

Call for Collaboration “Christian Humanism, North and South: Piloting an intercultural model of cooperation for the Common Good”

Abstract

The project “Christian Humanism, North and South: Piloting an intercultural model of cooperation for the Common Good” is a cooperation between the Hekima University College in Nairobi and the Faculty of Catholic Theology of the University of Bonn.

It aims to address the contextual challenges that arise from different cultural expressions of Christianity which do not only affect the church and her work in different parts of the world, but also theologians in different countries (GS 44). There needs to be the awareness that every theological position is embedded into a specific cultural background which influences the position. The project will focus on “marginalised people” as communicated by Pope Francis. For this, there are specific questions such as

- what marginalised people are,
- in which way people are being marginalized and
- who belongs to the group of marginalized people

that need to be answered from different theological perspectives, that are sensitive to contextual differences and the aspect of inculturation.

As a sub-project we want to explore the dynamics of “evangelization” and “secularization” from a North-South-perspective, focussing on concurrent processes and concepts of secularisation, religious affiliation and non-religious or religious-indifferent life designs.

Another overarching dimension highly pertinent to our discussion is the theme of reconciliation. All our respective countries, North and South, have experienced the historical and contemporary traumas of war, genocide, racism and xenophobia, and the effects of colonialism and decolonization. All countries (North and South), too, struggle with the questions of poverty and marginalization (whether of majorities or minorities); we grapple too with questions of gender and sexuality, and the notion of what constitutes family. Catholic Christianity has historically perpetrated and resisted these challenges, offering diverse ‘answers’ that have exacerbated and ameliorated the problems, sometimes even dividing the Church. Thus reconciliation is an essential methodological dimension – a tool for creating common ground or at least holding differences in a convivial, dialogical tension – to all our reflections. The synodal and intercultural nature of such an approach is obvious.

In the project, we want to establish cooperation that will lead to an intercultural theological dialogue. The areas of focus that we have chosen will come from three different theological fields. These are the topics that the tandem groups can choose from:

- secularization and evangelisation, which comes from the field of fundamental theology,
- family, sex and gender, discrimination and disregard, which will come from the field of moral theology,
- marginalization, poverty and sustainability (including the crucial ecological dimension that *Laudato Si* and *Laudate Deum*, among other key Catholic texts, have emphasized), which will come from the field of Catholic Social Thought.
- Reconciliation which will not only serve as a methodological lens through which all the other topics will be explored, but will also be a fourth area of focus, given the common North-South histories of war, atrocity and trauma.

The specific issues should be identified and elaborated in small research groups that will be formed with applicants from German-speaking countries and applicants from the Global South. The aim of these research groups is to focus on one of the aforementioned areas of focus. With the forming of small groups with applicants from the Global North as well as the Global South, we aim to incorporate the intercultural perspective in the group projects. This will not only be on a scientific level, but also on a personal level as the participants will get to know about living the Global North and the Global South respectively through the communication with their fellow colleagues. The collaboration will take place in digital formats. The results will be presented, reflected, and discussed at a conference in 2024 at the University of Bonn. The proceedings from the conference will consequently be published.

What can be expected from the project?

Successful applicants can expect to be teamed up in a small group with other applicants that come from the Global North and the Global South. In this group, they will get to choose one of the four areas of focus of the project to work on from an intercultural perspective. This means that they will be able to get new inputs from their colleagues in the group and will be able to reflect on the importance of the different cultural backgrounds when doing theology. The collaboration in the groups will take place in digital formats to allow every applicant to participate. Applicants can also expect to be invited to a conference in Bonn, Germany, where the results from the group collaborations will be presented and discussed. The travel costs for the applicants will be covered.

Moreover, applicants can expect their results from the group collaborations and the conference to be published.

Project proposals and application modalities

- Application is possible for Doctoral students, postdocs or lecturers from German-speaking countries and from the Global South.
- The call for the project will last until **1st December 2023**. After that the steering committee of the project will review the applications and select the applicants most suitable for the project. Applicants will be informed of the decision in December 2023.
- Number of Participants: 25
- An application in English with a letter of motivation (approx. 1. page), a project idea (approx. 1 page) and the applicant's personal information in pdf format can be sent to **proske@uni-bonn.de**