Call for Papers | LIMINA 10:2 (Autumn 2027)

Church—Politics—Power

A theological perspective on new Christian right-wing networks

ENGLISH

The relationship between the (Catholic) Church, politics and power has markedly shifted in recent years. The current social climate characterised by uncertainty, democratic fatigue, polarisation and growing authoritarian tendencies also gives rise to new alliances among Christians. Within Catholicism, fundamentalist religious movements are aligning themselves with the resurgent political right, for example under the umbrella and in support of "neo-integralism". This alignment is a bilateral exchange that serves mutual interests: political parties and movements exploit Christian semantics as a tool for identity-based political division and cultural hegemony; while fundamentalist religious actors find appeal and power in political arenas that pursue the disruption or elimination of liberal democratic structures.

These constellations raise questions about the "unholy alliances" that are emerging at the confluence of Church circles, certain new spiritual movements, neointegralist groups and the political right in Europe and beyond. Who instrumentalises whom, and at what cost? What forms of power (gain), symbolic capital and interpretative authority are being disseminated, defended or reclaimed? How do these dynamics relate to the Churches' self-understanding and ecclesiological decision-making, in particular with regard to the reform impulses of the Second Vatican Council?

LIMINA 10:2 thus explores the complex interrelations between *Church—Politics—Power* with a focus on neointegralism and corresponding phenomena of a "Christian right". We want to create a dialogue between internal theological perspectives and external viewpoints (philosophy, political science, social ethics, sociology of religion, communication sci-

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ence, media studies, etc.). The aim is to analyse current manifestations of these movements as well as their democratic and theological political implications, and to examine them through a systematic theological lens. The intention is two-fold: an understanding of neointegralist movements as well as a critical questioning of democratic or liberal systems and highlighting their weaknesses. Further, we seek answers as to what attracts (young) Catholic theologist to illiberal alternatives. Of particular interest here is the role of social media as a space for resonance and radicalisation. All these phenomena pose a challenge for the development of a relevant political theology and religious and democratic education in the face of growing fundamentalism. This issue of LIMINA sets out to give a nuanced voice to different, including oppositional, positions and to provide a space for explicitly controverse discourse.

Following on from the above considerations and intentions, the below questions exemplify and specify the scope of contributions we seek for this call for papers:

- How do Church circles, new spiritual communities and political actors *interact*? What forms of symbolic, institutional and discursive power are being mobilised, stabilised or recoded?
- Where and how do *neointegralist* positions and current forms of *postliberalism* converge and diverge? What criticisms are levelled at *political liberalism*, and what theological, moral-theological or socio-ethical alternatives are put forward?
- What distinguishes "right-wing conservative", "right-wing" and "far-right", and to what extent do they each pose a threat to democracy?
- How do theology, political science and philosophy define neointegralism? How does neointegralism relate to classical forms of integralism, anti-modernism, traditionalism and other movements within the Christian right?

- What do existing socio-ethical and political science analyses reveal about the connection between the Christian right and right-wing populist or far-right parties, and how are these received from a *theological perspective*?
- What does an updated "*political theology*" that can respond to fundamentalist tendencies without in turn adopting illiberal or au-

thoritarian patterns of thought look like? How can democracy, pluralism and human rights be theologically and robustly grounded?
- What *toxic theologies*—such as revelational positivism, utilitarian logic or presentist promises of efficacy—can be identified in neoliberal and right-wing traditionalist narratives that are exploited for manipulative purposes?

- How are *power and dominance structures* created and manifested at the intersection of Church—Politics—Media? Who instrumentalises whom: Church vs politics, politics vs Church, influencer vs Church structures or vice versa? What role do logics of humiliation and victimhood, martyr figures and messianic self-presentation play in this context?
- How does the relationship between *Church authority*, *institutional power* and *charismatic leaders* play out when neoliberalist movements both draw on traditions and utilise digital personality cults? What are alternative models of authority or participation?
- What *alliances and networks* between Catholic and other forms of religious fundamentalism (e. g. in Islam or in evangelical contexts) can be identified—for instance through the rejection of liberal democracies, in attitudes towards gender roles, sexuality, "Christian/Western identity" or religious freedom?

- What role do *social media, podcasts, influencers* and *digital networks* play in disseminating neointegralist and traditional right-wing narratives and in establishing young, transnationally connected movements? What rhetorical, aesthetic and politically affective strategies are employed, and why did they go unnoticed in Church contexts for so long?
- What *challenges for democratic and educational policy* does the rise of a Christian right pose for approaches to religious education as well as, for example, the training of priests? What degree of influence do "mediating forces" have within the Church—and where do they meet structural limits?
- What *empirical approaches*—such as interviews, direct quotes from students, or case studies of influencers or movements—offer insights for understanding and critically examining the appeal of neointegralist and right-wing traditionalist movements for young people?

The editors of this issue explicitly invite interdisciplinary contributions that investigate the intersection of *Church—Politics—Power* from different perspectives: systematic theology, fundamental theology, practical theology, social ethics, religious education, philosophy, political science, sociology, media studies and communication science. Both theory-based and empirical studies that further and support a nuanced analysis of current constellations are welcome.

If you are interested in contributing to this discussion on "Church—Politics—Power. A theological perspective on new Christian right-wing networks" with an innovative and yet unpublished article in LIMINA, please submit an outline (max. 4,000 characters) to:

limina(at)uni-graz.at

The final article (in German or English) should not exceed 40,000 characters. For more information about the journal, the peer review process and publication guidelines please visit:

http://unipub.uni-graz.at/limina

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