the popular, folkloric Catholicism of the time. But Spiritualism was also by no means a purely women’s religion. The majority of female mediums were integrated into Spiritualist circles that were usually led by an affluent and respectable man. It was he who watched over the choice of guests to the Spiritualist séances, and he who took paternalistic charge of the mostly young mediums.

On the other hand, the practices of the Spiritualists definitely generated stimuli that were able to upset the established gender order, especially during the semi-private séances: the dim illumination of the gatherings, the touching among male and female participants, the uncontrolled utterances of the trance mediums (who did not always follow the Victorian rules governing appropriate gender discourse) – all this could at least momentarily unsettle the established forms of behaviour between the sexes.

How must it have seemed when, for example, male spirits suddenly spoke through female trance mediums, or the spirits that had been raised behaved in

a much more libertine manner than was stipulated by the moral values of the time? At the beginning of the 1870s, for instance, the fifteen-year-old Florence Cook (1856–1904) aroused the interest of numerous Spiritualists because she could apparently raise the spirit of a court lady from the early-eighteenth century named “Katie King”. Katie – whose similarity to the medium herself could scarcely be overlooked – was not only described by the male séance participants as extremely attractive and enchanting; she also loved to flirt with them and even let them kiss her occasionally. Some decades later another medium, the Frenchwoman Marthe Béraud (1886–19??), alias Eva Carrière, drew attention to herself by choosing to offer her mediumistic abilities in a state of undress. Added to this was a presumed connection between Spiritualism and homoeroticism, which characterised the performances of the Scottish medium Daniel Dunglas Home (1833–1886), for example. Home is said to have

often spent the nights after séances together in his private chambers with male participants.

This Spiritualist unsettling of the gender order, which contemporaries also clearly perceived, repeatedly gave rise to criticism and disassociation, and by no means only externally. Rather, it was the concern of many convinced Spiritualists themselves to keep their worldview at arm's length from any appearance of frivolity or indecency. Many scientists and physicians with a critical attitude towards Spiritualism

classified the behaviour displayed in the trance state especially by the female mediums as plainly pathological. The common diagnosis was "hysteria"; some people, such as the New York neurologist Frederic Rowland Marvin (1847–1918), even spoke of a "mediomania", and attributed this to a disorder of the uterus. These diagnoses were later refined through the development of psychoanalytic theory, and the term "hysteria" was abandoned. Ascribing inexplicable psychosomatic phenomena, which nineteenth-century Spiritualism still

embedded in a religious worldview, to pathological states has nonetheless remained to the present day. In short, the messages of the usually female mediums were declared meaningless, and the voices of the deceased banished back to the hereafter.



Klaus Große Kracht

holds a postdoctoral degree in History. He is project head at the Cluster of Excellence

and mentor at the Graduate School, klaus.grosse-kracht@uni-muenster.de

Spirit Healing and Psychiatry in India

Rolling eyes, twitching limbs, frothing at the mouth – the people seeking help at an Islamic shrine in western India were observed over many months by the anthropologist HELENE BASU. "Many of those crowding around the saint's grave feel tormented by demons", reports Basu. "It gets loud and animated. Some experience a trance, others scream or roll on the ground from side to side." What would be considered a sign of intrapsychic disorders in the West possesses here social meanings, too. Basu explores at the Cluster of Excellence how people deal with mental illnesses in India and Pakistan.



Touching a relic inside the shrine, thus bringing to the surface spirits that cause illness in the bodies of sick women, "Spirits of Envy", 2012.

"Mental illnesses are often attributed in South Asia to black magic or possession – those affected are considered victims of malevolent magic", explains Basu. But supernatural powers have always had two sides: whoever practises malevolent magic can also heal. Those affected thus seek help in religious locations, such as at the graves of Muslim saints. Basu recorded her experiences in western India in her documentary films "Drugs and Prayers" and "Spirits of Envy". "There has also been for some time now a psychiatric advice centre at this saint's shrine, where Indian



Priests at a shrine perform the daily evening ritual: purification through burning incense, “Spirits of Envy”, 2012.

representatives of cosmopolitan conventional medicine prescribe medication. I am interested in how different ideas about mental illnesses and their treatment clash.”

In the project “Drugs and Prayers”, which Indian psychiatrists set up with the support of the government in 2000, psychiatrists offer regular office hours and a course of treatment consisting only of medication near the Sufi shrines – people of all religions visit them for the purposes of healing. It is frequently schizophrenias, bipolar disorders, and conversion disorders that lead people to Muslim shrines, explains Helene Basu.

“Psychiatry has a greater chance of helping people when it aligns itself with the religion rather than fighting against it as a superstition”, explains Basu. The doctors whose psychiatric advice centres are located directly at Hindu temples and Muslim shrines do not contradict the traditional interpretations of the illnesses, which gains them the support of traditional healers. All in all, they are very successful.

The film “Spirits of Envy” also resulted from field research in western Indian Gujarat: at the Sufi shrine of Mira Datar, in psychiatric hospitals, and religious institutions. There, Basu observed the healing methods used by psychiatrists and religious healers, and asked each group what they thought of the forms of treatment used by the other group.

As an anthropologist, Helene Basu does not pass judgement on what she sees, but describes it and attempts to understand other views of the world. “I do not decide whether those seeking help are possessed or mentally ill. There are different ideas about the world”, she says, “and it is not a matter of judging whether they are right or wrong from our point of view; rather, it is about the meaning that they hold for those who live their lives with them. Our Western medical concepts are also shaped by culture and history.”

Taking culture into consideration during medical treatment is also becoming increasingly important in Germany, as Basu emphasises. “Immigrants bring their own ideas of illness and healing with them when they are treated here by a German doctor.” Helene Basu has therefore offered seminars for several years now on transcultural psychiatry together with a psychiatrist from Benin. The participants include anthropologists, doctors, psychologists, and educational experts.



Helene Basu is Professor of Anthropology at the WWU and principal investigator at the Cluster of Excellence, hbasu_01@uni-muenster.de

DEBUNKING CLICHÉS

THE HISTORY OF ISLAM

Delightful Ambiguity

The West's view of Islam has been dominated by clichés for centuries, says Arabist and Leibniz Prize winner THOMAS BAUER. The romantic “One Thousand and One Nights” image of Islam from previous decades has yielded today to a darker image of a religion that has supposedly been intolerant and cruel since its very beginnings. Bauer recounts in contrast “A different history of Islam”, as the subtitle of his widely acclaimed book *Die Kultur der Ambiguität* (The Culture of Ambiguity) shows. His research over the decades has demonstrated that Islam was for many centuries much more tolerant towards different values and truth claims than the West realises.



Actually prohibited: alcohol and representations of people in Islamic art, Vienna Maqamat of Hariri, Cairo, 1334.

Bauer illuminates 1,000 years of Arabic-Islamic cultural history and finds a high degree of “tolerance of ambiguity”. He demonstrates in numerous historical sources this ability of Islamic societies to allow mutually conflicting norms to exist side-by-side – whether in the interpretation of the Qur’an, in sexual morality, poetry, law, or political

debates. Bauer seeks to refute the “distorted image” of a politically and religiously dogmatic, intolerant, and prudish Islam, an image that the West has constructed since the fall of the Eastern Bloc to function as a “surrogate enemy”.

For Bauer, the history of modern Islamism begins in the nineteenth century. “At that time, colonialism exerted pressure on the Near East to define itself through clear norms, as the West did.” When Islamism today champions a narrow-minded truth claim, then, according to Bauer, it is displaying an intellectual attitude learned from the West. “It only appears to be a recourse to ‘traditional Islamic values.’” Thus, we consider ideas today

as being Islamic that are in reality elements of Victorian morality.

It is wrong, according to Bauer, to speak of a “re-Islamicisation” in the twentieth century. “Rather, it is much more the case that Islamism is a new creation of an intolerant, ideological Islam, one that adopts the totalitarian structures of earlier Western ideologies that were intolerant of a plurality of worldviews.”

This changed in the West after 1968. “But this awakening bypassed the Islamic world. What Islam ultimately lacks is not the Enlightenment as experienced by Europe in the eighteenth century, but the revolts of 1968.”

With his work, which has also been translated into Arabic, Bauer seeks not least to afford Muslims the opportunity to gain a new view of the history of their culture and religion: “Interest in a different image of Islam is growing throughout the world today, whether in the Arabic world or among Muslims in Europe. Thus, it is high time, especially with a view to the younger generation, that academically grounded depictions of the centuries-old Islamic culture to be made accessible to them as well.”

The Culture of Ambiguity in Examples

Religion and Politics: In Bauer’s opinion, no other prejudice has had such a disastrous effect as the idea that Islam does not recognise any separation between religion and state. There have in reality “always been religion-free zones” in Islam. Muslims have always been able to differentiate between worldly and religious matters.

Bauer disputes the view that is widely held today of an “Islamicisation of Islam”: no one should impute more religiosity to Islam than to other cultures. The oft-quoted slogan according to which Islam is “Din wa-Daula” (that is, “religion and state”) first arose in the nineteenth century, explains Bauer, when Islamic countries sought an ideology that could counter the strong Western ideologies of the time. “The politicised Islam of the present has mainly arisen from an intellectual attitude that can in no way be derived from traditional Islamic writings. Rather, it is Western models that were the force behind its formation.”

Sexuality: According to Bauer, Islam is often characterised in the West as “medieval” and prudish; it requires a sexual revolution like the one in the West, so the argument goes. But, for Bauer, history shows a different picture: “Arab physicians were already composing guides on sexuality in the ninth century. In doing so, they were continuing an ancient tradition that went uninterrupted until the advent of Christianity. Arabic guides on sexual hygiene that treated love and sex in a way that was objective and unpatronising were produced for many centuries.” Countless homoerotic poems were written and became a recognised part of high literature between 800 and 1800. This development lasted until the nineteenth century, when people became aware of the texts and “denigrated them as pornography”.

What is ... Tolerance of Ambiguity?

by Thomas Bauer | The concept of tolerance of ambiguity is derived from psychology and refers to a person’s ability to live with indeterminacy; that is, to allow mutually conflicting values and truths to coexist without insisting on the validity of one’s own convictions. The concept can be transferred to the history of culture and mentality. All cultures have to live with ambiguity, but they differ greatly in terms of how they deal with it. Some cultures avoid or fight ambiguity. Others exhibit a high degree of tolerance.

Whoever applies the concept of cultural ambiguity to the history of mentalities can escape a Eurocentric perspective, and focus on the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the people in question. In this way, one arrives at an alternative historical narrative, one that is not teleological and goal-driven. Sources in which a society’s ambiguity can be discerned include legal texts, poems, paintings, and coins.



Recto pagan, *verso* Islamic: the Islamic ruler of Mardin had ambiguous coins minted in 1223 that show on the one side a bust modelled after those of pagan Roman emperors, and name on the other side the Abbasid caliph and “commander of the faithful” an-Nasir.



Arabic translation of the book *The Culture of Ambiguity*, 2017.

Interpretation of the Qur'an: The Qur'an contains countless ambiguous passages. Whereas Islamic scholars of earlier centuries saw the variations as an enrichment, Muslims today often view them as a nuisance, complains Bauer. "Whether in favour of reform or fundamentalist, they always believe that they know the true meaning of a Qur'an passage." A modern philologist generally assumes that, when there are two interpretations of a text, one must be wrong; in contrast, the Muslim exegete of the past saw the ambiguity of some passages as having been willed by God, "a divine ruse that piqued people into concerning themselves with the text again and again." This is also behind the traditional scepticism that Muslims show towards translations of the Qur'an.

The Image of the Scholar: Differences of opinion between scholars were considered "a blessing for the community" in the classical period of Islam, Bauer explains. "In contrast, many consider these differences today as an evil to be eradicated." In earlier centuries, the ideal of the pious, meek scholar stood on an equal footing alongside the ideal of the elegant, quick-witted intellectual. But the secular literature of these thinkers would be met with incomprehension among their modern heirs.

Law: According to Bauer, Islamic law is not as rigid and dogmatic as it is often portrayed today. "Instead, it recognises a vast number of norms that Muslims have applied flexibly in their everyday lives for more than 1,300 years." Legal scholars often downplayed the claim to truth. They did not eradicate uncertainty and contradiction, says Bauer, but instead tamed them in the form of a probability theory. But, faced with the challenges posed by an increasingly dominant West, Muslims then began to ideologise and politicise their law. "Fundamentalists and pro-Western Muslims in favour of reform both claim today in equal measure that Islamic law is to be interpreted unambiguously".

Poetry and Rhetoric: Arabic poets cultivated sophisticated forms of ambiguous expression for centuries. Arabic linguists and rhetoricians collected ambiguous words and analysed the stylistic means of ambiguity. "This gave rise to hundreds of works on rhetoric. Poets, scholars, merchants, artisans, and popular poets composed countless poems and prose texts in which all conceivable kinds of ambiguity were allowed to run joyful riot", explains Bauer. This was a kind of "training in ambiguity", designed to help people accept ambiguity in other areas of life, too. In contrast, many Muslims and experts in Orientalism see this diversity today "as a sure sign of the decline of Islam".

Thomas Bauer: *Die Kultur der Ambiguität. Eine andere Geschichte des Islams* (The Culture of Ambiguity. A Different History of Islam), Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen 2011.

The book was published in Arabic in 2017 by the Al-Kamel Verlag with offices in Cologne, Beirut, and Baghdad. A Slovenian translation has existed since 2014, published by Založba Krtina in Ljubljana. An English-language edition, to be published by Columbia University Press in New York, is planned for 2018.



Thomas Bauer is Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the WWU. The Leibniz Prize winner is principal investigator at the Cluster of Excellence, arabist@uni-muenster.de

CHRISTIANITY IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Passionate Debates

Men and women wearing different habits, pope and bishops in magnificent robes, members of lay brotherhoods kneel: they discuss, pray, and one crouches on the floor engrossed in his book. This multi-faceted picture is how the Florentine painter Andrea di Buonaiuto (1346–1379) portrayed the clergy of the medieval church in the fourteenth century. The medieval historian SITA STECKEL sees this detail of a fresco in Florence as depicting a central theme of her research: the polyphony and diversity of the medieval church.

The historical sources that Steckel has examined about heresy and orthodoxy do not confirm the image that many people today consider typically medieval of a “dark Middle Ages” and of an omnipotent, monolithic church – a cliché that haunts medievalists like no other. “When they think about the Middle Ages, many people in the modern period have in mind only the violent suppression of any religious nonconformity by the Inquisition and the burning of heretics”, says Steckel.

“The stereotypical image of the evil, fanatical Grand Inquisitor has become part of pop culture, for example, finding expression in both Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose* as well as in a sketch by the British comedy troupe Monty Python.” Even if such figures did of course exist: “Many of these negative images originate in the time of the Reformation and the

Confessional Age, and should not be adopted uncritically today.” If we examine more closely the conflicts of the period over divergent beliefs, Steckel argues, then we find the idea of a religiously unified world in the Middle Ages disproven many times over.

“The sources reflect passionate debates about the proper political and religious order of society. Tracts, sermons, and even vernacular popular literature contain heated discussions, also including criticisms of church authorities”, explains Steckel. “It was not only popes, bishops, and theologians who participated in the debates, but also burghers, including common people and (what may come as a surprise to some) women.” People discussed the supposed profit motives of the Jews just as much as they did the wealth of the church. They also disputed which path best led to salvation:

the complex religious life of monks, or the simple piety of lay people. Religious dissenters such as the heretical Cathars were criticised by their neighbours, but also protected by them when persecution became severe. “Debates about the right degree of religion, and about the relationship of religion to law or the economy, were therefore not peripheral matters; rather, they were omnipresent, and served to delineate right from wrong in religious belief.”



Sita Steckel is Junior Professor of Medieval History at the WWU and designated principal investigator at the Cluster of Excellence, sita.steckel@uni-muenster.de

The fresco by Andrea di Buonaiuto in the Church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence shows the multifaceted character of the medieval clergy, c. 1365 (detail).



POPES AND VIOLENCE

“Blessed is the Persecutor”



To think that all the popes in the history of the church were peace-loving because Christianity always preached love of one’s neighbour and of one’s enemy is to succumb to a cliché: historian Gerd Althoff has discovered in his studies of the reform-oriented papacy of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries that in polemical writings, letters, and tracts

popes developed complex theories for justifying violence. “The church had phases when it endorsed the use of violence in the name of God”, explains Althoff. “The theory may well have elicited criticism among contemporaries, but their perspective was not able to prevail.”

The clerics found their theological arguments in the Old Testament and the writings of St. Augustine (354–430), who had allowed heresy to be fought with violence. “The reform-oriented papacy ignored biblical passages about love of one’s neighbour and of one’s enemy, although these passages were considered by many, and also in the Middle Ages, to be key messages of Christianity”, explains Althoff. Researchers have long restricted their gaze to the Crusades

and to wars against heretics, thereby overlooking the fact that these were first made possible through theories of violence.

The trigger for the theories were the politics of Emperor Henry III (1039–1056), who dominated the church by installing and removing popes. “The external intervention led to intellectual efforts to derive papal law anew from the Scriptures.” The papacy was soon demanding authority over the church and the world. “They discovered that the popes could demand obedience from all believers – and that disobedience against papal commandments could be heresy, which was to be dealt with by means of violence.” In the eleventh century, Bishop Bonizo of Sutri even went so far as to invert the Sermon on the Mount into its very opposite. Althoff: “Bonizo wrote that ‘blessed are also those who for the sake of justice practise persecution’ – not only those who are persecuted.”

Gerd Althoff: “Selig sind, die Verfolgung ausüben”. Pápste und Gewalt im Hochmittelalter (Blessed Are They Who Persecute. Popes and Violence in the High Middle Ages), Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 2013.



Gerd Althoff is Emeritus Professor of Medieval History at the WWU, project head at the Cluster of Excellence, and was speaker of the Cluster from 2007–2011, althofg@uni-muenster.de

RELIGION AND POLITICS IN THE US

A Celebration of Civil Religion

Church service and pledge of allegiance, parade and fireworks – the inaugurations of new presidents are great media events in the US. Foreign observers may see this as confirming a cliché about the US: big show, little substance. The historian of North America Heike Bungert refutes this in her studies of inaugural celebrations since George Washington’s assumption of office in 1789. She interprets the ceremonies as a ritual that constitutes the identity of American society: “Inaugurations are a rite of passage that represents the peaceful transition of power”, she explains. “They are meant to contribute to the unity of the country, to reconcile the rivals in the recent election campaign, and to create a collective, national identity.”

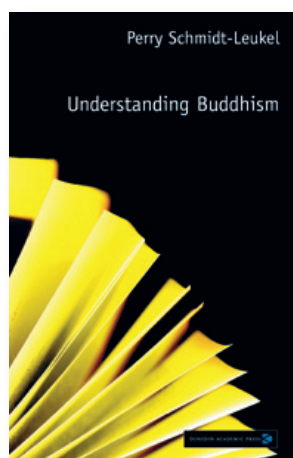
Religion and politics mix powerfully in this: “The inaugural addresses are the sacred texts of US civil religion, and the president is its high priest.” Almost all presidents, including Barack Obama and Donald Trump, took the oath of office on the Bible, and invoked America in their inaugural speeches as God’s chosen land. But this also entails an obligation, says Bungert: “This civil religion means that Americans must continuously prove themselves worthy of their status as a chosen people.”



Heike Bungert is Professor of North American History at the WWU and project head at the Cluster of Excellence, heike.bungert@uni-muenster.de

BUDDHISM

“Not a Pop Religion”



According to the religious studies scholar and theologian Perry Schmidt-Leukel, Buddhism is often seen in the West through “rose-tinted spectacles”. “Whereas it was previously and is sometimes also today perceived more negatively as being pessimistic and nihilistic, numerous romanticising clichés can now be found about Buddhism: peaceful and tolerant, easy to practise, a spirituality free from dogmas and prescriptions, without heaven or hell.” Buddhism is often not even considered a religion, but rather as a “psychology of wisdom, a lifestyle, or a fashionable worldview, something particularly suited to the somewhat slack but

affluent postmodern intellectual.” But this indicates, for Schmidt-Leukel, more an unease with Christianity than an understanding of the reality of Asian Buddhism in the past and present.

In his book *Understanding Buddhism* (published in English and German), Schmidt-Leukel introduces the history and the world of ideas of Buddhism, stretching over two and a half thousand years. In doing so, he provides the reader not only with an understanding of the internal Buddhist perspective; drawing on numerous Buddhist sources, he also debunks a number of older and newer stereotypes, including the view that Buddhism does not know a transcendent reality. He shows in his chapters on Buddhist politics and modernity that important Buddhist currents criticise and even reject Western principles such as liberalism, individualism, human rights and democracy. Also deviating from the romanticising image in the West is the fact that women have long been disadvantaged in Buddhism just as much as they have been in other world religions. “In its principles, Buddhism also places the human over nature, and is by no means always as ‘environmentally friendly’ as modern ‘eco-Buddhists’ claim. Overall, the diversity of currents and regional forms of Buddhism as a world religion are largely unknown in the West.”

Perry Schmidt-Leukel, *Understanding Buddhism*, Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press 2006.



Perry Schmidt-Leukel is Professor of Religious Studies and Intercultural Theology at the WWU, and principal investigator at the Cluster of Excellence, perrysl@uni-muenster.de



Quoted from ...

Islam is Mercy, by Mouhanad Khorchide

The Qur’anic passage “and we [God] have only sent you [Muhammad], as a mercy to the whole of mankind” underlines that mercy represents the primary concern and the key aspect of the Prophet’s message. Many Muslims understand this passage as a warning, reminding them to obey God’s commands. Thinking back to my religious studies classes in Saudi Arabia, I cannot recall a single time when we as pupils would have been told about God’s love and mercy. Any teaching about God inevitably involved lessons on how to glorify Him, on His wrath, His punishment and His hell, to which He would condemn anyone who disobeyed Him. It is obvious what kind of image of God this creates in the minds of young people, and what consequences this has on the way they plan and live their lives (pp. 39 f.).

MOUHANAD KHORCHIDE

Islam is
Mercy

Essential
Features of
a Modern
Religion

HERDER

PROTESTANTISM

Political Pastors

by ARNULF VON SCHELIHA | Pastors at the forefront of political demonstrations, bearded clergymen in swaying cassocks in front of the Brokdorf nuclear power plant, bishops calling for social justice in their Christmas sermons: in Germany, Protestant pastors tend to be viewed as being on the left, and as “red-green” in their politics. The spirit of 1968 still seems to be just as alive today as it was then. Women are pastors; the traditional idea of marriage has been discarded. But a historical, long-term perspective complicates this cliché. There have been pastors in politics not only since 1968, and by no means all have been left-wing.

Protestantism has always had political pastors. After the Reformation, the pastors became more or less state officials, whose task it was to swear the population to obedience to authority. In a sermon delivered in 1813, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) called on the people to wage a “holy war” against the Napoleonic occupation, while at the same time not refraining from criticising the hesitant King Frederick William III. At the outbreak of the First World War, the Cathedral and Court Preacher Bruno Doehring (1879–1961) held a church service on the steps of the *Reichstag* building before a huge crowd, and concluded with the words: “If we did not – I almost want to say physically – feel the nearness of God, who unfurls our flags and presses into the hand of our emperor the sword to the crusade, to the holy war, then we would have to tremble and hesitate. But now we give the defiantly bold answer, the most German one of all: We Germans fear God and nothing else in the world.”

The political involvement of pastors often reached all the way to the office of parliamentary representative, as studies at the Cluster of Excellence on Protestant theologians as parliamentarians have shown. Twenty-six pastors were given a mandate in the elections to the National Assembly that met in St. Paul’s Church in Frankfurt in 1848. Protestant pastors did not represent the whole party-political spectrum: Social Democracy was considered hostile to Christianity, and the Centre Party was Catholic. Thus, Protestant pastors participated initially in liberal and conservative parties. The Court and Cathedral Preacher Adolf Stoecker (1835–1909) founded the “Christian Social Workers’ Party”, which saw itself as a conservative competitor to Social Democracy. Pastor Friedrich Naumann (1860–1919) was one of the leading figures of political liberalism, and was heavily involved in developing the list of fundamental rights for the Weimar constitution.

The first Weimar *Reichstag* elected seventeen male and female theologians (the latter existing from this point on). The *Kirchenkampf* (church struggle) between the “German Christians”, who were close to the Nazis, and the “Confessing Church”, as well as the political resistance centred around Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945), contributed to an attitude on the part of the Protestant churches that was critical of the state. The political spectrum widened: in the first German *Bundestag* of 1949, four of the seven pastors belonged to the SPD faction. When the Green Party joined the *Bundestag* in 1983, Antje Vollmer (b. 1943) became the best-known pastor in politics, and was even vice president of the *Bundestag* from 1994–2005.

German reunification brought in a wave of theologians, since many pastors in East Germany had been involved in civil rights movements. Nineteen theologians were elected to the *Bundestag* in 1990: thirteen in the SPD, four in the CDU/CSU, and two in the Green Party. A swing to the left did in fact take place here, but the classic party-political distinctions were in any case very blurred during this phase.

Viewed from a long-term perspective, Protestant theologians represent the diverse spectrum of democratic parties: no less well-known than the Green Party’s Antje Vollmer was the pastor and CDU representative Peter Hintze (1950–2016). And seven theologians of almost every political hue are present in the *Bundestag* elected in 2017: two in the SPD, one in the Green Party, three in the CDU/CSU, and one in the liberal FDP. That Protestant Christianity in Germany is politically “red-green” is a cliché that the research does not confirm.



Arnulf von Scheliha is Professor of Ethics at the Faculty of Protestant Theology of the WWU and designated principal investigator at the Cluster of Excellence, scheliha@uni-muenster.de

Far and Yet so Near

“Religions have claimed the truth for themselves, and will always fight each other” – this is what many people think, whether religious or not. The theologian and religious studies scholar PERRY SCHMIDT-LEUKEL investigates at the Cluster of Excellence what the world religions think of each other, and how they explain to themselves the diversity of religions. “There is much potential for conflict here”, says Schmidt-Leukel, “since religions often see each other as a threat.” But religions can also value each other and learn theologically from the insights that other religions have: “This is the goal of interreligious theology.”

For Schmidt-Leukel, traditional theologies do not provide sufficient answers to the growing challenges of religious diversity and conflicts. He has developed in his own research on interreligious theology a “fractal interpretation”, which argues that the differences between religions can also often be found in a similar form within the major religions. “Religions are neither all the same, and nor completely different from one another. Rather, they resemble each other with respect to their internal multifariousness.” For Schmidt-Leukel, fundamental patterns of religious diversity are ultimately reflected even in the religious capacities inherent in individual people.

This interpretation opens up new perspectives, as Schmidt-Leukel shows by way of an example: such a

“fractal” structure can be found in the declarations of belief in Muhammad as “Prophet”, in Jesus as the incarnated “Son of God”, and in Gautama as the “Buddha”, the “Awakened One”. Each of the three unites in itself the “awakening” to the ultimate reality, the prophetic proclamation of a message, and its “embodiment/incarnation” in word and life. “There are therefore strong internal lines of connection between the religions, which reach into the heart of their beliefs. Ecumenical discussion within the religions, and dialogue between the religions, are continuous and can illuminate and enrich each other.” Schmidt-Leukel first introduced his new theory of religious diversity in the Scottish Gifford Lectures that he gave in 2015. He was the first German in twenty-five years to speak in the prestigious lecture series.

According to Schmidt-Leukel, religions possess the potential to see themselves as different, but nonetheless equally valid, and in many ways complementary, paths to salvation. This potential can transform a self-conception that has been absolutist. “This is also important politically, since religious claims to exclusive validity or superiority often underlie the potential for interreligious conflict.”

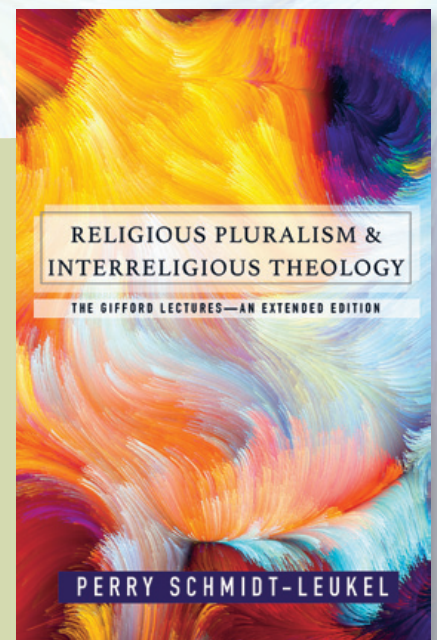


Perry Schmidt-Leukel is Professor of Religious Studies and Intercultural Theology at the WWU, and principal investigator at the Cluster of Excellence, perrysl@uni-muenster.de

The Gifford Lectures

The four Scottish universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, St. Andrews, and Aberdeen have invited speakers to hold the Gifford Lectures every one to two years since 1888. In accordance with the wishes of the founder Adam Lord Gifford (1820–1887), the lectures serve to promote a scholarly study of religion that investigates the question of the rationality and possible truth of religion. The first Gifford Lectures were held in Glasgow between 1888 and 1892 by the German religious studies scholar Friedrich Max Müller. He has been followed since then by many renowned researchers in theology, religious studies, philosophy, history, and the natural sciences. Being invited to give the Gifford Lectures is considered one of the highest international distinctions in this field. Before Perry Schmidt-Leukel, the last Germans to give the Gifford Lectures were the Protestant theologian Jürgen Moltmann in 1984–85, and the Islamic studies scholar Annemarie Schimmel in 1991–92.

Perry Schmidt-Leukel: *Religious Pluralism and Interreligious Theology. The Gifford Lectures – An Extended Edition*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2017. The book will also be published in German and Chinese.



Contact

Centre for Research Communication of the
Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics”
Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster (WWU)
Johannisstraße 1, 48143 Münster
Tel.: +49 251 83-23376
Fax: +49 251 83-23246
religionundpolitik@uni-muenster.de
www.religion-und-politik.de/en



Imprint

Published by: Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics”
of the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster (WWU)

Person responsible: Prof. Dr. Detlef Pollack, Speaker of the
Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics” of the Westfälische
Wilhelms-Universität Münster (WWU)

Editorial team and design: Centre for Research Communication
of the Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics” of the West-
fälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster (WWU), Viola van Melis
(head), Simon Camp, Dr. Anja Schäfers, Martin Zaune
(text and image editing), Verena Ilger (design), Jana Busch
(secretariat); goldmarie design, Münster (layout details);
Lars Scharrenbroich (lithography)

Translation and English editing: Cynthia Hall, Theo Riches,
David West; **Print:** Bitter & Loose GmbH, Greven
Münster, March 2018

Download of the magazine in English:

www.religion-und-politik.de/en/magazin

Download of the magazine in German:

www.religion-und-politik.de/magazin

Picture Credits

Pages 6 ff., 26 (detail cover page), 46 (detail cover page), 62, 72 (detail cover page, pp. 2, 87): Wilfried Gerharz
Page 9: Springer-Verlag, portrait: University of Münster (WWU)/Peter Watterdorff
Page 11: The Victory Stela of Piankhy is located today in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, inv. no. JE 48862, 47086-9. Photo and drawing (detail cover page) with kind permission of Nicolas Grimal
Page 12 (detail cover page): Bryan Whitney, with kind permission of Tim Kendall, portrait: privately owned
Pages 13 ff. (detail cover page, pp. 2, 4, 87): Asia Minor Research Centre, portrait: Julia Cawley
Page 16: top: Centre for Research Communication of the Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics” (Wiko), bottom: Julia Holtkötter
Page 17 (detail cover page, pp. 2, 87): From Albert Tanner: Das Schiffchen fliegt, die Maschine rauscht. Zürich: Unionsverlag 1985/Wikimedia Commons
Page 18 (detail cover page): British Library, London, C.106.k.16, portrait: Thomas Kundy
Page 19 (detail cover page): Mr. Granger/Wikimedia Commons, portrait: privately owned
Page 20 (detail pp. 2, 87): Leiden University Library, Codex Perizoni F 17, fol. 15v
Page 21: Julia Holtkötter
Page 22 (detail cover page, pp. 2, 4, 87): Habib M'henni/Wikimedia Commons
Page 24: top: WWU/Peter Grewer, centre: privately owned, bottom: Andreas Kühlken
Page 25 (detail cover page, pp. 2, 87): publisher M. D. Gunasena, portrait: Wiko
Page 28 (detail cover page, pp. 2, 4, 87): Irish Defence Forces: LÉ Eithne (P31), Operation Triton, 15. Juni 2015/Wikipedia Commons
Page 29: Wiko
Page 30: top: Natalia Frumkina, centre (detail cover page): Julia Koch, bottom: Wiko
Page 31: top (detail cover page, p. 4): Wiko, bottom: privately owned
Page 32: Bavarian State Library Munich, Rar. 287, fol. 6v
Page 35: top: Richard Rillinger, bottom left: Wiko, bottom right (detail cover page, p. 4): The British Museum, London, 2007,3005,35. © Trustees of the British Museum
Page 36: Wiko
Page 37: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Manuscrits, Arabe 5847, fol. 58v, portrait: privately owned
Page 38: Leipzig University Library, Vollers 1102-I, fol. 64r
Page 39: National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo. From Eugen Werber, The Sarajevo Haggadah, Belgrade: Prosveta 1983
Page 40: top: The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, B46.04.0912, 180/057. From Moshe Spitzer (Ed.), The Bird's Head Haggadah of the Bezalel National Art Museum in Jerusalem, Jerusalem: Tarshish 1965, bottom: Library of Congress, Washington, DC: African and Middle Eastern Division, Hebrew Section, MS heb. 1
Page 41: Braginsky Collection, Zürich: Prague Haggada, BCB_211, fols. 6v-7r, portrait: Wiko
Page 42: Austrian National Library, Vienna: Cod. 2554, fol. Iv

Page 43: Hildegard of Bingen, Liber divinorum operum, fol. 135r (left) fol. 143r (right), sec. XIII, Biblioteca Statale di Lucca, ms. 1942 (© Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo – Biblioteca Statale di Lucca)
Page 44: Fig. CM3, from: Christel Meier, Die Quadratur des Kreises, in: Alexander Patschovsky (Ed.), Die Bildwelt der Diagramme Joachims von Fiore, Ostfildern: Thorbecke 2003, pp. 23–53
Page 45: Wiko
Page 49 (detail cover page, pp. 2, 5, 87): Andreas Trogisch, Bob Hennig/bob-sairport, portrait: Hilla Südhaus
Page 50 (detail cover page, pp. 2, 87): Los Angeles County Museum of Art (www.lacma.org), portrait: Hanspeter Schiess
Page 51 (detail cover page, p. 5): Lothar Wolleh/Wikimedia Commons
Page 52: top: Wiko, centre: Diocese of Linz, Appenzeller, bottom: privately owned
Page 53 (detail cover page, pp. 2, 87): Lothar Wolleh/Wikimedia Commons, portrait: Andreas Kühlken
Page 54 (detail cover page, pp. 2, 5, 87): wikipedia/Vitalonga
Page 56: Oxford University Press
Page 57: Wiko
Page 58: Berghahn Books
Page 59: top: Julia Holtkötter, bottom: Wiko
Page 60 (detail cover page, pp. 2, 87): with permission of the photographer
Page 61: top: Julia Holtkötter, centre: Wiko, bottom: privately owned
Page 64 (detail cover page, pp. 2, 5, 87): photos: Thomas Bauer, translation: Nefeli Papoutsakis, Münster
Page 65 (detail cover page, pp. 2, 87): The British Museum, London, 1867,1012,510 © Trustees of the British Museum, portrait: Julia Holtkötter
Page 66: © Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna: 2540 (detail), portrait: Julia Holtkötter
Page 67: left: Julia Holtkötter, right: Katrin Neumann
Page 68: © Jewish Museum London, C 1996.2.3
Page 69: WWU/Peter Grewer
Page 70: Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum, Aachen, photo: Anne Gold, Aachen, portrait: Wiko
Page 71: Julia Holtkötter
Page 74 (detail pp. 2, 87): Société astronomique de France, Paris, Fonds documentaire Camille Flammarion
Pages 76 f. (detail cover page, pp. 2, 5, 87): Photos from the film “Spirits of Envy”, 2012, portraits: Wiko
Page 78: Austrian National Library, Vienna, Cod. A. F. 9, fol. 42v
Page 79 (detail cover page): Thomas Bauer
Page 80 (detail cover page): Al-Kamel Verlag, portrait: Julia Holtkötter
Page 81: La Chiesa militante e trionfante, Prefettura di Firenze, Fondo Edifici di Culto, Ministero dell'Interno, photo: Antonio Quattrone, portrait: privately owned
Page 82: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, portraits: Julia Holtkötter
Page 83: Dunedin Academic Press, Herder Verlag, portrait: Wiko
Page 84: WWU/Institut für Ethik und angrenzende Sozialwissenschaften
Page 85: Orbis Books, background (detail cover page): PantherMedia Stock Agency/Andrew Ostrovsky, portrait: Wiko
Page 86: Stefan Klatt



www.religion-und-politik.de/en

